Building Italian Regional Identity in Toronto: Using Space to Make Culture Material

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Abstract: The landscape of greater Toronto is dotted with Italian ethnoregional community centres constructed with financial and diplomatic help from Italian regional governments. These ethnoregional centres are physical representations of Italian Canadianness and used by Italian Canadians to create meaningful spaces, to generate collective sentiment and locate themselves in the land of immigration. The ethnographic examples used in this paper, I suggest, require us to consider how to locate the ideas of flow and deterritorialization in recent anthropological work through local realities. Italian immigrants and their descendants participate in diasporic discourses and practices to construct physical places of identification to make their sentiment material and reterritorialize their identity. Further, these sites shed light on the way states alter their activities to adapt to the movement of people, money and ideas across borders. The Italian national and regional governments and levels of the Canadian state respond to the challenges of transnationality by practicing a kind of governmentality, a "flexible sovereignty" through the support of these projects. As such these projects help to organize the behaviour and identity of Italians living overseas.

Résumé: Le paysage du Toronto métropolitain est parsemé de centres communautaire italiens ethno-régionaux construits avec l'aide financière et diplomatique de gouvernements régionaux d''Italie. Ces centre ethno-régionaux sont des manifestations concrètes de la canadienneté italienne et ils sont utilisés par les canadien-ne-s italien-ne-s pour créer des espaces significatifs, pour susciter des sentiments collectifs et pour se situer dans la terre d'immigration. Je soumets que les exemples ethnographiques relatés dans cet article nous incitent à examiner les idées de flux et de déterritorialisation, exposées dans les travaux récents en anthropologie, dans leur application aux réalités locales. Les immigrant-e-s italien-ne-s participent à des discours et à des pratiques diasporiques pour construire des lieux d'identification, pour donner une expression matérielle à leurs sentiments et reterritorialiser leur identité. De plus, ces sites apportent un éclairage sur la manière dont les États adaptent leurs activités aux mouvements des gens, de l'argent et des idées à travers les frontières. Les gouvernements national et régionaux d''Italie et les différents paliers de l''État canadien répondent aux défis de la transnationalité en pratiquant une certaine forme de gouvernement, une «souveraineté flexible» en supportant ces projets. Comme tels, ces projets contribuent à organiser le comportement des Italien-ne-s vivant outre-mer.

In this paper I examine several ethnographic examples that locate the ideas of flow and deterritorialization in recent anthropological work within the lived experiences of Italian immigrants and their descendants living in Toronto, Canada. Italian immigrants and their descendants negotiate identity in locally specific circumstances in the greater Toronto area within the context of state-sponsored multiculturalism in Canada and multiple diasporic discourses linking peoples in Italy and Canada. A central means of expressing this complex constellation of identities is through the construction of physical places of identification. I argue we need to pay closer attention to the reterritorialization and materialization of identity and culture to refocus work by scholars who have emphasized fluidity and movement at the expense of analysing the constitution of identities through locally-specific physical spaces (Appadurai, 1990; Hannerz, 1996; Rapport and Dawson, 1998). Further, these sites created by Italian Canadians shed light on the way people as actors work within larger structures of power to create meaningful worlds. Over the last decade governments, both in Canada and Italy, have undertaken activities and programs to adapt to the movement of people, money and ideas across borders. The Italian national and regional governments and different levels of government in Canada respond to the challenges of transnationalism by practising a kind of governmentality, a "flexible sovereignty" (Foucault, 1991; Ong, 1999, 214-216) through the support of the projects studied here. As such these projects help to discipline and regulate the behaviour and identity of Italian immigrants engaged in transnationalism.

Anthropology, transnationalism and diaspora

Anthropologists have forcefully critiqued the place-focussed concept of culture that binds cultures and peoples to specific territorial locations. This approach to understanding culture and its production is linked to Western nationalist discourse that binds nations to defined spaces or territories. Cultures, ethnic communi-

ties and nations are, however, neither clearly bounded nor unchanging (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992). As part of this critique some anthropologists have begun to examine cultures and social relations that transcend state borders (Basch et al., 1994). The great migrations of people in the last half century linked to decolonization, changes in global labour markets, financial arrangements and new communications and transportation technology have encouraged anthropologists to examine the movement of peoples as a central feature of social life (Clifford, 1997, 1988). Anthropologists seeking to find a vantage point to address the impact these changes have had on conceptualizations of culture and a manageable unit of study for face-to-face ethnographic fieldwork have turned to the study of displaced or deterritorialized migrant peoples. Some have examined the ambiguities of identity and belonging for expatriates, professionals and the managerial classes bound up in the new financial economy (Amit-Talai, 1998; Hannerz, 1996). Most anthropologists, however, are exploring the conditions of more traditional labour migrants. A major focus of work seeking to understand transnationalism has concerned the circulation of migrants, or transmigrants, between home villages in Mexico and the Caribbean basin and communities of settlement in the United States (Glick Schiller, 1992; Kearney, 1995; Rouse, 1991). Proponents of the transmigrant view suggest the era of late capitalism or Post-Fordism (Featherstone, 1990; Harvey, 1989) has created something socially and culturally new to understand because these changes permit far greater intensity of contact between people in different geographic locations within these transmigrant circuits. This intensity and diversity of contact through jet planes, the internet, fax, phones, videotapes and satellite dishes create new spaces for cultural production, making the physically distant, emotively near. As a result, these scholars argue, social relations and cultural connections are qualitatively different than they were for previous migrants, refugees and sojourners. (Foner, 1997; Glick Schiller et al., 1995). Nevertheless, these transmigrants in many ways continue a centuries-long tradition of movement of labour to capital to fuel the North American economy. Transnationalism has been an ordinary feature of the lives of many Italian peasants, workers, and families over the last one hundred and thirty years. Italians have an extensive migration history and awareness of life beyond the local village, region or nation that impacts family life, work experiences and consciousness (Gabaccia, 2000: 11; see also Foerster, 1968).

