

## ***Neighborhood.* Andrew M. Greeley. New York: Seabury Press, 1977.**

### **Introduction**

The book is intended as a personal and passionate defense of neighborhoods against cultural/intellectual elites who consider them overly 'narrow' and restrictive of progress. It is rooted in Greeley's personal assumptions ("templates") about the nature of social reality. He tries, ergo, to communicate something of a depth of feeling which lies beneath intellectual principles. He intends to do this without being romantic – saying simply that neighborhoods are a good thing, not perfect.

### **Chapter ONE: Two Neighborhoods**

Begins with recollections of 'St. Angela's' (West side Irish) which cause feelings to surface in the author, and hopefully in the reader.

A place of modest expectations and taken-for-granted loyalties, within which there was serenity/support/self-confidence and a set of behavior paradigms. [11]

Those expectations, in fact, were too modest; as it turned out, Catholic immigrants were about to make incredible social progress. [12]

"Nostalgia is affection with a little ambivalence mixed in." [13]

Begins description of "Beverly" (South side Irish) with extraordinary affection and fondness. [14-15]

Sees one tragic flaw: a passion for "respectability" which results in caution, narrowness and rigidity. [16]

Beverly – as neighborhood – was a 'chosen' life-style, unlike first generation immigrant neighborhoods which were a matter of survival; the neighborhood was an enthusiastically chosen option. [18]

Greeley's acknowledgment of neighborhoods as powerful formative influences. [19]

G.K. Chesterton's reaction to Eliot's Wasteland: "I'll be damned if I ever felt that way." [19]

He finds it hard to understand the "alienation" of so many contemporary intellectuals: "Why can't you be critical of where you came from and still be sensitive and sympathetic to its strengths and assets?" [20]

### **Chapter TWO: Two Other Neighborhoods**

G. Suttles: "The neighborhood is by definition a place to be defended." [24]

Reactions that appear to some critics as 'racist' are really nothing more than 'defense'. [24-25]

The basic barrier to real integration is the 'dual real estate market' in which powerful people profit on neighborhood change. [26]

The reality of neighborhood as a place to be defended can allow for pluralism of ethnic and racial populations within the neighborhood to be relatively peaceful. [27]

Tour of the various ethnic churches in "Bridgeport," with realization of the presence of a population of 'minorities' blended in. [27-30]

'Mr. Dooley' recalling the hardships [32-35] and hoy/strength [36-37] of immigrant life.

Stanislawowo was a predominantly Polish neighborhood; in recent years, a large Latino population has arrived. The two communities have managed to survive alongside one another in relative peace, occupying a neighborhood which both claim to be theirs. [39-41]

Talks about destructive social planning and lack of planning. E.g., how a housing project is built that becomes a slum, how blacks in such projects are frequently led into being dependent; how young professionals can take over an area and uproot the established neighborhood. [42-43]

### **Chapter THREE: Four Streets**

Remarks that Chicago had no 'native elite' as in other cities receiving immigrants; gives stats on immigration in Chicago between 1850 and 1900.

Recalls briefly the difficult situation of Jewish, Irish, Italian, and Polish neighborhoods at the turn of the century - and how these groups survived oppression and "made their impossible dream come true." [49-55]

Contends that the immigrants made Chicago what it is. Yet they are remembered with ambivalence, in some ways because the difficulty/pain of their lives is too hard to dwell on. [55-56]

### **Chapter FOUR: The Ethnic Miracle**

How Southern and Eastern European immigrants in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were considered "racially/culturally inferior." [60-62]

Chicago school of sociology posited the "social disorganization" of these immigrants, arguing that their cultural values were not able to withstand the shock of the immigrant experience. In retrospect, this theory looks to have been a form of pernicious cultural racism. [62-63]

From the 1940s to the 1970s these ethnic groups have shown remarkable achievement: first in income, then in education, and then in occupation. [63-65]

Irish Catholics are the richest, best-educated, and most occupationally prestigious of any U.S. Gentile group. [67]

Hypothesis: the school is a rather poor institution at facilitating the upward mobility of minority groups until such groups first acquire some kind of rough income parity. [67]

And the most successful of the ethnics attended parochial schools which were overcrowded, underfinanced, and poorly staffed. But, notes McCreedy, "They are *our* schools." [68]

The “ethnic miracle” is even more surprising given the prejudice/hatred/oppression experienced. What they had going for them was hard work, saving, sacrifice – and appreciation of two things in the U.S. they had not had in Europe: personal freedom and the opportunity to convert their hard work into economic progress. [69-70]

*Contra* ‘assimilationist’ theory, Greeley asserts that a remarkable diversity persists in ethnic groups. [71]

“In America the common culture validates diversity. You can be anything you want religiously, culturally, stylistically so long as you are committed to the fundamental political principles of the republic.” [71]

On social/political issues, ethnics tend to be in the center or to the left of it – *contra* many leftist stereotypes. [72]

Research tentatively suggests that Catholic and Jewish culture (especially familialism) has something to do with eventual economic success. [73]

Ethnics still do not achieve occupational status appropriate for their education. [74]

There is empirical evidence to demonstrate that this underrepresentation is not due to ‘intellectual inferiority’. [75]

Greeley attributes this to “residual nativism.” [76]

