

TENANT INVOLVEMENT IN THE  
HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the contributions made and the contradictions engendered by an indigenous tenant leadership who took an unusual degree of authority in the transformation of America Park into Kings Lynne.

The transformation of America Park, a deteriorated public housing project, into Kings Lynne, a 441-unit privately owned mixed income development has been publicly portrayed as a model of cooperation among traditionally competing actors in the housing development process as well as proof of the efficiency of the private sector. This thesis argues that the Kings Lynne development process secured adequate housing for lower income people who would not have otherwise received it not because of those factors but because of the sustained and principled struggle of the local tenant leadership.

The reasons why in a normal development process many of these tenants would have been screened out are provided. Empirical evidence about the actual extent of screening is provided and the conclusion is reached that there was no formal, externally-imposed screening. The claim is made that this state of affairs came about because of the tenant leadership. The questions then asked are (1) What informed and empowered them? and (2) What problems would progressive planners face in working with such tenants?

(1) I argue that the leadership relied on radical notions available in the 1960s such as equality, unity and dignity of the underclass and that they were guided by the principles of collectivity and control which entailed the dual demand for respect for and control by the tenants over key elements in the housing process. These principles were used to overcome the twin problems of isolation and low self-esteem which afflicted America Park tenants up to that point.

(2) I argue that planners face dilemmas and/or conflicts with both the world of relevant professionals and the world of tenants. The former stems from the fact that the professional world had a different explanation of why this project was successful, and that difference implied a different criteria of success from that of the tenants. This difference in criteria was significant because the tenant leadership politicized decisions planners typically consider to be technical, and the principles which informed that politicization were such as to vitiate traditional planners' prerogatives.

The conflict with the tenant's world is one between process and product which may emerge when the planner has reason to believe that the majority of tenants are acting in a manner inconsistent with their true self interest. If the planner is interested in empowering the tenants, he or she is faced with a conflict between democratically-oriented principles: the majority of tenants may support positions at some points which if carried out would lead to undemocratic results. I argue that such dilemmas be resolved by following the course of action most consistent with the principles of collectivity and control.

Thesis supervisor: Mel King  
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PREFACE

The transformation of America Park, a deterioriated public housing project, into Kings Lynne, a 441-unit privately owned mixed income development featuring swimming pools and high market rents has been so striking as to capture national attention. It has been publicly portrayed as a model of cooperation among traditionally competing actors in the housing development process as well as proof of the efficiency of the private sector in solving the housing problems of some low and moderate income public housing tenants (see pp. 47-48).

This thesis argues that the Kings Lynne redevelopment process secured adequate housing for low and moderate income people who would not have otherwise received it not because of that cooperation or the discipline of the private sector, but because of the sustained and principled struggle of the low and moderate income tenant leadership.

This is a study of the contributions made and the contradictions engendered by an indigenous tenant leadership who took an unusual degree of authority in their housing development process. The motivation for the thesis is to explore how this striking victory for well over a hundred lower income families came about and to explore the complications that emerge when the progressive planner attempts to work with such tenants.

Aside from the specific claim that these leaders brought about this notable housing opportunity, the focus on tenant leadership is further justified by the assumption that such individuals are the cutting edge of the struggles that gave political life to the 1960s and will do so in future struggles. While such efforts may be mass in their effect, they are not so in their daily functioning: Such movements are created by, create, but in all cases need persistent, competent leadership. Such individuals

are well represented in the housing transformation under study here. Their role is also of interest because it was such a volatile blend of persona and program which defies easy political categorization: I found the tenants acting in a confrontational, class-conscious way to help create a housing development that was subsequently praised on the front page of the Wall Street Journal.

While there are many ways to approach this housing transformation, I have focused on the issue of screening because it raises most starkly the issue of power and on whose behalf it is wielded. The potential to screen out -- to make terminal judgments about the housing prospects of specific lower income individuals before the fact is clearly the most powerful weapon that middle class people have in their efforts to isolate themselves from what they perceive as the troublesome poor. And, conversely, it is the ultimate expression of underclass subservience before that external authority. To do without screening is to make an unmistakable statement about the perceived value of the people who will not be screened. To the extent that that statement threatens, it will be resisted. And to the extent that that statement is defended, those defending it are worthy of study.

This thesis first lays out the reasons for believing that in a normal development process these tenants would have been screened out. It then examines the empirical evidence about the actual extent of screening and concludes that there was no formal, externally-imposed screening. It then gives evidence to support the claim that this state of affairs came about because of the tenant leadership. The two questions then posed are: (1) What informed and empowered them? and (2) What problems would progressive planners face in attempting to work with them?

(1) I argue that the leadership relied on radical notions available in the 1960s such as equality, unity and dignity of the underclass and that they were guided by the principles of collectivity and control so as to demand untypical respect for themselves and their followers while also demanding control over the decision-making process that would determine their housing destiny.

The term "collectivity" stands for a variety of ways in which the tenant leadership insisted on unity, dignity and equality for the tenants as a body. It meant, in brief, that the tenants would be treated as one. The notion of individual opportunity would be applied to them as a set; they would not be singled out individually for either positive or negative treatment. The ultimate extension of this principle was that on the most critical allocation decision -- the choice of who was to live in Kings Lynne -- there would be no individual evaluation.

The term "control" means that the leadership insisted on transcending the traditional call for tenant input and instead elevated themselves to the level of decision makers on a par with all relevant professionals. This implied both a heightened sense of self-esteem and a depressed amount of confidence in external authorities. The ultimate extension of this principle was that on the most controversial decision -- the choice of low income tenants -- that all decision making authority would be stripped from external authorities.

They used these two principles to overcome the twin problems of isolation and low self-esteem which afflicted America Park tenants up to that point. The themes that informed their early community organizing days led in an essentially logical path to their making (and winning) the demand for the re-entry guarantee for America Park tenants.

(2) I argue that planners face dilemmas and/or conflicts with both the world of relevant professionals and the world of the tenants. The conflict with the professional world stems from the fact that the professional world had a different explanation of why this project was successful, and that difference implied a different criteria of success from that of the tenants. This difference in criteria took on unavoidable significance because the tenant leadership politicized decisions planners typically consider technical, and the principles which informed that politicization were such as to vitiate traditional planners' prerogatives.

The conflict with the tenant's world is one between process and product which may emerge when the planner has reason to believe that the majority of tenants are acting in a manner inconsistent with their true self interest. This occurred when the tenants themselves were divided and the planner was in a position to give some aid to either of the competing sides. If the planner is interested in empowering the tenants, he or she was faced with a conflict between democratically-oriented principles: that is, the majority of the tenants supported positions at some point in time which if carried out would have led to very undemocratic results. To the extent that the planner/consultant carried some weight among the tenants, this was a powerful dilemma. I argue that such dilemmas be resolved by following the course of action most consistent with the principles of collectivity and control.

#### BACKGROUND

Built in the late 1940's to house returning veterans, by the late 1960's, the 200 unit public housing project known as America Park was in total collapse. In the Spring of 1972, Housing Opportunities Incorporated

(HOI), a group of concerned citizens of Lynn, decided to evaluate available planning options to deal with America Park's problems. To that end, they sought out Greater Boston Community Development Inc. (GBCD), a nonprofit housing consultant firm with extensive experience in community sponsored, subsidized housing. HOI and GBCD formed the America Park Fact Finding Committee (FFC) which grew to include representatives from the Lynn Housing Authority (LHA); the Lynn Planning Board; the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and some local politicians. It also came to include three America Park tenants. This grouping was responsible for planning the transformation of America Park.

The ongoing planning was carried out by an Interagency Team from the DCA, the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) and the LHA which had operational responsibility for putting together a development program and an Interagency Policy Board made up of the heads of those agencies plus America Park tenant representatives which had approval rights over major planning decisions of the Team. A memo from the Chair of the FFC dealt with the role of the tenants:

The FFC has expressed concern with what MHFA/DCA/LHA are going to do now. Most concerned of all are the tenants of America Park, who, through their Tenants' Association are well represented on the FFC. Very early on in the proceedings when the Interagency Team has itself together, it should meet with the tenant leadership to make clear to them that the committee has their best interests at heart, particularly on the issues of relocation.

There would not appear to be a need for regular meetings. That communication function can be handled through myself and Fred Bowler [of the LHA] reporting to the FFC. However, plugging the tenants in early on seems to be a necessary and useful thing to do. DCA should have the lead responsibility for keeping the tenants plugged in and for insuring their well-being as the development process unfolds. (Langley Keyes Memo to DCA 10/23/73)

In October, 1973, the Governor signed Chapter 884, "An Act providing for the sale of certain low rent housing projects and providing for



replacement housing and relocation assistance to displaced occupants ...." Once the DCA had determined that a project met its threshold requirements of inadequacy its responsibilities included: (1) approving the proposed redevelopment, including the relocation of existing occupants and the guarantee that at least twenty-five percent of the housing built was for low income tenants; (2) establishing a cooperation agreement with the MHFA to select a developer and, with regard to the question of the particular tenants in the project, finding that,

representatives of all occupants of such existing housing projects, selected by the occupants in a manner approved by the DCA, have fully participated in the development of the project proposal and that all occupants of such existing housing projects have adequate notice and an opportunity to review the proposed project and relocation plan and an opportunity to present their views at a public hearing which shall be held by the DCA.

In all, this may be fairly said to represent an enlightened planning process featuring a genuine concern that there be some low income representation in the final product. And that final product is quite impressive in contrast to what it replaced: The accommodations include air conditioning, wall-to-wall carpeting, fully modern kitchens, two swimming pools, four tennis courts, varied lot sizes, a spacious community center and elegantly designed common grounds. King Lynne has 37.5 percent low income tenants, roughly seven percentage points higher than the MHFA average, but on its face it is a typical, well appointed MHFA mixed income development.

Any good housing for low and moderate income people is noteworthy. The literature is replete with the institutional, economic, social and political reasons why those people tend to be ill-housed. And Kings Lynne, rising from the devastation of America Park, has received its share of public comment, ranging from praise for the cooperation among the tenants, the developer and the state to praise for the role of the private sector.

My argument is that the single feature of Kings Lynne which should challenge most planners is that in the face of the received wisdom of conservative and liberal analysts, a wisdom which informed the intense resistance from planners, funding agencies, consultants and even other low income tenants, there was essentially no screening of the low income tenants. The tenant leadership fought for and won a re-entry guarantee for all interested America Park tenants regardless of record or reputation. They created a housing opportunity for over a hundred low and moderate income people who would otherwise not have enjoyed it. It was not, I claim, "cooperation" between the various actors, nor was it the alleged efficiency of the private sector which brought about this housing opportunity. It was the principled struggle of the tenant leadership. In order to demonstrate how striking a feat it was, we will first examine the ideological background which informed the actual institutional and political pressures the tenant leaders had to overcome to avoid screening. That is, we will first look at the ideological justification for screening and then at both the institutional and political forces that were in this specific case pushing for screening.

#### IDEOLOGY

The issue of low income tenants was the most controversial aspect of this redevelopment process and the basis for much of the delay and hostility that haunted and almost killed it. Many theorists locate the causal center of our housing problems in the inner dynamics of the underclass, either by pointing to individual pathology or the pathology of the entire group. Underlying either aspect of this view is a critique of low income people. This critique informed the opposition to the re-entry

guarantee. We will now examine that view, the culture of poverty approach.

