Sandra Annunziata, Lidia K.C. Manzo

[Desire for Diversity and Difference in Gentrified Brooklyn]

Dialogue between a planner and a sociologist

Abstract: This paper combines two ethnographic experiences conducted in two Brooklyn neighborhoods, with the aim to understand the gentrification process: its plural and multidimensional character and the contextual variables. However, coming from different paradigms they are less interested in doing a comparison of their case studies than presenting how different perspectives see and problematize gentrification and urban change in the face of diversity. In this light, the paper discusses the authors' first-hand experiences and results from the field research as in a sort of dialogue with the academic reader. Reflection on how do they see and problematize gentrification and diversity, the social effects of displacement and the role of planning conclude the paper.

Keywords: Gentrification, Urban Desire, Diversity, Brooklyn, Park Slope, Fort Greene.

Introduction

This paper combines two ethnographic experiences independently conducted by the authors in two Brooklyn neighborhoods[1]. The overall goal of their work was to understand the process of gentrification: its plural and multidimensional character and the contextual variables of its process (Malutas 2011; Lees et al 2008). However, coming from different paradigms and carrying with them their backgrounds in planning and sociology, they are less interested in doing a comparison of their studies (already published as Annunziata 2009 and Manzo 2012) than presenting how different perspectives see and problematize gentrification and urban change. In this light, the paper discusses the authors' first-hand experiences and results from the field research as in a sort of dialogue with the academic reader. Reflection on how do they deal with the issue of gentrification and diversity, the social effects of displacement and the role of planning conclude the paper.

Biographies of two Neighborhoods and a Borough: Brooklyn

Park Slope and Fort Greene are two well-known neighborhoods of New York City located just beside downtown Brooklyn (*see Figure 1 for their geographic location*), a borough which is experiencing a tremendous change due to its proximity with Manhattan. Brooklyn is becoming fashionable in particular for its otherness to Manhattan. It is characterized by low density, row houses and by the vibrancy and heterogeneity of its neighborhoods. Since our approach assumes that spatiality is inseparable by its contents, we interpret them as the organic result of the mutual adjustment between old residents, newcomers and the build environment able to host them. While «the bustle and congestion of Gotham» (Jackson 1993) elevates itself at financial capital, Brooklyn consolidates its nature of «heterogeneous mosaic of neighborhoods» (*ibidem*), the city of churches, with large boulevards with trees and villas. This is why Brooklyn confirmed to be the right place for our investigations into the complex world

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1 Cf. *Metodological Appendix*.

of a changing neighborhood. Contrary to the literature on urban renewal and gentrification - mainly focused on the tremendous change occurred on Manhattan's Lower East Side (Smith 1989; 1996) - Brooklyn appeared stable and unchanged. Something contributes to confer to this neighborhood a stable image of multiethnic and diverse urban environment. However its diversity, in particular its social mix, was little by little mined by a silent and long lasting process of gentrification, that - in different time and modalities - effected the majority of the so called «Brownstone Brooklyn» (Osman 2011). In this urban scape, Park Slope and Fort Greene have been experienced a long lasting urban fabric transformation together with a socio-demographic shift, and are struggling to maintain their reputation of diverse and integrated neighborhoods. Named gentrification, this process is known to urban dwellers across the world, especially to those who move to Brooklyn, many of whom play a role in the process, consciously or not, including the authors of this work. Their narratives of change allow us to shed light on the tension between diversity as a living condition and the recognition and reproduction of differences as signs of distinction in class reproduction (Krase 2012).

Figure 1- Geographic location of Park Slope and Fort Greene neighborhoods within the Brooklyn's borough and the city of New York
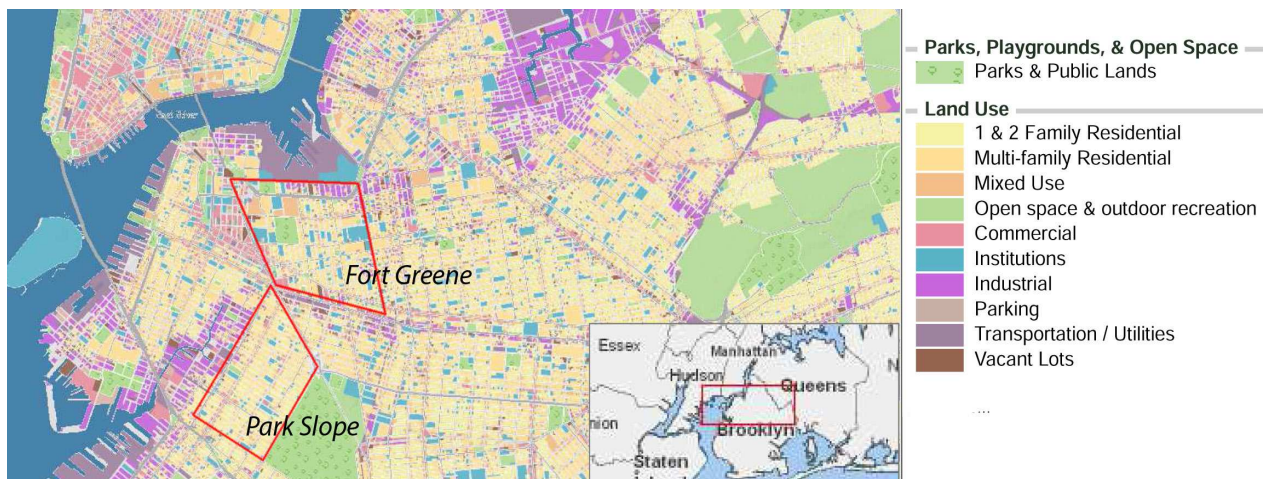
Source: Authors' elaboration on OASIS (Center for Urban Research, CUNY Graduate Center)

Park Slope is located in southwestern Brooklyn, roughly bounded by Prospect Park West to the east, Fourth Avenue to the west, Flatbush Avenue to the north, and 15th Street to the south. Its character was achieved by the establishing of a unique architecture that features charming Victorian brownstones, townhouses and apartments, as well as the aesthetically pleasing public places and vistas like the monumental Grand Army Plaza or the named streets on its north. Identifiable landmarks and focal points are connected to the 526-acres of Prospect Park, which offers recreational areas, a zoo, a bandstand, ponds, a lagoon and picnic grounds. Nearby are the Brooklyn Museum and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Other key elements of place-making include: lively commercial boulevards, the nation's largest member-owned and operated food co-op, five subway stops, two bus routes and some activist community projects, like restoring bluestone sidewalks, hosting the first citywide household hazardous-waste collection day, and an intensive recycling program. Seventh Avenue and Fifth Avenue are its primary commercial strips, while its east-west side streets are populated by many historic brownstones. Park Slope features historic buildings, top-rated restaurants, bars, and shops, as well as proximity to environmental and cultural amenities[2]. This contributes to a stimulating cultural scene and a family-friendly ambiance (*see Figure 2 for some visual evidences about Park Slope*).

