PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF
ETHNIC NEIGHBORHOODS

by

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Abstract

The revival of ethnicity and preservation and development of ethnic neighborhoods are key issues in America today. This thesis, which has focused on Italian-Americans and their neighborhoods, has attempted to provide an understanding of the historical evolution of these neighborhoods by synthesizing the structural changes undergone there and by elucidating the dialectical relationship between these changes and the assimilation process of Italian-Americans. Such a historical analysis has raised certain issues, such as assimilation versus cultural pluralism, ethnic versus class stratification, and manipulative intermediaries versus community leaders, which, I feel, are central to an analysis of ethnicity and ethnic groups and which must be among the concerns of future ethnic neighborhood preservation and development attempts.

This thesis also evaluates the aims and effects of the government agencies' policies for and planning processes in ethnic neighborhoods during the past few years. In particular, my analysis of the "Risorgimento Plan" for Little Italy in New York reveals the limitations of present ethnic neighborhood preservation and provides suggestions for alternate action.

Thesis Supervisor: Tunney F. Lee
Title: Associate Professor
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis aims to be objective in its intellectual speculation on issues which have interested me for the last four years. Underlying its objectivity are subjective emotional dilemmas which I have faced and experienced as an immigrant in America during the last decade. I therefore wish to now express my gratitude to those who during this time have meant a great deal to me and/or who have in some way been involved in the conception and materialization of this thesis. My thanks to Msgr. Geno Baroni, Rev. Silvano Tomasi, Mr. Gerson Green, Mr. Arthur Naparstek and the staff of the Urban Design Group of the Department of City Planning, New York City for their kind assistance; to my sponsor Professor Tunney Lee and my readers Professors Alcira Kreimer and Kevin Lynch for their valuable criticism, encouragement and support; to my good friends at MIT who have shared my good and bad days; to Beth and Anne for getting this thesis through its final hours and for their assistance and warmth; ai miei genitori, fratelli e sorella per il loro continuo sostegno ed affetto; and to Danielle for always being there.
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INTRODUCTION

Why it is important, today, to speculate on the preservation and development of ethnic neighborhoods.

Many ethnic neighborhoods in inner city districts are in the process of undergoing major structural (physical and social) changes. There are forces acting on these neighborhoods which aim at altering the social content of the areas and at profiting from real estate operation. These processes are facilitated by the disintegrating social cohesion of most ethnic neighborhoods and often by the lack of appropriate community leadership. Governmental efforts to regulate such phenomena have been mostly ineffective. It is therefore important to study thoroughly the problems of ethnic neighborhoods, to understand the reasons for the government's failure in dealing with these problems and, if possible, to provide alternative proposals for action.

The current economic crisis has dramatized and accelerated physical and social changes occurring in ethnic neighborhoods. The construction of new housing has almost been brought to a halt. The cost of suburban housing, which was
already increasing because of higher taxes, has consequently been affected. As a result, many young people, professionals, and other potential investors have been attracted to certain inner city districts, mainly historical ones, which are often inhabited by ethnic groups. The relatively low rent levels and the safety and pleasantness of these areas have been reasons for such an attraction. This phenomenon has also encouraged real estate exploitation and has created conflicts between newcomers and old residents, the latter fearing an eventual displacement and meanwhile having to bear the burden of such side effects as higher rents and taxes.

The effects of such processes can already be seen in large cities such as New York and Boston and even in smaller ones such as Providence and Worcester. In New York, pressure exercised by real estate groups on old districts such as the brownstone areas of Brooklyn and the Lower East and West Sides of Manhattan has resulted in conflicts among communities, government agencies, and newcomers. In Boston, the North End is threatened by pressure resulting from the surrounding urban renewal development.

The ethnic communities living in inner city districts are particularly sensitive to and affected by the above mentioned phenomena. For example, the influx of the new population into the neighborhood contributes to the disintegration of the already weakened community cohesiveness. Also, changes in ownership of many of the neighborhood estates result in the
community's loss of control of its "turf." Such situations, in addition to the above mentioned economic burden affecting the old residents of ethnic neighborhoods, have produced cries of protest and screams for survival.

Responding to community and real estate group pressure, city and federal agencies stepped in to regulate the physical development of the neighborhoods and to preserve, whenever possible, the existing communities. There is however evidence that their efforts have mostly been ineffective. The ineffectiveness of these agencies is, in my opinion, due to their lack of an historical understanding of the complex and interrelated socio-economic and political events which have shaped and conditioned the existence of ethnic neighborhoods in large American cities. The agencies also seem to be unable or do not want to surface appropriate leadership in the neighborhoods and often tend to serve only specific interest groups while forgetting the needs of the underrepresented majority of the residents. Finally the ineffectiveness of the agencies is conditioned by the neighborhood residents' lack of awareness of their past and present social conditions and lack of vision or confusion regarding the future of their community.

The current interest in ethnic neighborhoods has also been steered by a movement called the New Ethnicity which, during the past few years, has attained national dimensions. Many leaders of this movement, who in the past lobbied for the Ethnic Heritage Studies Act, are now very concerned with
urban issues affecting their ethnic groups and constituencies. They are therefore now supporting the National Neighborhood Policy Act which is still pending in Congress. While this legislation, if enacted, should make available new economic resources to needy communities, it is essential that a new leadership emerge from such communities in order to overcome other factors that have prevented or limited the effectiveness of governmental agencies.

A new leadership is needed that will be able to arouse the consciousness of the ethnic and other residents, build in them an awareness of the marginality of their socio-economic conditions, convince them that they can control the development of their living environment and improve their social conditions if they succeed in defining and articulating their needs and desires and in defending their rights in the political arena. A leadership which in the political arena does not only compete for the limited resources available to their constituencies, but forms meaningful coalitions to increase the resources available.

Aim of Thesis

Basically, in this thesis, I wish to understand the complexity of problems affecting ethnic neighborhoods; to point out what has caused the ineffectiveness of government agencies which have dealt with them; to explore possible action which could be proposed to overcome such ineffectiveness; and
to articulate what role new leaders could/should play in the process of preservation and development of ethnic neighborhoods.

For the purpose of this thesis I have decided to study the Italian-American neighborhoods located in inner city districts. I shall focus on the Little Italies of New York and of Boston. I have chosen these communities as case studies for various reasons. First of all, because they are among the oldest and most famous ethnic communities still existing in America and because they are now undergoing transformation. Secondly, because governmental agencies have proposed or are proposing plans for their preservation and development. Thirdly, because there exists extensive documentation and historical data on these neighborhoods. Finally, it was my own Italian background which had a determining influence on my choice of these communities.

In this thesis I shall specifically attempt to:

1. Provide Italian-American communities with an understanding of the historical evolution of their neighborhoods by synthesizing the structural changes undergone there and by elucidating the dialectical relationship between these changes and the assimilation process of Italian-Americans.

2. Evaluate the aims and effects of the
government agencies' policies for and planning processes in ethnic neighborhoods during the last few years.

3. Suggest alternative processes which will attempt to overcome the existing limitations of ethnic neighborhood preservation and development policies.

4. Propose new action to enhance the participation of ethnic communities in the planning processes that affect them.

Thesis Structure

This thesis has been divided into six chapters which respectively treat:

1. The cultural background of Italian-Americans: relevance of native cultural traits in the process of assimilation of Italian immigrants; cultural traits of Italian immigrants; causes and modalities of mass emigration from Italy to the U.S.A.

2. The evolution of Italian-American neighborhoods -- part I: reasons for and implications of mass immigration into the U.S.A. -- 1880; patterns of
settlement, regional and urban, of Italian immigrants; the Italian Colonies 1880-1920 (external influences, internal structure, evolution of institutions, community control and leadership); the problem of assimilation and Americanization; political and cultural intolerance.

3. The evolution of Italian-American neighborhoods -- part II: suburbanization and insulation of Italian colonies; evolution of Italian-American neighborhoods 1920-1945 (the new social order, immigrant culture, supporting institutions, community control and leadership).

4. The evolution of Italian-American neighborhoods -- part III: decline of neighborhoods from 1945 - present (erosion of community cohesion, decay of physical structures, effects of urban renewal programs); the present problems of the Little Italies in New York and Boston; rise of the "New Ethnicity" and the neighborhood preservation crusades.

5. Evaluation of programs and planning processes for the preservation of Italian-
American neighborhoods in NYC: two cases -- the Italian-American Center for Urban Affairs; the "Risorgimento" Plan, a joint proposal by the NYC Planning Commission and the Little Italy Restoration Association.

6. Synthesis of problems and issues: assimilation vs. cultural pluralism; ethnic vs. class stratification; manipulative intermediaries vs. community leaders.

Most of the data and information given and discussed in this thesis were gathered during my internship at the New York Planning Commission (summer 1975) and through my course work at M.I.T. (spring 1976). Discussions with and feedback from the staffs of the National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs in Washington, D.C.; the Center for Migration Studies in New York; and the Institute on Pluralism and Group Identity in New York have provided me with a clearer focus on the issues. Field work in the communities of Mulberry Street in New York and the North End in Boston has given me a vital understanding of the perceptions and feelings of "unmelttable ethnics."
CHAPTER ONE

THE CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF ITALIAN-AMERICANS

"At the head of everything is God, Lord of Heaven. After Him comes Prince Torlonia, lord of the earth. Then come Prince Torlonia's armed guards. Then come Prince Torlonia's armed guards' dogs. Then, nothing at all. Then nothing at all. Then nothing at all. Then come the peasants. And that's all."

(Ignazio Silone, Fontamara)
The need to define and enforce a national character is often one of the major tasks for the ruling class of a country. This already problematic task is even more difficult in a country John F. Kennedy called a "nation of immigrants," where the advocacy of cultural pluralism should operate as a counterforce against the enforcement of national homogeneity. Most of the history of America can be read as the struggle between forces of homogenization and counterforces of diversification. The issues at stake in this dialectic process are evidently the maintenance of social control and the perpetuation of a certain order that implies social inequalities which are visible in the political, economic, and environmental domains.

The process of enforcing a national character becomes one of incorporation: a process which, originally in historical and sociological jargon and now in our everyday usage, has euphemistically been called assimilation and which is nothing but a process of domination or oppression by one group over others. For incorporation or assimilation is a prescriptive act necessitating the imposition of certain values and standards of behavior by a ruling group on another group which is forced to discard many of its own values and traditions. Assimilation is thus, in my opinion, an oppressive process since the ruling group of the host society de-
cides that their ideology and way of life is superior and should be assumed by all. This stance of superiority serves, more importantly, as justification for their socio-economic status and control.

Nevertheless, at first glance, one could argue that assimilation, notwithstanding a dictation of values and behavioral norms, can be considered a positive process if it eventually permits individuals to be socially and economically integrated in a given society. It is my contention, however, that this is a superficial apprehension of the phenomenon and that the possibility and reality of assimilation served additional oppressive functions in American society. At the time of mass immigration, the belief in America as a land of opportunity where newcomers could be assimilated into the mainstream and eventually "make it" had to be advocated if any immigrants were to come here as cheap labor.

Oppression, however, was often viewed as temporary: if the first generation immigrant remained an exploited outsider, there was usually the hope and consolation that successive generations would be assimilated and achieve a higher socio-economic status. Assimilation became intricately linked to the phenomenon of social mobility. Advocacy of the American way of life, rising and making it as individuals, served not only to justify a hierarchical and class structured capitalist society (everybody eventually makes it!) but also to prevent potential rebellions of discontent ethnic groups or separatism -- attempts
to upset the ruling class structure and dominant ideology. Assimilation and social mobility encouraged competition not coalition, emphasized the de-rooted mobile individual not group ties and obligations. You were taught to despise your ethnic identity and group ties; you were ridiculed for your differences. On one side, you saw a group struggling to survive and demeaned, on the other, people who were financially comfortable and respected. You forgot or were unaware that your cultural traits were the result of your inferior socio-economic status and this was the issue around which to organize as a group and fight; instead you though it was your nationality that was inferior so you set out to reject it and become assimilated with the "beautiful people."

Individual assimilation was far from being an easy process or equal for all. The ruling class certainly had no intention of being deposed! If immigrants were led to believe that if they became culturally assimilated they would eventually become socio-economically assimilated, the assimilation process had to be such that it only posed a very remote threat to the status and power of the ruling class. For those immigrants unwilling or unable to assimilate, the price was high: emargination and penalization (as we shall see later). Yet, for those who were willing or able to assimilate, the price was equally high: forfeiting an identity and lifestyle for new ones dictated by the ruling class and culture.

This painful process of cultural assimilation was only
the beginning, however, of a much longer and more difficult process of assimilation: socio-economic integration. Achieving economic opportunities, social acceptance, and a role in the American power structure and decision-making process took much longer to achieve than learning to speak English without an accent and appearing "all-American." For some ethnic groups, the former, even today, still remains an unmaterialized dream. This is due to an unequal assimilation rate among the different ethnic groups. I feel that assimilation is greatly a function of the type and strength of the immigrants' native cultural traits. Those whose native language was already English and whose cultural traits were close to or compatible with those advocated by the host society could most likely look forward to an easier assimilation process.

Therefore, to understand the dynamics of assimilation and the acceptance or rejection of ethnic groups in American society, we must first familiarize ourselves with the cultural traits of these groups. We are specifically interested in the Italian-Americans. Who were these Italians that came in masses to the United States between 1880 and 1924? Statistics tell us that 80% of them were from Southern Italy and 85% were unskilled and 50% illiterate. In short, they were the poor, the oppressed, the voiceless. Upon their arrival in America, they were often labeled dirty and stupid dagoes, but the cause of their poverty and intellectual inferiority was not their Italianity but their socio-economic class --
they were peasants. Their cultural traits were not due to their national origin but to their economic origin -- the lowest strata of a society.

They were the oppressed. They left the oppression of their native Italy only to find an American immigrant brand of oppression. Their sense of inferiority, a cultural trait which greatly handicapped them, was the consequence of their oppression in Italy. They arrived with this sentiment of inferiority and in the face of further oppression here could not rebel for they were not a strong, conscious, articulate and organized group. A state of inferiority either eventually leads to rebellion or remains resignation -- a closing in on oneself in order to survive.

To better understand the experience of this group in America, we must first briefly look at the conditions of the Southern Italian peasants in their homeland. At the time of the first mass emigration of Italians to America in 1880, major cultural and economic differences persisted in the various Italian regions despite the attempt to eliminate them with the Unification of Italy in 1861. Generally speaking, there were still two Italies -- the North and the South, the latter a backward region with a feudal social system, archaic agricultural methods and poor land, the former a more modern society which benefited from an industrialized economy and fertile land.

The South was the land of the "latifondo": large landed
estates controlled by absentee landlords. The latifundium system exploited both man and nature: water scarcity, depleted soil fertility, and deforestation were some of the consequences of this archaic agricultural system. The exploited individuals were the peasants and their families. By peasant, I mean both the contadini and giornalieri (day laborers); men who worked the land but did not own it and usually lived in poor and crowded quarters in distant towns. While a few peasants did manage to own small parcels of land, there was usually not enough produce for their subsistence.4

The following two selections by the contemporary Italian writer, Elio Vittorini, acutely depict the conditions and status of the Southern Italian peasant:5

On the Sicilian latifundium, it rarely happens that he who has sown gathers the harvest. At harvest time in June, strange men encamp in the village squares, going away each morning and returning every night; strange men who seem to belong to another race: thin, bony, sun-burnt, blinking eyes, and they are not called peasants, they are called reapers, "metricaliti". The village children fear them the way they fear the gypsies. Do they really belong to another race? They are of that same race which in winter has spaded, ploughed, and then sown, but their faces now show the signs of the privations suffered during those months the landlords didn't need them. Even today a large number of Sicilian peasants are taken on and discarded: are taken on, plough, and are discarded; taken on, sow, and are discarded, and only a few of them happen to reap the same grain they have sown. They aren't peasants: they're spaders, they're sowers, they're reapers. Just as the earth isn't land; it's a latifundium.

Architecture is very simple for the poor in Puglia. It's very functional, very rational; its only function is to delimit with four walls and cover with a
roof the space in which a man, a woman, two old people, six or seven children, and a beast of burden can lie outstretched. There are no unnecessary openings; only the one which serves as an entrance. In this way, even men become very rational, without troublesome needs, good only for what is useful (to the bosses); working when it's useful that they work, and dying of hunger when it's useful that they die of hunger.

The peasants and especially the giornalieri were from the bottom strata of a society based on a rigid caste system which sharply differentiated the gentry (galantuomini, prominenti) from the artisans and merchants and from the peasants. Interaction among the three groups was prevented or minimized through tradition ("pari con pari") and a social consciousness which was confined to the interests of own's own group. In addition, peasants were not allowed to participate in local affairs. The life of the peasants, and particularly of the giornalieri, was a life of total subjugation since their "[...]livelihood depended entirely on the whims of their masters and the seasons[...] It was a life of disperazione and miseria -- despair and misery; fear of man, god and elements; dread of the future, hunger and disease." Such an existence engendered a psychological state of resignation and a feeling of inferiority.

The peasants were pretty much passively resigned to class segregation and social advancement was sought only as family advancement -- a desire to keep up with or be better off than the next peasant family. The "famiglia," the basic unit of the Southern Italian pea-
ant society, is an extended family seen as an inclusive social world". Its members were bound by traditions and codes such as: male domination and leadership, family solidarity, exclusion of outsiders, pursuit of family and not community interests. Familism was a double-faced reality: on the one hand, it gave the peasant the illusion of defending himself against the exploitation of the ruling class and society in general; on the other hand, it gave the ruling class better control of the masses by minimizing social interaction and maximizing competition among peasant families.

The state of marginality and inferiority of the peasant was also preserved because compulsory education was not enforced and illiteracy was widespread. This was evidently to the satisfaction of the upper classes and clergy who saw in the education of the peasant an eventual threat to their social and economic status and stability. Compulsory education also did not appeal to the peasant because of his short-term interests. Unable to see the possible long-term advantages of education, he saw only a threat from the outside world which could destroy the social and economic stability of his family. Children would no longer be able or might no longer want to work to support the family and might even eventually question its values. The home was thus the school for the child -- transmitting cultural, social, and moral values (often through folklore) and maintaining stability through the various generations.
Contrary to what one might expect, the peasants also distrusted the Church and anticlericalism was prevalent among them because of the alliances between the clergy and upper classes. What is also interesting is that the peasants' religion consisted of an adherence to the Catholic faith supplemented by pagan beliefs and rituals. The peasant thus depended on magic conceptualizations of his natural and social milieu rather than on logical and rational apprehension of it.

It is not difficult to understand why values, practices, and conditions such as: magic influences, illiteracy, familism, "[...] lack of organization, lack of leadership, political immaturity, suspicion of authority and legalized government, and lack of civic experience and responsibility," and finally a deep sentiment of inferiority which characterized the Southern Italian peasant and immigrant at the turn of the century would contrast sharply with the values and way of life of the modern rapidly evolving industrial and urban America he came to. The traits and behavior of the Southern Italian immigrants, which are certainly not the "unchanging elements" of Italians but "remnants of a peasant culture, a culture of poverty," certainly played a key role in the way they perceived and related to American society at large.

Yet how did a supposedly resigned peasant find the desire and courage to emigrate? There is an apparent contradiction between resignation and the desire for change which emigration
obviously implies.

In our generalized characterization of the Southern Italian peasant, we have portrayed an individual who accepted his state of marginality and was distrustful of outside changes which could lead to further oppression. He sought only changes and improvements of a short-term nature which did not transcend class stratification. Yet there were certain attempts to transgress these limits. There had been sporadic, spontaneous and unorganized rebellions against landlords before the Italian Unification, and peasants had fought with the revolutionary, Garibaldi, thereby manifesting a desire to fight for change.

But the Unification of Italy did nothing for the peasant and disillusionment set in for many. Some overly manifested their discontent through "brigantaggio" (Robin Hood Italian style).15

In a nation where revolution seemed impossible for the peasant, emigration became the only other possible alternative for improving his human condition. Emigration, however, is not a one-way phenomenon characterized only by "push factors," but, as Lopreato16 points out, is a phenomenon caused by a combination of push-pull factors. Push factors are those in the migrant's society which prevent him from improving his status and thus discourage him from staying there, while pull factors are those aspects of the new society which attract the migrant by increasing his desire for improvement and change.

Yet for the attraction to materialize into actual emi-
migration, intermediaries were needed. While the sporadic flights from Italy prior to 1880 could have encouraged further emigration, the most determining factor for the mass emigration of 1880 were probably the agents. Sent to Italy to obtain cheap labor for American contractors and railroad companies, they found a peasant audience most receptive to their propaganda. Their promises of earning and saving substantial sums of money in a short time encouraged the migration of multitudes of peasants.

Usually the men left alone, thereby maintaining definite ties with their homeland and seeing in this flight a temporary one which would permit them to eventually return to Italy with enough money to buy land and lead a better life. The dream of return prevailed even among those who had left with their families. Their stay in America thus became a sort of limbo -- an attempt to build up one's resources and await one's return to the homeland.