The major assumption made by many "culture of poverty" theorists is that a virtually autonomous subculture exists among the poor; one that is self-perpetuating and self-defeating. This subculture, it is argued, involves a sense of resignation or fatalism and an inability to put off the satisfaction of immediate desires in order to plan for the future. These characteristics are linked with low educational motivation and inadequate preparation for an occupation -- factors that perpetuate unemployment, poverty and despair. (Leacock p. 12)

### Weakness of Failed Individuals

The roots of a negative attitude toward the poor are quite old. In Doing Good, Stephen Marcus reviews Malthus' policy for eliminating poverty by, in effect, eliminating the poor (pp. 51-55). This is a logical extension of viewing poverty in personal rather than in institutional terms. Martin Rein also reviews the historic relation between the failed individual and the "successful" society:

This conception of dependency as a social evil is in part the legacy inherited from the early English Victorians. It is deeply ingrained in our philosophy of individualism and our commitment to industrialization. The critical social problem in the 19th Century was pauperism, a condition defined as individual weakness of character which "poor relief" -- welfare -- only encouraged. (Rein p. 197)

Some theorists saw the unsuccessful individual as immoral while others, holding a less overtly Victorian line, saw their problems more as a failure to resist their environment. Michael Lewis summarizes this move:

Deficiency explanations depart from the moralistic form by holding that, while the individual fails to succeed because of personal characteristics and experiences, these personal inadequacies are not volitional. (Lewis p. 10)

Jacob Riis foresaw this aspect of the culture of poverty view back in 1895 when he said:

Weakness characterizes the slum criminal, rather than wickedness. Chameleon like, he takes on the color of his surroundings. (In Friedman p. 28)

### Pathology of the Failed Subculture

The next step is to locate those surroundings; the source of these self-defeating traits. Oscar Lewis' work provides some of the classic elements in the culture of poverty itinerary: They include disorganization, female headed homes, maternal deprivation, weak ego structure, confusion of sexual identification, inability to defer gratification or plan for the future and a high tolerance for psychological pathology (Valentine p. 68). And Banfield provides a four-part class breakdown of relevant traits which locates these self-defeating ones primarily in the lower class.

Banfield is careful to distinguish between the working class and the lower class. The former is described much like a rough but stable version of the middle class (which is itself described as a less ambitious, visionary and self-perfecting version of the upper class):

As compared to the middle-class individual, (the member of the working class) is little disposed toward either self-improvement or self-expression ... in rearing his children he emphasizes the virtues of neatness and cleanliness, honesty and obedience, and respect for external authority. (Banfield p. 52)

But by the time we work our way down to the lower class, the quantitative steps have produced a qualitative change. The poor really are different. Using his criteria of class -- relative orientation to the future -- the lower class "is radically improvident: whatever he cannot consume immediately he considers valueless. His bodily needs (especially for sex) and his taste for "action" take precedence over everything else -- and certainly over any work routine." (Banfield p. 53) But he is not simply childish and hyperactive. He is also troubled -- diseased:

The stress on "action," risk-taking, conquest, fighting and "smartness" makes lower-class life extraordinarily violent. However, much of the violence is probably more an expression of mental illness than of class culture. The incidence of mental illness is greater in

the lower class than in any of the others. Moreover, the nature of lower-class culture is such that much behavior that in another class would be considered bizarre seems routine. (Banfield p. 54)

This tension between blaming the failed individual and blaming the pathology-producing environment is played out in analyzing the policy implications of the culture of poverty approach to housing problems.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

As Friedman has pointed out, the linkage between things said about that class and things done on its behalf is not a consistent one:

In 1900, to argue that the poor suffered from special disabilities of mind, family, personality and social organization was to argue for doing nothing about the slums. Two generations later, the same arguments implied not less but more government intervention. (Friedman p. 35)

A fundamental building block of liberal reform movements has been that the poor were poor because they lacked the opportunity to advance. The culture of poverty's perspective on the causality of failure, however, is quite different. David J. Brodua summarizes this view:

It is quite true that members of highly sophisticated delinquent gangs often find themselves blocked from whatever occupational opportunities there are, but this seems, often, the end product of a long history of their progressively cutting off opportunity and destroying their own capabilities which may begin in the lower class family .... (Moynihan p. 174)

Hence a prima facie case is made for, perhaps, doing nothing about the failed minority; they would, it goes, not respond to the opportunity. Yet, taking a cynical view of social change ("The germ theory is a powerful engine of social reform," Friedman p. 89), we may discover that the upper classes felt they could not afford to simply ignore the poor. As Justice Peckham put it in 1895, "Tendencies to immorality and crime where there is very close packing of human beings of the lower order in intelligence and morals ... must arouse the attention of the legislator." (Friedman p. 30)

And as Herbert Gans (critically) pointed out seventy years later:

Public funds are still spent largely for protecting the larger society from the self-destructive and anti-social behavior of the lower class rather than for the elimination of the causes that create this behavior. (Gans (b) p. 278)

So although the culture of poverty suggests skepticism about policy aimed at the improvement of the poor, the concern for public safety at the very least dictates some action. But, again, not action aimed outward at the opportunity structure but inward at the families and individuals of poverty. Following Maurice Stein's dictum that "The central sociological problem is to explain the way the social organization of the slum affects family patterns ... such as to promote delinquency" (Stein p. 30), Banfield demands that we concentrate on the dynamics of the delinquent:

Our devotion to the doctrine that all men are created equal discourages any explicit recognition of class-cultural differences and leads to "democratic" -- and often misleading -- formulations of problems: for example, poverty as lack of income and material resources (something external to the individual) rather than an inability or unwillingness to take account of the future or to control impulses (something internal). (Banfield p. 256)

It is critical to remember that our "inward" look at the low income individual will uncover a morass of anti-social pathology. Not just differences but sickness:

What are we to do with the large number of people emerging in modern society who are irresponsible and depraved? The worthy poor create no serious problems -- nothing that money cannot solve. But the unworthy poor? No one has come up with the answers. (Moynihan 1967 speech)

Young people as such differ from the lower class as such in at least one very important respect: they dislike hurting people. When they employ violence, it is as a means rather than as an end in itself. (Banfield p. 169)

Nobody who has responsibility for local housing policy can comfortably state in public that we do not yet have a cure for the emotional problems and behavior patterns of many troubled urban families. No one may base policy on the frank admission that the minority has become the majority in vast sections of our cities and no way has been found to desegregate the schools under such conditions. (Starr p. 9)

At its most aggressive the policy implications of the culture of poverty approach involve radical intervention in the home life of low income families:

Thus, in April 1970, President Nixon sent to H.E.W. a recommendation of his personal physician that all children be tested at age six to identify criminal potential: and that the potential criminal be "treated" by being placed in state-run camps. (Rothstein p. 16; see also Banfield chapter 10)

At its mildest, it lends comfort to those in the middle class who wish to avoid living in economically integrated settings -- and gives pause to those who would plan it unconditionally for others. Indeed, all variants on the culture of poverty view imply some form of segregation or at least strict screening of the underclass. And this approach informed the institutional and political pressures for screening in this particular case.

#### INSTITUTIONAL

This was an MHFA development, and the MHFA is a strict screener and isolator of its poor. Its investigations include house calls on prospective low income residents as well as credit, police, past landlord and employment checks to determine emotional and financial stability. According to an independent Social Audit performed on the Agency in 1974, 21 percent of all low income applicants are rejected; according to a member of the MHFA management staff, 10 percent of that group appeals, and of them only 15 percent win their appeal. Under pressure from a Mass Law Reform class action suit against the Agency for alleged nepotism and arbitrariness in resident selection, greater guarantees for individual due process and rights of appeal were instituted. Nonetheless, the notion of screening remained in effect.

Further, while maintaining a general average of nearly one-third low income tenants, the MHFA tends to isolate its poor and minority tenants. According to the Social Audit, 15 percent of all units have 36 percent of all market tenants; 28 percent have less than one percent of all market tenants; 25 percent of all non-whites are in one development and 63 percent of all non-whites are in just five developments (there are no market tenants in those developments). In general, the Audit found an inverse correlation between the number of market tenants and the number of minority tenants. In sum, even with the imposed individual safeguards, MHFA seems to produce a segregated, elite approach to income mixing. Clearly, there is institutional pressure in an MHFA development to have a high degree of careful screening of low income tenants.

### POLITICAL

The controversy about the morals and mores of the poor was always at issue in America Park. And echoing the largest national debate it was always rather sharply drawn. The public animosity towards the inhabitants was extreme. As the Police Chief S. Craft Scribner put it:

There's nothing of any value in America Park anyway. The only value those people have is as a nuisance. (Boston Globe 4/28/74)

Similar sentiments were expressed by then Mayor David L. Phillips who metaphorically questioned the species of some tenants:

There are good people there, but there are also people living there who I wouldn't call human. (Boston Globe 4/28/74)

The City of Lynn was deeply opposed to Kings Lynne, desiring middle income single family houses instead. The Lynn area Chamber of Commerce; the Rental Housing Association of Greater Lynn; the Lynn Planning Board; the City Council and (more subtly) the Lynn Daily Item all stressed the



problems associated with encouraging more low income tenants. More specifically, there was high level Agency distress at the prospect of an unscreened low income population being blended with moderate and market rate tenants, as the following internal DCA memo displays:

I know that \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are both troubled about the inability of the Task Force to touch base with reality in handling the following issues; in fact both agree the thing could well result in one "fantastic failure" if these matters are not deftly dealt with:

The absolute guarantee that all tenants of America Park shall have an apartment in the new development with no screening whatsoever ... won't work unless there's one helluva re-socialization program put into gear between now and rent-up.

The tenants had previously agreed upon some tenant screening backed by a formal grievance procedure. Eleanor [Wessel] has now been positioned ... so that she now believes in guaranteed readmission and no "forced relocation" (she has always been very uncomfortable with tenants judging tenants). The unspoken hope is that the super-problem families will be convinced, cajoled, etc. into moving off-site. This is risky at best.

How do you attract higher income outsiders to a development, fully tenanted with low-income persons, at least in the early stages, particularly if they include the more severe social problem -- maybe not impossible, but there's no indication that anyone is even anticipating the problem.

I doubt whether other MHFA staff would allow a "no tenant screening" policy. They have said so already but aren't part of the developer's kit process.

So that DCA will not be the only heavy, you might ask Bill [White, head of MHFA] to meet with MHFA staff and hear their views. I doubt whether Bill is even aware of these issues.

This issue should be treated in such a way that it doesn't look too much like everyone is lining up against Eleanor and Dan.

In summary, there was an entire school of thought with a long history; an elite though well-intentioned funding Agency; an aroused and hostile City; and many well placed planners/consultants all of whom assumed there should be strict screening of the underclass. And while this last memo concludes by saying that they must avoid the appearance of people lining up against the tenant leadership, the fact is that they were.

SCREENING

Having reviewed the institutional and ideological pressures that would normally dictate strict screening of the poor, we turn to the question of to what extent there was such screening in this development process. Because of a number of factors -- a zoning challenge from the City, cutbacks in state subsidy programs and the collapse of the national bond market -- there was a lengthy transition time during which it seemed quite likely that the hoped for development would not occur. Our question is, was there significant screening during that period? I argue that, while this is not the sort of question that is easy to answer, (1) the evidence that is given to support the existence of screening is false; (2) there were structural reasons why the leaders feared losing any tenants more than keeping bad ones; and (3) there is positive evidence that no screening occurred at a particularly critical juncture.

(1) Madge Dinitto Associates, which handled the relocation effort, did demographic studies of who left the development at various stages of the transition period. On the basis of their comparison of the 1974 and the 1979 America Park residents, one could apparently find movement in the direction of screening by the traditional culture of poverty criteria -- a suspicion of poor, large, minority, young, female-headed families: The percentage of female-headed households declined from 65.4% to 59%; the percentage of low income residents declined from 91% to 80%; and of those with children, the number of children per unit declined from 3.63 to 3.33.

