

THE CRY OF THE EXCAVATOR: notes on the social impact of urban renewal

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Abstract: Many of the grassroots protests we witnessed to in the last years have put back to the center of our attention the issue of popular participation to urban planning. Therefore, it is now the moment to develop instruments that help us to evaluate public policies observing the short and long term effects they have on the populations that suffer them. The question of what are the consequences (individual or collective) of urban renewal is analyzed here in relationship to three fields of research: cultural anthropology, psychology, and urban studies. The limitations and potentialities of these three approaches are presented through the discussion on five texts (some of them classical, other not) in which different scholars developed different ways of studying the impact of urban renewal.

Keywords: Urban planning. Impact of urban renewal. Social impact of urban renewal.

Resumo: Muitos dos protestos que presenciamos nos últimos anos têm trazido ao centro da nossa atenção a questão da participação popular para o planejamento urbano. portanto, agora é o momento de desenvolver instrumentos que nos ajudam a avaliar as políticas públicas observando os efeitos de curto e longo prazo sobre as populações que sofrem estes efeitos. A questão de quais são as consequências (individuais ou coletivas) da renovação urbana é analisada aqui em relação a três áreas de investigação: antropologia cultural, psicologia e estudos urbanos. as limitações e potencialidades destas três abordagens são apresentadas através da discussão em cinco textos (alguns deles clássica, outros não) em que diferentes estudiosos desenvolveram diferentes formas de estudar o impacto da renovação urbana.

Palavras-chave: Planejamento urbano. Impacto da renovação urbana. Impacto social da renovação urbana.

1 Urban Landscape, Human Landscape

The idea of the unavoidable demolition of the so called 'slums', and of the deportation of the population of the inner city districts towards the suburbs, can be traced back at least to the early 20th century. 'Opening up' the central neighborhoods was the essential feature of Haussmann's *éventrements* at the mid-19th century, but it was not its major scope; the creation of new neighborhoods outside the center was by then much less pursued than announced. One of the first early-century philanthropes who advocated for decongestion of the cities, stated that the residents of the center had to be "dug up by its roots and

trasplanted into areas developed in such a way as to make slums impossible."¹ But competing interests made difficult both to execute the invoked demolitions and to build new neighborhoods to relocated the evicted; and it was not until half a century later that the authorities of many cities in US and Europe finally found the technical means to achieve this long-prepared plan. So in the 1950s, the systematic slum clearance and relocation of residents from the city centers became a standard practice in city planning (Foglesong, 1986, p. 172-179).

I will here collect some notes on the planned urban interventions executed since World War II that

involved demolition and relocation. I propose the idea that this could be considered as a single phenomenon, a single 'wave' of urban renewal that swept the whole world for almost 70 years. Uniform in scopes and methods, we could broadly set its outbreak in the USA, where the original idea of decongesting and relocating was conceived, half a century before, and specifically with the *Housing Act* of 1949. From North America, this wave of demolitions and relocations quickly shifted towards Europe, where it reached Southern Europe in the 1960s and 1970s; meanwhile it was extending in circles, out to the metropolis and cities of Asia, South America and Africa, during the 1980s, 1990s. With the new millennium, almost no city in the world was immune to it; in some of them the transformations were so quick and brutal that they caused strong concerns in many sectors of the local and international elites (it is the case of 'global' cities like Istanbul, Rio de Janeiro and Addis Abeba). If mass evictions and huge demolitions were carried out since the beginning of urbanization - let's think for example of colonial cities of the XIX and early XX century - the current wave of *systematic* demolitions and relocations has no precedent in history, for the speed and extent of its impacts.

As David Harvey (2008) and Neil Smith (2002, p. 441) noticed, the logics that underlie urban transformations today, even when applied in very different contexts, are increasingly similar to one another. Gentrification blurs the differences between global North and South, and urban policies are surprisingly similar in the former 'First', 'Second' and 'Third' worlds. Identical phenomena of dispossession and mass eviction can take place in Marseille and Rabat, on the shores of the Thames and on the shores of the Mekong. Still, in reviewing the immense body of scholarly literature produced on this - I repeat, hypotized - wave of urban renewal, one is struck by the relative lack of research on the *social impacts* of these transformations. Very few scholars focused their attention on the way urban renewal is *perceived* by the local population, i.e., on how these interventions are *lived* and *experienced*, or on how the physical changes in the city fabric influenced the different 'human landscapes' that cities are made of. In fact, even if the policies pursued by the city administrations are very similar, if not the same, their 'human consequences' (Bauman, 2007) are immensely different. Different places and different populations have uncomparable systems of thought and perception; and they were made even more

diverse by the great rural-urban migrations that, throughout the globe, preceded these demolitions, often overlapping with them.

This is a surprising gap, if we consider how much the first urban sociologists were interested in the relation between the form of the city and the social behavior of its residents. Georg Simmel's seminal text 'The metropolis and mental life' (1903), as well as Robert Park's introductory chapter to the collective book *The City* (1925), or Lous Wirth's article 'Urbanism as a way of life' (1938), were all attempts to settle the basis of a discipline concerned on how the urban space induced specific forms of behavior, which in turn caused certain mental states or some specific forms of perception. In fact, social sciences developed as a way to understand why people behave in different ways according to the different environments in which they lived. But the social sciences, by then, shared the same epistemologic paradigm that underlied the building of the city itself. Durkheim, for example, put at the origin of *anomie* - the psychic state of the city dweller - the rupture of the old social and cultural structures, a direct product of the increase in the number and density of the population: the same issue that the metropolitan authorities and philanthropes tried to address in the early XX century with the struggle against *congestion*. For these early urban thinkers, the very economic needs of the metropolis, as Park (p. 13-14) stated, would "break down or modify the older organization of society, which was based on family ties, local associations, on culture, caste, and status, and to substitute for it an organization based on vocational interests." The growth of the city was interpreted as a linear phenomenon, on an evolutionary scale; its understanding was possible, if only the data were accurate enough.²

But this positivistic confidence shattered after the Second World War, exactly when urban renewal began sweeping the world. Nazism showed that modernity and urbanization had not chased from the core of Europe the relevance of ethnic, religious and cultural belonging: industrialization and the growth of cities began to be considered much more complex and ambiguous phenomena, and urbanization lost part of its justifications, with the crisis of the paradigm of 'progress'. But the wave of urban renewal had already began, and the demolitions it entailed took place (and still are taking place) in a scenario in which the theoretical frame of reference that supported them had lost most of its meaning. So, the epistemological victory of relativism occurs

in a global stage in which the processes of spatial transformation are increasingly uniform and standardized; but similar projects of urban intervention give birth to immensely diverse urban and human landscapes. The idea of understanding the consequences that these changes are having upon the people can easily be bypassed, or simplified in an anachronistic justification of 'modernity' in itself, through the same outdated rhetorics that support the urban projects. But science today has also embraced a higher level complexity. With an effort of joining forces through different fields, many new things can be understood.³

In this notes I will propose a reflection on the limitation of current theoretical thought to deal with the consequences of what I consider an unique phenomenon, the global wave of urban intervention that spans from 1949 to nowadays. My aim is to contribute to the development of a methodology which can account the impact of this global process at a *local* scale. In the opening paragraph I will bring some examples of the kind of urban interventions I deal with, briefly describing the studies - or lack of studies - that focused on their social impact. Then I will expose my idea that there are mainly *three fields of inquiry* that can deal with the human impact of urban renewal, and that it is from the collaboration of these three fields (and especially of certain sub-fields within each of them), that a strategy of research on this issue can be developed. Finally, I will discuss *five texts*, spanning from early post-war sociology to contemporary scholarship in psychiatry, from which to my advice it is possible to set the boundaries of the problem and to evaluate the possibilities of research on it.