In this context, Gupta and Ferguson (1992) urge us to study shifting locations rather than bounded fields.

Their approach to grids of spatial power and theorizing about globalization has similarities to, among others, Appadurai (1993; 1996) and Rouse (1996) who have explored global cultural configurations and deterritorialized cultural flows and have produced significant work on social imaginaries, mass media and cultural politics. Nevertheless, these studies tend to emphasize flow and movement as constitutive of contemporary cultural configurations and neglect the materialization of everyday life or the concrete experiences of transnationality that manifest themselves in the lives of transmigrants. By materialization, or reterritorialization, I intend something similar to the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) that suggests dynamism and refraction in the process involved in deterritorialization and reterritorialization. The process creates a new territoriality and not a reproduction of the old territory in a new environment. If this new territoriality is seen as constantly negotiated then this approach avoids the assumption of an essential past and suggests creativity on the part of people using space to construct meaning. Italian immigrants in Toronto negotiate and constitute layers of transnational identities by making culture material and embedding in particular places the movement and fluidity theorists posit as central features in the constitution of culture and identity in the contemporary world.

Many people engaged in popular politics have taken up the language of nationhood in this era of transnationalism. It is as if each hopeful collectivity of people abroad from their putative "homeland" seeks to nurture the dreams of some form of territorially based collective governance (Anderson, 1983). Diaspora has become a frequently used term by social theorists over the last decade to define peoples who have been wrenched from their putative homelands, displaced by global economic restructuring, or civil wars but who maintain and nurture a sense of peoplehood in more than one national territory (Cohen, 1997; Safran, 1991; Tölölyan, 1996). Connor's (1986: 16) broad definition of diaspora as "that segment of people living outside the homeland" leaves much to the imagination but its very expansiveness does indicate the seeming plethora of diasporic projects that are active today. A limitation inherent in these approaches is the binary structure of the models. They neglect the contested and entangled space in which subjectivities are constituted that Brah examines through the concept of "diasporic space" (1996: 208-209). This space creates room for the on-going, shifting, positional constitution of identity and difference within webs of power relations. This approach disrupts the comfortable spatial assumptions about peoples and cultures commonly linked to

ideas of nation, community, and territory. Further, by focussing on the relationship between "here" and "there," or "homeland" and diaspora in an undifferentiated "abroad," these approaches erase the way in which diasporic peoples imagine, negotiate and constitute their identities and communities in new and locally-specific ways outside of a simple binary model (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1994). Put simply, how are Italians in Toronto constituting their identities through everyday collective life there even as these constructions speak to a larger notion of diasporic space. I will further explore the materialization of identity through the foundation of meaningful physical spaces.

For Italians who migrated to countries around the globe throughout the twentieth century their experience of "forced" dispersal was a result of poor economic circumstances, demographic pressures and an Italian political culture and structure that seemed incapable of dealing with the former two issues. Italians left in search of work as part of a "labour diaspora" (Cohen, 1997: 57). To a lesser degree than other more traumatic dispersals, such as Jews or Armenians, the diasporic discourse among Italians in Toronto exhibits many of the characteristics associated with the term. These should not be seen as exhaustive. First, the experience of dispersal is to more than one place. Second, there is active communication, both institutional and kin, between different locations within the diaspora and also with the homeland. Third, a collective sentiment of groupness is cultivated and distinct from the host society. Fourth, there is a collective memory about the past, real or imagined. Fifth, diasporas are also disciplined, structured and influenced by their location within the political, bureaucratic and cultural sphere of a host society which may adopt strategies for managing diversity. In the Italian Canadian case there are multiple diasporic projects at work including a pan-Italian identity and more recently the emergent diasporas based on the Italian regions of origin of people of Italian heritage living in Canada.

The Dimensions of Toronto Italia

Although there were small prewar settlements of Italians in Canada as part of labour migrations that sent workers to mine, lay track and clear brush, Italians are an overwhelmingly postwar community with the peak years of migration in the 1950s and 1960s (Harney, 1998). They came to work in manufacturing, construction and resource extraction. During the 1950s an average of 25081 entered Canada each year. In 1960 the yearly average was 19076. By the 1970s immigration from Italy declined dramatically until the decade between 1981 and

1991 when on average fewer than a thousand Italians entered each year. Over a half-million came to Canada after World War II and most settled in Canada's two major cities, Toronto and Montreal. Fully 70% of Italian Canadians trace their heritage to southern Italy which includes the Regions of Sicily, Calabria, Basilicata, Campania, Apulia and another 12% come from other underdeveloped and impoverished areas in Molise, Lazio and Abruzzo. The largest group comes from the region of Calabria at nearly 20% (Jansen, 1988).[1]