On the basis of those figures, the Wall Street Journal which wrote two articles on Kings Lynne concluded that there had been definite and significant screening. But the numbers by themselves are misleading. First, the decline in families headed by females is questionable for two

reasons: when the first survey was done, there was no trust of the Dinitto team and hence a natural fear that admission of the existence of a male might hurt family benefits. That trust was earned over the years, and so people would be more likely to admit their true status without fear of reprisal. The other reason for doubting these figures is that the LHA was typically lax in investigating these matters in contrast to the MHFA which had taken over that responsibility. There is no reason to place adequate confidence in the base line for that data.

Second, the number of minority families actually rose by five percentage points, and the number of elderly declined by 1.7 percentage points. These figures do not support the assertion of screening by traditional culture of poverty criteria as they are manifested in American social housing policy.

Third, all of those elderly were low income, thus reducing the eleven percentage point drop to 9.3 percentage points; moreover, some of that 9.3 percentage point drop in low income families was due to natural attrition in family size, i.e., a smaller family dividing up essentially the same financial package. And some of that drop was accounted for by the fact that America Park residents got many on-site maintenance and construction jobs: fully one half of the on-site maintenance jobs went to America Park residents. In essence, many of the same families were being demographically redefined, not simply cleared out or radically altered. The apparent reduction in low income families is not indicative of real screening.

(2) The political situation was such as to encourage the retention of a critical mass of America Park tenants, not to pick and choose among those deemed most worthy. As tenant leader Betty Dempsey put it,

We had gone from about 400 families to 166, and we were worried that the city could just disperse us throughout the city. We knew that if

we went below 100, we would never get it. So when social services came on, our goal was not to lose anybody ....

An informational letter sent by the tenant association to all tenants in January, 1974 made a strong effort to discourage relocation:

We are concerned to give people an opportunity to move to housing they can afford elsewhere if they so choose; but, basically, the America Park Association has been most concerned that present residents of AP be given maximum opportunity if they so choose to live in the new development.

It is very important to emphasize that a guarantee for rehousing in the new development will ONLY be given to those households who continue to remain in America Park. So, if you are interested in a place in the new development, DO NOT LEAVE America Park. (1/16/74)

Interim Manager Michael Sherman's 1975 progress report to the DCA summarized the overall context in which the development functioned:

LHA clearly has been squeezed by budgetary problems, accompanying the delayed closing, and is likely to be affected even more strongly the longer the delay persists ... For well discussed political reasons we cannot afford to allow on-site population to fall much below the present 166 level. (9/9/75)

As Dick Allen of Mass Law Reform put it, "A major strategy of the Lynn rezoning law suit was to play on the fear of the tenants that they would numerically dissipate even if they won the suit." And the numbers bore those fears out: From 330 on-site households in February, 1973, they saw their population shrink to 166 in September, 1975. The Dukakis moratorium on 707 units made it difficult to locate off-site relocation units, leaving them with only 705 acquisitions which were time consuming and hard to come by. But the heart of the tenants' fears were not technical but were political, as the following unsigned 1974 memo sent to a high staff member of one of the lead Agencies underscores:

The tenants and the developer kit team are now working under the presumption that tenants who are temporarily relocated off-site could conveniently be "forgotten" by future officials, especially if they are larger or problem families. Therefore, they are planning to move people with A.P. to make large enough parcels of land available for demolition and new construction ....

The memo went on to say how this was "most likely impractical and certainly a relocation expert's nightmare," which highlights the fact that the attempt not to lose America Park tenants was both real and counter to the professional grain.

(3) A more detailed look at who left America Park at a particularly revealing time provides evidence that there was no screening. Given a historic turnover rate of roughly 25 percent and given the uncertainty surrounding this development process, it is difficult to determine exactly why those who left before the closing did so. But to leave after the closing, after the guarantee of re-entry to an obviously superior yet affordable housing environment, carried the clearest implication of somehow being forced out. This is the group to be looked at more closely.

Of the 51 families who left after the September, 1976 closing, 29 bought their own homes, 11 rented on the private, unsubsidized market, and 11 moved into low income subsidized housing. Families in the first two categories may be said to represent the more stable families who lack only start-up capital to buy or rent in the private, more expensive market. A high level InterAgency memo captured this in discussing relocation options:

... Because families are showing a preference to relocate off-site rather than move temporarily to bottom of hill, and because it is the better organized and more stable families who are able to find and afford accommodations off-site; and conversely, the less desirable families who are staying ... the Task Force should consider a slightly revised relocation plan which would facilitate off-site relocation rather than discourage it. (July 29, 1974)

In handwriting, with an arrow pointing to the words, "the less desirable families," it says, "Slur unintended. Requires care in making the point." Our point here is not about slurs or the problems in approaching this issue with the tenants but rather that the available evidence leads, using the traditional culture of poverty criteria, to a

conclusion of either no screening or even "reverse" screening.

Families in the third category -- those who moved to low income subsidized housing may be suspect here, for what family would voluntarily move from what Kings Lynne was about to be to yet another subsidized project? Yet a family-by-family accounting of those who moved during that period and who fell into the purely low income category turned up two families who were having trouble in their new living quarters; one for rent problems, the other for more serious infractions. One family had moved into another (strictly screened) MHFA development; three families had insisted on keeping their pets; another had just barely moved up in income to the moderate income level, and so on with the others. Only one family exhibiting the sorts of problems screening is supposed to detect and prevent were to be found.

What screening as there may be said to have existed was informal and ultimately voluntary. As tenant leader Doris Lynstrom recalls:

Part of my job was to tell the hard core, the really hard core, that although they had a choice, we didn't think they had any chance of making it. And some of them moved off and took the \$4,000 relocation money. But some of them stayed and I thought we were going to have trouble with them, but we really haven't. There have been one or two things with their kids, but nothing serious, really. It's very hard to tell who is going to make it or not. We may lose some.

Screening by any traditional criteria has to be, from the point of view of the prospective tenant, involuntary and external. In this case, given the long side-by-side history many of these people had; given the coming of an extremely tightly run development and given the existence of a \$4,000 relocation fee to those choosing to leave, it is neither surprising nor threatening to our position to acknowledge the existence of some internal, voluntary "screening." As we have shown, the representative case was that of the person who stayed despite their history and the public

perception of their abilities. While this aspect of the housing development process is not amenable to cut-and-dried proofs, there is no question that we can best capture the spirit and reality of the non-screening policy as the provision of a housing opportunity for those who would not otherwise have it. As the experienced interim manager Gerald Tuckman put it:

People would pay seven months back rent and come up and hug me. They would have been knocked off with a normal development process.

#### THE GUARANTEE AND THE LEADERSHIP

Thus far we have seen that there was nearly universal opposition to the guarantee. This was the most volatile aspect of tenant involvement in the development process, challenging as it did a traditionally critical prerogative of agencies, developers and consultants. It also heightened the development's vulnerability to a hostile city and brought up issues of personal self-worth on the part of the tenants. It is hard to overstate the opposition to the non-screening guarantee. As tenant leaders Dan and Eleanor Wessel put it:

They never wanted to give us a guarantee, none of them. Not the MHFA, the DCA, the FCC, none of them. Even Langley [Keyes] was dead against it. In fact it was one of the biggest, most brutal fights we ever had with Langley. Other than Ed Blackman, we're the only ones who thought it would work.

The guarantee represented a form of amnesty, and as Betty Dempsey, one of the original tenant leaders recalls, it engendered resistance both before and after it was in place, from insiders and outsiders alike:

We were getting so nervous about the guarantee. I spent three months going door to door, and when I'd hear a rumor that so and so was bad mouthing it, I'd go there and talk to them. Dan and Eleanor and myself had a meeting, got hold of a copy of an MHFA lease and took it to a meeting of the tenants. We pointed out that not a person there, including ourselves, could pass this and get in. "They're going to take your homes, they're going to build this beautiful thing, then

you'll be on the outside looking in," we told them.

The guarantee always came up. Everybody wants to know if it can be broken. The City wanted to know, the developer wanted to know. Even to this day, the management will question it, saying, "Why did certain families have certain guarantees?" If there were any leak or any weakness in the people believing in the guarantee, it would have been gone. It would have been gonzo!

It was one thing to get a guarantee in the face of the culture of poverty view whose policy implications were to essentially lump all lower class people in one undesirable package which market tenants would avoid. That is a powerful pressure, but one can argue against it that not all of "those people" are so anti-social. The thrust of the liberal reforms of the 1960's (and before) was the provision of individual opportunity in defiance of group labels and prejudices typified either by racial slurs or the blanket condemnation of all America Park tenants. Certainly many of the key people in this transformation were committed to individual opportunity and what seems like a common sense approach which avoided the misapplication of group stigma. A representative attempt to protect individual rights in that way is provided by Herman Idler (1971) who cautions landlords to guard against categorical discrimination:

Instability exists among all age groups, all economic levels and among all races. Therefore all applicants must be treated on an individual basis with a uniform method of processing each application (p. 25. See also Struyk p. 107)

The notion of "unbiased" screening is difficult to argue against and can generally be counted on to carry the day in a heated community meeting -- and certainly in a cool planning agency boardroom. The attraction it holds for tenants is intensified when one acknowledges the existence of troubled individuals in the project. It may be impossible to distinguish a priori between those tenants who are only temporarily acting out because of their housing environment and those who may continue regardless of how they



are housed, but to their neighbor that is a moot point. The liberal call to judge each person on their individual merits in accordance with established standards not only has the power of the individualistic ideology, but it also has the power of tacitly promising those who are (or believe themselves to be) good tenants that those they believe to be bad tenants will be exposed and expelled. It has seductive appeal to many, for to publicly oppose it may be viewed as an admission of personal inadequacy; a fear of being fairly judged.

Hard as it is to argue against this view, one can see difficulties for many low income prospective tenants when they have to meet Idler's not untypical criteria by which those "individual" judgements are made. Here we find that they get more points for higher levels of education and higher rankings for holding skilled rather than unskilled jobs. In fact, despite the blanket assertion of class/race blindness, he has unknowingly introduced in a structural way class and race bias. Such criteria used to select tenants where there were no prior assurances about low income or minority representation would predictably lead to an essentially white, middle class development. In a development process such as the Kings Lynne example where there was prior assurance about some level of low income representation, it (or similar criteria) would lead to an unknown but predictably large number of America Park residents losing out on this housing opportunity. In short, a few of the tenant leaders had a different perspective on the notion of individual opportunity and fair, externally imposed criteria than anyone else in this development process. And they successfully acted on their beliefs:

The turning point was a tenant meeting where Fred Bowler of the LHA stood up and said, "You will not get in if you owe rent or if you have unruly kids or if you're not a clean housekeeper" and 75 strong applauded him. Dan and I talked about it. Knowing those tenants as

well as we do our own family, not one of them, including Dan and I, would have survived it. If they were behind on their rent they thought it was a legitimate cause. It was legitimate for them but not for anyone else. That's what decided us to be sneaky about getting the guarantee. We decided that we were a union and we had to protect every tenant and in order to do that we had to have a guarantee.

So we threatened we were going to march everybody, knowing that we couldn't, and we got the guarantee! (Eleanor Wessel)

The tenant leaders violated common sense; the shared dominant ideology of individualism; and the traditional prerogatives of external resource allocating agencies. They were "unreasonable," but they were heeded. This was the most existentially loaded aspect of tenant involvement in this entire process. There were no pre-grooved tracks for them to follow or to modify, yet their actions were not random. In order to determine where in their history and situation this re-entry demand came from we must turn to the pre-development community organizing phase of their work. This will help us answer the questions of what empowered and informed the tenant leadership in their struggle.

In order to do this we must first locate them in terms of the problems they faced and the social context in which they went about solving them.

