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Angela Barbanente Urbanistica: differences between languages, focuses and cultures

Problems, policies, and research

Policies and plans for medium sized cities in South Italy

Urban policies in Cosenza

Salerno: a daring approach to town planning

Programmes and policies of urban regeneration in Catania metropolitan area

The plan of Catania between the fox and the hedgehog

Antonio Pietro Latini
Enrico Fontanari, Daniele Rallo
Policies of conservation and revitalization of historic centres. The case of Ortigia
(Siracusa)

Carla Tedesco Europeanisation and urban policy initiatives in the Italian Mezzogiorno

Projects and implementation

Augusto Cagnardi
Augusto Cagnardi
A fascinating adventure
The new "italian city" for 80,000 inhabitants at Pujiang

Huang Xiang Ming One City, Nine Towns. Search for ideal suburbia in China

Profiles and practices

Ilene Steingut
Teresa Cannarozzo
Ground Zero: construction, reconstruction, participation
Sicily: the interpretation of the territory in the Bourbon land registry of the first half of the XIX century

Methods and tools

Stefano Stanghellini Equalization in the new master plan for Catania

Andrea Di Giovanni Reviews

Received books

Policies of conservation and revitalization of historic centres. The case of Ortigia (Siracusa)

Enrico Fontanari, Daniele Rallo

The purpose of this article is to examine and present the research and development resulting from the intervention policies and the physical restoration that were recently initiated in the historic centre of Siracusa, Sicily (1). The article will furthermore highlight the significance of this case study as the combination of a successful conservation process of the town centre's cultural and architectural patrimony along with the policies and strategies that were enacted for its economic revitalisation.

Ortigia: its historical aspects and its current conditions

The city of Siracusa can be divided into three distinct areas: the island of Ortigia, as its delimited historic centre, the areas of a nineteenth century urban expansion process, and its modern suburbs. The historic centre represents only a small part of what is recognised as Siracusa's existing central urban area, and is physically separated from the present day city, being connected by just two bridges. Presently, the old town remains substantially intact both for its building types and above all morphologically, apart from the areas affected by nineteenth century additions or by certain transformations that took place in the thirties. The urban fabric is composed of a tightly knit road network, made up of narrow, restricted alleyways (only a few main roads and some squares have wider or more open dimensions), meaning that, still today, the island of Ortigia maintains its labyrinthine structure, which

is typical of many Mediterranean historical cities. The size of the historic centre zone is approximately 50 hectares, representing only 5% of Siracusa's total urbanised area. The nearly 5,000 inhabitants that live in this historic centre represent only 4% of the total population. This present day situation is a result of the slow 'evacuation' and abandonment of the old town, which began in the 60's and continued until the mid 90's. Since then the population has stabilised, and, as a matter of fact, a counter exodus soon ensued once revitalisation policies for the city's historic centre were initiated. In the 50's 30% of the total population of the municipality lived on the island of Ortigia. The exodus of the population to the 'mainland' began with the construction of new areas (to the north of the 19th century city) (2). At the same time, the 'centre' of the city moved towards the area of the new urban developments. The new structure types were large 10-12 storey apartment buildings, which, in those days, represented a more modern style of architecture. To move from small poorly lit row houses in the old town, to the new blocks of flats 'over the bridge', meant a social leap as well as improved standards of living conditions. This transition is in part due to the fact that, at that time, overcrowded accommodations (averaging 5-6 persons per housing unit) had led to the complete deterioration of living conditions which had become difficult to endure. As a result of this process of 'evacuation' the historic centre's housing properties further deteriorated, and by the mid 90's around 50% of the units were 'unoccupied' and abandoned or unfit to

live in. Today's housing stock and density has basically remained the same as it was in the 50's. The area occupied by predominantly residential use covers more than 50% of the entire built surface of Ortigia, representing the equivalent of 4,000-4,500 dwellings in total (i.e. more than two million cubic metres). Census polls taken in 1994 for Ortigia indicated a residential population of 5,880 inhabitants, which constituted approximately 2,837 families, resulting in an average of 2.07 persons per family. With this situation, each inhabitant had about 350 square metres at his disposal compared to the 75 square metres in 1950. Despite the fact that some residential zones of Ortigia have a greater residential density, it became apparent that the original situation of overcrowding had become one of underutilisation and inefficient use of residential spaces.