Given the fact that Italians who immigrated to Toronto came primarily as unskilled or skilled labour to work in the building trades or manufacturing sector, the economic success of Italians has been remarkable. Jansen (1997) noted recently that, Italian Canadians have found adjustment in and acceptance to Canadian society relatively easy in the last decade. In the 1981 census, Canadians of Italian multiple origin, that is those who note a mix of Italian heritage and another ethnic category, constituted just 14% of all people of Italian heritage; by 1991 that percentage was 34. In the 1991 census, under half reported Italian as their mother tongue and just 55% could speak it. Education levels are at par if not higher than the Canadian average, which is a dramatic shift for an immigrant cohort that arrived, generally, with just fifth grade elementary school education. Average income and rates of home-ownership were higher for people of Italian heritage than the Canadian average (see Sturino, 1996). Finally, 92% of all Italians had obtained Canadian citizenship.

Toronto Italia, itself, is perhaps unusual in its size, period of settlement, migration pattern and relative economic success. In pre-World War II Toronto between 15000 and 20000 Italians lived in Toronto but by 1991 that number approached half a million. Nearly two thirds of Canadians with some Italian heritage live in Ontario and 41% live in the greater Toronto area. This concentration leads to a significant degree of institutional completeness and density of co-ethnic social networks. Given the age-pyramid of Italian Canadians, the people who migrated in the 1950s and 1960s are now reaching the age of retirement and discovering that they have greater leisure time. Nostalgia for their place of origin is taking on an increasing importance in their lives. Many are seeking to enhance their ties back to their village or region of origin. Vacation packages, arranged through local Italian travel agencies with the help of Italian regional government sponsorship, are common. This nostalgia for home manifests itself through everyday activities and styles of interaction. A greeting, an evening walk, the choice of a specific pasta from a company based region-

ally in Italy such as Calabria, Molise or Abruzzo, the cultivation of backyard gardens or a longing for a fresh fig act as prompts for immigrants, mnemonic devices, or topics of discourse that encourage a reflection about home and "homeland" or narratives about longing for 'there." In the two cases I offer here, Italian Canadians literally cement their relations in the sense that they construct buildings that locate their sense of peoplehood, their social networks, their desires, imaginings and reminiscences about being Italian. In an effort to appeal to Italians living abroad Italian governments have created programs that encourage Italians to see their land of emigration as central to who they are in their new states. In this age of mobile labour, states need to adapt to the challenges to their sovereignty that are posed by global deregulation, the flow of information and capital and the movement of people across their borders. Of course, there is nothing natural about the nation or citizenship within it. Both are made and remade. People make an effort to belong to a particular state. Citizenship then should be seen as "a political process of participatory enactment that is increasingly broader than its territorial borders, and that is linked to other states through networks of migration" (Joseph, 1999: 158). Italian immigrants and their descendants actively negotiate and assert their identities within the opportunities presented to them by political tools employed by states in the transnational world. By doing this they reconfigure what it means to be Italian and Canadian.

States of Influence

To understand the way in which the transnational flows of the pan-Italian and ethnoregional diasporas are made material through specific sites, I offer a few ways Canada and Italy have adjusted their encouraging practices in response to the arrival or dispersal of people since World War II. Canada, and more specifically in this case, the province of Ontario, practices a species of flexible sovereignty in the way it has adapted to the sociocultural dimensions of the dramatic changes in its population. It seeks to discipline and regulate the subjective forms of identity emerging from the ethnocultural diversity of its population with a multiculturalist discourse. It adjusts to the potential loss in sovereignty,—the ultimate power over people, places and things—engendered by the flow of labour to capital, or the mass movements of people and diasporic discourses and practices by incorporating them into a pluralist nationalist project. Further, in the case of Italian regional governments, state programmes have adapted to economic deregulation and the new political configurations of the European Union that sees

the reduction in traditional nation/state authority. Various levels of the Italian state have also responded to the displacement of Italians around the globe to find new ways to discipline and regulate them so that the national Italian state and its component regions can successfully engage the global marketplace.

On October 8, 1971, Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau announced the policy of multiculturalism in the Canadian House of Commons. In 1988, the policy was officially enshrined in law with the Multiculturalism Act. There has been much written about the government's intentions and the failure of the policy to live up to the expectations of various interests in Canada (Brotz, 1980; Fleras and Elliott, 1992). The emergence of the policy grew out of the rejection of the notion of two founding nations, British and French, in favour of a cultural pluralism. The massive sociodemographic and political changes occurring in the country as a result of postwar immigration, that saw more than a third of the country with origins other than British or French, necessitated this change in perception and policy (Harney, 1988). Canada was to be different from the popular perception of the American melting pot that erased ethnicity and created a homogenized American identity. Instead, a favourite metaphor for Canadian multiculturalism was the mosaic that suggested that ethnocultural groups maintained their integrity while contributing to the Canadian nation/state. The exact ways in which ethnocultural groups would be nurtured and maintained over time was left unspecified in terms of state policy although limited funding for celebratory festivals, heritage language and ethnocultural enrichment programs and citizenship adjustment was forthcoming. As Dusenberry notes the liberal message of the policy suggested an agency in identity construction asserted by individuals and ethnocultural groups who can "will themselves into existence" (Dusenberry, 1997: 742). Critiques of the policy came from non-European immigrants, Caribbean, South and East Asian peoples who felt the policy insufficiently addressed systemic discrimination. Interestingly, within the community leadership of some European groups there were and are complaints that the policy focussed too much on symbolic expressions of culture and less on genuine political and economic equality for all people regardless of their heritage. Moreover, some European immigrant group leaders envisaged an equality of cultures that meant Italian and Ukrainian cultural and linguistic efforts and programmes would be promoted and sustained by government support as readily as English and French (Kymlicka, 1998; Lupul, 1982). As both a discourse and policy, multiculturalism attempts to manage, co-opt, control, regulate and dis-

