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Something *was* Here: The Power of the Mundane in Rethinking Urban Change

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This project is personal. It is an attempt, on my part, to begin to weave together two educations. One, founded in theory, founded in a nuanced, founding in a tangled, and confusing engagement with the worlds I am embedded in, directly and indirectly, and the other, founded, more, in technical training, in approaching the world through the lens of built environment, tangibly. This project is an attempt to begin to think through a world view, a way of planning and engaging in the built environment that is based on the affective dimension, that embraces embodied sensation and nuance. This project is one that, fundamentally, begins to imagine a sort of relationality based on affect, a relationality based in shared sensation and shared constitution. In doing so, this project begins to reimagine conceptions of time and connection in urban spaces in the United States, in Seattle, specifically in the context of rapidly changing cities, cities that are founded on displacement, on cyphering of bodies through place, and continue to be embedded in narratives of progress, narratives of development, and narratives of growth.

This project reads affect theory into relationship to place, and begins, through media analysis, to look at how affect emerges as a foundation for understanding parallels between personal connection to place, identity, and relationality within communities, and outside of communities. So, while this project emerges from a personal investment, it also questions the normal order of operations within engagements with the built environment.

In this way, this project is multidimensional. At a foundation level, I attempt to understand how affect circulates through spaces, through connection to place and personhood. I attempt to understand how this connection is held on to in the context of extreme change, through narrative, and through storytelling. More broadly, through this engagement, I begin to incorporate the affective dimension into the worldview of a planner. I incorporate affect into an understanding of urban change and the violence associated with it, to begin to reimagine a world where affect is an organizing force.

This work is situated in the context of the redevelopment of Yesler Terrace. This community, is a community whose physical space is changing quickly. Yesler Terrace is an affordable housing site and

community that was built in 1941. In 2013, the SHA began to demolish and redevelop Yesler Terrace. What was once home to 561 families, will now be the site of, according to current plans, five thousand mixed-income units. In the midst of this redevelopment, many narratives have circulated. The Seattle Housing Authority has been working through an engagement process of Citizen Review Committees, getting feedback from residents about the impending changes. They have also promised replacement housing for those displaced by this change. This narrative is one of many. Artists and activists, both through the SHA and outside of it, have worked to preserve memory and capture meaning in the context of this complete change. I argue, within my engagement, that this work of preservation and push back against erasure is fundamentally founded in the affective dimension, and that this engagement with affect is what the urban planning realm is missing.

I do this in multiple parts. First, I engage in a process to define affect, both in the context of my own world, and in the context of other scholarly conversations. I write about my journey with affect, and affect in my own world, acting as a first glimpse at the intimacy that affect provides for, and also situating this inquiry in a recognition that, as someone on the outside, my perceptions of affect through these works will be different from those for whom this place is uniquely theirs. Then, I move into an engagement with Yesler, with two key projects – the film *Even the Walls*, and the Yesler Terrace Youth Media Project. I look at how affect flows through these projects, through the stories that are told, through the relationships conveyed, and through conceptions of time, space, and meaning. I try, in this work, to not shy away from my own position, to recognize myself as an outsider engaging with work that for me, holds meaning, but is not fundamentally my reality. I find relations to this work, but these relations are conditioned by distance. This engagement must be specific because of this, but in doing this work, more broadly, I also push back against inherently capitalist, detached notions of progress, and of development, beginning to push for a reordering of our world, in the dominant spheres of white culture

in the United States, based on an understanding of relationality, of co-constituted bodies and vulnerability, and based on a radical sort of caring.

I have three notes for the reader before proceeding. The first, is a recognition that affect is messy. It engages with confusing questions of sensation, of embodied realities, and of the limits and confines of our perception, all elements of how we relate to one another. Affect is, by nature, evasive and ephemeral. Throughout this engagement I struggle with this, and I hope, that through my struggle, affect finds its way into your own conception of the world, or brings pause, brings questions of how we move through the world and relate to one another. Second, throughout this paper I gesture to a “we”, “we” in this sense, is referring to those moving through cities, specifically moving through the city of Seattle. I recognize, though, that in referring to this “we” there is a flattening occurs that is at tension with the awareness of positionality shaping perspective throughout this project.

The third, is a caution, for myself, and for those reading. The narratives I engage with are real. Yesler Terrace is being demolished, and a new Yesler, a different Yesler, is being built. This place will never, completely be the same. The crux of my engagement is an argument that this change involves identities, involves lives, and involves meaning. To engage in this spirit, there needs to be a constant reminder of this. A constant reminder that I am an outsider, a constant reminder of my position. With narratives of this sort, I find myself falling into binaries, development on one side, and the realities of lives on the other. Though our society is organized in binaries, sensations are not organizable in this way, sentiment evades categorization. In engaging in this process of urban change, displacement, and gentrification, this work is fundamentally political, but I hope throughout this engagement to push back against the reduction of the reality of mundane and meaningful lived experience to binaries, to choices between right or wrong. Affect does not operate in categorizations or reductions of either or.

Affect

I first encountered affect in the summer of 2015, while studying abroad in Lima, Peru. Captivated by the energy of Lima, and entangled in my own questions about the politics and ethics of studying a place as an outsider, I began to grapple with the nature of everyday movements through the world. In retrospect, my fascination with the senses of the city of Lima, and the embodied experience of moving through it, in part, perhaps, came about from being somewhere completely new.

I have lived in cities, though much smaller than Lima, throughout my entire life. I had been a single entity in a wave of individuals moving through spaces that held unique meaning throughout my entire existence. I had been a single fleck of a person in the context of a cityscape of hundreds of thousands, and maybe even millions. But something about being in a completely new context, in a completely new framework, and being an outsider, unsure of how to navigate with the crowd, that made the dynamics of city spaces fascinating in a completely different and new way.

In thinking about this experience, two years later, what stands out to me, immediately, is the time spent walking from my apartment suite, to the grocery store, or to class, to meetings, or to meet friends. I remember specific streets, specific sounds, specific signs, all which now, looking back, hold a sort of confusing and ephemeral meaning for me. I remember a specific intersection – the department store with sparkling dresses clinging to mannequin's bodies, blurs of blue, currency exchanged quickly, benches lining the street in rows, buses weaving past, exhaust blowing, I remember coughing. This intersection was where I first found affect.

At the end of my study abroad program, we were given the space to complete our own research project. I thought about how to use this project to process the past 6 weeks. I thought back to this intersection. I couldn't stop thinking about it. Energy flowing in and out of the space in waves, the buzzing and bumping of traffic serving as an ambient but invasive soundtrack running throughout, in rhythms – waves of cars, individuals, buses, and bikes flowed into the intersection, moving in and out and on with their every day. As an individual moving through the space, I meandered through the crowd, pushing my

way past individual after individual, barely making it across in time. As soon as I left the space, the sensory experience calmed down, cooled off, the sounds and vibrations of the space fading in the distance. But for the minute or so that I moved through the space, it was so captivating. I had this sense that there was meaning within this, but it was evasive, I was unsure of how to engage with it. For a moment, I was surrounded by people, connected to people by space and proximity, but at the same time completely distinct entities, separated by so much distance. I kept think about how despite our movement through the space as separate entities, and the mundane reality of the experience, our shared bumps or glances could shape our days, and our trajectories. I became fascinated by this notion of proximity in the face of deep separation, about this notion of impacting and shaping trajectories without doing so overtly.

This focus, for me, was the beginning of a two-year sort of fascination with affect. For my final project I chose to return to this intersection, and another close by that was familiar, but also completely new, an intersection that I moved through when walking to class, when walking to go shopping, or when walking to just to walk. I spent eight hours at these intersections, watching, moving, walking – getting a sense for how energy circulated through the space. I came in, as much as possible, without any guiding questions, and was there to simply be a part of the space, and to feel the embodied experience of being an observer of the space.