But the state of limbo was more a form of hell for the Italians and this was due in part to the oppression of the agents. They exploited the immigrants by overcharging for their boatfare, keeping a percentage of their earnings as an employment fee, and thus succeeded in controlling their lives in America for quite some time. However, notwithstanding this exploitation, the level of subsistence in America was still higher than it had been for the peasant in Southern Italy and therefore most found it convenient to stay.
The attitude of the Italian government towards emigration was basically one of careless laissez-faire as is reflected in this statement which accompanied the Crispi Legislation of 1887: "L'emigrazione è un fatto che non si ha il diritto di sopprimere e non si hanno i mezzi di impedire" (Emigration is a fact which we don't have the right to suppress nor the means to prevent).\(^{18}\) The lack of emigration regulations reflects the Italian government's inability or unwillingness to promote economic development and social reforms which would eliminate the emigration process at its roots and indicates that permissive emigration policies were used by the government as a security valve for maintaining social and economic stability and eliminating the threat of an eventual peasant revolution.

The emigrants therefore left Italy without any legal protection against exploitation in foreign countries and without even a minimal preparation for emigration. It was only later (1900-1919) that the Italian government finally adopted legislation to protect emigrants,\(^{19}\) but by that time more than four million Italians had already left their country without assistance and ignorant of their rights. Given their peasant cultural traits and the lack of Italian government assistance and protection, they were beginning their stay in America on a very shaky threshold.
Arrival of Italian Immigrant Family at New York Harbor
Notes

1. Silvano Tomasi, Piety and Power (New York: The Center for Migration Studies, 1975), pp. 15-39. Additional statistics on emigration are to be found in Glazer and Moynihan's Beyond the Melting Pot. It is important to note that by 1930, Italians constituted the largest foreign group in the United States: 5,058,776 Italians had immigrated here (the peak period being between 1900-1914). Eighty percent of them came from the South. The largest region of origin was Sicily, followed by Campania, Abruzzi and Molise, Calabria, Apulia, Basilicata, and Sardinia.

2. Some extensive studies on this topic are: Edward Banfield's The Moral Basis of a Backward Society; Leonard Covello's The Social Background of the Italo-American School Child; and Joseph Lopreato's Italian Americans. Some contemporary Italian works of fiction which depict Southern Italian society are: Carl Levi's Cristo si è Fermato a Eboli (Christ Stopped at Eboli); Ignazio Silone's Pane e Vino (Bread and Wine) and Fontamara; Giovanni Verga's I Malavoglia (The House by the Medlar Tree); and Elio Vittorini's Conversazione in Sicilia (In Sicily) and Le Donne di Messina (The Women of Messina).


5. Elio Vittorini, "The Southern Issue: the Nomads of the Latifundia" (Dec. '45), and "The Southern Issue: Man as Means" (Nov. '45), Diario in Pubblico (Milano: Bompiani, 1970), pp. 220-221 [translations are my own].


10. Ibid., p. 274.


13. Ibid., p. 399.


18. Ibid., p. 22.

19. Ibid., ch. 1.
"These people are not fit to live in a nice house. Let them go where they can, and let my house stand...

From midnight till far into the small hours of the morning the policeman's thundering rap on closed doors is heard, with his stern command, "Apri port'!" on his rounds gathering evidence of illegal overcrowding. The doors are opened unwillingly enough -- but the order means business, and the tenant knows it even if he understands no word of English -- upon such scenes: In a room not thirteen feet either way slept twelve men and women, two or three in bunks set in a sort of alcove, the rest on the floor. A kerosene lamp burned dimly in the fearful atmosphere, probably to guide other and late arrivals to their 'beds', for it was only just past midnight."

(From Jacob Riis, How the Other Half Lives)
The Statue of Liberty's lamp must have dimmed for the majority of immigrants who came in 1880, for they did not find the "golden door" but rather doors open to sweat and toil. They came to the United States as cheap labor.

In 1880, post-Civil War American society was undergoing a major transformation. With the abolition of slavery and the economic growth induced by the war, the nation was searching for a new social order and therefore for new forms of social exploitation. The ruling forces of America were transforming a basically rural and agricultural society into an urban and industrial one. In the process, the northeastern region became suddenly urbanized and industrially developed, while in the southern and western regions an attempt was made to modernize the agricultural system, which resulted in a mechanization of production (with a consequent dependence on industry for the necessary machines) and a diminuation in the manpower employed. As a result, many people migrated from rural to urbanized areas where industrial production was taking place and manpower was needed.

Industrialization also resulted in the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. The accumulation of capital was facilitated by legislation which openly favored the formation of financial and industrial monopolies. Financial capitalists became a new ruling class who seized and expanded their power
during the industrialization of America. By the end of the
1880's, it was clear that American society no longer resembled
the agrarian democracy idealized by Jefferson; it was instead
becoming the industrial and financial plutocracy envisioned
by Hamilton.³

The new industrial growth required additional manpower and
new markets for the consumption of produced goods. For these
reasons industrialists favored and promoted mass immigration.
Propaganda campaigns⁴ describing the "promised land" as a
place of "wealth and comfort" attracted millions of Southern
and Eastern Europeans. Yet the majority of them did not find
the promised frontier on the other side of the ocean, but
crowded and filthy tenements and shacks to sleep in and sewers,
mines, and factories to work in.

The Italians constituted the largest group of immigrants
arriving in the United States between 1880 and 1924. Two im-
portant factors characterize their pattern of settlement.
First, "the mass migration at the turn of the century estab-
lished the basic regional distribution of Italian immigrants;
the post-1924 flows followed the already established channels
of communication and movement."⁵ Most of them settled in the
northeast and Great Lakes region. Smaller groups ventured to
California and Missouri where large Italian communities even-
tually developed. Secondly, the Italians concentrated in urban
areas.⁶

Why did Italian immigrants settle in these regions and
concentrate in urban areas if most of them were peasants? Several hypotheses have been submitted to explain such a seemingly paradoxical phenomenon. First, it has been argued that Italian immigrants did not have enough money to travel further than New York City or for that matter to purchase farm land. Secondly, as was pointed out in the previous chapter, Southern Italians were peasants and not farmers. They were only too glad to give up agricultural work because of the "human degradation" associated with it in Italy. Thirdly, many Italians first came to the United States as seasonal laborers in search of fast earnings and then expected to return to Italy and buy a small plot of land in order to alleviate their dependence on the landlords. Living in inner city districts close to the working place was, for these Italians, a convenient temporary solution, especially in economic terms. Finally, Italian immigrants were sponsored by industrial and construction entrepreneurs who obviously sent them to industrial and urbanized areas to work and consequently to live. Each of these hypotheses is basically sound and a theory of Italian immigrant settlement patterns in the United States must incorporate them all.

Yet why, when living conditions in immigrant quarters became inhuman because of overcrowding and lack of sanitary services, did United States federal and Italian agencies fail in their attempts to promote a more uniform distribution of aliens in other less populated areas of the city or regions of the
Unauthorized Lodging in New York Tenements
Sheds Among New York Tenements
Home of Italian Ragpicker on Jersey Street
Hester and Clinton Streets in Lower East Side of New York
Mulberry Bend of New York
country? The fact is that, at the turn of the century, the government had little control over immigration and the distribution of Italian immigrants which, as for other Eastern and Southern European nationalities, was instead largely determined by the "padrone system." This was an unofficial yet well-organized and efficient network of labor distribution agencies that governed the demand and supply of labor forces in the United States under the silent promotion of capitalists and entrepreneurs.

The system was based on an agreement that padroni would provide laborers to contractors, industrialists, and railroad companies and subsequently supervise them. The agreement had advantages for both parties. The employers did not have to pay employment fees or provide insurance, nor worry about interpreters for the workers, and could count on the padrone, who literally controlled the lives of laborers, to make certain that they did not organize themselves in labor movements to ask for better wages and working conditions. On the other hand, in order to provide such services to employers, the padrone had developed a system for controlling the laborers and making lucrative gains off their backs.

The padrone system was a capillary network of agents and subagents including bankers and steamship representatives. They were located in urbanized areas of the United States where laborers were needed and in small villages or provinces of Italy where laborers were available. When a contractor needed
laborers for a particular job, he contacted a padrone in the immigrant district where laborers were "stored" in boarding houses. The subagents would then recruit the necessary workers, and when the demand exceeded the supply, workers would arrive from Italy. The padrone, working closely with Italian bankers and steamship owners, would usually anticipate the necessary transportation fares. And upon their arrival in America, the padrone would collect a transportation rebate from the laborers and would make profits by overcharging them for room and board and employment fees ("bossatura").

The number of Italian immigrants dependent on such an exploitive system was ever increasing and by the end of the nineteenth century, padroni controlled two-thirds of the Italian laborers in New York City while similar levels were being reached in Chicago and other cities. The padrone system flourished for quite some time and various legislative attempts to control it were unsuccessful, because they tried to punish the intermediaries and obviously did not try to get at the germ of the plague, that is the capitalists. The system eventually disintegrated when national industrial growth slowed down and there was no longer any need for new temporary laborers and when laborers were finally unionized.

The Italian immigrant workers accepted the padrone system because they had no other alternative; being illiterate, penniless, not knowing the English language, and most importantly because of the lack of necessary and appropriate services and
and protection from the United States and Italian governments. Dependence on the padrone system undoubtedly provided immediate advantages for the Italian immigrants but in the long run retarded their assimilation into American society since they had few contacts with outside institutions.

The padrone system was not a typical Italian phenomenon. It was common to other ethnic groups which arrived in the nineteenth century. A typical form of exploitation in capitalistic development, it is still present today in other parts of the world where industrialized nations (France, West Germany, etc.) need cheap labor to minimize production costs. In America, during the second wave of mass immigration (1880-1924), it helped the industrialists build their empires and it determined the regional distribution of workers. It was also largely responsible for the concentration of ethnic groups in decayed inner city districts which suddenly acquired new economic life becoming additional bonanzas for bankers and landlords.

Our particular concern is with the evolution of those inner city districts that were occupied by Italian immigrants and became known as Little Italies. From an analysis of the historical development of the oldest Italian communities in Boston (North End) and New York City (Mulberry Street, West Village, East Harlem), we can generalize that their evolution may be divided into three periods corresponding roughly to the years 1880-1920, 1920-1950, and 1950 to the present.
The first period, during which the Italians concentrated in urban areas near the port of arrival, was characterized by a high degree of population turnover and by a transformation of the physical structures of the area. At first, the immigrants tended to reproduce the social structure they left in Italy; then, under the pressure of the hosting society, they made a first attempt to relate to the institutions found in their districts. In this period, Italian colonies served two important functions: they were reservoirs of cheap labor and they functioned as "shock absorbers" for Italian immigrants in their process of adjustment to the new society and its culture.

In the second period which begins with the end of mass immigration, brought about by restrictive laws passed between 1919 and 1924, there was a consolidation of Italians in the neighborhood which became socially and physically insulated. The immigrants developed institutions, life-styles, and norms to preserve their native cultural traits and to defend themselves from "outsiders."

The third period, covering from the 1950's until today, has been characterized by an increased out-migration of second and third generation residents, by a decay of physical structures in the neighborhoods, and by a breakdown of values and social institutions which previously acted as binding forces in the Italian communities. Some of the communities which are dealt with in this study, such as East Harlem's Little Italy,
have already undergone major transformations; others, like the North End and the Little Italy of Mulberry Street, are now under pressure for development which could lead to a drastic alteration of their social content and subsequently displace many of the poorer residents.

For the remainder of this chapter, we shall focus on the evolution of Italian-American neighborhoods during the first period, and shall defer to the next two chapters the discussion of the other two periods.

The majority of Italian immigrants arriving at the ports of Boston and New York City in the 1880's had little choice in terms of mobility. Whether they came under the padrone system or not, they were addressed to or attracted by the immigrant districts of those cities where they could find lodging accommodations within their limited economic means. These already densely populated districts were residential pockets in the proximity of harbor and commercial facilities. Once attractive and integrated neighborhoods, they slowly declined during the post-revolutionary period and became "interstitial areas" during the first wave of mass immigration (1825-1860) when the Irish, Germans, and other ethnic groups settled there. Many immigrants stayed only temporarily in the areas and moved to other regions as soon as they acquired the necessary financial means. Others, like the Irish, remained in the districts and developed strong communities, controlling most of the local cultural and political institutions.
When Southern Italians came to these predominantly Irish districts, there were, however, already smaller subcommunities formed by Northern Italians between 1850 and 1880. The Northern Italian immigrants had come mainly from the regions of Liguria and Tuscany. As a small group, comprised of many educated and skilled members, they were more "assimilable" even though they remained mostly in their enclaves. Their subcommunities functioned as nuclei which attracted the masses of Southern Italians to these districts.

It is likely that some Northern Italians, who had settled in the districts during earlier periods, organized the first padrone system which brought the Southern Italian immigrants into their subcommunities. The Southern Italian immigrants lived at first in padrone controlled boarding houses and, when they brought their families, eventually occupied every room, basement or stable in the blocks surrounding the first settlement.

The settlement process, however, was not a chaotic one but a "chain phenomenon" where familism and localism were the binding forces that produced a "mosaic of subcommunities." In the Italian colony there was a correspondence between social and spatial subdivisions: generally, each subneighborhood represented a different Italian region; a group of streets, a province; a street or block, a town or village; and finally, in tenements were concentrated extended families.

Such a pattern of settlement reflects not only the con-
tinuation of a general North-South opposition and a local village and regional antagonism carried over from Italy, but manifests the human need of clinging first to one's family and then to one's paesani when one is among strangers in a place breeding insecurity. Familism and localism remained the associative criteria for the first clubs, mutual aid and fraternal societies that were organized by Italian immigrants in various subneighborhoods. These nevertheless testified to the Italian immigrant's partial encounter with the host society, for these associative institutions were not transplanted from Italy, but emulative of those found in the original multi-ethnic districts.  

The large influx of Southern Italians and other immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe into these districts produced serious living condition problems such as over-crowding and caused many of the other ethnic groups to move elsewhere. By the end of the 1880's, the immigrant districts were the most overcrowded areas of Boston and New York, with densities reaching 1100 inhabitants per acre. The ever-increasing demand for additional housing encouraged speculators and absentee landlords to charge the immigrants incredibility high rents and to build new abusive constructions in almost every backyard. Newly infilled blocks became unsanitary and, as the photos and words of Jacob Riis vividly testify, living conditions were simply unbearable. Inevitably, disease spread, crime and death rates rose, and conflicts between old resident groups and new-
comers took on racial overtones.\textsuperscript{19}

The plight of Italians and other immigrants attracted public attention and consequently local health and housing legislation was enacted to ameliorate sanitary and living conditions.\textsuperscript{20} Health authorities were granted unprecedented powers to set restrictive building codes and to ensure better sanitary standards. The enforcement of such legislation during the 1890-1920 period, produced a radical physical transformation in most immigrant districts. Dilapidated wooden structures were either replaced by tenement buildings or were demolished to create new playgrounds and public services such as schools and churches.\textsuperscript{21}

The problems created by immigrants in large American cities also concerned the "nativists" who feared that the new "ignorant" and "immoral" masses would be a threat to American institutions. Protestant Churches, in particular, seemed to be convinced that the problems of immigrants in overcrowded ghettos would be alleviated if the immigrants could first be evangelized and Americanized. Missions were therefore sent to the new ethnic communities to help the foreign population appreciate the greatness of American institutions and to set behavioral models and standards.\textsuperscript{22} Their goal was to assimilate the masses:

\begin{quote}
No greater opportunity ever came to the Christian people of America to do mission work than to evangelize, Christianize, Americanize and assimilate these multitudes of immigrants in our midst into one composite people, united, liberty-loving, flag-
loving, God-fearing, Christ-following, Christian.\textsuperscript{23}

The work of Protestant missions was particularly intense in Italian communities because Southern Italians seemed reluctant and slow in adopting American ideals and their manifestations of religiosity were considered perverse, even by the Catholic Church. This, however, was an arrogant misinterpretation of reality and indicated that religious authorities lacked an understanding of the cultural attitudes and background of Southern Italians as it has been pointed out by H.S. Nelli:

Critics who saw an irreligious attitude in immigrant superstition and idolatry ignored the fact that image-worship, especially of the Virgin, and anthropomorphic views of nature and religion made Catholicism comprehensible to the unlettered mind. In the same way, critics considered the Italians' addiction to festival, procession and feasts as a perversion of religion, although to participants they formed an integral part of worship. Immigrants who celebrated these functions in American did so not only in an effort to re-establish those elements of religion which had strongly appealed to them in Italy, but also to counteract Irish influences in their new churches. Thus what seemed to Americans to be a falling away from religion was at least in part an adaption of old habits to new conditions.\textsuperscript{24}

In the Italian colonies of New York and Boston, the Methodist was the first Protestant mission (followed by the Baptists, Congregational and Episcopal ones) which attempted to proselyte the immigrants while offering them services and assistance.\textsuperscript{25} Their programs included child-rearing, health care, employment referral, and language courses for adults. However, the impact that these missions had on Italian immi-
grants was limited, notwithstanding some positive results, because only small groups were attracted and these were the ones which eventually moved out of the colonies. In addition, missionaries would often overtly attack the exploitive institutions of the colonies, accusing them of controlling the population and of retarding their assimilation. This attitude generated resentment and conflicts in the communities, and with the rise of national Catholic parishes and the proliferation of governmental agencies, the Protestant missions were forced to close down and leave the colonies after World War I.

The exploitative institutions, attacked by the missionaries, had emerged in the Italian colonies because of the inability and inadequacy of the host society to deal with the pressing needs of immigrants. These institutions, which were an evolution of the padrone system and were controlled by "prominenti" (prominent persons), provided the immigrants with minimal but essential services while monitoring most of the economic and social life of the community.

The prominenti were persons who acquired economic status in the Italian community by taking advantage of the social and psychological conditions and the language problems of the immigrants. Most of them owned a "banca." This was not a traditional banking institution but a sort of "social emporium" where immigrants could obtain information and advice. At the same time, it operated as a travel agency, public notary, employment center, mailroom, and savings deposit. The
prominenti bankers were initially associated with the padrone system and therefore controlled the work contracts of most laborers in the colony. While providing the above-mentioned services, the prominenti exploited the immigrants by not paying interest on their savings and by investing them in boarding houses and tenements for which immigrants were charged exorbitant rents.

The prominenti extended their control over the immigrants in other spheres of community life. Most of them, in fact, were the founders of local societies and editors/owners of local newspapers. Their societies were somewhat different from the old welfare-oriented mutual aid fraternities set up by immigrants. The new societies were mainly recreational and often organized parades and processions which were used by the prominenti as occasions to reinforce their power over the community. Other societies, which were financed by the Italian government to provide the immigrants with some legal protection and assistance, were instead used by prominenti to extend their influence outside the community.

The control of local newspapers permitted the prominenti to manipulate public opinion and keep the community fragmented and isolated. In fact, the editorial politics of the newspapers was often contradictory. The newspapers would, for example, praise American institutions in order to criticize local Italian community societies they did not control; or would print long discourses about Italianità, patriotism and
other similar rhetoric to criticize missions, social workers or labor unions which could undermine their power in the community. 29

The prominenti-bankers' hegemony over immigrants faded after World War I when the government imposed new regulations on their banking operations which therefore limited the forms of exploitation and the power they had in the Italian communities.

The hegemony of prominenti in Italian colonies was further weakened by the Labor Unions (American Federation of Labor and others) which succeeded in the 1910's in organizing several powerful locals there. 30 The establishment of these locals played a major role in the evolution of Italian colonies because immigrants transcended associative patterns based on familism and localism, and, for the first time, manifested class solidarity and political consciousness. Socialist unions such as the Industrial Workers of the World were able to cross ethnic and racial lines and build coalitions of Italian, Jewish, Irish, and other ethnic workers. Many of them were eventually radicalized and successful strikes were organized. 31 The large participation of immigrants in these strikes worried not only the ethnic prominenti but also the moderate labor organizations and the ruling class of America.

Striking and waving red flags was playing with fire. But immigrant workers were not aware of the powerful fire extinguishers that capitalists were about to operate. Nativists
were joined by capitalists in their campaign to obtain restrictive immigration measures and the United States government promptly responded to such pressure by enacting laws, between 1917 and 1924, which openly discriminated against Southern, Eastern European and Asian groups. Yet this was only the beginning of a movement which used the "red scare" as a strategy and the Sacco and Vanzetti case\(^{32}\) as an example against those workers, radicals or ethnic groups which would not accept or would dare to question the social institutions of America.

Many intellectuals, both here and abroad, understood quite well the political implications of the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti and protested vehemently against the United States government. But for the residents of the North End (and other Italian colonies), when the coffins of Sacco and Vanzetti were paraded along Hanover Street, the message was clearly another one. The psychological lynching began to affect them and their choice was either to hide their "self" in the closet or heed the words of Theodore Roosevelt:

\[
(...)\text{There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americanism[...]}\text{Americanism is a matter of the spirit and of the soul. Our allegiance must be purely to the United States} \]

\[
(...)\text{The man who calls himself an American citizen and who yet shows by his actions that he is primarily the citizen of a foreign land, plays a thoroughly mischievous part in the life of our body politic. He has no place here[...]}\text{The only man who is a good American is the man who is an American and nothing else[...]}^{33}\]

The process of their Americanization had begun under the benevolent and paternalistic guidance of Woodrow Wilson and
"What Happened To The One We Used To Have?"