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2 Prospect Park, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, the Brooklyn Museum, the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, and the Central Library (as well as the Park Slope branch) of the Brooklyn Public Library system among the many.

Figure 2 - The urbanity of Park Slope's neighborhood

Lidia Manzo's archive (2011-2012)

Fort Greene is bounded by Flatbush Avenue and Atlantic Avenue on the south, by Flushing Avenue on the north (encompassing the Navy Yard) and by Vanderbilt Avenue on the East where Fort Greene meets Bedford Stuyvesant, the most black historical neighborhood in Brooklyn. Nevertheless the "institutional planning district", the inhabitants perceive the neighborhood as divided in sub-parts, whose boundaries are not collectively shared. Living in Fort Greene encompasses those living in the Wallabaut Bay, in Clinton Hill and the public houses project. Housing typology contributes in making these subparts and their social geography recognizable: the Wallabaut Bay is a mix of wood houses, manufacturing buildings and warehouses. The area around the Fort Greene park, a precious green amenity designed by Olmsted, is characterized by brownstone, row houses made of brownstone realized at the end of the nineteen century. Along Clinton Hill, individual villas in Romanesque, New gothic, Italianate style, where the majority of wealthy residents lives, emerge as single landmark alongside the brownstone. Beside these distinguishable urban fabric, there are also condos, apartments and public projects: the Walt Whitman Houses and the Raymond V. Ingersoll Houses that replaced the Fort Greene houses in 1958. Those are the places where the majority of the Fort Greene low income population lives. Three main horizontal commercial corridors meet the tree-lined streets where a daily urban life is consumed: Myrtle Avenue, Dekalb Avenue and Fulton Street. A large amount of cultural institutions contributes in conferring to Fort Greene the status of a cultural hub and testify the Afro-American cultural potential of the area[3] (*see Figure 3 for some visual evidences about Fort Greene*).

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3 Fort Greene is home to the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Brooklyn Music School, The Paul Robeson Theater, The Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts, BRIC Arts|Media|Brooklyn, UrbanGlass, 651 Arts performing center for African-American presenters, The Irondale Center for Theater, Education, and Outreach, the Mark Morris Dance Center and Lafayette Church. It is home also to Brooklyn Technical High School, and the Pratt Institute, in neighboring Clinton Hill, is one of the leading art and architecture schools in the United States.

Figure 3, The urbanity of Fort Greene's neighborhood.

Sandra Annunziata's archive (2007)

Nevertheless some architectural similarities, each neighborhood in Brooklyn is somehow special and unique. Media exposure and urban narratives contribute in their escalation of the New York City's most desirable places, achieving a significant position in the cultural geography of the Brooklynites. According with this trend, in 2007 Park Slope was selected as «one of the ten Great Neighborhoods in America» by the American Planning Association, «for its architectural and historical features and its diverse mix of residents and businesses, all of which are supported and preserved by its active and involved citizenry» and in 2010, it was ranked number one in New York by New York Magazine citing «its quality public schools, dining, nightlife, shopping, access to public transit, green space, quality housing, safety, and creative capital, among other aspects». However, Park Slope was not exactly that kind of successful neighborhood as it is known, enjoyed and represented nowadays. It grew as Brooklyn did, from a sleepy string of farm villages into a «bustling, teeming place that large in the nation's imagination» (Robbins & Palitz 2001: p. 7).

Since its beginnings as "Prospect Hill," Park Slope has been divided in two smaller neighborhoods, North Slope and South Slope. Although real estate prices and immigration have continued to keep these communities separate, the distinction is becoming blurred. The North Slope, for example, adjacent to Grand Army Plaza and the 7th Avenue shopping area, offered the only stores or restaurants in "the Slope" until the 1990s. But nowadays shops and dining areas are opening in South Slope as well. Indeed, the beauty of its landscape and architecture make this neighborhood a very attractive area with historic brownstones sloping down from the magnificent west side of Prospect Park . In fact, one of the most priciest areas of Park Slope is where the streets have names and not only numbers, which is the northeast or, being more precise, at the intersection of those named streets with Prospect Park West, the "park block." This area of the neighborhood was known in the 1880s as the Gold Coast

and today it is a historic preservation district larger than any other in New York City thanks to its breathtaking Victorian mansions with wraparound center staircases and original wooden details. However, the housing stock of the neighborhood was always class stratified. The lots itself were different, so then getting beyond Ninth street they get decreasingly nice. If at the park blocks there are still brownstones, as we start going down the houses start becoming brick. And they start being basically always built as lower middle class housing, and then the lower down we go on the hill, the lower down we go on the class strata and, just in terms of the housing stock, when we get between Fifth and Fourth Avenues we are already a whole other class fraction away (Manzo 2012).

Between the world wars, the working-class sections of South Slope were home to predominantly Irish and Irish American residents. In addition, wealthier Park Slope residents started moving to the suburbs, and other groups of working-class residents moved into North Slope. Some of the luxurious brownstones were turned into rooming houses and later demolished for new apartment buildings. The community of Park Slope became a diverse cultural mix as Irish and Italians lived and worked close to the mansions of Dutch, English, and Scandinavian industrialists.

Looking for industrial jobs, New York City was a destination site of the second great migration of African Americans from the South to the North after World War II. As more African Americans and Puerto Ricans migrated to the city, race began to replace ethnicity as a spatial category by which Brooklynites oriented themselves. Alongside the manufacturing and docks segregated/unskilled workspaces, these impoverished populations spread all over in Brooklyn from their enclave in Bedford-Stuyvesant also westward into Park Slope. Between the 1950s and the 1960s, the strong collective racial identities of the Italians, Irish, Russian Jews and the other groups which formed the neighborhood of Park Slope had to blend together with Puerto Ricans, Caribbeans, as well as Spanish and English speakers. They were all nestled together in the same neighborhood's territory. For much of the 1970s and 1980s, wealthy upper-middle-class Park Slope residents lived only in the North Slope, whereas the South Slope was known as the home of those newer immigrants. However, South Slope residents have been busy beautifying, organizing, and revitalizing their section of the neighborhood, and the division between north and south has become through the time more and more, less distinct.

