ITALIAN AND ITALIAN AMERICAN IDENTITY: A VISUAL APPROACH

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Introduction

This essay is a brief exploration of the related concepts of Italian Ethnicity and Italian Ethnic Identity via a Visual Sociological study of two geographically different venues — Italian American neighbourhoods in the United States and neighbourhoods in Rome, Italy. By studying the Vernacular Landscape (Jackson, 1984) via the methods of Visual Sociology (Grady, 1996 and Harper, 1988, Rieger, 1996), and the theoretical perspectives of Urbanization of Capital (Harvey, 1989) and Spatial Semeiotics (Gottdiener, 1994) the question: "What does it mean for mean for a place of a space to 'Look Italian'?" is addressed. For data, the discourse draws from my extensive collection of visual studies in both the United States and Italy of the "Public Realms", or spaces accessible to all (Lofland, 1998). Here are featured my observations and photographic research on the "New Immigrants to Rome".

It is argued that the urban landscapes of both Italian America and Italy are affected by "natural" and migration-driven demographic forces, as well as the powerful processes of globalization, de-industrialization, and privatization. As I have argued elsewhere (Krase, 1999), "Contemporary urban sociologists appear to be suffering from parallax vision. One eye sees the 'natural' spatial form and function of the city as a biological analogy as did Parks and Burgess

(Gubert & Tomasi, 1994). The other eye sees these same urban places and spaces as the reproductions of power, and circuits of capital *a la* Castells (1977), Harvey (1989), and Lefebvre (1991)". I must emphasize that my research into ethnicity and space has not been merely a theoretical exercise. It has important practical applications to the present and future problems of Italian cities which are unprepared to deal with the rapidity of ethnic and racial change engendered by globalization and the development of a European Union (Krase, 1997).

What is Visual Sociology?

For the less-informed Visual Sociology is merely using a camera as an adjunct to the "regular" process of research. Douglas Harper explains that the growing field is divided into "Visual Methods", which includes "any project where researchers 'take' photographs in order to study social worlds". And "Visual Studies" in which researchers "analyze images that are produced by the culture" and where "sociologists typically explore the semeiotics, or sign systems, of different visual communication systems". It is this aspect which also lends itself most easily to the practice of Spatial Semeiotics (1988). John Grady offers a three part, "Pragmatic Definition" (1996): 1. "'Seeing': how sight and vision helps construct social organization and meaning". 2. "Communicating with Icons", how images and imagery can both inform and be used to manage social relations; and, 3. "Doing Sociology Visually" "… how the techniques of producing and decoding images can be used to empirically investigate social organization, cultural meaning and psychological processes" (14). Jon Rieger notes that among many other advantages in research, such as freezing a complex scene or enabling unobtrusive measurement, "Photography is well-suited to the study of social change because of its capacity to record a scene with far greater speed and completeness than could ever be accomplished by a human observer taking notes" (1996: 6). Given the rapidly changing scenes, which in some cases whiz by

contemporary urban sociologists, the value of visual methods and techniques is obvious. Because Italian settlements change slowly they are excellent sites for studying the changing world around them.

What is Vernacular Landscape?

For Bernard Rudofsky's the "vernacular" is "nonpedigreed", "anonymous", "spontaneous", and "indigenous" (1964: 1). John Brinkerhoff Jackson adds that studying it can teach us about ourselves and how we relate to the world around us. Vernacular landscapes lie below the symbols of permanent power expressed in the "Political Landscape". It is flexible without overall plan and contains spaces which are organized and used in their traditional way. Much of it is "countrified; home made using local techniques, local materials, with the local environment in mind". Vernacular landscapes are part of the life of communities which are governed by custom and held together by personal relationship. For him and his students "vernacular landscape cannot be comprehended unless we perceive it as an organization of space; unless we ask ourselves who owns the spaces, how they were created and how they change" (1984: 6).

American or Italian administrators and planners of multi-ethnic cities could benefit greatly from an understanding of immigrant and ethnic vernacular urban landscapes. For Dolores Hayden, ethnic urban landscapes consist of ethnic vernacular buildings, ethnic spatial patterns, ethnic vernacular arts traditions, and "territorial histories" which are "the history of bounded space, with some enforcement of the boundary, used as a way of defining political and economic power. It is the political and temporal complement of the cognitive map; it is an account of both inclusion and exclusion" (7).