### **Chapter FIVE: Origins**

Two reasons for neighborhoods: “First, we make friends with those with whom we live, and secondly, we live with those who are our friends.” [82]

“People get attached to the place where they live. . . Local community is natural and human beings seek it because they like each other.” [84]

When immigrants arrived they went to places where there were people they knew. [85]

Ethnic concentration has not diminished nearly as much as “assimilationist” theorists would have us believe. [86]

Indices of ‘segregation’ between various ethnic groups are still high. [87]

For many people, ‘neighborhood’ behavior continues in the suburbs. [90]

Narrates different styles in which different ethnic groups established their communities and religious bonds. [92-94]

### **Chapter SIX: The Enemies of Neighborhoods**

The basic assumption of those involved in ‘urban planning’ are such that their policies are destructive of neighborhoods. [101]

An example given is the destruction of a large part of the Taylor Street neighborhood in Chicago to build a University of Illinois campus, rather than any attempt to integrate the campus into the neighborhood. [105]

Much higher education intentionally attempts the alienation of young people from their neighborhoods: “The goal of higher education is *not* to enable a person to look with critical sympathy and sympathetic criticism on his own assumptions and those of the people who raised him but to turn him against those assumptions.” [106-107]

The perspectives from which the elites view human life in society are such that they cannot help but think that neighborhoods are old fashioned, reactionary, particularistic, and inferior. [107]

Statement of Greeley’s theory of “preconscious ‘pictures’” which shape our experience and our response to that experience. [108]

Ethnic neighborhoods offend the “melting pot template” which sees pluralism and diversity as diminishing; they also offend the image of “modernization.” [109]

Modernization has three steps: change / evolution / progress. [109]

The basic assumption is that something fundamental has changed about human life. [110]

Assertion that there is very little evidence to support the modernization model. [111]

Asserts possibility of utilizing science/technology without “soulless. . . bureaucracy.” The emergence of corporate masters is not a necessary result of the industrial revolution; rather it results from a conviction that ‘large is better’. [113]

Both the *terminus ad quem* and *terminus a quo* of the modernization model are called into question by emerging empirical evidence. [114]

Greeley acknowledges the reality of change without positing its “fundamental” modification of human needs/longings/propensities. [115]

Narrates the consolidation of school districts in Iowa, without present evidence that it has improved education. [116-117]

Cites evidence that ethnic success did not result from education, but from a deep sense of cultural identity; education followed economic success. [118]

Small, local communities are as important to people today as they ever were; questions of the meaning of life are as important as they ever were; and the desire to pass on one’s values and heritage to one’s children is at least as powerful as it ever was. [120]

## **Chapter SEVEN: The Case for the Neighborhood**

The human body and personality seem to operate according to established rhythms, which involve stability and familiarity of place. There is also a strong predisposition in us to establish psychic bonds. [126-127]

Neighborhood is one of the places in the contemporary world where humans life and experience and organize the physiological and psychological rhythms of their lives, rhythms which become deeply involved with that physical place. [127-128]

Humankind was social long before it became human (Geertz); it was the social nature of prehomnids that enabled their evolution. [128]

There are strong basic cooperative tendencies in the human personality (as well, of course, as aggressive Ones); the ordinary human proclivity is to establish relationships of some trust/affection with many of those with whom one interacts frequently and routinely. [129-130]

But because distrust is also a reality, there is need for providing structures and motivation for overcoming it. [130]

There is no evidence that the changes of the past centuries have significantly modified these propensities. [131]

Society does not arise out of 'contract,' but the state does. [132]

Personal dignity is maintained only when social/political power is exercised at the lowest possible level. [133]

"If the individual human person is given the greatest amount of freedom to develop his own unique and special talents, and if the dense organic, informal, intimate interaction networks in which he lives and loves are given their greatest possible freedom, they too will develop that which is most unique and special in them. Under such circumstances variegated and diversified interaction networks are bound to emerge." [134]

The issue is ultimately philosophical. [135]

### **Chapter EIGHT: Support for Your Local Neighborhood**

1. Structurally solid housing is deteriorating because policies do not promote maintenance and rehabilitation. Vested interests are oriented to the creation of new suburbs.
2. In many cities there is a dual housing market: one for blacks and one for whites. Antidiscriminatory practices in the housing market are not enforced. It would seem that tax incentives could be used in the area of housing.
3. Panic peddling real estate agents stir up racial tension in an area, to profit from buying houses cheaply and selling to blacks at inflated prices. Property value insurance could protect against this, by decreasing the probability of panic.
4. Crime is an acute problem in racially changing neighborhoods; strong measures must be taken to control this.
5. The present welfare system creates dependency and imprisons the poor in the trap of poverty.
6. The current policies of federal courts to create racial integration are counterproductive.
7. The most serious assault on neighborhoods is redlining, "a process in which banks take money out of the neighborhoods and refuse to put it back in."
8. Abandoned land tracks pose serious problems.

Summary statement of eight recommendations. The obstacles to implementation of these are liberal ideology and conservative greed. [157]

**Chapter NINE: Neighborhoods Are Possible**

Description of trend in brightly painted houses in neighborhoods. [164-165]

The principle of *subsidiarity* is fundamental precisely because it is a guarantee of personal freedom.