This engagement, without my knowing it, centered around affect. I think specifically here about the sensations that I experience while moving through the intersections that I centered my project around. As I touched on before, I was interested in the encounters that took place within the intersection, though not so much in the actual dynamics of the encounter, as in how these meetings shaped future moments. I remember during breakfast one morning, in Lima, one of my classmates told me he had heard once that every person we see in our dreams is someone we have passed by once before. Regardless of whether this anecdote is true, it made me think in depth about the significance of bumping into, or passing by, or exchanging glances with someone we share an intersection with for a fleeting moment. I

wondered whether the encounters that happened at intersections had an impact on where we went when exiting the intersection, whether a small shift in position, or a glance shared could shape or change where individuals went next, or their perspective or position within the world. In this line of thinking, I do not mean to argue that there is a literal shift in perspective or position or trajectory. These impacts, I think, happen less obviously, subconsciously, below the surface. My project, in this sense, fundamentally, centered on reading meaning into the mundane, questions of how we make meaning, and how we fail to recognize meaning being made.

One moment stands out here that I think speaks to affect particularly well. I was in my last day of observations at intersections. Throughout our trip, we had talked about the politics and implications of taking part in a study abroad, of traveling elsewhere to learn from the culture and individuals, and then leaving. These conversations have stuck with me since, I often think back to them in current discussions and dilemmas that I find myself in while taking urban planning classes for my major, or when navigating questions of positionality in the current moment. When at the intersections, I thought about these conversations. For me, these intersections did have meaning, though this meaning was completely different from those for whom this intersection was a regular part of their daily existence. Sitting there, trying my best to immerse myself in these intersections felt voyeuristic. It felt messy, potentially problematic. I never quite found a way to completely answer these concerns, I think they are always there when working with observations, and they remain in this work.

There was a moment at one of the intersections where this concern felt particularly potent. It had been on my mind that day, as I had seen people move through the intersection now on two occasions. I noticed the regulars, and there was a sense, I think, of fleeting recognition on many of their faces as they moved past me. While sitting on the corner, behind a tree, trying my best to blend in, a younger, probably middle-school-aged, child walked by, wearing a backpack. I never saw their face, but as they moved past I saw on their backpack, a white mask. My eyes met the eyes on the back side of their

backpack. It was surprising, almost spooky. This moment gave texture to the conversations I had been a part of throughout the program, an inexplicable sensation that came with the reminder that while sitting in this intersection, I was watching lives go by, specific individual experiences in which this intersection played a different role. When I think about the importance of recognizing positionality, in recognizing privilege, and stepping back, I think about this moment.

This experience, of studying abroad, and of spending this time at intersections, changed my experience today. Being in Lima, feeling the sensations of the city, being a part of this program, changed how I conceived of myself, of my body, my position, how I move through the world, and in doing so, fundamentally, changed how I interact with others. In this sense, this experience was and is an embodiment of affect.

Affect is the idea that when two bodies meet, defined loosely, there is some sort of embodied intensity that occurs at a deep sort of sensory level. It is an embodied intensity that shapes us, and shapes how we move through the world, but it is an embodied intensity that does not make much noise. When I wrote of my experience moving through intersections in Peru, I was engaging in an attempt to understand affect, without really knowing it.

I came back to school, still fascinated by the layers of experiencing moving through these intersections. I wanted to understand how different actors, both human and non-human, came together to make a moment happen. How much complexity it took for one person, in one second, to weave through an intersection – breezing past a lamp post, bumping shoulders with someone else – and how what happened within the confines of this experience shaped trajectories of where individuals went next. I stumbled upon affect in a class centered around the politics of life, and from there, felt I had a language to begin to unpack an experience that I still struggle to describe for myself, and for others. Affect, in this sense, has the power to unpack meaning where meaning may be opaque. In being centered around embodied intensity, affect has a sort of ephemeral quality. Affect, in this sense, refers to the sensations

that are deeply felt, but are difficult to describe within the confines of English language. Think of a moment when you hear a loud “boom” and your gut drops. Simply saying “your gut drops” fails to capture the deep sensation that occurs in this moment. There is so much more texture and density. Affect allows us to take this moment, and to unpack it, thinking through how this “boom” could in some small way trigger a different trajectory, a different life force. Affect allows us to think through the interconnection that takes place within this fleeting sensation.

It is for this reason that I believe in affect. Affect engages with the power of the mundane, and in doing so, I think, has the power to rethink how we move through the world, rethink connection and dependency, and rethink the role that intimacy and connection to place plays in our everyday. This is the central project of this work.

This work is an attempt to read affect theory into the urban planning process. In doing so, this work begins to nuance traditional planning in an attempt to embrace intimacy and complexity of relationship to space and place. I engage specifically here with the redevelopment of Yesler Terrace, an “affordable housing” community in the First Hill neighborhood of Seattle, the first racially integrated housing site in United States History. In 2006, the Seattle Housing Authority began plans to redevelop Yesler Terrace, demolishing the former 561, and rebuilding, according to current plans, approximately five thousand mixed-income units. In exploring the important history and redevelopment of Yesler Terrace, this project explores, in some ways, the complexity of place attachment in the context of a gentrifying city.

Within this, this project is fundamentally caught up in a question of home, what it means to be connected to home, understanding how affect relates to this connection, and how this concept of home ebbs and flows throughout the urban planning process. The context of affordable housing provides a uniquely magnified example of this. Yesler Terrace was and is and will be home to many families and

many individuals, and this discussion of the redevelopment is one that needs to be constantly aware of the fact that for many, this redevelopment is fundamental tied to livelihood and identity.

In reading affect into the planning process, this project is experimental. Affect, as I have hinted to, is something deeply personal, embedded within each of us. It is difficult to begin to understand how affect intermingles within my own life, let alone how it weaves throughout the lives of others. But, this work is important. Throughout this engagement, I strive, as I have said, to balance a recognition of the deep internal nature of affect, and the power dynamics associated with studying a community, as an outsider, and within the institution of the academy. This project engages directly with power dynamics of this sort in beginning to rethink the relationship between the planner and community members, and this reality is something that I strive to hold at the center of my work.

Affect

Affect *is* complicated and messy. But this messiness fundamentally shows how multilayered everyday moments are, and how visceral forces operate within each moment at a deep, inconspicuous level. Though difficult to grasp and engage with, especially because it evades the confines of the English language, engaging with affect is necessary in that it allows space for rethinking through how we engage with one another, our surroundings, and brings in a recognition of nuance and interconnectedness.

In “An Inventory of Shimmers” Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth work through various concepts of affect. They say,

“There is no single unwavering line that might unfurl toward or around affect and its singularities, let alone its theories: only swerves and knottings, perhaps a few marked and unremarked intersections as well as those unforeseen crosshatchings of articulations yet to made, refastened, or unmade” (5).

It is in this spirit that I engage with affect. Throughout this engagement, I hope to begin to get to the root of why I think that affect is powerful, and the underlying ways in which affect can be read into the field of planning. I found the power affect, in some small sense, while in Lima. This is an attempt to delve deeper within this, to take this power and extend it, weave it into everyday

practice, and begin to imagine a planning practice based on theory. In Lima, I saw how affect can be a lens for rethinking our engagement with the everyday, for understanding how we are made and unmade as we move through the world. Here, I hope to take this first encounter with affect and begin to imagine a sort of engagement with the built environment that is based on the affective dimension.

Affect in the Everyday – The Power of the Mundane

Kathleen Stewart writes about affect in the context of the everyday. In the opening of her book *Ordinary Affects*, she immediately pushes for an understanding of the world that does not focus on totalizing systems, but instead looks at how forces, like globalization, capitalism, and so on, circulate throughout lives. She argues that her project is to “bring them into view as a scene of immanent force, rather than leave them looking like dead effects imposed on an innocent world” (1).

She goes on to define the ordinary, characterizing it as “a shifting assemblage of practices and practical knowledge” (1). Ordinary affects, she says, in this sense, are “the varied, surging, capacities to affect and to be affected that give everyday life the quality of a continual motion of relations, scenes, contingencies, and emergences” (2). Ordinary affects are happenings, they’re encounters, they’re daydreams, expectations, disappointments, relations that “catch people up in something that feels like something” (2).

It becomes clear, when reading Stewart, that when we talk about affect, we are talking about the dynamics of life generally. Interaction, whether with other human bodies, non-human animal bodies, or inanimate bodies, encompasses our every moment, we are never truly alone – we are constantly in states of encounter.

