Xochimilco es Hogar: Place Attachment and Belonging in Mexico City

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ABSTRACT

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M. Bin Jung
Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning on May 21, 2014 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in City Planning

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Mexico City is a sprawling megalopolis of 22 million inhabitants with new residents moving into the city daily. The city's growth is spatially uneven; the southern delegation of Xochimilco has been experiencing rapid urbanization whereas the city center has experienced less. The thesis focuses on the experiences and concerns of a group of young people who participated in the photography project Xochimilco es Hogar ('Xochimilco is Home') in January 2014. Participants were asked a series of questions about the photographing process and their images, along with questions about identity, belonging, and community in Xochimilco and in Mexico City. Finally, participants were asked what they would change about Xochimilco. Photographs and interviews were analyzed according to Setha Low's model of aspects of place attachment and M. Carmen Hidalgo and Bernardo Hernandez's study of place attachment across different spatial scales while being mindful of the politics of place. Participants were highly aware of the planning issues faced by Xochimilco, and I analyze their concerns about environmental sustainability, public safety and security, and transportation and mobility. This thesis concludes by connecting participant experiences to the structural violence of the state, and offering proposals on how place attachment can help planning practice create more equitable cities.

DEDICATION

for Kelsey.

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In no way is this thesis the greatest learning of my two years here at DUSP, so in this moment I give thanks to all those who have helped me make this time what it is now and what it will be in the future.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a brief portion of my personal reflection and investigation into the concept of home. During my time at MIT I have been forced to think deeply about home and what it means to me past, present, and future. Home is a simultaneously easy and difficult concept to analyze, and relies heavily on feelings, emotions, and experiences. I believe community is a shared experienced based on place and shared social interaction, and that it is often seen as an extension of home. Home and community are incredibly powerful feelings and motivations, and this thesis is a brief look into the experience of home and community for a group of young people in Xochimilco, Mexico City.

Mexico City, also known as Distrito Federal (DF),[1] is a sprawling megalopolis of 22 million inhabitants with new residents moving into the city daily. DF's growth is spatially uneven; the southern delegations[2] of Xochimilco and Tláhuac have been experiencing rapid urbanization whereas the city center has experienced less. Due to the lack of affordable land and housing in the city, many new migrants have taken to filling in the pre-Hispanic system of canals and floating islands, also known as *chinampas* or *chinampera* zone, in the southern delegations to build informal settlements. Xochimilco existed as an independent township before incorporation into Mexico City, and during this time provided Mexico City with much of its agriculture. The *chinampera* zone has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is under environmental conservation by the city. I was drawn to conduct research in Xochimilco because of its history, isolation, rapid urbanization, and unique ecological landscape.

[1] Mexico City is called Distrito Federal in Spanish, which is then abbreviated to DF. This thesis uses all three terms interchangeably.
[2] Mexico City is made up of eighteen delegations, or boroughs.

Research question

This thesis examines how place attachment analysis can help planners better understand what is at stake for communities in re/development projects in Xochimilco, Mexico City and aid in the creation of a just city. This thesis focuses on the experiences and concerns of a group of young people who participated in the photography project *Xochimilco es Hogar*[3] in January 2014.

This thesis assesses photographs and interviews by project participants and analyzes them according to two different themes of place attachment: socio-political/ideological aspect of place attachment as outlined by Setha Low, and place attachment across different spatial scales as researched by M. Carmen Hidalgo and Bernardo Hernandez. This thesis also highlights the planning concerns brought forth by project participants, the majority of which fell into the broad categories of environmental sustainability and pollution, public safety and security, and transportation and mobility. I argue place attachment research is a method by which to better understand the systematic injustice experienced by marginalized communities on a daily basis, and that the connctions people make with place are a powerful location for empowerment and creating social change.

Research methodology

This thesis is based on narrative understanding and place attachment theory of a group of eight young people who participated in the photography project, *Xochimilco es Hogar*, in the delegation of Xochimilco in Mexico City in January 2014. Mexico City was selected because of my personal interest in the city, and Xochimilco was chosen because of its unique culture, history, and location in the south of the city. The southern

[3] *Xochimilco es Hogar* translates to 'Xochimilco is Home.'

delegations of Mexico City are experiencing rapid urbanization whereas the central city's growth is more steady, and I believed it would be interesting to capture young people's experiences of this urbanization.

The bulk of this thesis relies on primary research conducted during January 2014 in Xochimilco, Mexico City. Research data is the photographs taken by project participants and the semi-structured interviews conducted with each participant and their photographs. *Xochimilco es Hogar* was run through the Carlos Pellicer Cultural Center in Xochimilco and a group of eight young people volunteered to participate in the project. Participants were given disposable cameras with 27 exposures and instructed to take photographs of home.[4] After the photos were developed, semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 40 minutes were conducted with each participant and his/her photographs to understand his/her process and images.

Cesar, Erika, and Misael were interviewed together, Samantha and Diana were interviewed together, and the others, Daniela, Denisse, and Abigail, were interviewed individually. Cesar, Erika, and Misael were at the Cultural Center at the same time and they preferred to be interviewed as a group rather than individually. Samantha and Diana were also present at the Cultural Center at the same time and expressed the same preference. Both girls were with their respective boyfriends, and the boyfriends were also present for the interview.

Cesar, Erika, and Misael were clearly friends who spent time together. They frequently built off each other's answers and it was clear that the space created in the interview was safe and supportive for them to express their opinions. Samantha

[4] See Appendix for detail.

cesar, 2014

and Diana were less familiar with each other. Diana's talkative nature overshadowed Samantha at times, and Samantha often defaulted to agreeing with Diana's answers without offering her own thoughts. Their boyfriends were silent and listening throughout the interview, but in hindsight I would have chosen to interview Diana and Samantha individually. I think that Samantha may have felt more comfortable speaking up if she had been interviewed alone.

Participants were asked a series of questions about the photographing process and their images, along with questions about identity, belonging, and community in Xochimilco and Mexico City. Finally, participants were asked what they would change about Xochimilco.[5]

My research team consisted of two bilingual friends, Edgar Castellanos and Daniel Palencia, and myself. We conducted and recorded all interviews, which I then coded using an open coding method. I also kept travel notebooks to record my thoughts and observations, and had reflective and clarifying conversations with my research team. In many ways I was foreign; I am not racially Latino or ethnically Mexican, I am not a Mexican citizen, and I do not speak fluent Spanish. I believe my foreignness gave me certain advantages by allowing participants to be more frank with their thoughts and emotions as I did not carry traditional race, class, and ethnic baggage that somebody from similar communities would bear. At the same time, my restricted knowledge of the culture and community limited my ability to fully understand the entire context and all that was unsaid.

At the end of the project there was a celebration and final exhibition of all the photographs at the Carlos Pellicer Cultural

[5] Ibid.

Center, and each participant received a photo album of their images.

Research outline

Chapter two presents definitions of place and place attachment and then conducts a brief literature review of the sociocultural approach to place attachment, which are the fields of anthropology and sociology. I chose to analyze the sociocultural approach to place attachment because I believe it offers the most insight into participant experiences. The sociocultural approach sees place attachment as the connection people have with place as a result of the sociocultural processes and interactions that happen in a specific locale, but often offers the influence of the physical and built environment as an afterthought. A review of urban planning's contribution to place attachment research is also presented, highlighting the work of Mia C. White and her case study of the North Gulfport Community Land Trust in Turkey Creek, Mississippi. White's research in Turkey Creek presents a model for planning to understand both the microlevel place attachment of individuals to place while incorporating macrolevel sociocultural structures and processes.

Chapter three presents participant profiles for each participant in *Xochimilco es Hogar* along with a brief photo analysis of their taken images. Demographic information was taken of each participant to provide a fuller picture each individual.[6]

Chapter four borrows anthropologist Setha Low's matrix of place attachment and analyzes the participants of *Xochimilco es Hogar* according to the socio-political and ideological aspects of place attachment. The socio-political aspect of place attachment was clearly the most important form of place attachment for

[6] Ibid.

participants, and I look at immediate families and mothers and other kinship ties in more detail. The ideological aspect of place attachment was also meaningful to participants, and I discuss the pilgrimage linkage participants had to Xochimilco, focusing on the Niñopa, which is a religious and cultural phenomenon native to Xochimilco.

Chapter five references sociologists M. Carmen Hidalgo and Bernardo Hernandez's study of place attachment across the spatial scales of house, neighborhood, and city in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain, the capital of the Canary Islands. Participants in *Xochimilo es Hogar* were mainly asked questions dealing with attachment to the delegation of Xochimilco versus the city of DF, but here an intermediary spatial scale of the southern delegations is presented as a potential middle ground for how they experience place attachment. As a transition to the final chapter, the imagined futures of the participants in *Xochimilco es Hogar* exhibit what is at stake for these yong people in future development projects.

Chapter six looks at the urban planning specific issues participants saw in Xochimilco. Environmental sustainability and pollution, public safety and security, and transportation and mobility were identified as the primary opportunities for change and improvement. I analyze participant comments for each of these themes with an eye towards planning and design that has addressed similar issues in a Latin American context. The concluding remarks of this thesis connects participant experiences to the structural violence of the state and argues for how place attachment can better urban planning practice for communities that traditionally bear its negative consequences.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter introduces key ideas and previous research that underlie this thesis. I begin by defining place and place attachment, and then outlining approaches to place attachment study in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and urban planning. Although place attachment has been studied by various disciplines, the sociocultural (anthropology and/or sociology) and psychological approaches have the richest depth of study. My research found the sociocultural approach to place attachment most helpful because it better incorporated the influence of structural processes in people's lives, whereas the psychological approach focused more on an individual's perception and preservation of self-identity. I sought to connect participant experiences to socially constructed processes and as a result, this literature review primarily focuses on the fields of anthropology and sociology. I then turn to planning's contributions, and look at Mia C. White's case study of the North Gulfport Community Land Trust in Turkey Creek, Mississippi as an example of urban planning research that uses place attachment as to inform planning practice.

Definitions of place and place attachment

In this thesis, place is defined as "the space that has been given meaning through personal, group, or cultural processes."[7] When an abstract space attains meaning through any number of processes, it becomes a place. Places can be real (Seattle, Washington) or imaginary (over the rainbow), and can range in size from small (broom closet under the stairs) to infinite (the internet). Setha Low, one of the prominent scholars in place attachment, defines place as "the symbolic relationship formed by people giving culturally shared emotional/affective meanings

[7] Low, "Symbolic Ties that Bind: Place Attachment in the Plaza," 165.

to a particular space or piece of land that provides the basis for the individual's and group's understanding of and relationship to the environment."[8] Low includes the cultural beliefs and practices that connect people to place in her definition of place attachment. Therefore, it encompasses more than just the emotional or cognitive bond one may have with a given locale.

