Finding Common Ground: The Importance of Place Attachment to Community Participation and Planning

Lynne C. Manzo

Douglas D. Perkins

This article draws connections between the environmental and community psychology literature on place attachment and meaning with the theory, research, and practice of community participation and planning. Each area of inquiry has much to offer the other, yet few links have been made between them. Typically, literature on place attachment focuses on individual feelings and experiences and has not placed these bonds in the larger, sociopolitical context in which planners operate. Conversely, the community planning literature emphasizes participation and empowerment, but overlooks emotional connections to place. Yet these attachments can motivate cooperative efforts to improve one's community. Literature across disciplines is examined and synthesized to develop a framework for understanding the psychological dimensions of people's interactions with community. An ecological model is then proposed that integrates multiple environmental domains and analysis levels. This model can accommodate place attachments and meaning as well as social and political aspects of community participation.

As we are all inextricably embedded in a physical context, we are compelled to understand the nature of our relationships to place. Many years ago, Donald Appleyard (1979, 1981) studied people's perceptions and attitudes toward place and began to explore place meanings in an effort to inform the planning process. Similarly, Jane Jacobs (1961) and Herbert Gans (1968), in their now-classic works, advocated for a fuller understanding of community social dynamics as a way to

LYNNE C. MANZO *is an environmental psychologist and assistant professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture, College of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Washington, Seattle. Her research focuses on place attachment, place identity, affordable housing, and diversity in the urban landscape. Please address correspondence to Lynne C. Manzo, PhD, Department of Landscape Architecture, Box 355734, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195-5734; lmanzo@u.washington .edu.*

DOUGLAS D. PERKINS *is a community/environmental psychologist and director of the Center for Community Studies, Department of Human and Organizational Development, Peabody College, Vanderbilt University. He studies community organizing and development and the assessment of urban social and physical environments. Please address corespondence to Douglas D. Perkins, PhD, Department of Human and Organizational Development, Box 90, Mayburn 107, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN 37203; douglas.d.perkins@vanderbilt.edu.*

enrich planning practice. And while they did not fully elaborate on the direct impact and role of place meanings in the planning process, they began to draw critical connections among people's experience of place "on the ground" and its implications for planning. In subsequent years, the planning literature has largely neglected exploration of these critical connections—particularly how place meaning and attachment can play a pivotal role in planning processes. While planners enthusiastically pursued issues of participation and other social dynamics in planning, the study of the nature and role of place meaning and attachment were left largely to environmental and community psychologists. In this article, we attempt to reconnect these areas of study, particularly in the context of the burgeoning literature on community planning and development.

Environmental psychologists and geographers have brought relationships to place to the forefront as a critical element of our lived experiences through their study of place-related attitudes, behaviors, and feelings (Tuan 1974; Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff 1983; Altman and Low 1992). At the same time, sociologists and community psychologists have developed a rich understanding of community development concepts, such as social capital, sense of community, and citizen participation (Flora and Flora 1996; Perkins and Long 2002).[1] While community participation in the planning process has also been an active area of exploration (Forester 1989, 1999; Innes and Booher 1999a, 1999b; Umemoto 2001), this has developed mostly in isolation from relevant literature in other disciplines and it does not draw upon what we know about place meaning and experience from place-based social sciences. This lack of cross-pollination is evident when we see parallel discussions on community building, social capital, and citizen participation appear independently in the literature of various fields. Psychologists who study place attachment do not usually discuss community development, nor do planners often incorporate environmental psychology concepts such as place attachment in their research and practice. Yet a combination of these perspectives can provide a richer understanding—not only of how planning impacts our experience of place, but also how community-focused emotions, cognitions, and behaviors can impact community planning and development.

A cross-disciplinary analysis is essential to better understand the nature of people's relationships to place and to develop a more holistic view of how such relationships influence our experiences of place and the success of our communities. Such an approach—which we call an ecological perspective—would engage multiple levels of analysis (individual, group/organization, community/neighborhood, and city/region/

society) and examine multiple environmental domains (i.e., the physical, social, political and economic aspects of our communities; Perkins et al. 2004). By considering multiple domains and levels in one holistic context, a more complete understanding of neighborhood and community phenomena can emerge. This is critical for successful planning and community development efforts since community phenomena happen at all of these levels simultaneously. With this approach we can better see how neighborhoods and concern for their improvement/well-being can become the common ground—literally and figuratively—among diverse residents and planners, as well as the common ground of exploration among scholars and practitioners who are concerned with human and community development.

Moreover, this broader, more holistic perspective would enable both social scientists and planners to learn from one another's expertise for a fuller understanding of community dynamics. To build this ecological framework, we draw on environmental and community psychology—particularly on concepts of place attachment, sense of community, and social capital—to understand how they can inform the community planning process and complement planners' expertise in participation and community development.

GROUNDING COMMUNITY PLANNING IN PLACE MEANING

Theory on place attachments and meaning, explored largely in environmental and community psychology, can help us to understand how particular preferences, perceptions, and emotional connections to place relate to community social cohesion, organized participation, and community development. Often the focus in community development and planning is on economic, political, or social dynamics both within the community and between the community and public agencies. However, the unique qualities and meanings of the specific physical setting in which community planning and development take place can play a critical role in the process as well. Our thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about our local community places—what psychologists call "intra-psychic" phenomena—impact our behaviors toward such places, thus influencing whether and how we might participate in local planning efforts. Research that incorporates place experiences and meanings can therefore provide an important model for a "grounded" or ecological approach to community-based planning. For example, a recent study by Brown, Perkins, and Brown (2003) found that place attachments and sense of community play a significant role in neighborhood revitalization efforts. More specif-

ically, in cases where neighbors are anonymous and do not stay long enough to develop any emotional connection to the place, they tend not be committed enough to improve their own home, or to work with their neighbors and local agencies to improve the whole neighborhood. Unfortunately, many studies have ignored these place-based psychological ties to the community, but these can make a critical contribution to effective community development and planning efforts, as they are a source of community power and collective action.