The legislation

The historic centre of Ortigia has been the subject of different State and regional laws (3), which have sanctioned its importance. The first law, which identified Ortigia as an "asset of national historical interest", was decreed by the Ministry for the Arts and Culture in 1968, and it applied the restrictions of the State law of 1939 for the "protection of natural beauty". The second important legislative measure was enacted with a "Special Law for Ortigia" issued by the Regional Government of Sicily in 1976. This law required the Municipality to effect an appropriate town-planning instrument, the 'Detailed Plan', within a preestablished time period. Over the years various modifications to this plan have been introduced. The

most significant of these was the 1996 variant, which allowed for the launch of the renovation and conservation process for Ortigia. The 'New Special Law' introduced regulations that streamlined and simplified the procedures both for project approval and for the allocation of funding. A specific Commission for Ortigia was established as a substitute for the municipal building commission, with special powers and a two fold principal task: to evaluate the projects for intervention and to concurrently examine the requests for financing grants. In unifying these two procedures, the rate of planning approval was hastened from an average of 18 months to 6-8 months. Furthermore, a specific Technical Office was hence instituted, which was exclusively dedicated to the problems of Ortigia, and that was to "take on the tasks of study, analysis, programming, planning design, co-ordination and management of both public and private interventions in Ortigia". In order to increase the efficiency and autonomy of this Office, the law inserted two other important changes:

- In derogating former public service management procedures, the office was able to equip itself with its own staff, even if not provided for within the personnel structure, both by transferring staff from other municipal offices, and by stipulating fixed term contracts with external professionals;
- In addition to access to the normal resources budget, in order to facilitate operations, it was also able to draw on funds provided by the Special Law, within a limit of 1.5% of the total sum.

A third important change was made by the new proposals for the allocation of grants. The possibility to apply for non-repayable

grants was allowed for up to 30% of the admissible expenditure for all internal work; up to 60% for interventions in public spaces, for antisismic measures and for interventions carried out on spaces intended for commercial or artisan use; up to 70% for all restoration and repair work on building façades. Moreover, a maximum expenditure limit for intervention costs was set at Lire 1,000,000 (Italian Lira) per square metre of gross surface area, which could however be updated annually according to the ISTAT index.

The total grant sum given to the private citizen was hence approximately Lire 300,000 per square metre of property, and Lire 600,000 per square metre for communal areas (stairwells, roofs, etc.). In addition to this, funds were provided for the façades at the equivalent of 70% of the actual expenses, with no maximum limit.

Policies and actions

The operation for conservation and renovation of the old town began with the drafting of the Detailed Plan for Ortigia (PPO), provided for by the PRG in 1976 and completed in 1988 (4). The PPO brought forth a plan for restoration and revitalisation of the historic centre using a dual strategy to redefine the urban role of this part of the city, while also aiming to increase its residential population. Many priority goals were identified, such as the preservation of residential functions, the enhancement of the "existing office businesses and service industries historically located in the city's centre", the identification of possible tourist locations and associated businesses (also involving residential buildings), and the designation of important

buildings for cultural activities.
Strategic intervention points were established and defined as "magnetic poles", which correspond to groups of historically important buildings, complex units or areas with a specific building style. The thorough classification of the buildings (grade of permanence of the building typology, state of preservation, etc.), allowed for detailed design guidelines to be devised, which defined the intervention procedures and compatible destinations of use for each building. The regulation codes indicated the types of predominant functions to be inserted in each area. If it became difficult to install a given function in a certain building, alternative uses could substitute it as long as they complied to one of the functional zoning systems established by the town planning instrument, i.e. residential use, cultural activities, administration, tourism, school and university.