Multiple disciplines such as architecture, anthropology, environmental psychology, sociology, and urban planning have looked at why and how people create bonds to place. They have also studied the significance of place attachment in people's lives and its practical applications. Place attachment may seem "obvious," but there is no holistic framework by which to understand it. As a result, integration of place attachment theory and understanding is severely lacking in disciplines, such as urban planning, that could gain much from its analysis. Furthermore, the terminology used to describe place attachment is expansive. Community attachment, sense of community, place attachment, place identity, sense of place, and place dependence are all used with high frequency in place attachment research. It is hard to distinguish if researchers are discussing different concepts and makes the creation of a unified theory supremely difficult. The jargonization of place attachment also detracts from its ability to be revelant and powerful in planning and development.

I do not seek to create a unified theory of place attachment with this thesis. I use place attachment study and narrative analysis to better understand the experiences of the participants in *Xochimilco es Hogar* and see how these tools could be applied to planning practice.

[8] Ibid.

Approaches to place attachment

Anthropology

Traditional anthropology theorizes that people's experiences, memories, feelings, and interactions within a site result in place attachment. The physical features of a locale act as a stage and do not influence attachment. A place's meaning, and people's subsequent attachment of a place, is produced by people and reflects sociocultural processes layered over the natural and built environment; places do not innately have meaning.[9] Once meaning has been given to a physical site, its physical features acts as a mnemonic device, reminding us of our experiences, memories, feelings, and interactions there. Anthropologist Setha Low outlines a typology of place attachment with six types of linkages people have with land, although I believe it can be extended to all space. These include: (1) genealogical linkage of land through history of family lineage; (2) linkage through loss of land or destruction of community; (3) economic linkage through ownership, inheritance, and politics; (4) cosmological linkage through a religious, spiritual, or mythological relationship; (5) pilgrimage linkage through religious and secular cultural events; and (6) narrative linkage through storytelling and place naming.[10] These distinct categories do not function independently in vacuums, but rather overlap and create multilayered dimensions of meaning and place attachment.

A major linkage experienced by participants in *Xochimilco es Hogar* was pilgrimage, which will be discussed in further detail in chapter four. Denise Lawrence's study of the annual Valencian carnival of Las Fallas presents a case of pilgrimage linkage. Low's use of the word pilgrimage is not restricted to religious journey, and encompasses other religious and secular

[9] Lawrence, "Transcendence of Place: The Role of *La Placeta* in Valencia's *Las Fallas*," 213-214.
[10] Low, "Symbolic Ties that Bind: Place Attachment in the Plaza," 166.

acts of ceremony and ritual. In her study, Lawrence explores how physical objects and sites acquire meaning through culturally and socially significant rituals.

Valencia is located on Spain's southeastern coast and is the country's third largest city. Las Fallas is an annual festival where participants build and install massive gigantic papier-mâché figures in local plazas throughout the city. The figures often satirize local, national, and international issues and reflect public dissenting opinions. The festival dates to the fifteenth century and is an important symbol of local pride and history. Lawrence argues that to participate in Las Fallas is a reaffirmation of a uniquely Valencian identity and that people acquire a heightened understanding and sense of self, group, and culture through these ritual-spatial relations. Smaller daily ritualized spatial interactions also give people and spaces meaning, but it is these larger scale events that reaffirm these connections and help carve an identity for people and place.

Low's matrix (see Figure 1) is a useful classification tool to understand the hypothesis that place attachment is the culturally meaningful and shared experiences between people and place. The physical features of a site are also important when understanding how and why people connect to place. Lawrence agrees that, "place [the physical environment] can be seen as one component among several that interacts in producing meaning,"[11] but a more rigorous examination of the physical environment's influence as a predicator and agent in place attachment is necessary.

[11] Lawrence, "Transcendence of Place: The Role of *La Placeta* in Valencia's *Las Fallas*," 213-214.

LOW'S ASPECTS OF PLACE ATTACHMENT

IDEOLOGICAL	SOCIO-POLITICAL	MATERIAL
cosmological linkage through religious, spiritual, or mythological relationship	linkage through **loss of land** or destruction of community	**economic** linkage through ownership, inheritance, and politics
pilgrimage linkage through religious and secular cultural events	**geneological** linkage of land through history of family lineage	
narrative linkage through storytelling and place naming		

Figure 1: Low's Aspects of Place Attachment

Sociological

Urban sociologists have written extensively about spatial ordering in communities with an awareness of the space and the built environment, and so offer planning richer collaboration than other disciplines. Research shows that attachment is most strongly related to the social relationships one has within a physical site rather than a site's physical attributes, echoing anthropology's conclusions. Sociology shares much of its place attachment research with anthropology as they both look at sociocultural processes and their influence on individuals. Long-term residence, social integration into groups and communities, and routine interactions with local characters such as businesspeople are the most consistent predictors of place attachment. Additional factors such as age and gender are also influential; the elderly and women are more likely to have greater place attachment.[12]

M. Carmen Hidalgo and Bernardo Hernandez studied place attachment across different spatial scales in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain, the capital of the Canary Islands. Santa Cruz de Tenerife is a mid-size city located off the northwestern coast of Africa and is an incredibly important political and economic hub for the region. Its social and physical diversity results from historic and current migrant flows from Latin America, Africa, and Western Europe. Hidalgo and Hernandez analyzed attachment within three spatial scales: house, neighborhood, and city. They found that people were most physically connected to the spatial scale of the city, but their strongest social bonds were in the house. Young people specifically between the ages 17 – 20 displayed a greater social bond to the city, whereas older adults between the ages 31 – 49 showed a greater bond to the

[12] Main, "Place Attachment and MacArthur Park."

house. The elderly did not show attachment differences across spatial ranges, but overall were more attached to place.[13]

Hidalgo and Hernandez note that city size influences place attachment research focused on spatial ranges. Individual neighborhoods function like miniature metropolises in larger cities, and so attachments to city and neighborhood may differ when analyzing large cities such as New York City or Chicago. The study in Santa Cruz de Tenerife found the neighborhood scale had the weakest attachment but in a larger place like Mexico City, this may change. Hidalgo and Hernandez found no differences in attachment regarding social class,[14] but this finding should be supplemented with additional research as this lack of connection is difficult to believe. The study also does not break down place attachment according to ethnic or racial groups, which is important given the context of the Canary Islands. Hidalgo and Heranandez's offers research that acknowledges the different spatial scales of attachment, but fails to connect their study with practice or next steps.

Urban planning

Urban planning research on place attachment has focused more on physical site characteristics and attachment than their personal bond with place. Physical determinism, or the notion that the environment creates people-place relationships, has historically dominated the field, in sharp contrast to the previously discussed disciplines.[15] Since the 1960s there has been a more nuanced and complex understanding of place and place attachment. Planning with community became important, which meant the incorporation of community engagement processes. This highlighted certain aspects of place attachment such as the

[13] Hidalgo and Hernandez, "Place Attachment: Conceptual and Empirical Questions," 279-280.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Main, "Place Attachment and MacArthur Park."

importance of social ties and the effect physical environment had on social interactions. More recently, planning literature has focused on "placelessness," or the loss of meaning for places as a result of capitalism and globalization, the proliferation of corporate design and culture, gentrification, and urban sprawl.[16]

The opposite of placelessness is a sense of place, which planners mean to be the perceptions and feelings one has about an environment. Sense of place encompasses both cognitive and emotional components, and hinges upon the belief that places are ultimately unique. The proliferation of corporate design and culture creates uniform places driven by capitalist interests, which in turn influences the interactions people can have there. This process flattens organically created local social and physical environments to ones that are often exclusionary and classist.

Mia C. White's case study of the North Gulfport Community Land Trust in Turkey Creek, Mississippi uses narrative analysis of Rose Johnson, the trust's founder, to better understand place attachment and its influence on community planning. Turkey Creek is a historically Black town on the Mississippi Gulf Coast with high levels of Black land ownership. Land in Turkey Creek has been passed down through generations, but residents are under threat of being "priced and flooded out" because of nearby economic development.[17] In response, Black community leaders formed a committee for community-based planning modeled on the Dudley Square Neighborhood Initiative in Roxbury, Massachusetts. The North Gulfport Community Land Trust, along with the Turkey Creek Community Initiative, has led planning initiatives in the area, focusing on community self-determination, and ecological and historic preservation.

[16] Ibid.
[17] White, "Gender, Race, and Place Attachment: The Recovery of a Historic Neighborhood in Coastal Mississippi," 157-164.

White seeks to "elaborate on the ways in which gender, race, and place assemble the social and give meaning to spaces" by looking at how Johnson's personal interpretation about her work.[18] The Black community has lived in the North Gulfport region for generations but has faced recent hardships from Hurricane Katrina and gentrification. Increasing access to home ownership was the mechanism by which Johnson institutionalized and memorialized her community and their histories. At the heart of Johnson's activism was a deep connection to home:

> *"Home is for spiritual things to happen, for storytelling about who did what back in the day, a place to be sure. After Katrina, people were not secure, people were lost in so many ways. I saw how important home is. You know, not just your four walls. This is a place for Black people to protect themselves."*

Johnson's definition of home is spiritual, and the transfer of history and knowledge through storytelling is part of that spirituality. Johnson also notes the importance of home and security after Hurricane Katrina, which was profoundly important event for many Black communities along the Gulf Coast.

White argues that redevelopment planning must better understand how individuals develop attachment to social and physical places in order to create equitable and just plans. She argues the politics of place attachment are also deeply racialized, gendered, and fiercely tied to issues of representation, citizenship, and the struggle for power. White's conclusions are important to take to heart as marginalized communities suffer the majority of negative impacts from redevelopment plans. The following chapters outline how young people in Xochimilco participate in the politics of place attachment, how these are reflective of larger structural injustices, and what place attachment research could offer future planning.

[18] Ibid.

misael, 2014

CHAPTER THREE: DATA AND PHOTO ANALYSIS

This chapter presents profiles of each individual based on a short demographic information survey, participant photographs, and a semi-structured interview. Photo analysis is done of each participant's photographs, and all photographs can be seen in full in the Appendix.

Participant Profiles

Abigail

Abigail took a total of 26 photos. Abigail and her family were heavily involved in Christian seminary and she took all of her photographs at her church. Six of her photographs were taken indoors, six of her photographs were of food, and two of her photographs were of prayer circles.

Abigail was 19 years old but looked much younger due to her small size. She was aware of how the combination of her small stature and her gender affected her lived experience. She spoke about feeling unsafe in unfamiliar places, how she felt "big" in Xochimilco, and talked about street harassment. Abigail lived with her parents and brothers close to the Tren Ligero.[19] She had been attending seminary since she was seven years old, and her whole worldview was seen through the lens of seminary and its teachings. She had never considered committing her life to the seminary but was interested in helping those who had. As a child, Abigail wanted to be either a ballerina or a nurse to help women who had low self-esteem. It was clear to me that she was too young to have watched the 1998 Winter Olympics, because then her ballerina dreams would have been quickly replaced by wanting to be Michelle Kwan. She had finished high school and was studying for her nursing entrance exam into UNAM, one of the major universities in Mexico City. She mentioned not having

[19] The Tren Ligero is the light rail train that links Xochimilco to the metro station Taxqueña in Coyoacán, which is a major transit hub and transfer station.

abigail, 2014

many friends, and when asked why she didn't take photographs of her family she stated that the seminary was her family.