In a related vein, Harvey argued that: "Different classes construct their sense of territory and community in radically different ways. This elemental fact is often overlooked by those theorists who presume a priori that there is some ideal-typical and universal tendency for all

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human beings to construct a human community of roughly similar sort, no matter what the political or economic circumstances" (1989:265). For the powerless "the main way to dominate space is through continuous appropriation. Exchange values are scarce, and so the pursuit of use values for daily survival is central to social action. This means frequent material and interpersonal transactions and the formation of very small scale communities. Within the community space, use values get shared through some mix of mutual aid and mutual predation, creating tight but often highly conflictual interpersonal social bonding in both private and public spaces. The result is an often intense attachment to place and 'turf' and an exact sense of boundaries because it is only through active appropriation that control over space is assured" (265-66).

Furthermore, Anthony Gidden's "structuration theory" also cautions that in order to understand urban regions, cities, and neighbourhoods one needs not only an understanding of theory but local history, resources, ideas of local leadership (1984). The Visual Sociology of ordinary neighbourhoods demonstrates "Human Agency" by the "deliberate efforts of human beings, thinking and acting, alone or in concert" to create their own vernacular landscapes.

Semeiotics, Ecology, and Spatial Semeiotics

Visual Sociology and Vernacular Landscapes are connected via Spatial Semeiotics. Mark Gottdiener writes that "the study of culture which links symbols to objects is called semeiotics" and   "spatial semeiotics studies the metropolis as a meaningful environment" (1994: 15-16). "Seeing" the uses and/or meanings of space require sensitivity and understanding of the particular culture which creates, maintains, and uses the re-signified space. In other words even the most powerless of urban dwellers is a social "agent" and therefore participates in the local reproduction of regional, national, and global societal relations.

The question for pre- and post-modern urbanologists has not been "Who or what is where in the city?" but "How and why" they got there. Researchers look at the same objects but the meanings of those objects seem to vary by the ideology of the viewer. The purely descriptive models of Classical Urban Ecology come from a biological analogy. In the city, equilibrium is expressed through the interaction of human nature with geographical and spatial factors producing "natural" areas. Political economists on the contrary see these natural areas, and ecological zones as the result of "uneven development", and perhaps even planned cycles of decay and renewal.

Symbolically and ecologically, James Dickinson sees in the landscape of the "zone of social pathology" more than a simple process of dereliction — the view shared by both the Chicago School and Marxists geographers. Looking at ruined neighbourhoods he posits that, "These decaying zones become factories producing the ruins that will be become the monuments of tomorrow. Here then, are the liminal zones where new meanings and values are negotiated for old structures" (1996:82. See also Vergara, 1995).

Harvey's "Grid of Spatial Practices" from Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (262) is a powerful connection tool for connecting the new and old urban sociologies. As a paraphrase I would say that in the arena of social conflict and struggle, commanding and producing spaces, reproduces and enhances power.

Down the left hand side of the grid we find:

Material social practices refer to the physical and material flows, transfers, and interactions that occur in and across space in such a way as to assure production and social reproduction.

Representations of space encompass all of the signs and significations, codes and knowledge, that allow such material practices to be talked about and understood, no matter whether in terms of everyday common sense or through the sometimes

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arcane jargon of the academic disciplines that deal with spatial practices (engineering, architecture, geography, planning, social ecology, and the like).

Spaces of representations are social inventions (codes, signs, and even material constructs such as symbolic spaces, particular built environments, paintings, museums and the like) that seek to generate new meanings of possibilities for spatial practices (Harvey: 261).

Across the top of the grid (263-64):

Accessibility and distanciation speaks to the role of the "friction of distance" in human affairs. Distance is both a barrier to and a defense against human interaction. It imposes transaction costs upon any system of production and reproduction (particularly those based on any elaborate social division of labor, trade, and social differentiation of reproductive functions). Distanciation (cf. Giddens 1984: 258-9) is simply a measure of the degree to which the friction of space has been overcome to accommodate social interaction.

The appropriation of space examines the way in which space is used and occupied by individuals, classes, or other social groupings. Systematized and institutionalized appropriation may entail the production of territorially bounded forms of social solidarity.

The domination of space reflects how individuals or powerful groups dominate the organization and production of space so as to exercise a greater degree of control either over the friction of distance or over the manner in which space is appropriated by themselves or others.