*Place Attachment—The Importance
of Psychological Ties to Place*

For decades, humanistic geographers and environmental psychologists have studied people's emotional relationships to places. Yi-Fu Tuan's (1974, 1977) now classic work is among the first to examine the ways in which people attach meaning to place. He argues that what begins as undifferentiated "space" evolves into "place" as we come to know places better and endow them with value. Thus places acquire deep meaning through the "steady accretion of sentiment" and experience (Tuan 1974, 33). Tuan and phenomenologists interested in place (Bachelard 1969; Relph 1985; Seamon 1982, 1984) call for a return to the everyday lifeworld of lived experience, and a move away from the objectification of place and its meaning (Million 1996).

Since these earlier writings, a variety of concepts and models have been developed in environmental and community psychology to further explore people's emotional connections with place, most notably regarding place attachment (Altman and Low 1992) and place identity (Pretty, Chipuer, and Bramston 2003; Proshansky 1978; Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff 1983; Korpela 1989; Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996). The notion of rootedness (Vitek and Jackson 1996) and the value of community places (Cobb 1996; Hummon 1992) have also been explored in rich detail. Despite the diversity of terms, all of this literature has people's relationships to place at its core. Such relationships are a critical aspect of people's involvement in their local community.

Altman and Low (1992) define place attachment as an affective bond between people and places. It includes different actors, social relationships, and places of varying scale. A review of this literature indicates that it has been researched largely in terms of affective bonds to the residence or neighborhood (Manzo 2003, 2005). For example, many studies link place attachment specifically to length of residence (Ahlbrandt 1984; Kasarda and Janowitz 1974; Taylor 1996). It has also been linked to community clean-up and revitalization efforts (Brown, Perkins, and Brown

2003). Thus place attachments, in influencing individual and group behavior, affect communities at large.

Environmental psychology research has also shown place attachment to be a dynamic and dialectic process that includes both a positive and a "shadow" side, as attachments can also entrap or create territorial conflicts (Chawla 1992). For example, Manzo (2003, 2005) found how romanticized notions of home and community cause difficulties when they contrast with one's everyday experiences, or when ideals about community (either implicit or explicit) are challenged. Given that conflicts among various community members can sometimes emerge in the planning process, exploring how place attachments influence people's motivations and behaviors in the community planning and development process is an important goal.

Another concept that has gained renewed vigor in the environmental psychology literature in recent years is "place identity." First coined by Proshansky in 1978, place identity consists of those dimensions of the self that develop in relation to the physical environment by means of a pattern of beliefs, preferences, feelings, values, and goals. It is a dynamic phenomenon that grows and transforms through lived experience (Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff 1983). As Frederickson and Anderson (1999) point out, "it is through one's interactions with the particulars of a place that one creates their own personal identity and deepest-held values" (p. 22). If people's identity and values are indeed informed by places they deem significant, then it follows that people's bonds with those places will impact their engagement in such places, whether it be to maintain or improve them, respond to changes within them, or simply to stay in that place (Pretty, Chipuer, and Bramston 2003).

Disruptions to Place Attachments

Studies in community and environmental psychology on disruptions to place attachments illustrate the importance of place meaning to community members as well as their commitment to, and participation in, neighborhood processes. For example, proposed development projects can be perceived by some community members as a threat to place attachments because they will change the physical fabric of the neighborhood. Those who feel their relationships to their community places are threatened by redevelopment may consequently resist a proposal regardless of its potential value. To adequately understand and respond to such reactions, it is critical to uncover and address these latent place attachments. In addition, crime, relocation, and environmental disasters, such as the hurricanes that now displace whole cities along the U.S. Gulf Coast with increasing frequency and devastation, also disrupt

place attachments, disturb a sense of continuity (Brown and Perkins 1992), and cause feelings of loss and alienation (Hummon 1992). Tapping into such feelings and reactions to disruption can, if properly recognized and understood, help mobilize citizen participation to rebuild a community. Conversely, if such feelings and experiences are not well addressed, disruptions could divide a community.

Much of the literature described above tends to examine people-place relationships at the individual level of analysis, largely because of the focus on subjective experience. Even those who view attachment as a commitment to the neighborhood and one's neighbors (Gerson, Steuve, and Fischer 1977) examine these institutional ties and social involvements on the individual level. While this research is important for understanding how individual cognitions and feelings impact community members' actions toward their local environment, for a fuller understanding of community-based action and planning, it is also helpful to look at research on people-place relationships that takes the community as its unit of analysis.

Community Place Attachment

Community and environmental psychologists, who focus as much on the neighborhood as on the individual level of analysis, explore attachments to commonly shared neighborhood places (Bonaiuto et al. 1999; Feldman 1996). Riger and Lavrakas (1981) found two dimensions of attachment that are communal in nature: a sense of *bondedness*, or feelings of being a part of one's neighborhood, and a sense of *rootedness* to the community. Here, emotional bonds with the neighborhood are products not only of individual, internal processes but also external, social processes. This is well illustrated by scholars who have conducted in-depth studies of particular neighborhoods with unique characteristics, such as ethnic enclaves (Abrahamson 1996; Rivlin 1987). For example, Rivlin's (1982, 1987) study of neighborhood attachments in an enclave of Hasidic Jews demonstrates the complex interrelationships between people's identity as members of a self-defined community and the neighborhood space where they live, work, and socialize. This work reveals how both qualities of settings and place attachments affect people's relationships to each other and their neighborhood. This is supported by recent research demonstrating that residents who are more attached to their community experience higher levels of social cohesion and social control and less fear of crime, while their neighborhoods have more outward signs of physical revitalization (Brown, Perkins, and Brown 2003).