Abigail's favorite photograph was of a prayer circle of children, but she was unable to take a photograph of motorcycles, although she loved them and their speed. When asked what the monks at seminary thought of her passion, she responded laughing that they thought she was crazy. She was good-natured and enthusiastic. Another moment she failed to capture was the male monks cooking food. She spoke about how she liked that men cooked because in Mexico women typically cooked food and cleaned afterwards, while men just ate the food. Abigail showed a high awareness of gender and patriarchy.

Abigail had not traveled much, but her grandmother lived a few hours from DF in a town called Toluca, and she mentioned that she wouldn't mind living there to be close to her. She spoke about nature and how she liked trees and the feeling of small towns and their simpler, more rustic way of life. She stated that she had not thought of community before this exercise but when asked if she had thought about it in seminary, she conceded that she felt the exercise reaffirmed the feelings of community and home that she had in the seminary. Abigail's immediate family and a pastor from the seminary attended the final exhibition.

Cesar

Cesar took a total of 21 photographs. Six of these photographs were of dogs or other pets, five photographs were of family members, and seven photographs were of the outdoors. Cesar's photographs showed an awareness of compositional structure, and he played with perspective, shadows, angles, and distances to subject matter more than other participants.

At 19, Cesar was confident, youthful, and charismatic. He was quite stylish and wore Ray-Ban sunglasses and had a United Kingdom flag iPhone cover. He was friends with

cesar, 2014

Misael and Erika, and was also very close to his family. Cesar's parents had divorced when he was a child and they both lived in Xochimilco. He spent the majority of time with his father, but he felt closer to his mother and safer in her home. The safety he felt there was not a result of the physical location of the house, but because of his mother. He lived close to the Tren Ligero, so had easy access to other delegations in Mexico City.

The family portraits Cesar took were taken inside his home, and they show different areas of his house along with his family members. There are a lot of things in Cesar's home, but he also lived in an intergenerational home with extended family members and multiple siblings. Cesar spoke about his family frequently, and it was clear that he was very connected to them. There are aspects of his home that feel very Mexican, such as a bright oilcloth flower patterned table cloth on a dining room table and a wall of portraits in the living room. In every available space there are laundry lines, plants, or other household items.

There were also photos of Cesar's home from outside and the street that he lived on and the alleyway behind his house that is a shortcut to the main road. There is also a view of the neighborhood from the rooftop of his home. The photo of the street and the neighborhood view are wide, open, and brightly lit. When speaking of these photos, Cesar mentioned how he felt safe and secure when turning onto his street or walking in the alley. Although he was familiar with the rest of the neighborhood, he spoke of his own street giving him a sense of arrival and safety.

Cesar loved his pets, especially the black and white one licking its nose in Cesar's favorite photo. He also took a picture of a bird that his grandmother had, and a turtle. He never took

photographs of himself, but at times he is visible: his feet are in some of the photographs, and his hands are holding the turtle. He also was the only participant to take a photo of a photo; he took a photograph of his cousin's Quinceañera.[20]

Daniela

Daniela took a total of 17 photographs. Her disposable camera broke during the project, but she took photographs using her cell phone camera instead. A component of the project was the inability to view photographs on a disposable camera and the camera's limited exposures, but Daniela's photographs still echoed similar themes of the other participants. She took eleven photographs outdoors, three of the *trajineras*, which are the gondola-esque boats that can be taken through the canals in Xochimilco, two of food, and two of her cat.

Daniela was 16 years old and lived with her mother and her younger brother close to the Tren Ligero. She moved to Xochimilco last year from Coyoacán, but a section of Coyoacán that was very close to Xochimilco. She spoke with a mildly *fresa* accent. *Fresa*, which is Spanish for strawberry, is a popular Mexican term used to describe wealthier, higher educated people that have a preppy look and materialistic tastes. The term *fresa* is used to describe the speech sounds of this demographic, because they often sound like they are speaking Spanish with a strawberry in their mouth. Daniela's younger brother said hello during the interview and wore a private school uniform. Daniela attended Prepa 1, the most prestigious UNAM-affiliated high school in Mexico City.

Daniela was mature and insightful. She had previously thought about issues of community as they related to Coyoacán,

[20] A Quinceañera is a girl's fifteenth birthday and is celebrated as a passage to from childhood to young womanhood, much like a Sweet Sixteen in the US.

daniela, 2014

not Xochimilco. She appreciated Xochimilco's traditions and customs, and stated that in Xochimilco you could suddenly find women in the street dancing in costume. She had been attending the Cultural Center for its Arabic Dance classes, and her brother took music classes there as well. She did not spend a lot of time in Xochimilco, but was responsible for taking her brother to and from his music classes. Her favorite photographs were of the Olympic Canal in Xochimilco and the sunlight that reflected off the water. She loved her cat although it was moody and occasionally scratched her. Her subjects in her photographs were primarily close range, but this could have been the result of using her cell phone camera.

Daniela's mother attended the final exhibition, and took a keen interest in the project from the beginning. She knew a man who worked in the chinampas growing flowers, and offered me his business card so I could be given a tour. Unfortunately our schedules did not align, but I appreciated her mother's thoughtfulness.

Daniela valued the reflection offered from *Xochimilco es Hogar*, and spoke about how at times Mexicans/Xochimilcans did not value the things they had. She stated that there was value in me, a foreigner, coming to Xochimilco and focusing on normal people's lives. She saw potential in my project to help her and other participants see the positive things in Xochimilco, and peacefully change things that were bad. She applauded my project for being cool.

Denisse

Denisse took a total of 24 photographs. All of her photographs were taken outdoors. Sixteen of her photographs were in or around the central square in Xochimilco, and six of her photographs were of the Dolores Olmedo Museum, one of the tourist attractions in the delegation, and its peacocks and Xoloitzuintle dogs, which is also called Mexican Hairless. She

took six photographs of street vendors, and three of these were of food stands or restaurants. She also took a photograph of Niño Dioses and their traditional showcase attire. The Niño Dios, or Baby God, is part of the Mexican Catholic Christmas tradition and will be discussed in greater detail in chapter four. Denisse also took a photograph of the *trajineras*.

Denisse was 20 years old and was studying psychology at a private university in Mexico City. She lived with her parents and her brother close to the Tren Ligero, and had been attending the Cultural Center since she was 15. She was mature, spoke with intention, and was easy-going. She had understood the project to be focused more on Xochimilco the delegation, and so took photographs that she felt were indicative of its identity. She was not native to Xochimilco and had previously lived in Villa Coapa, a neighborhood located in the delegation of Tlalpan which is very close to Xochimilco. She had only lived in Villa Coapa for a few years as a child before moving to Xochimilco, and had attended high school in Tlalpan.

Her photographs were typically head-on, but six of them were perspective shots of paths leading to a horizon line. She spoke about valuing nature and appreciating how Xochimilco was beautiful. She told humorous anecdotes about asking shopkeepers if she could take photographs for their storefronts. She also spoke of how the project incentivized her to walk to places she would normally not frequent.

Denisse was well informed about the customs and niche traditions in Xochimilco, and spoke of them knowingly. She had travelled to other cities and states in Mexico, and found travel refreshing as an escape from DF. She mentioned Atlixco, a small town located near Puebla, the fourth largest city in Mexico. Atlixco is known for its plants and flowers, and is situated near mountains. Denisse stated that she wouldn't mind living in a smaller city such as Puebla or Atlixco because it would be more relaxed and less stressful. She did though speak about how one

denisse, 2014

of the benefits of living in DF was that it was the center of the country and therefore, had everything she needed. Although she did not take photographs of her family because she misunderstood the project prompt, through conversation it was clear that her family and friends were extremely important to her.

Diana

Diana took a total of 27 photographs. Seven of these photographs were clearly taken from the passenger seat of a car, although there may have been others. Four of her photographs were taken at her high school, three were of food, and three were of family or friends. Diana was 17 years old and attended Prepa 1. She had written about community and home before through high school assignments. She seemed studious, and had very thorough and well thought out responses to the interview questions.

She lived with her mother and her sister in a home close to the Tren Ligero and spoke of fighting with her mother, but how that was typical for high schoolers. She was born in the Cuauhtémoc delegation, but moved to Xochimilco when she was three. Diana was extremely chatty and friendly. She spoke with a slight *fresa* accent and had a preppy style of dress. She was very invested in her boyfriend, Francisco, and they were always together.

The majority of Diana's photographs were taken at close range. It was somewhat difficult to understand the subject of the photographs taken from the car seat, because the viewing frame and perspective was so limited. Only a handful of photographs captured an openness of sky, but she took three photographs of the Birds of Paradise flowers in her front yard because they were her favorite. Birds of Paradise are the official flower of Xochimilco, which is known for its flora. Diana took a photograph of her friend group and it was her favorite image, but she expressed that she was still missing additional photographs of her other friends.

diana, 2014

Diana spoke about how Xochimilco was beautiful and how she appreciated its nature, history, and traditions. She chastised the other residents of Xochimilco because they littered, cursed, and did not value the things Xochimilco offered. She mentioned how people in Xochimilco often had a closed mentality and could be narrow-minded. She spoke of how the Cultural Center was good for Xochimilco because it offered interesting classes that were affordable, and that frequently people did not think things were valuable if they were not expensive. She appreciated that the teachers at the Cultural Center patient and not as strict as the ones in school. Diana was interviewed with Samantha, and Diana was surprised to see and hear that Samantha's more rural home was also part of Xochimilco.

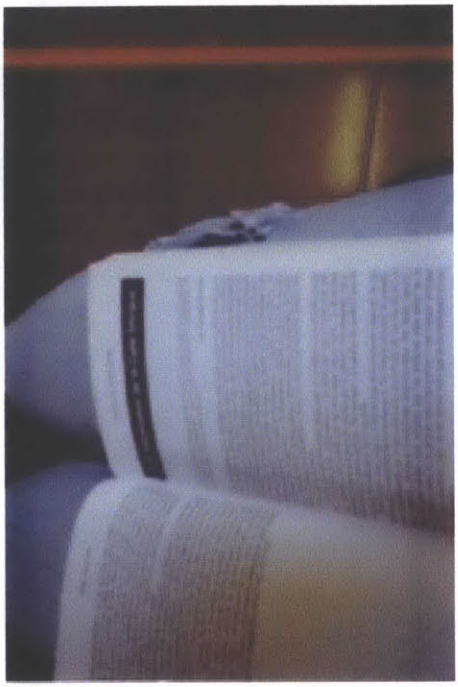
Diana wore a pink hooded sweatshirt that said ITALIA and talked about how she had always wanted to visit Europe, places like Italy or Germany. At the final exhibition she took a photograph with me and said that she would put the printed image on one of the extra album pages.