According to Gottdiener (1994) the most basic concept for urban studies is the settlement space which is both constructed and organized. "It is built by people who have followed some meaningful plan for the

purposes of containing economic, political, and cultural activities. Within it people organize their daily actions according to meaningful aspects of the constructed space" (16). As part of national and global systems, neighbourhoods are affected by a wide range of supply-side forces. The connection made between Italian and Italian American vernacular landscape in later pages of this essay shows that ordinary people can affect their environment, even though they are ultimately at the mercy of larger societal forces. In recent decades we have seen some reversal in the assumedly inevitable process of central urban deterioration in the form of "Gentrification"; or the conversion of socially marginal and working-class areas of the central city to middle-class residential use which in America began in the 1960s. Sharon Zukin notes that "Gentrification thus appears as a multidimensional cultural practice that is rooted in both sides of the methodological schisms…" between neo Marxists and neo-Weberians (1987:143).   In her earlier work on Loft Living, Zukin noted "The promotion of a historical infrastructure, for example, changes the nature of urban space. By giving value to old buildings near the downtown, preservation makes them into a scarce commodity and so creates monopoly rents. Alternatively, the uncertainty that surrounds their conservation-in the face of the predominant tendency to destroy and rebuild- can create a climate in which speculation runs rife".   We might say that the promotion of ventures such, tourist or immigrant residential zones as well as, "…arts infrastructures changes the nature of the urban space" (1982: 190).   Borrowing from her insight into "patterns of cultural and social reproduction" (1987: 131), it should be possible to see how choices of even the least "elite" members of society are also reflected in the residential and commercial landscapes of central cities.

Visual Sociology and attention to Vernacular Landscapes in the inner city allows us to see conflict, competition, and dominance at a level not usually noticed and which can easily be related to the theories and descriptions of Lefebvre and Bourdieu. Just think of how

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different, and perhaps more interesting, "accessibility" and "distanciation" become when we speak of racial discrimination in local housing markets, and inter-ethnic violence at the street level. What is a better introduction to the ethnic neighbourhood than when Harvey speaks of spatial dominance thusly: "Successful control presumes a power to exclude unwanted elements. Fine-tuned ethnic, religious, racial, and status discriminations are frequently called into play within such a process of community construction" (266). Other productions of Symbolic Capital, defined by Bourdieu as "The collection of luxury goods attesting to the taste and distinction of the owner" (1977: 188), might help us to understand the gentrification of these very same areas during a later phase in the second circuit of capital when once run-down neighbourhoods become the shabbily chic "in" places to live, such as Greenwich Village in New York City or Trastevere in Rome.

Since "the most successful ideological effects are those which have no words, and ask no more than complicitous silence", so the production of symbolic capital serves ideological functions, because the mechanisms through which it contributes "to the reproduction of the established order and to the perpetuation of domination remain hidden" (Bourdieu 1977: 188).

Reviewing the Spatial Semeiotics of Little Italies (Krase, 1997)

Little Italy is a product and source of both social and cultural capital. Although ordinary people in the neighbourhood are ultimately at the mercy of distant structural forces in their naivete they continue to create and modify local spaces allocated to them, and inevitably become part of the urban landscape. Thusly people and spaces become symbols. They come to represent themselves and thereby lose their autonomy. The enclave comes to symbolize its imagined inhabitants and stands for them independent of their residence in it. Localized reproductions of cultural spaces can also be easily commodified. For example, the expropriated cultural capital of the Italian American vernacular such as

resistance to diversity and cultural insularity, perhaps even intolerance becomes a sales point in real estate parlance as a quaint "safe" neighbourhood, with "old world charm", and romantically symbolizing the "way its used to be".

No model or stereotype can ever adequately represent the multiple realities of Italian, or any other, ethnic-America. There is too much in the way of permutations of generations, continuity, and change. But, Little Italy does represent the idea of Italian America and how Visual Sociology helps us to understand both its structural and cultural realities. If I may suggest; the idealized ethnic urban spaces, both "Representations of Spaces" as well as "Spaces of Representation", can be summarized as follows: Oblivion, Ruination, Ethnic Theme Parks, Immigration Museums, and Anthropological Gardens.

I have argued that "semeiotically speaking", models of Little Italies are as follows:

1. Oblivion. Oblivion means "the state of being forgotten". Urban renewal, highways, bridges, construction.
2. Ruins. The rubble of neighbourhoods abandoned in anticipation of "renewal", cleared of misnamed "slums" —, and still awaiting new uses. These "liminal" zones of "in betweenness" are on their way toward oblivion
3. Ethnic Theme Parks. Little Italies are preserved as spectacles for the appreciation of tourists.