2 The Study of the Impact of Urban Renewal

I developed most of my field researches in Barcelona, which is one of the European cities that experienced more dramatic changes in its urban form during the last decades. The catalan writer Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, known for his *noir* novels set during the big transformations for the Olympic Games of 1992, explains how these events, planned at the level of the whole city, had very different impacts in the different parts that compose the city. "Those english travelers who have already visited or intend to visit Barcelona should be aware that not one but several cities are contained within its municipal boundaries, and that nearly all of them have been radically changed under the impact of the Olympics" (Montalbán, 1992, p. 3). Still, during those

years, no institute of research or university faculty engaged in evaluating the consequences of these processes, on the lives of the residents of the different Barcelonas.⁴ The same thing happened in the subsequent two decades, with the huge transformations that preceeded and followed the new 'big event', the *Universal Forum of Cultures* of 2004: the difficult topic of social impacts was eluded. The only researches worth mentioning were conducted by independent scholars, linked to neighbors' associations or activists,⁵ only recently some researchers affiliated to the University of Barcelona are starting to address the social impact that urban transformations had in each neighborhood.⁶

In places where the urban intervention concern wider territories, the ruling administrations can be even less propense (if not openly hostile) to the study of their social effects. In Istanbul, between 2005 and 2010, more than a million people were evicted from the *gecekondu*, the hundreds of spontaneous settlements all over the city, and relocated into *grand ensembles* built by the semi-public company 'TOKI'. But the results of these interventions were often very different from what was announced. For example, the forced displacement of the community of Ayazma, overwhelmingly kurdis, that was relocated into a *housing project* in Bezirganbahçe, produced an increment in interethnic hostility, and pushed many residents to return to their villages (Baysal, 2010). Many of the inhabitants of the old roma neighborhood of Sulukulé, evicted from the area in 2009 and transferred 40 km far from it, returned to live precariously around the ruins of Sulukulé.⁷ Like in Montalbán's *barcelonas*, as explain the sociologists Candan and Kollou lu (2008), while Istanbul as a city is expanding, the different *istanbuls* that compose it have been shrinking: within each neighborhood the social interactions are reduced, the vital horizons of the inhabitants become smaller, and the links among the different neighborhoods are weaker. As stated by a resident of Ba_1 büyük, a neighborhood undergoing a process of demolition: "When this project will be completed, nobody will talk anymore to anybody, everyone will just mind his own businesses [The City Council] wants to transform us into robots: we will work day and night to pay our bills, we will be as contracted servants of TOKI" (Karaman, 2013). In the eyes of these robots, we can imagine the same *blasé* absence of feelings that Simmel recognized in the citizens of the expanding metropolis.

Often the studies on the impact of urban renewal arise out of urgency. This is the case of Brazil, where the World Cup of 2014 and the Olympic games of 2016 caused a dramatic increase in the *remoções* of *favelas*: some of those operations were designed as real military interventions. Most of the studies on their impacts were carried out by independent organizations, as the *Comité Popular da Copa e Olimpíadas*; but some academic works were also published on the topic, as in the issue of *O social em questão* devoted to 'Grandes eventos e seus impactos sociais' (Gonçalves; Simões; Magalhães, 2013), or the 'mapas de remoções' developed by the Grupo de Geografía Urbana Radical of the University of São Paulo. These studies show how at the base of the 'exception' that the big events elicit there are much more structural changes in politics and economy at a much wider scale: from commodification of the urban space to the entrepreneurial drift in the management of the city. But the urgency of the situation requires quantitative researches – how many conflicts, how many neighborhoods, how many people displaced or threatened by displacement - to the detriment of the more symbolic dimensions of spatial transformation, and of its social and psychological consequences, which still haven't been described in detail.

Urban transformations of much greater proportions happen in Asia and Africa. But a similar lack of systematic studies on the local impact of these processes can be observed. Often, the human groups targeted by displacement are the same groups that, not so long ago, have suffered other traumas, with a different origin but not so different consequences. Some studies on Addis Abeba describe the consequences of the *slum clearance* of Arat Kilo (Gebre, 2014; Yntiso, 2008), showing how the displacement, more or less forced, impacted negatively not only on the economies of the households, but also on the health and education of the inhabitants. The new *condominium*, in which the residents were relocated, are more modern and comfortable compared to the old houses of the central districts, but the access to basic services is reduced, while many residents can't afford to pay the new flats at all. In a country in where famine and armed conflicts caused enormous waves of internal displacements and migrations, the transfers imposed by urban renewal can be understood only in relation to the local interpretations of history.

Similarly, in Asia, where the most huge and intense urban transformation of the history of

mankind are taking place, the issue of how past and present displacement are related, can be addressed even focusing on a relatively marginal town. In Phnom Penh, for example, a neoliberal government is imposing privatization to a population that suffered a genocide in the name of collective ownership. The evictions and the relocation of residents of the old center, which are driven to still unurbanized plots in the periphery, are to be considered at least ambiguous, in a country that underwent Pol Pot's deportations of city dwellers to the countryside, not more than thirty years ago. The researches on the impacts of these projects are developed by NGOs, and the case most studied is the rehabilitation of the railway network. Nora Lindström (2012) summarized the experiences of several people displaced, suggesting a much deeper level of suffering than the purely economic one, as reflected in the title of her report: *Losing the plot*. With a different metaphor, Bugalski and Medallo (2012) entitled *Derailed* their research on the effects of the evictions, where they recall some of the stories of the inhabitants of the new settlements. But these works are generally fragmentary, and they privilege quantitative data.

With these examples, I want to highlight the importance and at the same time the complexity of any research on the effects of urban renewal. Public interventions often produce deep ruptures in the spatial fabric and in the historic continuity of entire communities. But these ruptures also bring to the foreground several social dynamics that in the ordinary life remained invisible: the relation between space and collective life, between space and culture, between space and 'mental life'. Something is retained of these events, also when the spatial order is reconstructed, and the human groups recreate the 'legibility' of their environment (Lynch, 1960). Thus, to understand the interpretations and experiences of the residents during these moments of rupture, allows us to shed light on some mechanisms that underlie the construction of the culture of cities.