The delineation of this strategic outline of interventions gave a new direction to the incentive policies that started with the funding from the Special Law for Ortigia, hence allowing the city to qualify for later national and European funding. A second key factor in the policies for Ortigia was provided by the Bylaw for Implementation of the Special Law. This Bylaw sets the regulations that the citizens must follow for the submission of project proposals and for funding applications. In particular it specifies:

- certain terms inserted in the design guidelines of the Detailed Plan; the expression "minimum measuring unit for intervention" refers to "building units" and also to "property units"; in these

types of interventions, the possibility of the division or joining of one or more property units within the same building unit is made available, under the conditions that the façades and openings remain unchanged;
- the procedure for preliminary inspections; within 15 days all documentation must be sent to the offices concerned (The Bureau of monumental and artistic patrimony, The Health Department, Civil Engineers, etc.); and within 45 days they must be completed;
- the operations and functions of the Sole Commission, which must evaluate the project proposal and decide on the funding application;
- the interventions needing permits, such as the restoration of housing or buildings, and the preservation of supporting and non-supporting structures that are not destined for a change of use, can be approved directly by the office;
- the rules for the "substitute interventions" established by the Detailed Plan; the Municipal Administration has the power to 'order' private bodies to intervene in cases where it is necessary to ensure public safety, public health, urban décor, décor of the external façades, and for the building conservation in general; in the case of inaction, the Municipality directly submits the intervention project, scheduling the allocation of contingent funding to the owners; if the "condominium" majority is not reached, the Mayor can order execution of the interventions or even "substitute intervention" reserving the right to make good losses against the defaulting owners;
- the admitted interventions on the façades looking onto public spaces; the design must be extended to cover

the whole building unit concerned, and must take into consideration all of the elements of décor, including frames, railings, signs, plaques, etc.;

- the contents of the convention to be signed by private owners and Municipality for the grant allocation which include: the foreseen time period for the completion of the works; the total sum of the grant and the allocation procedure (the balance must be paid at the completion of the works, and after the inspection by the office); the obligation to adhere to the destination of use for a period of not less than six years; the obligation to reinstate the previous tenants if the property was rented;
- the procedure for determining and distributing the grants; the allocation is paid in stages as the work progresses, but for security, the applicant must present a guarantee.

In reference to the funding programme, the launch of the revitalisation programme in Ortigia was made possible by integrating the funds obtained by the Special Law of the Regional Government of Sicily and the funding received from the National and European programmes.

The Special Law for Ortigia has granted around Lire 68 billion allocated over a period of 15 years. The Regional Government of Sicily provided grants from a special fund managed separately and by means of a town council resolution the subdivision of individual items were determined. These included: grants to private bodies for the restoration of single housing units and buildings; grants to the Municipality, public bodies and the Catholic Church for the restoration of public buildings and churches; grants for the recovery of public spaces, street furnishings, and for

works of subterranean infrastructure and utility lines; grants for the restoration of dilapidated city blocks even by expropriation, with the "substitute" interventions for private bodies.

The funding has been completely allocated and a greater part of it was already spent, despite the fact that another 400 applications for interventions have been filed at the technical office (in early 2001), which is awaiting a renewal of further funding.

Furthermore, the experience gained from the Municipal technical structure (the Special Office for Ortigia) has encouraged the participation in ministerial funding and announcements for other complex programmes. Ortigia has thus been entered in the list of applicants for funding of the Programme of Urban Renewal (PRU), in the Urban Programme of 1994, as well as in the PRUSST programme (5).

The PRU proposed by the local government focuses specifically on the historic centre of Ortigia with the major objectives regarding urban and housing rehabilitation, economic revitalisation and an increase in residential population. Its role is to plan for interventions on the private residential building property, interventions for the rehabilitation of public property, the restoration of public spaces, infrastructure and public services.