In Fort Greene the neighborhood revitalization process (De Giovanni 1985) and its recognition as a cultural hub (Cooper 1995) is overlapping with even more rooted racial issue. From 1880 to 1930 is estimated that one third of the black American population of Brooklyn was living in Fort Greene and the area was called a «Black Belt» (Brown 1992). The afro American working class was manly employed in the Navy Yard[4] with more than 70.000 workers. In 1944 the NYC Housing Authority built a public estate for 14000 inhabitants which, as in many other part of NY, signified the fate of the working class population in the area. When the arsenal closed in mid-fifties the working class population remained trap by disinvestment and deindustrialization process. «Unemployment and rioting became a constant threat, arson was on the rise, and poverty, labor strike and racial tension seemed to be the only stories» (Jackson 2004). Traces of these years are still in the imaginaries of the inhabitants who call *the jungle* the public housing estate, and *Murder Avenue* Myrtle Avenue the street along it, that is one of the most important commercial corridor of the area.

However a vibrant cultural black art scene contributes in the enhancement of the desirability of Fort Greene. In 2005 the neighborhood was declared an *art neighborhood* by the Urban Fortune Report, a sort of strategic document that seek to boost the strategic vision of Brooklyn future development (2007). This artistic status overlaps with the socio- cultural and civic emancipation of the Afro-American community.

The idea of an art neighborhood is therefore linked with this stable middle class Black community. At the time when Fort Greene was poor and manly afro American, a crucible of musicians and actors sets up their home here, producing a vibrant cultural scene and establishing «the oldest and most Afro-centric artist community» (Woo 2002). Beside these cultural scenes, the neighborhood was severely in decline. It was listed *as poverty area*[5] and was mainly inhabited by a black working class trapped into the vicious circle of disinvestment and unemployment.

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4 «In approximately 1840, there was a migration of skilled Black workers, mostly ship builders, who found work in the Navy Yard. This migration established a stable middle class Black community. Together with Clinton Hill, the neighborhood was a suburb of Brooklyn Heights and a stable middle class area, though it did not reach the apotheosis of luxury of its western neighborhoods» (Kamil 2005).

5 Poverty areas were defined by the Council Against Poverty. In order to be a poverty area, the neighborhood should have an high rate of young crime, high proportion of residents living on welfare and a high rate of families with an annual income below 400 dollars.

Harbensteit conducted a neighborhood survey in 1974 comparing Fort Greene with other poverty area in USA: "there was time when you couldn't walk down to Myrtle Avenue without tripping over an antipoverty agency […] however there are a number of positive forces at work in this area that are having important effect on the economic and social structure of the community (1974). She refers to the anti-poverty and homeownership rights sponsored by local community developers; to the rehabilitation program of the Park and social housing; and last but not least the arrival of middle classes and the first sign of gentrification.

The demographic shift in Fort Greene started at the beginning of the 80's when the neighborhood foresaw the first wave of a process of gentrification mainly due to the rehabilitation of the *brownstone house*. In the same years, the Afro-American artistic mecca of Fort Greene acquired recognition and media exposure[6]. Black artists moved into the neighborhood for its vibrant black scene. The sing of a famous Jazz club JAZZ 966 testifies the Afro-American cultural disposition of the area re-calling the time when Steve Coleman was catalyzing the Jazz Scene (AA. VV. 1994). Few minutes away, the flag of the *40 acre and one mule* Spike Lee's films studios reminds both to the image of the sophisticated black middle class shot in "she is gotta have it" and the black pride of the civil right revolution (see the spatial distribution of the communities of color in Brooklyn - with reference to the neighborhoods of Park Slope and Fort Greene - in Figure 4).

Figure 4, Spatial distribution of the communities of color in Brooklyn's Park Slope and Fort Greene (2005-2009)
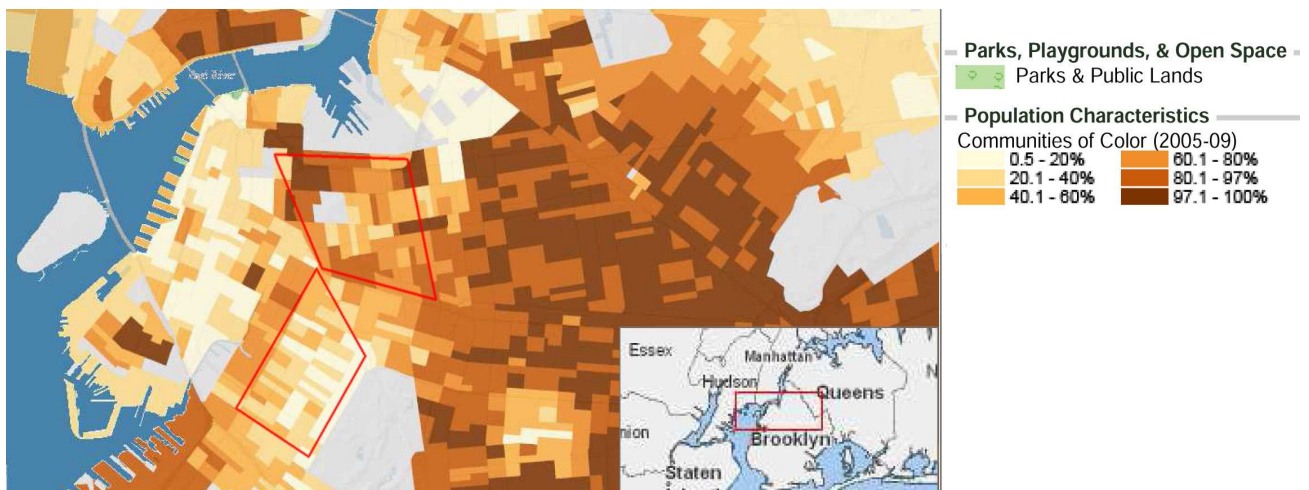
Source: Authors' elaboration on OASIS (Center for Urban Research, CUNY Graduate Center) & U.S. Bureau of the Census data

The anchoring phase of gentrification

This historical overview of the initial process of urban renewal in Park Slope and Fort Greene is important to understand how the beginning of the gentrification process in both side of Atlantic Avenue was driven by the effort of a specific group of people. Pioneer gentrifiers, who perhaps would never recognize themselves with this kind of "label", were undoubtedly the "booster" of the changing of an historic site while most Manhattanites still considered it an unacceptable place even to go for dinner. By organizing, raising money and agitation for preservation, by lobbing bankers to limit redlining, the pioneer gentrifiers were very vocal and effective champions of the brownstone revival that spread from Brooklyn to the rest of the country (Lees *et alii* 2007).