cipline the ethnocultural diversity of Canada. In effect, it responds to the nationalist idea that there is a threat to the Canadian nation-building project if people living within the borders of the Canadian state participate in social worlds beyond the host society in the era of globalization.

Within the world of Toronto Italia the general message that multiculturalism encourages "[e]very ethnic group to preserve and develop its own culture and values within the Canadian context" (Canada, 1971: 8580-8581) has been, in a limited way, embraced and espoused by many Italian Canadians. It has for many Italian Canadians created a broader nation-space to incorporate their ideas about citizenship in Canada, to nurture expressive and symbolic forms of culture and to maintain ties with their homeland.

The policy has done more than manage the diversity. It has created a deeper symbolic shift in the traditional axis of power by denying the claims of British and French Canadians to greater legitimacy (Breton, 1984). Politicians are not able to control this symbolic change in the meaning people invest in their society and collective identity. Through the articulation of a multiculturalist ethos, different levels of government in Canada have opened up space in public discourse for the articulation of ethnic identity projects. Although mediated through local experiences, in some instances these projects are reconfigured through transnational ties and emerge as part of diasporic projects. Some Italian Canadian ethnocultural leaders act on this shift in the symbolic order in Canada and actively seek the support of the Canadian state to pursue local projects that mix the local and the transnational.

Space and Seniors

There has been a tradition in Ontario for provincial governments to fund building projects sponsored by specific ethnic groups in the area of seniors' housing and seniors' care whatever their political stripe, whether Progressive Conservative or Liberal. In the 1970s and 1980s, to augment millions of dollars raised in the Italian community, the Italian Canadian Benevolent Corporation (ICBC) received significant financial support from the Ontario provincial government to build a home for the aged, Villa Colombo in 1975. Later, the Ontario government contributed financial support to the ICBC again to build a community centre, Columbus Centre in 1980, and a seniors' non-profit apartment building, Casa Del Zotto in 1987. The organization, now known as Villa Charities to encompass the range of social and cultural services that function under its name, has always used the discourse

of multiculturalism as a central rationale for the legitimacy of its work. Located in the northwest corner of the city, in an area of traditionally high Italian immigrant settlement, the campus of Villa Charities has sought to represent the public face of the Italian community to the rest of Ontario. As the community's piazza, or town square, the Villa Charities complex, in the words of one long time participant, "is a bridge to ourselves and to the greater community. This piazza has helped to shed negative stereotypes and foster instead the vibrant values of commitment and multiculturalism" (Di Iulio, 1991). Villa Charities has therefore, always occupied that interstitial point between the needs arising from the experiences of the Italian settlement in Toronto and the transnationality of Italian identity. Columbus Centre, with its elegant glass-encased rotunda and Villa Colombo with its internal fountain and piazza reminiscent of an Italian hill-town, recall idyllic images of Italy and serve as symbolic sites of interaction and engagement for visiting Italian heads of state and dignitaries as well as Canadian politicians. The campus of Villa Charities offers a range of services such as meeting rooms, restaurants, seniors" programs, support services for the mentally and physically challenged, a day care, athletic facilities, an art gallery and community centre activities. Its cultural arm Centro Scuola Canadese e Cultura Italiana aggressively articulates a multiculturalist ethos while maintaining extensive and elaborate ties to Italy. To augment specific grants from the Ontario and Federal Canadian governments, Centro Scuola receives substantial funding from the Italian Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Education as well as more modest support from the regional government of Abruzzo. Among its programs are Italian heritage-language courses, athletic events and tournaments in Italy for Italian Canadian youth and a language and cultural program in Italy during the summer. It is the major sponsor behind an annual heritage-language banquet that brings together teachers and community leaders from dozens of groups engaged in teaching non-English and non-French languages in communities and schools to discuss pedagogical issues but more importantly to impress upon politicians the importance of non-French and non-British communities. (see Harney, 1998: 102-123).

In an attempt to manage a heterogeneous population and to reduce the potential threat to the production of a national citizenry from the destabilizing effects of having citizens loyal to more than one nation, the governments of Ontario and Canada domesticate and discipline diasporic discourse by incorporating it within the nationalist ideology of multiculturalism. The Italian government has had a century-long period to develop regulating regimes

to cope with its loss of population overseas and hence its loss of sovereignty over their subjectivity. Commissioners were sent out at the turn of the century to inquire about the conditions under which Italian immigrants were working in North America and how the Italian state might help (Rossi, 1903). Mussolini's interaction was more aggressive and propagandistic as he tried through his consular officials to cultivate a sense of national pride among Italians in the diaspora and control the development of community institutions (Zucchi, 1988). Since the 1950s and up to the present, efforts by the Italian government reflect the welfare state realities of this time and the more recent global economic changes. Pension benefits are made available through Italian agencies with offices in Canada to Italians who had worked in Italy before migrating to Canada and recently double citizenship rights were allowed for children born of Italian immigrants overseas. One Italian government official noted to me that one reason the Italian government encourages language and cultural programs overseas in general and among Italians living abroad in particular is that it is believed these programmes help to market Italy—its tourist attractions, design industry and agricultural products. Further, with a populace of Italians overseas there is a ready-made market and a conduit through which to enter new markets.