Five Public Notices have been introduced for private citizens, addressed to:

- owners of real estate who would benefit from the public funding, which is also combinable with the funding already provided by the special law, for the restoration of communal areas and the recovery of the housing units (277 applications have been filed);

- individual or joint owners who would sell at least an entire building (17 applications for a total of 48 housing units);
- business operators who intend to acquire and restore at least an entire building destined for primarily residential status (32 applications);
- owners of property intending to restore or sell housing units located within the Public Housing zone of the Detailed Plan (11 applications).
The accepted applications concerned 1,283 interventions on residential buildings (174,000 square metres), commercial buildings (13,100 square metres), office buildings (7,100 square metres), artisans' craft stores (10,200 square metres), tourist industry/accommodations (1,600 square metres). The public interventions targeted both the structural, architectural and functional rehabilitation of public property in order to increase the offer of areas destined for cultural activities and backing for tourism, as well as the rehabilitation of urban utilities and street furnishings.
In a national ranking, to the PRU of Siracusa was awarded the highest quota of public funding. Nevertheless, the programme was funded only in part (Lire 17.8 billion as opposed to the Lire 50 billion applied for), which meant that the programme had to be adapted on the basis of the funding obtained.
- The Urban Programme presented by the Municipality in 1994 was approved by the European Union two years later. This programme was also concentrated exclusively in the historic centre, which was identified as the most deteriorated part of the city for its physical and social aspects. The programme, developed by Measures and

by Actions, focused on the launch and promotion of new local businesses, on the development of social services, and on environmental improvement. **Measure 1** consisted of: the launching of an association between the Municipality and private entities with the aim of recovering abandoned or unused houses in order to provide extra tourist accommodations (apart from hotels); the institution of a Tourist Information Centre to welcome and give assistance to tourists; the support of artisan crafts production and commerce activities, and tourist accommodation (there were 200 applications, 91 of which received funding). **Measure 2** was concerned with interventions regarding the formation and promotion of employment through social assistance and activities. Recreational centres for children, young people and the elderly were also set up under this measure.

Measure 3 was introduced in order to improve restoration projects with the launch of a technical structure for the operators (called The Building Advice Bureau) and for the creation of a services co-ordination centre for citizens, located in an appropriately restored municipal property. **Measure 4** focused on the rehabilitation of open spaces and the restoration of seven "large building units" suitable for cultural, scholastic and university activities.

Results

Since the passing of the new law until the end of 2000, the financing allocated was calculated at Lire 128 billion. In the planning for 2001 another Lire 117 billion have been provided, thus the sum total of funds for urban renewal will be Lire 244 billion. The allocations of funding

have been activated with different programmes and by different donating bodies: Lire 65 billion have been awarded by the Regional Government of Sicily, Lire 17.8 billion by the European Union from its Urban Programme, Lire 17.8 billion by the Ministry of Public Works from PRU, Lire 23.1 billion by the Italian State, and further provisions were made for the zones hit by the Santa Lucia earthquake in December of 1990. In the subdivision per financing institution, the main quota (54%) was allocated by the Regional Government of Sicily (Lire 68 billion), which was drawn from its own capital balance dedicated to the special law. This amount has been completely expended. The second financing institution was the Italian government (32%, around Lire 41 billion) by way of funding from the "special" law for the zones which were hit by the earthquake of 1990, and from the PRU. These funds have almost exclusively covered the public sector. A further allocation of funds for Lire 25.4 billion that have already been awarded to the Regional Government of Sicily are expected in the near future in Siracusa. The European Union's Urban Programme took third place for funding in Siracusa, in awarding almost Lire 18 billion, equivalent to 14% of the total funding for the city's renovation. The grants were used to finance interventions on private properties, historic buildings belonging to public bodies or to the Church, and infrastructure development. In this subdivision the highest percentage was assigned for the restoration of historic buildings and churches, for which over Lire 60 billion, equivalent to 47.7% of the total investment, were allocated. Around Lire 44 billion was awarded to the renovation

of privately owned buildings, of which Lire 30 billion, i.e. 23.7% of the total, was invested in the restoration of housing units, building fronts or the ground floors used for business activities. The other Lire 14 billion (11.2%) was allocated for interventions on private properties subjected to a special regulations, such as State subsided housing or housing intended for rental. Through this renovation process, approximately 550 houses were restored (approximately 10% of the total building property). Another Lire 20.4 billion (equivalent to 16% of the total funds) was used for the conservation and renewal of public spaces: paving of the squares, underground technical networks, public lighting, urban furniture, etc. Finally 1.3% (Lire 1.7 billion) was reserved for the management of the Special Office and to finance the planning process and studies.