MANAGEMENT AT AMERICA PARK

The historic bad treatment of low income tenants by owners and managers of social housing provides ample incentive for tenants to seek drastic change. Few people in positions of authority at such Authorities are well suited to the task. Hartman and Carr summarize such findings:

Our survey has shown that the men and women who make basic public housing policy at the local level are in no sense representative of the client group the programs are intended to serve. A substantial proportion of the commissioners do not favor ... many of the "liberalization" trends, including increased tenant participation. [They] act as a brake on the program by failing to keep abreast of new trends and techniques and by representing a microcosm of middle-class, white views about the poor, their housing and the responsibilities of government. (Hartman and Carr, in Gordon p. 470)

The roots of mismanagement run deep at America Park. To get a flavor of underclass powerlessness and humiliation, we need only review one attempt to get some leaking roofs repaired. It begins with a December, 1953 letter from the Lynn Housing Authority to the State Housing Board:

You will recall previous conversations pertaining to certain buildings located in our America Park Project, wherein a driving rain storm caused the rain to penetrate the brick walls, affecting damage to the interior walls, floors and property of the tenants ... We are continuing to receive calls from tenants who are living in many of these buildings, and it is known that clothing, furniture etc. is being damaged because of the rain.

A series of prickly correspondence ensued, leading to an angry letter dated November 7, 1955:

These items have been brought to the attention of the State Housing Board many times since 1953; many conferences have been held on the matter; much correspondence has transpired; many representatives of waterproofing concerns have visited the project to see for themselves. However the heavy rains still continue to pour through the brick walls into many apartments, destroying the paint on the walls and ceilings, damaging the plastered walls, and ruining the furniture of tenants ... It isn't a healthy sign for housing to have to truck sawdust to a number of our apartments when a storm is forecast. Have you any good answers to give them when they call your home at night, Saturday, Sunday or holidays?

More such correspondence ensued, culminating in an innocent-sounding response from the State Housing Board some 30 months after the first recorded complaint:

Some three or four weeks ago I wrote you asking that you have a survey made of your buildings at the America Park project and then give us as accurate a report as you could relative to the number of buildings or portions thereof that need waterproofing. Up to this time I have not received a reply to that request ... Once again I am asking for your report and I would like to have it by the first of August when Mr. Dreyer will have returned from his vacation and will be able to give his attention to this matter.

And so it went, confirmed by countless first-person stories combining both on-site managerial incompetence with the unconcern of the State Housing Authority. And so it continued well up until the early 1970's, as highlighted by the clash between the new interim manager and the old site manager whom he replaced. The use of staged construction meant the need for an interim manager. Having been screened by representatives from the LHA, MLA, and GBCD, Gerald Tuckman became interim manager in June, 1974. In his first week he was told by the on-site manager, Justin McCarthy, with whom he would temporarily overlap, to carry out four evictions. Believing that McCarthy had followed appropriate procedures Tuckman had constables deliver the notices to the tenants. Then he looked into it and made the following written report:

In one case, the tenant was laid off for the summer and had difficulty coming up with some rent money (although he now has paid it all). No one had personally contacted him to see what his problem was. In another case, the tenant was in fact making payments and continued to do so, removing her overdue balance. In a third case, the tenant had a request for a rent reduction in as of October, 1973 (in writing) and it had never been acted on. In the fourth case, the tenant had fallen behind because he had difficulties with the Armed Services and his wife did not use money sent home for the rent. He said he was home permanently now and we set up a partial payment plan which has significantly reduced his balance. (Memo to DCA 7/17/74)

Good management was seen by the LHA as a privilege unearned by the poor, not a right. Some tenants were singled out for special treatment;

some were threatened for internal political reasons; due process was virtually non-existent; serious problems ignored and trivial ones potentially blown out of proportion and basic maintenance ignored. In April, 1974, two young children were playing in an abandoned refrigerator that should have been removed. They were both suffocated in it.

### THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

The America Park Associates was created in the political climate of the 1960's. That climate may be characterized, in its most militant political form, as an expansion of assumed rights; the attempt to transform the privileges of the few into the rights of the many. That attempt took place in virtually every social institution and included claims of many groups. The agitation of that era was an agitation for power, a key feature of which was a distrust of the ways in which major decisions were made. The decision-making privilege was to be transformed into a shared right. This era infused certain professionals as well as low income tenants with a spirit of possibility through control. Little was seen as fixed and unmoveable. It was a supportive setting for low income tenant groups, an easily identified set of visible victims. As tenant leader Doris Lynstrom put it,

It was the right time. It was the 60's, everything was going on, all this change was going on, and people were trying to find causes somewhere or other. All we had to say was "America Park" and people wanted to get in on it and do things. And the people who were running the Association just kept cool heads and said, "Aha, yes ... OK ... We'll take you, and you ..." and we just took the best of what was offered to us.

It was an electric time, where the underclass got a taste of the fruits of its militance -- and the usefulness of the theatrical tease. As tenant Sue Woolrich put it, "You didn't exactly threaten, but you sort of

threatened." Tenant Bob Cashman added, "We would get some people to go to hearings, but as far as demonstrations, it was usually more the threat of doing it rather than the doing of it itself." The latent power of the implicit threat; the fact of strong and trusted leadership; and the supportive political climate of the 1960's are captured in an incident recalled by Doris Lynstrom:

I almost got arrested at the State House. My feet were tired from standing and I decided to sit down. Jesus! A big state cop tells me "Get up!" I said, "Please let me sit here for a minute, just five minutes and I'll get up, I promise you." Well, what happened was that when I sat down everybody thought I was sitting in, and they all sat down. We were demonstrating for better public housing, and we were there with Mass Union of Public Housing, and we had brought people in from Lynn and from all over the state. And my feet hurt and I wanted to sit down.

But of course the tenant leadership did not simply push people and programs around -- they were guided by principles which explain their effectiveness and attraction to the progressive planner. And the leadership did not simply pick and choose among the various offerings that came their way -- they transcended them in face of considerable opposition. This next section examines how they dealt with their housing problems and how certain basic operating principles arose by which their particular impact can be identified and their ultimate transcendence of even an ostensibly friendly development process can be explained.

#### COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AT AMERICA PARK

The community organizing that went on at America Park was, in its significant aspects, typical of numerous such efforts which occurred throughout the late 1960's. Such organizing efforts have been analyzed by Piven and Cloward (1977) and their categories capture the America Park experience. The organizing at America Park reflected a three-part

consciousness raising scheme presented by Piven and Cloward. This scheme consists of a loss of legitimacy for the "system", a new assertion of "rights" the implications of which are demands for change; and a new found sense of efficacy on the part of people who previously felt themselves helpless to change things (Piven and Cloward, pp. 3-4). It is not difficult to see how much of the "system" would lose its claims of legitimacy given the living conditions the America Park tenants experienced. Our section on community organizing will explore how the tenant leadership demanded new "rights" and made those demands stick -- how they came to believe in and act on their new found sense of efficacy.

We will also see how the tenants moved from what I term the "passive" stage they presented themselves to the world as being in a certain way, as demanding certain sorts of collective treatment. In the "active" phase, they moved to demanding that they themselves make certain key decisions; that they in effect seize control. This movement is captured by Si Kahn's statement that,

The tactics of the Civil Rights Movement were designed to achieve the right to sit at a lunch counter ... They were not meant to help poor people achieve economic and political control of their communities. Today, it is understood that significant economic and political influence by the poor is an absolute necessity if their lives are to be changed for the better in any measurable degree ... the struggle for the rights of poor people has finally moved into the power arena within American society. (Kahn p. 33)

Along with the raised consciousness comes a heightened sense of personal well-being, a phenomenon which as William Ryan points out, is well discussed:

Self esteem is dependent on being capable of influencing one's environment to one's own benefit ... A number of reports have been published suggesting that acting as a group in one's own behalf -- in a sit-in, in the development and program of a block organization -- does, in fact, have precisely this effect: increase in confidence, effectiveness, sense of well-being -- of the characteristics that add up to good mental health. (Ryan pp. 152-3. See also Valentine p. 72.)

Emile Durkheim put it most eloquently: "All man's pleasure in acting, moving and exerting himself implies the sense that his efforts are not in vain and that by walking he has advanced." (Durkheim p. 248)

The community organizing at America Park represented a heightened sense of self on the part of the lower income tenant population, the cause and result of a political struggle which in effect delegitimized a portion of the housing system; created the demands for new rights and revealed an unexplored potential for efficacy by certain types of people. We will concentrate on the work, the struggle, the pain and the dilemmas involved. But we should begin with one ultimate moving force: the joy of empowerment:

My radicalism used to be all mouth. Radicals keep me young. That's why I like the kids. I admire people with dedication. I used to run around with all them hippies. I really enjoyed the 60's. I was content to be a woman on welfare with two kids, until the 60's. Someone said, "Is that the image you want your kids to have of you?" I said, "No." My kids say, "My mother did this, my mother did that," they think I'm Superwoman. They respect me. I just liked it all. The hollering and screaming. The sense of power. I just loved it. (Doris Lyndstrom)

While it is true that the America Park tenants were confronted with underfunding, bad management, city hostility and more, their struggle was in some sense with themselves. They fought against externally derived problems, but the best way to understand their history is to see how their leadership overcame the internal impacts (the effects on the tenants) of those problems. The internal impacts may be broadly classified as problems of (1) Isolation and (2) Low Self Esteem. Our analysis of how they dealt with various facets of those problems yields the principles which led logically to the demand for the re-entry guarantee for all America Park tenants.



The two principles which may be said to have guided them can be called collectivity and control. The successful tenant leaders were at great pains to insist on some form of collectivity in many different aspects of their experiences. This involved them in fighting against any form of individuation that they felt might weaken the resolve or the political potential of their group. It also involved them in using that unity to gain control over the development process and in using the notion of control in turn to reinforce their sense of collectivity.

### ISOLATION

A traditional way of keeping underclass people disorganized is to use both rewards and punishments as divisive tools. As long as tenants can be kept busy comparing their individual treatment to that of their neighbor's (especially if there are inconsistencies in that treatment), collective action on behalf of the tenants as a whole is unlikely. Dan and Eleanor had seen this divide other housing projects and were not about to let it occur again:

At the Curwin Circle Project, the Housing Authority got the tenant's organization to agree that if you weren't a clean housekeeper you wouldn't get a refrigerator, etc., and the tenant's organization went along with that, and it really killed Curwin Circle Associates.

When we got \$600,000 in Modernization money Fred Bowler [head of the LHA] said that the Tenant Board should decide who should get or not get on the basis of good housekeeping etc. Dan and I thought about it a lot and we went into the Board making those decisions, and no one on the Board, including ourselves, would have gotten a refrigerator or a stove because our morals or our housekeeping weren't perfect.

By the time we had eliminated everyone on the Board, they decided that everyone should get one after after all. But that's how you had to do it in those days. You had to prove to the tenants that they were going to lose. Nobody sees their own faults. Only their neighbor's. But it can be shown to them. It's an educational process.

This was a time when funds could be found to fix some of the obvious physical problems of the project. But it was absolutely critical that the emerging leadership at America Park retain a form of unity about how those funds were allocated. It was critical, that is, if the tenant organization was not to disintegrate into invidious comparisons and backstabbing. And it was critical if there was to be confidence on the part of the followers that their leaders were not simply in it for themselves. This was the accusation leveled at past, unsuccessful leaders. Doris Lyndstrom was one of the original leaders of this successful organizing drive, and she was placed in the position of having to turn down immediate personal relief in order to achieve credibility and ultimate strength:

The head of the LHA came out to my place and told me he was putting all new screens on my windows, was going to give me anything I wanted fixed! And I said, "Fine, are you going to do it for all the tenants? Because if you're not, I don't want it." He said, "Oh yes, we're going to do it for everybody." And I said, "Where are you going to start?" And he said, "At the bottom of the hill, and we're going to do your apartment first." I said, "I will wait my turn." And my turn never came.

There was no way she was going to allow her turn to come in isolation from the rest of the tenants. The tenant leaders were engaged in building a collectivity which could make things happen, and the leaders knew that they could not be isolated from the led.

