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Francesco Lo Piccolo

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Palermo, a City in Transition: Saint Benedict 'The Moor' *versus* Saint Rosalia

FRANCESCO LO PICCOLO

Dipartimento Città e Territorio, Università degli Studi di Palermo, Piazza Bologni 13, 90134 Palermo, Italy

ABSTRACT *This paper discusses responses of the city council in Palermo to trends in immigration, in the context of the long-term physical decline of the historic centre. The paper describes these trends, the role and needs of ethnic minorities and problems related to their living conditions in the historic centre. It goes on to assess whether the specific issue of planning and ethnic minorities can suggest new approaches to a wider re-analysis of planning practices.*

> Palermo as an European, African and Asiatic city: this is our identity. This is why I, as a human being and as a Mayor—and proud to be a Palermitan—, feel bound to remark that our City is both a port and a gate; it has always welcomed every pilgrim; it is proud and honoured to have as a patron saint, together with Saint Rosalia, a saint whose skin was black: Saint Benedict. (Leoluca Orlando, Mayor of Palermo)
>
> These Moors are changeable in their wills—fill thy purse with money. (William Shakespeare, *Othello*, 1.3.347)

Introduction

Within a general context of urban decay, the historic centre of Palermo has—like many other southern Italian towns—specific characteristics and problems: a rich cultural history; a great concentration of monumental and historic buildings; a complex and dynamic physical structure; an increasing density of development; a physical decay of buildings; social deprivation of the inhabitants; depopulation; and slowness and inadequacy of public policies (Cannarozzo, 1990; Lo Piccolo, 1996; Caudo & Lo Piccolo, 1998). However, in spite of decay and depopulation, Palermo's historic centre (250 ha in area and with about 27 500 inhabitants out of the city's total of 750 000) retains the strong identity of a great capital, underlined by the richness and variety of its architecture. Moreover, it continues to have a recognizable role in the wider urban context.

In recent years new forms of migration and growing ethnic diversity have led to fundamental transformations in economic, social and cultural structures in Palermo and especially in its historic centre. Migrations—mainly from Northern and Central Africa, but also from the Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri

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Lanka and Mauritius—change demographic, economic and social structures (Tosco, 1994), and produce a new cultural diversity, which often brings into question national and local identity. Although not strictly comparable with the rest of Europe, due to the distinctive character of its immigration, the foreign presence in Palermo has, in the last few years, assumed significant proportions. Mainly concentrated in the historic centre, the foreign communities are extremely differentiated in terms of both the large number of ethnic groups present and the manner and time scale of settlement.

This paper describes these new general tendencies, the role and needs of ethnic minorities and problems related to their living conditions in the historic centre of the city. In terms of urban dynamics and the uses and transformations of city spaces, the implications are many and problematic. Ethnic minority groups not only live the city in their own time and manner, but also develop different forms of spatial organizations. Consequently, they tend to make different uses of, and different demands upon, the local urban environment. New forms of possible conflicts also emerge. In consequence of these processes, Palermo has now to organize a cosmopolitan society in which not only different individuals, but also different regional and ethnic groups and their different cultures, can live together, conserve their identity and freely express themselves. This is an issue which goes beyond, but which also provides challenges for, planning.

So the historic centre of Palermo represents a case of great interest, on account of the characteristics of its resident population, its history and the spatial configuration of its sites. It is an area of widespread urban degradation and, at the same time, of great potential, owing to its location within the city and the historical (and market) value of its buildings. The restoration of the historic centre, connected with wider policies of urban revitalization, is an essential component of a strategy for the redevelopment of the city. As the historic centre has to regain its previous residential use, this process will inevitably imply either the return of the middle and lower classes living in the peripheries or the maintenance of the present ethnic communities, creating a mix which avoids social, racial and functional polarization. This process will not have any chance of starting if the city council administration is not able to organize effective housing and social policies, and to launch coordinated programmes for conserving and reusing its estate so as to encourage private investment, and to support the most disadvantaged groups. The programme for the restoration of the historic centre needs at one and the same time a huge policy of promotion, connected to a stringent control and safeguarding policy on speculative plots, while avoiding discriminatory policies.

This paper discusses the role of the city council administration and its planning department in undertaking specific initiatives and carrying out adequate policies. Assuming that there are no simple and easy answers to the complexity of the problem, the paper highlights the importance of participation and involvement of ethnic communities in the planning process. The paper also intends to assess whether the specific issue of planning and ethnic minorities can suggest new approaches to a wider re-analysis of planning practices.

