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***The Underside of Fashion:
Immigrants in the Parisian
Garment Industry***

by

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THE UNDERSIDE OF FASHION: IMMIGRANTS AS A SOURCE OF
FLEXIBILITY IN GARMENT PRODUCTION IN PARIS.PERSPECTIVES
FOR BERLIN

“Here the demands of industry and the availability of
employment alone determined when a MAN should work and when he
should rest” (O.Handlin “The Uprooted”)

Introduction

Unless we are buying some kind of a uniform, we generally do not
want to get an outfit likely to be also worn by **our** neighbor or
someone else at work or on the street. **Our** longing for uniqueness is
however limited by trendy fashions of the season, by **our** age or the
social group we belong to: most of us are not excentrics but
followers. Yet, we do not follow for a long time. We, namely, like
to change, put on something new.

We have had these "bad" habits for a long time. Occasionally
manufacturers have been complaining about the changing fashion
imperatives, but they have been obliged to adapt to them, and, more
often, created them and learned to profit from them. They have
devised sophisticated techniques of design, model making, they have
been innovative in presenting the collections, in marketing, in
telling us what and how we should wear, in predicting best **our**
purchesses. They "help" us buy, wear shortly, throw away, buy again.

But on the strictly assembly side, their innovative spirit could not
lead them very far. Indeed sewing machines have become faster, some
are specialized, but there has been one constant: it still takes two
hands to run a machine and to manipulate a garment like a century
ago'. And for better pieces it takes also a needle and a thread and
a couple hands more. With this labor intensity as a constant,
looking for ever cheaper workforce was a must. In the core countries
the search for competitiveness has resulted in diversifying
strategies: implementing innovation technology, transfer to low wage
countries or direct imports for mass production goods and

There are multiple experiments with robotization, but their implementation is likely to be
introduced for standardized garments (Kriagar Mytelka, 1987).

maintaining domestically what had to be done under strict quality control and in response to rapid demand fluctuations. For cost containment and flexibility ashore manufacturers in developed countries rely on similar organizational structures, efficient and competitive, relating formal and informal activities through fragmented vertically decentralized structures. Especially in the big fashion centers, this flexible organization is largely dependent for assembly functions on immigrant and minority labour and entrepreneurs (sub-contractors), like in Paris, London, New York, Amsterdam, LA, or on small local firms and family labor, like in Italy.

My main objective is to show, on the example of Paris, why is it that precisely immigrants become providers of flexibility in the garment manufacturing in that city and how does the system function. The reference to Berlin for comparison, has a double purpose: first it is a control case which shows that in the absence of local opportunity structures, the apparently similar labour supply engages in different kind of economic behavior than in Paris; second, the comparison, put in a historical perspective makes it possible to raise questions about possible future developments. Namely, given the *recent* developments in the Eastern Europe, the opening of the Berlin wall and the prospect of German unification, and given also general trends on the labour market towards more atypical jobs, could one foresee a revival of the garment industry in Berlin along the similar pattern as in Paris?

Immigrants and *garment* industry - theoretical perspectives

The garment industry has been a pole of attraction for immigrants wherever they have settled. It had to offer a range of jobs for different categories of immigrants, for those who were confined at home, for those who had no other job opportunities, for those who were capable of mobilizing their compatriots, for those who had skills in sewing as well as those who had none, for those who had starting capital and for those who did not have any. However, not all the immigrants **were** attracted, but those who had certain characteristics or those who belonged to a community which already had some connections with the industry. Researchers have tackled the issue of **immigrants** and garment industry from a number of perspectives.

There is a body of literature focusing primarily on garments as example of a sector in need of a flexible, cheap, non-unionized workforce in order to survive and on **immigrants** and women (including immigrant women) as vulnerable workforce with little bargaining **power**. They point to the exploitative nature of the organization of production. A number of studies have looked at the workers at the bottom of the scale, women homeworkers working in appalling conditions and badly paid (Shah 1975, Hoel 1982, Labelle 1985, Saifullah-Khan 1979, Allen 1981,1989, Anthias 1983, Coyle 1982).

Phizacklea's and my own work have shown that gender combined with ethnicity and racism increases the vulnerability of female workforce: they are 'naturally' paid less and allocated to certain type of ~~jobs~~ because they are women and because their role as worker is never considered as their primary role (Morokvasic 1988,1987b, Morokvesic,Phizacklea and Rudolph, 1986). In France the attention has focused less on homeworkers (except for the studies in the fifties on immigrant men and on native women (Kletzman,1987, Guilbert and Isambert-Jameti 1956). Klatzman predicted the disappearance of that kind of work for male workers he was observing (East European Jews).

Industry studies in France if they refer to Immigrants at all, it is mostly as illegal labor (Delecourt 1980, Vincent, 1981, Conseil Economique et Social 1982, Krieger Mytelka,1987) and generally as a rather marginal phenomenon in the industry et large (Montegne Villette 1987, Dubois 1987). The analysis of the relationship between the formal and informal **structures** which incorporate these illegal workers has been rare **in this country**. It has been however shown that illegal immigrant workers tended to be employed by immigrants themselves or people of the same origin (Morokvesic, 1987b) and that the latter were important link to manufacturers in the subcontracting chain. N. Green has focused on historical developments of the relationship between immigrant workers and immigrant employers (Green 1984, 1986).

Also relevant to our purpose is a body of literature which looks at immigrants as potential entrepreneurs as well as at garment industry not only as a source of exploitation but also as provider of opportunities: ethnic business literature has looked at immigrants and minorities beyond their confinement to the worker status only and has focused on upward mobility of immigrants by access to self-employment; it is argued that previous experience of waged employment with a co-ethnic owner enhances the probability of self-employment in the same sector. Though not directly focusing on garment industry, this approach is a useful framework - starting with I. Light's now classic "Ethnic Enterprise in America" (1972), Bonacich middleman minority theory (1973); Bonacich and Modell (1980), Light and Bonacich (1988), and a number of other work in that field in the US, UK and later in Europe (see theoretical discussion in Waldinger, Aldrich and Ward, 1990). In his book on garment industry in New York, Waldinger (1986) has discussed various explanations of ethnic entrepreneurship and suggested a theoretical framework based on interaction of opportunity structures and migrants' characteristics (see also Morokvasic, Phizacklea and Waldinger, 1990 and Morokvesic 1987e). Among the most important immigrant characteristics are their skill (imported or learned on the spot), future orientation related to circumstances of immigration (target workers vs. settlers), capacity of mobilization of ethnic networks and resources, blocked mobility and limited access to the general labour market (see also Pyong Gap Min, 1987); on the other hand, the opportunities of starting on their own arise in those sectors which have low entry barriers and where "vacancies"

are created with departure of previous **entrepreneurs** (Waldinger 1989). Garment industry is an example of such a sector where segmentation patterns offer opportunities for immigrants to set up their own **firms, relying** on their own networks and labour resources.

There are a number of **controversies** about differential impact of these dimensions on access to self-employment (for instance the impact of the circumstances of immigration and future orientation of immigrants (Waldinger 1989).

Also the gender specific access to self-employment and gender differentials in reliance on ethnic community networks and access to ethnic resources has not been explored sufficiently and deserves further attention not only in the garment sector but in other occupational sectors where immigrants tend to set their businesses (Morokvasic, 1988, Boyd 1990).