In the introduction to her book, Stewart brings in Raymond Williams’s structures of feelings. Borrowing from him, she explains that ordinary affects ‘do not have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures’ (3). She contrasts these sensations with the “‘obvious meaning’ of semantic message and symbolic signification,” perhaps gesturing to the idea that

affect is “immanent, obtuse, and erratic” as opposed to feelings, which are easier to grasp and translate (3). Affect gains meaning in movement – movement through “bodies, dramas, and social worldings of all kinds” (3). Affect, in this sense, as I have attempted to outline, is a guiding force, an embodied intensity that stimulates movement and shapes trajectory, but operates almost as a silent force. It follows, then, that affect is fundamentally concerned with our everyday – shaping how we move through the world.

Jonathan Flatley also touches on the everyday dimension of affect in his book *Affective Mapping*. Flatley explains that affective mapping indicates the memories, or pictures, that we bring with us as we move through the world. These memories or pictures carry with them affective values of the spaces, places, and situations that our social worlds are comprised of. In this way, he provides a tangible, direct way of thinking through how affect guides, and how affect shapes the everyday.

This is why affect is important, and why reading affect into the urban planning process is pivotal. Planning, as a baseline, is concerned with the dynamics and operations of the everyday, how we live our life in the context of community and in the context of the built environment.

Affect and Consciousness

All of the speakers I engage with here, discuss, in some form, affect in the context of consciousness, working through a question of what level of sensation we are aware of when we move through the world.

As I gestured to in the previous section, affect moves silently, without making noise. And despite being guiding, we are often unaware of the way in which affective memories move through our bodies and flow within encounters.

This brings up an interesting question of what it means to engage with the world, what it means to be a being moving through the world, and potentially breaks down dominant conceptions of consciousness and knowledge. Without engaging with the discipline of psychology, or diving far into the depths of processes of scientific inquiry, affect begins to dismantle the idea that through process and

methods of inquiry, that we can ever truly know, completely, the dynamics of how we move through the world and make meaning.

Gregg and Seigworth touch on this in their discussion of Brian Massumi's, an affect scholar, work. Referencing the ephemeral and difficult-to-engage-with quality of affect, they say, "affect would feel a great deal less like a free fall if our most familiar modes of inquiry had begun with movement rather than stasis, with process always underway than a position taken" (4). Affect is difficult to engage with in that it is subversive, it pushes back against current conceptions of bodies and identity, and connection, and begins to imagine a new world of operation where sensation and emotions are at the forefront. Affect is difficult to engage with because it is fluid, and it points to a form of knowing that is beyond current conceptions of the way the world works, and perhaps shows the limitation of current conceptions of knowledge and thought. Affect, in this sense, points to the power in thinking through what is beyond our control, or what cannot be known. Affect, in this sense, makes space for a sort of humility, both in conceptions of oneself and in conceptions of others. In the same vein, thinking specifically in the context of affect and urban planning, affect begins to breakdown conceptions of the planner as being able to completely know a community, or completely understand the depth of various dimensions of a context they are engaging with.

Affect in Relation to Bodies and Becoming

Gregg and Seigworth's gesturing to this question of why affect is so difficult to engage with brings in a question of how we relate affect theory to conceptions of bodies and becoming. Various thinkers within affect theory conversations gesture to the way in which affect relates to the body. Sara Ahmed talks about surfaces of bodies. Eve Sedgwick talks about texture and utterances. Gregg and Seigworth talk about the in-between-ness of affect, and becoming.

This question of consciousness relates, more broadly, to a question of what constitutes a body, and what it means to be in a state of becoming. In "An Inventory of Shimmers" Melissa Gregg and

Gregory Seigworth work through the idea of of “in-between-ness” and bodies within the context of affect. They define affect as a “state of relation”, as a passage between bodies.

The relationship between affect and bodies seems to have multiple dimensions. In “Happy Objects” Sara Ahmed talks about angles. She writes, “we may walk into a room and ‘feel the atmosphere,’ but what we feel depends on the angle of our arrival. Or we might say that the atmosphere is already angled; it is always felt from a specific point. The pedagogic encounter is full of angles” (Ahmed 14).

In Ahmed’s discussion of angles, I see a direct connection to bodies, to positionality. We all encounter affect differently, because we all approach an encounter from an angle specific to ourselves and our own position. We encounter affect, and we are conditioned by affect in different ways. In this sense, Ahmed speaks to what Kathleen Stewart pushes for in the first pages of *Ordinary Affect*, to begin to recognize the intricacies with which affect lends itself to, to begin to understand a world not in the totalizing systems to guide and shape us, but in the way those systems circulate among us. I find this tension within affect as well though, in gestures to the affective dimension I find myself thinking through a web of energy the unites and ties us all together. Perhaps not completely untrue, but part of what makes affect powerful, is the way it situates individual bodies as affective agents moving through the world, it situates bodies as autonomous but interconnected.

In *Touching Feeling*, Eve Sedgwick thinks through the relationship between texture and affect. Sedgwick posits that texture seems like a promising site for shifting the focus of “interdisciplinary conversation” from epistemology – or a focus on performativity as a lens for showing us whether there are essential truths and how or whether we can know them – to a conversation that thinks through phenomenology and affect – or what motivates performance, how “effects are mobilized in their execution” (17). When we perceive texture, we are a part of other perceptions of texture, a long lineage of others, a “history of touches” that have worked to form the surface that we are engaging with, much like affect and the body. Conceiving of surfaces of the body as sites of texture, perhaps, is a way to think

of the body, of bodies, as conditioned by affect, as shaped by “touch,” as shaped by sites of affective encounter. Here, affect, and Sedgwick’s work, seem to almost shift our conception of the world from one of a false sort of separation, to one founded in entanglements, and gaining meaning within encounter. Here, affect signals to an idea very similar to Judith Butler’s thinking in her work *Precarious Bodies*, a conception of the body that is fundamentally centered around relationality, a “I” as formed and shaped the the Other.

Affect and Temporality

Gregg and Seigworth read this into a discussion of, again, the ephemeral nature of affect, and the tendency of the ‘what’ in affect to give way to matters of the “‘how’ in the rhythm or angle of approach, ... [the tendency of] many theories of affect” to not sweat the “construction of any elaborate step-by-step methodology” (14). Affect pushes past current concepts of time and temporality in the United States. It pushes us to slow down, to take notice of the intermingling of encounters that make up our everyday, and to think about the meaning that is encapsulated within each moment. This, for me, is one of the most powerful elements of affect, and where, potentially, it begins to imagine an alternative conception of the world most potently. To notice affect, we must slow down, we must linger, we must engage in the mundane. We must begin to push back against inherently capitalistic notions of progress, and of productivity. This is powerful.

Affect and Home

Kathleen Stewart writes about affect in the everyday in “Ordinary Affects.” Her writing weaves through confusing, almost half-written stories, sharing moments within the life of one woman, intermingled with short theoretical pieces that think through the forces and potential of the everyday.

In the final chapter of her book, called beginnings, she suggests that thought is “not the kind of thing that flows inevitably ... but rather something that takes off with the potential trajectories in which it finds itself in the middle” (128). Her book, she says, does not come to a finish, it spreads out, with a sort of rhizome-like effect (see Deleuze and Guattari).

Earlier on in her book, in a section entitled “Still Life” she talks about still life paintings in the context of affect and life trajectory. She says, “A still is a state of calm, a lull in the action. But it is also a machine hidden in the woods that distills spirits into potency through a process of slow condensation” (18). So simply, but so viscerally and tangibly, she relates affect and potential to the ordinary and the everyday, to the mundane reality of life. Lives, for the most part, without being too cynical, are cycles of the mundane. There is excitement, there are moments of lows, but we move through the world in a rhythm, surviving. But this mundane reality is fascinating, for it holds so much potential that is not apparent until it unravels. Stewart goes on, she says that “a still life is a static state filled with vibratory motion, or resonance. A quivering in the stability of a category or a trajectory, it gives the ordinary a charge of an unfolding” (19). This is affect. Affect, in this way, provides a level of mystery to our everyday. An almost silent complexity that we carry with us as we move through the world, a map of encounters that shape our current moment, and can be shaped by our current moment, to move us, to morph us.

