Planning Theory & Practice

What's Love Got To Do With It? Illuminations on Loving Attachment in Planning

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To cite this article: Libby Porter, Leonie Sandercock, Karen Umemoto, Karen Umemoto, Lisa K. Bates, Marisa A. Zapata, Michelle C. Kondo, Andrew Zitcer, Robert W. Lake, Annalise Fonza, Bjorn Sletto, Aftab Erfan & Leonie Sandercock (2012): What’s Love Got To Do With It? Illuminations on Loving Attachment in Planning, Planning Theory & Practice, 13:4, 593-627

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2012.731210

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What’s Love Got To Do With It?
Illuminations on Loving Attachment in Planning

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Original image by Libby Porter, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia
Seeking the Value of Loving Attachment in Planning Research

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In 2009, the People of Color Interest Group (POCIG) sponsored a round table at the annual Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) meeting entitled, “Loving Attachment: Dilemmas of Researchers in Communities of Color”. Leonie Sandercock and I initially proposed the round table to address the challenges that many scholars face who do research in and with communities of color. As academics engaged in community-situated research, we commonly come across two types of issues. One has to do with the relationships that we develop with individuals and groups while working in the communities that we study. The other has to do with how those relationships are viewed by our peers who have the job of evaluating the value and rigor of our scholarship and who may be skeptical about the validity of our findings from a more postivist-leaning paradigm. This Interface is part of an effort to continue the dialogue we began at the round table and that seemed to resonate strongly among those who attended. I restart this conversation with an illustration of loving attachment to a subject matter and community with which I have a long-held relationship and personal history. I share this more personalized story as a point of entry to discuss the challenges and dilemmas faced by researchers working in communities, particularly communities of color, with which we may have developed an emotional attachment.

I became a planning scholar quite inadvertently. In fact, my first entry into fuller political consciousness was in the act of opposing planners. It was at the height of urban renewal activity in Los Angeles and the city’s redevelopment authority, called the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), was preparing to raze hundreds of units of single resident occupancy hotels in Little Tokyo, an historic center for the Japanese American community in Southern California, to make way for a luxury tourist hotel and mall. One quarter of Little Tokyo had already been taken by the City to expand the police station as part of the growing Civic Center complex. I was a little more bilingual then than I am now and I volunteered to help with tenant outreach to the mainly elderly residents, many of whom spoke only Japanese. It was my freshman year of college at UCLA and the recently established ethnic studies programs were encouraging us students to “serve the community”. One main question that arose for me was “isn’t the City supposed to serve the community, too?” Naive as I was, it was the plain sense of bewilderment in the face of seemingly callous treatment of the elderly and the financially poor that sustained my involvement and eventually led to my interest in planning ... or at least in changing some of the ways that planning was conceived.

It could be said that I have a loving attachment to this community and I would not deny this. My mother and her family called Little Tokyo home after being released from the American internment camps during World War II. My father and his mother were also part of the post-internment migration to Little Tokyo, a place where they found refuge and

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opportunity on the heels of misguided war hostilities aimed at Japanese of American ancestry at that time. From the early 1900s, Little Tokyo had become the social, economic, and cultural hub for Japanese immigrants in the continental U.S. who began filling the cheap labor void following the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. By the end of the 1930s, Little Tokyo was a bustling community that served approximately 75,000 Japanese in Southern California, equipped with everything an immigrant community needed to sustain itself—retail shops and department stores, ethnic newspapers, social organizations, Japanese language schools, Buddhist and Christian churches, employment agencies, professional services, restaurants, and cultural institutions. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, all those of Japanese ancestry on the West Coast were rounded up and sent to confinement camps where most lived out the war years. Residents of Little Tokyo were evacuated and moved to one of 10 internment camps in desolate parts of the country. During this time, Little Tokyo was referred to as “Bronzeville,” as African Americans migrating to Southern California to fill war industry jobs searched for housing in an era of strict segregation. At war’s end, many Japanese returned to Little Tokyo displacing many of the African American residents whose stories I have yet to find. Though it never returned to its earlier size, it remained a center for the Japanese American community and one that many strove to preserve.

While many scholars have feelings of attachment to their myriad research interests, the loving attachment we found ourselves grappling with at the round table is of a particular breed. For some, that attachment is similar to my affection towards Little Tokyo and the community of which I feel a part. For others, it is one that grows from a prolonged interaction with a community rather than from kinship ties. In either case, attachment involving human emotion is often seen as “problematic” by many in academia who frown upon emotional bonding between a researcher and “subjects” of research, assuming that it bars our ability to seek an “objective” understanding of phenomena. Loving attachment involving our social identity is especially seen to have a corrosive effect on critical analysis, as it is assumed we can “go native” and lose the ability to speak from an “unbiased” perspective. Research methods developed by postmodern scholars over the past several decades have not necessarily gained wide acceptance in many fields, planning being one of them. Certainly, there are potential pitfalls to loving attachment from the standpoint of a researcher. But the point I would like to argue is that we in fact can substantially enrich our understanding of planning by taking advantage of the unique insights that loving attachment to people and places of our research can yield, knowing there are moral and perspectival challenges to address. Let me share a bit on both.

Loving attachment is filled with a variety of emotions and it is helpful to pinpoint some of their dimensions. First, there is the attachment to place and the real and symbolic meaning of a place or space to the researcher. Just as members of a residential or identity-bound community inhabit a place, this space can come to mean something quite dear, whether it is a place of refuge and sustenance, as it was for my parents and grandparents, or a touchstone for maintaining the social relations, historical understanding, and cultural practices that comprise what we might consider a part of our social identity as researchers. Place attachment may not seem salient for a group as socially and culturally assimilated as fifth or sixth generation Japanese Americans may be. But as Dean Toji and I wrote earlier (2003), we are witnessing a “paradox of dispersal”. That is, as many Japanese Americans have geographically dispersed with suburbanization, varying degrees of economic mobility, and easing of racial restrictions, places like Little Tokyo have taken on even greater meaning as gathering places and institutional centers for cultural, educational, political, recreational, and social connection. These places are tied to an ethnic identity that
many feel a desire to maintain. Little Tokyo is not in the least unique. Place attachment related to social identity formation is well documented and we as researchers are not beyond the reach of such phenomena.

Second, there is the attachment to people. As a member of a community or as someone with relations to those in a community, life as a researcher is interconnected, sometimes intimately, with others in the community in which the study is situated. Whether they are people with whom you grew up, worked or went to school, or are related to through kinship networks, there are often strong social bonds that go back in time, sometimes even across generations. And in many ethnic communities it often feels as though there are only one or two degrees of separation between you and the next guy. If you don’t know them, you might know their mother, or at least their barber. Those loving attachments are not felt as a researcher, but as a fellow being and, in the context of this discussion, as a member of a common community of concern. There is a lot that accompanies this type of attachment (we can call it ethnic attachment in this example) including a degree of trust, sense of camaraderie, or expectation of shared interests with people in communities that we study. And to be clear, this has nothing to do with common gene pools, but it can rather be seen as an artifact of time where, at least in this U.S. example, ethnic identity is tied to a particular history of immigration and disparate treatment of racial and ethnic groups—a history that lives on in the retelling of stories and the creation of collective memory. While the level and substance of identification varies within any ethnic or racial group, there may be a shared sensibility that comes with common historic referents tracing back in time.

Third, there is the attachment to time. Places and people are constantly in flux. And it is not uncommon for people to become attached to a place or to a community of people as it existed in a particular point in time. “It was much better in the good ol’ days,” as many might reminisce. Likewise, some become attached to an image of what they would like a place or a community to be—“if it were only like…” People have opinions about the future based in good part on remembrances of the past. We as researchers are seldom immune to having our own, especially if we work in or with a given community over an extended period of time.

There are clear advantages and disadvantages of doing research that involves loving attachment, whether preexisting or newly developed in the course of inquiry. I do believe that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages, assuming one is mindful of the potential pitfalls.

Surely, there are many challenges. One major challenge is the effects of attachment on what we feel we are able to see and say. Community life is often very colorful and sometimes conflict-ridden, just as we might find in an extended family, but multiplied. There is a good chance that we become privy to information that lies outside of formal interview protocols that university human studies committees might have approved before the official start of the research endeavor. We may have taken part in some of the history that we later study as a scholar. Our ties to people in communities that we study may be laden with that history in the form of perceptions, attitudes, or feelings set in that earlier time that may or may not affect current research efforts. Attachment to individuals may blunt the sharpness of critical inquiry, causing us to overlook certain activities or withhold vital information from published work in order to protect individuals from public scrutiny. Loving attachment might fill us with the same blind nostalgia that we are trying to avoid by doing our research. Or it may move us to shield the public from dark secrets we discover that may be an important part of the story. I recall a book title by Erma Bombeck that read, “Family—The ties that bind … and gag!” The presence of loving attachment can affect what we see, what we would rather ignore, what we share, and how we share it.
In some ways, these are dilemmas all researchers face, regardless of any degree or type of attachment. In fact, with the postmodern turn, harsh criticisms have been leveled towards scholars who in their reluctance to relate more fully with communities they study, suffer from the limitations that accompanies a lack of engagement. The most common criticism has been that “outsider” research without some degree of immersion in a community of study often fails to capture the intricate systems of thought, complex feelings, and the historically rooted foundations of knowledge that inform community sensibilities. Edward Said and others, for instance, have derided the imposition of Western epistemologies on racial or ethnic groups that may live by differing precepts, exposing some of the gross misreading of human behavior that have resulted. This is all to say that the mere lack of attachment comes with its own potential demons.