Another body of evidence points to economic restructuring accompanied by the expansion of informal sector in advanced industrialized countries. Sassen-Koob (1989) highlights the relationship between job contractions in the formal arrangements and reliance on subcontracting and job creation in informal sector (homes, sweatshops) in apparel production in New York. This and other evidence (Fernandez-Kelly and Garcia, 1989) suggests that informal structures, rather than being an expression of immigrant workers' own imported practices (since immigrants are indeed found in this type of structures), are related to formal economy and that state regulation policies often provide ground for growing informalisation. In case of the garment industry the process is driven by increasing international competition, urge for more profits and threat of losing ground; it reflects employers' strategy to reassert dominance and **power**, but also that of workers, not only to survive but also to gain more autonomy (Fernandez-Kelly, 1987).

The present text draws on previous comparative work on immigrants in garment industry in (Morokvasic, Phizacklea, Rudolph 1986; Morokvasic, Phizacklea, Waldinger 1990; Morokvasic, 1987s), and my study of legalized garment workers in Paris (1987c), on some evidence from my study of immigrant and minority women in self-employment (Morokvasic, 1988); finally, new field data and other material collected in 1989 and 1990 for the purpose of writing this chapter, while in support of previous findings, enabled me also to reexamine them from a new perspective.

Basic for comparison

Paris and Berlin were two rival cities in fashion industry at the turn of the century. They both relied on immigrant and women's labor. They relied on similar flexible organization of production based on subcontracting (Verlagsystem) to small atelier **iers** (sweatshops, Zwischenmeister) and to homeworkers. In the era of fast industrialization in garment production, the system remained in

existence in spite of creation of larger factories and concentration of capital and production (Gullbert M. and Isambert-Jamati 1956, Westphal, 1986). Large supplies of cheap labour - women and Immigrants - were available and enabled this system to function.

While Paris remained a famous fashion center and garment producer, Berlin could not withstand a **succession of events which had drastic effects for its garment industry - Nazi regime, 2nd World War, Soviet Blockade of 1948 and finally the erection of the Berlin wall in 1962** which transformed Berlin into an isolated city without periphery. Its garment industry was transferred to West Germany and Eastern Europe.

Paris and Berlin both have large immigrant populations, with Turks and Yugoslavs in both cities. These two groups have been settled for about the same period of time, and have high propensity towards self-employment. In both cities they have been earning their living dealing with garments: in Paris as labour and as entrepreneurs-subcontractors, in Berlin as labour **in the remaining industry and as self-employed in repair shops**. Let me introduce Milan from Paris and Cihan from Berlin:

Milan produces high quality two piece outfits for a famous Haute Couture manufacturer of Paris. He came twenty years ago with his wife, seeing for better opportunities than at home where he had a job as a clerk (he had previously done one year at the law school). He and his wife were **first immigrants working for a compatriot, until he gradually settled on his own**. With ups and downs he has been in business for over 15 years. He had no skills himself, but his wife knew how to sew, since she had always made clothes for the family. He manages to ~~keep~~ stable seven workers and recruits extra ones if needed on a temporary basis.

Cihan is a skilled artisan tailor, that was his occupation at home in Turkey. With pride he remembers his clients and suits he was making. He was recruited for a job in garment **industry** and put to work as machine operator which he found humiliating and degrading, but that or ~~some~~ other unskilled work in the manufacturing industry or construction was the only way to get to Germany. When the factory closed he found work in a gramophone factory. After another period of unemployment he started a clothing repair and alteration shop. This was one of the few sectors where foreigners can enter as self-employed without many formalities. He could at least use his skills, his wife can help. It is a dead end job, he says. It is good to survive (He earns about a half of what he earns in Paris).

Why could Milan, without any previous skills, do in Paris what Cihan, whose initial skills were much more adequate, could **not do in Berlin** and had to limit himself to doing minor alterations and repairs, a low paying dead end situation with little perspective for improvement or mobility?.

Comparative assessment of opportunity structures in garment industry.

At the first glance, both Milan's and Cihan's chances in garment industry are equally poor, even as **workers**, let alone as entrepreneurs: in France the industry employs only 6,6% of foreigners and in Germany some 8,2%. In both France and Germany garment industry in general is rapidly losing its importance as a

major manufacturing employer: as table 1 shows in 1977-87 decade there has been a loss of about 90,000 jobs in each country representing one third of the workers over that period.

Table 1 Declining employment in garment industry 1977-87					
	in France	and	Federal	Republic of	Germany
	1977	1980	1985	1987	job-loss 77-87
France	279200	251334	207975	189000	33%
FRG	294000	282000	216000	204000	31%

Source: France: UNEDIC
FRG: Statistisches Bundesamt

Immigrant workers were the first to suffer job contraction and in both countries their unemployment rates are much higher than those of French and German population.

But, in contrast to Berlin, and much like in New York, job contraction and closing of enterprises has been in France accompanied by increased reliance on subcontracting, evidenced by opening of new firms (in particular small ones or those without any production on their premises) and by job creations (although not necessarily officially visible ones).

Manufacturers tend to subcontract most or all of the labour intensive part of the production process to small firms that are run by and employ immigrants. This enables them to transfer their own production risks to another segment of the industry which is prepared to take these risks and cater to the unpredictable and fluctuating portion of demand. It could be argued that industrial segmentation is bound to arise when demand falls into stable and unstable portions and the two components can be separated from one another. (Piore, 1979, Piore and Sabel 1984). Rather than competition, which has often been put forward as one of the consequences of segmentation, it is the mutual interdependency that is important. The secondary segment consisting of small firms becomes an economic niche for immigrants who decide to enter the countries' labour market through "the needle's eye".

There is evidence that subcontracting in France is steadily increasing. The annual survey of enterprises recorded in 1979 10% of firms as essentially jobbers, without production premises of their

own (who contract, out the assembly pert.). Their number doubled in only few years representing 21% of the firms in 1984. Their sales represented over one third of the total sales in the industry. The same survey indicates that. 60% of all the firms externalize their production representing 13.5% of their overall product, on (Dubois,1987). This tendency has been especially marked in the ladies' ready to wear where the employment has been decreasing like in the rest of the sector, but where the number of firms even increased in the beginning of the eighties and the number of jobbers has almost tripled. In the same time, in the downward employment trend these firms have registered an increase in employment: from 2.999 in the end of seventies to over 6000 in the mid eighties.

The average size of the firms is extremely small: in France et large, but in particular in Paris, a great majority (90%) of units have less than 19 employees, majority less than 9. In Paris over half of the workforce is employed in the plants of less than 19 salaried persons and one third in those of less than 9 (INSEE, Morokvasic 1987c). Besides, closing down of plants has affected the big ones (over 100 employed) and much less the small ones. Keeping the size low, diminishes the risks, reduces tax payments and enables employers to circumvent various aspects of labour legislation. The evidence suggests that the tendency is more towards dispersion and the creation of many small units than towards concentration: "A critical threshold of 20 persons per unit is not to be overcome" (Welsz and Anselme, 1981). Basically it is the invisible part of the industry that has been gaining importance lately. This, on the other hand, enhances the chances of immigrants to enter the employer status. One needs very little capital to start working on one's own in garment industry. Unlike a manufacturer who needs a substantial capital to invest into fabric and preparatory stages of production as well as in distribution of the finished product, and who cannot do without an organizational know-how in order to negotiate with different partners, a petty entrepreneur or a contractor can start with one sewing machine only and can function even without knowing the language of the country.