Writings on cultural landscapes also shed light on community-level attachments to place by revealing the importance of shared identity and place attachments for community planning and development efforts (Umemoto 2001; Zelinsky 1997). This literature examines cultural connections to, and expressions in, place as well as group histories and shared meanings of places. This is particularly critical for the success of urban landscapes, which by their nature house the "public pasts" of many different groups who have a stake in a community (Hayden 1995). For example, a recent interdisciplinary study of Seattle's Chinatown-International District (Abramson, Manzo, and Hou forthcoming) included an examination of the meanings that residents and community leaders attached to places within the district. This revealed the motivations behind different stakeholder reactions to the ongoing neighborhood planning process. For some, proposed changes to the neighborhood signified an erasure of their particular cultural history and identity, and they consequently resisted the neighborhood plan. However, once these place meanings were acknowledged and discussed, community leaders and planners made more concerted efforts to include the concerns of the different stakeholders and incorporate strategies that acknowledged those attachments. Competition among different ethnic groups for sociospatial expression greatly lessened as each group's role and heritage was acknowledged and incorporated into the plan. This led to greater agreement on the neighborhood plan and a more satisfactory process for all. A more typical macrolevel community analysis would have made it more difficult to connect residents' needs and concerns with community planning efforts and the efforts of the local grassroots organizations.

The sharing of a common neighborhood space by diverse groups does not inevitably lead to a sense of community; therefore it is essential to understand the diverse meanings that a neighborhood holds for its residents in order to create successful places (Loukaitou-Sideris 1995). Such an understanding can also help foster action on the part of all parties who have an emotional stake in a place (Lukas 1985). This is critical because urban neighborhoods are shaped by an array of cultures as residents express their identity spatially, through the creation of vernacular (i.e., culturally-sensitive, locally-based) architecture and through their use of space. Such practices can build a sense of community and create new attachments to place.

However, good neighborhoods are not simple achievements nor are they merely a matter of outward physical or economic improvements. While comprehensive efforts to revitalize the human and physical fabric of declining neighborhoods are routinely advocated and implemented, proponents seldom focus on the role of place attachment. Instead, they focus on how

good neighborhoods need to achieve investments of time and money, social cohesion, and social control. Yet these very factors are related to place attachment, as those who are more attached to their neighborhoods are more likely to invest their time and money into the neighborhood. Those who are more attached to their neighborhoods also interact more with neighbors and watch over their communities more. Such activities stem from, and also create, further social cohesion, no matter how diverse the community members might be (Brown, Perkins, and Brown 2003).

Research that examines community-level place attachments has important behavioral implications (Shumaker and Taylor 1983). Such studies suggest ways in which emotional bonds to place can be connected to community participation in planning and design efforts. For example, landscape architect Randolph Hester's (1993) community design work in Manteo, North Carolina was based upon the meanings and value that residents attached to certain places. Through surveys and focus group discussions, residents of this small town identified "sacred places" that were important to them and that they wanted to preserve and protect. Residents' identification and articulation of these place meanings marked the beginning of community participation in the design process. Just as important, the designer's responsiveness to those attachments helped to make the revitalization project a success, not only because residents had an active role in the redevelopment of their community, but also because they were able to ensure that those places that were especially important and meaningful were preserved in the new plan. Such revitalization projects—rooted in careful explorations of place meanings, attachments, and identity—are still uncommon. However, they are essential to understand better so that we may learn how such processes impact community planning, preservation, and development, as well as how they can lead to positive community outcomes.

Sense of Community

People's attachments to place are often intertwined with their sense of community (Pretty, Chipuer, and Bramson 2003). Sense of community has been studied extensively in community psychology and sociology. While scholars have distinguished between geographically defined communities (community of place) and aspatial communities of interest (Nasar and Julian 1995), we are particularly concerned with communities of place, and the nature and quality of interpersonal relationships within blocks and neighborhoods. A psychological "sense of community" is thought to be multidimensional (Hughey and Speer 2002; McMillan and Chavis 1986; Chavis and Wandersman 1990) and has

been defined in many ways, but the greatest consensus revolves around feelings of membership or belongingness to a group, including an emotional connection based on a shared history, as well as shared interests or concerns (Perkins and Long 2002).[2]

It is noteworthy that emotional connection is at the core of a sense of community. While this connection is focused on bonds among people, place attachment (as an emotional connection to *place*) can complement a sense of community, since both can motivate community members to participate in neighborhood improvement and planning efforts. In fact, sense of community has been linked to place attachment at both the individual and community scale. Rivlin's (1987) study of a Brooklyn neighborhood found that attachment to the neighborhood served as a precondition for the development of a sense of community among neighbors. Moreover, both sense of community and place attachment manifest themselves behaviorally in participation. Both can be especially valuable when tied to practice.

Because sense of community is linked to citizen participation (Cuba and Hummon 1993; Perkins, Brown, and Taylor 1996) and other positive individual and neighborhood outcomes, creating and fostering a sense of community has become a key goal in planning practice (Morris 1996). Just one example of its application is the creation of walkable, mixed-use developments that promote social interaction in shared private and public outdoor spaces (Nasar and Julian 1995; Plas and Lewis 1996; for a critique, see Audirac and Shermyen 1994). However, in order to utilize sense of community to better inform practice, it is important to understand how it operates at multiple levels and in different psychological and social domains. This is where insights from environmental and community psychology are particularly helpful, as these fields have studied in depth the psychological and social processes at the root of a sense of community—feelings of mutual trust, social connections, shared concerns, and community values—along with place attachments. A rich, nuanced study of these helps to understand the basis of neighborhood-level action and cooperation.

THE POLITICS OF PLACE AND PLACE ATTACHMENT

Studies of community-level place attachments, their disruptions, and subsequent citizen action underscore the fundamentally political nature of people's connections to their community. Indeed, the very creation and use of space is a political act (Hayden 1997; King 1997). This particular argument is adopted by geographers who take a social constructionist perspective on place and examine what Castells (1983) calls the "production of space" or the ways in which the appearance, mean-

ings, and uses of place are influenced by the larger sociopolitical context in which they exist (see for example Keith and Pile 1993; Yaeger 1996; Massey, Allan, and Sarre 1999). Their work adds another dimension to our understanding of the role of place attachments in planning processes by providing an exploration of the sociopolitical context in which both our attachments and our communities exist.