Their struggle inevitably led them to step on some toes, and as Doris remembers, even the initially supportive outside Agency would use a divide-and-conquer approach. The tenants, however, adapted:

The Lynn Economic Opportunity staff got scared of our power, because we were telling them what to do and in the rest of the city they were telling people what to do. So they started digging in a little unrest with people up here. So I started a group called the Tenant Affairs Board (TAB), named after my favorite drink. And so everybody who didn't want to work with Eleanor worked on mine. What they didn't realize was that I'm reporting back to Eleanor.

People would call and ask, "Are you part of America Park Associates?" and I'd say, "Why?" And they might say, "Well, that's a really strong group, you should get behind it," and I'd say, "Oh, definitely, we plan to soon." Or if they said, "They're a bunch of scum," I'd say, "Yes, I know, and that's why I'm working so hard to do this without them." That's what we had to do. It got so bad, Eleanor even questioned me one time! I would sign my letters, Doris Lynstrom, T.A.B. and, depending on where it was going, I would add or leave off, "America Park Associates."

There really were heated personal and political splits, some uncooled for decades, but as a political unit, as a face to the world, they insisted on unity, and they manipulated the manipulators who would divide them from one another. The concern with unity in the face of genuine internal divisions eventually became so powerful that it even defined the public persona of the two tenant leaders who came to dominate the process:

It's funny how you learn. You notice how Dan sits and doesn't say much. When we first started, when MHFA came in, Dan and I were fighting constantly. He wanted his opinion, and I wanted my opinion, and we were really at each other's throats. We were at the point of saying, "Hey, the hell with it." So we sat down and made the decision that there could only be one spokesman and that would be me. Because I had a tendency to be nastier than Dan. Dan most generally will make the decisions and I'll carry them out. He does all the writing and all the reading. The more they saw us fighting, the easier they felt it was to get between us. We would disagree here, but not at meetings. No way my mouth could do it without Dan, although people may think that.

The first principle, then, that guided the tenants in their attempt to overcome the isolation (and all efforts to deepen that isolation) of the tenants was that the tenants must be seen and function as a collectivity. Their unity came to define them. But they were not content to simply demand that there not be divisive allocation decisions or that they respond collectively to externally based attempts to sow discord and isolation. The tenants also transcended their internal isolation -- their internal splits and divisions -- through the principle of tenant control.

The tenant leaders were primarily white, but they made important bridges to the black residents by use of their friendships with black

people who were respected within the black community. The distinction between the Northern, more formally educated blacks and their Southern counterparts, however, complicated the picture. The latter group was suspicious of the former, and the former was the source of the black leadership. Betty Dempsey's approach to this problem characterized the demand for participation -- control of one's own fate -- as a tool for overcoming internal group isolation:

The southern blacks here said that although there were blacks on the Board they didn't share the same culture. So I said, "For gosh sakes, if you really feel that way, get in there and represent yourselves! Get active. Get involved. And they did. They started going to meetings. They had been shoved around by urban renewal into this horrible place, and I told them if they didn't want this to happen again, they would have to get involved. And they did.

I used the same approach with the Hispanic population here. I said, "Why should you let a white person or a black person decide your fate? You should get in there; get active, have a say." But the Hispanic were themselves never a really close community, they have their own long standing splits, and they never got as active here as they might have, certainly not as active as the blacks.

The effort to unite all such groups were at least successful enough to avoid rigid, dysfunctional divisions along those lines as the tenants moved through the development process. From what I could learn, the divisions that existed and persisted among the America Park tenants fell more on personal or political lines than on racial or ethnic lines. Of interest is the approach on the part of the organizing leadership, the second principle that guided them in their attempt to overcome the tenants' socially imposed isolation from one another: That principle of action was that to overcome this impact of oppression one must take matters into one's own hands. One must take control. This was not a matter of avoiding favoritism or demanding a unified self-definition. It was a matter of moving the oppressed to the decision-making side. It was the demand for control.

A third way in which America Park tenants were isolated was politically. This is another way of saying they were powerless as long as they could be politically isolated from similar constituencies. Their early leadership, however, was mindful of the potential for empowerment that the 1960's represented. It became the "natural" way for many groups to improve their lot. So they transcended their political isolation by forging alliances with the many like-minded political groups and individuals. As early activist Sue Woolrich remembers:

We demonstrated to back Sandy Winterberger, a real rabble rouser from another project in Lynn. We had a City Wide housing advisory board and we pulled the elderly into it. Since we were all under the same housing authority and the DCA, anytime we wanted to buck them we would get everybody together and we'd go.

Another activist, Bob Cashman, points to the basis for their move into coalition building:

Interstate 96 was going to divide us from the rest of the city, because it would go between us and the school. The kids would have to go through a tunnel to get to the school. We felt that we were going to be isolated. So we were against it, because we were isolated as it was. So we joined with some environmental groups and got it stopped.

Ultimately the point of this approach of transcending isolation was to get more for their own troops. And their experience in moving the political system through their coalition efforts helped them become adept at moving the system for themselves. As Doris recalls:

In the beginning the City Council laughed at us. They thought we were really funny. Ha ha ha. Until the election when I took every person in this project and another one in Lynn down to city hall and registered them. Then I told the City Councillor for this ward, "You either do something for us or I'll put you out of office." And he laughed. And we put him out of office.

The point here, of course, is that to be effective they had to make good their threats, they had to win their battles. And to do that with any constituency they had to have developed the active collectivity which was precisely what the tenant leadership developed to overcome their isolation

from one another and from the outside world. That isolation could be caused by divisive allocation decisions; by ethnic/racial/geographic divisions or by political segregation from the mainstream.

The tactics the tenant leaders used in the context of the supportive atmosphere of the 1960's was such as to stress the collective and controlling potential of the tenants. This allowed them to function as an effective political force. It was a combination of guiding principles and tactics which involved the tenants not only rejecting the status quo, but also rejecting the available remedies. The leadership insisted that the tenants all be treated by external forces in certain ways and used the credibility and power thus engendered to actively make a difference in the world. To get more.

These principles also informed the leadership's efforts to confront the second major internal problem for America Park tenants: low self esteem.

#### LOW SELF ESTEEM

Their inability to control the deprivation of rats, hot steam pipes, balky stoves and poorly fused electrical circuits tells them that they are failures as autonomous individuals. (Rainwater p. 30)

Scobie (p. 24) and Goffman (p. 146) have spoken of the self-fulfilling prophecy of negative labeling of either individuals or whole groups of lower income people. Birnbaum and Mogey point out how,

This ... has been injurious to the personality of the masses, saddling them with a "self-hate" complex and a sense of impotence and inferiority which tends to destroy upward aspirations and to develop a feeling of imprisonment and of being unwanted, from which it is almost impossible to escape. (p. 49)

Not only are such labeled, stigmatized people looked down on and not only do some of them tend to internalize the negative social reaction, but

they ultimately feel trapped, powerless. Eric Fromm's deprecatory description of "mass man" captures this sort of individual:

He does not experience himself as the active bearer of his own powers and richness, but as an impoverished "thing" dependent on powers outside of himself, unto whom he has projected his living substance. (Fromm p. 124)

Accompanying the material isolation of the America Park tenants was a profound psychological isolation manifested through passivity, dependence and self-hatred. Some local manifestations of this are discussed on pp. 56-61. The tenants did in fact have a collective self-image, but it was often quite negative and dysfunctional. In terms of the first, "passive," stage of reaction, the leadership was at great pains to stress the more positive aspects of lower income tenant autonomy and self-worth. From early on in the planning process they were concerned that the spontaneity that characterized much of the mutual self-help in America Park might be lost:

Eleanor indicated that all of the services used now are done by people inside the development. They include going to the store for the elderly, painting the insides of units ... The mechanic who fixes the cars fixes everyone's cars. Someone asked if a daycare program being considered for smaller children would be informal or organized and Eleanor stated that it would work well as long as it didn't become too structured. (AP Planning Committee 4/26/74)

The tradeoff between the informally organized (and rarely funded) community services tenants provided one another, and the potentially over-professionalized services envisioned for the new development was a very real one. It was not that the leadership was blind to the obvious social needs in the project, but rather that they insisted on some public or planning recognition of the extent of effective and caring individuals working without official credentials in the project. The leaders knew that they had to rely on outside professionals, on the outside world in general, in order to improve their situation. But they insisted on collective

dignity even in the face of the pain that this exposure -- the call for help -- occasioned:

And when we really got into it, we threw everything to the wind. We dragged ourselves down. Instead of living here quietly, we really had to show them how bad things were. And instead of people saying, "Oh God, look how badly people are living, we'll help them!" they said, "Look how bad they are, how rotten. They deserve to live there," and that kind of thing.

We overcame that because we knew we were better. We knew we weren't what they were saying we were.

They insisted on a positive group identity and fought those who would blame them for their situation. When that call for help was in front of the Legislature, they even risked the loss of key political support. As Eleanor says:

When legislation was being heard at the Urban Affairs committee, Vin McMannus informed the Committee that they had to do something about America Park because it was all prostitutes, drug addicts and alcoholics. And I went bullshit. Langley held me back from saying anything there, saying, "Don't blow it here." But at the next FFC meeting I hit him with both barrels and he resigned from the Committee and never came back. He said he didn't mean it that way, but he said it that way.

However desperate Eleanor was to transform America Park, she would not tolerate the culture of poverty view being used as an opportunistic peg on which to hang a case for reform legislation. One of the great tensions for the leaders was to provide evidence of squalor to audiences ready to give the least favorable interpretation to it while maintaining their own collective self esteem. There had to be a collective, public insistence on their self worth. There had to be an insistence that their real problem was the lack of opportunity. Given some of their direct experiences with a few of their neighbors, there had to be a leap of faith.

Just as the leadership would tolerate no divisive external allocations, they would not tolerate external slandering accusations. Just



as all America Park tenants would be treated equally concerning rewards and punishments, so too would they be treated on an equal (and dignified) footing with middle income residents throughout the city. This public posture, and the credibility it helped create within the America Park community, stood the tenants in good stead in their "active" phase of overcoming low self esteem. In this phase they came to deal with professionals, helping and otherwise, at least as equals. And often as superiors. This was not the typical way in which underclass people, even the leadership, relate to, or are related to by, professionals.

Some writers have commented on how the middle class professional may attempt to change some fundamental way-of-being of the lower class (Gans (b) pp. 148, 152, 261, 274; Smith & Fried Chapter 7). Others have commented on the tendency to feel that the lower class must be led (Friere p. 46). The element common to such critiques is the belief that in failing to see past its own values, the middle class implicitly or explicitly makes harsh judgment about the relative worth of the lower class and that this has consequences when the classes meet in a professional-client relationship. Hans H. Harms summarizes much of the behavior being criticized:

Many professionals cannot help assuming that the low income users are, in some sense, inferior to themselves. The professional's relative affluence, social status and sense of power seem to suggest to them that they must have some human qualities which have been denied to those for whom they are making critical life decisions. This sense of an innate difference between themselves and their ultimate clients projects them into the role of custodians, looking after social orphans and incompetents who could not be expected to speak responsibly on their own behalf. (in Turner p. 191)

THE DEVELOPMENT OF KINGS LYNNE

This redevelopment process illustrates such attitudes on the part of some professionals, but it also reveals a rebellion on the part of the clients, one which, as Dan and Eleanor recall, began early on in the days of the Fact Finding Committee:

General Electric paid for the FFC printing costs, but we didn't want them to own GBCD. Clorice Newmann is the wife of a big VP at GE, and one of the heads of Housing Opportunities Incorporated, one of the main groups behind the FFC. She stayed in a little longer than some, but she couldn't handle the tenants either. She wanted no tenant guarantees and we just killed her. We were very vicious in those days. We were going to get what we wanted or we weren't going to get anything. If you want to call that vicious.