The evidence about immigrants in small firm proprietors comes from the lists of registrants at the Chambre de metiers de Paris. Distribution per nationality among the registrants shows that majority of small firm (under 10) proprietors are foreigners: 54.51%. After the French (45.49%), the Turks (22.45%) and Yugoslavs (8.32%) are the most represented single nationalities, whereas the Asian group taken globally accounts for one third of owners (see table 2).

Table 2. Garment firms of less than 10 employees in Paris by nationality of the registrant (March 1990)

	number	%
French*	1655	45.49
British	0042	01.15
Greek	0061	01.67
total EEC	1822	50.00
Yugoslav	303	08.32
other European	314	08.63
Turkish	817	22.45
Pakistan	52	01.42
Chinese	115	03.16
Vietnam	36	01.00
total Asian	1234	33.91
Marocan	0045	01.23
Tunisian	0071	01.95
Algerian	0050	01.37
total African	0181	04.87
Total	3638	100.00

Source : Chambre des metiers de Paris, unpublished data on registrants and my calculations, 1990

Entry of immigrants in this context is further facilitated in Paris by the fact that there are no legal restrictions or certificate requirements for garment proprietorships: anyone with a residence permit can register as self-employed. Very high fluctuations, closing down and opening up, reflect this facility but also the vulnerability of firms: in 1989 for instance 1092 firms registered with the Parisian Chamber of Artisans, 658 closed down. Among those who started 44% were French nationals', 31% were Turkish, 8% Yugoslav, 4% Chinese. Among those who closed French and Turks

*It is likely that these are to a large extent foreign born French, naturalized. Unlike US it is not possible to know their "ethnic origin". That is a question one does not ask in France. We know from census data however that the tendency to become self-employed is higher among foreign born French than among foreigners or native born French (Morokvasic, 1988). British are in fact the Hong-Kong Chinese,

'see footnote 2

accounted for 29% each, Yugoslavs accounted for 13% and Chinese for 7% - which indicates a higher stability of French run firms.

In Paris the subcontracting system is known under the name "Sentier", after the traditional inner city location of garment producers (see map 1 which shows where the highest concentration of garment plants is). It is where design and showrooms are, where fabric is being sold and cut, where manufacturers are linked to a network of immigrant contractors and subcontractors and at a far end to homeworkers or home-based ateliers which can deliver finished product at an extremely high speed and at low cost. In women's ready-to-wear this parallel structure influences strategies of production and retailing in the whole sector. Manufacturers and retailers can satisfy their short-term needs and resupply runs if needed. Sentier can also fill in the dead season. **There** is evidence that the Sentier structure is being reproduced in the outskirts of Paris and in some cities of French Provinces (Weisz and Anselme 1981, Weisz 1987, Dubois 1987, Montagne Villette 1987).

It is the way this system functions that **makes** entry of immigrants possible at the subcontractor end. The manufacturer may contract out all the stages of production or he may keep design, model making and cutting at his premises while giving the assembly part to one or more subcontractors, and marketing the garment himself. Subcontracting thus largely reflects the trend to externalize labour intensive functions of production separating it from creation and distribution (design, pattern making, wholesale and retail). This enables manufacturers to widen the spectrum of their products from low quality, cheap, to high quality, while in the same time remaining specialized in the category of product and to remain in control of the whole process while in the same time transferring the risks to contractors.

Contractors are in competition with one another and in struggle- for their own survival they may try to lower their labor costs or produce their own segmentation by subcontracting work further, engaging in different kind of informal activities (Morokvasic 1987a). Much of it is off the- books. "If *you* are completely legal, *you go* out of business", I was often told. The system produces different risk-takers (another entry for enterprising immigrants) which cover the tax law violations and other kinds of economic crime with a legal facade. What they do basically, is to mask the link between the formal, *regular* activities of the manufacturers and the informal functioning of subcontractors. I have- described in detail this functioning elsewhere (Morokvasic 1987a). I interviewed again recently some of employers involved in various informal activities, some taken to court in connection with a "false bills" affair. One of them, released because of "lack of evidence" told me:

'I knew the outcome from the beginning-. They let me go because I knew too much . and they knew that I could speak.'

In contrast to Paris, the once dynamic system of subcontracting no longer exist³ in Berlin. Its destruction goes back to the Nazi

period, with boycott and confiscation of Jewish production units and the exile and deportation of the Jewish producers and **vorkers** by the Nazis (Westphal, 1986). After the war, the revival of German garment industry was based on modernization and mass production. But the Soviet blockade of 1948 and the Berlin wall were the ultimate blows to the Berlin production. Until 1961 manufacturers could still rely on subcontractors in the eastern part of the city, but the Wall finally isolated Berlin and condemned its garment industry to shift abroad (mainly Eastern Europe) and to West Germany, near new fashion centers Munich and Dusseldorf, and in vicinity of rural areas with **large** supplies of female labor- (Figge and Quack, 1989). Eastern Europe was especially interesting because of low wages, vicinity, low transport costs, advantageous tariff regulations (in particular with GDR) and liberation from import tax for certain type of imports. These strategies of German manufacturers did not produce opportunities for new creations of small firms, let alone for newcomer immigrants. In the sixties, in the beginning of migrant labor recruitment period, both industrial firms and the artisan ones were in the process of rapid decline, whereas the system of subcontracting had virtually disappeared. The number of industrial garment firms in Berlin went down from 1646 in 1965 to 400 in 1977 and is halved by now. Artisan firms (former contractors), 5.616 in 1951 went down to 1605 in 1965, when immigrants started arriving massively. There are no **more** but two hundred left at present.

But even if there had been some opportunities for new creations when Cihan came to Berlin, he would have had to overcome obstacles that Milan did not have in Paris: to produce a German certificate to prove that he could make clothes, he would have had to have a special residence and work permit - all of which he did not have at the time. The only **sector** where entry was possible and where Cihan could use his garment skills was clothing alterations (in German "Andrerungschneiderei"). Immigrants, mostly Turks and some Yugoslavs, revived this dying sector in the cities all **over** Germany; in West Berlin the number of alterations shops went up from only 12 in 1965 to over 500 in the beginning of the eighties, employing 2-3 workers on the average.. To an extent immigrants created their own demand for this type of services; but also responded to the needs of a population with **restricted** consumption appetite for new garments and took over some of the **work** German women, now increasingly active in the labour force, used to do at home. **Our** data show (Morokvasic, Phizacklea and Rudolph, 1987) that entering this sector was a survival strategy for those who could not find other opportunities and were threatened by losing their residence permit under prolonged unemployment. But there was saturation of demand in the eighties and hardly any prospects for further absorption of immigrants, let alone their upward mobility. Some of the Turkish owners started then diversifying their output, offering leather clothes which they had had made in Turkey.