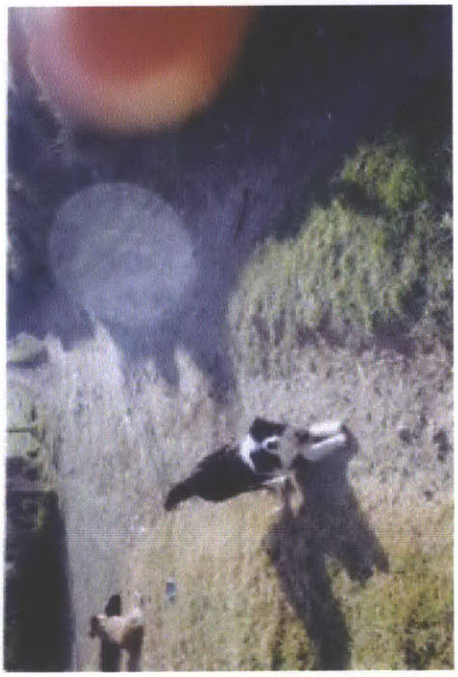
Erika

Erika took a total of 10 photographs. Five of these photographs were taken at the Carlos Pellicer Cultural Center, three were taken outdoors, two were of her pet dogs, and one was of her living room. Erika's photographs were taken within two days, and included a photograph of herself taken by Cesar. She was 17 years old, and a little quiet and shy. She was an only child and lived with her mother, whose highest level of education was high school. She lived farther from the Tren Ligero and it took her an hour and a half to get to school; Cesar and Misael were her classmates at CETIS 39 high school and they were all completing their Community Service Requirement at the Carlos Pellicer Cultural Center.

Erika's home's more remote location is seen in a photograph she took in her yard of the tree-line, the setting sun, and

erika, 2014





a open expanse of sky. Her favorite photograph was of her black and white dog stretching in her yard. She spoke about how she had other dogs, but that this one was her favorite because it would follow her around. There are no family members in her photographs, but she did take a picture of Cesar and of Cesar and Misael walking in the courtyard of the Cultural Center. She also took a photograph of a book on her lap and had Cesar take a photograph of her reading the book. Erika talked about how she loved reading and that she would do it often. She seemed quite brainy and spoke of wanting to pursue astronomy in university studies.

Erika's style of dress had punk influences, as evidenced by her by her numerous bracelets, zebra print backpack, and Vans sneakers. One day she wore a brightly decorated shirt with the emblem of the religious cult of Saint Judas, although she did not mention her religious beliefs nor did she take any photographs of religious activities or paraphernalia.

She also took a photograph of her CD Walkman and talked about listening to of music. She listened to *banda* music, which is brass-based traditional Mexican music that is similar to polka and mostly listened to by older folks. It is not extremely popular with young people.

Misael

Misael took a total of 13 photographs. Seven of these photographs were taken outdoors, and two were of Erika and Cesar at the Cultural Center. At 17 years old, Misael was incredibly mature, thoughtful, talkative, and kind. He was also completing his Community Service Requirement at the Cultural Center, and was the lead young person at the Center. Adrian, the Executive Director at the Center, would refer to him with respect to administrative tasks and logistical issues regarding events. He was also the only participant who spoke English with confidence. Other participants, if they understood English, did

misael, 2014

not feel comfortable conversing in the language. Misael, like Cesar, lived in an intergenerational home with extended family members. His family lived farther from the Tren Ligero in the hills of Xochimilco, and it took him 45 minutes to get to school. Misael was the only participant who knew people who lived in the *chinampera* zone.

Misael's photographs were predominately of the nature surrounding his home, and these photographs echo the tree-lines and open sky seen in Erika and Samantha's photographs. There are no photographs of the interior of his home, although there is a picture of his church and his friends standing for a photograph inside the church. He did not mention church other than when describing his photographs, but spoke extensively about his family and their importance in his life. He is an older brother and lived with his aunt and uncle and their children. His favorite photograph was of his dog sitting outside on the porch with dining room chairs lined up behind him. Misael also pointed out a photograph of the plants his mother kept in his front yard. He spoke about how he had previously thought his mother's gardening habit was a bit obsessive, but that seeing the developed photograph of her plants reminded him of her and her love.

After the photo exposition, Misael texted me in English inviting me to come to Mexico again, when we would "eat delicious Mexican food like sopes and tamales together."

Samantha

Samantha took a total of 20 photographs. All of her photographs were taken outside, and a portion of her photographs was taken in the company of her boyfriend, Sebastián, as they hung out in a park near her high school. She took a photograph of her primary school, her house, and of the views around her house, but not the interior. Her portrait photographs are very direct, but the photographs she took alone (meaning, not in

the hang out session with Sebastián) depict more varied subject matter. Samantha was 17 years old and lived with her sisters and her mother, although they were not pictured in her photographs. The only person in her photographs was Sebastián, and he was also present during the interview. The two were very taken with each other.

Samantha was shy, goth, and liked anime and what she knew of Japanese culture. She dressed in primarily black, had a lip piercing and dyed red hair, and Sebastián similarly had an emo hairstyle, gauged ears, and a lip ring. She was interested in one day visiting Japan.

Samantha also lived farther from the Tren Ligero, and her photographs of the area surrounding her house were of wide expanses of land with distant trees and open skies. She also took photos of tree canopies from underneath. Samantha's home had a Christmas garland, was tagged with graffiti that had been crossed out, and did not have a front sidewalk. She also took a photograph of her primary school, which had a police car in front and a wire fence on top, most likely as the roof served as a play area for children. Samantha loved music as well, but was unable to take a picture of the guitar she had at home because she ran out of exposures.

Key concepts and themes

The themes of family, landmarks, landscapes, neighborhood, and the physical home emerged in all participant photographs, and these themes were also brought up repeatedly in the interviews. Chapters four and five discuss the importance of these key themes using place attachment theory to better understand how participants felt connected to each. Embedded within these concepts is each individual participant's creation of an origin story and history. Important to note is that all participants were young people, whom often undergo multiple stages of identity formation, social integration, and experiences

samantha, 2014

with (counter-)culture.

The permanence of constants during these periods of turbulence is incredibly important against a micro to macrolevel context. The microlevel context is the uncertainty of individual life, but this is also influenced by the dynamic socio-political and economic processes of Mexico City. All participants took photographs of the permanent natural landscape, such as the trees or the sky, and perceived permanent built structures, such as the *trajineras* and their canals, or the streets and their surrounding buildings. Taking photographs of one's physical home and neighborhood was an act of re-establishing permanence in the physical and psychological imagination.

A great majority of participants spoke about nature and its importance to them. As DF is a city of 22 million, it is understandable that its citizens may be starved for more than the urban concrete. The restorative and reflective characteristic of nature is often used to slow down the quick pace of (urban) life, and participants such as Cesar and Denisse spoke about it in a similar manner.

Several participants commented on how the project had changed their relationship with their neighborhood in that they became more aware of the everyday things that influenced their feelings of safety and home. The majority of participants had not previously thought about community, and acknowledged that the process of taking photographs had created moments of pause and reflection in their daily routines. The process of storytelling and documentation is an incredibly powerful tool for claiming space, time, and experience. It often establishes history, identity, and belonging, and helps individuals make sense of the world and life's unfolding events.

CHAPTER FOUR: ASPECTS OF ATTACHMENT

This chapter utilizes Setha Low's typology of place attachment as a matrix by which to understand the bonds people make with place. Low categorizes the different linkages people have to land/space as: cosmological; economic; genealogical; linkage through loss of land or destruction of community; narrative; and pilgrimmage.[21] I have grouped these categories into three aspects of place attachment: socio-political, material, and ideological. The socio-political aspect of place attachment encompass family and/or kinship ties, material aspect include land ownership and/or loss, and ideological aspect include cosmological, pilgrimage, and narrative.

In this chapter, I analyze the images and words of the participants in *Xochimilco es Hogar* using socio-political and ideological aspects of place attachment to show the layers of connection participants have with Xochimilco. Within the socio-political aspect of place attachment, family/kinship ties were the most important to participants. Pilgrimage, or linkage through cultural, secular, and religious events, was the most important form of ideological attachment. The material aspect of place attachment did not surface as a theme for participants, but I believe that deeper and further conversation would have revealed it to be relevant. Furthermore, a different demographic may have leaned more heavily on the material aspects of place attachment.

Socio-political aspect of place attachment

Immediate families and mothers

The socio-political aspect of place attachment was by far the strongest and most important form of place attachment. All participants took photographs of family members, pets, and

[21] Low, "Symbolic Ties that Bind: Place Attachment in the Plaza," 166.

cesar, 2014

friends. Several participants responded that the most important thing to take a picture of during the project was a picture of their mother, family, and/or friends because it most meant home.

> **Interviewer**: *"What was the most important thing to take a picture of?"*
> **Misael**: *"I wanted to take a picture of my family together."*
> **Cesar**: *"My mom, but it wasn't easy to take pictures of her because she was working. She's the person that makes me most happy."*
> **Erika**: *"For me, a photo with my friends, but I couldn't see them because we live in different places and have different schedules."*

It is important to remember that all participants were either teenagers or in their very early twenties. Also important to note is the profound importance of family in Mexican culture. All participants mentioned living with their mother, but only three mentioned living with their father. It becomes clear that mothers are the foundation of home and are seen as stable source of security and continuity.

> *"If I were to leave Xochimilco, I would miss my bed the most. My bed because it smells like my mom and it smells like home."*
> - **Misael**

> *"I live with my mom, and on Sundays, we would have tamales. So when I eat a tamale I feel like I'm with my mom."*
> – **Cesar**

> *"If I have to go to the city center, I'll ask my mom to come with me. ...If I were to leave Xochimilco and live somewhere else, I would bring my mom."* – **Abigail**

From Misael and Cesar we can see that mothers are symbolic of home and of things that are familiar. Misael would not only miss his bed because of its restorative significance, but also because it possesses an olfactory trigger of his mother. The repeated experiences of home allow us to build stability in our surroundings, which engender feelings of safety and security. As stated earlier by Ms. Johnson of the North Gulfport Community Land Trust, home is not just four walls, but is something greater. Similarly for Cesar, the ritual of eating tamales is symbolic of

his mother and of being with her. Cesar's parents are divorced and he lives with his father the majority of the time, but he feels safer and more comfortable with his mother than he does with his father. A divorce is an important familial moment of rupture and reorganization, and so it is unsurprising that Cesar would speak about his mother when talking about home.