As Louis Wirth (1938) concluded the article quoted above, urban transformations have an impact not only on the specific places in which they are enforced, but *on the world*, as a unity bigger than the sum of its parts, and that is driven by complex global dynamics. If these events are not addressed starting from the evaluation of their effects, they will keep reproducing in similar forms for more decades. The direction of the current changes – he writes – in good or in bad will not only transform the city but the world. Some of the most basics among these factors and processes, and the possibility to direct

them and to control them, compels us to study them in greater detail.

3 Three Fields of Inquiry: urban planning, anthropology, sciences of the psyche

I frame the study of the consequences of urban transformations as a subject that lies at the intersection of *three different disciplinary fields*, each with its peculiar methodologies and biases. I will sketch now a brief commentary on each one of them, trying to relate some authors within each field to the topic I am concerned of. I will later briefly present *five texts*, which, from different historical and geographical contexts, managed to hold together in creative ways these three approaches. By studying these texts comparatively, and creating a dialogue among them, without forgetting their flaws, we can find some interesting suggestions to develop a methodology of research on this subject.

3.1 Sciences of the built environment

The first field I analyzed is the huge area that includes human geography, urban planning and urban studies in general. Even if the planned transformations of city are intensely studied by these disciplines, the research on the *effects* of these transformations are surprisingly few. There is a line of studies, which we can trace back to Geddes and Mumford (or even before, Ruskin), that devoted a special attention to the ways in which communities take control of the spaces they inhabit. More recent authors, like Lynch and Rykwert – or, in Italy, De Carlo – reflected on the ‘sense of places’, highlighting the relation between urban landscape and human landscape. But even within this sub-field, already marginal in itself, few studies actually focus on how urban interventions modify the social arrangement of the human groups they affect.

From Lefebvre onwards, the study of the impacts of planning assumed the language of marxist critical geography. The processes of gentrification, of urban renewal, even of displacement, were described as partial reflections of the class conflict. For critical geographers like Soja, Harvey or the late Neil Smith, the economic order shapes space to adapt it to its needs, erasing from the territory the uses that are not compatible or not desirable: if necessary, by removing the population, otherwise by promoting or enforcing a change in their customs. This powerful interpretation has the merit of bringing back the conscience of class in urban studies; though, it is steadily becoming a conventional language to describe very different processes, imposing on the

whole world an epistemologic construction that emerge from the peculiar history of Europe and North America. Even if inserted in a same global system, the stories and the forms of belonging that developed in different cities over the world are often hard to compare one with another, or to enclose in a single frame.

Other researchers work on how planning *in itself* involves certain dynamics of accumulation of wealth and dispossession, which can be described as merely colonial: they also provide an interesting key for the study of its impacts. In fact, Neil Smith’s major work described gentrification with a metaphor linked to colonization: the frontier (1996). Libby Porter (2010) highlighted how colonization in Australia always used planning to pacificate the conquered areas; Leonnie Sandercock (1998) observed how planning in the Canadian territories inhabited by First Nations conveys class and ethnic biases that reproduce the hostility towards them; Oren Yiftachel (2006) and Eyal Weizman (2007) showed how architecture and urban renewal in Palestine are used as devices of conquest and exclusion. These approaches can be applied also to territories that are neither reclaimed by aboriginal inhabitants, nor at war; in fact, the rhetorics that legitimate urban renewal are often the same.

3.2 Sciences of culture and society

Obviously, in the social sciences, and especially in cultural anthropology, we can find many important studies that are useful for the study of the impacts of urban renewal. The first ethnographers devoted much attention to the spatial organization of the colonized populations; but their spatial approach has not been followed to this day. Few anthropologists are interested in the cultural implications of urban renewal: my hypothesis is that this is due to two characteristics of the discipline itself: the preference for synchrony over diachrony, and the ‘anti-urban prejudice’ of many anthropologists (for Italy, see Signorelli, 1984; Giglia 1989).

Regarding the synchronic bias, it suffices to quote Lévi-Strauss (1961): in *Tristes tropiques*, the father of structural anthropology engages with the issue of the spatial organization of the Bororo tribes and its relation with the social order. But the impact of colonization on this dyade is dismissed in one single paragraph. It is a crucial paragraph, indeed, because it mentions the ‘disorientation’ that the new spatial order caused on the natives.⁸ Lévi-Strauss does not go further in studying the problem, which would have been of great importance to us; but the (diachronic) impact of change was marginal to his

concerns, because what really interests him is the (synchronic) homology between the religious and the social structures. Some years later, another French ethnographer, Robert Jaulin (1972), will devote much more attention to a process of this kind, among the Motilones of the Venezuelan Amazonas. Jaulin connects the spatial transformation of their villages, that the Jesuite missionaries set in place, to nothing less than the deterioration of the tribe's collective *health*: it is an important step forward, in comparison to the anti-historicism of the structuralists, whose climax is reached by Bourdieu's famous essay on the kabyle house.⁹

Regarding the 'anti-urban prejudice', it is worth mentioning that recently the anthropologist Setha Low wrote that urban anthropology, despite the great amount of researches, has not produced substantial theoretical innovations (2010). Many urban researches focus on the relation between local or individual experiences and the bigger socio-economic picture, as well as on the meanings that people attach to the urban environment. But among the 254 studies she reviewed, there is no recognizable school of thought on urban transformation within urban anthropology. The same author, few years before, edited a compilation of essays with Denise Lawrence-Zuniga (2003) on the anthropology of space and place, where some very important texts are included; in particular, on the 'cultural implications' of planning. Rabinow's and Herzfeld's articles, for example, show how the building of new public spaces, as well as the demolition or preservation of specific private buildings, convey dynamics of power and conflict among social, ethnic or religious groups. These conflicts have a reflection on the spaces that emerge from these interventions; so these are impregnated of some cultural stories that are invisible to an external observer, and difficult to decipher even for the groups that inhabit them.

Displacement is at the center of the concerns of the anthropologist Michael Cernea, an assessor for the World Bank that elaborated a model for the prevention of the socio-cultural damages caused by relocations: though, he mainly addresses post-catastrophe or post-war events. The episodes of displacement and eviction that occur in times of peace still remain scarcely researched. It is worth reporting that in Italy, since the 1970s, several researchers focused on the cultural crisis linked with the disappearance of familiar landscapes. A famous text by Ernesto de Martino describes the disorientation of a Southern peasant when for the first time he is brought out of his village,

Marcellinara, in a car. When he loses sight of the steeple, he experiences an existential anxiety which testifies the fact that that object, and the place it stands for, were the cornerstones of his vital experience (Martino, 1977, p. 479-481). This episode opened the way to a series of studies on the 'sense of places' in Italian ethnology, from Minicuci (1982) to Laceda (1993) and Teti (2003): the first analyzes the organization of space in a village in Calabria, the second the symbolic aspects of spatial rootedness and uprooting, the third the relation of the inhabitants of Calabria with the abandoned villages.

We don't know if in the big cities of our days there are some equivalents to the steeple of Marcellinara. The conceptual tools of anthropology were developed in rural settings, and cannot be applied acritically to completely different contexts. But we also know that the split between 'simple' and 'complex' societies is artificial: neither the world of the Bororo, and of the peasants of Southern Italy, was so traditional and immutable as anthropologists like to think, nor contemporary society is so void of symbolic implications as the social scientists of the Chicago School imagined.