A close examination of place attachments reveals how individual identity and power relations manifest themselves in the everyday uses and meanings of place (Devine-Wright and Lyons 1997; Dixon and Durrheim 2000; Manzo 2003). For example, who we are and where we feel we belong are influenced by gender, race, ethnicity, and class (Manzo 2003, 2005). As Cresswell (1996) points out, sociopolitical relations are often expressed in spatial terms—for example, we talk about our "position" in society, "marginalized" people, being an "insider" or an "outsider." Research has demonstrated a link among gender, race, and class, how we use space, and whether and how we participate in neighborhood processes (Massey, Allan, and Sarre 1999; Cresswell 1996; Yaeger 1996; Hayden 1995; Keith and Pile 1993). This includes whether we feel marginalized or empowered to participate in community change efforts, and whether we feel we have a place, or a right to a place, at the bargaining table. In making this argument, scholars draw a critical connection among place attachments, place meaning, and the larger sociopolitical reality in which we live, while connecting each to political action (Keith and Pile 1993).

The political aspects of place and place attachments are illustrated in communities that have been empowered or disempowered (often the same community experiences both simultaneously or in succession) in response to environmental problems (Edelstein 2003). In such cases, place attachments can be used to foster a partnership approach as different parties find common interest in their health and their neighborhood. When residents are able to take control of the situation themselves and identify common interests and targets, they are more likely to be mobilized toward action and be empowered (Edelstein 2003; Rich et al. 1995; Kemmis 1990). Conversely, if emotional responses to place (in this case particularly health-, property-, and place-related anxieties) are not acknowledged and understood, people can be divided and immobilized by their anxieties. Consequently, environmental and community psychology studies on the intersection of the politics of place and place attachments warrant further exploration.

Many studies of urban crises are rooted in a perspective that views individual place experience, social movements, and the political economy as separate systems (Mollenkopf 1992). As a result, "we are left with urban systems separated from personal experiences, with structures without actors" (Castells 1983, p. xvi). This dilemma is in urgent need of attention, and this article is an attempt to begin to address the separation of personal experience of place from an understanding of the politics and dynamics of community planning and development. We need a more integrated view of community life (Soja 1997) that recognizes the value of personal experience, attachments, and meaning on one hand and larger political-economic forces on the other. It is only through a holistic, ecological perspective that we can develop or foster effective planning and community development strategies.

Place Attachment and Conflict in Community Planning and Development

While place attachments can form the basis for cooperation and community action, they can also lie at the root of community conflict (Forester 1987). The planning literature is a critical source for understanding neighborhood-based conflict, because the planning process is rarely conducted without conflict (LeGates and Stout 1996). For example, in his effort to get racially integrated low-income housing built in white suburbs, Davidoff (1965) recognized the essential role that conflict plays in communities, arguing that "determinations of what serves the public interest in a society containing many diverse interest groups are almost always of a highly contentious nature" (p. 332). He felt that planners should act as advocates, so that the needs of underrepresented groups could be acknowledged and met. "Equity planners" today continue this tradition, as do those who employ participatory planning processes and advocate strategies for "planning for multiple publics" (Sandercock and Forsyth 1992, 45). Some planners even argue that conflict plays a necessary role in the planning and design of physical communities (Piven 1965). It is seen, for example, as a prerequisite for the existence and growth of public space (Deutsche 1996).

What is suggested but not explicitly addressed in this work are the underlying place attachments and meanings that influence the attitudes and behaviors of community members in conflict. It is essential to get to the root of these emotional relationships to place in order to understand people's reasons for blocking or facilitating certain community-based efforts. While the planning literature is rich in strategies for conflict resolution and consensus building, it usually does not explicitly analyze the underlying place attachments of different factions in community conflict and how an understanding of them can help foster cooperative action.

However, some environmental and community psychology and sociology research does explore this con-

nection of place meaning and attachments within the context of conflict, particularly in trying to understand the NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) response to what are often referred to as "locally unwanted land uses," or LULUs (Freudenburg and Pastor 1992). The NIMBY response is usually seen as organized community opposition to local environmental and/or social change—whether it is the development of a dumpsite, a wind turbine farm, or a homeless shelter. Environmental psychologist Devine-Wright (2003) argues that policy makers and commentators who frame community responses in terms of a NIMBY reaction typically depict people as inflexible and irrationally opposed to change, while assuming self-interested and egoistic motives for behavior. In his research on one community's reaction to a renewable energy development (i.e., a wind farm), Devine-Wright (2003) notes that this pejorative label for resistance is "politically deployed to undermine the legitimacy of opponents' views by opposing symbolic/affective concerns with rational/instrumental ones" (p. 2). He argues that this has limited utility in accurately explaining the "important emotional and symbolic character" of community members' response to local environmental change (p. 2). Perhaps most importantly, Devine-Wright (2003) argues that "NIMBYism fails to recognize that efforts to create better places to live are also likely to create the very social and psychological conditions in which place change matters for people" (p. 2). A careful understanding of the place attachments of community members can provide a better understanding of the social acceptability of change.

When considering the nature of place attachments and conflicts, it is important to remember that while the meanings of places may differ among community residents, there can be an appreciation among people of different sets of coexisting meanings (Flora and Flora 1996). What is important is not seeing the differences as hierarchical. Community development sociologists Flora and Flora (1996) maintain that people within a community can disagree on the meanings and uses of places and still respect one another if there is an "acceptance of controversy" (p. 221). They argue that once it is understood that meaning is not intrinsic to a place but is socially determined, then it becomes possible to accept diverse meanings as valid, air problems, and discuss solutions. In this way, conflicts are depersonalized and viewpoints on issues are less likely to be seen as moral imperatives; hence, cooperation becomes more possible.