Attempts, successes and failures experienced in Palermo highlight the need to revise the narrowness and the rigid character of the existing planning policies and practices. Furthermore, some positive aspects of the programme run by the municipality can be considered an interesting and unconventional effort to

guarantee those rights of citizenship which are mostly denied at the national political level.

In many European cities the presence of immigrants in inner urban areas is very often considered as a social problem and a possible source of conflicts. Even if the recent nature and the limited dimensions of the immigration phenomenon in Italy do not affect urban renewal processes as much as in other European countries, in the next few years the Italian scenario will progressively become similar to the Western European one in terms of presence of ethnic groups and problems of integration. In this respect, many Italian cities are following European trends and models of action, a prospect that does not indicate good results and solutions of conflicts (Favaro & Tognetti Bordogna, 1989). The Palermo experience could be considered a possible alternative for the future, even with all its unresolved problems and contradictory aspects.

The empirical data for this paper are provided by revisiting the municipality plans and programmes for the historic centre: this paper draws on secondary data from these projects and programmes, through an extensive review of the plans, project documentation and reports. Primary data are derived from interviews with local planners involved in the implementation of the rehabilitation of the historic centre. The paper also makes reference to and analyses the records of the immigration and registry offices as primary data: results from the city council surveys of immigrants are used as secondary data.

Ethnic minority needs and uses of spaces are also investigated through interviews with Don B. Meli, priest of the S. Chiara parish, and people involved in the voluntary sector, included two students of the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Palermo—L. Marinello and A. Vadalà—working on this subject for their degree dissertation. Primary data are also derived from questionnaires and interviews with immigrants conducted by students of the course of Sociology and Urban Analyses of the Faculty of Engineering.

Last, but not least, to all this I can also add the day-by-day direct observation of urban changes and uses of spaces in the historic centre, the place where—first as student, then as scholar/worker—I have spent most of my time for many years.

Migrants in Palermo: Similarities and Differences within the European Context

Migratory processes, and consequent settlement and identification with a place, are inevitably long drawn out, often contradictory and in any case non-linear. They involve not only the entire lifespan of the individual who migrates, but also subsequent generations (Castles & Kosack, 1973; Miller, 1981; Castles *et al.*, 1984; Castles, 1989), and constitute a true collective action which produces important social transformations and consequent changes (which are also physical) in the new place of settlement.

Although each case of migration is unique, with its own structure and timescale, it is nevertheless possible to identify a pattern in the internal dynamics of migratory phenomena in terms of the relationship established with the place of arrival and therefore with the form of identification with this place. These dynamics are described below and generally characterize a large part of migration experiences (Castles & Miller, 1993).

(a) An initial migration of young people looking for work, temporary in its aims. Ties with the place of origin are very strong and those with the destination weak.
(b) Consolidation of the first migration, through the building up of social contacts based on relationships of familiarity with other immigrants originating from the same area or with cultural affinities. The need for reciprocal help in the new environment favours the creation of this kind of tie which can overcome the substantial cultural differences which characterize each ethnic group.
(c) The re-uniting of the family unit determines a second migration which involves a larger number of women and non-working age groups. In this third phase ties with the place of arrival are consolidated further and the awareness of a long-lasting form of settlement and an identification with the place grows. An ethnic community is formed, also by means of the appropriation of urban spaces, with its own activities, institutions and places.
(d) Definitive consolidation of the (now permanent) settlement, and of the community which welcomes 'second-generation' individuals, i.e. those born in the country of arrival. In relation to the policies adopted regarding the reception of immigrants and the right to citizenship, and in relation to the population of the host country, these forms of settlement can assume the character of a multicultural integration or, at the other extreme, political exclusion, discrimination and socioeconomic marginalization, even by means of spatial segregation (Somma, 1991).

This last phase, which is not yet fully developed in Palermo, is in any case destined to take place in the not too distant future and is the phase which interests us most, due to the obvious spatial implications and the role which urban planning can play. The consequences of the urban planner's tasks are significant, as many studies demonstrate (Royal Town Planning Institute/ Commission for Racial Equality Working Party, 1983; Gilroy, 1993; Krishnarayan & Thomas, 1993; Thomas & Krishnarayan, 1994; Ratcliffe, 1998), and cannot be dealt with by resorting to convenient simplifications, based on short-sighted policies and handouts, however willingly proffered.