3.3 Sciences of individual behavior

Within this field of inquiry I reviewed the researches of psychologists and psychiatrists concerned on the influences that society and the environment have on mental health. As in the other two fields, I found few approaches that help to clarify the effects of the transformations of space on behavior.

A key figure in North American environmental psychology is Irwin Altman (disciple of Proshansky, who was one of the first psychologists who investigated on the impact of urban environment on human behavior). Since the mid-Seventies, Altman was the director of *Human Behavior and the Environment*, a collection of books that hosted a lively interdisciplinary debate on the role of space and place in the formation of the individual psyche. Among its contributors there was the architect Amos Rapoport (1982), who considered the 'vernacular' relationship between space and social organization as a guarantee for mental health, especially through the investment of meaning on the environment. This 'culturalist' strand of environmental psychology will have its peak in 1993, with the publication of a volume edited by Altman and Setha Low, under the title, which will become famous, of *Place Attachments*.

Between the 1980s and 1990s the concept of place attachments was applied also to the analysis of urban transformations, in reviews like *Environment and Behavior* or the *Journal of Environmental Psychology*.¹⁰ But this idea quickly was reduced into an interpretation that privileged the sentimental relations, the emotional bond that links the individual to certain spaces. The spaces mentioned are generally *private*, and the bond emerges from habits, from memories, and from a sense of security, which supposedly gives psychological support to the individual. This is a phenomenological approach, linked to concepts like *place identity* or *genius loci*, developed by scholars like Yi-fu Tuan or Edward Relph. Although they might be useful in a clinical context, these concept have clear epistemological limitations: they admit very little margin for social and cultural dynamics, for conflicts, for class tensions – in brief, for history. In the final chapter of *Place Attachment*, in fact, Brown and Perkins describe the ‘Rupture of Place Attachments’, but only the last ten pages of the chapter deal with involuntary relocation.¹¹ The other examples of ‘rupture’ are the invasion of privacy, or the nostalgia of the youth when they go to study in a college. From our point of view, these events are so radically different, that binding them under the same definition involves a serious risk of banalizing the dynamics of rupture of a spatial order.

In 2013 the two northamerican psychologists Manzo and Devin-Wright edited a compilation of texts on the state of the art of the school of ‘place attachments’, twenty years after the original volume of 1993 was published. But the new book is much less interdisciplinary, and no anthropologist contributed to it.¹² The ambiguity of this phenomenologic and sentimental approach reaches a peak when this paradigm is used to study gentrification: in 2004 Brown, Brown and Perkins studied a process of residential substitution in the center of Salt Lake City, and found an increased ‘confidence in place’ among the new (wealthier) residents, compared to the (poorer) inhabitants of the areas still not renovated – thus legitimizing the project of urban renewal. Two years later, in a study on citizens’ participation, Manzo states: “[...] the proposal of a development project can be interpreted by some members of the community as a threat for their place attachment, because the physical fabric of the neighborhood will be modified. Those that feel that the relation with their community is threatened by the renovation, can oppose to a project, despite its potential value” (Manzo; Perkins,

2006, p. 337). With the concept of *place attachment*, psychologists can essentialize the relation that a human group maintains with a specific space, reducing the opposition to urban renewal and gentrification to an expression of conservatism, or to an irrational nostalgia.

Other currents in the sciences of behavior challenge these essentialism that often degenerate into pathologizing or disease mongering. Tobie Nathan’s ethnopsychiatry, or Françoise Sironi ‘clinical geopolitical psychiatry’, for instance, were developed to incorporate the cultural, historical, social and even economic implications of the psychic events into the clinical approach. These authors interpret the idea of ‘attachments’ in a very different way, but until now their work was focused mainly on war traumas and huge migrations. But this approach can be applied also to events that happen in ‘times of peace’, like urban renewal. As I mentioned before, the parallel with colonization allows to link anthropology with urban planning; the study of urban transformations as *traumatic events*, in turn, can be the bridge through which the ethnopsychiatric approach (or the ‘clinical geopolitical’) links to the study of the impacts of urban renewal.

4 Five Texts to Focus the Study of the Impacts

I will now proceed to the presentation of five texts that are the best examples I have found of an analysis of the social and cultural impacts of urban transformations. They do not reflect any theoretical, chronological or disciplinary coherence: the first three emerge from a London-based research group, the *Institute for Community Studies*, that began its activities just after the Second World War; the other two belong to two completely different disciplinary traditions; with one exception, they were all published at a about fifteen years of distance one to the other. In each one of them I will highlight the concepts that can be helpful for the present, and the limitations that they imply. I describe their succession as a progression in the complexity of the approach, though the author may even not know the texts that preceed them, since, as I said, they do not belong to the same tradition of studies, nor to the same disciplinary field. Though, every one of them covers some important aspects on this topic, and these elements emerge mainly through the comparison of every text with all the others.

4.1 Michael Young and Peter Willmott (1957). Family and kinship in East London, London: Routledge

The first text is a landmark study; it is one of the most important 'community studies' in British sociology, and doubtlessly the first that addresses the issue of urban renewal. It analyzes the impact of one of the first *slum clearance* projects on the social structure of a working-class neighborhood in London. During the fifty years after its publication, *Family and Kinship* was continuously reprinted, and sold more than a million copies. Its success comes from the fact that, by addressing specifically the issue of how *families* were affected by the new space the residents were relocated in, even if describing a *local* phenomenon, this specific becomes a metonymy for all the changes that were modifying the whole city of London, maybe all of Britain. The modification of life experienced by the inhabitants of the working-class neighborhood of Bethnal Green, as they were transferred to a residential estate in the suburbs, contains *in nuce* all the transformation of the English working class, from the febrile world of the Docklands between the two wars, to the consumption and individualism of the 50s and 60s, when emerged the values that many years later will give rise to Thatcherism.

The title of the book expresses a very clear disciplinary affiliation: *Family*, and even more *Kinship*, recall social anthropology, as in Evans-Pritchard *Kinship and Marriage among the Nuer*, or in Malinowski's first work *The Family among the Australian Aborigines*. Young and Willmott try to apply in an urban community the epistemic categories that were developed in the field of ethnography: the family is considered the core social institution of the group they study, those of the residents of Bethnal Green. Even the methodology is ethnographic: the two researchers established their *Institute for Community Studies* in the neighborhood of Bethnal Green, and Peter Willmott lived there with his wife and children. "This book – they explain in the opening of the second part – is about the effects of the newest upon one of the oldest of our social institutions. The new is the housing estate, hundreds of which have been build since the war [...]. The old institution is the family. It has been official policy to move people out of the cities; and we felt it would help in the assessment of this policy if more were known about its effects on family life" (xxv). In the old neighborhood of Bethnal Green, heart of the Docklands, the authors discovered that the enlarged family was still alive

and active, as in the peasant societies of the past and in the "primitive societies studied by anthropologists" (ivi). In this area, whose demolition the local authorities presented as an undoubtable progress, the two researchers find a functioning fabric of human connections, based on social and cultural structures that guaranteed a sense of belonging to the residents, despite the great infrastructural problems. The relocation in the new estate shatters this sense of belonging; the houses are more healthy and spacious, but the families close in themselves, and many relations of friendship and enlarged kinship are lost. To maintain the increased social status, the new residents have to devote much more time to their jobs and to earn an income; new needs emerge (like the pursue of quality in education) that were absent before, and that are linked to a meritocratic interpretation of society. Culture, in brief, changes with the transformation of space.

