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Root Shock is a book about how communities experience and even recover from shock. Because shock is so commonplace today (Klein, 2007), community informatics can learn a lot from Fullilove's work. And as Fullilove continues her work with communities (for details see rootshock.org), it is possible to imagine her embracing some of the findings of community informatics.

Fullilove takes up America's unspoken reality, the problems of poverty and discrimination. As a social psychiatrist, Fullilove diagnoses modern-day America, devastated by the national urban renewal projects that began in the 1950s. Her methods include community visits, extensive individual interviews, and analyses of particular caricatures, photographs, and drawings produced by residents of bulldozed communities.

Tracing the earliest urban renewal projects from the 1950s and conducting fieldwork in Virginia, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, Fullilove finds both individuals and communities suffering from the displacement. Starting from the Housing Act of 1949, the unequal distribution of investment in the area created unstable and isolated communities of African Americans The first urban renewal, the 1955 Commonwealth Project, began in Roanoke, a historic Virginia neighborhood. In a series of urban renewals, the African American communities in northeast Roanoke were wiped out. Banks stopped investing, people started moving out, and vacant houses became attractive to extremely poor and troubled people. In Essex County in Newark, N.J. a similar process apparently broke the community up into pieces consisting of the wealthy and the poor.

Fullilove asserts that displacement through the destruction of neighborhoods and communities, whether by natural or man-made forces, causes emotional pain and a reaction similar to that of shock in the individual experiencing the displacement and loss--a root shock. "Root shock […], disables powerful mechanisms of community functioning, leaving [African Americans in particular] at an enormous disadvantage for meeting the challenges of globalization (p. 20)."

Fullilove's examination yields two main proposals aimed at different audiences. First, she emphasizes redesigning our education infrastructure to better support victims of root shock. Schools should provide children with the stable conditions of living where they can spend time on learning not only math but also how to heal their pain. Second, she recommends that "[E]very community […] needs an institution designed for gathering, where people can learn whatever it is they need to learn in order to go forward into an ever-changing future (p. 233)."

Fullilove focuses on African American communities, but around the world we are experiencing a spiral of disintegration of community. People still carry forward their detailed memories of the beauty of their homes as well as the struggle that urban renewal threw them into.

However, even forced to give up on the community where they have built networks of connections, people press on to replant their lives and start again, just as with any living organism. While communities have lost the financial and human resources to rebuild their localities and cultures, urban renewal doesn't have to prevent a history of that community being preserved.

A community informatics perspective on root shock would take into account the role of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). While Fullilove emphasizes people needing access to technologies and computer skills for the workforce, a public library or a telecentre, a cybercafé or community network services and media could serve as a powerful remedy for the root shock by using digital tools for community-rebuilding. Durrance, et al. (2005) and Williams and Alkalimat (2004) report ways that ICT serves as a central station for community repositories, whether it be libraries providing online community information or community technology centers producing hiphop music on social issues. People join and leave communities for a variety of good reasons, as well as in crises. But *Root Shock* demonstrates that devastation can be minimized, and change more successfully navigated, if communities take measures before as well as after crises to strengthen the (interconnected) root systems of their members.

Inspired by *Root Shock,* a video clip was created by a group of 6th grade students at the Ahlcon International School in New Delhi. The story uses the Indian tree, thought of as a depository of souls to show how a sense of cultural, spiritual, and social belongingness that people had lost can be revived and become stronger by reestablishing a new root again in unfamiliar soil (American Red Cross, 2007). People working in government offices, disaster and crisis response and recovery planning, community development, urban planning, and non-profit and non-governmental offices, librarians, researchers and education officials can all benefit from being aware of how root shock impacts communities and how, after a root shock, social development and commitment for all that is the basis for community an be maintained.

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