Within the European panorama, the Palermo 'case' presents both corresponding and distinctive characteristics. Although simplifying a phenomenon which is certainly more complex, it could be said that what distinguishes the Palermo case—as many others in Italy—from a number of other 'tales' of immigration in Europe is its recent character. Unlike Germany, France, the Netherlands and Great Britain, Palermo has been subject to immigration flows which have shown consistency only since the end of the 1970s, and which became 'socially visible' in the early 1980s. More importantly, these phenomena signal a real role reversal. In the last 20 years, Sicily has changed from being a region of emigration to one of immigration (Cusumano, 1976). I will not linger on the causes of these phenomena, which have been the object of several, at times contradictory, studies (Lo Piccolo, 1998). I will just emphasize the specific characteristics of the Palermo case, which is in many ways anomalous in the panorama of European immigration.

The anomaly rests on the fact that immigration in Palermo, as in the rest of Italy, has its beginnings during a period of economic crisis, in the absence of an unsatisfied demand for workers in the leading sectors of the economy, and in

large part as a result of processes of expulsion from the countries of origin rather than an attraction to the country of arrival (Melotti, 1993).

The origin of the phenomenon can be attributed not so much to a real and considerable expansion of the local job market as to a series of co-factors, such as: the global increase in migration; the more pronounced internationalization of the job market which hit the Mediterranean area between the 1970s and 1980s (Lazzarini, 1993; Pugliese, 1993); the tightening of systems of access and control in countries which traditionally import labour and the consequent redirecting of migratory flows towards politically less restrictive countries (Melotti, 1988). What is more relevant to the aims of our study is to highlight how the trend in immigration reversed itself in a relatively short period of time.

The process started in the second half of the 1970s, and new arrivals of non-European immigrants, most of them clandestine, continued throughout the 1980s. From the end of the 1970s, clandestine immigration increased in almost all European countries, but in none so much as in Palermo—as well as in Italy—where the majority of the immigrants now resident arrived clandestinely, and were subsequently able to get their papers in order through successive amnesties. The increase between 1986 and 1990 was concomitant with the possibility of regularization given to immigrants by two national laws, Acts 943/1986 and 39/1990 (Somma, 1999, pp. 78–79).

Immigration, Ethnic Conflicts and Related Measures: The Italian Context

The characteristics of the immigration processes described above are—more or less—the same in most of the rest of Italy (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, 1993). These factors are at the origin of the (largely emotional and somewhat confused) reactions which have characterized the political and cultural debate on immigration in Italy in recent years, as emerged—for example—from press campaigns often based more on sensationalist headlines than on detailed analyses (Ferrarotti, 1988; Somma, 1999). The prevailing public opinion is still now a mixture of incredulity, latent hostility and ignorance towards "a phenomenon which is, to a large degree, unknown, indecipherable and still now distant" (Manconi, 1990; see also Cotesta, 1992). As has been correctly pointed out, Italian society has come up against a phenomenon which was completely unexpected and faced with little awareness and inadequate cognitive and operative tools (Favaro & Tognetti Bordogna, 1989; Bolaffi, 1996). Luigi Manconi (1990) defined this situation "to the letter, naïve, or rather, totally unprepared". This needs to be understood in the context of the lack of social and housing policies in respect of the newcomers, debates on the effects of the newcomers on the labour market, the response of bureaucracy and public security offices to the problem of registering/monitoring regular immigrants and clandestines and, as a consequence of this, the continuous alternation of the control system between a high (even excessive) degree of toleration and temporary forms of repression.

Since the second half of the 1980s, and during most of the 1990s, public opinion has shown indifference or hostility towards immigrants, gradually being less sympathetic. A direct correspondence is found at the institutional level, as immigration laws and policies have become progressively more restrictive (Somma, 1999, p. 80).

To this must be added the particular nature of the migratory flows which

have affected Italy which, although having much in common with recent phenomena in the rest of Europe, possess a singularity due to their historical context. I refer in particular to the 'flight for survival' (Censis, 1979) which a large part of the migrations to Italy has represented, dependent more on conditions of extreme poverty in the country of origin than attraction based on demand, or the expectation of it, from the job market (Lo Piccolo, 1998). The statistic according to which Italy has the highest percentage of non-European Community (EC) immigrants of its total number of foreigners, while presenting one of the lowest percentages of immigrants with respect to the national population, is highly significant. Through direct day-to-day experience, we find ourselves faced with the most desperate and extreme cases of emigration, a bottoming out in the economic and social characteristics of immigrants with which there is little comparison in Europe (Di Liegro & Pittau, 1990; Collinson, 1993).