Abigail and her family are very active in a Christian seminary community. Although she sees the two as one, she identifies her mother as significant in her understanding of home. Abigail, who is very small and looks much younger than her 19 years, expresses fear about going to the city center and other crowded places alone. She trusts her mother to guide and protect her in Mexico City but also in hypothetical futures of far and permanent travel, where even her mother would be a foreigner. Abigail confides in her mother the ultimate trust of safety and security without boundaries or borders. Physical and psychological safety and security were reoccurring themes in participant interviews, and will be addressed in more detail in chapter six.

Other kinship ties

Kinship relations of immediate family, extended family, friends, and significant others all occupied the same tier of significance after mothers. One third of participants lived in multi-generational homes with extended family. Moreover, family, cousins, and/or friends accompanied the majority of trips participants made to other places in DF. Very few, if any, participants mentioned traveling alone, although this may be a result of participants' ages, which ranged from 19 – 21, in the context of living in Mexico City.

> **Interviewer**: *"So then, Xochimilco for you is more about the people you have in your life?"*
> **Daniela**: *"Well, yes. For me the most important thing is the people."*

"This photo is a photo of a photo, it's the Quinceañera of my cousin. I don't live with them but they're my closest cousins." **– Cesar**

"This is my favorite photo; the one of all my friends… these are my friends, my boyfriend, and me. It's my group." **– Diana**

As shown in the Hidalgo and Hernandez's study of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, social integration is critical to place attachment and belonging. This is seen clearly in Diana's favorite photograph, which is of her "group." This defined social community that includes her friends and boyfriend is important to her identity as well as her sense of belonging and home. Daniela concurs that what makes Xochimilco home is the people that she has in her life, again reiterating that social ties are incredibly important to place attachment and perceptions of home.

Ideological aspect of place attachment

The Niñopa and the axolotl

The pilgrimage component of ideological place attachment surfaced the most in *Xochimilco es Hogar.* Pilgrimage here is not restricted to just religious journeys, but also encompasses secular social and cultural events. The city of Xochimilco was founded in 919 and existed for centuries alongside Tenochtitlan/ Mexico City, providing much of the city's produce, and was finally incorporated as a delegation in 1928. Xochimilco is an incredibly old place rich with tradition and customs. Some of these traditions are native to Xochimilco, while others are dominant religious/secular traditions that have been modified by Xochimilcans. It has been said that there are more holidays in Xochimilco than there are days in the year.

An example of a tradition that has undergone "Xochimilcofication" is the Niñopa. Mexico is an intensely Catholic country, and interviews were held during late January

2014, just before end of the Christmas cycle on February 2, or Candelaria. In Mexican Catholic tradition, dolls representing the baby Jesus (Niño Dios) are dressed in clothes and honored during the Christmas season, which is from Christmas Eve to Candelaria. During this time it is common to see Niño Dios dolls in storefronts and Niño Dios dresses for sale. Xochimilco possesses a Niño Dios figure dating back to the 16th century, which is called a Niñopa. Instead of being kept in a church, the Niñopa is kept in the custody of a sponsor home in the community on a rotating yearly basis. The family who possesses the Niñopa is in charge of the responsibilities and traditions associated with the Niñopa, such as bringing it to daily mass, hospitals, and sick families. Families often build a separate room for the Niñopa for guests who wish to frequent the figure, which is common. Then every February 2, the Niñopa changes homes through a festival and procession. The Niñopa is an important religious figure in Xochimilco, and the waiting list to host it goes into 2040.

The Niñopa represents the adaptation of Catholic traditions from Spain to Mexico to Xochimilco. The procession of the Niñopa to the next host's house on Candelaria is an important pilgrimage event for the delegation and community members, even if they do not participate. The importance of the Niñopa highlights how practicing local traditions can supersede the importance of more dominant traditions because they are

unique to a community or place, as seen in Lawrence's study of the Las Fallas carnival in Valencia.

> *"There are a lot of customs here in Xochimilco, so I took a picture of the Niño Dios. ...We do special things in Xochimilco for the same holidays."* – **Denisse**

> *"I think that I like Xochimilco because of its traditions, because it's the only delegation that has traditions of ancestors."* – **Daniela**

> *"Sometimes something will happen in the street, a festival or something, and at times I know what it is, at times I don't."* – **Diana**

Participants in *Xochimilco es Hogar* understood how Xochimilco was an old place with its own unique take on Mexican(-Catholic) traditions. Diana is not from Xochimilco but has lived the majority of her life in the delegation. At the same time, she remains unaware of all the festivals celebrated there, indicating that there are levels of obscurity and insiderness when it comes to Xochimilcan holidays. Some, such as the Niñopa are delegation-wide and well advertised, whereas others are smaller and more specific. Daniela echoes the sentiment that Xochimilcan traditions and customs date back for generations, invoking a cosmological sense of place attachment.

Cosmological place attachment is a component of the ideological aspect of place attachment and connotes a religious, spiritual, or mythological relationship to place, and honoring traditions of ancestors highlights traditions that may have roots in divine sense of place. Creation stories of places are extremely important to understanding people and belonging. According to legend, the gods told the Aztecs to build a city where they saw an eagle on a cactus eating a serpent, and that city is now Mexico City. This legend is iconized in Mexico's national flag and is deeply part of its national history. Divine stories of creation, and the cosmological place attachment that occurs, are incredibly powerful tools for creating a unified narrative of a people. Additionally, marginalized places often do not have these divine stories of creation institutionalized in the dominant

"Doy gracias al milagroso 'NIÑOPA' por el favor de haberme librado de la muerte y extinctión de mi especie, porque sumergido en los canales me he encomendado a ti ante las redes de los pescadores. Siendo yo un animal único en el mundo, orgullosamente xochimilca, te ofrezco este milagrito para que cuides de mi en estas aguas. Doy gracias y fe de tu poder."

narratives, and so communities rely on other sources of divinity and spirituality to form their creation stories. We can look to Ms. Johnson's storytelling of the history of North Gulfport as a creation story for the community there.

Xochimilco is often described as the being at the peri-urban edge of Mexico City, but in many ways it still functions independently of DF's city center and acts as a center for the southern delegations of Coyoacán, Tlalpan, Milpa Alta, and Tláhuac. There is a large mural in the central market of downtown Xochimilco of an axolotl with the inscription below:

> *"I give thanks to the miracle Niñopa for the favor of makingme free from death and extinction of my species, because submerged in the canals I have trusted in you before the nets of fishermen. Being a unique animal in the world, proudly Xochimilcoan, I offer this little miracle to take care of me in these waters. I give thanks and faith in your power."*

The axolotl is a Mexican salamander indigenous to Lake Xochimilco, which underlies Mexico City. Lake Xochimilco was filled in to build Tenochtitlan/Mexico City, and the delegations of Xochimilco and Tláhuac retain the final vestiges of this hydrology. As a result, these delegations are the last remaining home of the axolotl, which is a critically endangered species. This mural inscription unites the native axolotl and the Niñopa in an affirmation of Xochimilco's unique religious, cultural, and ecological identity.

There exists a narrative of mutuality, community, security, and home in these brief sentences. The axolotl thanks the Niñopa for freeing it from extinction, which is an imminent threat, and in return ensures that the Niñopa will be safe in Xochimilco. Although not a creation story, the Niñopa and the axolotl contend an identity rooted in unique ecology and tradition that harkens to a divine sense of place. Within these scientific existences lie the beginnings of creation stories and a divine sense of place. Embedded in these stories is also intention and history, which translates into freedom and possibility.

CHAPTER FIVE: SCALES OF BELONGING

All participants in *Xochimilco es Hogar* had a relationship to Xochimilco, but some had stronger attachment bonds than others. Rootedness is the subconscious security and stability about place, and is important to consider when considering the connections people have with place, belonging, and community. It is an extremely powerful emotion and is often a driving motivation behind individual and community action and protest. The different types of attachment and relationships had by participants to Xochimilco reaffirm that there is no singular narrative to a place. This chapter uses Hidalgo and Hernandez's conceptualization of belonging across spatial scales and borrows from Dolores Hayden's *The Power of Place* to better understand multiplicities of meaning that exist within space.

Dolores Hayden's *The Power of Place* addresses the multiple histories that are imbedded in place and in landscape. She frames urban space as the site of multiple social histories and political meanings, and speaks specifically to marginalized communities. She analyzes the production of space and the territorial histories of cities based on race and gender, stating, "One of the consistent ways to limit the economic and political rights of groups has been to constrain social reproduction by limiting access to space."[22] These arenas of conflict can be mapped over various scales of space and are applicable to a broad range of social issues and identities.

As seen in the previous chapter with the Niñopa and its procession, festivals and parades help define identity in spatial terms by claiming space in the urban cultural landscape. Even if their presence is temporary, these rituals tie together temporally and spatially disparate elements in moments of heightened community. Celebrations that are native to the delegation

[22] Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*, 22.

of Xochimilco have a more intimate significance than those celebrated by all of Mexico City. These smaller, more personal scales of belonging and place are important to consider, especially as the majority of our lives is localized.

Regarding localized experience, David Harvey offers, "the elaboration of place-bound identities has become more rather than less important in a world of diminishing spatial barriers to exchange, movement and communication."[23] Although our lives are increasingly influenced by global flows of capital and labor, the lived experience of a great majority of people are still place-bound. This was very much the case for all participants in *Xochimilco es Hogar.*

Three scales

Delegation: Xochimilco

Participants were asked a series of questions on the issue of belonging at the spatial scale of the delegation (Xochimilco), the region (the southern delegations), or the city (Distrito Federal). Interviewers asked if participants identified as being from Xochimilco or from Mexico City. My original hypothesis was that participants would identify more strongly with being from Xochimilco than they would from DF as they were more isolated in Xochimilco. This held true for some participants but for others, it was difficult to choose between belonging to Xochimilco or to DF. Participants technically belonged to both entities, but I sought to see how participants understood and answered the question when it was presented to them as an either/or situation.

[23] Harvey, *Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference*, 39

Interviewer: *"Xochimilco is a part of Mexico City, but do you feel more part of Xochimilco or Mexico City?"*
Erika: *"Xochimilco."*
Cesar: *"Yes."*
Misael: *"I agree."*
Interviewer: *"How do you feel when you leave Xochimilco to go to the city center or other parts of the city?"*
Misael: *"I feel foreign."*
Cesar: *"I don't feel safe, no."*
Erika: *"Same, I don't feel good... like I'm missing something."*
Interviewer: *"So you all feel more from Xochimilco?"*
Cesar: *"Yes."*
Misael: *"Yes."*
Erika: *"Definitely."*

Cesar, Erika, and Misael all quickly and easily agreed they felt they were more from Xochimilco than they were from Mexico City. They were interviewed together and so may have been influenced by other responses, but they all seemed to be speaking from individual opinion and experience. The trio was very assured when describing the rootlessness experienced when they left the delegation, and all expressed strong feelings of security with Xochimilco. Much of this related back to feelings of familiarity, the comfort of routine habits, and minimal knowledge of another way to live.