There is still another Lire 13 billion assigned for special interventions (substitute interventions) including demolition and clearance, which for practical problems, have not yet been carried out.

In determining what different types of interventions would be effected, the special law was employed mainly to finance works on private buildings. 60% of the funding invested in this segment came from the grants of the special law; the other 40% was financed by the PRU.

The State and European funding were instead used to cover the restoration of historic public buildings and churches.

The investment of funding for the rehabilitation of open spaces has been divided in substantially equal parts between the special law (39%), the European Urban programme (32%) and the State Programme for Urban Rehabilitation PRU (28%).

There were about 20 renovated public buildings, the work for which led to a total cost of Lire 103 billion. This restoration project dealt mainly with buildings of considerable size, for which the costs were very high (roughly twice the costs needed for the restoration of private buildings). Each intervention amounted to over one billion lire. For example, the expenditure for the renovation of the Municipal Theatre was over Lire 30 billion, while the six churches that were restored had an average funding of half a billion each. The total expenditure for open spaces was Lire 35 billion. The most significant of these expenses was for the renovation of the seawalls, amounting to a total of Lire 15 billion. The other interventions of this category focused on the renovation of small squares and 'courtyards' having an average expenditure of about Lire 1 billion each. Trusting in the arrival of further public financing, the programme for future spending foresees continuing restoration projects and other interventions for Ortigia. The European funding from the Urban programme has been used primarily to develop the work sector and to launch new business activities, or to revitalise those already existing (6). The funding consists of a grant (to cover operating and capital costs) given as a one-off lump sum following the presentation of an economic project. In this investment sector Lire 10.6 billion were allocated. The funding went into activities connected to commerce, local artisan crafts, tourism and catering. From over 400 applications examined, 120 were selected to receive monetary contributions from the first quota of funding. 37% of the applications was related to the production

and sale of local craft products. The second group is more typically commercial (26.7%). A third group (20%) comprises the areas linked to tourism, while another 9% are businesses connected to catering. With the special law, renovation interventions were carried out on buildings that were transformed for accommodating tourist, including both luxury hotels and smaller family-run hotels. The physical rehabilitation of the historic centre's buildings led to two notable outcomes: a significant change in the housing market of the area and a new dynamic of social mobility for the area's inhabitants. The housing market underwent substantial changes in the number of buying/selling transactions, in housing prices and in rent prices. Before the implementation of the rehabilitation programme, property sales were practically non-existent. A few dozen units stayed on the market for very long periods of time (3-4 years) having extremely low sale prices (around Lire 100,000-200,000 per square metre). After 1995 the market activity began to increase and the prices immediately leapt. The price of a house requiring restoration now prices at around Lire 1-1.2 million per square metre. The cost of renovation is approximately Lire 600,000-800,000 per square metre (including the firm's profit). The sale price of renovated housing varies from Lire 2.5-3 million per square metre with a rate of price increase on the initial investment comparable to the housing market of the 60's and 70's. This leads one to believe that perhaps it is no longer necessary to apply for other public funding, and that normal financial credit will suffice. House sales in the

meantime have risen to around 200 per year and the demand has been upheld. In addition there is also a rental market with a going rate between Lire 250,000 and Lire 1,500,000 a month, depending on the size of the housing-unit. A new local phenomenon is the availability of rental units to university students. In this case, the rent is established per bed, at around Lire 200,000-300,000.

The fluctuation in the housing market has also brought about a phenomenon of social change, which is still not easy to quantify. Generally a person who wants to live in Ortigia is looking for a house/flat with 2-3 rooms (100-120 square metres); typical clients would be young couples or single people, with a medium-high income. 70% of purchases is by new families. The other 30% represents estate agencies that tend to buy entire buildings, in order to carry out speculative real estate deals.