What loving attachment does require of scholars is a particular type of attention to our moral compass as researchers. And here I argue that research ethics should be the focus of discussion rather than any narrow preoccupation with the fact that a researcher may have attachments to the field or subjects of study. Loving attachment brings to the fore questions that may not be as prominent in more detached approaches to social inquiry. It requires a layer of self-reflection that pushes us to think more deeply about how our attachments shape our thinking beyond simply epistemic or standpoint issues and into the realm of dynamic social relations. It invites critical reflection about our feelings about a place and our normative beliefs related to how we might evaluate particular actions or developments. It asks us to be mindful of how our relationships affect what we are discovering or missing. It forces us to confront any nostalgia that we might carry that is embedded in our personal experiences in the place or with its people. And maybe most importantly, it hinges the everyday practice of love, respect and reciprocity in our relationships that keep them honest and genuine. I believe that this layer of reflection in our ethical decision-making can actually deepen our insights, allowing us to see our work through a more transparent lens by placing ourselves within the scope of inquiry. Wrestling with the tangles of our attachments can release new insights otherwise buried in knots. Articulating the ethical dimensions of our work may help us to reap the benefits that intimacy with people and their stories can allow.

The round table sparked a flurry of discussion that went beyond the realm of loving attachment in planning research, and extended to the treatment of loving attachment in planning practice and in our teaching. Some voiced dismay that planning scholarship has not delved deeply into the nature of emotions in planning practice, knowing the profound role that social attachments can play. Planners may work in communities where they are an integral part of the social fabric, or feel a lineage to the place. In either scenario, emotional attachments are nestled in complex social, political, economic, and cultural systems that affect planning processes and the work of planners. There has been a growing number of planning scholars who have focused attention on the psychological side of planning. For example, John Forester, in The Deliberative Practitioner, discusses the pain people feel from traumatic histories that continue to haunt many historically marginalized communities, presenting planners’ stories of how they “worked through” pent-up emotions that often inflamed planning processes. Leonie Sandercock and Maged Senbel (2011) examined the mobilization of hope in connection to the spiritual realm that planners can tap through the practice of reverence in the face of modernity’s ills. And Howell Baum (1997), in The Organization of Hope, probes the quest of two ethnic
communities that plan for their economic, social and spiritual survival, questioning what identity will hold them together.

I believe that those who do research in which loving attachments play a part have opportunities to deepen our collective understanding of the emotional realm of planning, including the nature of hope, the origins of attachment, and the emotional dynamics surrounding planning controversies. Our empathic attachment to people and places may inform our multiple senses and give us a better “feel” not only for what thoughts might be traveling through the minds of people but also what they may feel in their guts. Our experience as part of a community can give us a glimpse into the possible motivations or imperatives that drive social action. Our social networks in communities can open access to sources of information that normally may not be so readily available. For those who share the same cultural background(s) as those within a community of study, there may be shared styles of speech and customary forms of social etiquette that help ease communication and avert misunderstanding. And the openness engendered by attachment can unfold stories that would otherwise be withheld from total strangers.

While there are many ways to maximize the benefits of loving attachment that go beyond the scope of this essay, the important thing is that we have safe discursive spaces to sort out these methodological and ethical concerns. Greater dialogue with each other as researchers can help us sharpen our awareness of the ways in which our past and present combine to frame the lens through which we understand history and the trajectory of the future. Perhaps in this way, loving attachment forces a study of the self as much as a study of the chosen phenomenon. This may be the case in other types of research as well. But in the case of loving attachment, we obligate ourselves to the screenshot of inquiry, which may be a more honest and revealing approach when all is said and done. This suggests that rather than seeing ourselves saddled with the burdens of proving that such scholarly work is done with rigor and critical interrogation, we might welcome and appreciate the unique opportunities to discover the types of knowledge and wisdom that critical and self-reflective research can yield.

All of these issues will be running through my mind as I embark on the history of community development in Little Tokyo. I am sure that the emotional connection I feel, the familial and social ties that remain, and the history that I share with people and the place will bear heavily on my scholarly work. I hope it will be so in a good way.

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Loving attachment to our racial/ethnic heritage communities aims to produce knowledge that is emancipatory for communities and transformative for planning practice. Love energizes our work. It enables us to tell important stories of difference and portray communities as more than just problematic. At the same time, the attachment that makes our work possible is often seen as a troubling acknowledgement of a lack of objectivity by dominant culture academic planners. In this essay, we present a conversation between ourselves to share our path to accept and outwardly speak about love and attachment. We are young scholars with planning PhDs. We are women of color, with mixed racial heritage. Like many of our colleagues, we come from class privilege. This dialogue proceeds in the language and tone that we use when we are actually doing the reflexive work—just as we break it down in the lobby of the conference hotel, over the phone, and via text. While we are capable of situating this conversation in scholarship and theory, we’ve chosen to present this as “real talk”.2

LKB: I feel like we could gain cred by referring to this as “street theory.” It’s hood theorizing! … Too much?

MAZ: Uh, yeah.

LKB: Ok seriously: My academic training was mainstream, the social scientist as a detached observer. But, reading literature that was about the dysfunctions of black communities, it was incredibly difficult to navigate my actual and perceived identity—it was assumed I had some insider knowledge. Partially because it is true, partially because I wanted to represent that there are black middle class people, but also because it walled me off from “those black people”, I was quick and loud in explaining my background: I am from a small town, my mother is white, my black father is a physician. I couldn’t shake the suspicion that some viewed me as one of the pathological “others”—a lens into the “culture of poverty”.

MAZ: The objective scholar concept always seemed counter-intuitive to me. I started out in socio-cultural anthropology. But even acknowledging positionality, I still did not feel ready to embrace the anger, frustration, and desperation I saw as connected with my racialized ethnic identity. In an English class I once asked why we couldn’t move past race – like, the whitest question in the world.

LKB: Imagining you saying “can’t we get past race” is actually making me LOL.

MAZ: Ha ha. I was a bi-racial Latina desperately not wanting to acknowledge the injustices I had grown up seeing and hearing about, and also reaching quickly to distinguish myself from Those Latinos. I am Mexican American and
Anglo. My brown dad was a professor. At that time I wanted to work on difference for the sake of difference, not addressing the connection to power. It took years to reconcile that my anger at injustice and my intellectual interest in difference could and should co-exist.

LKB: Positionality came to a head during my work in New Orleans. “Where y’at” is on every corny list of NOLA³ slang, but it took on real meaning: Where am I “at” doing the research and where am I “at” when I return to the predominantly white planning academy. In New Orleans, I was sometimes seen as Dr. Bougie Light Bright and sometimes as a classic case of “light-skinned rage”, and back at ACSP, I was being questioned about whether I had some “personal agenda” about race. I started responding with a sarcastic “I’m just another exploitive scholar chasing publications!” then tried claiming the politics alone—“It’s action research and I’m one of those activist scholars,” emphasis on scholar.

MAZ: How’d that work out?

LKB: That allowed me to be “with the people, but not of the people”—maybe comfortable for white researchers talking about racial inequality, but for me it became pure mind-bending fuckery.

MAZ: Oh god, break that down.

LKB: I was asserting my own class and educational privilege in order to be credible, presenting research making the case for dismantling systems of privilege and oppression. It just doesn’t work. I need to acknowledge being motivated not only by an ideological commitment, but also by a personal commitment to black people and communities. I went to New Orleans because I love the black community and I was heartbroken by its suffering.

MAZ: I try not to be heartbroken. But it’s always there, always on the surface. Even the first step—the act of conceptualizing research—does not occur with a clean slate. We already know the challenges made to this work, and how they become racialized. And some of the pressure not to do this kind of work comes from our own COC. And that becomes some crazy shit. POC wanting us to be better scientists than our peers—proving we aren’t second rate scholars, you know the classic assimilationist model.

LKB: The Talented Tenth shouldn’t marginalize themselves in academic niches! Only PONCs have that privilege.

MAZ: POC are trying to help us navigate the realities of academia. One person told me we have something different at stake, we can’t afford to be caught up in some methods debate, quantitative gets you tenure. But what drove me was understanding the complexity of COC.

LKB: Well, we can take a critical eye to questioning institutionalized bias in data and quantitative work, and although I do that too, it means something different to take up love, not just politics. I haven’t yet found the scholarly
language to talk about being face to face with the love, pain, and yearning of communities in New Orleans. I’m thinking more about the concept of “triage” in planning—the idea of shrinking cities—and its roots as a medical procedure that allows some patients to die. Death requires grieving, but we don’t have a strategic planning model to incorporate mourning.