All participants were either finishing high school or had recently completed it, and so were asked if they imagined themselves living outside of Xochimilco. Those with college plans were thinking about schools in DF, and not many participants had seriously thought about living anywhere besides Mexico City. There were hopes of visiting other places, but it was clear that they saw these as trips and that they would return to DF.

> *"Really, I would only live in other parts of Xochimilco. I appreciate Xochimilco a lot; we have our own things here. Sometimes you go to the city center and it's so smoggy and all you want is trees. But then sometimes you're in the trees and all you want is smog! But here in Xochimilco, we have both."* – **Misael**

> *"I think it's great that there are tourists here in Xochimilco from all over the world. There are so many great places to visit in Mexico City, but yes, you should definitely visit Xochimilco, because it's really cool."* – **Cesar**

The majority of participants talked about the nature in

"I loved living here in Xochimilco. It has more of a traditional living style that's common in the south. It's quieter, and slower, and the food is fresher and tastes better. People are nicer as well. I didn't make many new friends here, but I talked to some people at the community center, and I really liked the man who sold me bread everyday. He would always say hello and was very nice to me. I feel like an outsider now where I live, more than when I lived in Xochimilco, although I wasn't from there, either."

– Ana

Xochimilco and how it was important to the delegation and to them. They also noted that the nature in Xochimilco was unique to the rest of the Distrito Federal. A component of that nature is the *chinampas* and their green landscape of the canals and floating islands. Misael expressed how Xochimilco had a combination of city and nature lacking by other delegations, which reflects Xochimilco's history as an independent township with its own urban aesthetic and landscape. Many other participants also reflected on the restorative qualities of nature and the benefits of living in Xochimilco, where nature is more prominent than other delegations.

The *chinampera* zone in Xochimilco bridges the urban and rural and represents Xochimilco's agricultural identity. The *chinampas* are the main tourist attraction for the delegation, and are one of the major tourist attractions in Mexico City. One can hire *trajineras* by the hour and float through the miles of canals in Xochimilco. Tourists, as well as celebrating locals, will visit Xochimilco on the weekends to ride a *trajinera* with drinks, food, and music. Cesar acknowledged that Mexico City is a tourist destination with a tremendous number of things to see, and expressed pride at people coming to Xochimilco and visiting the place that he loved. Many participants took photographs of the *trajineras* and spoke with pride about their importance to Xochimilco's identity, establishing it as one of the defining characteristics of the delegation and linking it to a personal

perception of identity and belonging.

It is enlightening that Cesar and Misael were the only participants who lived in multi-generational homes of extended family members and the only young men who participated in the project. Imagined futures of places are incredibly important and powerful, especially when the envisioned future is disconnected from those in charge of planning and developing the area.

Region: The southern delegations

Three participants, Daniela, Denisse, and Diana all spent early childhood in other delegations. Diana was not born in Xochimilco and moved there when she was three, and had essentially grown up in the delegation. In contrast, Daniela had lived in Coyoacán until the past year and Denisse had attended high school in Tlalpan, which is where she lived before moving to Xochimilco. All mentioned their time in different delegations as why they felt both part of Xochimilco and DF. I wondered if Daniela and Denisse felt part of a regional identity that linked the southern delegations.

> **Interviewer**: *"Do you think there is a southern identity? Like the delegations of Coyoacán, Tlalpan, and Xochimilco?"*
> **Daniela**: *"Well, no, I don't think so. I mean, there's a common thing that happens, that people think the best place is where they live. I don't think that's true."*

> **Interviewer**: *"Do you think there is a southern identity? Like the delegations of Coyoacán, Tlalpan, and Xochimilco?"*
> **Denisse**: *"Yes, I think so, probably a little. I think all of DF has a lot in common, probably more than just the people in the south."*

Not only do both responses hesitate in affirming a southern identity, but they are also skeptical of its existence. Daniela's judgment of those who express strong connection to where they live highlights legitimate concerns with community and narratives of nativism. Several participants noted that Xochimilcans were generally narrow-minded and reflected a "small-town" mentality of conformity and judgement. Denisse is lukewarm about belonging to a regional southern identity,

but believes that the spatial scale of Mexico City is the unifier. She notes DF's high speed, traffic, pollution, stress levels, and people's unfriendly demeanor to be common features and contrasts these against the smaller towns of Puebla and Axtlico. These are all the less appealing aspects of urbanity, but one could indeed argue that all citizens of DF share them.

The perception of identity and belonging on multiple scales may not be familiar to participants, given their ages and the fact that the majority of their life experiences have been in either DF or the area immediately surrounding the city. My very first informational interview in Mexico City was with a friend, Ana, who offered a different perspective into the idea of a southern identity. Ana grew up in Coyoacán and lived in Xochimilco between the ages of 18 to 24. Three years ago she moved to a more central delegation, and spoke about missing the "southern way of life."

> *"I loved living here in Xochimilco. It has more of a traditional living style that's common in the south. It's quieter, and slower, and the food is fresher and tastes better. People are nicer as well. I didn't make many new friends here, but I talked to some people at the community center, and I really liked the man who sold me bread everyday. He would always say hello and was very nice to me. I feel like an outsider now where I live, more than when I lived in Xochimilco, although I wasn't from there, either."* – **Ana**

Ana was older than the other participants, and had lived in two separate southern delegations before moving to a central one. The delegations of Coyoacán and Xochimilco share similar features such as local traditions and customs, and historic autonomy from Mexico City. This has resulted in an urban fabric that is less dense and more open. Ana is possibly speaking from a place of nostalgia, but it is common to hear that the southern delegations have a "more traditional" way of life that is slower and quieter. She also states that the people in Xochimilco are nicer and friendlier than those in other delegations. From my own personal experience having lived in a central delegation and

then in Coyoacán (while spending a lot of time in Xochimilco), I can attest that the south does have a more relaxed pace that is much welcomed from the chaotic hustle of the city center. I did not experience the closed mindedness mentioned by participants, but believe it to be real.

Ana stated she did not feel like an outsider in Xochimilco although she was not native, but that she felt like an outsider in her current delegation. She later noted that her transition to living in Xochimilco from Coyoacán was fluid and Xochimilco's more traditional, southern way of life was influential in her feelings of comfort and home. Feelings of foreignness came up repeatedly in interviews and the majority of participants expressed unease at feeling foreign. Feelings of home and belonging were incredibly important to participants. The comfort of security and the fear of feeling foreign combined with a lack of imagined futures conlcude it likely that many participants would continue to make Xochimilco or Mexico City their home.

City: Distrito Federal

Regardless of whether participants felt they belonged at different spatial scales, all participants expressed a clear distinction between Xochimilco and the rest of Distrito Federal. Although levels of attachment differed among participants, Xochimilco was very clearly home whereas the rest of DF was something else.

> **Interviewer**: *"Xochimilco is a part of Mexico City, but do you feel more part of Xochimilco or part of Mexico City?"*
> **Diana**: *"I don't understand."*
> **Interviewer**: *"Well, Xochimilco is a delegation, right?, but it's also part of greater Mexico City. Do you identify more with being from Xochimilco, or with being from Mexico City?"*
> **Diana**: *"Well, both, no? I was born in the delegation Cuauhtémoc, but lived there for only three years, so I feel this is my delegation."*
> **Samantha**: *"I feel a part of here, Xochimilco, but yes, I also feel part of both."*

> **Interviewer**: *"Xochimilco is a part of Mexico City, but do you feel more part of Xochimilco or part of Mexico City?"*
> **Denisse**: *"Well, I feel like both. I feel like I'm from Xochimilco because I live here, right, and I am a lot of things from Xochimilco, but yes, part of both."*

> **Interviewer**: *"Xochimilco is a part of Mexico City, but do you feel more part of Xochimilco or part of Mexico City?"*
> **Daniela**: *"I feel more from DF, because I haven't lived here forever. There are things and traditions about Xochimilco that I like, but then there are other things about the people and the place that I don't like. ...But so I don't feel very identified with Xochimilco, because there are things I still don't identify with."*

Diana and Samantha both experienced confusion answering the question of whether they felt more part of Xochimilco or part of Mexico City, whereas Cesar, Erika, and Misael had no difficulty. Daniela and Denisse also had less difficulty answering the question, although their response was of a dual belonging. Diana, Daniela, and Denisse were not native to Xochimilco, whereas the rest of the participants were, which may account for the different perceptions of belonging. Those participants that expressed a dual belonging to Xochimilco and DF still noted that they did not always feel comfortable in other delegations, and that there were unique things about Xochimilco they liked.

Abigail presented an interesting contrast to the other participants because of her close connection with her Christian seminary. She viewed the seminary as her family and community, and her involvement in the seminary dominated her worldview.

> **Interviewer**: *"Xochimilco is a part of Mexico City, but do you feel more part of Xochimilco or part of Mexico City?"*
> **Abigail**: *"Oh, I've never thought about this. Well, I guess Xochimilco is so big, but I still feel at home here. I would say I'm part from Xochimilco, not DF, because I know all the parts of Xochimilco. Well, not all, but yes, I feel safe here, even when I'm alone, on the train, in the buses, in the street."*

Abigail speaks with far greater passion about the community she has at seminary, but nonetheless acknowledges that she feels from Xochimilco. Safety and familiarity takes prominence over her feelings of belonging, echoing other participant concerns.

diana, 2014

Imagined futures

My original hypothesis was that participants in *Xochimilco es Hogar* would feel physically isolated from the rest of Mexico City, and so would want to leave Xochimilco at the first possible chance for a more central and well-connected delegation. Participants were asked if they would live in another area of Mexico City, Mexico, or the world, but none of the participants felt an urgent desire to leave Xochimilco. Many participants viewed moving as a major ordeal that may not ultimately be worthwhile.

> *"I wouldn't want to live in another place. I live with my family, and if I weren't to live with them I wouldn't be able to see them as much. So no, I don't think I could live anywhere else. ...But I would like to visit New York, but just for a little bit. I couldn't live there; I would be missing something. For example, in my house, it's quiet. People may say it's boring but for me, I feel good."* – **Cesar**

> *"Really, I would just live in other parts of Xochimilco. I appreciate Xochimilco a lot. ...Living in another part would be a huge dramatic change."* – **Misael**

> *"I could live in another part of the city, but I would have to get used to the place. Like, I would have to change a lot. I've spent a lot of time here so I feel at home here. And I guess I could live in another part of Mexico, but I haven't really thought about it. It's not really my dream. I guess I could, though."* – **Diana**

Participants viewed leaving Xochimilco for anywhere else in the city as a major disruption of daily life and worldview. To some this was impossible and undesired. To others it was within imagination, but the motivation and logic behind undertaking such an extreme change was not present. Living at home throughout college is the norm for many families, especially those who live in DF where there are stellar public and private universities. This is strikingly different from the college experience in the United States, where college is marketed as a formative, symbolic, and almost obligatory departure from home.