Cartoon on Restrictive Immigration Laws
other nativists:

[...]This process of Americanization is going to be a process of self-examination, a process of purification, a process of rededication to the things which America represents and is proud to represent[...].34

[...]Americanization is the process of sharing in and promoting the ideals, aims, activities, and practice of basic American governmental principles, American freedom of thought, American schooling and language, and the best manners, habits, and customs of America[...].35

"Americanization" is assimilation in the United States. It is that process by which immigrants are transformed into Americans. It is not the mere adoption of American citizenship, but the actual raising of the immigrant to the American economic, social and moral standard of life. Then has an immigrant been Americanized only when his mind and will have been united with the mind and will of the American so that the two act and think together.36

And so the litany of Americanization goes on and on to outline the norms of American institutions and the values of the American way of life. But, behind this mystifying facade, the process implied an unfair imposition of the ruling class on the new immigrants. Writing on the nature of inequality, R. Dahrendorf states: "[...]we should remember that the selection of norms always involves discrimination"37 and adds that "the origin of inequality is[...] to be found in the existence in all human societies of norms of behavior to which sanctions are attached."38 By imposing the norms of Americanization, the ruling class had added another dimension to the already existing economic and political inequalities and legitimized the resulting social stratification in which the Ital-
ian immigrants were to occupy, not by choice but by default, one of the lowest places.
Notes

1. "Give me your tired, your poor,
   Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
   The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
   Send these, the homeless, the tempest-tost to me.
   I lift my lamp beside the golden door."
   (Legend on the Statue of Liberty)

2. Anna Maria Martellone, Una Little Italy nell'Atene d'America (Napoli: Guida Editore, 1973), ch. 2.

3. Ibid., pp. 79-82.


6. Ibid., p. 28. As of 1960, 91.8% of foreign born Italians reside in urban areas as compared to 69.9% of the total U.S. population.


13. According to statistical findings, between 1880-1900, 80% of Italian immigrants were males of working age. For additional information see R.F. Foerster, The Italian Immigration of our Times (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919) and Silvano Tomasi, Piety and Power (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1975).


15. The pattern is not solely an Italian phenomenon but can be found in other ethnic groups such as the Chinese, Greeks, etc., nor can we say that it disappeared with the adjustment and assimilation of immigrants to American society. On the contrary, such a pattern is still documentable in most old neighborhoods and seems to also be
present in suburban Italian-American enclaves such as Newton, Massachusetts where immigrants from the Frosinone province settled according to family and town ties.

27. Ibid., p. 305.
29. See the evaluation of editorial policies of the "Gazetta del Massachusetts" and "Corriere di Boston" in Martellone, op. cit., ch. 4.
30. Ibid., pp. 420-435.
35. Talbot, op. cit., p. 73.
38. Ibid., p. 34.
CHAPTER THREE

THE EVOLUTION OF ITALIAN-AMERICAN NEIGHBORHOODS (PART II)

"He said, 'Chick, I like to see you in college, you'd make a jackass of yourself the way you talk and act.' ... I was very sensitive about those things, and that hurted me. Right after that I went uptown and bought two books. One was a book on English, and the other was a book of etiquette. I don't know why I bought that book of etiquette, but when I got home, I read it through. I wanted to know everything I should do and not do."

(From William F. Whyte's Street Corner Society)

"In the course of time our Italian friends who stay here will be assimilated and Americanized, and learn to do right as we do right, and wrong as we do wrong. Schooling in our public schools will make an enormous difference to those who get it. But meanwhile, and especially in communities where large bands of Italians come and go according to the call of the labor market, better local provision will have to be made for taking care of them. No American village, certainly no suburban community hereabouts, is going to accept for long, and endure the thought that persons using its highways are liable to be stopped and robbed by Sicilian banditti."

(From Harper's Weekly -- July 3, 1909)
Americanization is a process of metamorphosis of the self, forfeiting an identity rooted in the past in exchange for a new image tailored by the ruling class. The new identity is one based on individualism, social mobility, faith in Progress and Capitalism. The prize for those who undergo Americanization is social acceptance and economic advancement. But Americanization is inevitably a selective process because not everyone can pay the price and those who are unable or not willing to Americanize are penalized and become socially marginal.

The evolution of Italian-American neighborhoods in the post World War I period is characterized by a community insulation resulting from the residents' inability to respond to the pressures of Americanization, which required not only a transformation of the self but also a radical change in lifestyle.

The American lifestyle of the 1920's was determined by the evolution of capitalism and industrial production. The new technology (assembly line, etc.) used by industrialists aimed at maximizing the production process (in order to maximize profit) and made new commodities (cars, electrical appliances, etc.) more economically and readily available to consumers. Advertisement was used to articulate an American dream of avid consumption. To facilitate the acquisition of
Pledge of Allegiance to American Flag
Pledge of Allegiance to American Flag
all these gadgets and goodies, the capitalists invented the installment payment plan which resulted in an increased level of private debt and dependency on banks.

Suburban living was increasingly advocated to market the nifty inventions of Ford, General Electric and other rising industrial empires. Suburbanization was also an expression of new forms of social control because it favored new lifestyles and residential patterns of social segregation along economic, class, and racial-ethnic lines. For immigrants, suburban living became an expected prerequisite for Americanization. Obviously, only those who had acquired the necessary economic means, had been educated, and had undergone cultural distanciation (generally the second and third generations) were moving to suburbia.

The growth of Italian communities was affected by suburbanization and by the lack of new immigration. The population of the colonies began to steadily decline because of the out-migration of prominenti, businessmen, etc. to suburban areas, and because there was no inflow due to the restriction placed on immigration (the 1924 Immigration Act). The people left in the colonies were mainly the old generation, their young families, unskilled laborers who could not afford suburban living, and those who preferred traditional values (familism, localism, etc.) to modern ones.¹

The Italian neighborhood became an insulated yet highly structured microcosm which was however superficially perceived
by outsiders as a slum characterized by a "formidable mass of confusion [and] social chaos."² For the residents, the neighborhood performed two very important functions. First, for those who could not join the mainstream of American society, it provided a "protective space," an "cultural retreat," a safe world where it was possible to preserve traditional values, to develop a strong sense of communal solidarity and new forms of lifestyle that were conditioned by the background of the immigrants and by the insulation of the community but which indicated a voluntary, gradual assimilation of the residents. Secondly, for those who eventually hoped to join the mainstream, it was a sort of purgatory, a place where it was possible to wait and build the necessary strength (cultural, economic) to climb the ladder of the American dream.

The major characteristics (insulation, "cultural retreat," purgatory) of the evolving Italian communities, during the period between the wars, were manifested in the spatial organization and use of the neighborhoods as well as in the structure of the social system that inhabited them. The spatial organization which developed in the Italian neighborhoods (and is still easily identifiable) is composed of a core, where all the major services are concentrated, and of various subneighborhoods where the immigrants had developed institutions and residential patterns based on localism. The core is delimited by or in some cases coincides with major streets
of the neighborhood. Along these, in a sequence that often reminds one of "la strada vecchia" or "il corso" of an Italian town, are concentrated most of the commercial activities such as travel agencies, public notaries, pharmacies, stores selling Italian products (clothing, shoes, hardware, records), pasta and pastry shops, produce markets, and whatever else has been needed by the residents. The Italian ambiance has been reinforced by the continuous use of sidewalks and shops as places for socialization. The subneighborhoods are contiguous to the core and generally grew around an open space, a small square, an intersection, or a church (which usually symbolized the center of the subcommunity). There were, in each neighborhood, basic services such as cornerstores, a barbershop, and bakery, which served the daily needs of the residents, while the church, parochial schools, religious societies, and other meeting places gave the residents an opportunity to express, share, and transmit to the younger generation communal values.

The neighborhood, as an insulated environment, offered the immigrants the opportunity to establish a continuity with and protection of past traditions and habits. At the same time, the "institutional completeness" of the community minimized the residents' interaction with the outside urban environment and institutions. In fact, most of the residents left the neighborhood only to work and confined their social interactions and leisure activities to the community.
This state of confinement facilitated the evolution of closely-knit social relationships among residents. While the "family" remained the most important institution for the old immigrants, the values and norms it embodied (solidarity, mutual obligations, respect for male leadership, social interaction limited to insiders of a group) were transcended to more communal forms of association. These extended to a neighborhood scale the opportunities for social interaction which, originally for immigrant peasants, were confined to kinship and localism affiliations.

One of the most important communal organizations among young working class males became the street corner gang. It was based on a code of reciprocal obligations, clear hierarchical distinctions between leaders and followers, and routine and organized activities where performance greatly determined group status. Generosity was an expected attribute, especially of leaders, and while members had the desire to get ahead in their gangs and neighborhood, this desire was always checked by reciprocal obligations to which they were bound. Although the gang was a self-functioning group with its own rules, it was nevertheless embedded in the societal framework of the neighborhood and was concerned with its well-being and advancement.

For street gang members, there was a certain effacement of the individual for the benefit of group relationships and certainly an interaction with and contribution to neighborhood
life. Yet for "college boys," young Italian-Americans who wanted to make the American dream theirs and were in the process of breaking away from traditional values, the neighborhood was more a state of purgatory -- a place to wait before joining the mainstream, before moving out of the neighborhood. Egoism was necessary for social mobility and individual advancement and the college boy therefore did not form close friendships or did not hesitate to give up those which did not benefit his advancement in American society. The college boy thus lived his stay in the Italian neighborhood as a transition or rather didn't live it, didn't contribute at all to its societal mechanisms since his ideals and dreams could only be realized outside the neighborhood and he was fast learning that his roots and present reality had to be forfeited for their realization.

This dichotomy between corner gang and college boy epitomizes the dilemma of the Italian immigrant caught between the choice of clinging to his roots and being reduced to a state of marginality or negating his roots as the price for individual success and advancement in American society.

There were, however, institutions in the neighborhood -- the parishes and settlement houses -- which attempted to help residents deal with this dilemma. The Italian parishes were the most important organizations which encouraged the development of a community consciousness and defended the ethnic identity of their members. These, as other national parishes,
evolved as a result of the struggle, within the Catholic Church, between Irish clergymen who advocated the immediate Americanization of immigrants, and various ethnic groups who demanded more flexibility and autonomy. The Italian parishes are seen by Silvano Tomasi as quasi-sects and are described as:

[...] place[s] where immigrant Italians who were on the religious and social periphery of society, could fulfill their religious needs, find opportunity for self expression, preserve their self-perception of being human in face of an unknown social environment.6

The parishes in the Italian neighborhoods immediately became catalysts for cultural evolution and social integration. By accepting the background and traditions of the peasants from Southern Italy, the parish became the fulcrum around which the immigrant culture developed and the community strengthened itself. In fact, as Tomasi argues:

The ethnic parish accepted the folkloristic religious manifestations of the immigrants; justified their moralism; never rejected their Italianità. It recreated, therefore, a cultural community in which the immigrants were aware of "being-of-a-kind," of participating in a common patrimony of symbolic meanings, myths, memories, traditions and values.7

Openly speaking about cultural pluralism, the Italian parishes offered a valuable alternative to the process of Americanization as the path to social integration. Their strategy aimed, first, at reinforcing the ties among the various sub-communities of the neighborhood by transcending their cultural differences in a common ethnic culture, and, then favoring a
"gradual assimilation" of the group, not the individual, into the new society.

In every Italian neighborhood, after World War I, ethnic parishes provided most of the recreational activities and services of assistance which Protestant missions used to offer. As a result, the missions and most other services set up to help immigrants were closed down and the parishes remained the most important supporting institution of the Italian communities.

The priests of these parishes played very important roles. Within the Catholic Church, they became advocators of cultural pluralism and "mediators between the established ecclesiastical structures and the immigrants attached to the cultural expressions of their peasant faith and their sentimental nationalism." 8 Within the Italian communities, they became respected leaders, offered services and legal advice to needy immigrants, and became catalysts for the evolution of parochial schools which were shortly favored by the immigrant families because such schools were not as intolerent of the child's cultural background and language as public schools were.

In contrast with the efforts of Italian parishes to identify themselves with the reality of the neighborhood and to help immigrants develop a strong sense of community, the settlement house remained very much an outside institution imposed on the Italian communities to encourage individual so-
cial mobility and to set behavioral standards for those who were already on the verge of moving out of the neighborhood.

After the closing of Protestant missions, settlement houses became the most important "American" institution operating in the Italian communities. As community centers and social welfare agencies, the houses continued to provide residents with important socializing (picnics, dances, day camps) and educational (lectures and films on child rearing, medical care, English language courses, job training) activities. Yet, they remained institutions alien to the majority of the residents and were unable or unwilling to deal with their problems and needs.

According to William F. Whyte, the limited interaction between settlement houses and neighborhood residents, especially first generation men, was due to the fact that the houses were run by non-Italian, middle class, usually female social workers who had "no systematic knowledge of the social backgrounds of the people in their Italian homeland," nor did they understand the social evolution taking place in the neighborhood because of their conviction that assimilation was a "one way adaption" achieved through upward mobility and through the acceptance of middle class values. Consequently the settlement houses attracted and dealt with those second generation individuals who were already rebelling against local values and traditions and not with those who were loyal to them (college boys vs. corner gang boys).
Loyalty to local traditions and values meant, for those who remained in the neighborhoods, the acceptance of a highly structured social system which Whyte describes as a "close-knit hierarchical organization in which people's positions and obligations to one another are defined and recognized." In addition, he argues that the people's acceptance of a community hierarchy seemed to reflect their belief in a religious supernatural order which in turn conditioned the way relationships between the community and society at large were handled. In fact, residents of a typical Italian neighborhood, Cornerville (North End, Boston), seemed to believe and act as if:

[...] society is made up of big people and little people -- with intermediaries serving to bridge the gaps between them. The masses of Cornerville people are little people. They cannot approach the big people directly but must have an intermediary to intercede for them. They gain this intercession by establishing connections with the intermediary, by performing services for him, and thus making him obligated to them. The intermediary performs the same functions for the big man. The interactions of big shots, intermediaries, and little guys build up a hierarchy of personal relations based upon a system of reciprocal obligations.

The above passage illustrates the workings of the local social structure and unfolds two important facts. First, that notwithstanding the network of reciprocal obligations in the Italian communities, there seemed to be a definite class stratification (masses, intermediaries, big shots). Second, that the control of the community was achieved through the practice
of "intercession" which led to a pyramidal social hierarchy that allowed only a few "big shots" to deal with the "outside" and condemned the majority of the community to a perpetual state of subservience and insulation. But who were the big shots? How did they achieve prominence in their community? How did they control it? How were they linked to the outside?

Two avenues, which sometimes intersected, were commonly followed by residents of Italian neighborhoods to achieve prominence in and control of their community: organized crime and local politics. The leaders or bosses of both domains were able to exercise a tight control in the community through a web of mutual obligations which invested the majority of residents. Both found the defensive insulation of the community to be a necessary condition for their personal success and therefore resisted any attempts that would have altered the status quo. In turn, both served the purpose of the established power structure of American society which used, first, organized crime to defame Italian-Americans, and, then, the Italian politician in the alchemy of ethnic fragmentation to minimize class conflicts at the city as well as national level.

The rise of organized crime as a controlling institution in Italian communities began in the 1920's with the illegal traffic of liquor and, when the National Prohibition Act was abolished in 1931, continued with the gambling racket. The bosses played a paternalistic role in the neighborhoods in
order to set up patterns of dependence and win the solidarity of the population. They provided jobs and opportunities for economic advancement to residents hit by unemployment or to illegal immigrants. In addition, they loaned money to needy residents and local businessmen and financed recreational activities. Their generosity, however, was not always calculated, as the following remark by a Cornerville resident to Whyte reveals:

These gangsters are the finest fellows you want to meet. They'll do a lot for you, Bill. You go up to them and say, "I haven't got a place to sleep," and they'll give you something. Now you go up to a businessman, one of the respected members of the community, and ask him. He throws you right out of the office.\textsuperscript{13}

Gestures like the above were typical of bosses who were praised in the Italian communities as "free spenders and patrons of local enterprises."\textsuperscript{14}

The outside society, however, perceived the bosses as gangsters and their activities as criminal actions. Through the manipulation of mass media, organized crime became associated with Italian-Americans. Daniel Bell has presented a different view of organized crime which does not see it as deviant behavior or a pathological trait of Italians but as a success story American-style. He has described it as a "queer ladder of social mobility,"\textsuperscript{15} as one of the few easily accessible to uneducated minorities and newly arrived immigrant groups. In fact, there has been an ethnic succession in the controlling positions of organized crime: first the Irish and then the
Jews and Italians, and now Cubans, Blacks, etc. Francis Ianni goes further in his research to demonstrate that "organized crime is a viable and persistent institution within American society," and describes it as "part of the American enterprise system, as one end of a continuum which has legitimate business as the other pole," embedded in the political structure of cities and federal government.

Local politics was the other opportunity open to ambitious residents who wanted to acquire prominence in the Italian community. Italians acquired political control of their wards only in the 1930's. Until then, district politics was controlled by the powerful Irish political machine. Irish politicians had socialized former generations of Italian politicians in the art of local politics which, at that time, had little to do with democratic government. Local politics was a group affair -- the group that seized the power then had access to city jobs, welfare assistance, and other advantages. Italians learned the hard way that only by enforcing community cohesiveness and solidarity, could they ensure their members accessibility to jobs and economic security. From the Irish, Italian politicians inherited the institutional framework (party organization, district political club, etc.) and the essential custom of local politics: the practice of patronage, based on exchanges of votes for favors, a very powerful tool for community control.

Studies about local politicians from inner city Italian
neighborhoods indicate that party choice was not an ideological matter for them. They would lean towards the Democratic Party if they lacked the personal financial means to run a campaign, or on the contrary chose the Republican Party if they were already successful businessmen. There seems to have been a consistent pattern of cooperation between the local democratic politician and the racketeers who often helped to finance his campaign and then used him to obtain the connections and cover-ups necessary for the bosses' operation of illegal activities or move into legal or more profitable businesses.

For community residents, the Italian politician was "an ambassador to the outside world," someone who could intercede with the unapproachable city bureaucracy, someone who could do favors and provide jobs. Consequently, a network of reciprocal obligations was established between the politician and residents.

Loyalty to Italian traditions and values was a prerequisite for a successful election campaign. Italian politicians were known to exploit their ethnic background for electoral purposes. In doing so, they mythicized the oppression suffered by Italians in America and consoled the electorate by praising Italy, its rich culture and great people. Many of them enthusiastically hailed Mussolini as the man who won the respect of Americans for Italians. This strategy, which we have already seen was used by the prominenti during the pre-
World War period to keep the neighborhood population socially insulated and romantically attached to Italy, was successfully utilized by local politicians in order to retain their leadership in the community. Once elected, many would throw the weight of their constituencies in the political arena and use it mainly for personal success. A few more services would arrive in the neighborhoods, some residents would get a city job and move out of the community; the rest was business as usual and the local politician would make his rounds during the next election.

Some Italian local politicians, such as La Guardia (East Harlem) and Di Sapio (Greenwich Village), became very skilled in the political arena of large cities such as New York, and acquired power, prestige, and even national fame. Their success stories have intrigued many sociologists and political commentators who point out again and again how deeply rooted ethnicity is in city politics and how important it has been for Italian politicians to maintain their ethnic neighborhoods insulated in order to personally have access to the power house of city government.

We have seen that Americanization, as an act of assimilation, implies the elimination of ethnicity or cultural diversity. We have seen that Americanization also implies social mobility and individual advancement. We have seen finally how intermediaries (organized crime, local politicians, and before them, prominenti and padroni) reinforced ethnicity and
community insulation (one implying the other) and used them as an instrument for their own individual social and economic advancement.

Americanization implies the elimination of ethnicity but for the intermediary, Americanization implies the reinforcement of ethnicity and community insulation: what was the antithesis or negation of Americanization, becomes incorporated into the Americanization process itself. Where there was an attempt to assimilate by an individual who negated his original identity and abandoned his ethnic group, now there is the attempt to individually assimilate by someone who reinforces the ethnic group, controls it for his own advancement and therefore for the benefit of the ruling class. While the intermediary controls the ethnic group for his advancement, in his hybrid stance of oppressor-oppressed\(^24\) he allows the ruling class to manipulate and control him. In his attempt at individual assimilation, he therefore "plays the game" and is co-opted by the dominant ideology.

Community cohesiveness and solidarity -- a potential source for human liberation -- becomes, in the hands of intermediaries, a negative force. The insulation and "protective" dimension of the neighborhood become instead an instrument for the manipulation and exploitation of most of its residents. Far from being an autonomous microcosm, outside of and insulated from the System, the Italian neighborhood is instead deeply embedded in the exploitive network of the System.
Notes

3. The expression used by Donald Tricarico in his unpublished paper, "The social structure and transformation of the Italian community in Greenwich Village" p. 63, was borrowed from Raymond Breton, "Institutional completeness of ethnic communities and personal relations of immigrants," American Journal of Sociology, pp. 93-205.
4. "Corner boys are groups of men who center their social activities upon particular street corners, with their adjoining barbershops, lunchrooms, poolrooms, or clubrooms. They constitute the bottom level of society within their age group, and at the same time they make up the great majority of the young men of Cornerville." Whyte, op. cit., p. XVIII. The statements on corner gangs are a combination of ideas drawn from Whyte's book and personal extrapolations.
5. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 127.
8. Ibid., p. 164.
10. Ibid., see ch. 3.
11. Ibid., p. 269.
12. Ibid., pp. 271-272.
13. Ibid., p. 142.
14. Ibid.
17. Ibid., p. 7. For additional information on organized crime, see An Inquiry into Organized Crime, the American Italian Historical Association Proceedings of the Third Annual Conference, October, 1970.
23. "[One young neighborhood resident] expressed a very common sentiment when he addressed these words to his Italian Community Club: 'Whatever you fellows may think of Mussolini, you've got to admit one thing. He had done more to get respect for the Italian people than anybody else. The Italians get a lot more respect now than when I started going to school. And you can thank Mussolini for that.'", Whyte, p. 274. My own field analysis in Little Italy of New York has confirmed that the older generation still feels strongly for Mussolini because of the self-pride and sense of identity he helped generate in them. It is interesting to note that a Little Italy cornerstore displays two posters side by side in its window: one of Mussolini next to one of Sophia Loren! Yet, as Philip Cannistraro pointed out in his talk, "The Fascist Era and Its Impact on the Italian American Community, 1924-1945" at the State of Italian American Research symposium last May, the impact of Fascism on Italian Americans and particularly on the way Fascism slowed down their assimilation process needs to be further studied.