Planning scholar Judith Innes (1996; with Booher 1999a and 1999b) points out that typical strategies for addressing community dissensus, including trade-offs, weighing competitive evidence, goal-directed analyses, and taking moral positions, often do not work to solve

community problems. It is likely unsuccessful because these instrumental strategies ignore the more symbolic and affective concerns that Devine-Wright (2003) identifies as crucial to community process. Indeed, Innes advocates for consensus building, a broad term encompassing many collaborative efforts, including long-term, face-to-face discussions to seek agreement on strategies, plans, policies, and actions. Consensus building employs special meeting management techniques that allow all participants to be heard and informed (Innes and Booher 1999a). It discourages people from taking hard-line positions while exploring assumptions and constraints. It acknowledges that different people have different points of view and do not always come easily to agreement. It is not coincidental that the successful consensus-building strategies that Innes advocates involve longer-term, face-to-face discussions that seek agreement among different community members and stakeholders, as it is through these processes that the symbolic values, place meanings, and attachments can be uncovered. While this process may indeed require special management techniques, it has an uncovering of place meanings and values at its core.

Consensus building can include more explicit explorations of place meaning and attachments among different community stakeholders. If consensus building is about examining assumptions and producing shared values in a joint learning process, then that process should include careful consideration of the underlying place attachments and meanings that are at the root of people's reactions. This can help move community members toward what Kemmis (1995) calls "the common ground of shared values" in the local community. Such a process can also facilitate the development of what social scientists call social capital (Flora and Flora 1996). A better understanding of the nature and value of social capital can foster more successful participatory planning processes.

Social Capital and Place Attachment: Understanding Community Assets

An "asset-based" perspective, as opposed to a problem orientation, has become popular in community development (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993). Along with place attachments, social capital is a community asset that can be accessed or created through participation in community planning; and the lack of either can greatly hinder public commitment to plans and the planning process. The concept of social capital refers to the extent and effectiveness of formal and informal human networks, as well as the impact of social ties on opportunities (Lin 2000). Formal networks include community organizations, and the links among them, while informal networks usually refer to social relation-

TABLE 1.   Four Psychological Dimensions of Community-based Social Capital (from Perkins and Long 2002)
(used with permission)

	Psychological Domain	
	Cognition/Trust	Social Behavior
Organized spontaneously/informally	Sense of community	Neighboring
Organized officially/formally	Collective efficacy/Empowerment	Citizen participation

ships and mutual trust (Perkins, Hughey, and Speer 2002; Saegert and Winkel 1998).

As with most concepts that become popular, social capital has attracted its share of critics. Middleton, Murie, and Groves (2005) find social capital to be poorly defined and its claims to be based more on rhetoric than empirically tested theory. They argue that it "is more of a product of wealth and demographics than something that can be artificially increased through policy prescriptions" (p. 1712). DeFilippis (2001), however, offers a more constructive critique, arguing that "social capital" is "an elastic term with a variety of meanings" (p. 782). While it often has been construed too narrowly and isolated from political and economic forms of capital (Bourdieu 1985), its various definitions cohere around the ability of individuals to secure benefits as a result of membership in social networks or other social structures (Narayan-Parker 1999). Further, we would dispute the claim by Middleton et al. that social capital is merely a product of wealth and demographics—there is substantial evidence of citizen participation, informal neighboring, and other bases of social capital across a wide range of demographics, including socioeconomic status (Perkins, Brown, and Taylor 1996; Putnam 2000; Saegert and Winkel 1998).

We would add that: (1) social capital also has important implications not only for economic and political capital but also for physical capital, or the creation and preservation of assets related to place and the built environment (as planners recognize), and (2) it operates on multiple levels, from individual motivations and behavior to formal and informal neighborhood networks all the way up to a culture of democratic communitarianism as a society (i.e., the value we place on community and on working collectively to improve it).

So while some have argued that social capital has largely disappeared (Putnam 2000), and that non-place-based (e.g., virtual) communities are replacing geographic ones, there is ample evidence that place-based community is alive and well, and that social capital is thriving (Taylor 2000). Its existence is evident in both well-functioning communities and in those that face

problems when people pool their resources and fight for their communities (Rich et al. 1995).

There are different ways that social capital can strengthen communities. In places where social capital and consensus are already strong, environmental problems can catalyze community action as residents focus on those assets they share as neighbors to help address the problem, even if their particular place-based values and attachments differ (Perkins, Brown, and Taylor 1996). Conversely, where conflicts already exist, it is easier for community members to come together in formal associations when they focus on their shared investment in the local environment and its value in their lives as residents. In that more formally structured way, social capital can develop in strife-ridden communities.

To better understand social capital at the individual level, Perkins and Long (2002) proposed a two-by-two psychological framework that contrasts informal and formally organized community-focused cognitions and behaviors. As Table 1 indicates, the key informal community-related cognition is sense of community, or trust in one's neighbors, which helps motivate both informal neighboring activity and participation in formally organized neighborhood groups. Formally-oriented community-focused cognitions relate to empowerment, or a sense of efficacy of collective action, which corresponds behaviorally to organized citizen participation.

While this framework is useful for analyzing individual motives and forms of social capital, it ignores the environmental side of community dynamics, or those *place-based* cognitions, attachments, and behaviors that are so critical both for the well-being of communities and for neighborhood planning efforts. Let us look at two examples to illustrate the different ways that social capital can influence community development and planning efforts.

Flora and Flora (1996) examine the creation of social capital in places where "newcomers" and "old-timers" clash in their study of the in-migration of middle-class professionals from urban areas into small towns. While longer-term residents look with favor on new retail facilities such as Wal-Mart for low-cost goods, newcom-

TABLE 2.   A Framework for Organizing Psychological Concepts that Focuses on Community in Both its Physical and Social Aspects

	Community-related Dimensions	
	Place	Social
Cognitive	Place identity	Community identity
Affective	Place attachment	Sense of community
Behavioral	Participation in neighborhood planning, protection, and improvement	Neighboring activities, participation in crime prevention, community celebrations

ers interpret them as threats to the picturesque nature of Main Street (Flora and Flora 1996). Here, conflicts stem from focusing on environmental capital, and the importance of social capital is ignored. Environmental capital—that is, the quantity and quality of natural resources and the landscape—becomes the source of conflict, and neither side recognizes the value of the social capital they have together (i.e., each group has skill sets, experiences, and perspectives that can benefit the other group). In this case, the newcomers had organizing skills and added new vitality to the community; these could be seen as an important new resource to be integrated into the community (Flora and Flora 1996). Despite their different reactions to Wal-Mart, newcomers and old timers are still residents of the same town and have its vitality and well-being at the center of their concern. This is their shared connection—the valuing of this community as a place to live. This can be the foundation of conflict resolution and consensus building. Thus, when the focus is on social capital and the value of fellow community members, conflicts can be effectively dismantled and the circumstances facing a community can be redefined in a more positive light.[3]