Reactions to this are generally emotional and confused, both in the plan of government action and that of legislative instruments, usually under the pressure of emergency needs (Bolaffi, 1996). The former can be judged as improvised, or in any case very limited, and the latter inadequate or in large part unapplied. Of course it is also necessary to acknowledge the objective complexity of the issue, and some additional difficulties which are specific to the Italian context.

I have already made reference to the lack of preparation, but to this I can add the extremely heterogeneous ethnic composition of the new arrivals, with the consequent presence of differing demands and expectations. The statistic regarding clandestine conditions which are much more widespread in Italy than in the rest of Europe (Melotti, 1993) is significant, and can be attributed to the absence of the appropriate regulations until the end of the second half of the 1980s, and to a mixture of tolerant negligence and 'slowness of reaction' (Macioti, 1993). Despite this, it is no longer possible to deny the limitations of hesitant, short-term policies and legislative instruments of analogous character, which are directed, in a short-term vision, towards putting right the existing irregularities and to stopping, or at least limiting, entry flows (Lo Piccolo, 1998). In fact, most of the debate and political action—especially during the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s—was devoted to the issue of accepting the newcomers and regulating this process, without any long-term view and policies regarding the social exclusion of them. Housing, social and employment policies were delayed, in most cases, giving priority just to the 'problem' of the arrival of immigrants.

Act 943 of 30 December 1986, which regulates employment agencies and the treatment of non-EC immigrant workers, and which represents the first national act concerning immigration, exhibits all the limitations mentioned above and, moreover, reveals a gap between the principle put forward regarding the formal recognition of civil rights and the real outcome. The main unapplied provisions of Act 943/1986 are in fact the monthly review of employment opportunities and the institution of the regional commission for employment. The act prescribed also the setting up of bodies, both at national and regional level, to improve immigrants' work conditions and to support family and health assistance: many of them have not yet been realized (Favaro & Tognetti Bordogna, 1989).

Act 416 of 30 December 1989, which was converted into Act 39 of 28 February 1990, commonly known as the 'Martelli act', sets out in some way to fill this gap. Without substituting its precedent, the act presents a wider field (Spatafora, 1991). Act 39 of 1990 must be considered, with all the limits of the case, in the

context of emergency legislation, and for just this reason it has not been possible to fully realize its predicted aims (Italia razzismo, 1990; Nascimbene, 1990). On the other hand, what needs to be underlined here is the contribution of the act to the recognition of civil and social rights regarding work, education, welfare and health assistance.

As has been noted, a large part of these proposals exists only on paper, in the absence of adequate policies at central and local levels (Favaro & Tognetti Bordogna, 1989; Bolaffi, 1996). If we exclude a number of initiatives undertaken by trade unions, the claims of the various immigrant associations, and the undeniably useful but structurally inadequate efforts of Catholic and secular volunteer groups, very little has been done (Favaro & Tognetti Bordogna, 1989; Balbo & Manconi, 1990). However, the political debate has intensified the theme of entry flow control, clinging to narrow, limited positions and invoking further restrictive measures.

Two main arguments have usually been used to support and motivate this:

(a) the social problems resulting from the presence of immigrants, above all the increase of crime and illegal activities;
(b) the negative effect of the immigrants' presence on the labour market, with particular reference to employment opportunities.

If the relation to the first point is—in certain respects—undeniable, but must also be considered in a wider context, the second does not fit with reality at all. All the analyses from the labour and employment market in Italy (Cotesta, 1992; Livi-Bacci, 1995; Bolaffi, 1996) show that immigrants usually 'cover' work sectors that are refused by Italians, the former consequently representing in many cases an indispensable work resource, as in the small family-based industries in the northeast, or in the farms and factories of Emilia Romagna or, even in temporary work conditions, in the agricultural enterprises in the south. Furthermore, the present state of the Italian population and its demographic trends show that it has recently become an ageing and shrinking one: consequently, the presence of immigrants has to be considered as a positive factor in meeting shortages in some sectors of the labour market.

Although they have resolved some pre-existing situations, neither Act 943 of 1986 nor the Martelli Act seem to have limited the immigration flow. This is not at all surprising considering the limited success of the restrictions regarding the entry and stay of foreigners previously tested in other countries (Spatafora, 1991; Pugliese, 1993).