24. For the problematic of oppressor/oppressed hybrid, see Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (New York: Continuum Book/Seabury Press, 1974).
CHAPTER FOUR

THE EVOLUTION OF ITALIAN-AMERICAN NEIGHBORHOODS (PART III)

"...It is all over. Stickball and stoopball...Tar Beach in the summers...sleeping on fire escapes...dancing on Saturday night...strolling along Pleasant Ave...the old men sipping black coffee, playing cards, chewing dark cigars...endless rows of cafes and social clubs...three kids in a bed...doors without locks...cobbled streets...back-to-back pastry shops...and those candy stores...My Block, Your Block His Block...The Boys...The Neighborhood...Little Italy in East Harlem. Gone."

(From Sunday News, New York, Jan. 7, 1973)

"[...]The city planners destroyed this neighborhood[...]You can't let planners take over. They don't understand people. They don't know how the people feel about their community [...]but it is our fault. We permitted them to take over."

(Leonard Covello)

" 'I have a dream,' Martin Luther King, Jr. intoned. 'I have a dream.'

What is the correlative ethnic dream?

It is based on self-interest; and on the solidarity of underdogs. It is a dream of the one inevitably, fundamental, indispensable coalition: blacks and ethnic whites, shoulder-to-shoulder. It is a dream of frank and open talk about the needs of each. Above all, honesty.

The first truth is that the hour is late. It is almost as if polarization were deliberate, as if the Left intended to condemn one social group and glorify another, assist one and penalize another, as if America had to choose between the two: black niggers, white niggers."

(From Michael Novak, The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics)
The decline of many old ethnic neighborhoods, the birth of a New Ethnicity movement, and the current neighborhood preservation crusades are the phenomena that characterize the evolution of ethnic communities in the post World War II period. These must be seen as effects of the continuing struggle between the forces of homogenization and counterforces of diversification in the American society. The dramatic and paradoxical change in attitude of the ruling class towards ethnic relations and neighborhood evolution is puzzling to say the least and should be carefully analyzed. Is it really true that the ruling class, which for so long advocated the "melting pot' philosophy, has rejected its original stance and suddenly embraced the philosophy of cultural pluralism? Has pluralism been truly accepted in the American society or have forces of homogenization succeeded in incorporating this antithetical position into their process of social control? Is it possible that forces and institutions which only a few years ago advocated destructive programs, such as inner city highways and urban renewal, have recognized the shortcomings of such solutions to urban problems and (now that the damage is halfway done) have suddenly attempted to rebuild those communities once denigrated or neglected? Does the current approach to preservation and community development imply a decentralization of the decision-making process or is it an attempt by the ruling class to control, through co-option, mar-
original and potentially explosive communities? Such questions must remain in the foreground in our analysis of the post World War II evolution of Italian-American neighborhoods.

Until the mid-sixties, the ebb of most inner city neighborhoods was visible in three interrelated phenomena: the outmigration of residents, the deterioration of neighborhood physical structures, and the breakdown of neighborhood order and cohesiveness. Initially the outmigration increased, in the immediate post-war years, because of new and pre-WWII housing programs which were conceived, proposed, and enacted mainly to reverse the negative trends of the national economy. These programs (VA, FHA) once again favored, although not surprisingly, suburbanization. While providing the necessary economic means or guarantees to many white working-class families to move out of old neighborhoods, these programs, or more precisely the management of these programs, increased residential segregation along economic and racial-ethnic lines. In fact, while the white ethnics were moving out of cities and consolidating themselves in suburban ethnic neighborhoods, their places in the old neighborhoods were being taken by Blacks or other minority groups.¹

More importantly, these housing programs paved the way for extensive development whose stated goal was curing the pressing urban problems (ghettos, congestion, etc.). This development, however, resulted in the reorganization of the physical, social, and political order of inner cities. Such re-
organization was essential to the capitalist system which continually seeks new opportunities for profit-making and capital accumulation in urban areas. In fact, the housing programs were quickly followed and complemented by an expansion of highway programs and by new urban renewal ones which drastically altered the morphology and role of inner cities, while providing developers, real estate groups, and banking institutions with occasions for land speculation and other profitable real estate operations.

The dynamics of inner city reorganization is complex and varies according to the specific context; the results however are clearly visible. Overall, most of the light manufacturing labor-intensive industries, once the economic backbone of most industrial cities and the source of employment for immigrants and the poor, were displaced. New technology, processes of industrial agglomeration, economies of scale, etc. contributed to and encouraged urban industrial disinvestment. New industries were relocated along highways or in suburban industrial parks.

The loss of job opportunities in the proximity of the neighborhood was a devastating blow to the cohesiveness of ethnic communities in inner city districts. But that was only the beginning of the process of inner city reorganization. The highway program established the necessary framework for future real estate operations. These controversial programs, backed by political and economic forces and powerful individ-
uals such as Robert Moses,\textsuperscript{2} were implemented, and in the process of constructing highways, inner-belts etc., many ethnic inner city communities were split, separated, or destroyed by the inexorable bulldozers while the "asphalt snakes" advanced in the inner cities, setting up physical barriers and new boundaries between communities which could stay and others which eventually had to be displaced.

The displacement inevitably took place with the urban renewal programs which brought about profound transformations of activities and texture in the areas around or affected by the highway programs. Activities which once intermingled with residential areas were now segregated. Urban space became "specialized" in its forms and content. Monumental, monolithic, impressive centers (government, central business, performing arts etc.) mushroomed in most inner cities and their realization very often implied destruction, displacement or a threat to still viable communities. Thus, during the fifties and sixties many inner city neighborhoods were replaced by tertiary activities which have more intensive levels of land exploitation and these districts have become the new financial and corporate power symbols, the new residence for centralized, technocratic government, and the employment location for the middle and upper classes living in suburban areas.

Yet all the billions which were pumped into the redevelopment of inner cities did not eliminate the problems of "blighted areas," nor did they alleviate poverty or provide much ad-
equate housing for poor residents. As many critics have frequently pointed out, urban renewal became a gold mine for speculators who used the program to subsidize their financial operations and therefore, with the complicity of the federal and city governments, to concentrate in the hands of a few the control of inner city real estate. The problems of ghettos, poverty and crime, remain in urban areas. They cannot disappear under a capitalist system; they are vital to its evolution. They are necessary for justifying the mechanisms of capital accumulation in urban areas and are therefore tolerated by capitalists.

Accumulation of capital is not only achieved through investment. Disinvestment is often a step that precedes investment, and it paves the way for very profitable real estate operations in urban areas. Many ethnic communities in inner city districts have in fact been victims of this cleverly disguised banking policy.

Arthur Naparstek and Gale Cincotta recently investigated the relationship between disinvestment and inner city decline and the report of their study indicates that:

Urban deterioration can be traced to certain institutionalized policies, attitudes and practices which lead to discrimination and inequity. The former is directed at race, and the latter towards the physical properties of neighborhoods. One affects individuals; the other, whole communities. When either operates, we can expect racial and ethnic tensions to accelerate and the inner city to deteriorate.³

The authors argue that disinvestment is the most devastating
institutionalized policy that affects, through the practice of "redlining," selected neighborhoods. Naparstek states: "Its consequences are not restricted to the neighborhood, however, but reverberate throughout the entire metropolitan area, and take a costly toll in both human and monetary terms." 4

The study charges that disinvestment is a practice embedded in the activities and regulatory policies of important branches of the banking industry which deal with housing and urban problems: the Federal Home Loan Bank Board (FHLBB), the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation (FSLIC), and the Federal Reserve Board. Indeed, findings of the research on the lending policies of the above organization suggest "the existence of systematic attitudes and policies prejudical to the interests of racial and ethnic and low-to-moderate-income citizens throughout the depository industry." 5 The study concludes by asking for the disclosure of the banking industry's lending practices, because this has been felt to be vital information for understanding the phenomenon of inner city decline and its relationship to disinvestment. Although the Home Loan Mortgage Disclosure Act was enacted in 1975, neighborhood groups have found it difficult to obtain such information from the banking industry and one is therefore led to believe that banks are indeed practicing disinvestment. 6

Yet what is disinvestment? How does this banking policy affect inner city neighborhoods? Richard and Mary Ann Krickus
offer a six phase description of the process which clearly
indicates the interdependence between this policy and urban
deterioration and renewal:

1. A neighborhood is comprised of low-to-moderate
income residents, ethnic and/or black; the homes
are old but in good condition; the area is stable
and conventional mortgages for buying or repairs
are available;

2. The neighborhood is singled out by lending in-
stitutions as a "high risk" area and they opt
to grant mortgages in other parts of the city
or in the suburbs; the designation of "high
risk" is based on arbitrary and subjective cri-
teria and reflects the biases of the lending
industry;

3. "Redlining" of the neighborhood begins. This
includes stringent loan requirements, harsh
terms for mortgages such as high interest and
and short loan life, or out and out refusal to
grant a loan. The lending institutions justify
these tactics by claiming to perceive a risk of
deterioration detrimental to their investors;
this judgement is then confirmed by their real
estate appraisers;

4. When all lending institutions have agreed that
a neighborhood is high risk, it is successfully
redlined. There are now no conventional loans
made and the only money available is that
 guarantee by FHA. This guarantee heralds the
arrival of the speculators, the brokers, and
the big investors.

5. Within a few years, the community is "turned
over." Absentee landlordism is now the name of
the game. Maintenance grinds to a halt, ser-
vices decrease, abandonment and crime increase,
and property values decline;

6. With the neighborhood picked clean, it ultimately
reverts back to the city; developers can then
purchase its property at below market prices and
build highly profitable "urban renewal" projects. 7

The Krickus conclude that "disinvestment is the total crime
committed on the neighborhood," 8 a most powerful tool in the
hands of the ruling class of America. Disinvestment is a leg-
ally issued license for killing a neighborhood. Naturally, no
banker, planner, or politician ever gets arrested or indicted for killing a neighborhood. Such people are covered and defended by the law because they were only providing opportunities or guarantees for the process of capital accumulation to continue in urban areas. The logic of such a process is inhumane because it does not consider or properly take into account the psychological and often financial price that neighborhood residents have to pay for induced deterioration, reduction of services, and forced displacement.

Industrial disinvestment, highway and urban renewal programs, and banking policies have therefore been the real causes for the outmigration of neighborhood residents, the physical deterioration and breakdown of the social order in many inner city ethnic communities since World War II.

The Italian-American neighborhoods dealt with in this thesis have been affected, and some still are, by the above-mentioned programs. These once stable and closely-knit communities have consequently become areas of transition and eventually have been transformed into middle-class residential areas or into poorer black-Puerto Rican communities.

In Boston, during the fifties, the Expressway wiped out thirteen blocks and divided in two the predominantly Italian communities of the West and North End. The resulting physical barrier isolated the North End from the rest of the city, while the West End was subsequently cleared because real estate operators saw its development as an occasion for making
big profits and the city an opportunity for raising more taxes. City planners, by assessing that most of the apartments and tenements were "substandard," provided developers and the city with the official justification for the destruction of a still socially viable community. Thus, with the excuse of better housing quality standards, more efficient land use (given the projected market value) and other official reasons, the Italian-American and elderly Jewish community of the West End was deprived of its habitat and neighborhood. The protest of not well organized residents was ineffective. The death of the West End neighborhood had already been signed by the elite of the city with the complicity of "intermediary" local politicians who had betrayed their constituencies and were the first to flee to the suburbs.

On the other side of the Expressway, the North End, which was also a temporary residence for many displaced West Enders, underwent major changes. Many residents who felt insecure about the future of the area moved to suburbia and they were followed by others who were looking for better housing conditions. The population of the neighborhood began to drop significantly and the North End declined as an ethnic residential community. Only activities related to food production and consumption boomed and the neighborhood has thus become a regional market place and tourist attraction.

Today, the urban renewal development of the Waterfront is determining the future of this historic neighborhood which was
one of the most famous immigrant colonies in America. The once cohesive ethnic community will most probably be transformed into a middle and upper class neighborhood with a commercialized ethnic flavor.

The strategy being adopted by planners, developers, and politicians to facilitate the metamorphosis of the North End does not advocate the physical destruction of the neighborhood, even if in an artist's sketch of the future of Boston, included in the city's 1965 Master Plan, it was depicted, consciously or not, as an empty bulldozed area surrounded by skyscrapers and awaiting development! Planners have now discovered that old is beautiful and that it can be made fashionable too! Now, only after real estate companies and local politicians/businessmen have, like vultures, secured most of the available properties. Now that the Waterfront development is advancing towards the old neighborhood, many apartments or tenements, which were for long left to deteriorate, are quickly being rehabilitated.

In several blocks of the North End adjacent to the Waterfront, luxuriously rehabilitated three-bedroom apartments are easily rented at $500-600 per month or sold at $60,000-65,000. Working-class residents can obviously not afford such rent levels or prices and are forced to move into less fashionable suburban areas where prices are still within their economic means. The outmigration of younger second and third generation Italian-American residents and the simultan-
eous infiltration of students and other transient residents might increase if the proposed plans for the depression of the Expressway are carried out. The depression of the highway is undoubtedly a threat for the community residents and local businessmen who will face, during the construction years, discomfort and economic losses. It also poses challenging questions about the future role of the neighborhood and about the destiny of those residents who will inevitably be squeezed out of the area because of economic pressures building around them.

In New York, another Italian-American neighborhood, the once prosperous working-class community around Columbia and President Sts. near the waterfront of Brooklyn, was badly damaged in 1946 by the construction of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. Subsequently, in 1964, a proposal was submitted by the Borough planners to transform the area into a containerport and to provide, at the same time, new housing for the displaced residents next to the industrial park where they could be employed. The plan was never implemented because of the strong opposition raised by the powerful Brooklyn Democratic Party bosses who feared that the project would weaken their political power base. They proposed an alternative plan which called for a less drastic demolition of the neighborhood. Yet as of today no final decision has been taken. This has created a destructive sense of uncertainty about the future of the area.
Since 1964, outmigration has been steadily increasing while the physical structures have deteriorated because of the lack of investment. Denis Hamill reports that:

Some people in the area feel the containerport will never be built but the rumor of it will be used as a ploy to discourage local residents so they will evacuate the area. Once these working-class people are gone, they fear the real estate investors will rush into the area and build high-rise luxury buildings. The fear of the residents is more than justified. In fact, there are indications that the process of property concentration is well under way and we can easily predict what developers and real estate investors will want to do in the area in the near future if the residents' outmigration is not reversed.

In the case of East Harlem and Greenwich Village, urban renewal programs not only provided developers with occasions to make profits while using governmental subsidies but, consciously or not, undermined the power base vital to Italian-American politicians. These two neighborhoods were, in fact, the vote mines for most of the politicians (such as La Guardia, De Sapio, Marcantonio, Impelletiri, etc.) who had, during the past decades, risen to powerful positions. Their political backing was lost through the outmigration of Italian-American residents and the infiltration of either more recent and poorer immigrants (ethnic succession) or middle-class residents transformed the social and political reality of the neighborhood.
In the fifties, the infiltration of Blacks and Puerto Ricans in the Italian community of East Harlem resulted in inevitable ethnic conflicts which were heightened by an urban renewal intervention that brought into the area new high-rise low-income housing projects which were assigned to Spanish-speaking families and for which Italian-American residents did not qualify since their income was just above the poverty income level. Italian-American residents resented the imposition of those projects which were perceived as the major cause for the increased infiltration of "outsiders" into their neighborhoods. This infiltration was considered by the old residents as the reason for increased street crime, the breakdown of community values and their loss of neighborhood institutional control. Inevitably, Italian-Americans lost the area which is now known as El Barrio.\textsuperscript{15}

The ethnic succession play was performed once again: same play, same roles, different actors. In the same place where fifty years ago Italian immigrants pushed out Irish residents, they were now being replaced by Puerto Ricans and Blacks. Succession in ethnic neighborhoods is seen by many as a sign of upward mobility, a guarantee for group advancement and assimilation into the mainstream of American society. Yet we must not forget that marginal groups always remain. They might change names, call them Irish, Jews, Italians, Puerto Ricans, Blacks, but there will and must always be someone to replace them for the unfortunate reality created by social
mobility to continue.

Among the Italian-American intellectuals who left the neighborhood was a deep feeling of conspiracy against them. They saw in the urban renewal project a strategy by the technocratic and political elite for creating disorder and division in their community which resulted in their mass outmigration and in their loss of political hegemony within the community.

A similar breakdown of community cohesiveness and order occurred in the Italian-American neighborhood of Greenwich Village, where the expansion of New York University and the urban renewal housing projects built in the decayed areas at the edge of Little Italy, caused the infiltration of students and middle-class residents into the neighborhood, and at the same time the out-migration of working-class second and third generation Italian-Americans. Like the North End of Boston, the neighborhood is now becoming a prime residential area for middle and upper income families and young professionals. It is slowly losing its old ethnic characteristics: in fact, corner stores, pastry shops, and groceries, etc. are being replaced by boutiques, fancy restaurants, and art galleries.

Yet sociologists indicate another factor which has contributed to the disintegration of the social order in these communities: the impact of mass media.16 In particular, television, which Michael Novak calls the "new melting pot," has been a very powerful tool controlled by the corporate/
political elite and used to accelerate the acculturation process of immigrants (especially for the second and third generations), to impose values and standards on them. We can say that the television replaced the settlement house in Italian-American neighborhoods, and that the residents, through this medium, have entered the whirl of consumption, modernity, and conformity. Thus the role of the family, the church, and other neighborhood institutions has been weakened because television has been subtly advocating assimilation and the pleasures of suburban living -- therefore outmigration. As a result, mostly old timers clung to the neighborhood and its traditional institutions. Those who left kept on distancing their relation to the neighborhood and, in the long run, only came back to visit old relatives or patronize ethnic shops.

We have seen thus far how urban policies and banking practices have led to a reorganization of inner cities leading to the deterioration of ethnic neighborhoods and, in particular, to the out-migration of the majority of Italian-American residents to suburbia. Yet, in the early seventies, attempts were made to reverse such processes. In fact, as a result of urban struggles during the late sixties, residents of those mostly dormant neighborhoods have acquired a new consciousness, a New Ethnicity, and their protests have definitely contributed to the planning shifts towards preservation and community participation in the process of economic revitaliza-
tion of inner city neighborhoods.

While there seems to be a general consensus about the necessity of preserving these neighborhoods, it is not clear, in most cases, who will benefit from their revitalization and whether the proposed programs are aimed at maintaining working-class white ethnics in the inner city, or if they are an excuse to dismember whatever is left of old communities and replace that social stratum with a middle-class population. We must therefore first understand what caused the rise of the New Ethnicity, what this new consciousness movement is all about, and who supports it. We shall defer our consideration of the evolution of policies and programs which have been proposed for the revitalization of Italian-American communities in New York City to the next chapter, where the issues of neighborhood preservation and development will be closely analyzed.

Initially, the New Ethnicity movement was a reaction of white ethnics to threats made against their social and economic status by the Black movement and the student unrest of the sixties. The long overdue rise of Blacks, demanding at first access to opportunities offered by the American society and then a "share of the power," disrupted an equilibrium based on unjust social relationships and thus the social, economic and political order was bound to change. Cities became the arena for the struggles of Blacks against injustices suffered by them for centuries, and the issues of dis-
crimination, integration, and equality of opportunity were focused on the existing residential segregation, the control of community schools, and access to economic opportunities.

Unfortunately, at that time, it was premature for Blacks and ethnics to establish interracial coalitions necessary to upset the ruling class structure and the dominant ideology. Instead Blacks began competing for a share of power and opportunity in those areas of the economy, government, and unions where white ethnics had made, during their past struggles, major breakthroughs. In addition, Black demands and protests brought about a massive expansion of welfare services which resulted in higher taxes for white ethnics and, according to conservatives, in inflationary trends in the economy. This inevitably gave rise to resentment among white ethnics who saw the new claims of Blacks not so much as an attempt to enlarge the share of power and opportunity to all underrepresented groups, but as a "pretentious" move (against the ethical rules imposed on white ethnics during past decades) to take away from them what they had gained after hard work and sacrifice.

Resentment turned to bitterness when, during the student unrest of the late sixties, white ethnics were accused of racism, bigotry, and provincialism and their traditional values of family and community were questioned and rejected by the youth of the counterculture movement. Thus white ethnics protested against the Blacks and the New Left accusing them of disrupting their families and communities, and against
the government for not also providing adequate services to the needy in old ethnic communities and for not defending their rights as well.