In conclusion of this section let me reiterate the essential differences in opportunities which produced different kind of economic entrepreneurial behavior among immigrants of **the same**

origin in the two cities. In Paris a highly flexible organization of the garment production relying on very small units, subcontracting and increasing informalisation created entries for immigrant entrepreneurs; in Berlin the dying **garment** industry absorbed some skilled artisans as unskilled labour; as for the artisan sector, rapidly disappearing, it was too rigid anyway to admit newcomers. Some of those who were laid off by the industry later found an entry: they dynamized a sector in which they could use their skills. The latter shows that the environmental conditions alone do not explain everything: immigrants also possess certain qualities, "imported" or shaped by the circumstances of immigration which enhance certain type of economic behavior and jeopardize other. In the following section I shall discuss the impact of the most important, ones in connection with the existent or non-existent opportunity structures.

Immigrant **supply and characteristics**

The focus is here on two important dimensions: one is immigrants' availability at the labor market and the other their **resources**.

Availability of immigrants in France and in Germany has been shaped differently by different immigration and foreign labour recruitment policies. The situation for many immigrants in France has been very much like that of "fluid labor supply" described by Handlin for the 19th century America:

"The fluid labour supply that gave the employer complete liberty to hire as many workers as he wished, when he wished, also gave him the ability, at will, to dismiss those whose toil he no longer needed" (Handlin, 1979)

Immigrants entered France thanks to a very liberal immigration policy and even after first attempts of regulation, immigration continued bypassing the hiring agencies: despite considerable efforts to organize migration flows especially with the creation of the ONI (Office National d' Immigration) in 1945, spontaneous immigration continued nevertheless, so that in the peak period of post-war immigration in the sixties, a majority of immigrants (approximately 70-90%), had their status legalized only after their entry into the country. Very early the procedure of amnesty (regularisation similar to IRCA in California) has been adopted as a normal strategy of labour market regulation (Moulier, Garson, et Silberman, 1987). The latest amnesty of 1981-2 was intended to deal with the large supply of undocumented labour that accumulated in the 1970s in France and could not be absorbed by sporadic procedures of amnesty (called "admissions to the labour market"). As a matter of fact after the 1974 labour migration stop, immigration of families, refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented workers continued and provided certain sectors of economy with flexible, not very demanding workforce. Because of this large **non-regulated** immigration, dictated by demographic and economic needs of France, there has always been a considerable **labour** supply in the country, consisting of workers with, at least temporarily, a rather insecure

lega 1 status profitable to sectors like garments. The data on the latest French regularisation of 1982 suggest, that the total amount of regularized workers (those who filed for it. and who met. The requirements, i.e. only a portion of illegal workers) was higher than the census figure for Paris for the same year (8820) (Morokvasic, 1987c).

My study based on a random sample of 1020 immigrants legalized by the 1982 amnesty procedure provides evidence about the spatial distribution of legalized garment workers. It shows that they are located precisely in the inner city area in "Sentier" and the vicinity (map 2). It is the area where most of the garment firms and garment workers are located (map 1 and map 3) and where immigrants outnumber French among the workers (map 4). The study further points to sources of underestimation in particular among women immigrants and persons from South-East Asia, suggesting a high proportion of workers still employed outside the legal context (Morokvasic, 1987c). It indicates further that majority of legalized workers were likely to be employed by an immigrant employer, mostly of the same origin. At least, even when the employment link was not genuine (I evidenced this through a few field check-ups), data suggests a solidarity bond: it is a compatriot employer who provided the employment certificate, a prerequisite for obtaining legalization.

Though some immigrants used the regular procedure of immigration via Office National d' Immigration, it was only to simplify their entry into the country, the direct recruitment for the garment industry was exceptional and if so, it was restricted to factories in the provinces. Parisian organization needed flexible labor - illegal was the cheapest - and immigrant subcontractors to mobilize that labour. Subcontractors were generally recruited among the ranks of settled immigrants who were prepared to undertake risks which they would have not undertaken as target workers i.e. with a return orientation. However, many subcontractors were only the product of informalization tendencies in the sector: i.e. further segmentation among subcontractors themselves who forced their own workers into self-employment in order to avoid high social security payments, health insurance etc. In that case access to self-employment and entrepreneurship is an outcome of power relations established in the subcontracting system, though it may genuinely reflect a person's desire for autonomy as well.

In contrast to the situation in France, the immigrant population was less available in Germany: the immigration flows were more organized, "guest worker-s" were brought for specific purposes - to fill in the vacancies in German industries. Dependent family members i.e. the possible flexible supply of labour for the informal sector and family owned firms, were kept to a minimum until the labour migration stop in 1973. At least in the sixties and in the beginning of the seventies the supply of migrant labour freely available on the labor market was minimal. It increased only later with the arrival of families after the 1973 labour migration stop and with the rationalizations in different industries which produced

redundancies among immigrants more than among the natives (ever since, the unemployment rates of immigrants has been double that of the Germans). The trend toward settlement, came **later** than in France, and given the official ideology that the Federal Republic is not an immigration country, insecurity is **de facto** much greater than in France.

That is how different circumstances of immigration shaped the availability of immigrants. Whereas **Milan was** freely available on the labor market, Cihan had no choice but to be recruited the official way for an assigned vacancy.

But in terms of resources, their qualities do not differ- very much. One can distinguish between individual resources (skills, know-how) and those related to community and its networks. **Skills** needed in garment industry are defined in a very flexible way and depend more on job supplies than on skills themselves which can be learned quickly: Cihan, a highly skilled *taylor* was considered unskilled by the German employer, whereas Milan's lack of skill was **not an** obstacle to his becoming a contractor - he could rely on the skills of his wife. The evidence from my work suggests that for women, on the contrary, skills were definitely an important asset, a condition sine qua non to become self-employed: unlike men they could not compensate for the lack of skills by mobilizing their husband as unpaid labor and have less **power to** mobilize other labor within the community.

This brings us to the issue of **other** resources, like reliance on inner community networks for finding work for oneself or getting cheap and attached **workforce**, for financial support or for market transactions. Immigrants are usually facing blocked mobility in the society and **in the general labor market**, the array of jobs available to them is limited, because **their skills and know-how are considered as inadequate for other jobs**. They learn to turn their **handicaps into advantages** by relying on *resources* the others do not have. Informal networks of the community provides them with a competitive edge over non-immigrants: word of mouth or- advertising for the community only in the local immigrant. newspaper, are the usual ways of finding a job or finding workers, or finding intermediaries for establishing the connections to manufacturers. An immigrant can also bring workers from his place of origin.

In these situations primary group relationships tend to blur class relationships because **complicity is established** between worker and employer: both have the impression that they have made a good bargain - he can make them work at a lower price and rely on them for working unsocial hours, they are indebted to him for providing them with a job, for being sympathetic to their private **worries** and helpful if they are in need. For a long time ethnicity functions as a filter through which expected class solidarities give way to **loyalty based on the same origin**; conflicts which otherwise would arise in pure market relationships are thereby masked. Though eventually, the entrepreneur recruits **beyond the family** the

relationship with the workers is mediated through kin ethnic and friendship ties within 3 community sharing common identities common set of rules and obligations and bonds of solidarity.