I think some of them just wanted a name for themselves. We used to call them the "do-gooders" and we used to get a bit aggravated with them. And they got so they couldn't take it any more. We used them when we needed them, and we needed their pull. They were dangerous. That's an awful way to feel, but we didn't want them making decisions. Many of them got their feelings hurt [my emphasis].

The tenants wanted to transform the externally enjoyed privilege of making policy decisions into an assumed right of the tenants. They wanted more than a forum for expression and input, they wanted an actual say in the management of people and things. The initial insistence on collective self-worth became translated into the demand for power -- the power to make their own policy decisions. And in this quest they did not simply use or dominate well-intentioned volunteers; they inverted traditional power relations with hard-nosed politicians. As Eleanor put it:

Everything we did was hard. Even at the meeting to sign the agreement. I'm very proud of this story since McGee is now the Speaker of the House. We're all signing and taking pictures in Lew Crampton's office. It was Dan and my decision to invite McGee there because when it came time to move our people in, he couldn't say he didn't know about it because there he was right in the picture.

We were also having a policy meeting, and he got up and got Lew Crampton in a corner. He wanted them to move a particular high rise from the top to the bottom of the hill and you could hear them discuss it. And generally Dan makes the snowballs and I throw them and finally we got fed up with it and I went over to them and said, "Hey wait a minute. If you're making a decision on this development you better come to the table because here is where the decisions are made."

And Tommy McGee turned around and said, "He works for me and I'll talk to him any time I want to." And I turned around and said, "Yes, but you work for me and if you're going to talk to him about our development, you'll do it here at the table." And he came over. Well, those were the things you had to do.

As we stated at the outset of the thesis, the planning mandate for the development of Kings Lynne was well intentioned with regard to keeping the tenants plugged into the process and ensuring that their well-being was assured. The tenant leadership, however, wanted to help set the terms of the debate and to be there meaningfully at decision time. A representative piece of evidence for this is found in minutes of an early Task Force meeting:

Eleanor expressed the tenants' desire to participate in what goes into the Developer's Kit after their initial input. She felt that if the tenants decide on something, and one of the agencies involved decides against what the tenants want, then there must be a process which will guarantee that the issue goes back to the tenants at their level. (Minutes, Inter-Agency Task Force 12/13/73)

The first draft of the Memo of Understanding between the DCA and the MHFA did not contain any specific reference to tenant input in the decision making process. The legislative mandate on this score, as mentioned, was liberal but vague. The leadership made the more radical demand that they be written in from the beginning:

All Chapter 884 said was that MHFA and DCA should get together and plan how a developer should be chosen. Bill White, Lewis Crampton, Fred Bowler and Langley Keyes had a meeting without the tenants. Langley told the tenants, and they raised hell. Dan sat down and wrote each of them a memo saying, "I am having a Policy Board meeting at such and such a time." We didn't think they would come, but they showed. They showed! So all we actually did was show our authority. Luckily enough, GBCD and some other helpful friends told us we could.

And then they didn't want two of us, both me and Dan. But we said you have to take two of us. We come in pairs.

This approach, this presumption, captures the leadership's confrontation with the problem of low self esteem. The tenants would not be treated as minor incompetent actors having a say about this or that small detail of the development process. They would, instead, help direct. And that presumption -- that they were so entitled -- reached and threatened even sympathetic high level planners: The head of the MHFA (Bill White), had pledged the Agency's full support to the Kings Lynne planning effort, but he may not have realized the full implications of the empowerment process that the tenants had begun. As Dan and Eleanor said:

They really didn't want us to get too involved. But we spent every day out on the road with different architects, developers who were interested. Bill White didn't like that. He thought we should take the kit just as it was and accept it. But we would have no part of that. So we were on our way, visiting developers, management teams, and architects, and Bill was getting very concerned, and he had reason to be because we were being offered everything from new homes to new cars, Caribbean cruises ....

So Bill decided that perhaps we could have a say all the way to the final vote on choosing a developer, but the final vote would be done by the Policy Group. No way. We got hold of Howard Cohen [of Mass. Law Reform] who wrote a position paper which said there was absolutely no reason we couldn't participate in the vote.

Cohen's June, 1974 letter stated that the question of conflict of interest was not relevant when the status of the tenants had changed from advocates to decision makers and when the issue was not one of pecuniary benefit but of control. The matter was settled in the tenants' favor. Once again the leadership had used professional help to transcend professional help, and once again they had insisted on control. They took the liberals at their word which, in those days, was quite radical. They used professional help to make those easily expressed sentiments stick in

the real world. In so violating the traditional channels of command and accountability, they found themselves having to deal with potential developers in unorthodox ways:

We were getting a lot of interest from 236 developers who had only done bad poor people's housing. So we did a sneaky thing. I suppose Bill White knows about it since it's appeared in print since then. We got behind closed doors and called Joe Carabetta, a fancy builder, and invited him to talk to us. And we called Corcoran, Mullins and Jennison. We said, "Come and talk to us, you'll find we're not monsters." CMJ had taken the kit out but they weren't going to submit because of the tenant council's power. We asked them to come and shoot the shit. So they did. Now that was not really kosher, but we were afraid we were going to get some really raunchy developer. We had one who stunk, one who was good but didn't have the financial feasibility, and one who wanted sweat equity.

By July, 1974, the MHFA Design Review Department had ranked Carabetta and CMJ virtually tied for first place on the basis of size, aesthetics, density and other traditional planning criteria. The tenant leaders, however, while not blind to the significance of technical performance, had an agenda of their own. That agenda featured honesty and respect. As Doris put it:

We picked CMJ because of attitude. When Carabetta went after us, he tried to get us all drunk, free booze and all that crap. He was giving us the world on a string. CMJ's attitude was, "Listen, I'm willing to work with you. We're going to have our differences, and some of the things I say are going to have to be, and no argument about it, like no pets and the fact that the tenants will have to act well or ship out." Carabetta and the others were patronizing. I'd rather have someone come out and say, "You stink, go take a bath," than to offer me a bottle of perfume and tell me how wonderful I smell.

In addition to making the mistake of not taking the principled struggle of the tenants seriously, that developer also made the familiar mistake of trying to peel off the leadership while maintaining decision-making control in his hands. As Dan and Eleanor remember:

Carabetta was so convinced he was going to get it that he hired his workers. He came in with a submission that said he would be sole owner, sole manager of the development. He figured he had bought us. He didn't give us a dime, but he offered us the world. He was going

to make some of us managers and thought we would accept it. He was really stunned when we didn't choose him.

Though the versions of what actually transpired in the offices when that final decision was made range from acrimony through tears to mutual agreement, there is adequate confirmation from a majority of the parties involved that the tenant leaders managed to carry the day. What actually motivated the Agency heads to acquiesce is in dispute, but that they did seems uncontroversial. Having had the final measure of impact on the choice of the developer, the tenant leaders sought to help define the limits of his power. The enabling legislation said that residents must have "fully participated in the development of the project's proposal and all occupants must have an opportunity to review the plans and present their views at a public hearing." Dan and Eleanor's perspective on how that went even beyond the picking of the developer to include a 50 percent general partnership reveals the heady uncertainty that prevailed:

We had asked for 50% say in management and a portion of partnership ... CMJ apparently read that as 50% General Partner. They came in offering 50%. We came in figuring maybe we'd get 10%! We called a negotiating meeting, and by the time the two attorneys got to bickering back and forth, we sat back and looked at Corcoran, Mullins and Jennison and said, "Can we do this without them? It's impossible to do it with them." They were screwing everybody, so we kicked them out and went to CMJ headquarters, the five of us, sat down and drew up our own partnership.

The tenant leader simply did not know the outer limits of their own strength. They knew they were stronger than such tenants traditionally are, but where specifically it ended was impossible to accurately gauge. In any case, their thrust was to push it -- to continually tease out its limits to see if and where it would end. As we stated near the outset of the thesis, part of the interest in analyzing such actors in the housing development process is precisely the uncharted quality of their efforts, the lack of specific framework. They could get everything or they could

get nothing. In negotiating the partnership with CMJ they relied on the expert counsel of Howard Cohen, but what was their criteria of success? Ten percent? One percent? Interestingly, without really expecting this specific piece of power, they received it nonetheless after informal discussions with the developers. As one of them wrote in the February,

1980 Multi-Housing News:

The partnership arrangement turned us off a little [sic] when we first looked at it but then we were called by the tenant organization to find out why we weren't interested. After talking to them we found their objectives were the same as ours; they wanted strong management and attractive buildings.

Without a clear view of where it would come out, the tenants made a sufficiently strong presentation to this private developer that Corcoran, Mullins and Jennison was willing to cede its traditional monopoly on all significant decisions to a collective developer/tenant entity. It is clear that CMJ both respected the tenant leadership and was not completely clear where the limits of their power lay. Uncontroverted statements show that the tenants had a meaningful impact on such specifics as the size of rooms, the amount of storage space, the mix of dwelling types and the equipping of the community center. No small part of their ability to do this came from their relation to the final choice of the architect. As Dan and Eleanor remember it:

CMJ pulled in Sakaki, Dawson and Demay, world known architects. They designed four separate villages, each with its own community space, and we wanted one community, so we started working with them, but there was just no working with them. You couldn't get across to them that we had a community life here and we wanted to protect it. A partner! You know. So finally Dan said to Corcoran, I'll never forget it because I didn't think it would happen, that we didn't want to work with them; we wanted Claude Michelle because the tenants liked other stuff he had done. CMJ was just as happy because they had just brought in Tomaki for the name and this would be cheaper. And so we got them and worked with Skip Kiley who was a good community-oriented person.

Once again a significant inversion in decision making lines of authority occurred in this process resulting in a substantial change in the personnel and policy of the process. And once again the explanation lies in a heightened sense of self esteem, a heightened sense of community and the demand for control on the part of the tenant leaders.

#### SUMMARY

The tenant leaders managed to overcome the isolation and self-hatred of an oppressed group through an intertwining of the basic principles of collectivity and control. In their "passive" mode they stressed the unity, equality and dignity which made it impossible for outsiders to split them with divisive allocation decisions or to demoralize them with negative attributions about their character or competence. They insisted on a united front while dealing with an often hostile outside world, and this insistence yielded the functional reality of a unified collectivity. In their "active" mode they stressed the need for and tenant ability to seize control of the decision making process. They saw the impossibility of trusting critical decisions to outsiders who traditionally made such decisions, and so they used their unified political status and heightened self-esteem to force or bluff the outside world into letting them make decisions for themselves. Hence they created a unified collectivity which would control much of the development process.

Acting in a supportive political environment with available professional help, they used these two principles to suspend many class, marketing and hierarchical preconceptions. They refused to allow negative interpretations of the required exposure of their living conditions to be divisive or debilitating. They demanded blanket equality -- between leader and led; between America Park resident and middle class abutter; between



the America Park Associates and private developers, planners and politicians. Accepting neither the status quo nor the available remedy, they never allowed the cutting edge of the tension created by their continual leap of faith to be dulled by premature acceptance of rewards or by narrowed focus. They were, in effect, structurally insatiable, accepting neither the status quo (whose shortcomings were by then widely acknowledged) nor the available remedies (for which they were supposed to be quietly grateful). Speaking in tactical terms, more a result of introspection after-the-fact than preplanned strategy (they were, after all, intelligently feeling their way through uncharted waters, not following a prepackaged party line), Dan and Eleanor summarized their effort this way:

Tenant organizations throughout the state and the country tend to be issue oriented. We were successful because we weren't even though we got into specifics. If they had a bad housing situation and they got a little money, that depleted the tenant organization ... Our focus was not bad housing or legislation at that time but it was a community type of feeling. Our aim was to form an organization that had many facets of interest and needs rather than a single issue at one time.