Italian-Americans were particularly sensitive to threats made against their status during the social turmoil of the late sixties, but their political leaders, many of whom were militant conservatives, were unable to capture their discontent and express it in the political arena. Paradoxically, it was a well-known godfather, Joseph Colombo, who understood the necessity for new leadership and he created the Italian American Civil Rights League which was immediately successful especially in New York where it has 24 neighborhood chapters. The League was mainly interested in bringing an end to "discrimination and defamatory labeling of Italian-Americans by the conspiracy of the federal government" and in providing new services to Italian-American neighborhoods where they were needed by many residents. Not surprisingly:

The segment of the Italian American population that responded to the appeal of the League was made up of mostly persons with a $7,000 to $9,000 yearly salary, incapable of meeting the high taxes, the expenses for parochial school education and for the payment of their homes, with no voice in politics and in the media.

When 100,000 of them met on June 25, 1971 in Columbus Circle (New York) to celebrate their Unity Day, it became clear that a new movement was rising, one of "unmeltable ethnics." Ironically, on that occasion, their leader Joseph Columbo was shot by a Black, probably because of unsettled
disputes in the underworld of organized crime.\textsuperscript{21} Since then the League has lost its initial momentum but the movement of the new ethnics has expanded tremendously.

The vacuum of political leadership in the white ethnic movement became an immediate public concern and suddenly major foundations made available millions of dollars for ethnic studies and for the development of ethnic communities. Conservative political forces quickly exploited the vacuum and as a consequence Nixon attracted, during the presidential election of 1972, most of the ethnic votes.\textsuperscript{22} The cause of white ethnics was of course used by the establishment to minimize or counteract, through the practice of "divide and rule," the protests and demands of Blacks.

On the other hand, the massive research carried out during the past few years by white ethnic intellectuals has certainly been positive because it has reopened the debate on cultural pluralism and has provided theoretical grounds for the New Ethnicity which has been conceived as "a form of historical consciousness"\textsuperscript{23} that is thought to be one of the necessary conditions for eliminating racism and prejudice from the American society. At the same time, studies of ethnic communities at a neighborhood or regional scale have provided new insights and a better understanding of the needs and problems which white working-class ethnics face today.

During the revived debate on pluralism and the persistence of ethnicity in the American society, white ethnic
intellectuals once again questioned the basic paradigm of traditional sociology which indicates an evolution from "gemeinschaft" (community) to "gesellschaft" (society) and the paradigm of cultural assimilation. It was argued that the persistence of ethnicity indicates that the evolution from community to society never took place completely and that American society is still made up of many subcommunities and subcultures. Primary groups (family and social cliques) are still very important for most individuals who prefer the personal, human and intimate relationships typical of such groups to the impersonal and formal ones typical of the achievement-oriented secondary groups (interest groups). Ethnicity was seen as an inescapable human need for a "sense of belongingness," for roots and primordial ties; ties that for most of the ethnics "have been transmuted by the immigration experience but they have not been eliminated." Therefore, the assumption that Americanization crusades and education would have, with time, abolished ethnic differences has proven to be wrong; at most ethnic differences and ties have been minimized.

The debate, once again, reproposed two opposing positions. Ethnic diversity is seen as either a social asset or a danger. Those who advocate ethnic pluralism argue that the persistence of ethnic diversity may cause conflicts and "drawbacks," but that it is a healthy phenomenon because as R. Dubos state: "it creates social tensions which lead to a strenuous quest for
Cover Page from I-AM Magazine
attitudes and laws designed to give equal rights to all citizens." 27 Others see the resurgent ethnic diversity phenomenon in our society as a "dangerous" and "regressive" trend which should not be encouraged because "it is a return to the particularistic, the local, the tribal, and an abandonment of the universal, the general, the global. It is a backward step, a turn against the evolutionary flow." 28

However, the intellectuals in favor of ethnicity know very well that the "evolutionary flow" leads to a "superculture" based on more homogenization and social atomization, to increased consumption and mobility, to a further professionalization of services, 29 and to an increased feeling of powerlessness among individuals. This flow is categorically refuted by the advocates of the New Ethnicity who believe that such a superculture is destructive, discriminatory and unjust. Instead, they propose a new politics which will strengthen the various ethnic subcultures and which is based on the reconstruction of family and neighborhood, the acceptance of and respect for cultural differences and social integration. 30

Michael Novak, one of the theorists of the New Ethnicity, advocates the foundation of an Ethnic Democratic Party (EDP) which he conceives as a political institution or force which should help to reverse the current "evolutionary flow." He writes:

People first. Families first. Neighborhoods first. In the last third of the twentieth century, one can safely call upon such energies without fear
of regression; they are the only hope of further progress. For talented persons, women not least, work could be most attractive if not too rigidly scheduled, if close to home, if not too alienating from family, neighborhood and friends. In the old days, mothers and grandmothers were economically indispensable. They worked in the fields or in the shops with men; they canned food; they baked; they made clothes; they delivered babies and set bones; they cared for disturbed children; often they gave children their primary education; they established and governed the family budget. In our age, given the much higher educational attainments of many men and women in the neighborhood, the neighborhood and home could reabsorb such tasks with far greater competence and effect than ever before in history. Why can't people of talent organize for their own needs, providing for them locally? Why can't education be aimed, not at "qualifying" professionals, but at imparting the real skills necessary to care for the needs of one's local communities?

The neighborhood would put many potentials and yearnings for satisfaction to greater use if it reclaimed many of the functions now grabbed up -- and made fantastically expensive -- by professionals[...]

Local neighborhoods have generosity and talent to care for their own as they did since man first walked on earth. We have so far done everything possible to demoralize our people. We tell them they are not "qualified." With support and encouragement, people could regain pride, capacity, and competence.

The EDP is dedicated to bringing human resourcefulness, political power, and social policy to the organic networks of family and neighborhood. Its every activity in organizing families, neighborhoods, and ethnic groups is a fulfillment of its platform. Its political success depends on bringing economic, enabling power back to local units. Local grievances, voiced by people themselves, are the point at which experienced organizers begin. The large professionalized system around us is a bubble. Pricking it at any point deflates its claims.31

The concerns of the new ethnic policies are not just confined, however, to strengthening the family and neighborhood.
The dream of the New Ethnicity's theoreticians is breathtaking. They dream of a new American society. Such an idealized society would result from policies and incentives which would: enforce social integration and a more equitable redistribution of resources and income; encourage the decentralization of metropolies, of productive activities, and a return to "smallness" and human scale; transform the present work process based on "productivity" and "efficiency" into one "imagined as part of the tissue, network, and organism of family and growth."^32

Their dream also calls for a broad and inevitable coalition between Blacks and ethnics: a coalition based on "mutual respect" and an understanding of each other's needs and interests; a coalition which will minimize racial conflicts and encourage the growth of each group, not as shadows of the superculture but as new creative forces of a new America. As Novak states:

The new ethnic politics asks no more than a fair deal -- but for each group, and not only for outstanding individuals. It demands a multiform ideology and culture. Not a superculture with satellite subcultures, but a multiculture in which each group supplies pivotal ideas and methods. It demands that "the American way of life" be broken open like a cocoon giving way to the burgeoning wings of a butterfly[...]

The new ethnic politics will prove its worth if it helps us to diminish the racial and other tensions in our cities; if it gives us a larger and more generous view of the role of families, neighborhoods, and primary-group networks in the health of social policies; and if it enables the nation to assume a more supple and accurate relation to ethnic groups in other nations of the world. The superculture around us is declining because it seems to have reached the limits of its creativity in pre-
Like all dreams, the New Ethnicity of Michael Novak is too removed from reality. My major criticism is that it idealizes the superculture as the major oppressive force in the American society, but does not extend its open and passionate attack to the capitalist system which has generated the superculture and uses it, very successfully indeed, as an instrument for social control. Consequently, his analyses of ethnic relations in America suffer because of the particular analytical perspective used which emphasizes ethnic rather than class stratification. Inevitably, proposals based on the idea that an awareness and acceptance of cultural roots and differences will be sufficient to eliminate or even minimize class interests and conflicts tend to be naive and superficial. To continue analyzing and acting on the complex American social stratification only from an economic perspective is deceptive. But, at the same time, to focus mainly on cultural differences and ethnic stratification is also unfruitful. We must not analyze or attempt to understand ethnicity and social classes as separate phenomena, but rather we must see them in dynamic interaction. Thus far, this interplay has not been properly explored and research should be encouraged to understand the extent to which class and ethnic stratifications are interdependent and most importantly to analyze how the ruling class uses ethnic fragmentation to minimize class struggle in America.
Notwithstanding all its naiveties and shortcomings, the dream of a New Ethnicity has increased the level of consciousness and militancy among the ethnic population. New ethnic interest groups began lobbying for resources to be allocated to their constituencies. During the past few years, the government and private (corporate) sectors responded positively to such demands and seem to have formally accepted the idea of cultural pluralism. The questions now are: how are the resources used? How is the formal acceptance of cultural pluralism translated into policies? Will the new policies result in a reversal of the "evolutionary flow" or have the corporate and political elite found a way to incorporate into their logic, and therefore to exploit, the ideas brought forward by the New Ethnicity theoreticians? Which resources finally reach ethnic neighborhoods and how are the new preservation policies affecting them?

"Politics begins in dream and ends in bureaucrats"\(^35\) writes Novak, and he is certainly right when we think of what happened to the New Ethnicity dream. The sudden interest of the public and private sectors in Ethnicity has resulted in a bureaucratization, professionalization and exploitation of the phenomenon.

Congress, in 1972, enacted the Ethnic Heritage Studies Act which provided grants and incentives for the development of curriculum materials and for comparative studies to understand the experience of ethnic groups in America.\(^36\) These
resources never reached the ethnic neighborhoods and their residents. They remained at an elite level. They were mainly used by universities, small colleges and community schools to set up programs for ethnic studies and bilingual programs. Even though there were intellectual repercussions, the most tangible outcome of such programs has been the employment of upper and middle class ethnics in educational institutions and the reduction of the ethnic experience to the contemplative realm. The institutionalization of the New Ethnicity has neutralized whatever revolutionary potential was implicit in the dream, as it had done for the Black and feminist movements. Black Studies, Women's Studies, Ethnic Studies, everything is studied and professionalized, but little is acted upon! However, even if this is a new form of co-option and control by the dominant ideology, subversive possibilities still exist for those militant ethnics who are able to use the educational framework for authentic consciousness raising and organizing.

In addition to the resources available through the Ethnic Heritage Studies Act, certain federal agencies and private foundations (Ford, Rockefeller) made funds available to ethnic organizations such as the New York Center for Ethnic Affairs, the Institute on Pluralism and Group Identity to carry out quantitative research on white ethnics. These studies have first of all statistically demonstrated that ethnic communities in metropolitan areas are indeed disadvantaged with
respect to the income, employment, and educational status of their population, and have also indicated that there have been patterns of discrimination against ethnics in terms of social mobility and acceptance. 37

Leaders of the various ethnic groups have used the results of such studies to lobby for additional resources. Given the purposely limited amount of resources made available, the result is that competitive mechanisms have been set up among the various ethnic and minority (Blacks, Puerto Rican) groups. This limited availability of resources is a strategy used by the system to prevent the economic and social advancement of the above-mentioned groups and to assure, through competition, that no coalition will materialize among white ethnics and Blacks.

Ethnicity has been used by the private sector, through the mass media, to increase consumption. Industries pretend that they have accepted ethnic pluralism as manifested in their differentiation of products (but not of the production process) and in their adoption of ethnic symbolism. The "ethnicization" of the product is not an acceptance of ethnicity and of what the ethnic dream implied since the production process is still a capitalist one. "Volaré" is still Chrysler and the assembly line, "Hunt's Prima Salsa" is still the corporate owned canned food with additives and artificial flavors produced on a conveyor belt.

Politics, in particular the recent presidential campaign,
has exploited "ethnicity" in order to win votes. Both Jimmy and Jerry have praised and promised the preservation of ethnic heritage and cultural pluralism in America. This rhetoric may appeal to many ethnics for it gives them the illusion that cultural diversity is now accepted as "American" and therefore that they (usually working-class) are an integrated part of American life and society. The ethnic factor becomes a clever political strategy for avoiding the real issues associated with immigrant working-class enclaves. As Ellen Goodman has pointed out: "the appeal to the 'ethnic vote'[...] helps the candidates avoid mentioning a no-no like the class structure of a society, or even using the phrase 'working class,' let alone white working class." 38

Politicians also praise and romanticize ethnic neighborhoods. They talk about the need to preserve them while occluding what they have really been. But is preservation to be more than the commercialization of an ethnic neighborhood and its subsequent transformation into a tourist attraction as has been the case, for example, of Little Italy in New York? Is cultural heritage to become but a mere component of the consumptive whirl? Religious festas, once an occasion for community celebration, are now fun fairs or amusement parks for suburbanites and students. Most neighborhood restaurants, with their high prices, can only cater to an elitist clientele. Yet, for the working-class neighborhood residents, there is always a Mac Donald's down the street, open to all, where the
prices are cheap and where they can learn about and appreciate the efficiency of highly productive capitalist food production.

Ethnic neighborhood preservation, as it will be analyzed in the case study of the next chapter, has thus far been characteristically "piecemeal" and often poorly coordinated. As a result, the scarce resources from different public programs have been channelled into particular neighborhoods while others are left to disintegrate. While cities are waiting for the presidential promises to materialize and hope that the National Neighborhood Policy Act, proposed by Senator Proxmire and now pending in Congress,34 will provide a more comprehensive planning framework and the resources necessary for the revitalization of all inner city working-class districts, attempts are being made by some ethnic organizations to deal with the pressing problems of several ethnic neighborhoods.

The National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs in Washington, D.C. is one of the largest non-profit organizations concerned with the preservation and revitalization of ethnic neighborhoods. Its director, Monsignor Geno Baroni, is another passionate advocate of the New Ethnicity. Contrary to many other ethnics who limit their field of action to writing and teaching, Monsignor Baroni is a firm believer in practice. He argues that the new wave of Ethnicity can bring about major social changes within the framework of democratic process and public policy:

The ethnic factor in America today is a quiet
revolution of consciousness aimed at creating a new pluralism. It is sparked by an untenable economic situation and by indignation at having been alternately ignored and castigated by the establishment. It is a revolution of self assertion that will utilize new techniques of community participation, community organization, community development, and legislative action to make power felt at the polls. 40

Baroni's attitudes toward the revitalization of ethnic neighborhoods is not based on dreams or radical social changes, but on concrete programs aimed at first reconstructing the social fabric of the neighborhood and its institutions, and then at revitalizing the physical and economic development of the area. For example, Baroni advocates a new role for the ethnic parishes:

The parish must revitalize the neighborhood not only around the altar where we are one in the unity of the eucharist, but the parish must develop a new sense of community development. The parish must become a catalyst for revitalizing neighborhoods in order to help them with rapid social change. 41

Baroni also encourages the development of a new kind of leadership in the ethnic communities which should deal specifically with local issues and seek the stabilization of the neighborhoods by developing appropriate social and economic policies.

Baroni's ideas have won the consensus of the United States Catholic Conference and of major foundations which have provided the NCUEA with funds necessary for initiating neighborhood revitalization programs in more than thirty cities (43 ethnic communities) and other research projects in 87 neighborhoods. During the past few years, the NCUEA has offered
the following services and resources to needy ethnic communities: 1) provision of seed money and training programs for the development of local leadership 2) development, through the organizing of the communities, of revitalization programs which reflect local needs and problems; 3) development of strategies to coordinate the public, private, and community sectors involved in the revitalization programs.42

The NCUEA has suggested a general program for Neighborhood Economic Revitalization which has the following objectives:

1. To increase the new cash flow into the neighborhood, including public and private capital investment.
2. To reduce patterns of disinvestment in neighborhood businesses and real estate.
3. To stimulate the environmental preconditions to profitable business operations in the neighborhoods, such as adequate facilities, public safety, public transportation, parking and zoning.43
4. To restore commercial life to the neighborhood, primarily by improving the mix of retail goods and services, strengthening its competitive position, and building a positive image based on the unique cultural and ethnic characteristics of the neighborhood.
5. To acquire and develop medium scale manufacturing enterprises that are labor-intensive.
6. To develop real estate by improving the housing and physical conditions of the neighborhood.
7. To provide management and technical assistance to local entrepreneurs and businesses.44

To provide the initial funding, the NCUEA has proposed that the Local Business Development Organization (LBDO) program of the Office of Minority Business Enterprise (OMBE) and other federal programs be expanded to also serve white ethnic communities. While the implementation of such programs in
some white ethnic neighborhoods is still at its initial stage, we can most likely forsee its development by retrospectively considering the experiences of Black community development projects funded by the same federal agencies and whose revitalization programs were similar, if not identical to the ones proposed by the NCUEA.

Many of the enterprises and programs initiated by Community Development Corporations (CDCs) and LBDOs in Black ghettos have had little success or have failed mainly because of their dependence on outside investors. Not only has there been a significant gap between what has been promised and what is actually delivered to Black communities, but (and this is especially true for the private corporate sector) what is delivered is aimed at profit-making at the expense of the community. This reliance on and control by outside investors not only deprives the community control of cash flow which is the most important tool for future economic development in the community and for the provision of services to residents, but also prevents the community from having a participatory management of its economic institutions.

Because of the constraints imposed on the community ventures by outside investors and by the economic system in general, the work and decision-making processes have remained hierarchical. The few Black community residents who have succeeded in becoming technicians or sometimes even managers, have been co-opted by the capitalist system which establishes
a division and distinction between bosses and workers and which uses the strategy of social mobility to justify it. A few "make it" but it is again (although within the community this time) at the expense of the group. It is now Black capitalism. Undoubtedly, the CDC monitored programs have sometimes resulted in a better standard of living (additional jobs, job training, services, etc.) but the quality of life remains pretty much the same. A feeling of powerlessness still prevades most of the residents who remain alienated from the decision making processes affecting their daily lives.

The programs for the revitalization of white ethnic neighborhoods are also dependent on the organizational framework provided by the CDCs and if community residents do not define and articulate their group interests and do not continuously search for participatory decision-making processes, then they are headed for an "ethnic" brand of capitalism.
Notes


4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., p. 7.


8. Ibid., p. 19.


11. I obtained such information from developers and contractors working in the North End.


19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
24. See the new paradigm (the ethnogenesis perspective) proposed by Andrew M. Greeley, Ethnicity in the United States (New York: Wiley, 1974), ch. 13.
32. Ibid., p. 290.
33. Ibid., pp. 336, 342.
34. Lydio F. Tomasi, op.cit., p. 4.

42. 1974 National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs Annual Report (Overview).


44. Krickus, op.cit., p. 87.
CHAPTER FIVE

EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND PLANNING PROCESSES FOR THE
PRESERVATION OF ITALIAN-AMERICAN NEIGHBORHOODS IN NYC

"Citizen involvement is a reality. History has clearly shown us that the only choice is to work with the communities -- or they will work against us[...]"

(John Zuccotti)
The 1970 Census findings confirmed that the complaints of white ethnics during the late sixties were not founded on racism, as the media and intellectuals had claimed, but on justified resentment due to the economic squeeze they were facing. The findings, which surprised many, cast shadows on the theory of ethnic succession, for if it was true that Blacks, Puerto Ricans, and other minorities had taken the places of white ethnics in certain inner city districts of New York, it was not true, on the other hand, that Italian-Americans and other ethnics were all quickly moving up the social mobility ladder. Many Italian-Americans and other white ethnics of New York were, in terms of income, educational attainment and jobs, still within the poverty bracket and, not surprisingly, were still living in ethnic enclaves.

The Census findings indicated that Italian-Americans, the largest ethnic group of New York City (1.7 million), had the largest percentage of poor of all white ethnic groups; in fact, the level of poverty of first and second generation Italian-Americans was close to that of Blacks. Approximately 400,000 (23%) of them earned less than $4,300 annually as opposed to 37% of the Blacks and 14% of all white ethnics. Poverty was particularly high among the aged who lived in the enclaves: 22% of the Italian-Americans in New York were over 62 and 80% of them were poor and did not receive appropriate
public assistance. Compared with other white ethnic groups, Italian-Americans were the lowest in educational attainment with the highest drop-out rate and youth unemployment level. Similarly, Italian-Americans had the highest percentage of unskilled laborers and the lowest percentage of professionals, managers, and administrators.¹

In light of these findings, the Federal Office of Economic Opportunity and the city's Human Resources Administration decided to review the existing antipoverty programs and extend to needy white ethnics those services restricted until then to minorities. Some two million dollars were made available to study the problems of ethnic communities in the city and to initiate programs for the stabilization and revitalization of the various ethnic neighborhoods. Mayor Lindsay and the city's H.R.A. invited new city-wide coalitions of Italian, Irish, Jewish, Greek and Chinese groups to submit proposals and programs for their communities.²

Representatives of 26 Italian-American groups quickly formed an "umbrella organization," the Italian-American Coalition of the City of New York, whose purpose, as stated in its constitution bylaws, was:

To establish, through the association of representative organizations, a coordinative structure beneficial to each member; to harmonize for the benefit of all the expertise or specialty of each member; to direct the collective thinking and efforts of all toward the promotion of equality, justice and fair play in all fields affecting our people and all people; to encourage Italian-American advancement everywhere within the frame-
work of the American way of life; and to assist each member in the furtherance of its respective goals and of this purpose. 3

The Italian-American Coalition immediately submitted a proposal for the funding of another organization, which was to be its technical and policy making branch, to the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity. The executive director of the Coalition, Dr. Joseph Valletutti, states that this new organization, called the Italian-American Center for Urban Affairs, was "created by deeply dedicated and altruistic men and women who have been serving the Italian-American community of this city for many years in many capacities -- in public, private, political, educational, cultural and business sectors of this community." 4 The purposes of the Center were:

a. To provide for and promote the general betterment and improvement of the cultural, social and physical well being of the individuals of Italian-American heritage.
b. To aid and to assist individuals of Italian-American heritage in their efforts to overcome the ills caused by ignorance, discrimination, intolerance, bigotry and exclusion preventing their pursuit of happiness and fulfillment as members of society.
c. To undertake study and research into the nature, extent and depth of the problems confronting individuals of Italian-American heritage in all aspects of their environments and to promote, create and initiate methods and programs to combat these problems.
d. To develop programs responsive to the needs of the Italian-American community, to utilize existing resources and develop resources when and where needed to meet these needs. 5

For such generalized, abstract, and rhetorically expressed goals, the Italian-American Center for Urban Affairs promptly
received $75,000 from the Federal Office of Economic Opportunity and $15,000 from the Pope Foundation, and was incorporated in July 1972 as a not for profit corporation, type B.6

In October 1972, the IACUA submitted an impressive sounding proposal to the Human Resources Administration asking for $318,380 to fund its future programs and projects. The proposal called for the development of a centralized administration within the IACUA which would "incorporate the functions of community participation and information dissemination, program development and program operation, monitoring information systems and reporting."7 The Center was to plan a city wide neighborhood stabilization program and coordinate the establishment of a Neighborhood Stabilization Council in each of six selected Italian-American communities in New York City. The centralized administration of the IACUA was also to be responsible for all major research, policy statements, and program development in each of those communities, and would represent them in their negotiations with city, state, and federal agencies. The Neighborhood Stabilization Councils composed of bilingual social workers, would instead be responsible for the delivery of a long list of social services administered through the IACUA: housing, economic development, manpower, youth development, education, senior citizens aid, day care aid, health services, welfare intake services, immigrant orientation program, etc. Yes, the whole bag!