Despite its merits, the book is based on a series of oppositions (before and after the transfer; enlarged and nuclear families; rich social life and solitary life) that recall the famous evolutionary dichotomy between simple and complex societies, still very influential in post-war sociology. To our aims, anyway, the important fact is that the social transformation is studied *spatially*: life in the new estate is described in detail, and the comparison among the two spaces helps us to understand why the same people behave in different manners depending on the space they live in. Young and Willmott have been criticized, the conclusions to which they arrive considered too pessimistic; they were even accused of romanticizing the life of the working class. Anyway, the young writer Linsey Hanley (2007), author of a book on the english suburban estates recognized perfectly, in the description of the 'Greenleigh' estate, the same alienated landscape in which she grew up in the 80s. But the simplifications exist, indeed; we will now see how, in the following decades, they were increasingly replaced with deeper approaches to urban transformations.

4.2 Marc Fried (1968). Rieving for a lost home: the psychological costs of relocation. In: James Q. Wilson (Ed.) Urban renewal: the record and the controversy. Cambridge: MIT Press

This seminal work was included in one of the first compilation of studies on urban renewal, and describes the reactions of the residents to the demolition of Boston's West End – one of the first

'Little Italies' in the US, where Leslie Whyte discovered his 'street corner society' (1943). Previously, Herbert Gans (1962), like Young and Willmott in London, highlighted the pain that many Italian migrants suffered, as a consequence of the loss of this 'urban village'. But Fried – who was also part of Young and Willmott's *ICS* – for the first time brings the attention upon the consequences of the displacement for *mental health*. In fact, he uses a psychological category to account for the transformation: grief.

If we are to understand the effects of relocation and the significance of the loss of a residential environment – he writes – it is essential that we have a deeper appreciation of the psychological implications of both physical and social aspects of residential experience. Thus we are led to formulations which deal with the functions and meanings of the residential area in the lives of working class people (361).

Through the observation of grief we discover the implications of space on the psyche; so, to understand grief better, we have to study more deeply the relations between space and psychic life, and the social and cultural implications of space. So the loss of space is an occasion to shed light over this triangle: space, culture, and the individual.

Like in the Docklands of London, the families of Boston's West End experienced an increase of individualism and of the weight of the nuclear family after the relocation. Fried uses the word *pathology*: "Grieving for a lost home is evidently a widespread and serious social phenomenon following in the wake of urban dislocation. It is likely to increase social and psychological 'pathology' in a number of instances; and it is also likely to create new opportunities for some, and to increase the rate of social mobility for others. For the greatest number, dislocation is unlikely to have either effect but does lead to intense personal suffering despite moderately successful adaptation to the total situation of relocation (p. 376). Who studied or suffered some event of urban renewal will quickly recognize the sentences that Fried quotes from the interviews he made: for a resident the relocation was "like having the rug pulled out from under you"; another said "It's just like a plant; when you tear up its roots, it dies" (p. 372, 374). We will see how this metaphor will be used forty years later by Mindy Fullilove, the last author of this compilation.

The article closes with a call to a better understanding of the social impacts, before slum clearance is planned; the residents' reactions, in

fact, can be compared to the death of a cherished person, and cause the fragmentation of the 'sense of continuity', which is an essential resource for working class people. Fried's interpretation might contradict the orthodox tradition of Marxist materialism, because it privileges the attention to the *meanings* linked to space, over the quantifiable aspects of housing (the dimensions of the houses, their price, the healthiness and comfort of the new spaces). The final aim of his work is to advocate for an urban planning that doesn't break this 'sense of continuity', by understanding what aspects of space give gratification to the residents, and at the same time by supporting psychologically those who experience relocation. "[O]nly by assuring the integrity of some of the external bases for the sense of continuity in the working class, and by maximizing the opportunities for meaningful adaptation, can we accomplish planned urban change without serious hazards to human welfare" (p. 379).

What is missing in this brief but important article is what is often excluded in most elaborations that are closer to psychology: history. The accent upon the 'sense of continuity', and on spatial identity is likely to hide from the frame precisely those dynamics that *build* belonging and meaning, and that are at the same time spatial *and temporal*. As for Young and Willmott's book, now from the point of view of psychology, if the relation between people and places is not understood as an historical dynamic, the grieving for a lost place is easily turned into simple – even if devastating – nostalgia. In the next work we will see a much more dynamic and historically based approach to grief.

4.3 Peter Marris (1974). *Loss and change*. London; New York: Routledge

Peter Marris is a sociologist, and he was affiliated to the same *Institute for Community Studies* whose works we reviewed in the last two paragraphs. For this reason, in this book appear many of the issues we saw in the works of Young, Willmott and Fried. But the point of view from which Marris analyzes this same topic is very different. In this singular book, Marris addresses the general topic of loss and change by analyzing many different traumatic events, and he chooses slum clearance as one of those. Even if different among each other, these events put people in front of contradictions and ruptures, and make difficult for them to reconstruct their – again – 'sense of continuity'. The case through which he illustrates the effects of slum clearance is drawn from the city of Lagos, in Nigeria,

where an illuminating bourgeoisie was promoting the demolition of many low-class neighborhood, and, as usual, the displacement of residents in newly built blocks of apartments in the periphery.

Just like in London's Bethnal Green and in Boston's West End, the demolition of the historical center of Lagos represented for many "a profound disturbance, from which they never recover" (p. 44). But Marris observes also how this disturbance is related with some messages which are *intrinsic to the urban process in itself*. When he interviewed the employees of the city authority responsible of the operation, he recognized in them a "missionary zeal" (p. 55), a very distinct quasi-personal engagement towards the solution of social problems through the transformation of space. Unprepared to recognize the social and cultural implications of their work, the planners associated the areas they are working on to disorder and pathology, and were convinced that their substitution will 'purify' society, as in a miracle. So the new neighborhoods were *intentionally* planned to break the residents' 'sense of continuity': the planners associated the old neighborhoods with the aspects of social life they wanted to obliterate. One of these employees revealed to Marris that "it's just at the moment that a family has been uprooted [...] that miracles can be accomplished" (p. 55).