Every aspect of their organizing was, consciously or not, aimed at avoiding the piecemeal and divisive. They aimed instead for the systemic and collective. And so from an unorganized collection of individuals complaining ineffectually about the continual violation of their housing rights, they became a self-conscious, powerful and effective collectivity which dominated their housing development process, impacting on a variety of essential development decisions and creating a situation in which America Park tenants would accept full responsibility for their future but none for their past. This collective amnesty, the re-entry guarantee, created an unusually good housing opportunity for over a hundred low and moderate income public housing tenants which would not have otherwise existed.

We have discussed underclass impact on a housing development process in a manner which emphasizes the role of the leadership in winning more housing opportunities for their lower income troops than anyone thought possible. These leaders combined Eleanor's "community type of feeling" with effective program specifics. They achieved the first by playing on their connectedness to their neighbors, their roots and self-definition. They achieved the second by skillfully and tenaciously holding the system accountable to the letter of its then progressive mandate. They got things done; and because their practice was so closely informed by their principles, what they got was worth the struggle.

Formulating policy suggestions based on this housing transformation is akin to legislating activism. The prime actors transcended every policy category and limit placed on them and proved themselves more stable and visionary than most policy experts would have predicted. They often set the terms around which major policy issues were negotiated. The seeds of the re-entry demand were sown in the early community organizing days when the leadership insisted on egalitarianism, unity and underclass dignity. If one accepted these premises, it was difficult to successfully argue against the guarantee. If one rejected these premises, one would, in effect, be talking to oneself. They insisted that a cornerstone of both the process and product of housing policy be respect for tenant autonomy and self-worth -- in short, a redefinition of the possible.

This concluding section deals with the question of how progressive planners might work constructively with and on behalf of such tenants. The role of the professional was critical here even if our emphasis has been on how the underclass leadership transcended them. A constant throughout the

study is the tenant dependence on technical help to provide credibility for their own positions. The fact that the tenants transcended even their most supportive consultants does not render the role of those consultants irrelevant. Though these leaders may have appeared at times to be capable of walking upon water, when it came time to syndicate the rental properties in the national bond markets, they could not float a loan.

Our discussion of the role of the planner can be seen as asking why the progressive planner cannot simply align him or herself with the more radical tenant leaders in their struggle to provide better housing opportunities for lower income tenants. Our finding is that there is complexity in that effort, complexity in the progressive planner's dealings with (1) other professionals and with (2) some other lower income tenants. The remainder of this study will explore the parameters of that complexity.

#### COMPLICATIONS WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS

As stated at the outset, Kings Lynne is well known and has been publicly praised as a model of cooperation among traditionally competing factions as well as a model of the private sector bringing peace and discipline to social housing. As the Wall Street Journal said,

America Park decided to go private -- a promising approach that could prove to be a solution to other blighted public-housing projects across the country. The idea is that private owners of rehabilitated or new projects will attract responsible families and evict irresponsible ones. And private developers' investments ought to motivate them to manage the property properly, too. (Wall Street Journal 7/13/73 p. 1)

A 16mm movie of the history of the development commissioned by CMJ was entitled "Kings Lynne Partnership: A Private Solution to a Public Problem," which provides insight into its real focus even while it was laudatory to the tenant leadership. Majority Leader Thomas McGee also

stressed the role of private enterprise:

McGee said that the key to the elimination of blight, vandalism and the deterioration of property values that characterize the existing project rest in private ownership. (Lynn Daily Item 9/7/73)

The local newspaper, for its part, stressed private ownership, the income mix and Mr. McGee himself:

The bill hasn't quite reached the Governor's desk ... but it looks as if Majority Leader Thomas W. McGee is singlehandedly about to give West Lynn a major face lift .... (Lynn Daily Item 9/7/73)

Governor Dukakis had praise for all of the actors involved in this transformation:

Kings Lynne is a success story because its major characters -- the tenants, the LHA and other city officials, state legislators and administrators and private developers -- worked cooperatively to plan a new community. (Gov. Dukakis, October 1976 Press Release)

Lynn Mayor Marino had praise for all parties involved though that did not include the tenants:

Mayor Marino said the development shows what can be accomplished when the private sector, state and federal government work together. (Lynn Daily Item 11/18/76)

Such publicly available analysis is at variance with my finding that sustained underclass struggle achieved that "cooperation." The point of interest here is that Kings Lynne would have been similarly praised -- as a model of cooperation or of private managers leading and disciplining the masses even if 80 percent of the America Park tenants had been screened out. Yet from the tenant leaders' point of view, and from the objective self-interest point of view of those screened-out America Park tenants, it would have been a failure. There are very different criteria of success working here. And those differences reflect the dilemma that the planner may find him or herself in when attempting to work for such tenants.

Planners in this housing process were put in the position of having to sustain a continued tension between professional standing and loyalty to

radical tenant leadership. When the tenant leaders here applied the universal value of individual freedom and opportunity to their objective situation and anticipated future, they came up with a very "nonprofessional," collective conclusion which included an amnesty from the judgment of professionals. But the essence of the planner's dilemma is not simply that such tenant leaders made "unreasonable" demands which while they appealed to the radical sensibility may have yielded "one fantastic failure." The essence of the problem is that the tenant leaders effected a profound reversal of a professional's typical approach.

That approach is to transform political decisions into technical ones. The more that political decisions about power relations and decision-making can be transformed into technical, abstract terms, the more power the professional has; the more control he or she can wield over the development process.

What the tenant leaders did was to take traditionally technical decisions and politicize them. Even the choice of the architect was based in large part on a political or community value such as unity rather than the traditional aesthetic or technical criteria. And, of course, the choice of the low income tenants -- the non-choice -- was the clearest example of this. The leadership implicitly denied the feasibility of politically sanitizing such decisions. They insisted instead that such decisions be made in accordance with apparently un-scientific principles, e.g., underclass Control and Collectivity.

The planner is caught in a dilemma of credibility. Clearly the success of Kings Lynne in housing specific people who would not have otherwise been so housed came from unprofessional readings of professional notions such as the external granting of individual opportunity. As we saw

at the outset, the relevant planners, planning agencies and enabling legislation were concerned for the well-being of the tenants. The conception here was that individual opportunity for the poor would be provided by fair minded and sensitive experts making informed judgments about who should live in this mixed-income luxury development.

For the planner to reject this approach, as the tenants did, is to put him or herself quite at odds with a host of relevant professionals in this complex development process. And that is a very dangerous loss, not just to the planner but also to the tenants counting on help from the planner. Because to hire a planning consultant is to hire access to their connections and credibility with similar and necessary actors. The planner cannot afford the luxury of simply siding with the tenant leaders if it entails a loss of credibility to the extent that the planner may be of little future value to the tenants. Yet the progressive planner will want to get more than seems "reasonable" for the tenants.

Tenants can afford to be "outrageous." Planners cannot. Ironically, the class position of the tenants is, in this one respect, an advantage. That is, while on one hand the tenant leaders had to convince skeptics that they could act reasonably and competently, they had the relative luxury of being able to make occasionally "unreasonable" demands without losing their basic credibility. They were not supposed to understand how all aspects of the system worked. They could occasionally use the fallback position of innocence even while demanding full participation as knowledgeable experts. The professional planner, on the other hand, quickly loses credibility if found wrong on matters deemed to be common wisdom to the profession. The professionals wanted to provide their technical expertise and experience on behalf of the tenants. The tenants stretched the planners' role beyond the

limits initially envisioned for it at the outset of the planning process. In fact they stretched it to the point where they simply ignored the planners while continuing to demand that the planners not ignore them. They put the planners in the position that no matter whom the planners listened to, they were necessarily ignoring an important constituency. The planners aimed for external control with individual assessment of tenants. The tenant leaders demanded internal (tenant) control and collective rights. The tenants consistently blurred the line between the planning role and the community organizing role.

#### COMPLICATIONS WITH TENANTS

The dilemma of a planner torn between the demands for professional expertise, respect and effectiveness on one hand and the demand to directly serve more radical tenant leaders on the other is somewhat predictable though impossible in principle to resolve. The second dilemma I want to discuss is somewhat more surprising. It is the dilemma which emerges in the face of a divided tenant body.

Thus far we have concentrated on the role and informing principles of a handful of tenant leaders, but they did not lead a purely unified tenant body. Piven and Cloward (p. 253) and Gamson (p. 104) speak of the tendency towards political splits in movement organizations, and such divisions, with or without the attending rhetoric, were in effect at America Park. Most significantly, there was the previously discussed widespread opposition to the re-entry guarantee; opposition coming from the majority of the tenants. This immediately puts a progressive planner in the position of potential conflict between what he or she perceives the interests of the tenants to be and what he or she perceives the desires of

the tenants to be. And, as Steven Lukes points out, there may be tension between the two:

The radical, however, maintains that men's wants may themselves be a product of a system which works against their interests, and, in such cases, relates the latter to what they would want and prefer, were they able to make the choice. (Lukes p. 34)

One can easily imagine situations in which the tenants are obviously misled by cleverly managed misinformation. And one can easily imagine situations in which the tenants' true interests are ignored by a well-intentioned planner who refuses to give credence to their collective voice. This a priori uncertainty about which of these situations the planner was confronting is the essence of this second dilemma.

On the face of it the objective interests of the America Park tenants were well protected by the leadership. Given their objective victories and the leadership's emphasis on creating a unified collectivity, the progressive planner might anticipate working for a united community. In fact, as was the case here, what the planner might instead confront is a conflict between working for an open process reflecting the will of the tenants and an open result reflecting the objective but not yet recognized interests of the majority of the tenants. The planner may face a situation in which the principles of democracy -- empowering tenants -- conflicts with decisions which if made democratically would undermine democratic principles. Put harshly, the planner may best represent the interests of the lower income residents by ignoring their expressed wishes.

This state of affairs can be traced to a combination of the tenant leaders working amid perpetual uncertainty on behalf of a client population which is vulnerable, ambivalent about the prospects of success and which becomes divided in new ways even by leadership whose success depends on apparent unity.



As we have seen throughout, the leadership was not working from a script. They were effective in a meaningful way precisely because they got more than they were offered, but this implies a lack of pre-structured criteria for success. It was impossible to know in advance how hard to push, particularly when what one was pushing for was controversial. There seem to be "natural rhythms" to specific demands that tenant leaders can make of the housing development system. They can only go to the well of indignation so often before it becomes a tiresome imitation of the righteous, well-timed demand which got them to where they were. While this uncertainty creates problems between the tenant leader and the progressive planner because of conflicts regarding the latter's sphere of expertise, it also creates problems between the tenant leader and many of the tenants because of the latter's history of defeat.

In speaking of the social service program that was envisioned during the changeover, Doris Lynstrom dealt with this problem. The social service staff, she said, would have to contend with a severe form of shyness; a fear of failing in the outside world:

Since these service agencies stereotyped the people as not being deserving, we have seen a defensive mechanism established by the tenants; i.e., "we don't want or need them." This consists of territoriality, withdrawals and isolation. Tenants who look down on themselves have little hope of breaking out of their situation.

Too much had gone wrong for these people, they had experienced too many failures to believe that something truly good was likely. Such defeated individuals may not pose a threat to their neighbors, but they represent a pool of easily satisfied (i.e., pessimistic) troops. They would be the first to accept the smallest token of improvement over what they had. The specific victories which are essential to the development of effective leadership also carry the contradictory implication of

appeasement: that is, once the tenants break into the system of rewards, it is impossible to simply fall back on the organizing position that "we have nothing to lose, why not demand something outrageous?" The tenants did have something, even if it was far less than what potentially lay in store. Working with a defeated population on matters for which there were no predrawn limits, it is reasonable to expect that a body of tenants would come to fear that the leadership was overreaching; was threatening what was won.