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6 «Fort Greene is an effervescent, trend-setting neighborhoods that artist in particular find irresistible. In perhaps no other Brooklyn community can writers, musicians, designers, filmmakers and visual artists draw inspiration from a rich and varied history that is so well preserved, or engage more fully in the animated debate that defines tomorrow's Avant-Garde» (Jackson 2004: 112).

If preservation constitutes an alternative strategy for the revalorization of the historic heritage of a district (Zukin 1982), gentrification in Brooklyn began as a grassroots movement led by young and idealistic white college graduates searching for authenticity and life outside the burgeoning suburbs. As Osman (2011) argues, this first stage of gentrification was in a sense idealistic and anti-chic, anti-corporate. All of the pioneer gentrifiers had their moral code focused on giving the neighborhood a new life.

> Brooklyn's young white-collar émigrés moved there with a sense of zeal. They started block associations, organized street festivals, and opened food cooperatives to foster a sense of community, place, and history. As they planted trees and dug community gardens in abandoned lots, they described themselves as "greening" the city ad echoed the themes of a nascent environmental movement. They avidly renovated houses, stripping away paint and aluminum siding, as well as symbolically ripping off the trapping of mass consumer society, to return to an older, more authentic form of life (Osman, 2011, p. 15).

In fact it seems that the preservationists of Park Slope were never motivated by money or economic interests in real estate. The only house that most of them ever owned was their own Park Slope Brownstone, where they were always been living. The first wave of gentrifiers were young families attracted to Park Slope by the low prices of brownstones. At the time, $25,000 (about $170,000 in today's dollars) really did seem a lot of money for a house in the area, but the people moving there were not exactly "rich." They were teachers and nurses, artists and writers, architects and engineers who were able to get a mortgage during the critical problem of red-lining.

The same occurred in Fort Greene. The arrival of white affluent middle class brought in the neighborhood the first trace of a different social geography both in term of class than in term of race[7]. In fact, this shift was also characterized by a movement of middle black Americans[8], a phenomenon that let the public opinion to think that gentrification was synonymous of a possible (even if transitional) racial and social inclusion.

Fort Greene thus became to be considered a place where gentrification brought a temporarily ethnically integrated mix community organically shaped (NYT 1986). The newcomers were mainly oriented to stabilize themselves and invest into rehabilitation of Brownstone houses. They chose Fort Greene for an alternative ways of living, far away from the suburban model, the Manhattan high rise; looking for the any sort of communal living. It was the reappraisal of the urban living (Ley 1994).

A step into the process: two Italian urban researchers in Brooklyn

At this point, what is gentrification and how we understand this concept need to be clarified. The process of gentrification is usually referred to the renewal of run-down housing (rather than industrial) typically in working-class neighborhoods by newcomers who - by rejecting the cultural homogeneity of the suburbs – were interested not only in cheap houses or rents, but also looking for a breath of "authentic diversity" and proximity to the city center (Caulfield 1994; Ley 1994; Smith 1987). Although city planners and housing experts quibble over a precise definition, people who have recently lived in major cities know gentrification when they see it. To be very simple, this process means that «as more outsiders move in, rents and property values creep up, and longtime residents are squeezed out» (Carlson 2003:22). As Manzo explains,

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7 «In retrospect, we can see that not only was Withe Flight good for slumlord and realtors, it also provided an opening for members of a growing Black middle class to buy beautiful homes in a previous white only section of neighborhood that had long had a black presence» (Rosenberg 1998).

8 «Further evidence of the growth in the black middle class can be seen in the brownstone of Fort Greene where black teacher, accountants, businessmen, engineer and architect are buying and renovating their own townhouses along with the middle class homeowner. It is a changing neighborhood in the sense that it is changing from poor to middle class» (Habenstreit 1974: 286)

meanwhile, established businesses close and new ones open up - coffee shops, cafes and specialty stores catering to the neighborhood's wealthier new residents. In fact, class narratives that emerge within these transformations of urban space have not only a material content, have not only to do with economics but also with a certain kind of look, style, in sum with the symbolic sphere. It is this "synergy of capital investment and cultural meaning" (Zukin 1996:45) through which urban spaces are produced (2012:3).

Indeed, Annunziata looks at gentrification as a process where highly diverse neighborhoods became desirable and urban change can be collectively problematized:

Desirability in gentrified neighborhood frames a complex reality. It embraces: a combination of different socio-cultural representations related to the neighborhood; a set of physical and social characteristics combined with the strong and persistent advocacy of activists, the sociability, and the opportunity to express ideas and claims. Thereby desirability is the opportunity and the space where individuals and groups of citizens can express their opinions concerning their surrounding world. This position finds its theoretical support on Lefebvre assumption (1974) *everyday life is a place of desire*. (Annunziata 2008)

At the time of the authors' arrival[9] in Brooklyn, gentrification in Fort Greene and Park Slope was on its way. The question was to which extend the occurred and occurring change was undermining the so called diverse and vibrant atmosphere of those Brooklyn neighborhoods.

As Madison (2005) suggests, the experiences in our lives, both past and present, and who we are as unique individuals, lead us to certain questions about the world. Moreover, the knowledge we have accumulated up to this point, as well as the intuition or instincts that draw us toward a particular direction, question, problem, or topic, also profoundly influence us – understanding that we may not always know exactly why or how we are being drawn in certain directions. These opening reflections are necessary in order to show evidence of our attitudes and biases toward the community (and its culture) we have studied and analyzed. More specifically, at the very beginning of this confrontation we asked ourselves questions regarding the issue at the heart of our work that had an impact on shaping our behavior and our activities in the field, for example: why did we decide to conduct researches in those particular neighborhoods, and what truly did interest us? What do we really want to know more about? And, finally, how did we manage our different academic backgrounds in order to write this piece? Therefore, we have to say something briefly about us and our approach in order to locate/situate ourselves and our subjectivities in Brooklyn.