Trust and loyalty are also indispensable for other- activities which the expanding informalization *generates*. For instance, employing unregistered workers necessitates access to large amounts of cash for their pay. In order to keep this 'off-the-books' activity invisible, subcontractors address themselves to other intermediaries in the subcontracting chain who provide them with necessary 'pay cheques', 'pay slips' for the workers and cash, against 3 commission (Morokvasic, 1987a).

One could argue that this flexible organization of work is highly exploitative of workers at the bottom in particular women: working from 8 AM to **midnight** often on weekends under difficult health and safety conditions, without job security, health and pension insurance means clearly breaching labour legislation. There are marked gender differences in upward mobility opportunities: first, women are more likely to remain in less visible jobs, either as illegals or as homeworkers, or assisting male homemaker (which literally means that they work without being paid at all). The evidence about this is indirectly provided by the legalization figures for 1982 amnesty: less than one quarter of legalized immigrants were women, even in sector traditionally employing three quarters of women, like garments (Morokvasic, 1987c). This can only be explained by the lesser likelihood of women to fulfill the requirements for legalization (i.e. provide a certificate about a stable, one year employment preceding legalization). Second, upward mobility through self-employment is more limited for women. They have often to rely on men in their transactions with manufacturers, jobbers, retailers, wholesalers. They say that they are often not taken seriously, they report sexual harassment and difficulty in getting paid in reasonable period of time after delivery of finished work. They also have difficulty in mobilizing the same kind of resource as men - the community networks do not seem to be always supportive of them (Morokvasic, 1986) and they often have to rely exclusively on female workers.

And yet, looking from the point of view of workers whose employment alternatives are otherwise nil, this flexible system is de facto a job creator. Milan, as a part of this flexible Informal Parisian system is a provider of opportunities for people he hired through his networks. Besides, Milan and his workers have an environment where the requirements of work meet those of non **work**, where it is possible to integrate a newcomer because it simply blurs the frontiers between the legal and the illegal work, between private and public, between formal and informal.

Prospects for future

SO far recourse to new technologies was thought to be the only form of innovation that, garment industry was to follow in the future. The view that "there s no transformation in this industry without elimination of the traditional sewing operation involving one machine operator to one machine" (Krieger Mytelka,1987). However, the highly flexible structure of the Parisian Sentier because of its competitiveness seems to be developing into a model for a different kind of innovation, the organizational one. Whereas only a few years ago the Sentier was condemned as marginal phenomenon (not deserving indeed more than a footnote in official parliamentary reports), it is now put forward as an innovative form of adaptation to the new consumption demands and to **an obsolete legi slat ion** (Montagne-Villette,1990). It seems that "the future of the whole sector depends on the capacity of enterprises to organize themselves as Sentier" (Dubois, 1987: 66), which is the only economic model capable of renovating the industry and facing international competition (Negri,1990).

Comparison with the functioning of garment industry in other parts of the world, in Italy (Taplin 1988), in the US (Waldinger 1988, Fernandez-Kelly 1987, Bonacich in this issue) suggests commonalities beyond the specificity of the Parisian case. It shows that the internationalisation of production meant both transfer of production to low wage countries, but also altered the conditions at the core with growing informalisation and demand for cheap labor. On one hand the process seems to have been going on at the expense of the workers at the bottom - bad working conditions have **not** been much improving over time. This is in particular true of women immigrant workers whose upward mobility is extremely limited. On the other, current functioning of garment production also provides opportunities, both for workers and for employers; it also questions the traditional frontiers between illegal and legal, between work and non work, between employer and employee, its functioning points to the obsolescence of traditional class relationships. Therefore strict limitation in the analysis to tracing and stigmatizing employers as the exploiters and employees as the exploited, the winners against the losers, is perhaps not the best way of understanding what. is going on and not. the best, strategy for improving equality of opportunity. One may miss the quality of new arrangements which can be much more complex and multifold. I know that the recently arrived worker in Milan's ateleir does not consider himself as a loser: he was forced to abandon his private business at home and came to France as a 'tourist' to work in the "confection". He has no other alternatives. Milan's gain in employing him illegally and the risk he is running by doing so cannot be explained in strictly market terms, without taking into account the weight and value of solidarity bonds and commitments.

Could one foresee the revival of garment production in Berlin? Cihan belongs to a large settled community in Berlin with an estimated several thousand entrepreneurs specializing in trade and services.

He could easily mobilize appropriate resources and rely on established networks. **Given** the new circumstances it may be possible that another entry opens for them (or that they open it) - in garment manufacturing.

So far Berlin was an isolated city in an artificial periphery-less situation. Now, the conditions in and around Berlin are rapidly changing. The wall practically no longer exists and the city east and west together approaches four million inhabitants; the city will now have a large periphery. This means a considerable change in labour supply. **Given** the extreme discrepancy in the levels of living in the city and the periphery around, Berlin is bound to be a point of destination for a large number of migrants heading for the city. This has already taken place: In 1989 and 1990 West Germany and West Berlin received about one million newcomers, majority ethnic Germans **from** GDR and the communist countries. They represent a high portion of currently unemployed i. e. readily available labour force.

Berlin has been also a point of destination for a great number of Poles who **were**, until recently, the only ones from the East block to circulate freely. They engage in the informal economy of the city (basically in the construction sector) or in informal trading and services.

The opportunities in the garment sector itself may open up. FRG has so far resorted to production in Eastern Europe, as I said earlier. Garment factories have been producing in Poland and in GDR as subcontractors for West German manufacturers. There are already informal networks established between some Berlin retailers (boutiques) and garment **workers** in these countries. This still remains on a limited scale, through informal networks and **acquaintances** and has not been researched.

The prospective unification may also produce some effect: GDR employs among other foreign workers 60.000 Vietnamese, a large portion of them working in garment industry. The West has **only** recently been learning about the living and working conditions of GDR'S migrant laborers (Runge, 1990). Some press **reports** and word of mouth accounts that I could collect among Vietnamese and East Germans pointed to the creation of informal production and marketing strategies of Vietnamese garment workers: they used their garment skills at home, reproducing the patterns made in the factories and selling them to private customers. The demand for this kind of output was obviously there: garments they marketed were the replica of those available only at the hard currency 'exquisite shops for triple the price. In the context of unified Germany it is very likely that what is now GDR mass garment production undergoes restructuring making a large number of Vietnamese available on the labour market **for** more informal organizational structures.

As for West Germany, there is evidence that German garment manufacturers, in attempt to overcome the rigidities of current, production structures, have already been seeking for flexibility

domestically by using "atypical" job arrangements (Figge and Quack, 1989), trend observed also in other sectors of economy (Hinrichs, 1989, Buchtemann and Quack 1989).

Another important dimension of opportunity structures is the vicinity of fashion center and market.. There has already been a tendency to reestablish Berlin as a fashion center with traditional and alternative fashion shows (Durchreise and Off Line! taking place several times a year. It is possible that this tendency gets reinforced and that garment manufacturers **try to** make most of the new Berlin conditions and of the available supply of labor, whereas the immigrants try to make the most of their new opportunities.

State policies can encourage these developments in one direction or another. They should be innovative in their support of activities which are growing and creating jobs. Trying to eradicate the growing informalisation through repressive measures and persecution could only produce a counter effect, a situation which would be at the expense of those at the bottom.