MAZ: And when emotion is allowed in, it is marginalized as “just” ethnography (scholarship) or therapy (practice). I worked in the California San Joaquin Valley. Cesar Chavez started there, but decades later there was still so much need. But the Latino community still had hope and faith. The Mexican Americans I interviewed participated in a planning process that explicitly addressed the uncertainty of the future. I saw that Mexican American participants appreciated the acknowledgment that the future may not be good, and may be especially bad for them. The process had space for hope and despair. But that’s not the norm in planning, too often our processes insist on producing a unitary vision of a positive future.

LKB: I do believe that it will be planning that takes this emotional dimension of place-making on board. At least, it’s not going to be real estate developers or economists or engineers.

MAZ: But it has to be across planning, not just POC. I am most frustrated by two interwoven beliefs. One, that racial issues can only be worked on by POC. And two, that race is all POC are interested in or capable of doing. Issues related to COC and scholars of color are then positioned—collectively—outside of the rest of academia and planning.

LKB: I’m frustrated that no one demands that PONC doing research on POC/COC reveal what their personal stake is. I want everybody to show their work, so to speak.

MAZ: Now I’m working on a project that is not about COC. I feel much less pressure, but it doesn’t ignite my passion.

LKB: So what’s passion? More than love?

MAZ: It’s what I feel about my identity and my work and my peeps is passion—love and hate all mixed together. We have to work through bitterness and be willing to experience hurt, pain, anger, and frustration all while holding out for love and hope.

LKB: Opening up to all of that isn’t just the righteous anger of an activist. It’s opening up to real, actual pain—to family and community history, expectations, and judgments.

MAZ: On the one hand we are talking about something exceptionally personal, on the other professional and the links between those two worlds becomes emotionally fraught.
LKB: No kidding. At the same time, I’m not facing down a fire hose here. I’m still in a very comfortable chair.

MAZ: We think we’re taking a risk here, but what are we really risking? Tenure? Jobs at other institutions? Meh.

LKB: I don’t think it’s demographically possible for us to have an all-angry WOC external review panel...

MAZ: I might need that panel less if we have places to write and talk about this passion. But we’ll see how our real talk plays out.

LKB: We’ll know it’s working when all the abstracts in JPER\(^6\) and JAPA\(^7\) include a positionality statement for the author and the reader (“check your privilege, it’s about to get real”).

MAZ: Why don’t we just start with asking everyone to unpack their invisible knapsacks of privilege?\(^8\)

LKB: I got nothin’ but love for you baby.\(^9\)

Notes

1. This title derives from an essay by author Zadie Smith (“Speaking in Tongues” in the *New York Review of Books* 2/28/2009), who writes powerfully of resisting a singular identity: “[Dream City] is a place of many voices, where the unified singular self is an illusion . . . When your personal multiplicity is printed on your face, in an almost too obviously thematic manner, in your DNA, in your hair and in the neither this nor that beige of your skin—well, anyone can see you come from Dream City. In Dream City everything is doubled, everything is various. You have no choice but to cross borders and speak in tongues.”

2. Saying “real talk” as a preface to communication is an important warning from some people of color (POC). It may be instructive to include the Urban Dictionary.com definition of “real talk” here: “n. 1. The philosophy of talking candidly and openly and honestly without fear of what others might think
   a. usually for another’s benefit to let them know of something that is usually hard to discuss
   b. to let others know that you are talking honestly and sincerely and that what you are expressing is not a joke and that you are unabashedly being true to your own thoughts and feelings.”


4. “Light skindid rage” refers to the apparent connection between being a lighter complexioned black person and radical politics, usually attributed to a desire to prove one’s Blackness despite having color privilege and/or white parentage.

5. We refer to communities, people, and women of color as COC, POC, and WOC, respectively. POC is distinct from “minority” as it does not place POC in a subordinate position, and from “diversity” as it acknowledges the process of racialization that has oppressed or marginalized nonwhites (aka PONC or people of no color). PONC was coined by Andrew Ti of the blog “Yo, Is This Racist?”


7. Journal of the American Planning Association

8. Peggy McIntosh (1988) describes this knapsack as the unearned privileges (white) people carry around with them. We readily acknowledge that the privilege we carry has provided us with unearned opportunities, including positioning us to write this essay.

9. A lyric from the unforgettable late Heavy D.
Lisa K. Bates researches housing policy and planning with a focus on how institutional and structural racism affect policy design, implementation, and outcomes. She politely refuses all requests to touch her afro.

Marisa A. Zapata’s research interests include land-use planning, participatory planning processes, and regional governance. She is especially concerned about equitable planning for uncertain futures in highly diverse communities. Marisa is from Texas, no matter how many times she is asked when she immigrated from the nation of Latin America.

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An Ethic of Love for Planning

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Many of us are driven to do research in and with communities. I believe that love has something to do with this drive. Love must be a part of our choice to learn with and from people we respect and admire, and to cross thresholds and boundaries set by society and institutions. Love must be a part of our choice to do what I call community-engaged research, in which we as researchers play a supportive rather than leading role, where communities define the research problem, help collect data, analyze results and determine its significance. But what is love, really, and what does it have to do with research?

In her book *all about love* (2000), author bell hooks explored the multiple meanings of love and its potential uses in present-day U.S. culture. A search through modern art, literature and media revealed that love has become any empty chalice devoid of meaning; it is considered a domain for women and a private, individualistic matter. hooks argued that if society is to make use of the affirming potential of love as a value and way of being, love must transform into a social phenomenon, rather than individuals’ secret.

One tool for making this transformation is the defining of an ethic of love. Living and working by a love ethic requires that we practice the multiple (and familiar) dimensions of love, such as trust, commitment, care, respect, knowledge and responsibility. Yet simply keeping these values in our daily mantras may not address the ethical tensions that can act as obstacles to practicing these values. hooks offers three essential tenets that can help bring an ethic of love to the everyday lives of society at large: (1) love is without fear, (2) living by a love ethic requires the cultivation of awareness, and ability to critically examine one’s actions, and (3) love is a process rather than an ideal state. In this essay

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I consider what these three tenets would entail in the frame of planning research with and in communities, using examples from my own community-engaged work.

There are many obstacles facing communities, scholars, institutions and organizations wanting to collaborate in research endeavors; to the fulfillment of this love. First, is fear. hooks reminds us that fear permeates society and our thoughts; that “we are all terribly afraid most of the time. As a culture we are obsessed with the notion of safety” (2000, p. 93) While fear, or rather caution, at times is important, it can be stifling and detrimental to those of us who wish to do community-engaged work.

I find that there are two (related) forms of fear detrimental to promoting positive working relationships between (and within) communities and researchers. First, fear of professional repercussions poses a large barrier to some researchers. Safety in academia is the unencumbered data set to work with and publish from at will. Stepping away from this model, introducing chance, relational commitments, norms and expectations, and vast amounts of time into the research process would strike fear into any tenure-seeking scholar. We must also deal with fear of “biasing” our research, removing “objectivity”, losing control of and sole credit for our work, and the list goes on.

Yet there is a growing movement among federal agencies, foundations, organizations and researchers recognizing the fundamental relationship between socio-cultural systems and outcomes related to human and environmental health and well-being. Research and policy agendas held by agencies such as the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) now incorporate community-participatory models. There are entire journals devoted to community-engaged research, such as Progress in Community Health Partnerships: Research, Education, and Action, while others routinely publish articles that describe community-based participatory research methods. Integrating this type of research into planning academia may require some cultural changes. For example, publications of community-engaged research often have long author lists; the single-author publication would be suspect. On the other hand, planners are well-positioned to take part in this movement, as this type of research requires use of mixed-research methodologies, close attention to the (adaptive) process of research, and involvement in regulatory and policy-based solutions.

A societal fear of urban communities themselves may also pose an obstacle to planning scholars. Cities, and communities within them, often instill fear not only in outsiders, but also the very residents of those communities. Urban planners have long been concerned about problems affecting urban residents, such as infectious disease, crime, poverty, and pollution. Yet conducting community-engaged research requires that we come face-to-face with these problems; that we explore, understand, perhaps even redefine and refute these problems, and develop solutions. Again, hooks reminds us that “[fear] is the primary force upholding structures of domination. It promotes the desire for separation, the desire not to be known… When we choose to love we choose to move against fear—against alienation and separation. The choice to love is the choice to connect—to find ourselves in the other” (2000, p. 93). Commitment to communities and an ethic of love requires that we undo fear of places and people that have been forgotten, misunderstood, or stigmatized.

My interest in environmental justice has recently brought me to the neighborhoods of Point Breeze and Greys Ferry in South Philadelphia, home to vibrant communities that are also stigmatized for pollution, racial tension and crime. These neighborhoods are bordered by some extremely heavy industry, including an oil refinery. The potential for exposure to hazardous pollutants in the air, land and water is high in this area, and a survey of 493 adult residents in 2003 found that 45% believed they suffered from asthma (Right to Know Committee, 2003). In spending time with community organizers in this
area, I learned that they share my concern about environmental health, but that a lack of hope for youth is an equally pressing issue. We have therefore centered plans to investigate environmental health risks, explore community concern and take action to improve regulatory compliance around neighborhood youth.