When Annunziata reached Brooklyn, she was interested in exploring the characteristic that nurtures neighborhood diversity and sociability. She discovered that urbanity, as a property of social relation, is indissolubly linked with the property of urban form. The coexistence of social, ethnical and racial diversity in Brooklyn neighborhood attracted her attention when she discovered that diversity wore away under the process of gentrification. A process that erode, while it is play on, diversity. What planning could it do (if it could) for encouraging diversity and contrasting social exclusion? It remained an open question during her field work.

On the other hand, the intention of Manzo was to develop a sociological interpretation of the relationships between a changing neighborhood and its inhabitants, as a set of contextual, moral attitudes that defines socio-cultural boundaries. In many instances, in fact, the empirical results emphasize a sense of division of class, ethnicity and immigrant status, which has been built through neighborhood experiences.

We are mentioning the difference of our background because who we are has undoubtedly manifested itself during the ethnography. Indeed, as Johnston and Longhurst state, «we don't pretend to be disembodied commentators» (2010: ix) of the research, especially talking about racial, class and gender differences. Who we are, and our backgrounds, guided our interrogations into our own research trajectories, either as a planner or as an urban sociologist, in relation to the issue of what makes different groups of people able to live together in

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9 Annunziata lived in Brooklyn for about 8 months in 2007; Manzo, after a first exploration in 2009, has lived there almost for two years, from the beginning of 2011 to the end of 2013.

the contemporary city. In this sense, we were both fascinated by Brooklyn, and this fascination resulted from the tension between past and present, between permanence and changes, diversity and difference.

Desiring diversity and producing differences. Experiences from the field

As we see, the biographies of Park Slope and Fort Greene are also one of its boroughs, and the story of Brooklyn has always been one of change, a tremendous melting pot of contrasting cultures.

> "Unrivaled diversity" is the only fitting description for its population. Brooklyn has a certain distinct personality. As a polycultural, polycentric, and polyhistorical cityscape, Brooklyn is wild in its essence, I would say. Brooklyn took its character from a combination of individual enterprise, chance, and civic planning. Those three elements explain why Brooklyn's neighborhoods like Park Slope are such strong receptors of increasingly volatile cultural flows, where people constantly adapt to their new-found urban environments, constructing what Appadurai terms "ethnoscapes" (1993:33): landscapes of those who constitute the shifting world in which we live (Manzo, forthcoming).

As Manzo (2012) points out, the lively progressive street life that forms an important part of the New York character is possible because the kinds of expected cross-class interactions that pop up in a global city neighborhood – where very settled structures and boundaries and role definitions have been changed – are constantly in flux. In this context, the research interest was not only focused on how people draw boundaries in defining what they call their neighborhood. Here the tension between residents or users is expressed in terms of socio-cultural boundaries between different community groups. From a *sociological perspective*, in fact, Manzo analyzes how social mix – both in terms of class and ethnic diversity – is experienced and negotiated by the different social groups who live in changing neighborhoods taking into account recent incomers, the long-term residents, business owners as well as local community institutions. By looking at both gentrifiers and non-gentrifiers living in the same neighborhoods, at different stages of gentrification, a sociologist is prompted to ask what happens to people who live in a changing neighborhood. In this respect, the cultural turn in urban studies has illuminated the path to a "new urban sociology" that joins political economy and cultural analysis (Zukin 1982; 1995; 2010).

Indeed, the transformation of New York City into a corporate city and the consequent deleterious effects on small firms and on dwindling employment opportunities for blue-collar workers began to create housing opportunities for some and to exacerbate displacement problems for others. By encouraging suburban home ownership, discouraging rental housing construction, and upwardly redistributing income through federal and municipal tax policies, Park Slope - for instance - at the beginning of the 1970s faced a racial and tenure status division between its neighborhood residents. The 1970s, in fact, saw the growth of the essentially white-collar reform Democratic movement and the ebbing of regular Democratic organization power. Reform institutions emerged from neighborhood civic organizations and broad-based interest groups. Thinking about Jane Jacobs's vision (1969), in changing neighborhoods diversity means not only social ties, but it is also an important moral sphere in the lives of those liberal progressive people that mobilized grassroots movements to have political outlets. Here, resistance[10] to gentrification was developed by a community based organization called FAC, the Fifth Avenue Committee. When the displacement of the old/low income residents reached a high water mark in 1999, FAC declared 105 square blocks of Park Slope a Displacement Free Zone (DFZ), trying to maintain the delicate balance in a racially and economically mixed neighborhood. However, as Slater (2003) points out, the DFZ brought in itself a contradiction: the more attractive the Committee made the streetscape, the more people wanted to live there thus contributing in the driving up of the rents. In sum, while calling for inclusionary practices and promoting social diversity, FAC have been produced by the territory for the further waves of gentrification. Accordingly to De Filippis *et alii* (2010), community institutions surely play a vital role in people's lives. Indeed, they work as a site and strategy for social change, especially when public administrators are absent. However, many

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10 In the context of New York City, the public body is almost absent to what concern policies or tools that could mediate the conflicts between local communities and real estate developers during a process of gentrification. This is one of the main reasons why community institutions and neighborhood based organizations are fully engaged in resistance movements.

times community efforts as both limits and potential, as we learnt from the Brooklyn's Fifth Avenue Committee.

Nowadays, the pre-gentrification families native to Park Slope have almost completely been either priced out or brought out, to be replaced by outsider newcomers willing to pay multiple times the amount of rent for the same apartments simply for "the right to say" they live in Park Slope. During the late 1980s and 1990s, its avenues became more and more filled with fancy, overpriced boutiques, and the neighborhood would offer up as a prototype of modern urban living for WASPs[11]. At this stage of the process - which in the Park Slope case spanned over forty years - it seems that the geographic boundary between the north and the south part of the neighborhood reflects a class boundary of residents and users as well. In summary, in speaking about the "North-South dividing line", many people draw a symbolic border all along 9th street. The social construction of this boundary has been built in their life through their neighborhood experiences,

> In many instances they emphasize a sense of division of class, ethnicity and immigrant status, and length of history as an immigrant, that has different layouts. They remember when North 5th Avenue was more like what South 5th Avenue is now. They don't conceive a division at 9th Street, because the way that people used to code that originally was not at 9th Street. Park Slopers' awareness of boundaries appears due to the experiencing the neighborhood as it was and as it changed, and seeing different kinds of stores open and close and different kinds of people, eventually feeling safe or unsafe at different parts of the neighborhood. (2012:19)

In Fort Greene, due to the liberal and political engagement, new community groups and advocacy started to be a regular doing for almost all aspect of urban living and daily life: those active for civil and home rights achieved the first mortgage for Afro-American families at the end of the 70's; those active for the park achieved the renovation of Fort Green park in the same years; preservationists joined other preservation movements in Brooklyn to claim for the definition of the Fort Greene historical precinct. They obtained the land mark preservation status in 1978 by the Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC). White and black middle classes were living side by side in brownstones and the physical rehabilitation of the neighborhood contributes in building a collective ideas of a Fort Greene renaissance. A brownstone costed twelve thousand dollar in late 70's. And the Fort Greene Brownstone living entered the *lessicum* of the middle class as an alternative to suburban living some years later in the 80's, when in Brooklyn High and Park Slope the brownstone were already reaching hundred thousand dollars.