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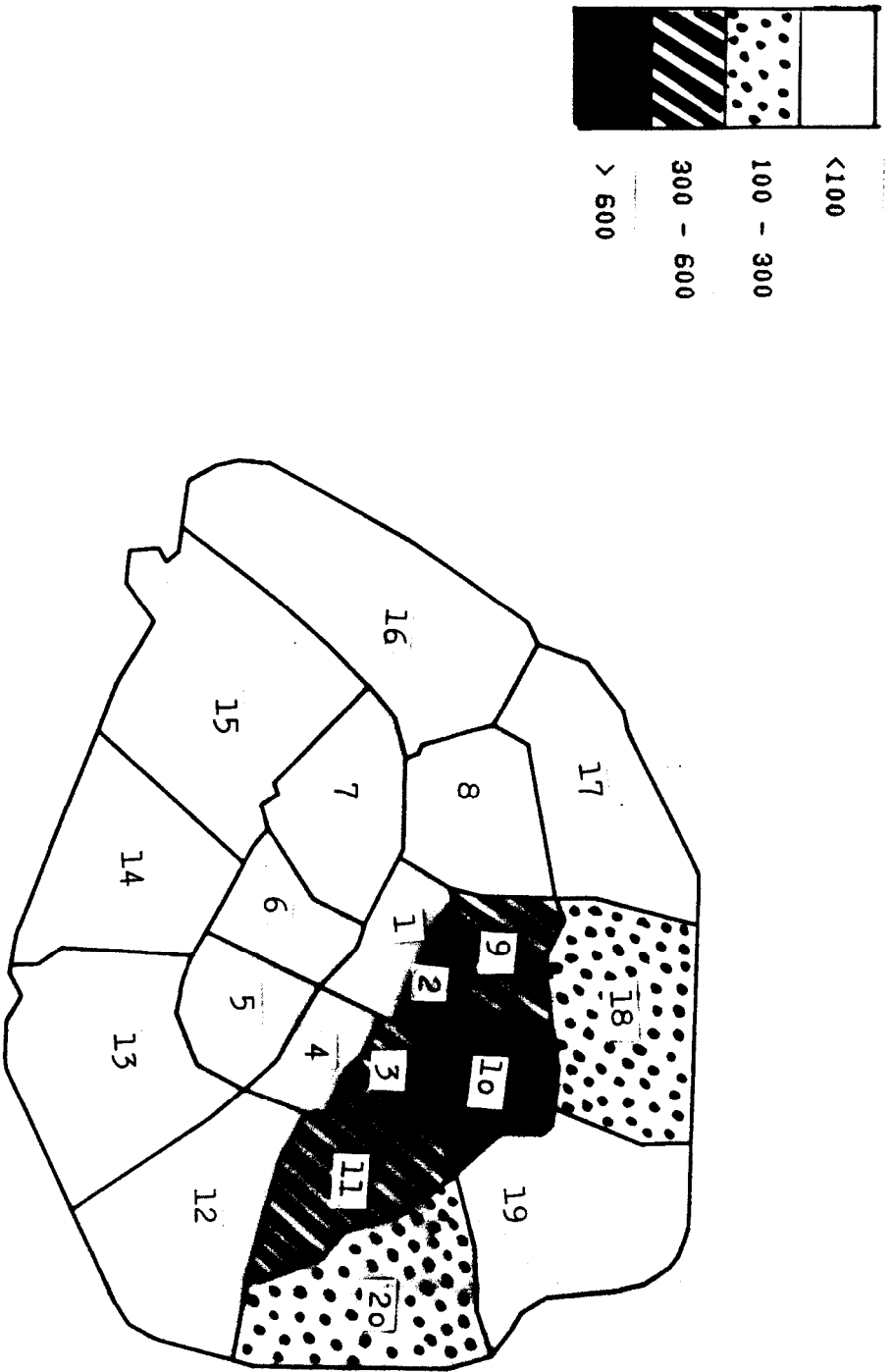
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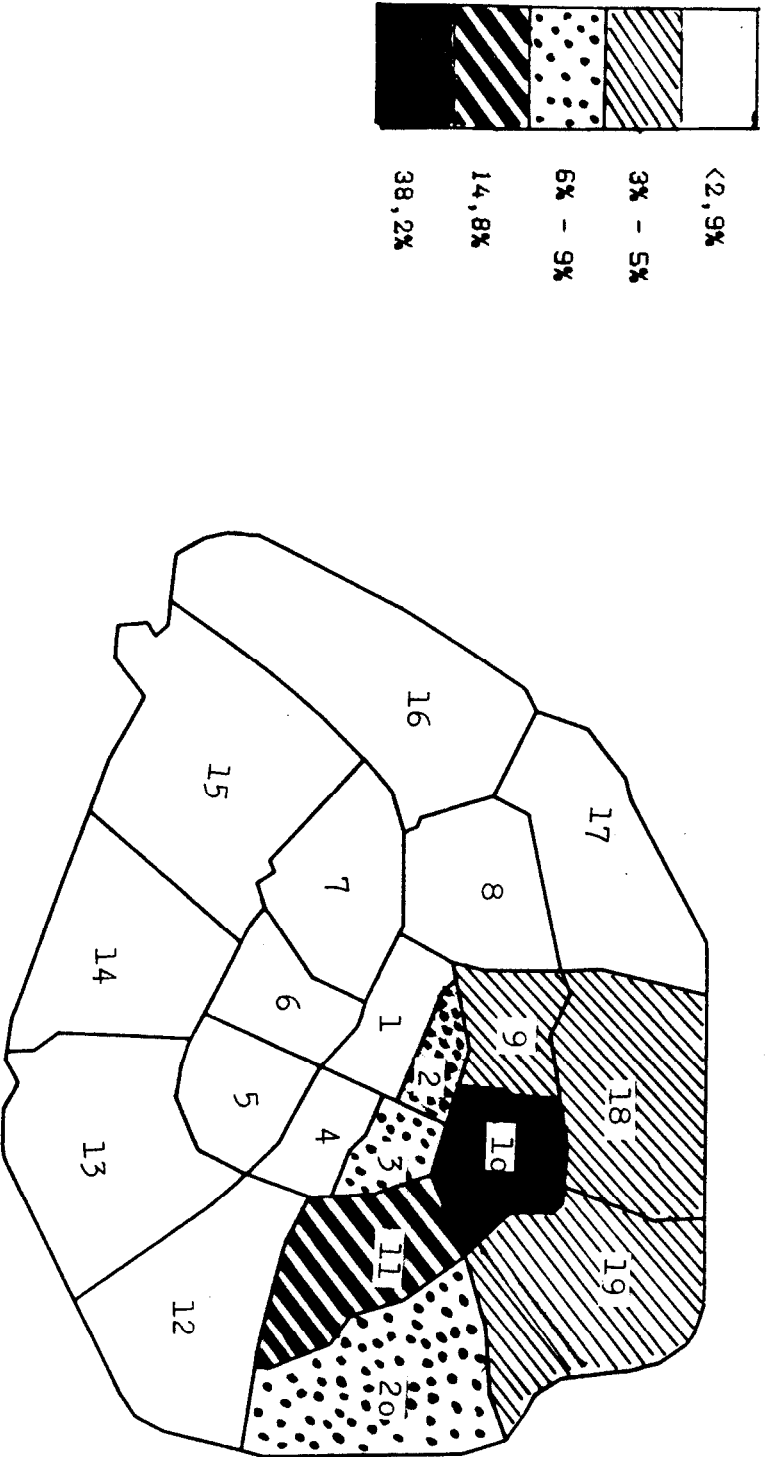
MAP 1