Second, living by a love ethic requires cultivation of awareness and an ability to critically examine one’s actions. It is an awareness of power inequalities, and methods to counteract these inequalities that is necessary in community-engaged work. We must be aware of the historical legacies of our institutions in the communities for which we work. The traditional academic model involves the researcher taking information from communities and then publishing and using the information for their own benefit. In instances, this practice has been to the extreme detriment of research subjects such as in past human syphilis experiments and human pesticide experiments. A different model of practice is required moving forward, one that emphasizes partnership, where communities are defining the research questions and planning agendas, where they are partners in grant applications, helping to conduct research, interpret findings, publish results and take action. A fundamental ingredient to this new model is relationships of trust with community members, which requires time spent on the ground in advance of, during, and after formal projects.

On a more micro-level, planners should be aware of furthering inequalities via the words we speak. Common assumptions and words implicate connotations that we may not be aware of, and which may not align with our intentions. Scholars of critical race theory (e.g. Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) have demonstrated ways that structures of discrimination are a part of our everyday language and experiences, and are not necessarily intentional on the part of their perpetrators. Planners are susceptible to these processes. In my work in the White Center community near Seattle, WA (Kondo, 2012), I found that planners and public officials had assigned the terms “biased” to immigrant and minority groups in the neighborhood, and “unbiased” to predominantly white groups in the neighborhood. This assignment of terms impeded their ability to effectively engage residents of all demographic backgrounds in an important neighborhood decision. We must be critical of social narratives we encounter in communities, which implicate members as either good or bad.

Last, hooks reminds us that love is a process of refinement rather than an ideal state. Living by and practicing an ethic of love is an everyday project. Learning to find professional acceptance, to reciprocate, respect, involve, share, and refine is a slow process, but one that is worth the toll.

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References

Love as a Planning Method

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The traditional rational planning model situates the planner at an objective distance from the planning subject, seeking impartiality through detachment between the observer and the thing observed. But persistent critique within and outside the planning discipline has undermined the illusion of value neutrality underlying the rational model, leaving unresolved the nature of the relationship between planner and subject. What might planning look like if love replaced distanced objectivity in the planner–subject relationship? What might it mean for a planner to love the people and communities that are the subject of planning? Attempts to answer these questions prompt further questions: What is love, and how can love be practiced as a planning method?

Not just any sort of love will do as a mode of planning. Love as a planning method cannot be uncritical, willful or blind. Love is neither lust, which objectifies the subject, nor infatuation, which is partial and distorted, nor desire, which consumes itself in its realization. Love must avoid slipping into paternalism, which renders the subject void of agency and a mere recipient of influence and domination. Nor is love reducible merely to fraternalism, which constructs a closed circle of commonality that necessarily excludes difference. Love encompasses but is more than care, nurturance, consideration or respect (Lawson, 2007, 2009).

Love defines a relation rather than an action or behavior (Metcalfe & Game, 2008; Nussbaum, 1990). To love another or to be “in love” is to be engaged in a particular kind or quality of relation. A loving relationship entails a reconciliation of the contradictory impulses of differentiation and connection. It is a paradoxical relationship that celebrates the autonomy, uniqueness, and complexity of the other while simultaneously nurturing connection, mutuality, and regard. The challenge of love is to balance separation and connectedness, individuality and relationality: to retain the integrity of difference while fostering unity and conjunction (Sandercock, 2003; Young, 2000).

There are many varieties of love and the different kinds of love negotiate this paradox in different ways (Lewis, 1960; Nussbaum, 1998). In his sermon at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Martin Luther King, Jr. (1957) distinguished among eros, philia, and agape in seeking a way to realize the injunction to love one’s enemy. He characterized eros as a “yearning of the soul” that, like desire, is unidirectional; philia as “intimate affection” and “reciprocal love;” and agape as “the understanding, creative, redemptive goodwill for all men ... that seeks nothing in return.”

Because planning, as a public art, is political, the value for planners of considering these varieties of love lies in their implications for acting politically. Each of these modes of love invokes a distinct relationship between planner and subject and entails different political implications in the practice of that relationship.

Hannah Arendt explored the relationship between love and the political and her insights offer much of value to planners. The political, for Arendt, rests on three principles of publicity, natality, and plurality (Disch, 1994). Publicity is an essential

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condition for politics because, in contrast to the invisibility of the private realm, “everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody” and thus to be political is to be public (Arendt, 1958, p. 50). Arendt describes natality as the emergence of the private individual into the public realm, a “second birth” in which “with word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world” (1958, p. 176). Natality initiates the possibility for both individual action and collective politics, “an act of individuation that is achieved, paradoxically, by a declaration of connection to those whom one respects enough to want to be joined in friendship with” (Disch, 1994, p. 33). Plurality is a fact of the diversity of public life because “the reality of the public realm relies on the simultaneous presence of innumerable perspectives and aspects in which the common world presents itself and for which no common measurement or denominator can ever be devised” (Arendt, 1958, p. 57).

How, then, do the varieties of love intersect with these dimensions of the political? Arendt wrote with suspicion about *eros*, a romantic or affectionate love that, because of its “inherent worldlessness,” she considered private and therefore unpolitical (Arendt, 1958, p. 52). Arendt equated *eros* with worldlessness because, unlike other modes of love, it isolates its participants in a web (“a world of their own”) that separates them from the public. “Generally speaking,” Arendt asserts, “the role of the ‘heart’ in politics seems to me altogether questionable” (Arendt, *The Jew as Pariah*, p. 247; quoted in Chiba, 1995, p. 517). It is questionable, for Arendt, because it is private and, because it is private, it negates the possibility of politics (Nussbaum, 1990, p. 343).

At the opposite extreme from the privacy of *eros* is the self-denying character of *agape*, the self-sacrificing love that asks or requires nothing in return. *Agape* describes the biblical imperative of love for all, one’s neighbor and one’s enemy, love that is unconditional, love for love’s sake (C.S. Lewis (1960) calls it Gift-love) that is an end in itself. It is precisely this unconditional universalism that causes Arendt to object to *agape* as a denial of the individuality and subjectivity of both the self and the subject. The magnanimous actor motivated by *agape* blindly abides by a divine command and, in so doing, abandons autonomous judgment and volition while also negating the “historicity, individuality, and particular needs of the neighbor” (Chiba, 1995, p. 527).

Both the deindividualization of the other and the dehistoricization of his or her situation take place in exchange with standardized equality and uniformity in which everyone is treated. Arendt thinks that due to the universalism of *agape*, what is loved in neighborly love is love itself rather than the neighbor. She maintains that neighborly love cannot properly deal with the historical and contingent conditions of the other person and that it results in both self-denial and the denial of the other. (Chiba, 1995, pp. 527–528).

*Philia*, the Greek word for friendship, offers a more politically promising form of love than the biological imperative of *eros* or the theocratic imperative of *agape*. Its power lies in the virtue of its reciprocity and non-necessity. Friendship is a choice we make, a gesture of solidarity with another. Friends stand side-by-side, ready to comprehend, and to make the world intelligible, together. “For Arendt,” Chiba explains, “friendship signifies a companionship with others as equal partners in a community common to them” (1995, p. 518). Lisa Disch, quoting Arendt, extends the thought:

The kind of friendship Arendt has in mind is not intimacy, but public friendship, mediated by individuals’ partnership in a common world...
“become equal partners in a common world.” It is friendship that makes possible the articulation of common interests. (Disch, 1994, p. 43)

Where *agape* strives to love the world, *philia* constructs a world in common; “friendship … embodies a politics of world-building” (Chiba, 1995, p. 523). In contrast to the selfless love of *agape*, *philia* or public friendship establishes a reciprocal relationship that closely corresponds to Arendt’s view of the political. It is a relationship that negotiates the paradox of separation and connectedness by experiencing the public world in common while acknowledging and protecting its diversity.

Arendt’s views on love and the political suggest a method for planning that employs the attributes of *philia*. Her method for collaborative world-building is “visiting”, an approach that preserves both the self and the subject as equal partners in a shared endeavor. Visiting entails engaging with an event or situation so as to tell its story through the diverse perspectives that construct it. As Disch explains: “Visiting involves constructing stories of an event from each of the plurality of perspectives that might have an interest in telling it and imagining how I would respond as a character in a story very different from my own” (Disch, 1994, p. 158). Visiting differs from empathy, which by assimilating or adopting the other’s perspective effaces one’s own, and also differs from abstraction, which reduces the diversity of perspectives to a universal norm. Visiting offers planners “a model of solidarity premised not on a common identity or essential sameness but on a limited, principled commitment to respond to a particular problem” (Disch, 1994, p. 22).

Arendt’s method of visiting and storytelling differs in fundamental ways from conventional practices of distanced, objective research and rational planning (Lake & Zitcer, in press). Where the analytical planner maintains a distance from the world in order to observe it, the visitor ventures into it to engage in conversation with its multiple participants. The implications of this positional shift are perhaps most acute in the domain of research, for if the purpose of traditional planning research is fact-finding, the goal of visiting is joint interpretation, “bringing to light more truth than fact” (Disch, 1994, p. 188). Research is directed to a distant audience, while visiting addresses its subjects as its principal interlocutors. Research is retrospective, compiling information about what has already been enacted, and the resulting plan is presented as an accomplished fact, while visiting produces a story intended to provoke critical thinking in an on-going discussion. Because visiting initiates discussion rather than concluding it, its “judgment is only provisional, and defending it does not involve proving it is right” (Disch, 1994, p. 208).