The recent political debate and a new act (Act 22 of 18 January 1996) on immigration seem to have ignored all of the above. They persist in taking the path of restriction, in the absence of comprehensive intervention programmes, and show a particular predisposition towards measures of expulsion and repression. Instead of developing effective reception strategies, the national government has concentrated on trying to limit new arrivals. During 1994 the authorities issued expulsion orders for 64 000 foreign citizens, and 12 000 expulsions were actually carried out. Taking this approach a stage further, in 1995 the government decided to use the armed forces to prevent the landing of Albanian immigrants in Puglia (Somma, 1999, p. 81).

In a mixture of pettiness, limited horizons and ignorance, the theme of integration on the basis of the recognition of rights seems to have disappeared from the scene, abandoning the field to proposals which reach the limits of the

grotesque and the unconstitutional—as in the case of some bizarre proposals of the secessionist 'Lega' party—or which, at best, do not address the issue.

New Arrivals in Old Places: Marginality, Needs and Expectations of Ethnic Minorities in Palermo

Within this general context, in the last 15 years the historic centre of Palermo has been a place of shelter for immigrants: today it is home to their largest concentration in the city. So this area is characterized by two main phenomena—on one hand a progressive depopulation and, on the other, a classic history of immigration (Cannarozzo, 1990, 1996; Lo Piccolo, 1996).

Although not strictly comparable to the rest of Europe, due to the distinctive character of its immigration, the foreign presence in Palermo has, in the last few years, assumed significant proportions. Mainly concentrated in the historic centre, the foreign communities are extremely differentiated both in terms of the large number of ethnic groups present and the manner and timescale of settlement.

According to the local immigration office, the city of Palermo has about 20 000 immigrants (13 200 males, 6800 females) with regular stay permits. It is estimated that 40% of them are not actually resident in Palermo; this evaluation fits more or less with the tables of resident immigrants in Palermo, showing about 12 500 (7300 males, 5200 females). To this number the presence of clandestines has to be added: it is estimated that there are a further 20 000 who are not in possession of stay permits.

A great proportion of immigrants (about 4000 regularly registered, but about 10 000 including clandestines) live in the historic and decayed centre. They have installed themselves in an area already depopulated and in decay.

The process of decay of the historic centre has old roots, although it has speeded up recently. At the beginning of the 20th century the Palermo aristocracy and upper class were more interested in developing the modern town than in managing the ancient palaces of the historic centre, which slowly but relentlessly decayed. Bombing during the Second World War was particularly heavy in the areas near the harbour, and the results of this are still visible today (Inzerillo, 1981). Equally ruinous were the estate management practices of post-war public and private operators (including the army, the Church and the university)—not so much through devastating works as through a total lack of maintenance of buildings of considerable architectural value (Cannarozzo, 1990).

Therefore, during the post-war period, the negligence of public administration, the lack of conservation programmes or any kind of control, together with the progressive departure of the inhabitants (relocated into new neighbourhoods of low-cost housing) contributed to the degradation and 'incorrect' usages of the buildings. Nowadays, cloisters and courts are often filled up, sometimes illegally, with warehouses, shops and parking. Between stores and warehouses there are spaces for the receiving of stolen goods, and some places are well known as areas for smuggling and drug dealing. A few metres from these areas coexist the prestigious seats of the local authorities and cultural institutions, while in recent years immigrants have begun to move into buildings long abandoned and generally unfit for habitation, where they have a precarious

existence (Lo Piccolo, 1996). The exploitation of the vulnerabilities of this new marginal population has inevitably led to further privation.

Africans from both the north and the centre (Morocco, Tunisia, Ethiopia, Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria) are the most numerous immigrants in Palermo (43% of the immigrants officially registered); significant numbers of people also come from Asia, mainly from the Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka (27% of the immigrants officially registered); 12% come from Mauritius, while the rest of the foreign presence (18%) flows from countries such as Egypt, Iraq, Algeria, China, former Yugoslavia and Albania (Tosco, 1994).

Immigrants are, on average, very young, and live mainly either as single people or in large nuclear or extended families, in both cases with a very low income. In 1998 there were more than 2500 regularized immigrants in Palermo under the age of 20, so registering a high percentage of minors (around 20%) by comparison with the Italian population.

In Palermo, especially in the historic centre, immigrants create a large demand for housing, as revealed by statistics regarding the index of overcrowding, the shortage of essential services, and the number of homeless people and people living in precarious conditions. It is easy to understand that significant differences exist between the living conditions of the immigrant population and those of the white population. Significant shortcomings have also been recorded in the area of education (Gruttadauria, 1994). Different, worse conditions affect clandestines, often working in an informal or illegal job market, with high rates of exploitation and marginalization.