But the values that the residents associated with these places were totally different. In Lagos, the maze of narrow alleys, little squares, passages, dark crowded rooms and common spaces where kids played, women cooked, washed or sold their products, meant to their inhabitants much more than decay and poverty – even if they might look as such to an external eye. They were instead the theater of a complex dynamic, which was a product of the crisis of the Yoruba family life and of the migrations from the countryside to the city. By getting involved in small businesses in the city, many young men and women obtained a power over their decisions much greater than what was recognized to them by the tradition; this change reflected on all the system of exchange internal to the groups, including marriage options, relations with the original families, and gender balance. But many elements linked with the support of the enlarged family groups maintained their importance, as well as many rituals linked to kinship; they obviously assumed a different value, in the new social conditions. Now, this interplay of continuity and change, was reflected in the *physical space* of these neighborhoods of the central city: the spatial form allowed the residents to face the difficulties of these transformations, by offering a

common scenario of reference on which the cultural dynamic could be played. "The uncertainties of married life in the city were manageable, because the situations which might arise could be understood by all in the same terms [...]. They could be vulnerable, but for good or bad they knew *where* they were" (p. 49, emphasis added).

In this sense, the relation between spatial form and social organization cannot be depicted as a static landscape of inherited traditions, in which suddenly history arrives in the form of urban renewal. The local communities were systems in transformation, and their evolution was suddenly *interrupted* by urban planning. This interpretation enables Marris to read also the social trauma caused by the relocation not as an irrational and atavistic resistance to change, but as the effect of *the interruption of a process of emancipation*. To the planners' pretension to reform a social life they considered archaic, only responded some specific sectors of inhabitants; the residential district "embodied the aspirations of the socially ambitious" (p. 52), for those residents of the slum that wanted to have tea and biscuits like the English. Naturally, most of them didn't possess "neither the money, nor the habitual skills, nor the sense of life's meaning which the estate implied. It robbed them of a physical support for an identity they could not afford to relinquish. Those who remained on the estate could only struggle against its hardships and inconveniences, in the hope that their resistance would sooner or later break the alien rigidity of its pattern" (p. 51). So the failure of the urban plan is linked to the social divisions it formed, to the rupture of social cohesion, to the loss of a *common space*, both physical and symbolic.

Many projects of urban transformation can be read through these lenses: an example would be that of the Pruitt-Igoe complex, which was supposed to regenerate a whole area of Saint Louis, but produced a space that was even worse than the one it intended to replace; it was actually demolished only 15 years after its construction.¹³ Even if it written almost half a century ago, Marris's text can be considered much more contemporary than many contemporary texts on community 'resilience'. The next text will help me to argue more about the "conflict on opposing conceptions of the place itself" (p. 56), what Lefebvre will later call the difference between the 'lived space' and the 'conceived space'.

4.4 Amalia Signorelli (1989). Spazio concreto e spazio astratto: divario di potere e squilibri culturali tra pianificatori e abitanti dei quartieri di edilizia popolare,¹⁴ *La Ricerca Folklorica*, n. 20, p. 13-20, Oct.

This study written by the neapolitan anthropologist Amalia Signorelli was conceived in a very specific moment for Italian urban history: in the 1970s and 1980s many big public housing projects were built, supported by the concern of many left-wing intellectuals and political activists with the material conditions of the poorest sectors of the population.¹⁵ To their great surprise, the residents of these new planned neighborhoods were far from grateful and comfortable in the new settings: at the contrary, they displayed a discomfort which often erupted in rage or even violence towards the physical structures of the buildings, which quickly fell into decay. This is a very contemporary problem; still, many social scientists and urban scholars have got so accustomed to it, that it is often given for granted that a certain degree of uncomfot and decay will always be linked with poverty and to public housing. In the crucial year 1989, several left-wing intellectuals were engaging in a deep reflection on their previous theoretical and methodological assumptions.

The failure of these neighborhood was generally attributed to the residents themselves, considered still incapable of adapting to an urban setting – especially for those who came from the countryside. This explanation recalled the positivist interpretations of the Chicago school (Signorelli, 1989, p. 14). But Signorelli dismisses this analysis, and considers that the crucial point was *class*. The newly designed neighborhoods, she observes, are the only spaces in the city that are *planned by a different social class than the one that inhabits them*. Their form thus implicitly conveys a way of using the space that does not correspond to those of the social classes that live in them. So, the same space can be completely different, if observed from above, as planners do, or from 1m 70 cm off the ground, as the residents see it. “What in a global reading appears as an order, becomes unbearably monotonous, flatness and anonymous repetition” (p. 16). The concrete space that the residents need, is in direct opposition to the abstract space of the planners.

This hypothesis is verified on a specific case: the city of Pozzuoli, in the gulf of Naples. Between 1983 and 1984 this small city experienced a dangerous amount of seismic activities, and 30,000 to 40,000

people were evacuated from the central neighborhood of *Rione Terra*, a picturesque district facing the sea and an ancient Roman settlement. They were moved to the other side of the hills surrounding the city, where a new planned neighborhood was built. But in the new space, the displaced residents obviously suffered from a discomfort linked to the loss of the old place: but the way Signorelli portrays this sentiment is worth studying. The old *Rione* was for her “a complex reality, characterized by a complex interplay between tradition and modernity, by lively dynamics of transformation” (p. 17). The beauty of the landscape combined with a high level of adaptability of space: flexible, non constrictive, this urban space *supported* the social dynamics of the residents, and those, in turn, modified the space, making it more recognizable and esthetically valuable. The new neighborhood was instead “only inhabited”, how an interviewee put it; it was “a dormitory, let’s call it that way” (p. 20). The planners didn’t want (or didn’t know how) to consider the peculiar relationship with places that the population developed, and decided to replace this complex construction with some completely foreign modalities of using the houses, the landscape, the environment. In particular, the new modalities had a distinct origin in a specific social class, higher than that of the residents, so the whole operation was tainted of a kind of classist violence.

So the discomfort had nothing to do with a ‘rupture of place attachment’: “The relation to places is not a habitus in a sentimental sense [...], it is instead a real esthetic experience, a clear and lucid conscience of the quality of the inhabited spaces; a conscience of how this quality, enjoyed as an object of esthetic contemplation, increases the quality of life as a whole; and moreover, of how the relation *between* the places are intertwined and qualify the relations that the human subjects have *with* places, so the admirable landscapes turns even the most miserable room or modest house into something highly valuable” (p. 19).

Many other events can be studied through this focus. In Italy, cases such as the neighborhood of La Martella, were in 1949 were relocated the inhabitants of the *Sassi*, an ancient neighborhood of the Southern Italian town of Matera, carved in the rock, and whose misery was depicted in the famous novel by Carlo Levi *Cristo stopped at Eboli*: after the relocation, they seemed to miss their old dwellings more than they appreciated the new settlement. Or to the recent relocation of the inhabitants of L’Aquila,

a central Italian town destroyed by an earthquake: according to recent studies, the trauma of relocation might have been even worse than the trauma of the earthquake. But Signorelli's intentions were not limited to the post-catastrophe reconstructions; her original concern was on relocations after urban renewal, as in the works we are analyzing here. Her approach helps us to stress the social and cultural dynamics that are embedded in any urban setting, and so the invisible implications of any project of demolition and relocation. We will now see how this issue is dealt with in the last text.