Significant and critical aspects

The first key step in the restoration of the historic centre of Siracusa is in the outlining of the Detailed Plan of Ortigia. The town-planning tool has defined precise criteria for admissible design guidelines for building interventions; thus the protection of the structural and typological characteristics of historical properties is guaranteed, even if they are not considered monuments. The PPO has determined a theory for a functional delineation of the plan, identifying compatible functions for the old town and indicating their prime locations; this strategic component of the plan was very important during the distribution of the phase regarding financial incentives, since it

functioned as a structure plan, and was able to address the development strategies by area. The existence of a town-planning tool has contributed in a decisive manner to give credibility to the later projects presented by the Municipality when applying for funding from the State and European programmes.

The second significant intervention was the approval in 1996 of the "New Special Law": the incentive policy of the private interventions was ratified, streamlining the procedure; the formation of a special office for the management of the entire renovation process for the historic centre was introduced; an administrative policy was officially launched to re-publicise the urban image of the island of Ortigia, encouraging an important change of attitude in the people of Siracusa with regard to the historic centre. The third component is the construction of "Historic Centre Office". With the creation of this structure, a post in the local authority was established that was able to overcome the traditional division between the different technical and administrative sectors that are oftentimes inevitable in a municipality's town planning activities. This structure has also encouraged a strong collaboration between the Municipality, the Regional Government of Sicily, the Italian State, and the European Union. Hence an integrated process was enacted which enabled an efficient management of the physical interventions and funding allocations for the launch of business activities, or, that is, the physical planning and the policies for future land use. Moreover, the setting up of the UCS has contributed to the enhancing of the

technical capacities required to let the local authority of Siracusa to compete, alongside other Italian local authorities, in order to obtain national and European funding.

Another salient aspect of the Siracusa experience was the level of co-operation that was created between the activities and the funding provided by the Special Law for Ortigia and the programmes of a national and European level. This encouraged and promoted a significant number of supplementary financial resources for building restoration and for the launching of the business activities.

Other notable aspects characterising the policies initiated in the historic centre are:

- the introduction of funding for the communal parts of the buildings; in particular, the funding for the interventions on the façades (without spending limits) convinced many private owners to add their own resources to those made available by the Municipality;
- the payment for study and planning phases for the building interventions on public property, overcoming the traditional slowness of project preparation of the local authority;
- the pilot interventions, financed by "Urban", for the restoration of historic buildings for public use (generally destined for cultural activities) and above all the restoration and improvement of public open spaces (squares, streets, walls, the sea front, etc.); these had taken on an important symbolic value and contributed greatly to the physical improvement of the historic centre while helping to attract both small resident-owners, as well as big real-estate investors to what was now recognised as the most important area of the city;

- the legislation (introduced by the "New Special Law"), which gave the Municipality the possibility to resell expropriated buildings (making more properties available to encouraged investors) with the result of promoting greater flexibility in urban policies for the historic centre.

However, it is necessary to take note of several points, which have yet to be resolved, and some critical aspects of the rehabilitation process carried out in Ortigia.

10 years after the approval of the PPO, there are still run-down areas of the city in a state of severe decay; the resources put into the process and the streamlining procedures introduced by the law have encouraged a rise in private interventions, while the interventions by public agencies are however often slow in operation (contract times and procedures, management of building yards, management of new services, e.g. tourist terminal, etc.). This tardiness has had a particularly negative effect on the symbolic interventions which should instead serve to multiply the positive effects of the policies in action in the historic centre, particularly regarding the residential policies (e.g. University residences) and the interventions to demolish the degraded areas within the city blocks, linked to the launch of the so called 'clearance' process.

The longwinded investigations of the projects, due to the detailed design guidelines of the PPO, which contribute to the lengthening of time in the issuing of construction permits, and the difficulty of involving private actors in interventions in less profitable zones, like the working class areas of Graziella and Giudecca, could cause the failure of a

project of the Historic Centre Office, an example being the restoration of whole city blocks designated to be residences; on these occasions it could be the case to resort to 'substitute interventions' by the public actor, that however were not carried out until now.