The reciprocal nature of *philia* and its associated practices of visiting and storytelling emphasize methods of communication rather than data-gathering or analysis. Bakhtin describes the inherently intersubjective character of communication: “[the] word is a two-sided act . . . determined equally by whose word it is and for whom it is meant. As word, it is precisely the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addressee and addressee” (Bakhtin & Morris, 2009, p. 58). As a consequence, visiting employs methods that Chiba calls “the public activity of citizens . . . which can consist of spontaneity, speech, common deliberation, persuasion, cooperation, [and] the absence of hierarchy” (1995, p. 519). More specifically, Iris Young’s (2000) discussion of “greeting”, “rhetoric”, and “narrative” as methods conducive to politically inclusive communication is applicable to planners engaged in the practice of visiting. Closely related to Arendt’s concept of political natality, greeting, for Young, names the practice of explicitly acknowledging the other as a participant in a conjoined communicative process. The political gesture of greeting acknowledges the risk and vulnerability implicit in initiating communication, recognizes the integrity of the other as holder of a distinct perspective, announces an intention to listen
and be listened to, and invites reciprocity based on mutual respect (Young, 2000, pp. 58–60). Young similarly discusses rhetoric as a communicative method that effects the transmission of ideas by reflectively choosing modes of expression appropriate to a specific audience in a specific situation. How assertions are expressed is as or more important than their content in constructing effective public discussion. Finally, narrative or storytelling is a communicative method that makes disparate or incommensurable perspectives accessible to differently situated participants, producing “a collective social wisdom not available from any one position” (Young, 2000, p. 76).

For love to characterize the relationship between planner and subject requires the incorporation of the cliché that love requires effective communication into planning methods. As Arendt concludes:

[For] the Greeks the essence of friendship consisted in discourse ... In discourse the political importance of friendship, and the humanness peculiar to it, were made manifest ... We humanize what is going on in the world and in ourselves only by speaking of it, and in the course of speaking of it we learn to be human. (Arendt, 1968, p. 24–25)

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References

“Through the Fire”: Womanism, Feminism and the Dialectics of Loving Attachment

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Feminists tend to spend a lot of time talking about love or considering how love is incorporated, or not, into the personal and professional relationships that we pursue. About a decade ago, for instance, black feminist bell hooks published a series of books on the topic of love. Called “the love trilogy,” this collection captured the attention of many, even those beyond academia (hooks, 2000, 2001a, 2002). With that in mind, I assumed that bell hooks’s definition of love would be a central part of the 2010 ACSP round-table discussion, but that was not necessarily the case. Instead, the round table opened with a quote or a definition of love by a man. Hence, at first, I was a little disappointed that the round table on loving attachment did not begin with a feminist epistemology of love.

As a contributor to this Interface, I feel that it is critical to acknowledge the term “loving attachment” as a feminist proposal, but that is not to say that constructing a “love ethic” or a theory of loving attachment among planners is the sole responsibility of feminist planners, i.e., women. Love, as an idea, an emotion, and even a theoretical or methodological construct is of interest to both women and men, as was demonstrated during the round-table discussion. Indeed, women are typically associated with love or the maintenance of love, as an emotion or a practice, but as we consider loving attachment as a basis for planning practice, it is very important that others, including men and non-feminists who desire to be a part of such a dialogue assume a shared responsibility for the development of a theory of love that could be useful in planning practice.¹ That being said, I would first like to offer a definition of feminism that was proposed by hooks and featured on the popular social networking tool, Facebook. On the page/site created in her honor, the definition, which I assume was written by hooks, was presented as follows:

Feminism is not simply a struggle to end chauvinism or a movement to ensure that women have equal rights with men; it is a commitment to eradicating the ideology of domination that permeates Western cultures on various levels—sex, race, class, to name a few—and a commitment to reorganize U.S. society so that the self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion and material desires²

This definition of feminism, which was most likely constructed within the cultural context of the U.S., is what I know of it in reality. More than an idealized quest for gender or women’s rights, feminism is a part of a larger, global movement for the creation and cultivation of just societies (Naples, 2003). Therefore, just because one is female and vocal on issues affecting women in general does not make one “a feminist”. Rather, being feminist and articulating a feminist consciousness and thus openly embracing it as a very particular socio-political identity, is shaped and cultivated by praxis, which is

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characterized by a conscientious and concrete movement between actual theory and practice versus an abstract or idealized theoretical proposal.

To that point, I was introduced to feminism in planning in a rather non-praxeological way. One of my former planning professors, who knew that I was interested in planning at the intersection of race, gender, class, and even sexuality, suggested that I read Leonie Sandercock’s and Ann Forsyth’s 1992 article, *A Gender Agenda: New Directions for Planning Theory* (Sandercock & Forsyth, 1992). When I read it, I was pleased, on the one hand, to know that a feminist consciousness had been articulated among planning scholars and practitioners, even if, according to Sandercock and Forsyth, it was marginal. However, over the years, I was quite disappointed that a black feminist consciousness among planners seemed nowhere to be found. Most recently, for example, their absence was quite apparent in Fainstein’s and Servon’s 2005 reader, *Gender and Planning* (Fainstein & Servon, 2005). Indeed, there are black women scholars in the planning profession. June Manning Thomas and Catherine Ross, for example, hold prominent positions in two very reputable planning institutions, and they have written many important articles and books on planning. But, neither Thomas nor Ross writes specifically about gender, nor do they openly claim a feminist standpoint. Claiming the word “feminist” is very important, as doing so has social and professional consequences; some positive, some negative. The reception toward being named a feminist is political; in other words, it depends on the situation. With the exception of one or two dissertations (fonza, 2010; Odom, 2009), an approach to planning that is openly and unapologetically black and feminist has yet to become a prominent feature in the planning canon. In U.S. planning literature, much of the writing about black women or women of color in urban communities, has been written by white feminists such as Jacquelyn Leavitt (Leavitt, 1997; Leavitt & Saegert, 1990), to which I have no argument. Feminist or not, it is significant that white women are writing about black women and their experience with the U.S. planning project. But, that white or non-black women are predominantly articulating that experience on behalf of black women in publications and at conferences is problematic, and, it underscores what I have observed about planning for more than a decade. Planning, as I have come to know it, is epistemologically and methodologically constructed or theorized from a “white point of entry”, and in particular from a white feminist point of entry.

There are, nonetheless, a handful of planning scholars and critical thinkers who have challenged white male hegemony (Beauregard, 1998; Sandercock, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 2003). In the first years of my doctoral studies, there was one article that was of particular interest to me. Written by feminist Barbara Hooper, and entitled, “‘Split at the roots’: a critique of the philosophical and political sources of modern planning doctrine” this essay was published in *Frontiers*, a respected feminist journal (Hooper, 1992). Hooper alleged that there have been three historical “sittings” leading to the development of planning theory: (1) professional roots; (2) rational roots; and (3) oppositional roots. Her discussion of each of the three sittings, especially the third, the oppositional roots, gave me hope that there was at least a minority of planners that were willing to use a feminist standpoint to push back against the modernist or positivist origins of planning, which are situated in European, white and masculinist ideas about culture, society and politics (Harvey, 1996; Healey, 2007). Another important read for me was Sandercock’s (1998b) edited text, *Making the Invisible Visible: A Multicultural Planning History*, which took into account a diversity of approaches to planning theory and practice. As I formulated my own dissertation topic, which was written from an explicitly womanist standpoint, I was most impressed with and influenced by the idea that planning could be conceptualized,
experienced and actualized as insurgent and emancipatory and still be considered valid and legitimate research by some in academia. Learning this was very encouraging. Therefore, although I was somewhat caught off-guard by the opening quote at the 2010 round table on loving attachment, I was also quite motivated by the fact that planners from a diversity of backgrounds were willing to explore the term “loving attachment.” Indeed, this was a very courageous and bold idea. That it was considered in a round-table format indicates that there are planning scholars who are attempting to assert a feminist epistemology into planning theory and a willingness in the scholarship community to discuss that assertion. As “loving attachment” should be, with all due respect, understood as a feminist and insurgent proposal, its parameters should also be fluid and inclusive enough for non-feminists who wish to challenge powerful Western masculinist views, and therefore what is deemed legitimate or authoritative by the U.S. planning establishment at large. Likewise, the round-table gathering at Minneapolis was very symbolic and forward-thinking as planning academicians and practitioners continue to encounter a world that is quite affected by the hyper-mobility of capital and a range of challenging environmental and social realities, many of which cannot be predicted. However, I am not a feminist, but want to assert that the construction and conceptualization of a theory of loving attachment may also be understood from a womanist standpoint, which I will attempt to explain in brief below.