4.5 Mindy Thompson Fullilove (2004). *Root shock: how tearing up City Neighborhoods hurts America, and what we can do about it*. New York: Ballantines Books

Mindy Fullilove, M.D., has been studying for more than a decade the psychological impacts of urban renewal on the afro-american communities whose neighborhoods were demolished starting with the 1949 *Housing Act*, and whose populations were displaced to newly built *housing projects* in the suburbs. According to her calculations, between 1949 and 1973 around 2,500 neighborhoods were torn down, in 993 American cities, removing about 1,600 afro-american communities from their neighborhood. As it is known, urban renewal was quickly dubbed *negro removal*: but what Fullilove maintains, is that its psychological and social consequences of it are still highly underestimated. In this very readable book, written for a general public, she completes the observations she exposed in qualified medical reviews on the study of the 'afro-american dispossession', and that emerge from the researches she had been conducting since 1995. Fullilove walked tens of American neighborhoods, interviewed the displaced residents, trying to understand their reaction to the loss of their places. Their pain is wider than the *grieving* that Fried depicted thirty years before; its effects much deeper than those described by Signorelli. "There was a remarkable emptiness in that pain. In that searing moment I realized the loss he was describing was, in a crucial way, the collective loss. It was the loss of a massive web of connections – a way of being – that had been destroyed by urban renewal; it was as thousands of people, who seemed to be with me in sunlight, were at some deeper level of their being wandering lost in a dense fog, unable to find one another for the rest of their lives", writes Fullilove, commenting an interview made in 2002 (p. 4). Fullilove says that the problem of displacement is

the problem that this century must solve, like the XX century had to deal with the problem of the 'color line'. By displacing from one place to another hundred of thousand people, in the cities and in the countryside, languages, cultures, traditions and social bonds were destroyed: she calls the effects of this destruction *root shock*, as a plant that after a series of transplanting suffers from a stress from which it cannot recover any more. Not a single word is out of place, in these two paragraphs that describe the multiple impacts of urban renewal:

Root shock, at the level of the individual, is a profound emotional upheaval that destroys the working model of the world that had existed in the individual's head. Root shock undermines trust, increases anxiety about letting loved ones out of one's sight, destabilizes relationships, destroys social, emotional and financial resources, and increases the risk for every kind of stress-related disease, from depression to heart attack. Root shock leaves people chronically cranky, barking a distinctive croaky complaint that their world was abruptly taken away.

Root shock, at the level of the local community, be it neighborhood or something else, ruptures bonds, dispersing people to all the directions of the compass. Even if they manage to regroup, they are not sure what to do with one another. People who were near are too far, and people who were far are too near. The elegance of the neighborhood – each person in his social and geographic slot – is destroyed, and even if the neighborhood is rebuilt exactly as it was, it will won't work. The restored geography is not enough to repair the many injuries to the *mazeway* (p. 14).

Fullilove uses the concept of *mazeway*, which synthetically condenses Young and Willmott's 'connecting fabric', Fried and Marris's 'sense of continuity', Signorelli's 'recognizability' of the 'concrete space', and even Kevin Lynch's 'legibility'. The *mazeway* is the physiological ability through which any organism learns how to move in the world, in one specific ecosystem, in order to increase its possibilities of survival, and to defend from peril. But for the human being, the ecosystem is 'emotional', and it is closely connected to the environment in a global way, "not just as our individual selves, but as beings caught in a single, universal net of consciousness anchored in small niches we call neighborhoods, fractions or villages" (p. 17). Root shock so repercutes in circles outside the strictly local context, connecting local tragedies to huge changes on a global scale. The most

convincing example that Fullilove provides of this 'butterfly effect' of urban renewal is that of jazz: since the afro-american neighborhoods destroyed by urban renewal are the ones from which jazz was born, their destruction modified all the northamerican musical culture. Jazz lost the network between the houses, the clubs and the streets of the ghettos, and moved to the universities and the elite clubs in New York, migrating finally to Europe and Japan; the afro-american, segregated in the new suburbs, began to express their discomfort with a completely different music, rap, which conveys very different emotions and aspirations, and which is linked with a completely different urban landscape.

Fullilove studies three specific cases, in Virginia, Pennsylvania and New Jersey; but the events that took place in these neighborhoods she analyzes are explained within a much broader and collective story: one that begins at the turn of the XIX and XX century, when tens of thousand afro-american migrated to the cities of the North, and claimed their right to integrate into the northamerican society. The afro-american ghettos in the old city centers were the stage to this project of emancipation; by living close ones to the others, they somewhat accepted the residential segregation that the white imposed to them, but at the same time strengthened their social relations and their position within society as a whole. It is from these very communities that in the mid-XX century the movement for civil rights began; and at the very climax of this process, urban renewal arrives. Even if it presented as an improval for the families of these neighborhood – which the authorities called *blight*, or directly *slums* (p. 58, 245) – it didn't take into account the solid and functional networks of relations and mutual help that the residents developed there. As in Lagos, in London, in Boston, in Pozzuoli... the residents of Roanoke, VA, lost neighborhoods in which they could reach by walking most of their acquaintances; they were dispersed through the city suburbs, in places in which it is fading that very *kindness* that permeated the relationships among the neighbors in the old quarters (p. 124).

Compared to the other four works we analyzed, it is interesting to see how this psychological approach to relocation is developed from a thorough comprehension of the socio-cultural dynamics of transformation. It was the hard path to emancipation that the urban afro-american are engaged in, that created the specific 'place attachment' to the neighborhoods that urban renewal demolished. So urban planning re-opens wounds that were not

completely cured, like those cut in the collective psyche by slavery, racial segregation and ongoing discrimination. Enclosed in new ghettos, where life is much less enjoyable that in their old 'slums', afro-americans are now confronting to a much greater challenge than those they faced during the struggle for civil rights: the battle against the new 'spatial injustice', to use Edward Soja's words, against this new form of oppression, much more difficult to recognize, which has silently trasferred to the field of space the political battle on class and race (and gender!) that the new century smoothly concealed from the field of public discourse.

5 Conclusion

The historical evolution I traced through these five texts shows how the discourse on the social impacts of urban renewal, even if marginal within each of the three fields of inquiry from which it is studied, has become much more complex and deep; also the interaction among the three fields are now stronger. From the initial attempt by Young and Willmott to read urban renewal in relation to the forms of social organization, through the conscience of the pain linked to the symbolic aspects of transformation studied by Fried, the dynamic approach of Marris, and the recognition of the political implications of space described by Signorelli, we arrive to the articulated work of Fullilove, where the conscience of these implications is assembled with an articulated analysis of the psychological and cultural consequences on a long term. After Mindy Fullilove's book, hopefully, the relation between space and people, between space and culture, between space and the psyche, can not be dealt anymore with in a simplified way.

A closer collaboration between sciences of the urban environment, sciences of the social relationships, and sciences of behavior, could lead to a new understanding of specific events of spatial transformation, contributing to the comprehension of how a single event can illustrate a global history. This comprehension can be useful especially for those who suffered the consequences of a relocation, by offering them a frame of meaning within which they can recognize the sense of their individual experiences. As explained by one of Fullilove's interviewees, Mary Bishop from Roanoke: "We still don't see urban renewal as a destructive force, because it hadn't been written, it had never been said really, except among a few academics a few years ago: people didn't see what have hit them. They didn't see the deep trauma, the assault almost.