LOCATION OF GARMENT PLANTS IN PARIS



SOURCE: STATISTIQUES ANNUELLES DU GARP, 1988

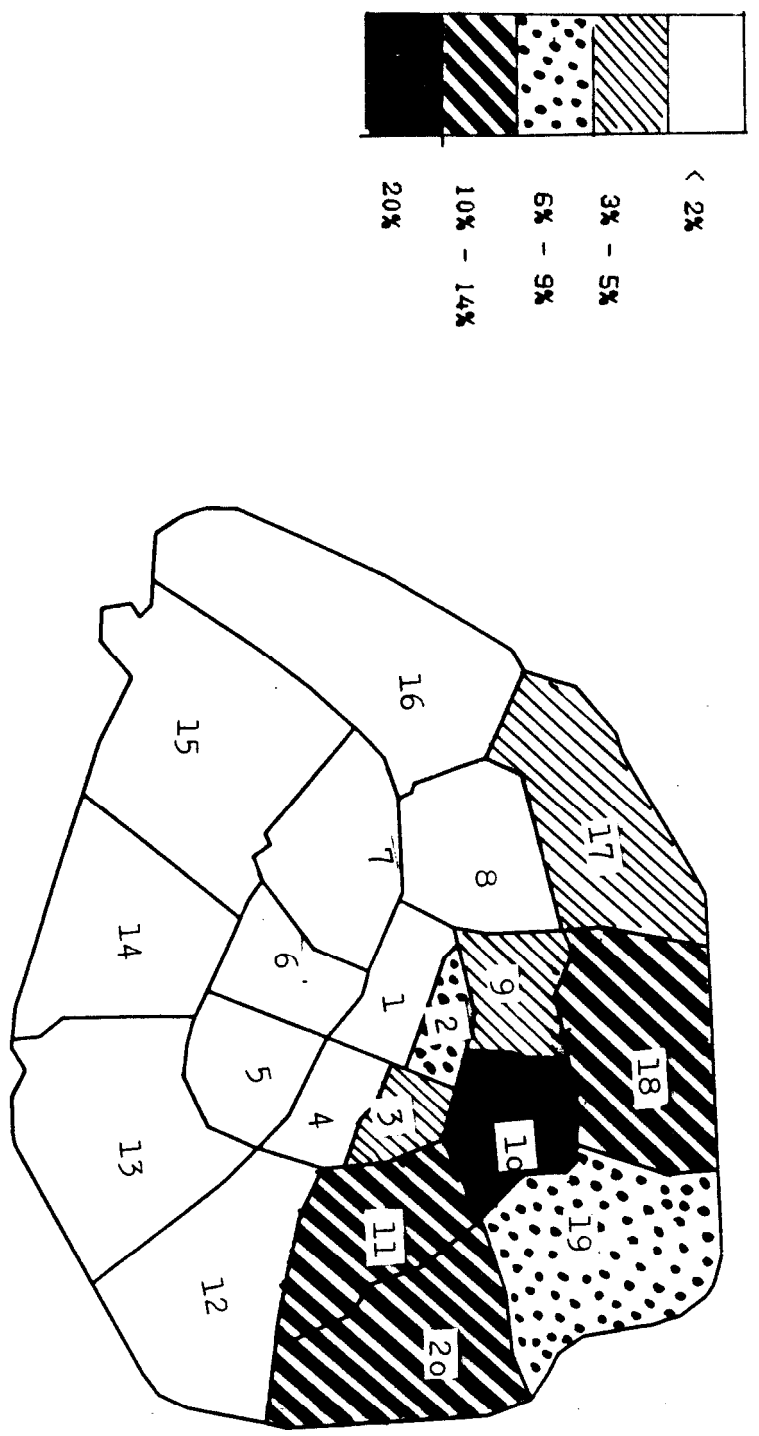
WORK LOCATION OF AMNISTIED FOREIGN WORKERS IN
GARMENT SECTOR



SOURCE: M.MOROKVASIC "LE RECOURS AUX IMMIGRES DANS LA CONFECTION A PARIS" in LA LUTTE CONTRE LES TRAFICS DE MAIN D'OEUVRE EN 1985-1986, Paris, la Documentation Francaise 1987 pp.199-241