Theme Parks usually contain (4) Assimilation Museums, or places for the preservation and display of inanimate objects and (5) Anthropological Gardens (Human Zoos), where the subjects of curiosity are still alive.

The primary focus in this paper are Little Italies and Italian cities as Theme Parks, or "Spectacles" for tourists. What they have in common is that they are visible commodified cultural representations of Italian America and Italy. David Harvey explains that the "organization of spectacles" can be part of "the production of an urban image" which is an "important facet of interurban competition" as "urban strategies to

capture consumer dollars" (233). Although he is primarily concerned with the modern or post modern version of "display of the commodity" (271), under the constraints of "flexible accumulation", he notes that since the ancient Roman "Bread and Festivals" spectacles have existed as a means of social control (270). In short, the creation and maintenance of Spectacle is associated with a highly fragile patterning of urban investment as well as increasing social and spatial polarization of urban class antagonisms (273).

Contradictory and Complementary Explanations: Italy as an Ethnic Theme Park Spectacle

Atroshencko and Grundy provide a classic explanation for the "white villages" such as those found in Puglia which are a major attraction for the hundred of thousands of tourists who deluge the Adriatic coast each summer: "for centuries, the inhabitants of these villages lived almost at subsistence level. There is a notable absence of unnecessary ornamentation on the buildings. Nothing is 'fashionable' or disposable. There is no conspicuous waste. Each village keeps its integrity; it does not lose its soul. There are constant, delightful juxtapositions of strong, natural forms and ever new and varied spaces. Based on the regenerative realities of the locale, this approach to building enabled tradition to act as an invisible hand (my emphasis), guiding the parts toward a unified and ordered completeness. Additions 'grew' adjacent to existing structures. The builders created practical, complex and visually stunning environments without destroying the unity of the village; viewed from afar, it is elegant, sculptural form that fits naturally into the landscape (5-6).

It has practical aspects also: the whitewash protects against disease and reflects the summer heat off the walls; the hillside site provides drainage; the civic identity and cooperation necessary for the preservation and protection of the village has remained intact down the centuries. The whitewashed village is a functional organism that meets

the requirements for shelter, work, quiet and social intercourse. Each element feels unique, especially the dwellings, whose scale, asymmetry and flexibility create endless combinations. These villages allow variations of the whole in order to fit individual needs. Here in these beautiful environments we see solutions to many universal problems facing the world, and they are worth emulating" (1991 :6).

Also, found in Puglia are conical, "beehive" roofs that is a peculiar "style" for the Val d'Itri area. According to Rudofsky, trulli are "the archaic house form of an early megalithic civilization, they are related to the Balearic tlyots, Sardinian nuraghi, and the sesi of Pantelleria. Despite the passage of a dozen nations, this type has survived almost without change since the second millennium BC" (1964:49). It is likely that the "white village" represents less of an "invisible hand" than the representation of either Spanish or Greek colonization.

There is yet another description of contemporary trulli which argues that although the system of trullo construction already existed it was preserved because of feudalism which came to the territory at the end of the 15th century. In order to maintain the vulnerability of the newly created serfs, Feudal lords decreed that the shelters of peasants and shepherds had to be destroyable in only one night. "So the agglomerate of 'casedde' dry built with rustic local stone and destructible with swift manoeuver in a short time arose" (Alberobello, 1982).

Over the past three decades I have observed and photographed what Lyn Lofland refers to as the "Private, Parochial, and Public Realms", of a wide range of Italian and Italian American neighbourhoods. To say that they do not generally conform to the visual expectations of middle-class Anglo-American urban "ideal" would be an understatement. Here Gans reflects on the visually induced misperceptions by outsiders of the Italian West End of Boston as a "slum": "The West Enders themselves took the poor maintenance of the building exteriors, halls, and cellars in stride, and paid little attention to them. The low rents were more than made up for these deficiencies, and for the generally rundown appearance of the area. Moreover, they did

not consider these conditions a reflection on their status. Having no interest in the opinions of the outside world, they were not overly concerned about the image which the West End had in the eyes of outsiders (my emphasis). They did not like to be called slum dwellers, of course, and resented the exaggerated descriptions of West End deterioration that appeared regularly in the Boston Press. Nor were they happy about the rooming houses that bordered the West End, or the skid row occupants who sometimes wandered into it. Unlike the middle class, however, they did not care about 'the address'. Consequently, the cultural differences between working- and middle-class residential choice suggest that the prevailing professional housing standards — which reflect only the later — could not be rigidly applied to the West End" (1962: 315-16).