I am sure that people died as a result of this. I am sure they died way prematurely” (p. 74). In post-urban-renewal neighborhoods like Bon Pastor in Barcelona, or Tarlabasé in Istanbul, or Nuova Ostia in Rome, many things can still happen, and new relations can be built; but they should begin with the understanding of how planning ‘killed’, in some way, some places that were crucial to the fabric of the social world they inhabited. By recognizing this loss, residents are allowed to ‘grieve for a lost home’, and to begin a more complete life in the new spaces.

The aim of such a work, obviously, would be to contribute to create the conditions by which the individuals and the communities will manage to decide over the future of their places, as well as of their social order. But it is also intended to save from oblivion some histories and processes that were drastically interrupted, and that remained buried under the ruins. These events are not addressed anymore in public, but in some way they are still present, unspoken of, lingering in the spaces and places of our cities. The ‘cry of the excavator’, heard by the great Italian poet Pierpaolo Pasolini, was a ‘grieving’ that remained unheard, to which our urban history still couldn’t give citizenship. Still, somebody heard it, during the formation of the landscape of blocks and squares that we now inhabit, and that now appears to us as inevitable, without contradictions, as *given*:

[...] *What used to be
a stretch of grass, an open expanse,
and is now a courtyard white as snow
enclosed within walls of resentment,
what used to be a kind of sideshow
of fresh plaster façades askew in the sun
and is now a new city block, bustling
with an order made of dull misfortune.
What cries is whatever changes, even
for the better.*¹⁶

Notes:

(1) Edward T. Hartman, secretary of the Massachusetts Civic League, who was paraphrasing Benjamin C. Marsh, secretary of New York Committee on Congestion of Population (CCP). (Foglesong, 1986, p. 172).

(2) No need to remind how these early linear explanation of city transformation relied on the classical dichotomy of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, which affected a series of very different scholars of the XIX and early-XX century, from Marx (though without the nostalgia for a lost rural world) to conservative right-wing theorists (where this nostalgia is the crucial point).

(3) I make reference here to contemporary approaches like those of ‘multiple modernities’ or ‘postsecular societies’ (Eisenstadt, 2000; Habermas, 2008; Rosati; Stoekl 2012).

(4) Before 1992 Olympic Games, the municipal agency *Vila Olímpica S.A.* appointed a young anthropologist, Concha Doncel

(1988), for a qualitative research in the neighborhood that was going to be demolished to make place for the new residential district. But her job had almost no diffusion, and lacks an historical and sociological contextualization to explain the impact of the big event on the local context.

(5) An exception will be that of the sociologist Joan Subirats *Del Chino al Raval*, financed by the CCCB (Contemporary cultural center of Barcelona) in 2006; it is also very hard to find, and it ignores most of the human dramas that were made public in subsequent years. The words ‘eviction’ and ‘expulsion’ (*desalojo, desahucio*) never appear in the text. For a different perspective, see TALLER VIU, 2006.

(6) In particular, the members of the group *Antropologia del Conflictu Urbà* (OACU) of the University of Barcelona, linked to anthropologist Manuel Delgado. Miquel Fernández studied the transformation of Raval; Muna Makhluft the *gentrification* of Barceloneta; Marc Dalmau the demolition of Colònia Castells; Marco Luca Stanchieri the transformation of the neighborhood of Vallcarca; Giuseppe Aricò the requalification of La Mina; Stefano Portelli the demolition and relocation of the residents of the ‘cheap houses’ of Bon Pastor. See <<http://observatoriconfliktueurba.org>>.

(7) See the publication *Istanbul: living in voluntary and involuntary exclusion* (Baysal, 2010).

(8) Lévi Strauss, 1961, p. 204: “So vital is to the social and religious life of the tribe is this circular layout that the Salesian missionaries soon realized that the surest way of converting the Bororo was to make them abandon their village and move to one in which the huts were laid out in parallel rows. They would then be, in every sense, *dis-oriented*. All feelings for their traditions would desert them, as if their social and religious systems (these were inseparable, as we shall see) were so complex that they could not exist without the schema made visible in their groundplans and reaffirmed to them in the daily rhythm of their lives”.

(9) Jaulin said that by replacing the traditional oval dwellings made of straw and mud (the *bohíos*) with quadrangular buildings made of concrete, the missionaries contributed to the worsening of the social life of the group. “An unusual variation in the habitat caused not only material discomfort, but also an important disturbance to social life, to the intimacy of families, to some moral qualities, to the social equilibrium, to the organization of responsibility and to an order and nobility that imposed to our attention” (1970, 65). “In few years, the white peace caused more than 800 deaths among the Motilonés; if it’s true that the great epidemics are over, the roots of the destruction remain, for epidemics are based in the systematic transformation of the natives’ order and style of life” (16).

(10) Feldman, “Settlement-identity: Psychological bonds with home places in a mobile society”, *Env. Beh.* 22, 1990, 183-229; Chavis, Wandersman, “Sense of community in the urban environment”, *Am. J. Comm. Psych.* 18, 1990, 55-82; Proshansky, Fabian, Kaminoff, “Place identity: physical world socialization of the self”, *J. Env. Psych.* 3, 1983, 57-84; Shumaker, Taylor, “Toward a clarification of people-place relationships”, in Feimer & Geller, *Environmental Psychology*, NY: Plenum, 1983; Chokor, “Cultural aspects of place consciousness and environmental identity”, in Canter, Krampen, Stea, *Environmental Perspectives* Hants: Gower, 1988.

(11) The two cases studies are the flooding of Buffalo Creek (West Virginia, USA) in 1972, and the landslide of Yungay (Peru) after the earthquake of 1970. Their sources are: Oliver-Smith, T., *The Martyred City: Death and Rebirth in the Andes*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976; and Erikson, K., *Everything in its path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1976.

(12) 22 contributions on 30 were written by psychologists or psychiatrists.

(13) The 33 11-storey blocks of Pruitt-Igoe, that were celebrated at their construction as ‘the best vertical housing project of the year’ was built between 1954 and 1956, and demolished between 1971 and 1976. The architect who had designed it, Minoru Yamasaki, was also the author of another building that fell down, even if in very different situation: New York’s World Trade Center.

(14) “Concrete space and abstract space: the cultural distance among the planners and the Inhabitants of Public Housing Neighborhoods.”

(15) "The idea, quite naive, was that once those who hadn't a house were given houses, their needs would be satisfied and its demands calmed down. At the contrary, as the new residents settled in the area, it was evident that there was a big social discomfort. It expressed mainly in three ways: the alteration of the schema for the house, and the transformation of the uses designed for the single parts; lack of responsibility from the adults, and vandalic aggression by the youth of the common spaces of the blocks and the neighborhood; and illegal behavior, among which the lack of payments for the rent" (Signorelli, 1989, p. 14).

(16) Pierpaolo Pasolini. Il pianto della scavatrice. In: *Le ceneri di Gramsci*, 1956. Translation by p. 217.

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