MAP 2b

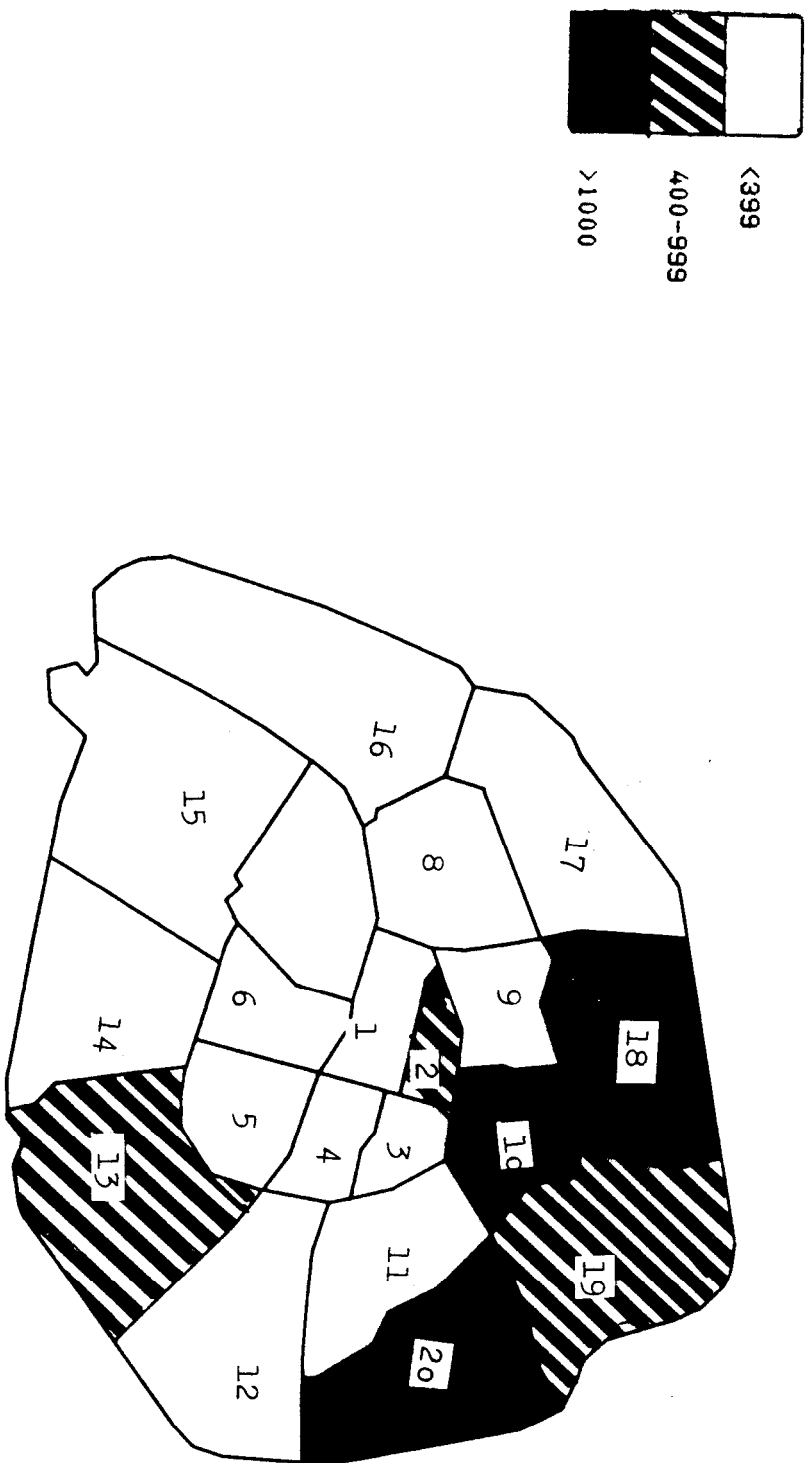
RESIDENCE LOCATION OF AMNISTIED FOREIGN WORKERS
IN GARMENT SECTOR



SOURCE: M. MOROKVASIC "LE RECOURS AUX IMMIGRES DANS LA
CONFECTON A PARIS" in LA LUTTE CONTRE LES TRAFICS DE
MAIN D'OEUVRE EN 1985-1986, Paris, la Documentation
Francaise 1987 pp.199-241

MAP 3

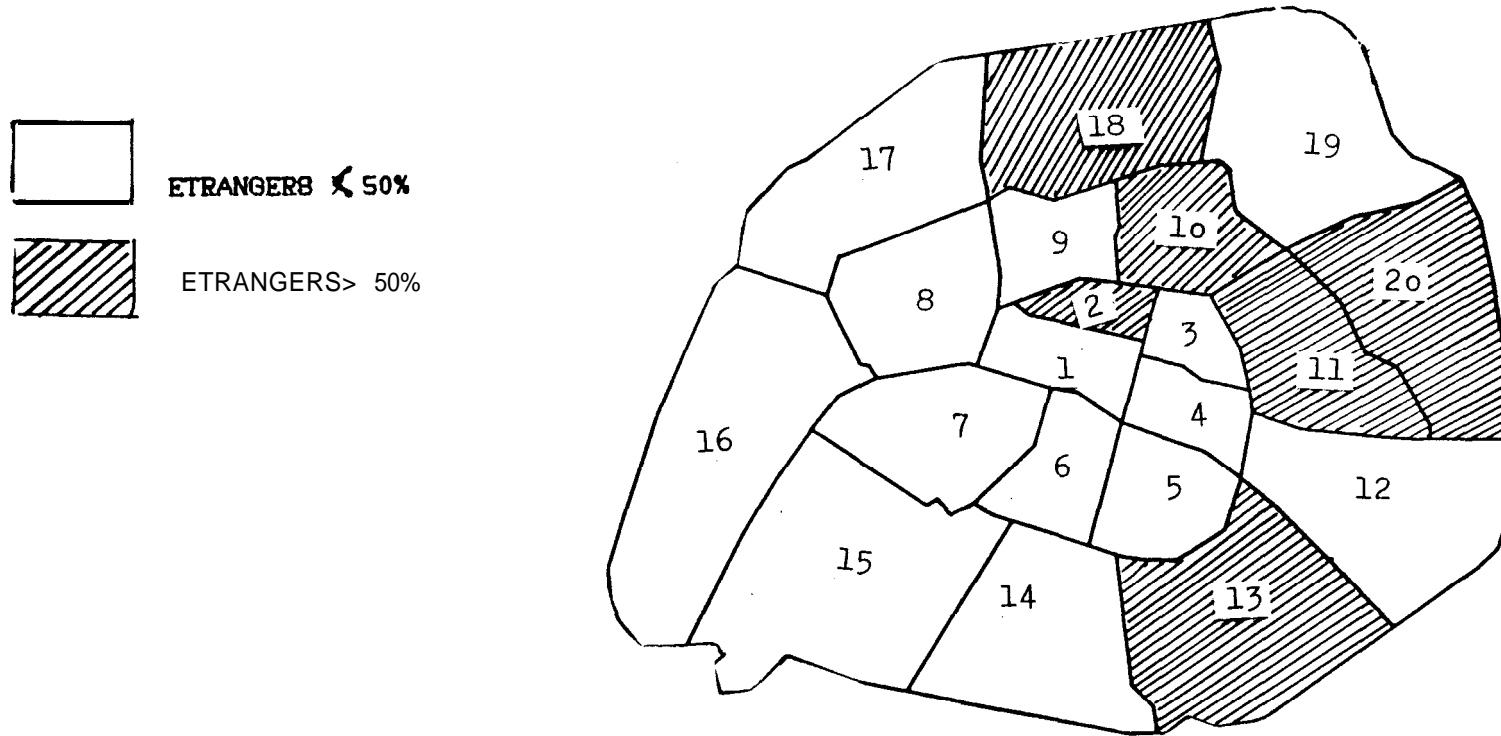
FOREIGN WORKERS IN GARMENT-TEXTILE INDUSTRY



SOURCE: LE RECENSEMENT DE 1982 (SONDAGE AU 1/20)

MAP 4

FOREIGN WORKERS AS PART OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF WORKERS IN GARMENT-TEXTILE SECTOR IN PARIS



SOURCE: LE RECENSEMENT DE 1982 (SONDAGE AU 1/20)

Table 1 shows that in the decade between 1977 and 1987, approximately 90,000 jobs were lost in each country (this represents approximately one-third of the previous labor force).

Table 1. Employment in garment industry in the past decade.

	1977	1980	1985	1987	job loss ('77-'87)
France	279,200	251,334	207,975	189,000	33%
FRG	294,000	282,000	216,000	204,000	31%

Source: UNEDIC
Stat. Bundesamt

Table 2a. Closing down of garment firms in West Berlin.

Industry

1965	1646
1969	1136
1977	400
1982	236

Stat. Landesamt

Table 2b. Closing down of garment firms in West Berlin.

Artisans (Handwerk)

I 1951	5616
1955	3208
1960	2550
1965	1605
1970	868
1975	410
1980	246

HANDBWERK

Table 3. Garment firms of less than 10 employees in Paris by nationality of the owner (March 1990).

	number	%
French	1655	45.49
total EEC	1822	50.00
Yugoslav	303	8.32
total Asial	1234	33.91
Turkish	817	22.45
African	181	4.87
Total	3638	100.00

Source: Chambre des metiers de Paris, unpublished data and my calculations, 1990.

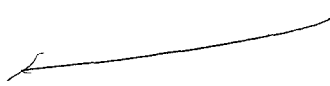


Table 4. Fluctuations of the garment firms of less than 10 employees in Paris for 1989 (by nationality).

	Started	Closed down
French	436	179
Yugoslav	78	88
Total Asian	485	309
Turkish	326	176
Chinese	42	47
Total	1092	658

Source : chambre des métiers de Paris, 1990