Additionally, traveling remains a luxury for many Mexican families, and so moving to another city or country where

there are presumably no familiar contacts can seem implausible and/or outrageous. Participants in *Xochimilco es Hogar* were also still young people, and their dependency on family could have contributed to their inability to image a future outside the delegation/city, but it is important to note that they did not see these restrictions to voluntary travel and movement as limiting. The imaged futures of all participants are in places and with people who are currently present in their lives. This gives us an incredibly important understanding of belonging and rootedness that is social, psychological, economic, and physical.

Like Ms. Johnson in Turkey Creek, Mississippi, place and community are understood and internalized principles that are foundational to a way of life. The participants in *Xochimilco es Hogar* have strong senses of place and community, and believe that voluntary movement would have incredible consequence. In addition to thinking about imagined futures, we must also think about marginality and positionality. None of the participants interviewed saw themselves as such, although they experienced certain conditions that were the result of the state viewing them as marginal. From the narratives of participants in *Xochimilco es Hogar*, we can better understand a community that traditional planning views as being marginal, and what is at stake when planning and development does not incorporate these communities. Through narrative analysis, we also deconstruct the existence of communities as monolithic by seeing the multiple types of relationships and attachments created by people inhabiting the same territory. We see the difficulty in reconciling individual meanings of place into a broader understanding and narrative of place. Most importantly, from here we can foresee the struggle that occurs when these individual meanings of place do not align with the meanings ascribed by planning, design, and development practitioners.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

All participants had a short list at hand when asked what they would change about Xochimilco. Environmental sustainability and pollution, public safety and security, and transportation and mobility were repeatedly mentioned as issues that needed greater attention. Fortunately for the current and future planners of Xochimilco, these are all problems that can be addressed through urban planning. The following chapter looks at each of these issues in detail from participants' point of view and connects their concerns with planning practice. I then discuss how place attachment can help planning practice create more equitable cities.

Concerns

Environmental sustainability and pollution

According to a 2004 UN Report, Mexico City was the most polluted place in the world, with vehicles responsible for half of its contamination.[24] Things have changed for the better since then, but it is no surprise that participants' major critique of Xochimilco was the pollution. Pollution incorporated air and noise pollution as well as littering. Mexico City is nestled in a valley in a horseshoe configuration of mountains with its opening facing north. The wind patterns in the region bring wind down into the horseshoe where it often gets stuck. Unfortunately, Mexico City's factories are predominately located in the north of the city and so pollution is brought down into the city by the winds and then stays there until it is cleared out by rain. The combination of industrial pollution and six million vehicles per day on city streets makes diesel exhaust and air contamination a major concern in the city.

The most urgent form of pollution for participants was

[24] Mead and the Guardian Interactive team, "The rise of megacities – interactive."

the littering and dumping in the *chinampas* that comprised the UNESCO World Heritage Site. The *chinampera* zone is an extremely fragile ecosystem that has been suffering for decades from environmental degradation and neglect. For a hundred years the city has been diverting the natural springs that feed the canals, leading to dropping water tables. Contaminated and untreated wastewater also historically flowed into Xochimilco's canals, and invasive species have destroyed natural habitats and native species. Additionally, Mexico City's population explosion of the past two decades has led to an influx of migrants to Xochimilco, and many have filled the canals to build their own housing. Approximately 90,000 people live in Xochimilco's informal settlements, and each year Xochimilco loses six hectares of former lakebed to them.[25] These settlements do not receive basic services and so tons of garbage, fecal matter, and other waste is found in the *chinampas*, which contributes to the destruction of the zone.

Participants all noted that the pollution in the canals was a major issue for Xochimilco.

> *"We have the canals, and they're so important to DF, it's a UNESCO World Heritage Site in DF, but no one takes care of them. So I would clean the canals. They're pretty, but they're not clean. People just don't value it. They throw garbage everywhere."* – **Diana**

> *"I would change the pollution. There's pollution in the lake, and a lot of people throw stuff in the water although it's a conservation site and tourist site."* – **Denisse**

There have been several interagency and multinational attempts to clean up the pollution in the canals, but the most aggressive was in the 1990s. One popular anecdote relays that a fleet of manatees was once introduced to eat invasive water lilies but was done so without prior notification to the community,

[25] Cevallos, "Archeology: Mexico's 'Venice' imperiled by pollution and erosion."

which resulted in a mass slaughter of manatees. Many people expressed skepticism at the cleanup efforts, proclaiming that they were always rife with corruption and never truly delivered the proposed results.

One could also argue that the current cleanup projects do not adequately address the root causes of contamination in the *chinampera* zone, which at this moment is the building of informal settlements on environmentally protected land. The lack of affordable housing throughout Mexico City forces new migrants to build their own housing which leads to tenuous land status and living situations for these new migrants, and to environmental pollution.

None of the participants mentioned the informal settlements or the systematic contamination of the *chinampera* zone. The language used by participants remained in the personal realm and pinned heavily on notions of cleanliness, value, and propriety. According to Diana, people did not value the canals although they were vital to Xochimilco and to the city. Although not quoted here, Denisse continued to state how Xochimilcans "are more irresponsible" versus people in other delegations, and how Xochimilcans did not appreciate the beautiful things they had. Both Diana and Denisse asserted nobody stewarded the *chinampas*, which seems implausible given they are under environmental protection by the city. If there is a stewardship program for the *chinampera* zone, the lack of visibility and efficacy is a major issue.

Public safety and security

Safety and security carried a high premium for the young people in *Xochimilco es Hogar* as they navigated a city heavily affected by drug-trafficking, crime, corruption. Perceptions of community and home were influenced by feelings of safety, and the lack of public safety was noted as a much needed change.

Interviewer: *"What would you change about Xochimilco?"*
Abigail: *"The police, because I always find them sleeping and doing nothing. And then I had an experience leaving school one day, and there was this older guy who was trying to take me away with him. It made me scared and the police were there, but they didn't do anything."*

Abigail's concerning anecdote is a window into the daily experience of insecurity and violence that exists in Mexico City. In three sentences, Mexico has been connected to drug trafficking since the 19th century, and within the past decade the Mexican drug war has become a completely militarized operation. The Distrito Federal remains a beacon of safety exempt from the violence that plagues other states throughout Mexico, but smaller-scale crime such as kidnapping, theft, and mugging happen daily. Furthermore, there is widespread distrust of local police due to documented and prevalent understanding of corruption, negligence, and incompetency when dealing with violence and crime.

Abigail's experience also exhibits the complex gender politics of Mexico, and the insecurity of traveling the city as a young woman. None of the young women interviewed mentioned traveling to other delegations alone, although a few mentioned comfort traveling alone in Xochimilco. Participants' repeated statements of feeling unsafe and insecure in other delegations could be the result of the legitimate chaotic nature of the city center, unfamiliarity with other delegations, and previous negative experiences.

Medellín, Colombia has implemented several interventions over the past decades to remedy its rampant violence and insecurity, and is now cited as one of the most successful city transformations in Latin America. Public services such as community centers, day cares, and health clinics were scattered throughout the hills of Medellín in low-income, violence-ridden areas and linked via open space. The drug cartel gangs in the hills respected the new community services and open spaces, resulting in a system of safe spaces that allowed community members,

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specifically women, to freely move from one destination to another without the threat of violence.

In another example closer to home, DF has built a series of open spaces and promenades in the historic city center to address that addressed issues of safety and violence in the central neighborhoods.[26] These developments were the result of community organizing around insecurity of the city center, and the result is a constellation of safe spaces that offered a network of services, safety, and movement very similar to Medellín. These examples show how urban planning and design can effectively address issues of safety and insecurity in historically violent areas. Community organizing and community claims about mobility and open space in DF led to citizens working with governing authorities in order to build the constellation of parks, and the significance of this should not be overlooked.

Transportation and mobility

Transportation and mobility was an issue for all participants, regardless of whether they lived near public transportation. Xochimilco is accessible from other parts of Mexico City via a combination of metro and light rail. The delegation is predominately traversed through a complex system of formal and informal buses, private vehicles, and walking. No participants expressed family ownership of private vehicles, and many relied on buses and walking.

> *"The streets are so narrow, and it leads to a lot of accidents because there are too many cars and buses at the same time."*
> **– Erika**

> *"I would change the microbuses because they're too fast and they're dangerous. But sometimes it's the only option."*
> **– Denisse**

[26] Davis, "Planning in the context of violent conflict: Comparative reflections."

"I would change the traffic, more than anything. It takes a long time for people to pass in cars when they need to go somewhere. It's bad for emergency services like the police and ambulances, when there's so much traffic. It makes me nervous for them." – **Abigail**

The sheer number of vehicles on the road is a concern but moreover, drivers are aggressive and reckless. Microbuses are understood to be the most dangerous form of transportation in Mexico City, but their routes also cover the most distance and go to the isolated areas that are not serviced by other forms of transportation. Transportation is always intricately tied to justice issues; those who are economically and physically marginalized are usually required to travel the greatest distances with the most insecurity.

Bike lanes are seen to be part of DF's transportation solution, although it is unclear when they will be implemented in the southern delegations and if that will ameliorate the three-hour commute of the most marginalized communities. Xochimilco also struggles with internal connection and not just connection to the city center. The neighboring delegation of Tlalpan has approved the construction of a cablecar that will link the outer hillside communities with the delegation center. Like Xochimilco, the south of Tlalpan is dominated by hills and urban growth has pushed up into the hills whereas two decades ago they stood empty. The new cablecar is a possible option for Xochimilco as well, and takes precedent from cablecars in Medellín.

Participants focused primarily on how the buses themselves were fast and dangerous, but another form of danger is the vulnerability of traveling in public transportation. The road is often the most dangerous place in cities and is the site of the most violence. Transportation intersects with safety and class issues; those of higher class background typically live in neighborhoods where there is less violence and also have the option of traveling in private vehicles, sometimes with guards. This is not an option for the majority of families and communities

in Mexico City, and so the question of how urban planning, design, and transportation can better address issues of justice and security continues to be imperative.

The value of place attachment in planning

In this thesis I have used place attachment theory to better understand the connections people have with place, which is a way by which to understand home and community. Place attachment, and community, is not without its negative components. What we decide to call community is wrought with personal and political meaning. I have defined community as a collection of people with shared experiences based on either place or shared social interaction. Critical to community is how its close ties are maintained even if there is difference.

One method in which community achieves this is by policing and ostracizing difference, and becoming an exclusive unit based on abidance to the norm. Here we find claims of authenticity based on time, which can be linked to an ongoing narrative of nativism that is responsible for oppression and marginalization. These folks are incredibly attached to place, but their attachment can bear negative consequences. Additionally, moral judgments on the character of people can be made in these communities, which was seen in some participants when they spoke about the littering and dumping in Xochimilco's *chinampas*.