When I think of affect in the context of my own home, I think of many things, but have more questions than answers. Home, four years ago, was something quite different than it is now. It was the angst filled emotions and sensations of being a teen confined within the walls of a home that was frustratingly comfortable. Home, now, seems like a longing for this reality, with a recognition that it will never be the same. Home to me, now, involves people who I had yet to know four years ago. Home involves some of the same people that it once did, though these relationships have shifted, depth has been added, tensions have cooled, angst still there, but fallen to the wayside, much less pressing, ever apparent.

Home is now a question. A question of where I go next, a question of who I become, a question of whether I currently have the agency to actively shape who I become, whether the flow of affect in part, is up to me, or whether try as I might, affect flows through without my understanding.

When I think back on various definitions of what it means to be home, I think of moments, some small, some large. Moments that I think involve affect.

Home is my first day of freshman year of college. Me, a baby, pushing my mom out the door, left alone in a hollow space, pale brown walls only clothed by an empty cork board (but not cork – what is this called?) with a large “UW” at the center, literally a blank slate. Feeling so completely lost, so angry at myself for telling my mom to leave. I remember this person, I am this person, but this memory seems far away. In retrospect this memory seems so naïve.

I remember hearing my best friend Kearstin’s voice wafting from the room next door. I remember seeing her mom, blurry, rushing down the hallway, Kearstin’s voice still lingering. At some point, I worked up the nerve to say hi, forcing myself to leave the pale brown confines of my new “home”, trailing behind Kearstin, hiding that I was hiding behind her shoulder as we went from door to door introduce ourselves to our new floor-mates.

Kearstin has been my best friend now for four years. Her voice holds those memories, memories of skateboarding up and down that hallway, memories of sitting on the laundry room floor, memories of doing nothing, eating frosted covered mini wheats on the floor of our dorm room hallway, sitting upside down, legs stretched out against the walls, backs on the ground. This is home. Home is a four-year friendship that continues on. Home is shared memories of a space explicitly temporary. Gone now.

Home is getting falafel sandwiches at Tierra Santa while studying abroad in Lima. Home is laughing instead of crying with Haley, unsure of what to do, how to process, what it even means to move forward. Home is our shared sighs, remembering an experience that shapes us, but an experience that, in some ways, would be okay being forgotten.

Home is spending summers with my grandparents and family visiting on Lake Michigan, a confusing question of whether on vacation or at home, switching back and forth, longing for one home while in the other.

Home is laying on the stairs. Distant memories of family members, once a constant presence. Now a painfully distant memory. Lost connections.

Home is losing my phone while doing homework, wrapped in knotted configurations of my blankets. Ripping them off the bed, a familiar sensation of shaking and waiting for a loud thud when my phone shockingly, miraculously, falls to safety.

Home is Yoda, home for the first time. A new addition, now a fixed connection. A “part of the family” that once was never there, but now will forever be a part of us all.

Home is yelling, laughing, frustrated screams. Yelling from pain, yelling without knowing why, yelling because of love muddled by frustration muddled by angst. Longing for comfort, longing to be there, but longing to leave. Home is turning the corner barefoot, running down the stairs, stomps. My dad yelling, scolding, against stomping. Home is pots and pans clanging at 6 in the morning. Coffee grinders. Home is 4:30pm walks up the steep hill on Fulton. Home is anxiously watching my dad lead Yoda into the unmarked crosswalk. Constant conversations of coming from “anxious people” and being a Solomon. Home is first remembering the bad, and then remembering all the good.

Home is confusing. Home is specific places, many places, but home is a memory that is ever fading, but ever shaping what I look for when I search for home, always. Home is a question of who I am that never seems to evade. I carry home with me, but I lose it and find it with each step.

What emerges when I think of home is who I am, though I am not sure how. Home is bits of pieces of a life that at first seem difficult to grasp on to, and then seem to flow, ever present. Clearly there but sometimes hard to access.

I think this is affect. Memories that mean something, though I am not sure what. Moments that I can share, but that I will never be able to completely communicate. Moments that seem insignificant but are everything.

I present this as an entry point for thinking about affect and relationship to place, and a foundation for thinking through levels of intimacy within relationship to affect. In this telling, I am an insider, perhaps the only, constant insider, because this is my story. As I engage with Yesler Terrace, I am conditioned by distance, as I point to throughout. Affect points to intimacy, and I see shimmers of this throughout my engagement.

Yesler Terrace

In incorporating affect into conceptions of the built environment, my first instinct was to center this around my own experience of place because, in many ways this, for me, considering the personal, the internal, has been when affect has been most potent, and most approachable. But in thinking through the implications of affect, and in reading affect into connection with the built environment, this fundamentally requires an entanglement with a specific place. Even more so, though, in attempting to read to spheres of thought together, the more theoretical and ephemeral, and those more tied to practical application, applying this to a real planning case, and a real, lived, reality, seems to be a way to do so without shying away from nuance, and the sort of “grey area” between right and wrong. I chose to focus the theoretical engagement around Yesler Terrace both because I did not want to shy away from the fact that interventions into place directly intervene into personal realities and therefore identities, and because thinking through affect theory in the context of a planning decision that is multifaceted embrace nuance, and pushes past potentially false narratives of right and wrong.

Yesler Terrace was a thirty-acre affordable housing community in the southern most end of Seattle’s First Hill neighborhood, bordering the Chinatown and International District. Most recently, Yesler Terrace was home to five hundred and forty-three families, and roughly twelve hundred individuals. More than eighty percent of the individuals living at Yesler Terrace were non-white individuals of color, and a large majority were immigrants or refugees. In the mid to late 2000s the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) began the process to redevelop Yesler Terrace. Today, all of the original Yesler Terrace structures have been demolished, and the SHA, along with Vulcan, a private Seattle-based real estate company, have

begun redeveloping the site, building a mix of low-income, middle-income, and market rate homes, as well as shared community space and office space that will be leased to an outside organization.

The history of Yesler Terrace is also a history of the formation of the SHA, a public corporation, separate from the city of Seattle, that provides affordable housing for those eligible (SHA). The roots of the SHA began to form in the late 1930s, with the passing of the Housing Act of 1937, and the efforts of Jesse Epstein, a lawyer living in Seattle. Jesse Epstein, while working at the Bureau of Governmental Research at the University of Washington, was in charge of tracking federal programs that could apply locally, and learned of the Housing Act of 1937, which allocated federal funds to support public-housing assistance programs led by local governments. After learning of the program, Epstein began to fight for the creation of a local housing authority in Seattle to make use of federal funds locally. Epstein worked with the mayor, and subsequent mayors, at the time to first establish a local housing advisory commission, but had to gain state approval in order to get funds to begin projects from the deferral government. In 1939, the state legislature passed the Housing Authorities Law and Housing Cooperation Laws that approved the existence of a local housing authority, and allowed for the allocation of a three-million-dollar loan from the federal government to build affordable housing in Seattle. These funds, and the creation of the local housing authority, SHA, more broadly, made the development of an affordable housing project on Yesler Terrace a possibility (Caldbeck).

Yesler Terrace was the first project taken on by the new SHA. The site selected for the project, again, was on the southern-most edge of the First Hill neighborhood known as Yesler Hill. The selected site was spanned a 24-block area, and was forty-three and a half acres (Caldbeck). The site was selected for multiple reasons. First, the housing stock in the neighborhood was older, and, from the perspective of the SHA, rundown, much like a lot of the housing stock in the city at the time. Second, the site was close to the King County public hospital and to many schools.

As Jesse Epstein and the SHA were beginning to move forward with plans to develop Yesler Terrace, there were approximately twelve hundred individuals living on the site, all of whom would be forced to vacate their homes and find a place to live elsewhere in order to make space for the new development. Existing low-income households were given priority when the homes were built, but within this group only households headed by a United States citizen were allowed to return. Individuals were not given priority to return (Caldbeck). This dynamic of displacement for development is one that we see again as Yesler Terrace, today, is in the process of being redeveloped, and one that lingers throughout histories of urbanization, development, and colonial history. Thinking through this dynamic, specifically in regards to place affect is a central idea throughout this paper.