The Ontario government and Italian regionalism

Between 1990 and 1995, for the first time the New Democratic Party (NDP) governed Ontario as the majority party in the provincial parliament. As noted earlier Italian Canadians as a collectivity had received funding for a Home for the Aged through Villa Charities in the previous two decades (Harney, 1998). A number of conditions arose in the early 1990s that occasioned a particular concentration of state funding for community based projects. First, in the depths of a worldwide recession, the New Democratic Party, a social democratic party, was ideologically predisposed to community economic development projects to encourage community-based affordable housing and to stimulate the economy and relieve unemployment in the construction sector. In Toronto, Italian immigrant workers, small contractors and some major developers had traditionally dominated the building trades. Second, in provincial elections Italian immigrants had a tradition of supporting the NDP, electing three MPPs of Italian descent in Italian populated ridings in the mid-1970s (Sturino, 1996: 135). In the 1990 election, seven NDP candidates of Italian heritage were elected. Five of these Italian Canadians held ridings in the West End of Toronto with heavy concentrations of Italian Canadians. Four of these arrived as young immi-

grants years earlier from Calabria and one from Abruzzo, Italy and two eventually became Ministers. This convergence of ideological predisposition, economic recession, a core of elected officials with a co-ethnic tie to a constituency and an acceptance of a multiculturalist perspective created the conditions for Canadian state structures to engage in the process of encouraging the emergence of this Italian regional identity formation. It also created space for Italian regions, on the heels of political reconfiguration in the European Union and the vacuum in power in Rome with the break-up of the major postwar parties, to flex their creative notions of sovereignty.

In the post-World War II period, the Italian state had given some special status and powers to Sicily to quell its separatist agitation, and to Sardinia, Trentino Alto-Adige, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Vale d'Aosta for geographic, historical and linguistic reasons. Even so, the interests of the unitary state were paramount in Italian politics and the inclusion of provisions concerning devolution within the 1948 republican constitution had little significance for the remaining Regions until the 1970s. Finally in the late 1970s and early 1980s Rome enacted enabling legislation and elections were held to permit the creation of some twenty regional governments. Cold war party politics in Italy had much to do with this slow pace of change. Another reason may have been that aside from the special regions mentioned above there was not much regional identification among ordinary Italians. Although the boundaries of these regions attempted to mimic some ancient historical territories, they had little meaning for the population encompassed by these new administrative structures. In fact rivalries and animosities within regions and loyalties to specific municipalities or provinces were more pronounced than feelings of loyalty to this larger governing unit. The example of Calabria indicates that loyalties were more likely linked to a local provincial city. Several riots in the early 1970s occurred in Calabria over which major city—Reggio, Catanzaro or Cosenza—would be the administrative seat of the new region and hence reap the economic and clientilistic benefit of jobs (Waltson, 1988). Regional identity for those in Abruzzo was also weak. Tensions between that segment that was part of the economic success in the 1980s of small and medium-sized businesses in the so-called "Third Italy" stretching from Veneto down through parts of Abruzzo and the portions that relied more heavily on funds transferred from Rome left Abruzzesi with identities not necessarily linked to the administrative region (Levy, 1996; Mazzonis, 1994).

Most Italian immigrants arrived in Canada before the 1970s and therefore had little experience with the

regional state, but this would change in the 1980s and 1990s. The regions were gradually ceded some power and responsibility in a number of areas including tourism and emigration. Following Rome's creation of advisory councils partly composed of representatives of Italian communities overseas in the diaspora to address issues facing emigrants, regional governments appointed bodies to do the same. Gradually in the 1980s and 1990s, in Toronto, notice appeared about regionally sponsored programs in newspapers, on local radio such as the Italian Canadian-owned multilingual CHIN International Radio and the multilingual television stations such as CFMT and TLN (Telelatino). Young Italian Canadians participate in soccer and other sports tournaments. Seniors who had immigrated to Canada in their twenties are offered month-long package tours to return to see their hometowns and explore their 'Region of origin." The regional governments, encouraged by Italian immigrants living overseas in migration targets as far afield for example as Toronto, San Francisco, Sao Paolo, and Melbourne, lobbied Rome to allow Italians overseas the right to vote in Italian elections. Italian regional governments such as Calabria offer Canadian-born students of Calabrian heritage scholarships to attend Canadian universities. Money is spent to encourage folkloric, literary and cultural linkages. Investment is sought to encourage economic development in hometowns of emigration.