The proposal was approved by the HRA which decided to
grant IACUA $270,000 and, at the same time, rejected a request for $10,000 submitted by CIAO (The Congress of Italian American Organizations), a grass roots organization which, since 1965, had been helping the residents of deteriorating Italian-American communities in New York. But who were those "deeply dedicated and altruistic men and women" of the Italian American Coalition and IACUA? Writing for the Village Voice, Jack Newfield states:

The Coalition is a strange group with a strange history. Its chairman is Dominic Massaro, a Rockefeller appointee to the staff of the State Commission of Human Rights. Its vice-chairman is Congressman Mario Biaggi. Its executive director is Dr. Joseph Valletutti. Dr. Valletutti got his "Dr." title, which is actually an honorary degree in commercial science, by raising enough money in a Thursday night bingo game on Queens Boulevard to endow a chair at St. John's University. St. John's in return gave Valletutti his honorary title of "doctor of commercial science."

Two other influential supporters of the Coalition are the recently indicted Nat Narcone of the Italian-American Civil Rights League and Manhattan Surrogate Sam Di Falco [also recently indicted during the judgeship sale scandal in N.Y.].

[Of the original $75,000 OEO grant] $40,000 of that money went into furnishing a garish office at 104 East 40th Street. The office contains zebra-striped sofas, wall-to-wall carpeting, a bar, and a stereo. None of the money went to poor Italians, or to hire organizers, or to start programs for the people who live in Carona, or Belmont, or in the South Village.

About $30,000 of the original OEO grant went to a very slick management consultant company called Raven Reserach on West 76th Street. The slick consultants wrote a formula proposal for a grant, promising many wonderful things the Italian-American Coalition would do. Yet, notwithstanding the above accusations, the Italian-American Coalition and its policy making branch, the IACUA,
managed to receive funds for another three and a half years of operation. As could be expected, during this period the IACUA has accomplished very little; only a handful of small publications of statistical and historical data about Italian Americans has appeared, and all the beautiful promises which were made in their slick proposal have remained promises. Soon, conflicts developed within the Coalition and its few honest and well-intentioned members dropped out. The Coalition never became a service agency; it remained a mere "paper organization" controlled by conservative politicians. Last spring it moved from its plush East 40th Street office to a church basement: it awaits new funds.

Like many other ethnic organizations, the IACUA and Coalition ended up providing for upper middle-class ethnic professionals and did almost nothing for the needy in the Italian-American communities. It is ironic to note that the IACUA remained virtually unknown to residents of Italian-American neighborhoods. Yet one must not only condemn the ethnic professionals for such tactics, but also city and federal agencies for granting funds to such an organization rather than searching for more appropriate local grass-roots organizations. These professionals were from outside the neighborhoods, were not neighborhood based and supported and therefore could be more easily co-opted and controlled by the city. This evidently could have greatly influenced city and federal decisions to
fund such people and such an organization rather than a more potentially effective community-based one.

The receptivity of city and federal agencies to such a beautifully written grant proposal as IACUA's, loaded with all sorts of claims and promises, raises crucial questions about criteria adopted in evaluating grant eligibility. Did this intermediary organization receive funds because it was seen as easily co-optable? Did it have the proper respectability and credentials, in a pre-established, conservative sense? Was it the manner in which the IACUA requests were expressed; was grantmanship the name of the game?

In addition, was the IACUA incident an isolated case or, as I fear, a phenomenon common to other ethnic intermediate organizations which have perhaps been able to better disguise or conceal their tactics and lack of accomplishments? Are intermediary organizations the best or only way to deal with ethnic communities? What other possibilities exist? Intermediaries are problematic but can they be eliminated? Such questions and issues, some of which will be dealt with in the next chapter, remain to be answered and resolved.

Although the Italian American Coalition failed to initiate programs for revitalizing Italian-American communities, New York City's politicians and officials seemed committed to new programs and processes for stabilizing decaying neighborhoods and developing their qualities. For a city like New York, this was a drastic change in attitude which implied leaving
unrealized most, if not all, of the proposals included in the monumental Plan for New York City published in 1969. In May 1973, the city mayor, in an executive order, declared that "[the] preservation of city neighborhoods is critically important to the welfare of all the people of the City of New York and must be given highest priority among government actions[...]"

This commitment, which resulted from the insistent criticism against urban renewal programs and centralized planning, must be seen as an integral part of the efforts made to more effectively involve neighborhood residents in the planning process. As John Zuccotti, then chairman of the New York Planning Commission, testified before the State Charter Revision Commission for NYC on March 30, 1973:

[...]In sum, I will be speaking about the redistribution of power, so that local matters can be decided in and with the community[...]Citizen involvement is a reality. History has clearly shown us that the only choice is to work with the communities -- or they will work against us[...]

In practice, the above was translated into a reinforcement of the Community Boards and in a shift from "Master Planning" to "Miniplanning." Miniplanning has been used by the city to "tailor" the planning process to the needs of particular areas or communities which have special historical, environmental or ethnic qualities.

The occasion for experimenting the miniplan approach with the entire community was provided in the early spring of 1974
when the residents of Little Italy, in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, picketed a site in the heart of the neighborhood where a new school for 1200 students, P.S. 21, was going to be built. Residents of Little Italy were worried about the continuous infiltration of the Chinese population into what they considered their neighborhood and feared that the new school would serve and reinforce the Chinese community more than the Italian-American residents, who instead were in severe need of housing and health services. Leaders of the community legally succeeded in halting the construction of the school and began to dialogue first with the Borough President, Percy Sutton, and then with the chairman of the City Planning Department, John Zuccotti, who eventually committed his agency to initiating a study to understand the unmet needs of this ethnic community and to plan for its future development.

The leaders of Little Italy were determined to defend and reinforce the Italian-American character of the neighborhood for, in the past decade, it has been weakened by the new multi-ethnic composition of the community. In Little Italy, live approximately 18,000 people of whom 46% are Italian-Americans while 49% are Chinese and the remaining 15% Puerto Ricans and Dominicans.13 The Italian is the oldest of the three ethnic groups but is declining since its young third generation has been moving into suburban areas. The business base of the neighborhood is also becoming multi-ethnic; in fact, one sees more and more Chinese stores along Mulberry and Mott Streets
intermingled with Italian restaurants, religious associations, and social clubs. Canal Street and the Bowery, which historically have been the boundaries separating the three ethnic groups, are no longer dividing lines. Spanish and Chinese speaking families are invading Little Italy: renting apartments, buying properties, opening stores and cultural centers.

The decayed areas surrounding Little Italy are also undergoing major transformations. It is likely that the Lower East and West Sides will become a middle-class residential area with ethnic food districts to give it flavor. On the Lower East Side, the old tenements are being bought by middle-class Puerto Ricans and other private investors. Chinatown, because of Hong Kong investors, is also undergoing major economic development. These changes are bound to have an effect on the land value, rent levels, and economic base of Little Italy.

The City Planning Commission decided to tackle the dynamic and interconnected situation evolving in the Lower East and West Sides by initiating three separate miniplans; first for Little Italy, then for Chinatown and Case Esperanza, and finally for So-Ho. These plans were to eventually lead to the revisions of existing zoning and the creation of three "Special District" legislations. It was decided that the Little Italy miniplan would be developed by the Urban Design Group, of the City Planning Commission, in consultation with the Little Italy Restoration Association, LIRA (MONEY!), a grassroots (or so they claim) community organization initially
created for surfacing the needs of the neighborhood.

John Zucotti attached much importance to the Little Italy project (employees of the Planning Commission refer to it as Zuccotti's "pet project") saying: "This is a new field for us [...] it isn't just preserving a street or a building. It's an attempt to preserve an atmosphere, to give an area a cultural and spiritual flavor," and added that, if successfully carried out, such an experiment would automatically become proto-type for other ethnic neighborhood stabilization and revitalization projects.

The draft of the plan was made available to Italian community leaders at the beginning of the summer of 1974. It was subsequently purged: relevant information such as the heterogeneity of the neighborhood was purposely omitted from the report. Finally, on September 19, 1974 at a press conference, the plan was made public and called the "Risorgimento" Plan. It was presented as a framework for action and as "the initial result of a partnership with the community that must be tested in the community." The proposals, however, were very precise and suggestive of a new neighborhood image. In particular, the "Risorgimento" called for the following programs:

1. Upgrading housing by means of selective rehabilitation and new infill housing, notably a joint housing/school project on the P.S. 21 site.
2. Pedestrianizing the major commercial strips and beautifying streets.
3. Rehabilitating and expanding the existing open space facilities.
4. Expanding the commercial base by attracting new businesses.
5. Preserving and restoring historic storefronts and landmarks.
6. Creating an Italian-American Cultural Center to be housed, upon rehabilitation, in the old Police Headquarters.
7. Expanding community social services.

The underlying assumption of the "Risorgimento" was that Little Italy, undoubtedly a low income, multi-ethnic decaying neighborhood, had to become a "city-wide" and regional resource, "a teeming tourist attraction [...] a place of great food and spectacular festivals." The plan emphasizes such a characteristic by proposing a new image which would transform the neighborhood into a middle-class residential area with a major pedestrianized "regional spine," where commercial resources of one ethnic group (Italian-American) would be concentrated. The flavor would remain Italian with outdoor caffe, new "piazze," new "trattorie" and an Italian-American Cultural Center, the first of its kind in New York City and probably in the United States.

This new image undermines not only the multi-ethnic character of the neighborhood but also its heterogeneous economic base which is now very prosperous, but controlled mainly by the Chinese and outsiders, as was indicated in the following:

1. Despite its residential and retail character, Little Italy is a high density industrial area, employing some 5,000 people in 30 blocks.
2. The industrial and manufacturing firms are concentrated on Mulberry and Mott Streets, where firms are also found above restaurants and ethnic shops.
3. Of the 130 ethnic retail storefronts, two-thirds are characterized as Italian and one-third as Chinese.  

4. The Chinese own approximately 50% of the estate and manufacturing firms in the southern part of the neighborhood.  

While the "Risorgimento" plan, through the pedestrianization of a commercial strip such as Mulberry Street, would, on the one hand, favor the establishment and expansion of restaurants and ethnic shops; it would, on the other hand, pressure industrial and manufacturing firms located there to move out of the neighborhood, and as a result there would be a significant loss of jobs for the community.  

The "Risorgimento" proposals were enthusiastically received by the press as well as by the Italian-American community. Il Progresso, the most important Italian-American newspaper, saluted them as "L'ultimo miracolo di S. Gennaro" (St. Gennaro's latest miracle)! The Sunday News echoed: "A renaissance for Little Italy. A strollers' delight." The Italian-American residents of Little Italy were also enthusiastic about the "Risorgimento" although most of them saw it from an entirely different point of view. One resident commented" "Beautiful, beautiful. The more Italian people in the area, the better the area."  

Anne Compoccia, president of the St. Anne Society of the Most Precious Blood Church, declared: "I think it's a very good idea. For the first time in many years Little Italy is showing a unity that we need in the area to combat the growing infiltration of other nation-
The community leaders and city officials, however, were suave and compromising on this issue. T. Tarantini, executive director of LIRA, pointed out: "There is no discrimination involved here. Little Italy will always be a mixed neighborhood. We want it that way. We just want to preserve the character of the area, and, frankly, in recent years the erosion has been severe." And elsewhere he says:

The Chinese and the Italians are very similar. Both groups are family oriented; both have a strong work ethic. The Chinese came here in the same way as the Italians -- through the padrone system, where someone sponsors you and you owe your life to them. Italians are very sensitive to those circumstances.

Zuccotti, when questioned if strengthening the Italian flavor of Little Italy would imply a "rebuff" to the Chinese residents, promptly replied:

Absolutely not. We regard both of these communities as valuable to the city and we intend to improve both of them. Any upgrading of social services, housing and health facilities on the Lower East Side will benefit both Italians and Chinese. And let's not forget that Little Italy is no longer monolithic -- it now has a substantial Hispanic and Chinese population.

In the plan, however, there is no provision for joint management (Italian, Chinese, Spanish) of the housing projects, nor is there a guarantee that residents would not be squeezed out of their apartments if demand for housing in the area were to increase.

To carry out the programs as outlined in the "Risorgimen-
View of Mulberry St. in Little Italy
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>CT 41</th>
<th>CT 43</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>9,294</td>
<td>5,104</td>
<td>14,398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Group 0-19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 20-34</td>
<td>1,028</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>1,492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 35-54</td>
<td>2,314</td>
<td>1,357</td>
<td>3,671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 55-64</td>
<td>1,865</td>
<td>1,321</td>
<td>3,186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 65 and over</td>
<td>2,953</td>
<td>1,486</td>
<td>4,439</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italians</td>
<td>3,367</td>
<td>2,525</td>
<td>5,892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Dominican</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>1,596</td>
<td>2,272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>4,930</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>5,398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Families [husband-wife, male head, female head]</td>
<td>Census Tract 41</td>
<td>Census Tract 43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With own children</td>
<td>2,225</td>
<td>1,145</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of children</td>
<td>1,065</td>
<td>565</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2,333</td>
<td>1,221</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.1 child.</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families without Children</td>
<td>1,161</td>
<td>580</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to Head of Household</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Persons</td>
<td>9,294</td>
<td>5,104</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Households</td>
<td>8,911</td>
<td>4,585</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Household</td>
<td>3,028</td>
<td>1,710</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Family</td>
<td>2,225</td>
<td>1,145</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Group Quarters</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>519</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons per Household</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence in 1965</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons 5 years and over</td>
<td>8,718</td>
<td>4,708</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same House as in 1970</td>
<td>5,800</td>
<td>2,710</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different House</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>606</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abroad</td>
<td>1,362</td>
<td>766</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LITTLE ITALY 1970: INCOME CHARACTERISTICS -- FAMILIES AND UNRELATED CHARACTERISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Census Tract 41</th>
<th>Census Tract 43</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Families</td>
<td>2,207</td>
<td>1,128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1,000</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 - 1,999</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,000 - 2,999</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,000 - 3,999</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,000 - 4,999</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 - 5,999</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6,000 - 6,999</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7,000 - 7,999</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8,000 - 8,999</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9,000 - 9,999</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 - 11,999</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12,000 - 14,999</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15,000 - 17,999</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25,000 - 24,999</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,000 or more</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Income</td>
<td>$6,263</td>
<td>$6,420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Income</td>
<td>7,137</td>
<td>7,424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Individuals</td>
<td>1,242</td>
<td>1,182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Income</td>
<td>$2,880</td>
<td>$2,716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Income</td>
<td>$3,296</td>
<td>$3,579</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LITTLE ITALY 1970: INCOME CHARACTERISTICS -- FAMILIES AND UNRELATED CHARACTERISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Census Tract 41</th>
<th>Census Tract 43</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income Below Poverty Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of all families</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of public assistance income</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Size of Family</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean # of Related Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 18</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Heads</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent 65 years and over</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated Individuals</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of all Unrelated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Income</td>
<td>$760</td>
<td>$729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Income Deficit</td>
<td>$1,077</td>
<td>$1,178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent 65 years and over</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households (no owner-renter occupied)</td>
<td>852</td>
<td>456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Gross Rent</td>
<td>$69</td>
<td>$70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Residential Community

Little Italy Community
### LITTLE ITALY 1970: OCCUPANCY, UTILIZATION AND FINANCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HOUSING UNITS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Units</th>
<th>Census Tract 41</th>
<th>Census Tract 43</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Housing Units</td>
<td>3,136</td>
<td>1,772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Occupied</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative and Condominium</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter Occupied</td>
<td>2,980</td>
<td>1,691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1,525</td>
<td>1,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negro</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Year Round</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Rent Asked</td>
<td>$48</td>
<td>$63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Lacking Some or All Plumbing Facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Census Tract 41</th>
<th>Census Tract 43</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Units</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking Complete Kitchen Facilities</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access Only Through Other Living Quarters</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rooms: Median</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons: Median (All Occupied Units)</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units with Roomer, Boarder, Lodger</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Year Structure Built

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Census Tract 41</th>
<th>Census Tract 43</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939 or earlier</td>
<td>3,019</td>
<td>1,596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Occupied Housing Units</td>
<td>3,028</td>
<td>1,710</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Industry

Little Italy: Location of Industries
### LITTLE ITALY 1975: FIRMS BY INDUSTRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Total Firms</th>
<th># of Firms South of Broome St.</th>
<th># of Firms North of Broome St.</th>
<th>Percent of Firms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apparel</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal Products (mfg)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automotive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Processing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services (Contractors, repairs)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Manufacturing</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous(^1)</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>314</strong></td>
<td><strong>176</strong></td>
<td><strong>138</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\)Con Edison, Canal Street and Bowery Jewelers
## LITTLE ITALY 1975: EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Total Employment</th>
<th>Employment South of Broome St.</th>
<th>Employment North of Broome St.</th>
<th>Industry's Percentage of Employment</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Apparel (mfg)</td>
<td>2667</td>
<td>2187</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>56.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Printing</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>113</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metal Products (mfg)</td>
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<td>142</td>
<td>51</td>
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<tr>
<td>Automotive</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food Processing</td>
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<td>Services (Contractors, repairs)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Manufacturing</td>
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<td>885</td>
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<td>207</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>4745</td>
<td>3427</td>
<td>1318</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>1</sup> Con Edison, Canal Street and Bower Jewelers
Zoning.

Special Zoning District

Little Italy: Boundaries of Proposed Special Zoning District
Restoration and Development Opportunities

- Housing
- Institutions
- Parks
- Municipal Garages
- Retail
- Street Improvements
- Landmarks
- Historical Storefront Improvements

Little Italy: Restoration and Development Opportunities
Historic Storefronts

Proposed Restoration of Historic Storefronts in Little Italy
Existing Storefront

Storefront Improvement Proposal

Example of an Existing Storefront and Proposed Storefront Improvement
Architects rendering of Proposed Housing/School site on corner of Mott and Spring Street

Artist rendering of rehabilitated De Salvio Park on Spring & Mulberry St.
Proposed Cultural Center
Former Police Headquarters
to," The Commission of City Planning recommended the establishment of a community based development corporation and it was suggested that LIRA "might serve as the nucleus of such a corporation ". Subsequently, LIRA was officially awarded a contract by the Housing and Development Administration. Its task was to gather detailed information about the housing conditions in the neighborhood, to propose a general rehabilitation plan necessary for preserving the character of the neighborhood, to coordinate the efforts of private parties, and eventually to control housing development in the area.

However, the contract between HDA and LIRA was only a means for providing this organization with expense funds. Instead of carrying out its initial tasks, LIRA concentrated mainly on the implementation of the proposed Mulberry Street Mall, while the Urban Design Group was preparing the "special district" plan which should have been enacted by the fall of 1975. Yet, as of today, not much has happened. The Mall has not been successfully implemented and the approval of the special district legislation has been postponed sine die.

The highly publicized and prototypical Mulberry Street Mall has remained the dream of a few. Mulberry Street is still as it was, jammed with cars, crowded, alive, picturesque as the residents have made it, as they perhaps really wanted it to be. When the residents want to close the street, it happens. But it happens in their own way, with
a participative disorder like the one during the chaotic and stressing days of the S. Gennaro festival. Why is that so? After all, the pedestrianization plan, provided by the UDG, had been well-studied and outlined. The outdoor space allocated to each caffe was carefully calculated; new banners were designed to beautify the street and their location was studied to preserve the street perspective and to respect the existing fire codes; new standards were studied for more humane street furniture. Tables, umbrellas, flower pots, and banners were all provided with a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation ($30,000).