Womanists are black women who are not necessarily feminists. There are, conversely, black women, like bell hooks and Angela Davis, who are not self-avowed womanists. Naming one’s self womanist, as opposed to being named womanist or feminist by others, is an important issue for black women academicians (Alexander-Floyd & Simien 2006; Coleman, 2009; Painter, 1996). In addition, while womanists and feminists tend to share socio-political commitments and therefore a gendered-consciousness needed to end social, spatial, political, economic and personal oppression, these two “sisters” so to speak, are not joined at the hip, nor are they two sides of the same coin as has been suggested (Hudson-Weems, 2001). Womanism is a term or an idea that has roots in African-American folk lore or tradition (Walker, 1983). In her classic 1983 text, In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens: Womanist Prose, Alice Walker defined womanist as:


Put another way, womanists are natural truth-tellers and risk takers and they tend to say things that no one wants to hear. Thus, being womanist or “acting womanish” is not often a role or an identity that is encouraged or supported within institutional boundaries that require adherence to white cultural norms and behaviors that support conformity to certain gender roles, such as female passivity. In keeping with this African-American tradition, a womanist/girl is “womanish” naturally, and she is seen and known as “womanish”, as a fire-starter. This knowing comes from a loving place, or at least a quasi-loving place often long before she ever embraces that identity for herself.

Because of its historical locus in folk tradition, the concept of womanism has not been the easiest term to define within academia. The meanings black women attach to womanism are best understood in each womanist’s own context, as she takes into account various “tripartite” experiences of racial, social, gender, and political oppression and articulates them individually and collectively (Allen, 2005; Hudson-Weems, 2001; Townes, 2006). The first womanist pioneers included Katie G. Cannon, Jacquelyn Grant, Renita Weems, and my former professor, Emilie Townes. Most of them, Christian social ethicists, delineated womanist thought and theory in four parts: radical subjectivity, traditional communalism, redemptive self-love; and critical engagement (Floyd-Thomas, 2006). These four pillars of
womanism, articulated by Alice Walker in 1983 and then rearticulated by others, are the embodiment of what it means for a black woman to be a self-namer, self-aware and openly committed to issues affecting black women and black communities in particular and in general. By 2006, third generation womanists such as Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, added a fifth part to the womanist framework: appropriation and reciprocity (Floyd-Thomas, 2006). This addition to Walker’s original womanist construct has thus expanded the original boundaries of womanist thought and prose (Townes, 2006b). Its appropriation among black women worldwide has fostered deeper and more critical dialogues among feminists, including black feminists, about the meaning and place that black women assume in the humanities and social sciences, especially in women’s studies programs and literature (see contributions to James et al., 2009, especially Coleman 2009). Consequently, in recent years womanism has become more of a movement than a standpoint (Floyd-Thomas, 2006). It has reenergized feminist discourse by calling on feminists to be less “culturally” white.

For some, like myself, to be a womanist is to be openly oppositional and revolutionary, on the frontlines of everyday struggle, and committed to social change and social justice in solidarity with others who have made liberation from oppression and the transformation of society a key component of their socio-political identity, even as it is expressed in academia. As such, it is from this awareness and this praxeological movement, between feminism and womanism, that I offer my concept of “loving attachment” and its uses in planning. Hence, my conception of loving attachment is not written from a white point of entry, and it includes a critique and a call to action. My critique, which is based on years of critical observation of planning and feminist literature, is that the basis for any love ethic or theory of planning based on love be insurgent and emancipatory as expressed by women who are engaged in the struggle to end domination and transform society. To do this, feminists and womanists must therefore develop bonds of solidarity and work politically and collaboratively with others. As such they must come to the table with rolled-up sleeves to craft a concept or theory of “loving attachment” that is openly constructed and designed from the perspective of those who have been on the margins of planning theory and practice. As challenged, too much of feminist theory was and is “bourgeois and white.” For example, since 1992, there have been few changes to Sandercock’s and Forsyth’s “Gender agenda”, though it was revised and reprinted in 2005. A “gender agenda” that was written in the late twentieth century should be structurally different in the early twenty-first century. Hence, those gathering to construct a definition of loving attachment in planning, must be willing to conceptualize a gender agenda that is structurally different than before: they must be willing to ask what is love and what does it have to do with planning theory and practice.

Thus, my call to action is directed primarily to Sandercock, Forsyth and other prominent white planning feminists. To them I say as Alice Walker would say, that “the way forward is with a broken heart” (2001). In other words, my proposal is that the development of a “love ethic” or an approach to planning that is grounded on a theory of love or “loving attachment” must be theoretically developed from the bottom up or from the epistemological perspective of those who have not had a hand in shaping planning discourse, including feminist planning discourse. These I would call the broken-hearted or the disappointed. Among the broken-hearted are people like me, including black women planning practitioners, who are not hired or who are avoided because their presence or their discourse offends the Western masculine establishments that deem their narratives as “too radical” or “too narrow”. More than is known, these powerful white establishments determine who is hired and who is fired, and that determination is often mediated, represented and protected by women and black men who have gained social
and economic mobility for their support.\textsuperscript{10} Therefore, the “way forward” into loving relationships or approaches to planning that challenge white male hegemony and the white feminist thinking that has dominated the discussion on gender, race, and class is filled with struggle and complexity. Defining loving attachment is not something that can consequently take place in one sitting, but it must be developed over time. As many work together on the development of this theory it will take shape.

In closing, I suspect this is not the narrative that many planners would like to consider; it is not plain, linear, packaged or culturally white, rather it is a prescription for loving attachment that is perceived from my experience as a womanist planner by profession. Further, it is the way that liberation is experienced on the ground: what is through the fire\textsuperscript{11} with persistence and strategic patience. A theory of planning based on loving attachment, as opposed to one based on detachment and disconnection from others, has to be truly relational and demonstrated in partnership with those who have not only been invisible, but who have been disillusioned or disappointed by the promises of planning tools and techniques hailed as progress.\textsuperscript{12} In addition, as feminists create bonds of solidarity with womanists and others who want to challenge white male hegemony they must start with a language that is conscious of the individual and collective experiences that many women have had in planning (radical subjectivity); it must be grounded in mutual partnerships between participants who come to the table (traditional communalism); it must celebrate progress “in the midst of suffering”\textsuperscript{13} (redemptive self-love); it must critically engage those who have been left out of the traditional and feminist planning discourses (critical engagement); and it must model what it means to struggle and plan for a sustainable future for all and not just for those privileged enough to afford it (appropriation and reciprocity). In summary, a theory of loving attachment must articulate these five tenets of womanism. In so doing, this construct will confront not only the racism in planning, but the privilege that makes it possible. Indeed, the way forward into loving attachment is through the fire and in the demonstration of a radical shift in consciousness and identity politics that is grounded in the concrete, in the nitty-gritty and nuances of gender and personal politics. I believe it can bring an end to the ideological oppression that has dominated the planning profession for more than a century. That is, if we are willing to go through the fire.

\textbf{Notes}

1. The development of this idea was informed by a reading of hooks (2002) particularly “Finding balance: work and love”.
2. A name search for “bell hooks” will access the page on Facebook. This specific reference was first accessed in 2011.
3. Sikivu Hutchinson, an African-American woman wrote a chapter in this book, but she is not currently a planning academician.
4. At times throughout this essay I use the terms “black” and “African-American” interchangeably.
5. A “white point of entry” refers to the theoretical, cultural and ideological starting point that informs a particular narrative or storyline. For more on this subject, I recommend Page (1999).
6. In the Painter reference, black historian Nell Irvin Painter uncovers plausible evidence that Sojourner Truth did not utter the phrase “Ain’t I a woman” as it has historically been presented in feminist narratives.
7. I have elaborated on the idea of womanism in my dissertation (fonza, 2011).
8. This critique was strongly asserted in hooks (2001b).
9. This statement was influenced by my reading of Gustavo Gutierrez (1998) and James H. Cone (1975), who are both theological liberation scholars.
10. For more on the subject of women and black male intermediaries, see Stokes (2001).
11. While the phrase “through the fire” can be taken quite generally, here I am also making reference to the popular 1984 song, “Through the Fire,” sung by the R&B singer, Chaka Khan, written by David Foster, Tom Keane, and Cynthia Weil, and released on the Warner Brothers label.

12. I am thinking here in particular about Mindy Thompson Fullilove’s (2001) ground-breaking work on urban renewal and its impact upon the health of African Americans. In this section I am also thinking about the term “heroic planning” as discussed in Sandercock (1998b).

13. In part, this is a term that can be attributed to Baker-Fletcher (2006).

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Disruptive Encounters and Affective Planning in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

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In our work in Los Platanitos, an informal settlement in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, my students and I have long wrestled with the implications of our emotional attachments for our planning research and practice. Residents in Los Platanitos endure lack of employment and educational opportunities, irregular electricity service, open sewers, contaminated tap water, and frequent flooding, but they have identified the lack of municipal garbage collection as one of the principal problems facing the community. We have therefore concentrated on documenting local solid waste management practices, analyzing how solid waste accumulations exacerbate flooding problems, and developing strategies to address the solid waste issue, including a community-based composting project initiated in 2012.1

But although our approach to research is both pragmatic and empirically rigorous, in practice our work is shot through with emotion in ways that are both unsettling and inspiring. Our research and practice in Los Platanitos is premised on and—most importantly—lived by all of us through infrequent but intense encounters: we conduct our participatory research during 10-day visits once or twice a year; in between these brief stints of fieldwork, project partners and I visit the community every few months for a few

Correspondence Address: The University of Texas at Austin, School of Architecture, 310 Inner Campus Drive Stop B7500, Austin, Texas 78712-1009, USA. Email: bjorn@utexas.edu
days at a time. Students’ interactions with residents are inherently unpredictable and far from detached: their encounters are colored by singing, laughter, flirting, teasing, jostling, positioning and claims-making, bursts of anger and attempts at persuasion, and tears and expression of love and longing, especially in more formal gatherings where residents relate eloquent and inspirational stories of our work together. Students quickly realize they are not “simply” conducting empirical data collection but instead are engaged in intersubjective, negotiated, and contested processes of knowledge production that must leave emotional traces behind—traces which are significant but impossible to measure.