Italian identity and transnationalism

Italian Canadians move easily between expressions of different orders of identity depending on the situation. Expressions of belonging based on hometown, municipality, region or pan-Italianism are common. A complex mix of factors encourages this lively discussion and assertion of identities within Toronto Italia. First, each subnational grouping has a population base large enough to sustain a sense of groupness within a larger Italian Canadian community. This numerical presence has led to ongoing comparisons not just between immigrants from the north of Italy and those from the south but also between regional groupings with, for example, distinctive dialects and culinary traditions. Second, chain migration was central to patterns of arrival. The concentration of residential settlement in neighbourhoods in the northwest corridor of the city has led to an intensification of social links. Third, the concentration of Italians in particular occupations such as construction and manufacturing has created opportunities for comparison and assertion of ethnic markers in everyday interaction between Italian immigrants from different hometowns and regions. Finally, the burgeoning of nostalgia for a place of emigration left over

thirty years ago has encouraged these identities to flourish. Teenagers in schools in the northwest suburbs of Toronto such as Downsview or the densely settled Italian district of Woodbridge in Vaughan township observe the different expectations of parents from different regions in Italy about genders and careers and experience different styles of cuisine and interaction. They also quickly notice that their home language, often a town or regional dialect their parents speak, gives them ways of acknowledging insiders and excluding outsiders within the intra-ethnic mixing. As one Calabrian Canadian teenager, born and raised here said to his Abruzzese Canadian friend, also born and raised here, "You Abruzzesi are almost German." To which the response was, "At least we're not Greek."

In an accelerated fashion, Italian immigrants and their children can interact with and expend emotional energy on ties with their "homeland" in every sphere of social life. Magazines arrive from regions of origin in Italy and hometown web sites seek out rite-of-passage life histories, photographs and social activities of co-villagers dispersed around the world. While they may follow Italian professional soccer, or the latest RAI TV variety show, or Armani and Bennetton fashion trends, the preponderance of food products is certainly the most democratic, accessible and affordable form of consumer connection people make. Since constitutional changes in the 1970s empowered and enlivened Italian regions, products not only declare Made in Italy but also now with more aggressive marketing by the Italian regions, we observe Made in Calabria or Molise or Sicily. Even specific hometowns and provinces from which Toronto's Italians have migrated are noted. Common Italian brand names such as DiCecco, Barilla, Lavazza, or Kimbo, arrive in bulk but so do products from less internationally well-known firms from Cosenza in Calabria or Campobasso in Molise. Olive oils, espresso coffee, cured salsiccia and antipasti, pastas, and hot red pepper sauces from Calabria, often labelled with the names of specific farmers' co-operatives in Calabria, Abruzzo, Molise or Apulia are widely available in Italian neighbourhood stores in Toronto. Kinship and quasi-kin linkages, circulatory travel, investment and personal communications create chain migrations of importers and products from certain regions to markets of Italians overseas. Italian governments, at the national and regional levels, try to exploit this dispersal of peoples as a market through the sponsorship of trade shows seeking consumers for Mediterranean culinary products and espousing the benefits of its diet. The efforts to forge an imagined Abruzzo from those who emigrated from this mountainous region

east of Rome that gradually turns into rolling farmland as it reaches the Adriatic is one example. The phrase 'Abruzzese overseas" is used by speakers in the diasporic discourse to construct the members of this migratory population as part of an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983). The Abruzzese in Toronto are confronted with a plethora of visual and electronic media and glossy print magazines found in doctor's offices, bakeries, travel agencies and social clubs. A recent issue of the magazine Abruzzo Italia, in an interview with the Vice President of the Regional Council of Abruzzo indicated the clear economic benefits of diasporan thinking. Asked what markets Abruzzo's small and medium sized firms would pursue, he responded that "First all those countries where there is a strong presence of immigrants from Abruzzo, such as Canada, the United States, Argentina [and] Brazil" (Abruzzo Italia, 1999: 22).

Building Abruzzo in Canada

In 1994 and 1995 people from the Region of Abruzzo, estimated in applications to the government at close to 75,000 people in the greater Toronto area, received funding from the joint Federal/Provincial (Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Province of Ontario Ministry of Housing) programme for a community-based seniors' housing project, the Casa Abruzzo.[2] While many were involved in the project, the main personality behind the proposal, Odoardo DiSanto, was a former NDP provincial MPP who was elected in 1977 and was widely known for his advocacy for workers' rights and job safety issues. An almost mythical figure for Italian labourers who relied on him to negotiate for them Canada's bureaucratic rules about workers' injury, pension and unemployment rights, this man had considerable influence within segments of the Italian community as well as access to the NDP political leadership. He was also involved in the Italian language media, print and radio, as a commentator and, just after the building of the seniors' housing and community centre began, he hosted a radio program about Abruzzo, entitled L'Eco d'Abruzzo. The Abruzzo Federation in Toronto was started in Toronto in 1982. The coincidence of its initiation with the enabling legislation in Italy underscores both the linkages between elites within the community in Toronto and their interpersonal connections to political leadership and party structures back in the homeland. The Federation is composed of forty different cultural and recreational clubs and helps to create social networks within the community, encourage business and trade shows for products from Abruzzo and networks in Abruzzo for Abruzzese Canadians wishing to do business there. It also sponsors language and folkloric activities for youth and seniors based on traditions in Abruzzo.

The Casa Abruzzo Benevolent Corporation, a key offshoot of the Federation, has received approximately $16 million to construct 175 seniors' apartments from a funding program of the Ministry of Housing and the CMHC. They received an additional $0.5 million from the Ontario provincial government Community Economic Development (CED) project JobsOntario [sic] Community Action (JOCA) which was to be matched by community fund-raising to build an attached community centre component (library, offices, meeting rooms, banquet hall, etc.) The Italian Region of Abruzzo gave $250 000 and promised educational materials and tour package arrangements to the region.