What Gans and other observers of inner city Italian American enclaves were not appreciative of was the vernacular aesthetic of Italian urbanism. Some social scientists did make accurate associations with the reluctance of the Italian middle class and peasants to display their relative prosperity in order to shield it from the tax scrutiny of authorities, as well as prying neighbours. However, they neglected to investigate whether exterior appearances have other cultural, economic, and social values. In the present context we must note that for centuries the rather run-down appearance of building exteriors in Italy have been part of the "charm" of the peninsula. At the extreme, visitors are attracted to Italy as a cornucopia of ruins. The built environment of much of Italy has a shabbily chic "worn" look. In recent years British and American retirees, for example, have been attracted to abandoned rural homes and villages in regions such as Tuscany. From Shakespeare to Puzo, this version of Italy has been a favorite for writers of fiction.

II.   Italy Rome. 1997 Research Narrative

Now that we have had a brief retrospective on American Little Italies and a short theoretical and historical discussion of special and ordinary

Italian spaces as "spectacle", we shall turn to the contemporary Italian urban scene where there is a related problem of visual transformation. Here our focus will be on people rather than buildings. An important aspect of the city scene are the people in the picture. People become part of the space by being in it.

Tourism is a major international industry and the sales image of Italy is derived in large part from foreigners' mental images of the Public Realms of Italians cities and towns. These spaces contain both monumental and vernacular landscapes. We might say that, for tourists at least, Italy itself is one huge multifaceted Ethnic Theme Park. Millions of visitors flock to places like Rome every year with expectations about what the "real" Italy and real Italians look like. They come expecting to view an Italy which conform to their stereotypical expectations. Most get their images from popular media and think Italians should look like Marcello Mastroiani and Sophia Loren. The built icons of Rome are the Fountain of Trevi, the Spanish Steps, the Coliseum, the Vatican, the Roman Forum, and the Via Veneto.

Luckily for those who market the traditional images of Rome few visitors travel outside the historical center. Perhaps they pass thorough the central station and a few may occasionally ride on public transportation. During their sojourn they will see ethnically diverse crowds of tourists, but not much of the local population. While eating out they seldom will look beyond the dining room into restaurant kitchens. While making purchases at local stores they will not peek into the rear of shops to see the workers toiling there. In short they see only a small proportion of the Public Realm and the people who live in the city of Rome.

In recent decades what Italy and Italians look like has changed considerably. In addition to the ordinary processes of modernization of urban spaces, and the construction of new built environments, a major factor in the changing image of the Italy has been immigration. It is argued here that the past decade of immigration has already had a major impact on Italian identity. This is true not only because of the

relatively large numbers of newcomers but because of their differences with indigenous Italians. These racial (physical) and ethnic (cultural) differences have produced an even great change in the "appearance" of some of Italy's well known urban landscapes. Given the projection that Italy will increasingly become multicultural as it integrates with the rest of Europe, changes in its visual identity in the 21st Century will be even more pronounced.

Research Narrative

My trip to Rome was intended to observe and capture on film the visual transformations of its well-know and the lesser known Parochial (neighbourhood) and Public spaces. My first task was to identify those areas of Rome that had residential concentrations of immigrants. My next step was to observe and then document via photography how these newcomers symbolically transform the vernacular landscape. This was also my first disappointment. Based on my study of immigrant settlements in American and other cities I expected to find clearly identifiable enclaves where the majority, if not a significant plurality, of local residents were immigrants. Contrary to my expectation I learned that for Rome, this was not the case. Compared to the United States residential mobility in Italy is slow. Therefore opportunities for housing is limited. In contrast to places like New York City for example Roman neighbourhoods do not completely change in a matter of a decade. I should note here that my interest was not in the mobility of the large foreign populations who are in temporary residence in Rome for business or political reasons. The area near the Piazza del Popolo, for example, seems to be such a multi-ethnic community with upscale convenience stores serving "foreign" clienteles.

Even more so in Rome, as in contrast to cities like Turin, legal and illegal immigrants participate primarily in the marginal economy. Because Rome is an administrative as opposed to an industrial city, there is little need for large scale migration and the related residential

concentration near sources of industrial employment. Due to the relatively slow residential mobility and neighbourhood transition immigrant populations are residentially dispersed. The classic pattern in the US central city during periods of high immigration had been the development of immigrant enclaves in urban ecological "Zones of Transition" located near the central business districts. In Rome, with few exceptions. the oldest central areas have also been the most prestigious or protected. Today, even the well-known working-class (at one time run-down) areas in central Rome are being gentrified. In the 1990s the least desirable areas for residence and commerce, near the central station, are also "in transition". Much of the upgrading of these marginal areas is probably due to the preparation for the Jubilee in 2000.