Yesler Terrace was the first racially integrated affordable housing development, though an informal policy limited the number of Black, African, or African American families to twenty-five percent (Yesler Terrace Youth Media). This was a deviation from the norm of racially segregated affordable housing projects at the time.

In late 1940 Epstein, going against the federally mandated designs that were an attempt to streamline development, began to solicit bids for the design of Yesler Terrace. And in early 1941 the SHA housing selected a construction company, and began construction of six hundred and ninety units. The design was based on Swedish worker housing, rows of single family units. After the completion of the units, very few old residents returned, either because they were ineligible because of strict income level requirements that limited the residents to those who were extremely low-income, or because they chose not to. This seems to foreshadow similar dynamics with the current redevelopment, with old residents choosing not to return.

At the point of completion of Yesler Terrace, the United States had entered World War II. A huge amount of industry and workforce was redirected towards the war effort, and there was a need for housing for military families and those supporting the war. In June of 1940, Congress amended the

Housing Act of 1937 to all funds for affordable housing development that had not been spent to build accommodations for those supporting the war. In October of 1940, Congress passed the Lanham Act that allowed for the redirection of low income housing funds to similarly go towards building military housing (Caldbeck). As a result, funds from the SHA went to building military housing in Sand Point, and the development of new homes in Rainier Valley and at Holly Park. In 1942, the SHA built one hundred and seventy-eight new units at Yesler Terrace that were explicitly for those working to support the war, and military families, making the total number of units over eight hundred.

The structures built in 1941 and 1942 are the structures that existed, and were home to over one-thousand individuals, some over the course of their entire lifetime or adult life, up until their demolition in 2010. There were, though, some changes. In 1960, two hundred and sixty units were demolished to make space for the construction of parts of Interstate 5. This project claimed eleven acres (Caldbeck). In 1975, the, now called, Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), began the Target Projects Program, a funding program that provides resources to “modernize” and update affordable housing sites. The SHA was awarded four and a half million dollars from this program. As the beginnings of a process to use some of these funds at Yesler Terrace, the SHA partnered with the Seattle Department of Community Development to for the 1975 Neighborhood Housing Rehabilitation Program to study potential options for the redevelopment of Yesler Terrace (Caldbeck).

Today, most of the physical structures of Yesler Terrace discussed throughout this history are no longer there, and the residents living in this place throughout this history are now living elsewhere, either waiting to return or not. Processes to formally develop Yesler Terrace began in 2006 with the First Hill Neighborhood Plan, though the roots of this project can be dated back to 197t. with the Target Projects Program.

The SHA describes the beginnings of this process as an attempt to “replace Yesler Terrace’s aging public housing buildings with a new mixed-income community where people from across society can

come together to enjoy cultural diversity and high quality housing with nearby amenities” (SHA 2012). In different phases, the SHA, according to their reporting, has given residents 18-months of notice that they need to relocate, and demolished different sections of Yesler Terrace. According to the SHA, and the Seattle City Council, there is a guarantee that residents can return to the new Yesler Terrace if they would like, but it is unclear whether former residents will be interested in moving back. In films like *Even the Walls*, which I will engage with more deeply soon, some residents have explicitly said that they do not want to return, that the Yesler that will come to be will not be the Yesler that they once knew and were a part of. This new development will include a mix of affordable and market rate homes.

In 2013, it was announced that through an opening bidding process, the SHA had selected Vulcan Real Estate as their partner on this project (SHA 2014). This move was one that seems to fit into the larger character of South Lake Union, a neighborhood that is rapidly changing to meet the needs of “market-oriented bioscience and e-commerce” (Mudede 2013).

Throughout the process of planning to and actually redeveloping Yesler Terrace, the SHA “engaged residents and community partners through [their] Citizen Review Committee” (SHA 3). Membership included “residents, affordable housing and smart growth/sustainability advocates, city agencies, and service providers” (3).

As of today, Yesler Terrace has been completely demolished, and the SHA is working with Vulcan to develop 5,000 new units. Of these 5,000, 561 will be replacement units for those displaced from Yesler Terrace, for individuals or families who are considered “extremely low income” – earning 30 percent or less of the area median income (AMI) – 290 units will be built for households that earn 60 percent or less of AMI, 850 units will be built for residents with incomes at or below 80 percent of AMI, considered to be “workforce housing,” and 3,200 homes will be priced at market-rate. Some progress has been made so far. Kebero Court, which includes a six-story apartment building, and three town home buildings, was completed in 2015. The site has 103 apartments in total, and is a mix of one, two, three, and four

bedroom units, 83 of which are subsidized and available to those making 30 percent of AMI or less, and 20 of which are for households making 60 percent of AMI or less. The Baldwin Apartments, replacement housing for those displaced by the redevelopment, was completed in 2014, and has 15-one bedroom apartments.

This history is admittedly incomplete. As someone who has never lived in Yesler Terrace it is impossible to completely tell the story of the reality of this place. And through reading, and even writing, this history it becomes clear that one thing is missing, this lived reality of place, the reality that for many people this was, is, and may always be home. Throughout these laws, amendments, shifts in funding, and new developments, what falls to the wayside in retelling this history is the reality that while all these changes were happening people were living there. People were living their lives. People were embedded in this place, being shaped by this place, and shaping this place in return. Again, this is why this engagement is so important, and why reading affect theory and place attachment into concerns of development and other planning phenomena is fundamental. As we think through affect in regards to this history the linear telling becomes nuanced, depth is added, and the crucial reality that this is a lived experience that is dynamic and powerful becomes more apparent.

This history, though incomplete, makes clear that my engagement is situated specifically in the context of gentrification and displacement, as is any engagement within the sphere of urban planning, because when we deal with space, we are always dealing with legacies of colonialism, native erasure, and racial segregation. This is especially the case in Seattle.

Affect at Yesler Terrace

In thinking through how affect flows at Yesler Terrace, I chose to look at narratives outside of those provided by the SHA. I know that in this choice some additional nuance and perspective will be left out, but in looking at relationality throughout these narratives, I think it is important to, as best as possible, center the work and voice of those for whom Yesler Terrace is home.

There are, though, limits to an engagement with these methods. *Even the Walls* and Yesler Terrace Youth Media are forms of media, there are narratives in and of themselves. They are positioned at an angle and I, the viewer, enter at an angle. Though I may try, I am conditioned by my own experiences, my own position and perspective, and I cannot escape this when engaging with these narratives.

Even the Walls

Even the Walls was my first introduction to Yesler Terrace. It was accidental, so to speak, a recommendation when in the process of formulating the framework of this engagement, but in retrospect, very appropriate. *Even the Walls* is an introduction to Yesler specifically through narrative, through intimate and intricate moments, through an explicit focus on lived experience.

This introduction to Yesler was one founded explicitly in lived reality of place, in stories, in experience, and in connection. *Even the Walls* centers itself, it seems, within the context of the mundane reality of living in a place, the mundane reality of home, but shows this mundane reality in the context of complete change, in the context of redevelopment, and in the context of questions of an impending future that is potentially out of the hands for whom this place is home. Through the voices and stories of different Yesler Terrace community members, the filmmakers take a process that is sweeping, multi-faceted, and explicitly political, and show the personal, the intricacies of moments that make Yesler home, the moments who's meaning belongs explicitly to those who are embedded within them, but who's meaning also transcends. Swinging on cricketing swings, back and forth. A father and son sharing tea. Doors slamming, home's entered. Sitting on a front porch talking on the phone.

These are moments that are ubiquitous. They are moments that define life. Moments that many share, moments that are not specific to Yesler, but moments that in this context are so specific. Moments that have more meaning perhaps than it initially seems.

In thinking through affect within *Even the Walls*, I find myself creating two categories, affect within the stories, memories, and realities for whom Yesler is home, and affect within the presentation of

the film – the sounds, the framework with which the narrative is presented, the use of stillness, the sounds, sights, and sensations that are captured in moments of sound-filled quiet. When engaging with affect there are always questions of perception, and it is difficult to completely excavate the way in which affect is circulating within a current moment. There are limits, and there are limitations. Accessing affect within one's own realm is more accessible, perhaps easier. With that in mind, I engage with the stories within *Even the Walls*, not to create meaning within the embodied realities of other's lives, but to see where affect flows as is, and to see how affect flows in my experience as a viewer. This is important, especially in considering how planners are moved to make decisions, and how meaning circulates around place.