Yet, when the day came to open the Mall (Phase II), there were on the street only a few people and still quite a few cars (the owners did not want to move them). The street had lost its liveliness. The people, the crowds of the S. Gennaro festivals, were not there: only Chinese children were playing in the streets while a few old Italian-American residents gathered around the new mural, at the corner of Canal Street. This mural features photos of the neighborhood landmarks and a sterile message form UDG saying: "Know your neighborhood." An angry Italian-American resident was shouting: "Why they did not put up a picture of the Most Precious Blood Church? It's our church. Why isn't it up there?" Others, shopkeepers, refused to take down the small green-white-red flags they had put up a long time before; infuriating in that way Ms. Raquel Ramati, UDG director, who
was arguing that the flags had to come down because they
disturbed the street perspective and because the new banners
advertising the Rockefeller Family Fund, Fiat, Alitalia, etc.
were not clearly visible! The shopkeepers, on the other hand,
were arguing that their flags had always been there and they
would only take them down when the S. Gennaro festival decor-
atations would go up. So the artist's rendering of the "pedon-
alizzazione," prepared by the UDG, representing joyful people
sitting in an orderly fashion "al fresco" and sipping a "capp-
puccino," remained only an artist's vision and the Mulberry
Street Mall...a fiasco.

The Mall fiasco was, in my opinion, due to the city's in-
ability to resolve local conflicts regarding the proposed
pedestrianization and to effectively involve the community in
a participatory planning process. Local residents and busi-
nessmen had been divided over the issue of the Mall: many
thought that their businesses or the neighborhood in general
would benefit from such a change, others feared that the elim-
ination of parking space would result in a loss of customers
and out-of-town visitors to the neighborhood. While the city
had proposed an alternative parking structure, there was cer-
tainly no guarantee that it would be implemented and thus, to
manifest their disapproval of the project, opponents refused
to move their cars from Mulberry Street when it had to be
closed to traffic.

Far from directly involving the community, the Mall project
was an imposition by the city on the neighborhood because most of the decisions were made by the Urban Design Group even if many neighborhood residents had argued for a greater role in the design and implementation of the project. The Mall, which after all was an attempt to institutionalize what residents had been spontaneously accomplishing through their festes and celebrations for decades, was such a failure that it has been extremely difficult to renew interest in this strategy for revitalizing Little Italy.

If the Mall reflects conflicts within the Italian community and between this community and the city, the housing programs setbacks reflect unresolved conflicts between the Italian and Chinese communities. While, on the one hand, housing construction on certain sites in Little Italy will not be realized because further studies have subsequently shown that projects designated for these sites are not economically feasible, conflicts between the Italians and Chinese over land use and ownership have also halted projects. For example, the Chinese community protested against the choice of a Hester/Mott Streets site for a 120 units housing project, arguing that part of the land was owned by the Chinese Buddhist Association and that in 1970 they had submitted a plan for a construction of a Buddhist temple on the same site. Representing the Chinese community, Reverend Mew Fung issued a statement strongly protesting against the City Planning Commission and the Italian leaders, and indicated that the new
housing plan was "an invasion of [their] rights of equal opportunity and prejudice towards [their] religion."\textsuperscript{28}

The controversy was eventually resolved on September 2, 1975 when Zuccotti announced that the housing project in question would not be carried out because of the city's financial crisis. After all, the plan was not recession proof!\textsuperscript{29} The Chinese-Americans would not get their Buddhist Temple and the Italian-Americans would not get their "mediterranean style" housing. And so, with two of the most important programs not realized, little remains of the ambitious "Risorgimento" plan except a remembrance of promises, the many promises made by Mayor Beame, Percy Sutton, John Zuccotti, Senator Jacob Javits, and others.

The promises and the plan have remained at a standstill but the promoters have moved ahead. Tarantini, executive director of LIRA, has left Little Italy because the city did not renew its contract with the LIRA, and has instead become the director of the Italy-America Action Council. Ramati, director of the Urban Design Group, is trying to publish a book on her "cosmetic design" (banners, etc.) for neighborhood preservation. Last but not least, Zuccotti, a self-designed "new-Jacobean" and often called a "street-wise urbanologist," has lived up to the image of "soft cop" or "rising star" in the political firmament: he is currently the deputy mayor of New York City.

To talk about the gap between promises and what is ac-
ually delivered, to determine what went wrong between intentions and realizations, is to fall prey to the origin myth, to assume or believe that in the beginning the ideas were good and that they somehow became corrupted by their contact with reality. It is my contention, however, that at the root of the "Risorgimento" plan and of the planning process conceived and adopted, was a clearly conceived but cleverly concealed political design to manipulate community participation and to exploit ethnic values. This is manifested in three interrelated aspects of the process: an occultation of or failure to deal with the real context; an emphasis on business interests of middle-class hegemony; and a distortion of the concept of participation.

The real context of Little Italy was heterogeneous: ethnically, economically, and socially. The "Risorgimento" plan was, in perspective and design, homogeneous. Given the present multi-ethnic population of the neighborhood, it seems absurd that the city would want to impose a homogeneous Italian-American ethnic flavor on the area, which if anything reflects a past reality. Absurd? No. Well conceived and deliberate. The ethnic flavor, as we shall see, was a businessmen's agreement.

The varied needs of the different ethnic groups, the resulting conflicts among them were not dealt with locally. The Italian, Chinese, and Spanish speaking residents did not meet to discuss the problems confronting them or interact on matters
directly concerning them. The maneuvering was done between the city and the intermediaries (LIRA, etc.). The City Planning Commission, however, did not ignore the non-Italian population. After dealing with the Italian businessmen of LIRA, it also made pacts with the Chinese businessmen. There were after all three miniplans.

While the miniplan supposedly represented an attempt to "tailor" the planning process to the needs of particular communities, it has proven to be a tool for dividing, opposing, and controlling these communities. It controls intermediaries by making them compete for existing limited resources; it divides and opposes different ethnic groups so that they do not form coalitions and become powerful. If people had managed to transgress the original physical boundaries separating the ethnic groups, the Planning Commission, through the strategy of different miniplans, was once again establishing those boundaries. No attempt was made to provide instead a framework where people of different ethnic backgrounds could co-exist harmoniously, where ethnic differences could be accepted and cultivated, which is after all what the New Ethnicity is all about. Yet, for those who were actually "participating in the "Risorgimento" planning process, ethnicity implied something very different.

If the neighborhood was heterogeneous ethnically, it was also heterogeneous economically and socially. The vision of Little Italy as "a place of great food and spectacular fes-
tivals" meant that one interest group -- restaurant and ethnic food store owners -- would benefit but that the economic heterogeneity of the neighborhood was being overlooked and that there would be severe consequences for it. An expansion and development of restaurants and ethnic food stores might mean attracting a chic and wealthy clientele to Little Italy and bringing profit to the few owners, but it would most probably mean (because of the pedestrianized Mall and other "cosmetic design" changes) that the light manufacturing industries would be forced to move elsewhere, that there would be a tremendous loss of jobs for the community, and subsequently that working-class residents would be displaced (and we can already predict what will happen to the vacanted apartments, etc. -- see So-Ho, Boston Waterfront). Thus, Little Italy, in a transition to middle-class hegemony, would be joining its neighbors (So-Ho, etc.).

The ethnic flavor was, after all, just that: ethnic flavor -- a commercialization of ethnicity, an exploitation of ethnic values for consumer purposes so that a select group of businessmen could profit at the expense of the community. This exploitation or distortion of ethnic values was a clever disguise for transforming the social reality of the neighborhood. In the attempt to convert Little Italy into a city-wide and regional tourist attraction, the neighborhood as "neighborhood" was being ignored. The planned "cosmetic design" changes might improve the physical structure of Italy, but what
about the social reality? Preserving the ethnic character of Little Italy meant further commercializing and stereotyping cultural expressions, giving a middle-class touch, the Mall, to a social group which had been forced, in its struggle for human and cultural survival, into marginality. What about the neighborhood residents? What did the "Risorgimento" plan hold for them? Were their options limited to either being displaced or further exploited in low-paying jobs as waiters, etc.? Certainly the "Risorgimento" plan had made no provisions, outside of an eventual additional service or two, for them -- there would be no share in the profit which the reinforced ethnic flavor might bring. It was clear that the profit would be going to a few businessmen who lived outside the neighborhood.

This brings us to the intermediary, LIRA, and why it was chosen by the city to represent the Italian-American community. LIRA has on its board of directors mainly Italian-American businessmen, most of whom own property and fancy restaurants in the neighborhood but live outside it, in Long Island, etc. The power of LIRA comes from a large constituency, 1000 families who once lived in the area and who have expressed an interest to return to the neighborhood if the housing conditions would be upgraded. Therefore, if Italian-American businessmen were advocating more housing development, etc, it was not so much to help the elderly and working class Italian-
Americans. Also to be questioned, is the commitment of those families to returning to Little Italy and whether they really exist. (Incidentally, when I asked LIRA for a list of the families, my request was denied.)

Members of the City Planning Commission have confessed that they could not ignore the businessmen of LIRA who controlled the community. The Commission hoped that by meeting the requests of the businessmen and reinforcing economic development, there would be a filtering down effect, that somehow the community as a whole would benefit. Certainly the City Planning Commission made no attempt to expand LIRA's constituency to encompass those actually living in the neighborhood who needed to be represented. And so, LIRA, the organization which had originally been set up for surfacing the community's needs, instead ended up dealing with its own; which was to represent the community, instead monopolized the commercial development of the community.

The planning process finally adopted by the City Planning Commission certainly had little to do with tailoring a plan around the needs of a community as a whole (it revolved around the needs of one group of businessmen) and with neighborhood preservation. The city's new planning approach which conceived comprehensive planning as a process and implied a shift from master planning to community planning does not much alter the existing power structure. This structure has merely become more complex and its consequent political compromises are only more
articulated. In a conference speech on decentralization, Zuccotti stated: "Public participation is what democracy is all about -- and I think we all recognize that communities have a right to be consulted about their own future." The controversiality of this statement is, in my opinion, in the answer to the question: How should communities be consulted?

Should they be consulted through intermediaries, such as LIRA, who only represent and serve special interests of the community or through a more complex, lengthy and difficult participatory process which directly involves the neighborhood residents in an attempt to articulate and satisfy their needs and interests and raise their consciousness and ability to transform their neighborhood reality?

Referring back to Zuccotti's statement: "[...] the only choice is to work with the communities -- or they will work against us [...]," in the light of the "Risorgimento" experience such a statement implies that communities must be dealt with because they represent a potential threat. All subsequent action is thus a means for controlling, removing that threat. Intermediaries were co-opted to eliminate that threat -- their business interests merged with the city's (for example, the city's interest in the neighborhood as a regional tourist attraction and in the stimulation of the real estate market which would result in an increase in tax revenue) and they could be counted on for controlling the communities. Thus, the city did not care (or cared very much!) that LIRA only repre-
presented a vertex of the Italian-American community, that development was only seen in economic and not human terms.

Instead of a community participatory process, a benevolent dictatorship appeared -- a plan was imposed on the community and no alternatives were even considered. A struggle which should have been between the community and the city, was instead between intermediaries (who had little or nothing to do with the communities) and the city. The city could easily control the intermediaries by their divide and rule tactics: separate miniplans, limited resources which would have to be competed for.

To control the community, the intermediary (LIRA) has employed a particular strategy -- it intensified a fear and mistrust for the outsider: both the other ethnics (especially the Chinese) and the city officials and planners. From my own experience in the community, it was clear that the Italian-American residents felt threatened by the infiltration of other ethnics into the neighborhood but that this threat had been intensified by the LIRA. This xenophobia had been created to serve the intermediary's interests. In order to impose a homogeneous Italian ethnic flavor, a need for reinforced Italianità had to be felt by the Italian-American residents. They had to feel threatened. The intermediaries also heightened the residents' bitterness towards and distrust of city officials and planners, in order to be backed by the community in bargaining with the city. Their control of the community could
therefore serve as leverage for getting their personal interests satisfied.

The major problem in this planning experience, as is often the case with experiments of community participation, lies in the inability or unwillingness of officials and planners to first surface the residents' needs and interests, and then to develop a process by which these often contrasting and conflicting needs and interests are synthesized in a common development strategy. I see no alternative in terms of significant citizen involvement and development of communities unless first of all intermediaries (in the way they are conceived and operate today) are eliminated and there is a new form of community leadership. And if we wish to speak about participation in terms of social equality and decentralization of power, this will require a different framework or context, certainly not a capitalist one.

The radical transformation of such a socio-economic framework certainly does not lie within the immediate future and therefore more modest proposals and alternatives have to be offered. The preservation and development of Little Italy could have given better results had the city agencies and officials had the necessary political will to involve all the ethnic groups living in the area and develop proposals which served the interests of the community at large and not just particular groups. The failure of the pedestrianization plan, the setback suffered by the housing program, and the current
shortage of funds for community development because of New York's fiscal crisis and the lagging economy in general, should encourage the city and the community leaders to review the glamorous Risorgimento Plan and take a more modest but effective outlook on the implementation of the programs indicated in that plan.

While I agree that the programs included in the plan are necessary and in the long run would be of benefit to the community, I suggest, in the light of the above, that the focus now be placed on other programs such as housing rehabilitation and job development, and that neighborhood development strategies and priorities be reworked with a larger constituency. The following are suggestions for new actions and possible alternative development strategies which could be proposed by city officials:

1. HDA should refinance LIRA but request that the community development organization be restructured to include representatives from the Chinese, Puerto Rican, and Dominican population. These other ethnic communities must be given a stake in the development of the neighborhood.

2. The City Planning Commission and restructured LIRA should develop strategies to better publicize other less emphasized programs in the community and, with the residents, work out the phasing and modalities of the implementation
of these programs (rehabilitation, services, job development, etc.).

3. Services should be planned and implemented simultaneously with the housing rehabilitation program. A detailed analysis of population characteristics (beyond census) and needs is necessary. It is also important to assess the level of service and mutual aid which local ethnic organizations still provide to residents and potentiate those that could better reach and serve the poorest and most isolated residents.

4. Rehabilitation techniques and financing mechanisms should be worked out to guarantee that the renewal of physical structures does not substantially increase rent levels for the residents and does not lead to their displacement. Rent subsidies, such as those available under the CDA (Community Development Act), should be publicized in the community. Low interest loans to small landlords (Article VIII of the Private Housing Finance Law of NYC) should also be publicized. Landlords should be solicited to eliminate code violations on their properties and, if they do not comply, the city should confiscate their properties (Section 507 of the General Municipal Law, NYC) and subsequently set up tenant cooperatives.
The city and LIRA should also provide all the necessary technical legal assistance to residents.

5. Given the present conditions of the physical structures and the population distribution of the neighborhood, it is advisable that the rehabilitation and renewal efforts be concentrated on the northern part of the neighborhood where ethnic influence is weaker but where most of the poor and elderly live, more vacancies prevail, the neighborhood is less cohesive, and where real estate speculation is most probable.

6. In order to maintain the economic heterogeneity of the neighborhood (which is definitely one of its assets), the city and LIRA should give equal consideration to the industrial (manufacturing) and commercial bases of the neighborhood. It is therefore important that the city initiate a program to attract new business activities on the eastern edge of So-Ho adjacent to Little Italy, where there are presently many vacancies. At the same time, LIRA should develop training programs for the residents and offer incentives to encourage the development of small scale semi-industrial/artisan enterprises managed and owned by the residents in the neighborhood.
Notes

1. For more information and data, see Italian-American Center for Urban Affairs, Preliminary Profile of Italian-Americans Living in New York City (New York: IACUA, 1973) and Josephine Casalena, A Portrait of the Italian American Community in New York City (New York: CIAO, 1975).


3. Italian-American Coalition of the City of New York, Constitution Bylaws, Article III.


5. IACUA, Certificate of Incorporation, p. 1.


9. Ibid.


14. Lately, city planners have officially acknowledged that the So-Ho--No-Ho area of Manhattan is drastically changing and legislation is under consideration to limit the conversion of the old buildings into lofts for artists. For additional information, see "Loft Conversion: A New Policy Approach for SoHo-NoHo," a report by the Manhattan Office of the New York City Planning Commission, 1975.


16. "Risorgimento" stands for the historical period which preceded the Unification of Italy (1861). Many Italians consider it as one of the most patriotic moments of the nation. For the first time since the Roman Empire the country was freed from foreign occupation or
infiltration. Those who chose this name for the revitalization of the neighborhood had probably envisioned a similar resurgence of the Italian community and an expulsion of other ethnic groups from the neighborhood.

17. New York City - Department of City Planning, Little Italy Risorgimento (September 1974), p. 6.
18. Ibid., p. 5.
19. New York City - Department of City Planning, Little Italy Economic Base (August 1975), pp. 1, 3.
21. Ibid.
26. Rita Bormioli, op.cit., p. 6
27. As of January 1977, the Risorgimento Plan has undergone several changes. First of all, the name of the plan has been changed from "Risorgimento" to "Little Italy Special District Legislation." Secondly, The Mulberry Street Mall has been downplayed and both the city and community are not putting much effort and time into its implementation. Instead of being a comprehensive plan, the Legislation is now a set of regulations regarding volumes, setbacks and other measures which aim at preserving the present neighborhood scale. The legislation, however, ignores the most crucial issues associated with the plan: real estate speculation, displacement of working class residents, interracial residential integration. In fact, there have been no attempts to include in the legislation clauses or stipulations which would deal with the above issues. This revised legislation has already undergone public hearings and will most likely be enacted.

Considering the existing market pressures and certain local interests (businessmen), the neighborhood will most probably still become a middle class residential area and tourist attraction even though the process will take much longer than originally anticipated and the fancy Mall probably won't be included. In fact, during the past year, several new exclusive restaurants have opened in the neighborhood, general rent levels are much higher, and there is evidence that property has changed hands at a higher than usual turnover rate.

Undoubtedly, conflicts will probably arise between the city and businessmen on the one hand and local residents on the other, when, for example, new housing,
if it will be built, becomes available since there are no regulations (or if there are, they have not been made public) regarding apartment assignation. The outcome of such conflicts will greatly depend on the strength of alternative organizations which residents might create to counteract the city/LIRA bonds. LIRA has been restructured to eliminate certain individuals but still continues to exclude other (non-Italian) ethnic group representatives from its board of directors.

28. Mew Fung, Rev., a document from the Department of City Planning files, #CP22971.

29. The Risorgimento Plan was publicized as being recession-proof, as indicated in the following comment by Ada Louise Huxtable: "[...] But perhaps the most important point to be made about this proposal is that it is a prime example of how New York's planners can continue to work on improvement and development schemas at a time when recession has brought private construction to a virtual halt, and the city has no money to spend. Earlier strategy tied improvements into the development process through zoning specifications that the builder was required to follow. This strategy was meant to have automatic, built-in execution, without cost to the city for special features, and it worked until construction stopped.

The Little Italy approach incorporated the same intention, through more recession-proof means. The local community, collaborating with the city staff, is to carry out the specifications that they have arrived at together, and that have been detailed by the planning professionals. This is to be done through grants, assessments, self-help, the pursuit of special purpose funds, business loans, even do-it-yourself techniques. These are plausible and possible financing devices.


30. Chinatown had its own miniplan conceived and carried out by the Manhattan Office of the City Planning Commission. This miniplan greatly resembled the "Risorgimento" plan: it proposed the pedestrianization of Mott Street, the further commercialization of the Chinatown Core, an expansion of housing facilities and the creation of new services for the booming population, etc. Similarly, the projects had to be carried out by a community development corporation. However, while in Little Italy, LIRA was the community development corporation and supposedly the representative of the community, in Chinatown there was a community development corporation and the Chinatown Steering Committee which was the organization mainly consulted by the city
during the planning process. On this committee, there were representatives from two Chinese community groups: the Chinese Planning Council (a leftist grass roots organization) and the Chinese Community Benevolent Association (a conservative group representing mainly business interests).

Since the Chinese community has been better represented and organized, they have had more power in the planning process and have been able to incorporate more social services, etc. in their plan. The commercialization of the Chinatown Core will be more successful than Little Italy's since the Chinese depend less on municipal aid because this community has more resources and because foreign investors have interests in Chinatown.


32. While these suggestions are my own, they were generated by discussions I had with Rita Bormioli and other members of the staff of the Urban Design Group of the New York City Department of City Planning.
"We live someplace. The question is whether politics should also live there."

(D. Morris & K. Hess, Neighborhood Power)

"While all development is transformation, not all transformation is development."

(Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed)
The revival of ethnicity and the preservation and development of ethnic neighborhoods are key issues today. In order to speculate on their present state and on the future directions they could take, it has first been necessary to understand their past. Since the ethnic neighborhood is not an independent and isolated entity and its evolution is greatly due to a complex dialectical relationship between it and American society in general, we have attempted to understand both its history and the evolution of ethnic groups and ethnicity in relation to American society and its dominant ideologies.

We have analyzed the evolution of Italian-American neighborhoods and have seen how initially (between 1880-1920) they were ethnically heterogenous colonies of immigrant workers (reservoirs of cheap labor), cultural "shock absorbers" to ease the transition between the abandoned homeland and the new society. With time, these colonies generally became monoethnic enclaves and in the second phase (between the two world wars) were insulated, highly structured, fairly independent microcosms. The neighborhood was a "cultural retreat" for those unwilling or unable to assimilate in the American mainstream, a "purgatory" for those hoping and waiting to be eventually assimilated. After World War II, the ethnic neighborhood became a transition area characterized by a deterior-
ation of its physical structures and a breakdown of ethnic institutions, neighborhood order and cohesiveness.