In addition to a pessimistic population being asked to support demands which virtually nobody thought would be met, the potential for complete tenant unity was threatened by a powerful ambivalence about the prospect of success.

The changes in their lives mean more than a chance, or a failure, to acquire middle class things. For them, history is challenging them and their children to become "cultural" in the intellectual's sense of that word, if they want to achieve respect in the new American terms; and toward that challenge they feel deeply ambivalent. (Sennett and Cobb, 1972 p. 18)

That ambivalence stemmed in part from the fear that significant gains could imply significant losses as well.

America Park was essentially housing of last resort. There were relatively few evictions, and management made few demands on tenants. However different the individual families felt themselves to be (and were) from each other, the public image they had was so homogeneous and pervasive that a reluctant sort of unity was formed. For many, this common identity and the known equilibrium concerning interpersonal relations was adequate. Anything different was an uninvited potential threat. Further, the presence of an incompetent on-site manager provided a convenient unifying foil, a source of derision which most of the tenants shared. Their buildings were so blatantly under-funded and maintained, and so poorly run

that, regardless of the problems that America Park families brought to their housing situation, the tenants could feel confident in saying to their neighbors that they were all being treated badly.

The advent of a development like Kings Lynne, however, represented some degree of risk for those tenants. Daily power relations would be altered permanently. The teenagers who had informal turf control would lose it, and their families would finally have something to lose. Those whose behavior had been noted fatalistically by other neighbors would be put under management scrutiny such that they could be separated from a crowd whose general powerlessness and housing situation had in effect protected them from retaliation. This separation, the culling out of individuals, is one of the hallmarks of a successful housing transformation such as this one. Once they are separated, they can be judged. And that brings up difficult problems.

I was struck with this sort of problem when I observed a session being given by one of the tenant leaders to other women at America Park which dealt with the process of applying for a job. The women were asked to write down what qualities they could bring to a job interview. At one point some of them simultaneously held their pencils in suspension above the paper, as though mirroring the attempt to suspend the flux of their lives; to make a kind of marketable sense of their experiences. How very difficult this was; how much support they needed; and how easily they could simply abandon the effort and turn on the person trying to lead them out of their past. The leader was a single parent mother, experienced with welfare, and a long time America Park resident. Her credentials were in order; she was not a middle class "outsider" making the often discussed class/culture imposition. She was helping her friends to improve their

lot, and she was not the least elitist about it. But she was making them re-examine their lives, asking them to restructure their lives for the market place (even for some to get continued welfare payments) in a manner that was clearly alien to them. The tenants were being asked to perform.

The tenants were being asked to sell themselves; to make sure their behavior and that of their offspring was acceptable; and perhaps affect middle class personality traits. Who knew what was going to be asked of them and by whom? The room in which the session took place had a warm and supportive atmosphere. What would happen if one of the "students" got a decent paying job on the outside? How would this affect the "teacher"? How would the unity in the room be affected if individual job recommendations had to be made? What would happen if hopes were artificially raised? Could anyone guarantee that there would be rewards commensurate with the sacrifice involved in admitting to personal shortcomings? As Betty Dempsey asked it,

Sometimes I say, "Who the hell am I to tell this person anything?" Is it worth what I am putting these people through, forcing them to see their problems? They've built up all these defenses all these years, and here we are making them look at themselves and saying that maybe everything is not so great; they've got to change. And sometimes I feel, what right do we have to do that?

The burden of responsibility that the leaders felt for getting their friends into an unknown and potentially risky situation was enormous. The point is that the leaders were in effect responsible to some degree for getting those tenants to raise their self-defining pencils together, but they would not all fall at the same time or in the same place. Some would have more to write than others; some would have a better chance to stay in Kings Lynne than others. The tenant leaders said over and over, "We can get you in, but we can't keep you in. You have to earn that yourself." And even with extensive social service backup, nobody believed that all of them would survive.

It was just those personal traits, the stability and reliability which helped make them repositories of the collective trust, which could now be perceived by some as having a mocking quality. The sense of community that was the backbone and beauty of this struggle was threatened by its very success. By raising the rewards provided to tenants it also raised potential demands placed upon them. This was perceived by some as having a negative effect on the existing community. As one tenant put it,

America Park used to be a place where people pulled together. Now they all pull apart. They're all for themselves. They would turn on each other to save themselves. I don't feel a part of anything here anymore.

A final factor in creating the dilemma for the progressive planner is the creation of distinctions between the leaders and the led, distinctions which increasingly took on greater and greater significance. The struggle changed from the all-in fellowship of those making broadside demands on the system to a situation in which they were moving into the system; making decisions, taking responsibility. Unfortunately, the leaders, even when working for the collective tenant interest became isolated from the tenants.

While they could use the implicit threat of mass action to show displeasure with how the planning process was moving, their role increasingly led them to planning meetings where they participated in policy decisions in conjunction with experienced professionals. This meant that more of their effort would have to revolve around being responsible to the concerns and constraints of various housing agencies and housing professionals. They would in effect be increasingly cut off from their collective base. One of their "selling points" to those in authority had to be that they really spoke for the tenants and that they could in fact make snap, on-site decisions on behalf of the tenants without creating an

endless bog of bickering, second guessing and reclarification. And as the planning process matured, the technical competence of the leaders -- essentially the ability to understand the implications and choice implicit in various housing options -- became more important. The tenant leader necessarily becomes something of an expert, but the tenants as a group (including the leaders) were very distrustful of outside experts. Even when there was an expressed commonality of goals, leadership competence was bought at the expense of unity and equality with other tenants. And this can lead to resentment on the same ground, ironically, as Eleanor used to organize the tenants: resentment toward condescending professionals:

Eleanor says that we don't appreciate what she's done but we do. But just because she is more highly intelligent doesn't mean that we haven't done as much as she has. She couldn't do it without us either. She'd be standing there alone. One hand washes the other. So why should she draw more appreciation than anybody else?

Lower income tenants are never completely in control of their housing or vocational fates. It is not hard to see why they reserve their greatest anger for those whom they perceive as having fallen from any aspect of collective grace. The resentment, of course, runs both ways. The following quotation from Eleanor captures the feelings -- respect tinged with annoyance -- that the leader as a skilled decision-maker feels about her troops. She is checking herself, but there is unavoidable judgment and distance:

You talk to tenants, they can literally think they put this thing together. I don't know how many of them said, "Well, we did it!" And in fact they did in the fact that they stuck with us. They may have sat in their houses for four years, but they did stick with us. While others were leaving like rats leaving a sinking ship, they stuck. Every time you turned around you picked up the Lynn Item, "Kings Lynne is dead!" or people on the radio would say, "Why are you going to give those people a swimming pool, they don't know how to take baths anyway." All that garbage they went through. So even if they didn't go out in the front lines like Dan and I, they did go through a lot of tough, tough times.

Unlike the leaders, the followers could only offer their status -- their oppression -- to the battle. They could not easily separate their expertise and their experience. Once the leadership had plunged into the development process (with the attendant notoriety, elbow rubbing and anecdote telling), however, those shared experiences lost much of their value. Even when the issues were drawn so as to focus on making uncontroversial collective strides for the tenants, the process created problematic distinctions between the tenant leaders and the tenants as a body.

What we have, then is a vulnerable, ambivalent and often resentful subgroup of tenants tucked into an apparently unified tenant collectivity. This subgroup can be expected to resist the more radical sounding demands, especially when they were as threatening as the re-entry guarantee appeared to be in terms of traditional power relations and self-esteem presumptions. And in fact, there was the tenant vote against the guarantee. It was at that point that the tenant leaders who prevailed -- Dan and Eleanor primarily -- relied on the logic of the principles of Collectivity and Control and used essentially undemocratic means to achieve democratic ends. And it is at such points where the progressive planner/consultant must ask who his or her client is and what the criteria of choice is. If you are hired by the Tenants yet the Tenants are divided, to whom are you responsible? What does it mean to maximize benefit for the tenants if there is a conflict between their expressed wishes and the planner's perception of their ultimate self-interest?

While it has been my point that there is no optimal way of answering such questions, it has also been my point that those tenants whose actions

can be explained by reference to such principles as underclass Control and Collectivity; those tenants who stress the dignity and competence of the underclass; who push the limits rather than hide behind the limitations of their troops are the tenants with whom the progressive planner should align him or herself. These were the tenants who actually made policy in this case, and in this case they managed to combine a moral purity with very practical results.

One problem for progressive planners is not just that such leaders do not always come neatly labeled, but they also do not always win their battles. The planner cannot easily expect to encounter a progressive tenant leader with the correct ideology of collectivity and control neatly in place or find that with perseverance, luck and support that their battles will be won and their positions vindicated despite the secret doubts of the experts. In fact, the more there is at stake in any such decision the greater the risk of being wrong; the greater the likelihood that there will be strong negative tenant reaction against a progressive stance; the harder it will be for the planner to find a satisfactory role. Such dilemmas, with both the world of other professionals and with the world of other tenants, take the progressive planner through and beyond the realm of technical expertise to the realm of value choice -- ultimately of political and personal identity. They force difficult choices with little more than fluid guidelines for answers.



POSTSCRIPT

I approached Kings Lynne prepared to analyze the various ways in which the upperclass thwarted the housing ambitions of the lower classes, i.e., insensitive developers, architects, bankers, etc. I was surprised to find apparent harmony between the developer and the underclass tenants and in fact to find an apparent commonality of interest and outlook.

My investigation into how this all came about revealed an explanatory variable which had been ignored or flattened out by the media and by most of the people connected with this development. That variable was the principled struggle of the tenants which led to the re-entry guarantee for the America Park tenants. More pointedly, I found that it was the tenant leadership which held things together and made much of what I found interesting come about.

But while the persistence and principles of these leaders helped answer many questions about how this housing opportunity came about for these individuals, it raised troubling, open-ended questions for me as a planner hoping to work with such individuals.

It was one thing to look back and claim that the planner should side with progressive leadership when it was demanding the guarantee. But during the process, there was good reason to believe that it might cripple an already vulnerable development plan. What would I have done if I believed that it would so affect the plan? What should I do if I am not convinced of the possibility of a tenant demand?

I have spoken of the dilemmas of credibility with other members of the professional world in such situations, and of the dilemma arising when a leadership accused of being elitist has a more egalitarian position than many of their followers. I want to conclude with a final word on what I

perceive the essence of leadership is.

Decisions about the host of matters that face tenants and planners in a complex, volatile planning process do not come neatly labeled as progressive or reactionary. Universally agreed on principles (i.e., individual opportunity) may come to mean very different things depending on how they get applied in the concrete situation. The ultimate role of the planner may be to act as a teacher showing both leader and led how different courses of action yield unforeseen consequences. The planner may well be positioned by virtue of being a sympathetic, experienced outsider to see long term implications not visible to those inside the experience and experiencing it anew. The tenant leaders here often said that they simply saw things other tenants didn't see. Eleanor said more than once that it was a "learning experience," and that she could make people see the wisdom of her perceptions once they got past their initial takes.

The problem for the planner is that he or she may not be right in the lessons being taught (as was the case here as professional after professional tried in vain to teach the tenants their limits), yet working with such tenants tends to force personal commitment -- exposure. It is impossible in principle to know, in the midst of a planning process, whether the risks that the tenants want to take should be taken.

In trying to figure out what it meant to be a progressive planner working with progressive tenant leaders under circumstances of perpetual uncertainty, I came to pinpoint what it meant to be such a leader: The essence of their role was to be a risk-taking teacher. Though the stakes for the planner and the tenant were obviously different, they were thrust into a parallel sort of trial by fire which stemmed from their not taking the available path. The leaders did not allow themselves or their

consultants a formulistic, depersonalized escape from difficult decisions. They became identified (and in effect imposed that identification on their followers) with their political positions to a precarious degree. They forced things: they confronted people. They taught, and they grew.

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