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Urban marginality – discourse, iteration and materiality.

In the study of the urban it has become increasingly evident that certain socially marginalized groups tend to become invisible, obliterated or to disappear. It is important to look closer at the way a specific phenomenon can be hidden due to a particular kind of discourse, and to what extent this is related to a direct physical invisibility or not. The discursively hidden is not always physically hidden, in a strict sense. One important factor in questions of “invisibility” or subalternity (in Spivak’s sense) is the non-iterated or the lack of apparent connection to the past of a marginal phenomenon. The urban place is largely constituted through acts of iteration and connection, even in contexts of major change. Thus the non-inclusion of marginality is one way of making something invisible. In order to address this kind of problems it is necessary to create collaborations between different perspectives and disciplines. Archaeology may play an interesting role in this context. Scholars such as Mrozowski, Roskams and Murray have demonstrated the possibility and importance of new approaches in this field. The problems of urban marginality will be addressed through a brief discussion on certain illustrating cases. The major example will be the contemporary marginal neighbourhood Villa Muñecas in the city of Tucumán, Argentina. In this setting there is substantial non-formally state authorized squatter settlement and also a presence of non-official mass-burials from the military Junta in the 1970’s. Historical examples, mainly from early modern contexts, will also be addressed briefly in the discussion.