At the time of the field work, a positive and emancipatory prospective emerged toward gentrification due to the perspectives of the black middle class families leaving in Fort Greene (Freeman 2007). These perspectives give room to the emancipatory theses of the gentrification process looking at the vantage taken by the Afro-American families that were able to remain in the neighborhood.

> As a means of expressing middle class identity outside of the mainstream suburban subdivision] gentrification is a potential liberating experience that allows for new forms of expression and allows some marginalized groups to carve out their own residential enclave (Freeman 2006:195).

In 2007 the Afro-American population was still the majority in the neighborhood and this contributes in making it an example of integrated and mixed one. However this positive perception was true only at one level of the class strata. The displacement watch event, held each Wednesday by PRATT community council[12], proved the increase of people "at risk of being priced out" by the erosion of rent stabilization device[13]. Those that were

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11 White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) is an informal term, often derogatory or disparaging, for a closed group of high-status Americans mostly of British Protestant ancestry. The term implies this group wields disproportionate financial and social power (Lewis Allen I. 1975).

12 A community nonprofit organization similar to FAC.

13 New York City has a system of rent regulation known as "rent stabilization" and rent control. Rent Control is a State program enacted in 1954 and requires long term occupancy by the occupant to be kept under this status. Rent Stabilization is a City program enacted in 1969 when rents were rising sharply in many post-war buildings. The system encompasses more than one million apartment and has been

jeopardized by the expiration of the rent control of their apartment were not the most represented voices of the emancipatory urban narratives. In addition these positive gentrification reached its breaking point when the real estate market found in the "imagine of Brooklyn vibrant neighborhood living" a potential for real estate and prices skyrocket to multi-million dollar brownstones.

From a *planning prospective*, the core issue was how gentrification enquires planners. How to deal with diversity in gentrifying neighborhood? Different types of diversity were shaping Fort Greene urban landscape and, avoiding the risk of rigid causal explanation (Fainstein 2005), we can say that they were linked each other. The mixing building types (also called a morpho-typological diversity) allows different social classes to leave in close proximity. Class and racial-ethnic belonging was manifested in the uses of public spaces, in the street scape and in the inhabitants cultural habitus (Bourdieu 1979) . However, the juxtaposition of brownstone houses with public housing and condos resulted in a clear social geography in the neighborhood that make it more differentiated than diverse. A strong class distinction is nowadays clear in walking in the neighborhood. Housing typology and street scape clearly testify the social polarization in the area (see methodological appendix for what has been describe elsewhere an archeology of chance) (Annunziata 2009a, 2009b). Two high contrasting realities emerged and became evident on the north and the south of Myrtle avenue: millions of dollars historical buildings, well designed and maintained, lay behind public housing and condos that did not deserve the same consideration, exacerbating the social polarization in the neighborhood. Rather than being integrated, Fort Greene started to polarize in late nineties; a class issue overlaps the already existing race issue, becoming a persistent phenomenon. Myrtle avenue, a large commercial corridor that goes along the public housing, is still considered a frontiers; retail and commerce here are dedicate to cheap goods, grocery, Hispanic restaurants and large retailers. While DeKalb avenue, that goes along the south bound of the Fort Greene park, is characterized by fancy restaurants, boutiques, biological and green shops. Fulton Street, on the south bound, goes across the historically most Afro-American, Caribbean, and Latin part of the neighborhood. Brownstone houses and renovated buildings characterize the trees-street scape of the neighborhood, where the incidence of white affluence is increased in the last years.

Beside the process of gentrification, planners were dealing with an urban redevelopment project promoted by City trough a strategic vision for the Downtown Brooklyn area. This vision foresaw urban re-development at the edge of Fort Greene (e.g. Atlantic Yard terminal). The Atlantic Yard, which is the largest redevelopment project in recent New York City history, is a section in the downtown area of the borough of Brooklyn, adjacent to the Prospect Heights, Park Slope and Fort Greene neighborhoods, near the Atlantic Terminal train station. At this geographical cornel, several Brooklyn neighborhoods met and their Afro-American cultural scene, nurtured by a long lasting diversity organically produced, became the raw material for a project highly based on consumption culture.

In Fort Greene - when the Atlantic Yard was under approval - it was impossible not to run into fliers of events, community meetings and public hearings regarding these projects. Redevelopment project, as well as any physical change occurring in the neighborhood, was a pretext for community groups to gather and discuss with passion the future of their neighborhood. These opposing forces gathered under the label DDDB -Developer Don't Destroy Brooklyn – and radical planners were supporting them providing alternative plans. The heart of the opposing movement to the Atlantic Yard project goes back to a more sustainable and "right scale" development and the abuse of eminent domain for economic rather than collective purposes (Annunziata 2008b).

Beside this controversial project, a new generation of community groups was active in Fort Greene. They were advocating for the revitalization of the commercial corridor and retail (Myrtle Avenue Partnership) and foresaw the occurring transformations as good business opportunities; others were promoting the artistic scene in the neighborhood that is of the map with open-studio event (SONIA Stroll); others were advocating for the enlargement of the historic precinct (e.g. Fort Greene Association). The latter perceived the transformations as a real threat of the physical integrity of their neighborhood. "My neighborhoods" is in Brooklyn something more

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extended and amended frequently, and now about one million apartments in the City are covered by rent stabilization. It is enforced for apartments in buildings of six or more units built between 1947 and 1974. However a rent stabilized can increase due to building repair, amelioration and expiration. If the rent reaches $2,500 or more, the owner has a right to petition the NY State Division of Housing and Community Renewal to deregulate the apartment.