Affect within the Narrative

It becomes clear within the opening minutes of *Even the Walls*, that this is film is Yesler Terrace resident's film. A "time capsule", a touchstone of memories in the context of a place that holds many, but a place that will, explicitly, no longer exist.

It becomes clear when watching that Yesler Terrace is marked by temporality, by time. Yesler Terrace has existed in this capacity for over seventy years. Now, it is changing. The Yesler Terrace in this film does not physically exist, the "neighborhood is disappearing" (Sarah Kuck).

Even the Walls provides a small glimpse of the meaning that this place holds for those who lived there. We see mundane moments, memories in action – children running, playing tag, tea shared, fishing trips, phone calls, front stoops, laughing. These memories hold meaning for the residents in this film that I will never understand. They are intimate, they are personal, embedded in lives' lived and life trajectories that I am not a part of.

My project here is not to understand these narratives, but to see how their telling gets at the relationship between place and personhood. Place and memory. Place and identity. In my own telling of home, I showcase these intricacies in my own life. They mean something for me that others will never understand completely, that perhaps I will never understand completely. I do not seek understanding

here. I do not seek to tell the stories of those who lived, live, and will live at Yesler Terrace, or the new Yesler. I am interested here in how affect flows through this reclamation of memories of Yesler.

The film opens with sounds. Familiar sounds, rubber tires hitting concrete, buzzing of car engines, buses, creaking swings. Sounds give way to telling of stories. Still a backdrop.

We hear from Selaay, a twenty-one-year resident, his entire lifetime, about the shreds of stories at Yesler. About memory, loss, moments ripped away.

We hear from Audry, of how she came to Yesler Terrace, “by way of Cajun country ... here a long time.” We hear of moments of sadness mixed with moments of joy, and of hopefulness, of “fighting to stay,” and of giving up.

We hear from Marty, a resident of Yesler Terrace (details), who talks of Seattle changing, of Yesler Terrace being a “billion-dollar hill,” of growing up on Jackson street, watching people coming to Yesler Terrace, and leaving. Of only having “rocks and beer,” of paying for sins, of returning, of changing trajectories, of past hurt.

We hear from Keshia, about Yesler today, the Yesler in progress, not being the Yesler Terrace she once knew. Of people giving up, of physical pain, teaching oneself how to walk, of phone calls on the porch, watching cousins play, just watching, of peace.

We hear from Julissa and Isiah. Of favorite places lost, of excitement, of known futures, known moves, others unknown.

We hear snippets of life from Yesler, but we never hear the full story. This resembles Kathleen Stewart’s writing in some ways, moments of deep intimacy that are mundane, that hold meanings that are deep below the surface, meanings that are guiding, deeply personal, and sometimes hidden. In some ways, though, we must also be cautious when engaging with stories of this sort, or perhaps more so, in engaging within the world generally. We operate in narratives, but as Ahmed points to we approach these narratives at angles. We are all positioned, angled, in our own ways, but, also, these narratives are

angled. This does not make them less real, but it is also clear, for example, that in *Even the Walls*, we are seeing snippets of a reality that is not our own, snippets that, perhaps, are an attempt to facilitate an affective sort of relation, both for the residents and for outsiders.

Yesler Terrace is changing; we see this through *Even the Walls*. We see this through the perspective of residents. Through stories of loss, stories of anger, stories of fear, stories that transcend emotions, that are confusing, that are nuanced. Stories of Yesler Terrace.

Affect in Shaping the Narrative

When introduced to this film by my thesis advisor, he told me it was “dripping in affect”. In the first few seconds of the film, and in the weaving of moments, stories, trajectories, sensations, and relations throughout the twenty-seven-minute film that follows, it becomes so clear how this is so.

Yesler Terrace is introduced through sounds. First, sounds of the city scape. Car engines buzzing, rubber tires hitting pavement, wind. Sounds that are familiar, sounds that are specific to Yesler Terrace. Then, a swing creaking back and forth. Watching from behind as a child swings back and forth. Jumping off. Entering home, the door closing in our faces. A reminder.

These sounds show Yesler. They are Yesler. I spoke with Sarah Kuck, one of the filmmakers, along with Saman Maydani, behind *Even the Walls*. This choice, she said, is Yesler expressing itself. Yesler is a character in the film. Through moments of sound filled silence we see Yesler as it is.

The film moves slowly. Sarah says this, in part, is to allow space to process, to step back, breath through the narrative. Sarah says, “Yesler is nothing if not mundane” and through the film we see this. Through quiet moments. Meaning in the mundane.

Understanding affect requires a shift in temporality. Slowing down. Spending time. Thinking through the minutia of life – thinking about where we usually do not attribute meaning. *Even the Walls* does this. Moving slowly, taking time, we become attune to the meaning circulating through sitting on your front stoop on your phone, watching children play. Of a white van driving away. Of moments shared over tea. Meaning is here.

Objects play a role in this. Objects, for me, have been central to thinking through the role affect plays in conception of self, and connection to place. Connection to objects provides an avenue for thinking through how we are shaped by encounters that are not often obvious, though still, perhaps tangible. I can think through my connection to objects.

Objects in *Even the Walls* seem to be a connector. In one scene, we see a father and son, Hussein and Armand sharing coffee, then the film moves through different scenes of individuals sharing tea, coffee. We see a mother brushing their child's hair, Marty, surrounded by his belongings. Each resident in their own context, often their homes, surrounded by their things. Sarah described these objects as touchstones, relating this back to Selaay describing the loss of Yesler as taking a way the memories of a place, in some way. She describes picking up a sweater after ten years, memories brought back, facilitated through touch. Affect. She said they had to treat these objects importantly. This fundamentally is a story about moving. When you move, you chose which objects to bring with you, which to leave behind.

In her epilogue to the book *Ordinary Affects* Kathleen Stewart says,

“Affect is the commonplace, labor intensive process of sensing modes of living as they come into being. *It hums* with the background noise of obstinacies and promises, ruts and disorientations, intensities and resting points. It stretches across real and imaginary social fields and sediments, linking some kind of everything. This is why there is nothing dead or inconsequential in even the flightiest of lifestyles or the starkest of circumstances. The lived spaces and temporalities of home, work, school, blame, adventure, illness, rumination, pleasure, downtime, and release are the rhythms of the present as a compositional event – one already weighted with the buzz of atmospheric fill” (340).

“Everything,” she says, “depends on the dense entanglement of affect, attention, the sense, and matter” (341). She talks of bloom spaces, of compositions of life, rhythms within a score, bodies as musical instruments, navigating it all. In *Even the Walls* we feel affect vibrating, humming along with “the background noise of obstinacies and promises ... of intensities and resting points” (340). We see this in Hussein and Armand sharing coffee, we see this in Matthew taking children at Yesler on a fishing trip,

moments of shared joy, moments of intimacy. We also see this in moments of perhaps anger, moments of heartbreak, of forced disconnection. Moments where Selaay talks of memories being destroyed, moments where Keshia talks of never returning. Individuals navigating a composition that they have little control over, a composition that in some ways is determined by political action, by capital interests, needs, by narratives of progress. Affect provides a way for thinking through how meaning is made within this, how forces circulate to shape and change meaning. How a changing physical space is so intimately wrapped up in identity, in personhood. How people have shaped this place, but too, have been shaped in return.

Yesler Terrace Youth Media Project

The Yesler Terrace Summer Youth Media Program is a seven-week program where teens use photography and video to “examine the history of Yesler Terrace, the diversity within their community, and the potential impact” this redevelopment will have on the community. The program works to “empower youth to act as community advocates” and to “teach creative and expressive communication skills through photography and media” (YT Youth Media). The program centers around the community at Yesler Terrace and the Central District, a neighborhood in Seattle with its own histories of systemic displacement, that is rapidly gentrifying. In 1822, William Gross bought 12 acres of land from Henry Yesler. This land became a settling point for the black community in Seattle, and the Pacific Northwest more broadly. This is not a narrative wholly of choice, though. Housing ordinances and bank practices prevented people of color from living, and accessing loans to purchase homes, restricted the areas that folks had access to living in. These ordinances were, in large part, why the Central District historically has been a predominately black neighborhood, though this is rapidly changing with systemic displacement and gentrification.