Personal behavior is one of the contributing factors for the environmental pollution seen in Xochimilco, but one must not forget the larger structural issues at hand that influence personal behavior. We see one of the negative sides of community from Diana and Denisse through their conception of a narrow set of actions that permit belonging to the group. Community members who participate in unsavory behavior are seen to be eyesores that are destroying the "proper" way of life. The policing of individuals misses the influence and responsibility of larger

structural systems. Without question, personal responsibility must be taken for personal actions and for creating social change. But personal responsibility must be extended to administrators and government officials so they are held accountable for implementing environmental sustainability initiatives.

This thesis has analyzed the photographs and words of participants in *Xochimilco es Hogar* according to socio-political/ideological place attachment and belonging across different spatial scales while being mindful of the politics of place. Place attachment may still seem "obvious," but it is specifically due to this obviousness that that it is not considered nor fully utilized within urban planning. I do not argue that a more thorough understanding of the personal connections people have with place is the solution to unjust planning. Place attachment's utility is its ability to highlight the multiple connections individuals have to people and place, which exposes the structural violence faced by these communities on a daily basis in addition to the disruption that these communities witness when the imagined future of a place as seen by outside design practitioners does not align with that of those who currently live there.

Through place attachment analysis, I have concluded that although participants in *Xochimilco es Hogar* had different perceptions about Xochimilco, all were psychologically, physically, socially, and economically rooted to the delegation. Social ties and integration, mostly through family and friends, were crucial to understanding of belonging and of community, and those bonds were seen as the most difficult ties to break and/or duplicate. Finally, all participants envisioned themselves in Xochimilco or Mexico City in the near- and long-term future due to a combination of factors. A life permanently independent and outside of Xochimilco was difficult to conceive, although some participants had imagined futures of living elsewhere for a short period of time in order to gain a different experience.

Place attachment analysis can help planning practice by

creating a greater awareness of the multiple histories, politics, and meanings of a place. This deeper understanding of community is a double-edged sword in that it can be manipulated and used against marginalized communities. Notions of community have often been used as selling points for new development that displaces existing communities, and insider information about people and communities have been used to exploit their weaknesses and destroy networks of connection.

But when used to empower and strengthen historically disenfranchised and marginalized communities, place attachment is one of an army of tools that can better help planners create equitable cities. Any initial scoping and research period would greatly benefit from an understanding of the multiplicities of meanings and histories in a specified urban landscape and territory. Mario Luis Small's work, *Villa Victoria: The Transformation of Social Capital in a Boston Barrio* provides a valuable model of how individual case studies of community residents can help create typologies of experience. This method highlights residents' microlevel attachments to people and place while being mindful of macro socially constructed processes that influence their lives. Due to my constricted timeframe, I set the smallest scale of attachment at the delegation level, but future research could begin from the granular neighborhood block scale and move its way up to the delegation. Furthermore, more time with participants would have allowed for a more thorough incorporation of class and gender in analysis.

Planning practice would benefit greatly from having a more integrated understanding of individual residents' experiences, or even more general typologies of residents. Place attachment could also contribute to planning vis-à-vis the community engagement and outreach process. Community engagement often relies too heavily on process and discredits an actual understanding of how impacted residents understand themselves and their home. Obligatory outreach that is done to

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the letter but not the spirit often misses a tremendous amount of knowledge and opportunity, and begs for alternative methods to engage community as active contributors and decision-making agents in the planning process.

Future renditions of *Xochimilco es Hogar* could incorporate an educational component where participants could learn how to address urban planning-related concerns through planning and/or organizing. Although my time with participants was brief, by the final exhibition I had developed trust and a rapport with participants. Trust between stakeholders is critical in all planning and development-related projects given there will always be a power dynamic and struggle between outside actors and the community residents.

The lives and homes of participants in *Xochimilco es Hogar* were relatively stable, but even in this stability it is clear that their lives would have been disrupted if future development in Xochimilco did not include them. Participants felt that voluntary movement would severely disrupt their sense of belonging, place, identity, and community. Forced movement via gentrification and displacement would then violently break these established norms and truths, and undoubtedly change the relationship that these communities have with the state. The structural inequality experienced by non-elites is deeply attached to our values and understandings of who is human, who belongs to a city, and who is present in the city's future.

A brief example of this is Torre Mítikah, a tower in a new high-rise complex located in Coyoacán that, upon completion in 2015, will be the second tallest tower in Mexico and will be comprised of completely market-rate housing and commercial space. Torre Mítikah is located at the edge of historic Coyoacán, and it recalls elements of the Atlantic Yards development in Brooklyn, New York. I do not know how much the state subsidized and aided in the land securitization, zoning regulation, community engagement process, or construction

of Torre Mítitah. Nonetheless, the construction of exclusively market-rate housing while new migrants in Xochimilco build hundreds of informal settlements on environmentally protected land in its shadow is a glaring revelation of an anti-poor bias in policy and planning. Governmental refusal to address the issue of affordable housing reveals how those in power have created institutions and bureaucracy that reflect their class priorities and defend the status quo, which are currently a state and economy that produces poverty. The participants in *Xochimilco es Hogar* daily face the structural violence of the state as they experience environmental pollution, navigate dangerous and limited transportation, and live with a constant awareness of personal safety and security.

Participant photos and interviews offer us a rich snapshot of Xochimilco, and show us that young people are highly aware of planning-related issues in their community, although they may not give it planning language. Participants' attachment to Xochimilco and their planning-related concerns bolsters the argument that a holistic approach to planning that addresses intersectional issues faced by marginalized communities must be adapted as the norm. Planning has become increasingly project-based, which results in replacing long-range comprehensive visioning with acupuncture projects that do not address larger structural issues affecting the majority of people. A cablecar in Tlalpan linking the hills with the center is helpful, but it is a technocratic intervention that will not contribute much if not part of a broader vision of a just city. A system of safe open spaces in the historic city center of DF is important, but will these safe spaces reach Xochimilco and do they actually address the structural insecurity witnessed by residents?

This thesis journey began with a personal introspection of home and community. I believe home and community are important to my identity and my life's work, and I found it similarly fundamental to the young people who participated in

Xochimilco es Hogar. In many ways, the young people had a clarity and confidence in their understanding of home and community that I lacked. It would be intriguing to revisit participants in five years after they have completed university or have been working for some time to see how and if their understandings of home have shifted. Their lives exhibited a personal yet communal sense of belonging critical to their understanding of self and the future. It is necessary for planning and planners to understand these personal lives, places, and communities in order to envision and create a just city.

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APPENDIX

Project Prompt

XOCHIMILCO ES HOGAR

"Xochimilco es Hogar' es un proyecto de fotografía/entrevista sobre cómo la gente en Xochimilco crean una senitimento de hogar y comunidad. A través de sus fotografías y palabras, vamos a construir una historia de la comunidad, y entender mejor cómo Xochimilco significa algo muy especial para todos que viven aquí. Mi nombre es Bin Jung y soy una estudiante en la Maestría de Urbanismo en MIT en los Estados Unidos, y estoy haciendo este proyecto con la ayuda del Centro Cultural Carlos Pellicer.

Por favor tome esta cámara desechable contigo y sacar fotos de lo que te sientes es hogar. Puede sacar fotografías de lugares, personas, habitaciones, objetos, cosas, otras fotografías, actividades, comida, todo que te da una sensación de hogar y pertenencia. Hogar es un sentimiento muy personal que incluye tú y personas/cosas cerca de tí, entonces por favor tratar de captar todo lo posible.

Las fotografías serán desarrolladas y hecho en un libro para usted. Cuando reciba el libro, habrá una breve entrevista acerca de sus fotografías. Al final del proyecto, habrá una exposición de todas las fotos en el Centro Cultural Carlos Pellicer. Por favor, mire la siguiente cronologiá para el proyecto, y mi información de contacto sicontacto tiene preguntas o preocupacións. Gracias por sus fotos y su historia!

CRONOLOGÍA

Ahora	Sacar fotos con la cámara desechable
25 de enero	Regresa cámara a Centro Cultural
27 de enero – 29 de enero	Libros de fotos y entrevistas a Centro Cultural
31 de enero	Exposición de fotos a Centro Cultural

INFORMACIÓN DE CONTACTO

Bin Jung
Correo: m****@mit.edu
Movil: 55-2068-****

'XOCHIMILCO ES HOGAR:' PREGUNTAS

PROCESO

• Gracias por hacer el proyecto, ¿fue divertido? ¿Te gustó?
• ¿Fue fácil o difícil usar la cámara desechable?
• ¿Fue más o menos difícil que tu celular o una cámara digital?
• ¿Fue importante que no podías ver la foto cuando la tomabas?

FOTOS

• ¿Cuál es tu foto favorita y por qué?
• ¿Cómo decidiste qué fotos tomar?
• ¿Cuál era la cosa más importante a la que querías tomarle foto? ¿Por qué?
    ¿Pudiste tomarle foto?
    ¿A qué no pudiste tomarle foto? ¿Por qué?

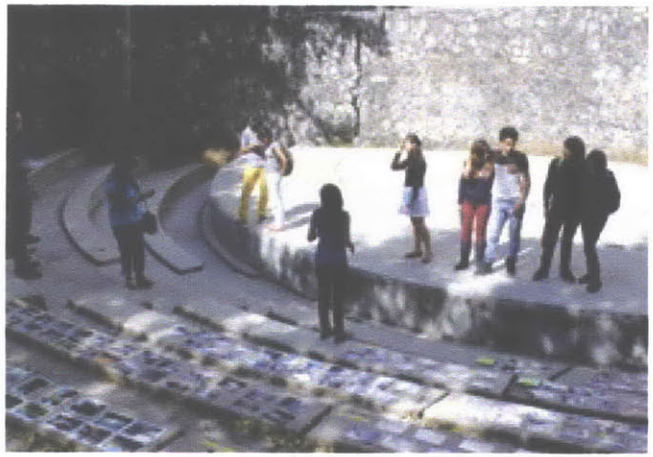
IDENTIDAD

• Este proyecto llama a 'Xochimilco es Hogar,' pero Xochimilco es parte de la Ciudad de México. ¿Te sientes más parte de Xochimilco o de la Ciudad de México? ¿Por qué?
•
•
•
•

OTROS HOGARES

• ¿Crees que podrías vivir en otra parte de la ciudad? ¿Dónde? ¿Por qué?
    ¿En otra parte de México?
    ¿del mundo?
• ¿Qué extrañarías más?

Final Exhibition



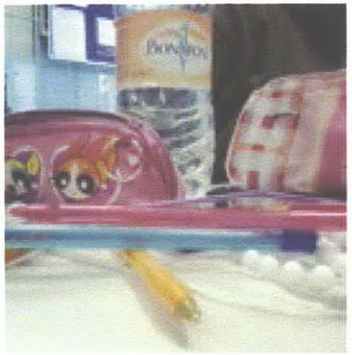
abigail

abigail

cesar

cesar

daniela



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Mexicana

diana

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samantha

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