than a place to live, nothing but a way of living. *"My neighborhoods"* refers to those who choose for a multiplicity of reasons and for them it is the material manifestation of the adherence to a precise idea of urbanity and communal living. This way of living, the social and cultural diversity in the area, the experienced solidarity and the low dense build form candidate the neighborhood to its desirability, a process that goes far behind the rent accumulation process that defines gentrification. A sort of nostalgic and neoromantic ideas of how the city should be emerged and was used as a matter of "defense" of the build environment in which this urbanity was possible. Old gentrifies were in the front line for protecting the build environment as a repository of this urbanity. Diversity was mentioned to be the distinguished feature that makes Fort Greene a special place where to live. However, this diversity was hard pushed by the displacement effect that goes along gentrification process. The members of the Fort Greene Association in some way overlap with those participating at the so-called condo-watch, organized by the Fort Greene community group. They advocate against any skyscrapers and new developments in the areas, seeking the preservation of the low rise density of Brooklyn. These attitude goes slightly in the direction of preserving social diversity. The main assumption is that «*if* the neighborhood does not change at all, it might keep its social complexity» (Jane, resident of Wallabaut bay). This assumption is questionable in many respects, in fact the groups seriously advocating against gentrification (e.g. the PRATT community council) provide legal support toward displacement of the less affluent neighborhood resident and negotiate for affordable housing in the Atlantic Yard redevelopment project. They seek for affordability even if this goal might mean a new development project in the neighborhood. In doing so, they share the same overall goals of preserving social diversity with their neighbor, but differ in the means by which these goals are achieved: seeking the preservation of the morphological integrity of the area vs allowing new affordable housing.

Interestingly, Manzo field work in Park Slope intersected the renewal project on the Atlantic Terminal too[14]. The project has been fraught with delays, financial and creative setbacks, and political scandals, together with heated debate over the project's impact on the community from its early stages (see the Anti-Atlantic Yards murals reported in Figure 5).

Figure 5 - Murals on anti-displacement opposing Ratner's Atlantic Yards development plans in Brooklyn, on the northeast border of Park

Slope. Photographs shot by Manzo L.K.C. on May 2009 during her first field exploration

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14 I had my very first interaction with Park Slope in 2009, two years before the beginning of my field research. During that exploration, a day in May, I lost myself walking around the mall of the Atlantic Terminal. Trying to reach the north-eastern border of the neighborhood - between Dean Street and Pacific Street - I bumped into the Anti-Atlantic Yards murals showed in Figure 5. Among the signs which appeared on the murals, the words "Eminent Domain" really attracted my attention. At that time, I did not know exactly the meaning, I have to admit, but of course I perfectly remember the feeling of seeing such protest signs linked to what in my mind the concept "domain" recalled. Two years later, doing ethnographic research in the field, I finally learned that "eminent domain" is what in Italy we call "expropriation", the power to take private property for public use by a state, municipality, or private person or corporation authorized to exercise functions of public character, following the payment of just compensation to the owner of that property *(Lidia Manzo's research diary,* October 2011*).*

When Annunziata was studying Fort Greene, the *Development Don't Destroy Brooklyn* campaign against Bruce Ratner was just started. Interesting was to learn that apparently separate community groups – that were sharing the geography of their belonging more that their local practices and goals – formed a unified and cohesive group against the Atlantic Yard project, accusing it of producing instant gentrification (Annunziata 2008b). The project was completed in 2012, nevertheless the DDDB campaign, with manor changes when Manzo just started her field work. In March 2008, the principal developer Bruce Ratner (of the Forest City Ratner Companies) acknowledged that the slowing economy might delay the construction of both the office and residential components of the project for several years. Indeed, when the project was announced at the end of 2003, the basketball arena was scheduled to open in the fall of 2006. Groundbreaking did not occur until 2010; the arena, a major component of the project named Barclays Center, was opened to the public on September 21st, 2012 and held its first event (a Jay-Z concert) on September 28th, 2012.

As Manzo explains (forthcoming PhD), that day was more than an inaugural concert. It was also a demarcation point in a searing battle that took on the contours of a morality play. The long-delayed $1 billion arena - which is the home of the transplanted Brooklyn Nets returned a major-league sports team to Brooklyn for the first time in more than half a century - has become a metaphor for the trials of change in an already changing borough. The actual stadium building, designed by SHop Architects and AECOM, features an unusual brown metallic facade that has been the occasion for many humorous-to-caustic jibes, "Brooklyn style". At its opening day, a group of opponents were protesting in front of the main entrance, and some of them (not more than 50) wore sandwich boards saying: «Billionaires for Barclays. Who is in your Pocket?» The New York Magazine cover stated that *With the opening of Barclays Center, Brooklyn is finished* (Davidson 2012), right after its opening. As it is described:

> Barclays Center, home of the re-baptized Brooklyn Nets, is armored in scales of rusted steel, yet somehow it's more alluring than fearsome. The arena won't placate those who all along hated the idea of Atlantic Yards. It won't erase the years of controversy and bad blood, or guarantee the success of the remaining acres. But Brooklynites of more recent vintage and fewer bitter memories may see a building endowed with texture, color, and personality — rare qualities in recent New York construction. (…) If Madison Square Garden hunkers glumly in its concrete drum, Barclays Center is an architectural chest bump: juiced, genial, and aggressive all at once.(NY magazine 12 October 2012)

Conclusions

Gentrification and diversity are linked in complex manner. The paradox is that while diversity (in all its forms) is a necessary condition for gentrification anchoring, the same cannot be said for the other way around. When gentrification intensifies, it erodes diversity, instead of reproducing it. The reciprocity between gentrification, diversity, and social mix is mined by the empirical evidence of displacements and resistances. Visible by direct experience during the field works.

The process of gentrification is often associated with this epiphenomena: expensive and aesthetically elegant cafes, restaurants, and boutiques that appeal to the high-class consumers' tastes. Yet, it also means the displacement of working class residents and their stores. This aspect of the phenomena is traceable only in loco and for a shot amount of time. It happened to a bakery in the south part of Park Slope, a place where one coffee costs less than a dollar, but the rent jumped up from four thousand dollars a month to a whopping five thousand dollars a month. As Manzo (2013) explains in her visual essay – which describes the last day of a displaced Sicilian bakery – businesses are critical to preserve not only the affordability of the neighborhoods but also to create a comfortable urban space where people share their lives.

