

Change is an inseparable part of life in our cities. These changes are often radical, with irreversible consequences for the identity of both the city and its inhabitants. Examples include the demolition of historic neighborhoods to make way for modern buildings, or the removal of trees to construct wide, multi-lane roads. At the same time, some changes aim to restore the splendor of historic buildings or modernize infrastructure in ways that enhance residents' quality of life. Our reactions to such changes vary—sometimes we protest them; other times, immersed in an unchanging reality, we long for transformation, seeking something that will break the monotony or improve our daily lives. In this project, we will explore the physical changes occurring in the places we live, our responses to these changes, and the factors that allow us to maintain a sense of continuity and a deep emotional bond with these places, even in the face of radical transformation.

Places differ in their malleability. Even the most ardent advocate of modernization would not support building a modern skyscraper in the heart of a medieval old town. Yet the same person might readily approve the replacement of an old building on the city's outskirts with a modern development. Some people see potential even in a crumbling ruin, while others primarily long for modernity. Why do some enthusiastically welcome the construction of a skyscraper along a riverbank, while others passionately oppose it? Debates over what should and shouldn't be allowed in the city are common across many urban areas. Which places are more susceptible to change, and which ones resist it? How significant must a change be before residents respond with protest? And finally, what psychological factors allow us to maintain an emotional bond with a place—and a sense of continuity of self and place—even amid profound transformation?

In the current project, we assume that people's attitudes toward changes in places will depend on (1) the type of changes and the places they affect, and (2) the subjectively perceived continuity of the self and the perceived continuity of the place. To analyze the characteristics of places, we will use the classification proposed in our earlier work, distinguishing between conservative places (stable, with visible traces of history, harmonious, and conducive to peace and relaxation) and progressive places (open, dynamic, diverse, and evoking feelings of excitement). However, places can also transform into non-places—either when they become excessively closed, static, and monotonous (conservative non-places), or when they become chaotic and unsettling (progressive non-places).

We predict that conservative places will be more resistant to change, but also that people in non-places will be more open to transformation. Additionally, we expect that changes which are still in the planning phase will be evaluated more negatively than those already implemented, and that changes occurring in one's own place of residence will be more accepted than similar changes in other, comparable locations.

In this project, we also examine how individual autobiography—specifically, the sense of continuity of one's self—is associated with the acceptance of change and the maintenance of ties to place. People can sustain a sense of personal continuity in two primary ways. One approach involves identifying elements of the self that remain unchanged despite the passage of time and life's upheavals—an unchanging "essence" of the self. The other involves viewing one's life as a series of "chapters" connected by a coherent narrative. These two modes of maintaining continuity may apply not only to autobiographical continuity but also to perceived continuity of one's social group and of place. Their implications for adaptation to change may differ. For instance, essentialist continuity may lead a person to resist change (i.e., "I remain the same, regardless of external changes"), whereas narrative continuity may increase sensitivity to change but also promote understanding and acceptance of it. In this project, we will investigate how people respond to changes in four types of locations, depending on whether these changes are of a conservative or progressive nature, and in relation to the type of continuity they experience—both autobiographical and perceived continuity of place.

We are planning several studies: experimental - conducted in the laboratory and in the field, online studies and free interviews with city residents. We will conduct research in historical and modern cities, in large metropolises and in small towns. In experimental studies, we will use virtual reality, in which we will present panoramic photos and physical changes introduced to these places. In field studies, we will examine reactions to actual changes that have occurred or may occur in these cities.