Conversely, in cases where there exists a shared, mutually agreed-upon value in the neighborhood, the environment can be the resource on which social capital is built. Kemmis (1995) argues for a greater focus on the commonly shared environmental capital of communities to stem what he views as the demise of public life. He claims that public life can be reclaimed only by understanding and practicing connections to real, identifiable places. Because no culture can exist in abstraction from place, we must recognize the common value of place that community members, however divided, ultimately share. As Jane Jacobs (1961) pointed out long ago, neighbors may have nothing more in common than a fragment of geography, but if they fail to manage that fragment well, the fragment will fail. Flora and Flora's focus on social capital contrasts with Kemmis's and Jacobs's view, but they all focus on shared values and common interests among community members, whether it be the physical community itself or the inter-

dependence of community members struggling to live satisfying lives. A careful analysis and understanding of these commonalities can make them powerful tools for community planning.

As we have seen, both social capital and place attachments are community assets. Indeed, this is what Kemmis and Jacobs have essentially argued—that shared, *place-based* values are an essential ingredient in well-functioning communities. Indeed, they are the very stuff of participatory community planning and development. We therefore offer Table 2 as an alternative framework for understanding the psychological dimensions of those community-focused interactions that involve both place-related and social aspects of a community. In this framework, we organize the various concepts from environmental and community psychology that have been described in this article—in particular, place identity, place attachment, and sense of community—and we link those to community participation. We consider there to be three fundamental dimensions to how people, as individual members of a community, interpret and interact with their community. These are the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions and they reflect the multiple ways that people experience their community both as a place and as a community of neighbors. On the cognitive dimension, there is both place identity and community identity (i.e., one's sense of self as informed by neighborhood places and by social interactions/neighboring respectively). The affective dimension refers to one's emotional relationship to the neighborhood or specific places within it (this takes the form of place attachments), as well as one's emotional relationships with neighbors and other local community groups (this takes the form of sense of community). Finally, the behavioral dimension includes participation in community planning, preservation, and development efforts (in regard to place-focused action) as well as engaging in neighboring and other social activities (in regard to socially oriented behavior).

It is important to note that these are the desirable or ideal conditions that lead to positive community out-

comes. Certainly, there are cases where people do not identify with their neighborhood, where they do not feel attached or have a sense of community, and where they do not participate in community improvement or planning efforts. However, in order to understand and properly address those situations, we need to understand these components of community dynamics when they thrive so that we may help foster place attachments, a sense of community, and a desire to participate in community activities.

Empowerment

An examination of the political underpinnings of place attachments and social capital reveal the ways in which participation can enable a sense of empowerment to emerge among community members. Indeed, as we have seen in the various cases presented earlier, social capital and empowerment are closely related to the psychological processes (place attachment, sense of community) and social processes (social capital, neighboring) that can be such valuable tools in effective participatory planning (Horelli 2002). Empowerment, defined by Rapoport (1987) as "a mechanism by which people, organizations and communities gain mastery over their affairs" (p. 122), illustrates the connection among place attachments, social capital, and action. Indeed, it may be a mediating factor that draws them all together. Speer and Hughey (1995) view empowerment as a reciprocal relationship between a community organization and its individual members. They claim that "relationships based on shared values and emotional ties to others produce more meaningful/sustainable bonds than emotional reaction to community issues alone" (Speer and Hughey 1995, p. 733). These studies of empowerment demonstrate that social power is built on the strength of interpersonal relationships among those working toward a common goal (Perkins 1995; Rich et al. 1995; Speer and Hughey 1995; Florin and Wandersman 1990). We also argue that shared emotional ties to *places* strengthen social relationships and collective community action even further.

While shared valued and emotional ties can empower community members, it is also true that situations in which communities are undergoing change or conflict can also create opportunities for empowerment. Rich et al. (1995), in their study of communities facing environmental threats, examine the relationships among citizen participation, the ways communities respond, and the forms of empowerment their responses suggest. They argue that a community's capacity to respond to a problem is determined by a combination of both individual characteristics and social institutions. They call for a partnership approach to citizen participation, which offers the advantage of a whole-community perspective that creates a proactive sense of empowerment rather than a reactive one (Rich et al. 1995). In particular, communities facing environmental problems can develop an "enabling response" in which citizens come together to confront a crisis (Edelstein 2003). Here, previously disempowering conditions such as an individual's sense of powerlessness, or inability to escape a hazardous situation, can be transformed through collective action, in which individuals develop a common purpose and create new responses to meet the challenges they face (Rich et al. 1995).

This kind of mobilization is certainly not restricted to communities facing environmental problems. Leavitt and Saegert (1990) found a similar phenomenon in their research on low-income cooperative housing in Harlem. Here, disenfranchised residents, mostly elderly, African American women, mobilized against all odds to reclaim their landlord-abandoned housing. With the help of sweat equity and technical assistance organizations, tenants with few alternatives organized, purchased their buildings back from the city, and renovated them, thus preserving and improving a meaningful place while empowering themselves in the process. This research demonstrates that a significant element of community empowerment is the relationship among individuals, groups, and the physical communities in which they exist.

TOWARD AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

While the literature described in this article provides ample evidence of the existence and value of place attachments and place identity, they have not been a critical part of the community development and planning literature. It is possible that because place attachment and identity began with a focus on individual meanings and experience, the applicability of these concepts has been less readily apparent to those working on the neighborhood scale. But communities are composed of individuals with histories, values, identities, and attachments and these do not develop outside of place; they also play a critical role in place-based improvements and planning.