From a sociological perspective, there is a crucial point in any kind of gentrification, which is the struggle for the *moral displacement* (Manzo 2012). In fact, it does not matter if people are owners of their houses or if they have a rent stabilized apartment, because even if they have right to stay in their neighborhoods, they can feel they do not belong anymore to it. «If they start to face everyday changes in their usual stores, restaurants, cafes and even in their neighbors, they can get uncomfortable. The comfort level is a very central issue that needs to be problematized» (Ibid.:23). Here is where gentrification wears out diversity and where the process is irreversible.

Despite the contraction between the action they do and the goal they want to achieve, the practices of resistance are the only "observation lens" that allow to see gentrification from a critical perspective and understanding of displacement for its «emotional, psychological, individual and social» cost (Slater 2011: 580).

From a planning perspective, the exploration of the dynamics of the process of gentrification was a complex arena of actors negotiating different ideas of what the neighborhood is and it should be, it represents a non-return point in the way we can re-frame the possibility of public action in a changing urban environment. In these perspective, gentrification resulted not to be a frontier or a caesura in the biography of a neighborhood, but a space of negotiation of the "ideas of the city" we want to achieve, where public action and collective deliberation can play an extensive role.

Public actions depend from the objective they want to achieve and from the context in which they have to intervene. Some goals are collectively legitimate and find support in planning tools, for instance the fact that the neighborhood is an historical precinct of brownstone that should be preserved. Others are more difficult to grasp, for instance that the neighborhood is reach because is socially diverse, and this diversity should be a matter of preservation. Planning is unprepared and lacks of tools for preserving social diversity and prevent social turn over in dense urban environment. More or less related with, objective public actions also depend on decisions taken upon a knowledge based issue. Public action can boost gentrification by tax-exemption, incentives toward renovation, urban strategies oriented toward middles class (ones that foresee highly sophisticated design, new housing types and ways of living). Or it can mitigate or contrast gentrification, and together with this, it might deal with social diversity.

Through the observation lens of resistance and community groups, a wide range of practices that seek to mitigate gentrification become clear and deserve nowadays more attention. They vary from the initial stage of a solidarity campaign, to the establishment of a special community or historic district to the definition of an anti-eviction zone. They request affordable housing obligation in both new development and rehabilitation project, as well as the enforcement of rent control and rent stabilization for all the buildings built prior 1974, as the only fortress of public action in the field of gentrification. These practices seem to be the only ways to guarantee social mix and diversity in the neighborhood and refer mainly to the juridical domain of planning and housing law.

For this reasons we conclude this chapter suggesting that it is important to understand the role played by diversity in neighborhood change and this understating should inform more in depth the practices of planning and social urban policies in order to avoid not only gentrification effects but also the Atlantic Yard effects, which means the loss of diversity in Brooklyn itself.

Methodological Appendix: In both cases, the data were gathered from interviews, observations, field notes, public documents, photographs, audio-visual recordings, journals, artifacts, and perceptions such as smell or taste. The use of multiple methods will facilitate the triangulation of the project's findings from a variety of vantage points (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2005).

The analysis of Brooklyn's Park Slope constitutes Lidia Manzo's PhD thesis project in Sociology at University of Trento, Italy (developed through the affiliation with CUNY University in New York, USA). The research lasted about twenty months: the data has been collected since January 2011 and they derived from field work activity in the neighborhood, archival research on census data sets as well as in newspapers, local websites and blogs, and a set of audio-visual data (photographs and movies taken by the researcher). The ethnographic data collection method is composed of different techniques: in the private places of the Park Slope Food Coop and a martial arts studio as co-performer, in the public space of the Community Garden on 6th avenue and 15thStreet as participant observer. At the Park Slope Food Coop, she was a volunteer member and performed many different kinds of jobs, such as shopping assistant, cashier, co-counter, receiving, cleaning/maintenance, and processing products such as cheeses, olives, spices, dried fruits. She also did participant observation, sometimes while shopping at the market or while shadowing customers' activities and talks. At the martial arts studio she trained in a traditional Shotokan karate club, taking in average 3-4 classes per week. Manzo has also served as a safe walker in a community organization named Safe Slope, a volunteer-based program providing free walks home late at night to female- and LGBTQ-identified neighborhood members. Additionally, in-depth interviews (sixty-six) were chosen as the best method for examining residents' perception in a systematic and detailed way. This experience has given her not only the opportunity to study the micro-politics of an intensely populated place by newcomers/gentrifiers, but it also opened a window into the social core values and morals of long-term residents who – despite different socioeconomic backgrounds – have built up the community since the beginning of the 1970s.

The analysis of Brooklyn's Fort Greene is Sandra Annunziata PhD thesis project in Local Project and Territorial Policies. Sandra Annunziata arrived in Brooklyn with the ingenuity and the enthusiasm of those, who want to make an immersion on the present. She was aware of the fact that she had to relay on her architectural and planning background for studying a process much better addressed by anthropologist and sociologists. After having carefully selected a specific context of observation she coded data by observation of the city scape. Observation is part of the practice of urbanism. She conducted morpho-typological analysis, mapped type of housing, the street scape and the main urban transformation (project and plans) in the area. This part of her work was called "the archeology of change". It was done to show that urban change can be traced back by physical observation of the urban space, spatial effect of urban policies and urban projects.

Observation in urbanism also implies the observation of social practices and social groups, more or less homogenous in their intents, able to nurture and build place where public sphere and public space can overlap. She selected those in which the change in the urban environment and neighborhood development was clearly stated as a "core issue". Public events to which she participated as observer: a) community visioning workshop organized by the Myrtle Avenue Partnership on the revitalization of the commercial corridor; b) Fort Greene Association aimed at the preservation of the neighborhood; c) community board 2, public hearings regarding the BAM cultural district; and SONIA Stroll, an open art studio event in the neighborhood. In following these events she built a snowball simple of contacts. In particular Anne, the homeowner of an ex-chocolate house now turned into artist loft opened her the precious door of the so called community meetings. Annunziata participated weekly for 8 months at two community groups: 1) the condo watch, organized by the Fort Greene community group that advocate against skyscrapers and new developments in the areas seeking the preservation of the low rise density of Brooklyn; and 2) the displacement watch, organized by PRATT community council. She coded the participation at these events and community group by keeping a diary and writing a story of participation for each group. Each story tells a bit on the neighborhood and its change and can be read independently (it was an appendix of the Phd Theses). The participation to the community group was accompanied by in-depth interview with key informants for a total of 30 interviews. After the data gathering process and coding part she analyzed all the data using an analytical matrix (published in Annunziata 2009b) which considers those who are the agents of urban transformation, the main neighborhood ideas and aspiration, together with a policy design implication.

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