During a meeting in 1995 of a group of Canadians of Abruzzese heritage gathered to discuss the Casa Abruzzo project, I asked one member in the small gathering, why he supported the Casa Abruzzo project. Why not give financial support to build a community for all people of Italian heritage or why not support an organization such as the United Way that serves everyone in need in Toronto? He replied that the other causes were worthy but first

> We must take care of our own and we need somewhere to do it. Besides the Japanese, the Jews, the Friulans [a region in northeast in Italy] all have one. Why shouldn't we? With everything we did here to build this country, we deserve it. A gathering place for us and our kids where we can teach them about our culture or we can show Abruzzese about Canada. (Interview, Luigi D., 1995)

As with other ethnocommunal projects in the past, such as the pan-Italian Villa Colombo effort in the 1970s, the governments supplied financial assistance but the community itself also needed to raise funds. At the meeting where the architect planned to unveil the design for the Casa Abruzzo, the group also talked about a dinner they had organized in honour of Frank Iacobucci, the first Italian Canadian Supreme Court Justice and Honourary Chair of the Casa Abruzzo Fundraising Committee. Justice Iacobucci was a symbol of a successful Italian who had "made it" in Canada and seemed a sensible choice to those there as the one to encourage the diasporan project.

The meeting culminated in the reaction to the architect's drawing of the Casa Abruzzo. In the same room there were people who had emigrated from towns in the mountain areas of L'Aquila, and Avezzano and still others who were from the coastal towns, north and

south of Pescara. As the conversation continued, gentle and playful ribbing persisted between these groups of men from different parts of Abruzzo comparing the quality of the cuisine and the ingenuity of the people from their respective towns. The architect's drawings had a number of characteristics that recalled the architecture of cities in their region of origin. It had several architectural features reminiscent of the geography of the region, including a series of stone supports that had mnemonic resonance with the medieval aqueduct of Sulmona and expanses of cut stone to create the feel of a piazza. The one detail of the site plans that caused a stir, albeit light-hearted, was the perspective the architect had used to draw an image of the mountain chain running through Abruzzo, the Apennines. What side of the great mountain range should be constructed in Toronto: the Gran Sasso, a snow-capped mountain seen from the cities of Teramo or L'Aquila, the Maiella of the Marone chain as seen from Chieti and Sulmona? From the L'Aquila side one can see two rock formations, or horns, described by the people as the il grande corno (the big horn) and il piccolo corno (the little horn). From the other perspective one sees just the little horn. Each perspective on the landscape spurred the memories of those gathered: "The air is so fresh in the morning in L'Aquila. You know, when I left L'Aquila in 1952, I guess I thought everywhere had mountains and fresh air. At least it was not like where those regnisti live near Sulmona.[4] Toronto is flat and humid but it's my home. My nipotini [grandchildren] are here" (Interview, Luigi D., 1995). To further their identity projects as members of a diaspora they needed to make material their ethnocultural feelings. The Casa Abruzzo located the sentiment for the "imagined community" of 75 000 Abruzzese Canadians in a specific material place. It reterritorialized their identity.

Joseph Sciorra (1996) informs us how ethnicity is inscribed in a city's landscape and how diaspora or global processes are made local and constituted by actors. He has explored the way in which Puerto Rican immigrants in New York have reclaimed abandoned urban space and constructed vernacular architecture to reconstitute Puerto Rican social life through the construction of casitas, small housing structures. These small structures are similar in form to those found in rural Puerto Rico whose open air style encourages social gatherings. Cultural meanings are inscribed in the physical structures of the community and in the everyday activities of meetings, cultural programs and social life practised in a place. Memories are often organized around artefacts such as buildings and embedded in places. In this sense, through

its construction and style, the Casa Abruzzo expresses Abruzzese Canadian history and identity.

The mood of the crowd surrounding the official ground-breaking ceremony for the Casa Abruzzo project was lively. The strip of land was situated on a piece of Ontario government land transferred to the non-profit housing corporation for the construction of the Casa Abruzzo. It was chosen from a number of sites based on cost and geographic proximity to Italian residential settlement. The site is in the heart of the Italian immigrant neighbourhood of Downsview. Diplomatic protocol required that the representative from the Region of Abruzzo be present before the event could start. For the occasion, the Italian regional Minister for Emigration and Culture, Silvana Pelusi had flown in from Abruzzo to participate in the ceremony. Her arrival was met with almost the same anticipation and excitement one usually sees reserved for celebrities. The NDP Premier of Ontario, Bob Rae and his Italian Canadian caucus, which included a Canadian-raised immigrant from Abruzzo, Anthony Perruzza, guided the project through the government for its political advantage because it appealed to a core constituency of Italian immigrant workers in the party's urban base. It also appealed to the governing party's social policy agenda to fund assisted housing and to encourage ethnocultural communities to organize non-profit groups to apply for these government funds. Premier Rae's presence, two Ministers and members of the Italian caucus and the 16 million dollars of provincial financial commitment were received as a matter of course. The buzz of the crowd revolved around nostalgia for Abruzzo and pride in being of Abruzzese heritage as well-dressed men and women tried to avoid the muddy terrain of the construction site just south of Highway 401. The conversations not only expressed feelings of pride and joy over the recognition of the contributions of Abruzzesi in Canada by both Canadian and Italian regional governments but also a sense of entitlement for the hard work and sacrifices of Abruzzese-Canadians.