Another problematic aspect is that the most substantial part of the business activity incentives is spent on financing physical interventions, while the funding for the support policies regarding other aspects linked to the launch of business activities (e.g. the marketing of products, technological innovations, the purchase and storage of merchandise, etc.) is not as conspicuous; certainly the allocation of funding to support physical interventions represents a support to the formation of 'fixed capital' that could be useful for the businesses to be started; nevertheless, the problem of supporting the activities that operate by renting locations, or that characterised by their mobility, remains unresolved.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the intervention model put into action in Siracusa has enabled the achievement of its main objective, which was to launch the restoration process and concurrently revitalise the historic centre of Ortigia. Apart from some unresolved problems, it is quite clear that, after a long period of progressive decay and impoverishment, the present-day historic centre represents a reversal of trend. This is highlighted by the renewal of commercial activities, by the growth of investments and of tourist business, by the reduction of physical deterioration and by the renewed life in the housing market.

Notes

1. This research was commissioned by the Department of Housing and Urban Development of the Government of the United States of America.
2. In 1950 the residents of Ortigia numbered 27,000, in 1961 this had decreased to 22,000, in 1987 there were 7,365 inhabitants, and in 1994 only around 5,900 remained. In 45 years 21,100 inhabitants had left Ortigia, the equivalent of 78% of the population of 1950.
3. In summary, the chronology of administrative and legal measures is as follows: 1968. Ministerial decree of restrictions for the Ortigia area according to art. 1 and 2 of the law 1497/39; 1976. First law for Ortigia, Regional law no. 70/76 for Ortigia and Agrigento; 1985. Detailed Plan for Ortigia (PPO). Town Council for the adoption of the Plan but however it was not passed by the majority; 1985. Amendments to the first law for Ortigia, regional law no. 34/85, further specifications for the drafting procedure and approval of the Detailed Plan; amendments to the regional law no. 70/76; 1988. Adoption with resolution of the 'Special Commissioner' (defaulting municipality), decree no. 1 of 27/1/89; 1990. Detailed Plan for Ortigia (PPO) approval with the Council Ordinance Regional Government of Sicily no. 286 of 27/3/90; 1996. New law for Ortigia, regional law no. 34/96; the law was preceded by a Proposal of Amendment put forward by the Municipal office for Ortigia to the Regional Government of Sicily and acknowledged by the same. The above-mentioned law introduced the new course of action for the grants (to cover operating and capital costs) as well as a series of procedural simplifications; 2000. Detailed Plan for

Ortigia (PPO) for the town planning legislation had expired and a new draft is being prepared.

4. The group that complied the PPO consisted of the following planners: Giuseppe Pagnano (head of group), Guglielmo Orlandi, Angelo Tamburini, Giuseppe Vinci.

5. The Prusst Project looked at the entire province of Siracusa and has been prepared and presented. The intervention areas identified were tourist development and environmental improvement, with a total investment of Lire 2,800 billion. Restoration of large historic buildings and public spaces were included for Ortigia. Up until now the Prusst has not been classified as suitable and therefore it is not financed.

6. One of the most interesting interventions carried out with the Urban funding was that of the recovery of a building used as a covered market then designated to be a tourist terminal. The project was an attempt at partnership between public and private bodies, in which the first controlled the building restoration of the public property, and the second was responsible for the management of the new business, paying an annual fee. The project provided for the following phases: a) restoration of the exmarket building, b) call for tender for the management of the spaces created within the building, c) drawing up of a special convention between the Municipality (owner of the building) and the management firm of the building (a private firm which won the call for tender). The restored building is a large dimensioned 'container' that occupies an entire building block in the nineteenth century area, near to the entrance of the historic centre. The building has a

usable surface area of about 1200 square metres. Within this space the following functions are planned: front tourist office, meeting room for 100 people, restaurant, bar, internet café, offices linked to tourist services. The convention provides the cession of free use for five years for the management firm of the centre. After this period, the Municipality will be paid a rent related to the market value. The management firm can rent the space to other private bodies, keeping to the regulation regarding the destination of use.

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