So it seems imperative to ask not only how the emotional character of our engagements influences our research, but also, and perhaps more importantly in terms of radical or insurgent planning, how our encounters may strengthen potentials for action in the community. It is well understood that research is always negotiated, and that through the research process both the researcher and the researched changes (Kobayashi, 1994; Rose, 1997), but it is less well understood how the emotional geographies produced through engagement can be productive in terms of effecting positive change. It bears noting that in this short essay, I find it necessary to focus on the effect of our emotional engagements on residents and how this may inspire radical action; clearly, the “loving attachment” that characterizes our work leaves strong emotional traces on students that may profoundly shape their future planning practice and scholarship.

To think through this problem, I find inspiration in the “affective” turn in the social sciences which aims, in Dewsbury’s (2003, p. 1907) words, to grapple with the “imperceptibles elided by representation [which] include emotions, passions, and desires, and immaterial matters of spirit, belief, and faith—all forces … which forge the weight of our meaningful relation with the world.” The failure of the social sciences to capture this heterogeneous “eventness” of the world is a logical outcome of the mode of representation “upon which mainstream social scientific accounts are based” (Latham & Conradson, 2003, pp. 1902–1903). In other words, the “overdependence that social science has on the representational setup and the interpretation of empiricism to facilitate knowledge production” (Dewsbury, 2003, p. 1908; see also Gregson & Rose, 2000) leads to “the glaringly obvious, yet intractable, silencing of emotion in both social research and public life” (Anderson & Smith, 2001, p. 7). This suppression of the role of emotion, in turn, leads to an incomplete understanding of how emotions regulate the social relations “through which lives are lived and societies made” (p. 7).

That is to say, the literature about affect holds—at great risk of oversimplification—that places are brought to life through interactions between the body and the material in ways that are characterized by performativity, emotion, and everyday practice. Innumerable performative events and relational encounters leave “traces” on the city (Cloke et al., 2008, p. 245), and in so doing, produce a city that is always in the process of becoming. By emphasizing the becoming-nature of cities produced through everyday practices, authors in this vein draw on the work of de Certeau (1984) but also Deleuze (Deleuze, 1988; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) to illuminate the “lived sensation, the feel, and emotional resonance of place” (Duff, 2010, p. 881) that are so significant in the production of places.

This brings me to the challenge of imagining a form of planning research that takes seriously the emotional geographies of the city; that is to say, a form of planning research which is capable of mapping the myriad unpredictable encounters and affective relations that shade “almost every urban activity with different hues” (Thrift, 2004, p. 57). This requires us to consider how our encounters with residents can be thought of as “unpredictable interjections” that disturb performers’ scripts and established identities.
(Gregson & Rose, 2000), and in turn, structure the ways in which knowledge is co-produced and the city is imagined, strategies are conceived, and futures are hoped for.

To better comprehend the emotional flavor and affective implications of our encounters in the informal settlement of Los Platanitos, I find the concept of disruption of particular utility. Our work here is disruptive not only in the sense that our interviews, surveys, focus groups and so on interrupt the daily flow of life in the community, but even more so because our encounters fundamentally disturb what Benjamin (1969) calls the “now-time” in the community. The sum, as it were, of our disruptions of now-time may generate what Anderson (2009) refers to as an “affective atmosphere”; that is, the affects caused by our disruptive encounters combine to recolor the emotional geographies of Los Platanitos, resulting in a new emotional resonance, new lived sensations, a new, tumultuous reimagining of place and community that in turn force new ways of seeing and thinking about selves and futures.

Such a production of affective atmosphere occurs because affects are not stable, static, predetermined or pre-existing. Affects do not simply reside in individual places or in individual bodies; rather, affects arise from the dynamic and relational interactions of places and bodies (Duff, 2010, p. 886; see also Casey, 2001). In other words, affects are experienced in bodies but emanate or emerge from diverse encounters between bodies, between bodies and contexts, and between bodies and events (Massumi, 2002). Second, the nature or character of these encounters is important. Affect is enhanced through what Deleuze (1988, p. 125) calls “good encounters”, “which involve the transfer of power from the affecting body to the affected body and so invest that body with joy and an increase in its power of acting” (Duff, 2010, p. 885).

Thus we arrive at another imperative for mapping the affective dimensions of planning research. Yes, the multiple encounters that punctuate our research and practice in Los Platanitos are indeed emotional and lead to unaccountable attachments; yes, the emotions that characterize our encounters complicate and shape our knowledge production in confounding and important ways. But beyond this, the affects produced through our encounters have profound potential for action and agency (Spinoza, 1989). This is because such “encounters may inject new ways of thinking and imagining, and in so doing, confer agency on residents in ways that may be thought of as political and liberating” (Dewsbury, 2003; Thrift, 2003). Our encounters in Los Platanitos over the past few years would appear to have furthered critical thinking, enthusiasm, and hope (Anderson, 2006) among residents, judging by the recent resident initiatives to form a community organization, pursue relationships with external support groups, and expand their composting operations. The impetus behind these initiatives, I suggest, may be due more to the affect generated by our encounters than the empirical rigor of our research. As Elias Brito said in our despedida (going away gathering) in March 2012, our work had been defined by “much love, much determination, much caring; it was us, the Americans, the boys, all together.”

Because of this loving attachment, as it were, residents had arrived at new ways of thinking that were in fact not merely thinking but also acting. For affect is a “means of thinking and as thought in action” (Thrift, 2004, p. 59), which means that affect has the potential to expand “the existing pool of alternatives and corresponding forms of dissent” (Dewsbury, 2003, p. 2021). As we continue our research and practice in Los Platanitos, therefore, we will continue to examine the role of our work in generating affect and hence a space of thinking-action, seeking a form of affective planning that emerges less from empirical knowledge production than from disruptive, emotional encounters, and that takes seriously the role of emotional geographies in the production of the informal city.
Notes

1. The reports from the 2008 and 2010 courses are available online (http://www.soa.utexas.edu/crp/info/Rincon_de_los_Olvidados.pdf, http://www.soa.utexas.edu/files/crpla/HaciaUnCaminoLimpio_Web.pdf); there is also a video documentary based on the first course, which explores the contingencies and negotiations surrounding the project development and co-productions of knowledge in the class (http://soa.utexas.edu/people/docs/sletto/RincondelosOlvidados.php?l=eng). The composting project was funded in part through a P3 award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and by support from the School of Architecture, the LBJ School of Public Policy, the Department of Geography and the Environment, and the Lozano Long Institute for Latin American Studies, all at the University of Texas. Invaluable assistance was provided by Antonio Almonte, Technical Director, and Gustavo Díaz, Planning Director, municipality of Santo Domingo Norte, Omar Rancier and Amin Abel, Dirección General de Ordenamiento y Desarrollo Territorial, Andrés Navarro and Juan Torres from the municipality of Santo Domingo Distrito Nacional, German Herrera and Nicolás Mendoza from Fundación de Saneamiento Ambiental de la Zurza, Benita García from Fundación Agricultura y Medio Ambiente, Gustavo Gandini, and especially Gabriel Báez for initiating the collaborative work in Santo Domingo Norte. Most importantly, the author acknowledges the efforts of colleagues, friends and co-researchers in Los Platanitos, especially the members of Fundación Los Platanitos (FUMPLA) and Mujeres Unidas, for their leadership in this ongoing work.


3. See, in particular, the work of Dewsbury (2000, 2003) and Thrift (2004); see also Hillier’s (2005) discussion of Deleuze’s concept of “becoming” and its relevance for planning.

4. We are typically referred to as “the Americans” even though the courses have included students from Ecuador, Mexico, and Norway.

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Plato’s Lacunae: On the Value of Loving Attachment in Community-Based Planning Research and Practice

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Community-based researchers have a well-kept secret: that loving attachment between researchers and communities is a common, unavoidable, even necessary part of the action-inquiry process. This goes against the conventional wisdom in the social sciences, reflected in ethical review processes that require keeping a distance from the research “subjects” in order to do good, dispassionate research. But what if something important is lost in this distancing? To open up this conversation we draw on two recent cross-cultural research projects that we as immigrants—and outsiders—undertook within indigenous communities in British Columbia. The first is Sandercock and Attili’s documentary filmmaking and awareness-raising project, uncovering histories of colonization and healing of the Burns Lake Band and the Carrier Cheslatta First Nations (Attili & Sandercock, 2010; Sandercock & Attili, 2012, forthcoming). The second is Erfan’s auto-ethnographic exploration of an attempt at a therapeutic approach to social planning, working around parenting issues with the Gwasala-‘Nakwaxda’xw First Nation. In our reflection on these projects, rather than seeing loving attachment as a “problem” to be “managed” by rigorous self-policing of emotions, we have asked what was learned through this form of vulnerable engagement that we might not otherwise have learned and what was achieved that was otherwise impossible. Here are our stories.
I.
Plato in his metaphorical manner
saw us as charioteers
the horses as our emotions.
Our responsibility
to rein them in,
let Reason drive us.