The Yesler Terrace Youth Media Project, the product of the Yesler Terrace Summer Youth Media Program, focuses on these issues of gentrification and forced displacement, through the lens and perspective of the youth in the program, the youth for whom this is home. On the Yesler Terrace Youth

Media homepage, they say that, in doing so, this work acts as an “archive concerning this redevelopment,” similar to the intention behind *Even the Walls*, a touchstone for those who are a part of this changing place, for those who will not return, or for those who will return to a completely different place.

I see the affect in the work produced by Yesler Terrace Youth Media, broadly, in its relationship to memory, time, and trust. I see this as well in *Even the Walls*, and in the various narratives circulating about Yesler Terrace.

Affect takes a single moment and exposes layers of meaning. In doing so, affect pushes us to think about our relationship to time and temporality. Moments of encounter stimulate an embodied intensity, but one that is quiet, one that does not make much noise. One that operates below the surface, guiding, shaping. How do we begin to understand affect in our environment, affect in the way we move through the world? We slow down. We think through the intricacies of our everyday. For some, for many, we unpack the privileges that shape us taking things for granted, we see how systems circulate through our every moment.

In an article about artists work to push back against the widespread displacement currently occurring in Seattle, Jen Graves, former Art Critic for *The Stranger*, wrote about this. Touching on the work of artists working to reclaim memory in the Central District (*Shelf Life Stories*), and the work of artists-in-residence at Yesler Terrace like DK Pan and George Lee, she writes,

“Artists will not be able to reverse gentrification, loss, and displacement – or the promised deportation of millions of immigrants. But, when a new normal is bearing down on a place art can become a call to stay and look as long as we possibly can, so that nobody, later, can get away with telling us nothing was ever there” (Jen Graves, *The Stranger*).

There’s so much here. She touches on histories of erasure that the United States is founded on, and the role that planning now, as practice, has in reinforcing this erasure. At the heart of this statement, though, lies the crux of the power of the work of Yesler Terrace Youth Media. Yesler Terrace Youth Media

operates as a “call to stay and look as long as we possibly can,” to hold on to the memories of a place, to see how this place shapes, and changes, and becomes along with those embedded in it.

I focused specifically on three pieces of work from the Yesler Terrace Youth Media – their site is home to many photographs, videos, and stories – a film called “Yesler’s Promise: An Inevitable Change,” a film called “Our Voices (Volume 3), and “Kids Speak,” a compilation of videos in which youth who are a part of Yesler Terrace Youth Media talk about the three biggest issues they see with the redevelopment. I chose the two films because they combine discussions of resident’s reality of home within this changing reality, with perceptions of this change – working through promises from the Seattle Housing Authority, perspectives and positions of private developer Vulcan, all while centering the stories, the realities, of Yesler Terrace residents. I chose “Kids Speak” because it centers the voices of the youth behind Yesler Terrace Youth Media – within the segments we hear from them their personal perception of the Yesler Terrace redevelopment.

In the film “Yesler’s Promise: An Inevitable Change,” Yesler Terrace Youth Media speaks with Ya Pham, a resident of Yesler Terrace. Ya Pham, they say, like many residents, is reluctant to move. His kids were raised here, they lived here all their lives, his family, very deeply, is connected to *this* Yesler Terrace. They talk about this, saying residents “planted their seeds of life at Yesler, and watched them grow ... to watch their plants be uprooted and destroyed is far too much to expect from longtime residents” (Yesler Terrace Youth Media). In planting your seeds of life in a place, the place, it seems, becomes a foundation for this life – a stabilizer. Memories, moments – the affective sensations and connections – that shape our everyday and the way we move through the world – are tied to this place.

Redevelopment, or perhaps more aptly, displacement, necessitates adding nuance to this connection to place, and the relationship affect has within this connection. In “Yesler’s Promise,” the filmmakers include mention of a quote from a Vulcan employee, who said that they envision Yesler Terrace becoming the next South Lake Union, an area in Seattle that once was home to a large immigrant

population, and is now the center of tech and health industry in Seattle – home to Amazon, Fred Hutch, and Vulcan. South Lake Union is a neighborhood of displacement. Today, we only see remnants of what it once was. Largely, we see a narrative that tells us “that nothing was ever there” (Jen Graves).

In these sweeping conversations of perceived progress, gentrification, and systemic displacement, affect draws us back to the intricacies of individual experience, a reminder that these processes condition our own bodies, and the bodies of others, though in varying ways. Within “Yesler’s Promise” the filmmakers focus on this, talking about their own perception of self in the context of a place that is changing based on a system that is outside of their control. They talk about expression, saying that with these changes – naming explicitly, rich white people coming in – it changes how “[they] feel towards oneself,” they question how they will express themselves and how they will interact with people who are different, with people who are coming to this place, viewing it as new, without knowing what was there before.

In thinking through the implication of the Vulcan staff member’s statement that their vision for Yesler is a second iteration of South Lake Union, the youth of Yesler Terrace Youth Media go to South Lake Union with Yesler resident Lete Kidane. In moving through the neighborhood, they ask, whether they would belong in the new Yesler Terrace.

It is so clear when watching these films how place is linked to identity. We know this, within the planning discipline place attachment is widely recognized, and, largely, we are able to recognize that positionality shapes perspective and identity, place and physical location being a part of this. We see this in ideology, in politics, and in common discourse. Affect, though, as I have gestured to throughout, takes this deeper, and this, I think, is what is communicated through Yesler Terrace Youth Media broadly. Sara Ahmed touches on this. In “Affective Economies” Ahmed talks about love, and emotion – essential connection – to generally, as not being simply “within” or “without”, but as forces that “create the very effect of the surfaces or boundaries of bodies and worlds” (115). If we read Ahmed in here, in thinking

through self, place, and connection in the context of complete change, this relationship between identity and place, between community and place is underscored. Change, as the youth all point to, experts of their own experience, disrupts identity. Affect, in this way, and the voices of the youth behind Yesler Terrace Youth Media, gesture, here towards histories of definition of identity through hierarchies of power – identity shaped by outsiders, outside forces, controlled by those in positions of power – identity defined through systems. Yesler Terrace Youth Media, throughout this discussion, uses individual experience as a lens to tell the systemic reality of the world we live in. This, I think, is affect.

In watching the videos on the “2012 Kids Speak” section of the Yesler Terrace Youth Media online archive, a common question of trust emerges. In the videos, the youth share three main concerns with the redevelopment of Yesler Terrace. Almost all of them bring up the question of trust, trust for the Seattle Housing Authority, gesturing often to questions about relocation, about information that has not been shared, and about promises that have been retracted without recognition. In talking about affect and the soul, Nietzsche thinks through the differences between positive and negative affects. Nietzsche argues that the soul is a bundle of wills – of stronger and weaker desires – and how these wills play out, in relation to one another, shapes action. Jonathan Flatley works through similar ideas in thinking about affective mapping as shaping trajectory. Sara Ahmed, too, thinks through this in relation to place.

Sara Ahmed tells us that what makes us “move”, or what makes us “feel” builds a connection to place. She discusses this in the context of a conversation of how objects become “sticky” with affect, how we grow attached or connected to objects, and how objects become a part of us in this sense (115). The same could be said for opposite sensations, sensations like distrust. Encounters that stimulate negative affects, these make us “feel,” though in a different regard, push us, perhaps, to disengage, to distrust, “move” us in the opposite direction, away. Affect in this sense provides an entry point, among others, for thinking through distrust as a product of injustice, thinking through relationship to institutions as

produced through encounter, tangible or not. This circulates through the conversations within the films produced by Yesler Terrace Youth Media.