Data

One of my most valuable observations were the result of comprehensive city tours combining windshield surveys and walks by auto led by Professors Stefania Vergati and Leonardo Cannavo of the University of Rome, La Sapienza. With their expert assistance I was able to visit and photograph all the varieties of Roman housing and zones of residential development in a short period of time. After several excursions I had scanned all eighteen zones of Roman housing — high and low density, public and private, lower through upper class, and oldest to newest. These research trips also made it possible for me to select areas for more focused research. They made it possible to note where immigrants were most visible, and in some cases signs of their invisibility.

Not all my research was in the field with a camera. In order to better select sites for extensive observation and photographing I spoke with ordinary Romans, and informed sources at the University. The two most important published sources were the Italian Censis and school data collected by Caritas. These documents allowed me to identify

those areas where at least "officially" the highest residential density of immigrants, and their counties of origin, were located. I also read selected studies on immigrants in Italian cities and scanned Roman newspapers for references to immigration issues.

According to the Census (Censis) of October, 1991 the population of Rome was 2,775,250, and the percentage of foreigners with permission was 3.9%. By 1998 the population grew to 2,812,473 and registered foreigners were 4.8%. Multi-ethnic Rome has residents from167 different nations. Caritas estimates that in 1998 legal and illegal, temporary and permanent immigrants together were 6.2% of the Roman population. There were 134,578 foreign residents in Rome and an estimated 40,000 more who were unregistered. I note here in contrast that since 1900 the Borough of Brooklyn, New York has averaged a foreign born population of at least 30%.

Further information provided by *Caritas Roma* on school children demonstrated that the immigrant populations were not randomly dispersed. Foreign children (more than 2.5%) are enrolled in schools in districts (*circoscrizioni)* 1, 2, 3,15,18, 19, 20. The highest percentages of foreign children are found in lower grades. As one might also anticipate this concentration mirrors the census data which finds the highest concentration of immigrants in the center (1) and in descending order of concentration in districts 2, 19, 20 much less in 3,7,8,9,10,12,15,17. Immigrants seem to be connected by major public transportation routes out from center to the northeast, north, northwest, and west. Of the total number of immigrants: European are 28%, African 18%, Asian 28%, and American 13.9%. It must be noted that 10% of "foreigners" are born in Italy of foreign parents. Of special value for my research was the fact that 33% of all Africans live in VII, 33% of Asians in districts 7, 9 and 10 and those from the Far East in 4, 6, 11, and 12. According to the published data immigrants from the Americas and the Far East are the most residentially concentrated.

Concern about immigrants in Italy is not limited to changes in the visible environment. The daily newspapers contained regular stories about crime and various conflicts between immigrants and authorities in many cities. I was also invited to participated in an Italian Chamber of Deputies Seminar (1998) which concerned the association of immigrants with crime in many Italian cities. In Rome, involvement in serious and quality of life (microcrimine) crime is also associated with immigrants For although they make up only six percent of the total population, immigrants were arrested for 29% of robberies, 43.9%, of thefts, and 39.1% of drug arrests. At the time I was in residence, Roman enforcement authorities announced a plan to attack the problem on quality of life crimes on a zonal basis by concentrated specialized police forces in immigrant areas.

Observations

Those who study immigration in Italy well understand that the published estimates of resident foreigners, as well as information about their origins, are not very reliable. The biggest problem are underestimates of the size of the population dues to the growing number of undocumented aliens (clandestini). This is further complicated in places like Rome by the large number of tourists and other foreign visitors. I believe that this situation makes visual sociological research of even greater value for the understanding of multi-ethnic Italian spaces where foreign populations are more visibly evident on the streets than would be anticipated by official statistics.

I quickly discovered that significant expressions of immigrant concentration were not merely residential but in particular kinds of urban territory. After identifying those areas in which I expected to find immigrants I traveled to them by foot, bus and subway. This is important to note because most immigrants, when not walking, regularly use public transportation. My first findings were made in transit. Immigrants make up a larger than expected proportion of those

using public transportation, especially on certain routes. Their over-representation is enhanced by the fact that Italians carry on their romance with their cars and scooters by driving to work. Once I arrived at a designated "immigrant" zone I spent hours walking the streets, some of which I revisited some several times.