I've worked hard in this country. Without us Toronto would never be what it is today. We deserve a place for us. We need a place to collect the community, a place to maintain ties to Abruzzo and Italy in general. When I am showing people around I can point to it and say we belong here. A part of me is also Abruzzo. We need to expose children to the cultural and linguistic traditions through events and develop exchanges for students and anziani [elders]. The kids can learn about our culture and dialect. The regional government tells us we have the greatest number of people outside of Abruzzo. We can

develop commercial ties. The Consiglio Regionale takes initiatives, offers cultural exchanges for Abruzzesi outside of Italy. Emigrants to those living in Italy have always been considered second class citizens, manipulated by Italian politicians. I guess we have a sense of injury for having left to succeed. We wanted to be sure to fare una bella figura [to cut a fine figure, i.e. to do well]. The pain of separation is not new, or aching. We have settled here. Our lives have been changed permanently by life in Canada but it provides a cultural justification for some and mental relief to have this place and to be recognized. Emigrants did a service to those living in Italy by leaving without aid because we provided more space and room for scarce resources. (Interview, Luca P., 1995)

The tricolour of the region of Abruzzo, white, blue and green, adorned the wooden platform constructed for the event. A local priest of Abruzzese origin blessed the land on which the new Casa Abruzzo would be built recalling in his prayers the Apennine mountain chain that runs through Abruzzo and the villages that sent thousands of immigrants overseas after World War II to find work. The elder statesman, Odoardo Di Santo, finally addressed the crowd. In a single breath he indicated some of the intra-ethnic competition between Italian regional groups in Toronto and the benefits of multiculturalism: "Abruzzese Canadians have never been involved in any criminal activity but have quietly, through hard work, helped to pass on heritage to our children and contribute to a vibrant multicultural Canada."[4] In the end the creation of Casa Abruzzo would let them do many things: preserve and pass on their heritage, add to the diversity of Ontario and Canada, but more than that it would be a "dot on the map of Canada for Abbruzzese around the world," as Di Santo told the crowd.

The terrain of greater Toronto is mapped with significant sites of Italianness through which Italian Canadians ground their transnational imaginings. In Toronto Italia to nurture these collective imaginings, people aspire to make their culture material and to reterritorialize the displacement they feel from the process of migration. Villa Charities, Casa Abruzzo, the Veneto Centre, the Friuli Centre and the dozens of hometown clubs are some of the places through which Italian Canadians attempt the "mastery of time through the foundation of an autonomous place" (de Certeau, 1984:36). These places let them erase the pain of displacement and reassert a belonging to a collectivity overseas through materializing their own lived realities as Italians in Canada. The construction of centres and the assertion of

presence and identity embodies the "spatial symbolism of multiculturalism" (Soysal, 1993, cited in Caglar, 1997) and reproduces assumptions about the unity, fixity and homogeneity of communities. It also requires that we reconsider the central role of physical space in the constitution of identity. To negotiate transnational realities and networks people need to materialize identity projects in space. The restructuring of the global economy has forced people and states to be creative in the ways they respond to the challenges of mobile labour and capital. In Toronto the "flexible sovereignty" of several states has attempted to organize these transnational imaginings, some might say manufacture them, to control and regulate the subjectivity of their citizens whether through a multiculturalist discourse or the encouragement of diasporic expressions of community. People of Italian heritage in Toronto make use of these creative solicitations of the state (Carter, 1997) to mould and shape these resources to create meaningful worlds in diasporic places.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1 During this government almost a dozen projects based on pan-Italian or Italian regional identity were approved for funding or at various stages in the planning process by June of 1995. Some pan-Italian groups who either received funding or were in the planning stages with bureaucrats include Columbus Centre (Villa Charities) Centro Scuola Canadese e Cultura Italiana, Eyetalian magazine, Le caravelle—Circolo D'Anziano seniors' group and Corriere Canadese-Tandem. At the Italian regional level Abruzzese, Calabrese and Venetian groups all had projects in the works for community centre development and/or non-profit assisted housing in Toronto. The Federal Canadian government was involved in financing non-profit housing through mortgage assistance (CMHC).

2 Social housing programs were cancelled in the province of Ontario after the election of the Progressive Conservative Party in June of 1995. The Federal government has also discontinued its social housing activities.

3 This term refers to the historical division of the territory of present-day Abruzzo between the Papal States and the Kingdom of Two Sicilies before Italian unification in 1870. As the man said this he smirked towards his neighbor sitting next to us. This man, in turn, called my informant a

papalini. Those in the northern part were known as papalini (little papists). Of course, the use of these terms bundled together ideas about belonging and difference between those who emigrated from northern/inland and those who emigrated from southern/more coastal Abruzzo.

4 The reference here was to the incidence of Calabrian organized criminal activity in Toronto. The vast majority of people of Calabrian heritage in Toronto have nothing to do with the actions of a few involved in the transnational activities of a few Calabrian crime families but the shootings every few years between rival factions make sensationalized copy in the Toronto press.

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