In *Ordinary Affects*, Kathleen Stewart emphasizes thinking through overarching systems of power in relation to the everyday, how they circulate between bodies, and how they shape how we move through the world and how we relate to one another. Reading affect into this relationship between trust, I think, begins to provide an entry point for thinking through the relationship between the SHA and Yesler Terrace residents that Yesler Terrace Youth Media focuses on here. This, also, seems to be where Nietzsche, in some part, is helpful. Trusting relationships, I argue, are based on affective dimensions. What sort of stimulates positive affects, perhaps, moves us to trust, whereas what stimulates negative affects moves us away from trust. The filmmakers at Yesler Terrace Youth Media, again, hone in on this relationship. Delina, a resident of Yesler Terrace and member of the Youth Media Project, explains that though residents have been promised they can return, they are hesitant to believe this, because in the past, they have heard promises that “don’t come back,” that don’t become reality. Liban, another member of the Yesler Terrace Youth Media Project, touches on this as well, saying that residents need guarantees. Yohanna, another Yesler Resident and project member, says this explicitly; “we never know, they could be lying” (Yesler Terrace Youth Media). If affect is what circulates among us to move us towards and away, affective encounter needs to be there to build trusting relationships. A promise is just a promise, belief and investment in this promise is built through affect.

Liban talks about this in the context of the gardens at Yesler Terrace. He says that one the main issues, or questions that lingers, with the impending redevelopment, is whether the residents will have the space for their gardens. Questions of whether gardens will remain a reality with the new Yesler circulate throughout these three pieces of work from Yesler Terrace Youth Media, bringing with them related questions of space, and whether space will remain.

Mama Fatouma, a community organizer from Yesler Terrace, speaks to this point. She says, it is good to have a “new house, but the way they [the SHA] rebuild it is not good” (YT Youth Media). She questions how, with no backyards in the new high-rise buildings, they will “stay in backyards and cook and drink coffee.” She says, “we don’t have space, we don’t have no home” (YT Youth Media).

Dynamics of the physical environment circulate through these three works. Concerns similar to Mama Fatouma’s circulate – whether there will be enough space for the activities that for residents, make this place their home – the moments that we see, too, in *Even the Walls*. Moments watching children play from the front stoop, moments spent gardening, growing literal seeds in the place where, for many, their seeds are planted, spending time sharing coffee – moments that, again, create connection, constituting the self.

The physicality of affect is something, I think, that I have gestured to without, but it necessitates a more careful conversation. In narratives circulating throughout Yesler, there always seems to be a sense that this place is special – special for the residents for whom this is home, but also special in terms of the norm of affordable housing. Very different from the Pruitt Igo model that has been critiqued for some time, Yesler, as much as anything else, has been defined, in some ways, by the amount of space. We see this in *Even the Walls*, and we see this in the films produced by Yesler Terrace Youth Media, through residents, through the emphasis on gardens, on time spent, together, in community, outdoors.

Within the “Kids Speak” section of the Yesler Terrace Youth Media project site, many of the youth mentioned the high rises that are currently being built at the new Yesler. They talk of loss of space with the high rises, with this new development creating a “different atmosphere,” and questions around how separations of income, and mixes of income will change the reality of their experience at Yesler. This, for me, as someone separate from the redevelopment, provokes questions of visibility and affect, of how this stark disconnect between previous physical realities of Yesler, and the current model of redevelopment. This signaling to high rises is more than just a push back against change, it is the reality of losing

something that, for many, was a crux of affective connection to Yesler, space. And though these new, different, buildings may have some sort of shared space, gardens, play grounds – this affective dimension of the Yesler that has been a physical reality since the early 1940s, will largely be gone, memories only remaining.

Memory seems, here, to be a product of affective relationships. With spaces gone, memory is all that remains, and this memory circulates, but without a physical dimension, as we saw with Selaay's telling in *Even the Walls*, this memory loses density.

Conclusion

Throughout this engagement, I see a dichotomy emerging, a sort of disconnect between the overarching processes of planning, and the narratives, like *Even the Walls*, and Yesler Terrace Youth Media, that are both pushing back against these overarching processes and narratives, and serve as a touchstone for memory in the context of a place that is completely changing. In a document that explains key terms for residents attending Citizen Review Committee meetings, the SHA describes the role of the planner. They say,

“Once planners have conducted their analysis, they develop strategic alternatives for solving problems in a coordinated and comprehensive manner. These alternatives ... guide future development based on the established goals and the systematic analysis” (SHA).

This statement prioritizes the systematic, the strategic, and the comprehensive. Within it, there lies a problem to be solved, a situation to be rectified, and an argument that planners hold to tools to best assess the means for which a solution can be outlined. This seems disconnected from affect. Many of the narratives I have engaged with within these two projects seem to fundamentally be situated in the affective dimension, in recognizing the power that the mundane has, the meaning that lies within, and in honoring the intimate reality of being situated and entangled within place.

My project here is not to create a binary of good and bad, to situate the planners as the bad, and the work coming directly out of Yesler Terrace as the good. Affect, though, as I have gestured to, nuances

this systematized approach that the SHA outlines. It takes this comprehensive and coordinated methodology and breaks it down, makes it intimate. It allows space for a recognition of the reality of lived experience, of identity, and of connection within the context of a place.

In *Even the Walls*, Selaay says that,

“Seattle housing has given the notion that everyone who’s lived in Yesler gets to come back ... Yesler is not going to be Yesler, they’re stomping out all the ties that we have with each other. That’s where the problem and the powerlessness lies. We’re not losing some object, we’re losing a piece of what we’ve created”

Yesler Terrace is more than a physical place, it is more than just shelter, just housing, it is community, it is connection, it is ties to place, ties to one another, and ties to self. Yesler, fundamentally, is identity. People as a reflection of the place that they are situated in, but also a place reflecting back. A reality of personhood and connection shaped by place, a reality of bodies conditioned by their context, relationships who’s meaning may seem mundane, but are guiding.

When we engage and intervene within the built environment, as planners, this is fundamentally what we are situated within. We are outsiders, thinking through problem-solving, thinking through systematic analysis at times, but we are really engaging within the reality of affective connection. The decisions we, as planners, make have the potential to shift this reality, and this should carry an immense amount of weight. This should cause pause. This should bring with it great caution. Planning without a foundation in the affective dimension is disconnected from reality of the world within it is engaging.

I think back, here, to the caution that Jen Graves posed in her discussion of the projects pushing back against gentrification. She says that artists will not be able to reverse processes of perceive progress, processes of displacement, of gentrification, but that when a “new normal is bearing down on a place art can become a call to stay and look as long as we possibly can, so that nobody, later, can get away with telling us nothing was ever there” (Jen Graves, *The Stranger*).

Urban planners are complicit in the creation of this “new normal,” in these processes of gentrification and of displacement. I have read her quotation many times now, and with each reading I think about how we begin to reverse these processes, and how planning can begin to proceed based off of a respect for the reality of identity in the context of urban change. This has to be through affect. I believe in the affective dimension, in affect theory, to be a part of beginning to push back against this new normal, to begin to assert the reality of who is here, who has been here, and to protect the connection to place that exists for individuals and communities who are at risk of losing their physical place. When we incorporate affect, we we act based on affect, and in recognition of affect, we perhaps can begin to be a part of a different normal, push back against process of displacement, and erasure, and honor connection. When we begin to think through affect in this way, we begin to recognize the intimacy that exists within planning interventions, an intimacy that I outline in my own relationship to home, and an intimacy that flows throughout *Even the Walls* and Yesler Terrace Youth Media.

I recognize that within this I am not outlining a clear set of processes for incorporating affect. Gregg and Seigworth show us that affect is something resistant to the “how,” that resists categorization, formal processes and outlining, and clear cut answers. To outline a formal process incorporating affect into urban planning is a clear next step to this research, but would take careful consideration, and a methodology that finds a way to breakdown constructs of process, and constraints of decision making that often are conveyed through binaries of right or wrong. Affect takes time, it takes slowing down, something that often times processes of planning projects do not allow. This is where, though, affect finds its power. It is frustratingly opaque, confusing, mingling and flowing, but this frustration that comes with this engagement perhaps stems more from a tension within the construction of current modes of operation, and less from the nature of the theory itself. Affect is frustrating because it begins to imagine an alternative mode of operation than the dominant, normative culture within urban spaces the United States, an alternative reality, an alternative way of existing in the world, a way that is fundamentally

grounded in relationality. When we embrace this frustration, when we embrace nuance, we begin to imagine a different normal, begin to look within, to slow down and look back. This is the first step in building a planning process founded in affect.

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