Of all the districts which I observed and photographed the most "visibly ethnic" was near the central station. There one can find concentrations of residence, work, shopping, and public transportation. It is interesting to note that in general the center of the city with its pedestrian shopping areas and thousands of tourists is multi-ethnic, but not necessarily residentially so. Also, in the residences near the station I believe there is a significant undercount of immigrants (probably clandestini), who share apartments with registered aliens and who may be sleeping in the same buildings in which they work. My street-level observations, as well as looking into private spaces behind normally closed doors, reveal a much larger immigrant world. Another problem for ethnographic researchers is that Italian residential spaces are difficult to access because they are usually set off from public spaces. Looking for indications of new immigrants around the central station I observed a Little Africa, a growing Chinatown, and a flourishing Bengali jewelry trade. Both Chinatown and the jewelry markets seemed to also be light production centers; which would be consistent with undocumented alien workers in sweatshops. Local stores also displayed and sold ethnic foods, as well as other culturally appropriate services, provisions, and clothing.

One might ask "How is ethnicity visual"? Africans and Asians, because of their "different" physical appearances vis a vis Romans are easy to identify, as are other ethnic groups such as Slavs with light skin and light hair. These groups are apparent near the station and other international areas, even in those districts of higher class foreign residents. In the better residential districts one also gets to see "foreign" household workers. Several times people explained to me that, for example, household workers from the Philippines are "preferred".

Without attempting a complete explanation in this limited space, I might say that different ethnic groups also dress differently than the local population. Many of the Slavic (Polish) working class women I observed in the center, and in markets such as the Portuguese Market in Trastevere, were dressed as I remembered them from my research in Poland a few years ago, and as I see them in Polish immigrant areas in the United States. In general the most obvious immigrants are those who are the most visibly different, such as Rom (Gypsy), and Moslem women.

The following are examples of situations, places, activities in which ethnic differences were most visibly notable during my research in Rome. I must caution that there are significant temporal variables; week day, weekends, early morning and evening, as well as locational ones.

Public Transportation Centers and Routes

Due to the residential dispersal of the different immigrant populations, travel to the center (or centers) appears to be necessary in order to maintain ethnic solidarity. Foreign (non-Italian) greetings and conversations can be overheard daily on buses, trains, and at local stops. Much more intensive ethnic social interaction takes place on weekends at the central station. On summer weekends groups of Latinos picnic under the shade of bus stop shelters. Co-ethnics share food, drinks, and conversation. It would be interesting to investigate whether the bus depot islands relate to the places from which people come. The central station is also where arriving immigrants are met by co-ethnics. Most disturbing was the sight of Rom women, often pregnant or with babies, entering crowded buses and subway cars as riders moved cautiously away. I was informed that Romans associate their presence with pick pocketing.

Centers of Telecommunication

Large numbers of immigrants can be observed at local public telephone banks or long distance telephone service outlets. The greatest concentration was at the central station underground corridors. One may also assume that low-income immigrants, and the undocumented, lack home phones.

Major Urban Arteries and Intersections

As one travels toward the center on public or private surface transportation one will observe "foreign" beggars, squeegee men, (squigi), and street vendors who have become fixtures of the arterial landscape. Most squeegee mean appeared to be either European (Slavic) or North African. In many places the men who work at the gas stations are also apparently "foreign" south Asians (Indo-Pakistani).

Soccer World Cup

While I was in Rome the Italian team was competing in the World Cup. This provided the opportunity to observe expressions of Italian ethnic (national) pride. In the most multi-ethnic Esquilino area, foreign vendors hawked Italian flags on the streets. One match pitted Cameroon against Italy and the African section near the central station was the site of a clash of ethnic symbols (flags).

Local Social Life

Immigrants take part in the communal social of Roman neighbourhoods. For example, I observed Moslem families and children during a festa in the Monte Sacro piazza. Foreign children can also be seen in local lower schools and their mothers participate in the same ritual of picking up children for lunch as do Italian parents.

Tourist Sites

All around the major one can find an assortment of immigrants, as vendors, and beggars (especially Rom women and children). I was particular struck by immigrants dressed in Roman soldier costumes near the Coliseum with whom tourists could have their picture taken. They can also be found behind the scenes in downtown restaurants, and Latinos might pass as Italian waiters. One Roman native commented to me that "Egyptians" are employed as pizza makers because they look more Italian. In most cases the space in which they work, or perform, is visible to patrons.