Consequently, we call for a holistic, ecological perspective on community phenomena that takes an interdisciplinary approach and draws insights from an array of fields that have shed light on different aspects of community processes. This approach examines communities in their multiple environmental domains or forms of capital (physical, social, political, and eco-

TABLE 3. An Ecological Framework for Community Planning and Development: Exploring Multiple Environmental Domains and Levels of Analysis

	Environmental Domains (or Forms of Capital)			
	Physical	Social	Political	Economic
Individual	Place attachment/ identity Incumbent upgrading Residential pride and satisfaction	Sense of community Community attachment and identity Neighboring behavior	Citizen participation Empowerment	Personal investments Real estate decisions Monetary contributions
Social group/ organization	Shared place meaning Participatory planning and design Design Resident associations	Mutual assistance Networking Social cohesion	Empowered organization Level of participation	Fundraising Resource sharing Business associations
Neighborhood	Community physical conditions Upgrading, gentrification, or deterioration Abandonment Zoning	Informal social networks	Extent and power of community organization in neighborhood Organization in neighborhood External connections Representation	Private investment/ disinvestment Public investment (for example, community development block grants)
City/region/ society	Urban growth/sprawl Transportation systems	Social services (health, education, safety) Demographic diversity	Local, state, federal agencies Political institutions (lobbies, coalitions)	Regional/global economy Local/state/federal/ housing and economic development policies

nomic) and engages in multiple levels of analysis (individual, group/organization, community/neighborhood, and city/region/society). This is particularly important in addressing the complexities of community planning, preservation, and development today. This ecological model can serve as a guide for conducting community studies and participatory planning endeavors that engage multiple scales.

Table 3 shows how we can explore the various environmental domains at different levels of analysis. For example, one could examine individual-level phenomenon across the physical, social, political, and economic domains. Addressing individual-level issues related to the physical environmental domain would include an exploration of place attachments and place identity, while in the social domain one could study sense of community and community-level attachments and neighboring behavior. In the political domain, individual-level phenomena include political engagement and empowerment. In the economic domain, it includes decisions about where to buy and develop property, investments in maintenance and improvements, and financial contributions to community organizations.

Similarly, at the social group, neighborhood, and societal levels there are an array of phenomena to study

in the physical, social, political, and economic realms when taking a holistic approach to community phenomena. For example, at the social group and neighborhood levels, we can examine people's participation in community events like neighborhood clean-ups and planning projects in the physical domain, and examine the nature and degree of social cohesion, networking, and social capital (in the social domain), while studying the degree or process of empowerment, fundraising, and resource sharing in the political and economic domain, respectively. The city/region/societal level of analysis would examine macro-structural forces such as demographic shifts and diversity, social services, and the impact of political and economic institutions and policies.

This ecological framework expands beyond those psychological dimensions of community interaction that were presented in Table 2. While that framework is important for explaining the psychological dimensions that can influence community planning—place attachment, identity, sense of community, and so on—we offer this ecological framework as a way of including the political and economic domains and higher levels of analysis on which planners already tend to focus so that we may provide a more complete perspective. It may be

quite challenging to consider all these dimensions and levels of analysis in community studies and planning efforts, but according to the ecological principle of interdependence of elements within and across levels of a system, failing to do is often related to negative unintended consequences, such as neighborhood demolition and dissection for highway construction and urban renewal. Other ecological principles—such as recycling of resources or assets, succession of populations as neighborhoods change, and social adaptation to the built environment—have been fruitfully applied to community organization and development (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993; Perkins, Brown, and Taylor 1996; Speer and Hughey 1995).

Community-driven Projects with an Ecological Perspective

There are a number of good examples of recent research and community development efforts that have begun to take this more inclusive ecological approach to understanding community-based phenomena. One of the best examples is the work of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) in Boston (Medoff and Sklar 1994). It is no accident that DSNI started with a focus on place—the clean up of a vacant lot that had become an illegal dumping ground. This provided residents with (a) attention from the media and city hall; (b) a "winnable" issue and almost immediate success; (c) tangible evidence of their collective power; (d) a physical rallying point for mobilizing community action; and (e) a vision of a better, safer, more attractive neighborhood that justified their attachment to it (Medoff and Sklar 1994). Social resources, economic opportunity, and especially political empowerment were important factors in their success. Unlike ostensibly empowerment-based policies and organizations at the national level (Perkins 1995), DSNI maintained a true empowerment orientation. But DSNI might have floundered, as so many revitalization efforts have, if not for the importance placed from the beginning on the value and personal meaning of particular neighborhood spaces.

A more holistic approach has also been adopted in some research on affordable housing. In one study, long-term Harlem residents took over their landlord-abandoned buildings and conducted gut rehabs rather than give up and leave the neighborhoods that meant so much to them (Leavitt and Saegert 1990). Based upon this phenomenon, the authors developed the concept of "community households," which identifies place attachments and social capital as key ingredients of effective community-based action. Later research, building upon that study but focusing on tenant organizing in the Bronx, further develops the connection between place attachment and neighborhood change (Saegert 2000). Here, residents also mobilized based on

their attachments to their residence, and they made claims on the legal owners of the neglected buildings where they lived as well as on the public agencies responsible for the neighborhood. This, in turn, provided residents with a sense of empowerment and helped them develop a sense of social ownership. Tenant organizing efforts were facilitated by mediating institutions, which helped channel residents' place attachment into legitimate claims on their home place (Saegert 2000). This work demonstrates that place attachment, place identity, and sense of community are resources for neighborhoods that require cultivation to withstand the social and economic forces that can lead to displacement through property abandonment or gentrification (Saegert 2000; see also Pretty, Chipuer, and Bramson 2003).

A compelling example of local, faith-based grassroots organizing for community environmental change is the work of Camden Churches Organized for People (CCOP; Speer et al. 2003). CCOP used community social networks and intentional political pressures to address a physical environmental problem (abandoned buildings) that had serious economic consequences for a low-income community and the entire city of Camden, New Jersey. What was most unusual about this project, and perhaps its greatest value as an exemplary model, was how interdisciplinary the action-research team was. Two community psychologists (Speer and Peterson), three urban planners (Ontkush, Schmitt, and Rengert), an economist (Rahman), and a sociologist (Jackson) collaborated closely across multiple disciplinary divides to work together with community leaders and organizers.