The ethnic neighborhood has historically been an antithesis to the mainstream of American society: it has been either a symbol of the refusal or inability of certain ethnics to assimilate or has represented a temporary stop before assimilation. In a society which emphasized individual assimilation and social mobility, the ethnic neighborhood has remained the home of those who stayed behind, those who usually did not assimilate and rise in socio-economic status. It has stood for stability, roots, cultural heritage, a sense of history, community ties; characteristics in opposition to the dominant ideology of individual assimilation and social mobility. Social mobility implied negating one's identity (ethnic background) and leaving one's ethnic neighborhood and has thus always threatened and undermined neighborhood stability.

The last few years represent a renewal of interest in and a reconsideration of ethnicity and ethnic neighborhoods, both of which have been on the verge of disappearing. There have been and there continue to be attempts to preserve and develop certain inner city ethnic neighborhoods but, as we have seen, these attempts too often reflect the following failures and dilemmas:

1. Commercialization of ethnic values and cultural expression.
2. Profit-oriented approach mainly serving special interest groups or attributing too much power to businessmen. An overemphasis on business interests; the belief that if community business is sound, the neighborhood is sound.

3. Failure to deal with the community as a whole, to represent and deal with the interests and concerns of the majority of the residents.

4. Perpetuation of a hierarchical neighborhood socio-economic structure and coopted, exploitive, community leadership.

5. Failure to effectively involve underrepresented and voiceless neighborhood residents in a participatory process leading to/implying the decentralization of decision-making and planning processes and a redistribution of power and control.

6. Lack of a guarantee that residents (particularly the working class) presently living in a neighborhood will not be displaced and replaced by the well to do.

7. Inability to eradicate a dependence on and control by outside forces (banks, investors, etc.) which minimize the residents' ability to control their neighborhood development.
Our analyses, in this thesis, raise further problematic issues which I feel are central to a consideration today of ethnicity and ethnic groups and which must be among the concerns of future ethnic neighborhood preservation and development attempts. These issues are: assimilation vs. cultural pluralism; ethnic vs. class stratification; and manipulative intermediaries vs. community leaders.

**Assimilation vs. Cultural Pluralism**

With the advocacy of cultural pluralism in the sixties, there appears to be a rejection or modification of the earlier American policy of assimilation. Challenged is the concept or process of cultural assimilation considered a prerequisite for socio-economic assimilation; cultural assimilation being used for the maintenance of a certain socio-economic order. Socio-economic assimilation was a long, difficult selective process. For example, the fact that only a few Italian-American names come to mind amongst those individuals able to effectuate a role in the American power structure and decision-making processes indicates how limited and restrictive the process of socio-economic assimilation has really been.

Those ethnics advocating cultural pluralism are generally intellectuals who have already been assimilated into the American mainstream. They are questioning the fact that they, their parents, etc. had to forfeit ethnic identity and cultural traditions or practice and transmit those traditions in
isolation, being open to possible ridicule and debasement by others. They are questioning the price of social mobility and success and realizing that in their desire and eagerness to "make it," they cut themselves off from their roots too fast. And they are discovering that not all are making it and are finally learning how important those roots are.²

What must be noted is that these ethnics can presently question the dominant ideology and the rules of society because they have been assimilated and are now in a position of strength.

They are attempting to resuscitate a lost identity and understand their evolution as Italian-Americans, the conflicts between their group and the host society, what had to be forfeited by their group, what was nevertheless accomplished by it. They are also asking to be really socio-economically integrated, that is, participate in transforming the social reality, and no longer passively abide by its rules.

Cultural pluralism and transculturation should mean an alternative to assimilation where cultural negation through the imposition of values and norms is the price for social acceptance. Obviously implied is cultural renewal or transformation. What the new culture, which will result from the merging or intersection of many different cultural traits and expressions, will be like is difficult to envision. What is predictable, however, and of great importance is that a
pluralistic culture will lead to a greater acceptance of diversity and thus to less ridiculing and oppression. With less obligation to homogenize, there will be more freedom and more significant human liberation will be encouraged. There will be more inventiveness and creativity. Cultural pluralism should hopefully lead to ideological and political pluralism, and a transformation of the infrastructure. 3

I sincerely doubt that such radical cultural transformation will occur and that the full implications of cultural pluralism will be realized, particularly since the intentions and concerns of ethnics do not reveal a desire to transform the infrastructure. As we shall see under 'Ethnic vs. Class Stratification,' ethnics appear content with the capitalist economic framework and reveal a desire to "make it," be part of the society it implies. The ethnics' views on cultural pluralism and cultural renewal thus appear utopian and are in direct contradiction with their socio-economic concerns. These ethnics seem to neglect or lack a proper understanding of the intricate relation between the infrastructure and superstructure.

The forces of capitalism and the consequent society it implies will also ascertain that cultural pluralism does not reach its fullest implications, does not keep its revolutionary potential. The system has already accepted cultural pluralism in order to employ divide and rule tactics. If
assimilation helped to preserve a determined socio-economic order, cultural pluralism, supposedly the antithesis of assimilation, could be employed by the system in order to set different ethnic groups against each other and make them compete for existing limited resources.

An economic system oriented around profit and a society around consumption can exploit cultural pluralism, negating its characteristic of creativity, through commercialization. We have only to consider how ethnicity has already been converted into marketable products; food, ethnic sweaters and jewelry, the ambiguous, multi-ethnic or racial doll whose traits permit it to be a representative of any racial or ethnic American group.

Ethnic groups are presently at the stage of rediscovering, and redefining their particular ethnic culture. There is evidence of a return to the past, to the old values of family and neighborhood, to certain ethnic institutions (such as the church) in their quest for lost identity. This process is (I hope) seen by the ethnics (and which I feel it can only be) as a temporary, transitory one. Critics of the New Ethnicity suspect that the above stance reflects a fear of approaching death, a last attempt to prove that one is well -- now that ethnic differences are disappearing, there is an attempt made to preserve them. But unlike the threatened whooping crane or American bison which have been placed on wildlife reservations or in zoos, confined, segregated, protected and so
preserved, ethnic culture should not be perpetuated in segregation if it is to evolve and flourish. (And if segregation is necessary, it must only be temporarily until group consciousness and strength is restored for further cultural and social action). Nor can ethnic neighborhoods be zoos, as they are becoming -- places for spectators to visit where cultural pression is no longer free to be itself and to evolve in its natural habitat (for example, festas as manifestations of community cohesiveness) but is caged, unable to express itself naturally and is subject to the gaze of curious spectators (festas turned funfairs). If old values are being proposed, they must reflect evolution, show that they have caught up with the present. The advocacy, for example, of a return to family and neighborhood can be a positive one if the concept of family is redefined (an oppressive patriarchal family structure is certainly questionable) and the neighborhood as a defensive cultural space can no longer exist in a society supposedly embracing cultural pluralism.

Central to the issue of a cultural pluralism are the questions: what changes will occur, what new forms will an ethnic culture assume if it is transformed from a defensive, alternative culture which has historically been emarginated from the dominant one to one more fully incorporated into a new dominant culture; and how will the individual ethnic cultures change if cultural pluralism materializes and they merge
to form a new culture? These questions must be faced by the different ethnic groups and particularly by those advocating the preservation and development of ethnic neighborhoods.

If neighborhood residents become the primary actors in the preservation and development of their ethnic neighborhoods, some of the issues they will have to face are the following: Which ethnic cultural traits and cultural expressions should they attempt to preserve and develop, which traits that their group had to forfeit should they resuscitate? Should certain ethnic neighborhood institutions be preserved, can they assume new roles and functions? How can the commercialization of ethnic values be prevented; the conversion of ethnic cultural expression into marketable products and thus its conversion into a dead, fixed, defined, static object rather than a viable, evolving process. Is commercialization of ethnic values necessary in order for the dominant culture to incorporate them? Is the commercialization of ethnicity essential to the neighborhood residents who make their living from selling fresh mozzarelle and freshly baked bread, serving cappuccini? Will ethnic neighborhoods further commercialize now that ethnicity is popular and there is thus a good opportunity for profit-making?

Ethnic culture has historically been defensive and emarginated, a "culture of consolation" and resignation, and ethnic neighborhoods insulated, segregated, and emarginated places.
If ethnic cultural expression finally has a chance to develop and freely express itself, what will this mean for ethnic neighborhoods; how will their role and function change? Will ethnic neighborhoods reinforce their ethnic culture, if so how, and will they still remain segregated, monoethnic places? Will American society be composed of a variety of monoethnic neighborhoods? Will they instead be multi-ethnic? Can an ethnically heterogenous population nevertheless impose a dominant ethnic flavor as has been the case for Little Italy in New York? Will such a situation inevitably perpetuate an oppressive environment since one group dominates over others, as has historically been the case for multiethnic colonies? Or will neighborhoods be truly culturally pluralistic -- composed of a variety of cultural differences and cultural expressions where all are acceptable and accepted?

Or will a common ethnic heritage be reinforced and serve to initially organize ethnic communities so that they can actively participate in the preservation and development of their own neighborhoods? Will the emphasis on ethnic culture then be superceded by other concerns and issues? After all, the ethnic neighborhood not only represents the home of those who share a common cultural heritage, but also of those who have been socio-economically emarginated. Therefore cultural and ethnic issues must be dealt with coextensively with class and economic ones.
Ethnic vs. Class Stratification

It can be argued that an emphasis on ethnic distinctions or ethnic differentiation has been employed and may continue to be employed for the maintenance of a hierarchical capitalist system with its socio-economic stratifications and inequalities, and to obfuscate class struggles and prevent class consciousness.

We have seen how most immigrants who came to America in the 1880's came defined a priori: they had been requested as cheap labor. Their cultural traits were for the most part due to their economic origin but they, for example the Italians, who had been debased on class terms in Italy because they were peasants, were now debased in America on ethnic or racial terms because they were Italians. When the ruling class and or nativists sought to criticize or put down immigrants, they did so on ethnic grounds, at times even employing "scientific" theories (to convert an ideological or bigoted stance into a supposedly objective one) such as eugenics and social darwinism. This enabled them to argue, for example, that Southern and Eastern European immigrants belonged to an inferior race and to justify the American capitalist system: if the immigrants were biologically inferior, it was to be expected that they were given menial and degrading jobs and remained poor. Kinder Americans encouraged Americanization or assimilation to help civilize and make these immigrants eventually become like them! Obviously the elite could not
condemn the immigrants on class terms, that is, say that they were offensive and objectionable because they were cheap labor and oppressed: that would mean acknowledging the oppressive capitalist system.

Thus, very often ethnics came to view their dilemma as being the result of what they were told was an inferior nationality, and saw assimilation as the only alternative to their situation if they were to transcend mere survival. It was usually difficult to define themselves in terms of their roles in production and work in the economic system, and thus organize themselves around class issues.

Ethnics did succeed in organizing and radicalizing as workers in the 1910's and 1920's, thereby going beyond their economic segmentation and establishing multiethnic coalitions and achieving class consciousness and solidarity. The means used by the ruling class to destroy such a potential revolutionary threat aimed at re-emphasizing the ethnic and re-establishing ethnic segmentation: Sacco and Vanzetti trial, deportation, restrictive immigration laws. Because of such oppressive tactics geared around ethnic discrimination and segmentation, it has been difficult to maintain strong working class movements in America. 5

Ethnic differentiation and segmentation has also led to socio-economic stratification as a result of the processes of assimilation and ethnic succession. If assimilation was used by the ruling class to eliminate cultural differences
and ethnicity, it nevertheless ended up emphasizing ethnic groups because of hierarchies created by an uneven assimilation rate. Also responsible for the creation of hierarchies among the different groups was ethnic succession; America had successive arrivals of immigrant groups and the last arrived was usually the (temporarily) oppressed group. The American realities of social mobility (as justification for a class society and as an invitation to all to make it) and of an immigrant nation with ethnic succession and ethnic fragmentation have been in my opinion, key devices for preventing class consciousness, potential revolutionary class movements and socialism in this country.

Ethnic succession and segmentation resulted in the following simplified pyramid where the different ethnic groups occupy horizontal strata located on a vertical socio-economic line:

![Pyramid Diagram]

This form of stratification has begun to break down because of a decrease in immigration and because individuals have moved from the stratum occupied by their ethnic group on the pyramid.
to higher ones. The present upward mobility of ethnics as well as the concerns of advocates of the New Ethnicity indicate that cultural pluralism, supposedly the antithesis of assimilation, could result in the perpetuation of socio-economic strata and hierarchies. In my opinion, it appears that the horizontal pyramid is being/will be replaced by another one which now contains within it smaller pyramids (vertical stratification), each smaller pyramid having its own horizontal strata which are socio-economically determined.

![Diagram of ethnics](image)

Each ethnic group will thus have its own pyramid, comprised of an elite and lower socio-economic classes. It is probable that the elite of the various ethnic groups will be struggling for a greater share of economic opportunity and more power. The majority of ethnics do not appear to be concerned with the realities of the capitalist infrastructure and the resulting inequalities it produces. By stating that they hope that more members of their ethnic group will make it, ethnics are accepting the capitalist system and therefore inevitably accepting the hierarchies and inequalities implied or they reveal an ignorance of the functioning of the American economic sys-
In order to continue functioning, the capitalist system will most probably oblige the ethnic elites and ethnic groups to compete for existing limited resources. As an alternative to this, the ethnic groups could first reinforce their pyramids and then form coalitions to bid for resources and to effect social change. If they do not, it remains likely that conflicts will develop among the various groups, that they will be pinned against each other. If there is no further significant immigration and if multiethnic coalitions among members of the lower socio-economic strata of the various groups do not materialize, there will also be conflicts within the ethnic groups, either among those belonging to the lower strata or between them and the group's elite. The forms that the conflicts will take as well as the relationship between the elite and lower socio-economic classes is not clear and will greatly depend on many factors such as the role and responsibilities of the elite and ethnic leaders towards their ethnic constituency or group; how will they control their group or meet their needs, will they perpetuate an old hierarchical order under new ethnic names or introduce social change?

It was stated earlier, under "assimilation and cultural pluralism," that many advocates of the New Ethnicity envision a society of cultural pluralism and transculturation where different cultural traits and different ethnic groups coexist
harmoniously. Doesn't this imply that all will be equal? Yet between this envisioned cultural utopia and ethnics' socio-economic concerns which suggest the perpetuation of inequalities, there seem to be apparent contradictions or a hiatus. There appears to be an improper understanding or failure to dialectically associate issues relating to infrastructure and superstructure which could lead to such contradictory visions. The new ethnics avoid taking a Marxist perspective in their analyses. They want to reinforce ethnicity and their ethnic group, hoping that such a reinforcement will solve their problems; they want to eliminate cultural oppression but do not realize that cultural oppression is greatly a result of economic oppression. Instead of struggling for the elimination of the root of oppression, they accept it and naively believe that an enforcement of their group in the political arena will eliminate oppression. Inevitably oppression will undergo "slippage," will be transferred elsewhere because it forms an integral part of capitalism.

Concerns regarding the cultural preservation and development of ethnic neighborhoods must lead to and not disguise more important socio-economic concerns. The ethnic neighborhood, after all, has represented and represents a poor, physically decaying inner city district where many working class ethnics continue to live. Ethnic neighborhood development should not lead to the displacement of such
people if they desire to live in the neighborhood. Preservation attempts should not conserve the marginal status of these residents for even if the ethnic neighborhood has displayed cohesiveness, there have been and continue to be oppressive hierarchies in the neighborhood which represent class stratification. Obvious issues and areas of conflict are why and how the neighborhood residents will want to deal with such a socio-economic neighborhood structure. This issue directly involves the intermediaries or neighborhood leaders who historically have acted more out of selfish interest than in the name of the majority of the residents.

Neighborhood development must imply not only an improvement of its physical structures, but since physical development cannot be separated from social development, it should mean that neighborhood residents who presently feel powerless must regain control over the events of their daily lives, must control their living environment. It is they, not outside forces, who must determine the future and fate of their neighborhood's development rather than be the victims of further impositions and exploitation. Effectively involving these people in participatory processes which allow them to decide on and plan the preservation and development of their neighborhood is a first step toward erasing a deep long-instilled feeling of powerlessness. One of the major ingredients and catalysts for bringing about
such a possibility of community organizing and participation is appropriate community leadership.

**Manipulative Intermediaries vs Community Leaders**

In the complex dialectic between ethnic groups and neighborhoods on the one hand and American society on the other, there has been a recurrent and historically constant agent -- the intermediary. There have essentially been two types of intermediaries involved in the dialectic between the ethnic neighborhood and American society: those who have come from the neighborhood (padroni, prominenti, crime bosses, politicians, the Church, businessmen, etc.) and those who have come from the mainstream of American society (settlement house representatives, Protestant missions, planners, city officials, etc.). These intermediaries have either been in favor of or against the assimilation of the ethnic community in the neighborhood.

Those intermediaries coming from the neighborhood who opposed the assimilation of the community, reinforced the ethnicity, marginality and insulation of the neighborhood using it as a means for their own socio-economic advancement and upward mobility. Their advancement certainly did not imply the advancement of the neighborhood community. They provided services for the residents and on the one hand worked against the system by attempting to prevent it from providing services and assimilating the residents so that they
could control the community and profit from this control. On the other hand, they worked for the system by providing cheap labor, etc., and were also co-opted by the system because in their attempt at individual advancement they were playing the game dictated by the dominant ideology.

The intermediaries reinforced the feelings of powerlessness of the residents by making the residents dependent on them. These feelings of dependence and powerlessness led to the residents' acceptance of a neighborhood hierarchical organization and belief that they needed to be represented by others. They thus depended on the practice of intercession for having their needs met. This invariably led to manipulation and exploitation. Intermediaries and intercession stifled conflict between the neighborhood community and American society.

Direct conflicts between the neighborhood and American society -- with no compromising intermediaries -- could have provided better responses to the residents' needs and perhaps have led to substantial changes in the neighborhood. Such conflicts could only occur if the residents acquired group cohesion and strength, but it was certainly not in the intermediaries' interests (with the possible exception of the Church) to help erase the residents' dependence and powerlessness.

A new form of leadership is needed if neighborhood com-
munities are to become organized and agents of social change. Community leaders may come from the neighborhood, from within the larger ethnic group community, or from the outside (planners, etc.). It is essential, however, that they are not motivated by selfish interests, a desire for advancement or power, do not represent special interest groups, or become co-opted by the system. They must serve and work with the majority of the neighborhood residents who have been underrepresented and voiceless. If the leaders come from the oppressor group, they must rid themselves of all oppressive ideologies and join the oppressed in an act of solidarity. The leaders must also help the oppressed exorcise the oppressor within themselves (fatalism, resignation, fear of freedom and social change which oppressive ideologies have instilled in them), and work together in a common dialogical process of de-ideologizing. "The people must find themselves in the emerging leaders, and the latter must find themselves in the people." 

The relationship between the leaders and the people cannot be a triangular one with the leaders occupying the vertex of the triangle, but must be a horizontal one with leaders and people forming one body in contradiction to the oppressor. "[...] leaders cannot think without the people, nor for the people, but only with the people." Leaders can no longer be the primary actors and thereby create the
danger of a new dependence or mediation, but must have trust
in the people's potential abilities and capacities and help
them become the primary agents, give them back a feeling of
power through active participation, make them the ones who
bargain and struggle as a group.

Nor must the leaders come as saviours to the people,
bringing with them their pre-determined and professionalized
view and analysis of the neighborhood situation, and impos-
ing their view on the residents. It is together with the re-
sidents that leaders must analyze the neighborhood reality
and unfold and understand the history of the neighborhood and
its group; instill in the residents an awareness of their
socio-economic marginality; help them to discover and arti-
culate their needs and interests; make them aware of all the
different forces which work for and against them, of all the
complex obstacles against social change in our society; con-
vince them that they can regain control of their living en-
vIRONMENT and improve their social condition, that they are
capable of defending their interests in the political arena;
and implement a common development strategy composed of a
participatory process through which powerlessness is eradi-
cated and former victims, spectators of the social reality
imposed on them, become agents for transforming their
reality. The ethnic neighborhood must no longer be a re-
fuge for the penalized, emarginated and oppressed but must
become a space for social change and human development.
Notes

1. The state of ethnic neighborhoods in inner cities depends on the specific context and on the particular ethnic groups living there. Therefore, any generalized conclusions will require studies similar to the one I have done for Italian-Americans. However, current literature on the subject and the fact that the New Ethnicity values are shared by most ethnic groups seem to indicate that any conclusions I have made with respect to ethnic groups and neighborhoods in general are justified.


3. I am employing the terms "infrastructure" and "superstructure" in their Marxist connotation.

4. The expression is Elio Vittorini's.

5. Even the movements of white ethnic workers in the sixties, as we have seen, originated around economic and class issues and subsequently resulted in a reinforcement of ethnic fragmentation and segmentation.


7. Ibid., p. 162.

8. Ibid., p. 164.

9. Ibid., p. 126.
The illustration on page 100 is from the cover of I-AM (The National Magazine for Italian-Americans), 1, No. 1, November 1976.

The photographs on pages 34, 35, 36, 38 and 61 are taken from Jacob Riis: Photographer and Citizen by Alexander Alland, Sr. (New York: Aperture, 1974).

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The illustrations on page 152 are from Risorgimento, 1, January 1975.

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The maps and tables on pages 133, 136, 144, 145 and 146 are a courtesy of the Urban Design Group of the New York City Department of City Planning. The tables on pages 137, 138, 139, 140 and 142 are from the U.S. Census, courtesy of the Urban Design Group.


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