Public Markets

In local and central markets immigrants are seen in varying proportions, but always greater than then official statistics would lead one to expect in. This is especially true near the central station (Piazza Vittorio) and in the well-known Portuguese market. Some references have been made to a Suk in cities such as Naples (Amato, 1997). In Rome I did not find a market dominated by non-Italian proprietors. Increasingly however, Italian vendors sell non-Italian ethnic foods and products and in most of the markets immigrant vendors sell their wares on the periphery.

Public Parks

In most parks I saw female immigrants serving as nannies — pushing baby carriages or minding children. During the evening in marginal parklands and other open spaces foreign women appeared as prostitutes. Immigrants are also over-represented as the destitute, beggars, and the homeless who may congregate at social service centers. Although it is certainly difficult to ascertain their exact status they are frequently referred to in discussions of microcrimine (quality

of life crimes). In one centrally located park area I saw several Rom women children relaxing with their young children on the grass and having lunch. In the same area were many groups of foreign (European and North African) men lounging, eating, or sleeping. I also found evidence of overnight sleeping areas beneath bushes and in fenced-off archeological sites. Similar evidence, such as mattresses, can be found along the banks of the Tiber.

Religious Centers

Immigrants are apparent at specific houses of worship. There are several Moslem mosques and centers. Rome has a new huge central mosque that is attended by thousands of worshipers. There are several Orthodox and Slavic national churches, and a Roman Catholic, Polish-speaking church to which Poles travel from all over the city for Sunday mass. Another, San Silvestro in Capite, is attended by immigrants from the Philippines. Similarly, there are Asian language Catholic masses and Asian (Korean and Chinese) Protestant churches which attract visually distinctive worshipers.   Specific churches minister to specific immigrants, which is best expressed by signs announcing services in a variety of foreign languages. I attended mass at an "American" church The church of Santa Susanna which bills itself as "a home for all English Speaking Catholics in Rome".

Residential Areas with Ethnic Identity

Other than the Asian and African section (Esquilino) near the central station few areas were widely recognized as having a distinctly ethnic identity in the sense that Americans peak of ethnic neighbourhoods. At one time the beach resort area, Ostia, had been a "Russian" area, especially in the off-season winter months when rents were lower. This was in the late 1980s during the time of the mass exodus of Jewish Russians who were en route to Israel or elsewhere. I learned that in

recent years the Russians have moved out but that have been replaced by a smaller number of Polish renters. Lastly, I was also directed to observe a Rom settlement (perhaps "encampment") which was located in a rather run-down area of unregulated urban land at some distance northward from the center.

Summary

It is difficult to summarize this rather brief report but I believe it can be said with confidence that immigrants have been symbolically transforming the public spaces of Rome. As had their Italian immigrant counterparts to cities in the United States, immigrants to Rome have been gradually changing the vernacular landscapes by their own, merely physical, appearances as well as their activities in the spaces they use. Their presence and their "difference" also changes the value of the space. As have nonwhite migrants to American city neighbourhoods, in some cases they have also stigmatized places by their presence. (Krase, 1977). It is interesting to note in this regard that some better off Romans are beginning to flee the least desirable of the central zones citing classic urban dissatisfactions with changing inner city neighbourhoods such as "noise", "dirt", and "crime". In contrast, at the same time that some residents move out, in other central Roman areas property values are soaring and what American urbanists would regard as "gentrification" is taking place. This urban development paradox is not inconsistent with observations of David Harvey on "circuits of capital" (1989).

In sum, based on my limited research efforts I would argue that Rome is much more multi-ethnic than Romans themselves are aware of because immigrants are found in particular kinds of spaces; especially those spaces through which Romans travel, and that they try to avoid. If I might say; it is my impression that in general Italians tend to ignore immigrants and talk as though they are not in their presence. They, immigrants, are not part of their personal Italian space. This is primarily

due to the fact that until the present new immigrant populations in Rome are widely dispersed residentially, but also periodically and situationally clustered such as at the Central Station, markets, or their places of worship.

It might be said that this essay is limited in scope and value. However, international crises such as those created by military conflicts in Africa, Bosnia, and Kosovo have brought the problem of immigration to the forefront of Italian politics. In addition the need to control large-scale movement of illegal immigrants through Italy and into their European Union partners has made immigration to Italy a major European-wide problem. Finally, I hope that this essay will lend support for the use of Visual Sociology as another tool to help in the study of a extremely important problem which will have a major impact on the future of Italy and the rest of Europe.

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