There are also examples in rural areas and small towns that have adopted economic development strategies based on nearby settings of scenic beauty or cultural or historical significance to develop and market. These communities have identified what is unique about their place and how that can be used to renew a sense of community, enhance local pride, and even attract tourism. Often these places were forgotten or taken for granted by local residents. For example, Hespeler, Ontario, was a town on the decline, economically, socially, politically, and environmentally (Banks and Mangan 1999). Now, a concerted community-development effort has begun to reverse those trends by refurbishing several "anchoring" cultural institutions in the center of town (e.g., a farmers' market, museum, youth programs, small retail businesses). Residents have also brought back a citywide celebration, which had been a local tradition that had not taken place in thirty years (Banks and Mangan 1999).

We have emphasized community development cases that are more grassroots-driven than the typical

planning project because these projects engaged not only the built environment, but also the sociocultural, economic, and political contexts in ways that can inform the planning process. This ecological approach can also be applied to more expert-driven (but still very participatory) planning projects. For example, the *Plan of Nashville* (Kreyling 2005) was a three-year, participatory, downtown visioning project conducted by the Nashville Civic Design Center and inspired by Burnham's influential 1909 *Plan of Chicago*. Over 800 design experts, volunteers, and residents were involved in the Plan of Nashville, starting with a series of monthly Urban Design Forums (which led to the creation of the Civic Design Center itself) and small, collaborative teams conducting in-depth background research on the natural history and topography of the region, its social, cultural, political, and economic history, changes in land uses, architecture, transportation, and over one hundred previous downtown and neighborhood master plans (many of which were never implemented, which was another motivation for this major public initiative). The centerpiece of the process was a series of community-based planning workshops in downtown Nashville and all the surrounding neighborhoods, in which participants discussed and drew their general visions and more specific place-based preferences and worked toward consensus. In these workshops, the primary focus was on the physical environment, but in the discussion and subsequent melding of visions into a unified plan, social, economic, and political aspects of place were also considered, and one could see individuals voicing their ideas in small groups which, in turn, represented neighborhood interests in a citywide process. While this may not be typical of participatory planning, it illustrates how all the multiple environmental domains and levels (i.e., all the elements in Table 3) were employed.

CONCLUSIONS

This article demonstrates that place attachments, place identity, sense of community, and social capital are all critical parts of person-environment transactions that foster the development of community in all of its physical, social, political, and economic aspects. In particular, affective bonds to places can help inspire action because people are motivated to seek, stay in, protect, and improve places that are meaningful to them. Consequently, place attachment, place identity, and sense of community can provide a greater understanding how neighborhood spaces can motivate ordinary residents to act collectively to preserve, protect, or improve their community and participate in local planning processes. And while we still need to learn more about the processes by which place meanings and attachments influence citizen participation and community development efforts, the literature suggests that processes of collective action work better when emotional ties to places and their inhabitants are cultivated.

Few would argue that place attachments are unimportant, but this leaves open the question of why they have not played a more important role in community planning and development processes. Much of the answer lies in the lack of interdisciplinary collaboration and in differences of perspective across disciplines. Environmental psychologists who study place attachments and identity often focus on individual experiences and meaning and less frequently examine the collective nature of these phenomena. Community psychologists address community development, empowerment, and the social capital created by aggregates of people, but focus less on individual experience or place-based theories. Planners and community designers, while focusing on place, tend to examine neighborhood-level dynamics and macro-structural forces—for example, the political-economy—and do not often look at personal experiences of place and attachments. But together, all of these perspectives can provide a rich, holistic understanding of how to create and develop successful communities.

Another challenge is a common perception among practitioners that research—especially social science research on place meanings and other psychosocial dynamics—is a luxury they cannot afford. But the cost of not considering these important dynamics and underlying motivators is great. We believe that a more holistic, ecological perspective can help overcome this kind of division between research and practice. Integrating these approaches is important to understanding the values of a community and how place meanings can be honored and strengthened in the planning-and-design process. Planners can benefit from environmental and community psychology perspectives on individual and community place attachments to help understand who gets involved in neighborhood change and planning efforts and why, as well as why people resist or support change efforts. For those seeking to foster participation, tapping into emotional bonds to place can help members of a community articulate and act upon place meaning. Even in communities with entrenched conflicts or negative responses to change, an understanding of place attachments and meanings can provide lessons about what mobilizes people, and what feelings about place are at the root of their reaction, which can help move a community toward conflict resolution or even consensus.

Neighborhoods can either thrive or struggle. Residents' ability and willingness to address local problems are influenced by their emotional commitment to their community places. These bonds are critical to the well-being of neighborhoods, as they can motivate residents to participate in their communities and work to improve and protect them (Brown, Perkins, and Brown 2003). It is essential for those working in community improvement and planning to better understand those emotional connections to place, how they are fostered, and how they might lead to action and effective participatory planning processes. More truly interdisciplinary, collaborative work that takes an ecological perspective is needed to fully explain such complex phenomena. It is difficult, time-consuming work, but it is essential to effective participatory planning and improvement of the neighborhoods and towns that form the common ground upon which we live our daily lives.

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NOTES

1. Community development is defined here as a process whereby government, nonprofit organizations, citizen volunteer associations, or public-private partnerships address existing—and prevent future—adversities within a community (Perkins, Crim, Silberman, and Brown 2004).

2. For a fuller treatment of sense of community, see A. T. Fisher, C. C. Sonn, and B. J. Bishop, eds. 2002. *Psychological sense of community: Research, applications, and implications.* New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

3. Appleyard's (1979, 1981) now classic studies address similar dynamics within communities between what he calls "insiders" and "outsiders." His work recognized the critical role of place meaning in the planning process, but subsequent work in planning did not maintain this integrated perspective. In a sense, then, we are rediscovering a lost connection.

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