But
we are not rational beings
Emotions rule our lives
encouraging stimulating motivating
all our behavior
for better and worse
unavoidable.
And that being so
better to be knowledgeable,
emotionally literate, attuned.
Emotions have an intelligence
that rationality will never know
(Martha Nussbaum).

Life scientists say
three paths to life:
lust attraction attachment.
Tibetan Book of the Dead says
three paths to death:
ignorance anger attachment.
Is there another way?
Developmental psychologists say
loving attachment is psychic DNA
basic building block
of mental emotional health
(John Bowlby)
and why not community health
(Peter Marris).

Long before Plato
Indigenous folks had this figured:
as the Medicine Wheel of life
mind body spirit emotions
four seasons rolling by
meaning moving in cycles
intertwined, interdependent

The love in loving attachment?
a love of paradox
the need for belonging and
the need for freedom.
Freedom for transformation
empowerment and self-determination
All My Relations
(Leroy Littlebear, bell hooks, Bikhu Parekh, Lee Maracle)

The chemistry of attachment is relationship.
The ethics of attachment is responsibility.
Ties that bind to web of life enduring always connecting.

II.
Starting as outsiders into the unknown surfacing a depth of not knowing fear anxiety vulnerability mistakes of predecessors ‘gaggle of anthros’ (Vine Deloria Jr) are we any different?

Divided community in search of healing history’s tragic antagonisms: unsettling the settlers unsettling ourselves (Paulette Regan) are we ready for this?

III.
I met him in the Band office this legendary Chief, long braids, flint eyes, known to eat white folks for breakfast. (so to speak) Warrior reputation, known for confrontation, no hostages taken.

He’d been in a running battle with Municipality, Mayor, Settlers, for twenty years a battle for stolen land, recognition, rights and dignity.

ii.
The first day we met You and I walked to the pub together, ahead of the others At the end of a long day of workshops And you told me point-blank That you liked my ways. It was too soon for me To know how much I would like yours, Or to admit to this early an attraction.

Your letter of invitation into the community With all its facts and figures, Describing the nature of the challenges Had captured me, Troubled me, Inspired me to step in. But our emerging friendship Was what had me make the eight-hour trip to the north island. On my second visit Your husband came home With a gift for my then-unborn child: A plastic bag full of plastic animals, That we spent hours playfully arranging On your parents’ dining room table

When did I fall in love with you exactly? Was it the day you appeared as a young man Skinning a deer -hanging upside down by the shed- Describing to me all the steps involved In professional detail As if I was going to skin my own deer the next week! My vegetarian self Repulsed, nauseated, judging, And all at once Blown away By the way your hands cared for the dead beast The skill of your ancestors preserved in your touch The beauty
The moment of introduction
a decisive moment
words incidental
he didn’t look into my eyes
but through them and
saw whatever was within.
It was terrifying, an undressing
of my very being.
My heart rate surged
The desire to be somewhere/
anywhere else was
overwhelming.

We went outside for a smoke
I wished (first time in my life)
that I smoked. Settling the nerves and
sharing a hard to kick habit.
More incidental talk, then
an invitation.
Come with me.

He took me down to the railway tracks
dividing the Rez from the Town
swampland from highground.
There’s our story. What do you see?

And so began a fieldtrip
into our mutual history
he the first among many
willing to share story
as teaching.

His willingness to share
his invitation to family sweatlodge
ceremonies, his funny emails,
kept me returning because
and in spite of the bitter taste
of the learning I was experiencing.

IV.
So what did I see
at the railway tracks?
On one side, the Town side,
a pretty municipal sign
calmly carved and carefully painted,
proudly announcing to tourists,
‘Welcome to Burns Lake:
Gateway to Tweedsmuir Park’.

...
Across the tracks, on the Rez side,
The Wall.
Words of fury splashed across it
words screaming at a passing train
screaming at residents
(if they cared to look, but didn’t)
INDIANS HAVE NO RIGHTS IN THIS
TOWN!
END APARTHEID NOW.
INJUSTICE ANYWHERE IS INJUSTICE
EVERYWHERE!
YOU CAN CONTROL OUR WATER
BUT
YOU CAN’T CONTROL OUR SOULS.

The Wall, that
separated
the homes of those whose
water and sewage had been turned off
(midwinter year 2000)
by the municipality, and
the homes of those
who had turned it off.
(Sarah de Leeuw)

A flashpoint burned into the history
of this town that is not a community
but two solitudes.
A flashpoint that is not ancient history
but 21st century.

V.
Thus began my education,
other teachers following.
The women Elders who cried
as they shared
what they perceived as their failures
as parents.
And I cried with them
as they told of their humiliations
and deprivations
and separations from family and
community
in Residential School.
The Cheslatta Chief
whose mother refused to teach her
Carrier language
because
she would only be punished for

To disclose on the spot
Everything about me
–my family, my history, my fears-
Before I could ask you
to disclose anything of yours.

iii.
To know you is to love you.

Over the months of my so-called research
You have emerged
Like a three dimensional world
Out of a pop-up book
The flat version of which I had read
too many times.
Now you’re standing before me
With all your strength
And all your vulnerability on display.
To have seen your suffering up close
Is to look at you with new,
far more appreciative, eyes.
What pleasure
to observe another so fully
And to be observed so fully in return.

iv.
Some research I could do
from the neck up.
Not this kind.
This is not a complex puzzle
to solve in one’s mind,
This is
the heartbreaking reality of a people
To engage with,
Without
an agenda to “solve” anything.

What if the heart is
the central organ in this exploration
And loving attachment my only access
point to certain “ways of knowing”?
(Leonie Sandercock, Michelle LeBaron)
What if it is love
That tells me what bold question to
ask in which right moment
And how to adjust my tone
so it lands softly?
What if it is love
saying it.
It took her a year to warm to me.
The senior policy advisor at Cheslatta who came as a young cowboy rancher from California via Wyoming and was changed forever on reading the Indian Act (1876 and still lives on) and insisted I read it, who introduced me to the tragic story of the Cheslatta people, evicted from their lands for a hydro/aluminum project, they in the way of our development. A half day in the telling, my listener’s tears flowing there was no way I could go away and forget, and do nothing, feel nothing.
The non-Native anti-racism activist who brought me there to hear the story of this, her community and taught me the true meaning of partnership. The Ojibway mental health counselor, migrated east to west body pierced and green Mohawk hair, who shared a shocking story of his crime and punishment, confession and self-criticism, but above all of healing himself through connecting to culture, and now there for the youth, 24/7. The Youth who told me of their shame simply being born Native. The impact of hearing that and so much more, on my body: a shriveling curdling gut-wrenching shame of the culture I am part of on my mind: the need to learn so much more and a commitment to be an ally on my emotions: rage and shame shifting to a loving attachment, forever on my spirit:
That lets me hear the subtext of what you say to me To pick up on what’s really going on? What if it is love That keeps in check and makes responsible My power in relation to you? (Adam Kahane) What if it is love That keeps me coming back When all I want to do is stay home and shut away the pain of what I have already learned?

v.
The story of my research in short: Mostly we suffered together, in our joint attempts to move unmovable mountains out in the world. But every once in a while We discovered our mutually transforming power mutually transforming love- (Bill Torbert) And unmovable mountains moved inside us.

Like the time I lost my bearings at a meeting, You stepped in and took over, Facilitating, - in your own brokenness- And you recognized you knew how to lead. Or the time you confidently walked away with my son - while I cried my tears of first separation- And brought him back to me smiling And I realized I knew how to trust.

I could tell I had become part of your family When your mother said to me On one of the last research trips That I should make sure
humility patience embracing another way of being in the world
Fifty and more shared stories of pain and pride suffering resilience and resistance.
What did I do to deserve these stories, and what will I do with them?
They say I’m different than when I started this ‘project’.
How could I not be?

VI.
You/I cannot be in community without loving attachment humble open-hearted vulnerable hopeful patient and critical,
listening thru silence:
without these and more I/you will always be suspect undeserving of trust.

So many gifts bestowed from a depth of not knowing to deep knowing,
adopted into a web of relations stretching from past to future lifelong attachment loving and accountable there is no end no final report or summative evaluation just being in relation.

To come back often
Because
She wants to see my son grow up.
Immediately I knew
That I would,
Because
I want to see your mother grow old.
I haven’t had an extended family around
for a long time,
But I remember the feeling of being
In that restraining,
yet reassuring bond
Knowing that
My humanity is caught up,
Is inextricably bound up,
In yours.
(Desmond Tutu)

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Leonie Sandercock teaches at SCARP, where she chairs the Indigenous Community Planning program and the Doctoral program. Her research, with Giovanni Attili, explores the uses of film in therapeutic planning practice and in social change processes.
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