Notwithstanding the city's sensitivity to immigrants (no blatant episode of racism has been recorded to date), and the city council's attention and initiatives that will be described in the following paragraphs, foreign citizens still have to face serious difficulties when trying to satisfy such primary needs as housing, working and health care, quite apart from the predictable immigration-related problems and those cultural difficulties deriving from linguistic, cultural, behavioural and religious diversities (Cammarata *et al*., 1996).

In the analyses of immigrants' conditions, that of housing is shown to be a priority, as might have been predicted. The immigrant population is quite young and has a high birth rate. Overcrowding is a direct consequence of, on the one hand, this high rate of demographic growth, and on the other, conditions of economic and social marginality. Moreover, as far as hygienic conditions and the provision of essential facilities are concerned, the existing housing is very much lacking. Houses also act often as places of work, since a proportion of the residents work from home, usually producing handicraft objects (Gruttadauria, 1994).

Immigrants with regular stay permits pay rent varying from 300 000 to 500 000 lire a month, utilities included. Their monthly income varies—on average—from 800 000 to 1 200 000 lire. However, recent analyses indicate that there is a gradual improvement in their income and, in consequence of this, in their 'availability to pay': this leads to the suggestion that there will in the future be a reduction, albeit small, of the immigrants' condition of marginality and social exclusion. Even so, the difference between the required and the actual conditions is notable and destined to become more accentuated (Gruttadauria, 1994).

Housing needs are quite different for different ethnic groups, according to their family structure as well as job and immigration conditions. Temporary

migrants, mainly single males, see their presence in Palermo only in the short term, aiming in the future to go back to their countries of origin or to move to other European countries. In consequence of this, their willingness to pay for lodging is quite low, as well as their interest/availability to integrate; at the same time, the defence of their culture and traditions is very high. For all these reasons these groups of immigrants are more oriented to solutions of communal housing establishments, to be shared with people coming from the same country or region. Common spaces and services, mainly cooking and living rooms, are considered not a problem but, on the contrary, as beneficial, for economic, cultural and religious reasons.

Stable migrants have different housing needs, developing autonomous lifestyles which are a result of the mix between traditions of the country of origin and local living conditions. The request for large housing units is quite widely expressed in consequence of the presence of extended families; spatial proximity amongst housing units is also considered important by many ethnic groups, not only for family and friendship links but also as an opportunity to preserve the identity of local communities and, in some cases (as for Northern and Central African groups), to develop economic activities at the micro scale.

It is important to highlight the 'diversity'—compared to the standards commonly adopted—of a large part of the needs expressed. These relate to the specific character of the ethnic group resident in the area, and an analysis carried out from an external observation point would have difficulty identifying them. The 'anomalous' percentage distribution of the different age groups, the particular structure of a large part of the families, the 'contradictory' role of women and the cultural and religious traditions all emerge as significant factors.

Further expectations are shown in the area of education, for social and cultural facilities, sport and leisure facilities and—for some ethnic groups—above all for places of worship. Religious needs are, in fact, often not satisfied, as there is a lack of places of worship for most of the ethnic minorities living in Palermo. For example, there is no Hindu temple, although the city has a community of at least 4000 individuals. The Tamil and Mauritian communities are in the same position, consequently being forced to use private houses for their religious practices.

The S. Chiara parish, the principal assistance and social centre for immigrants in Palermo, allows—even if in a sort of 'non-official' form—the practice of different religions: a small mosque is hosted in a room near the church while Hindu ceremonies and African animistic rites, included funerals, are celebrated in the court. This testifies—besides the undoubtedly significant role of the volunteer and religious sectors in the deliverance of social and cultural services—a good level of integration and religious tolerance, even if mainly due to the individual will and open-minded personality of the parish priest Don B. Meli, who was recently appointed advisor/consultant of the city council for the immigration problems. On the other hand, to give a more complete picture of the context, it must be noted that the Catholic Church does not allow the celebration of other religious faiths in its establishments, and that Don Meli was consequently invited by his superiors not to continue with his 'open door' practice of religious tolerance.

Many Peoples, One City: The Municipality Programme

Yet unlike what happened in other Italian cities, in Palermo the arrival and settlement of immigrants in the historic centre—as in other areas—has not

caused an evident increase in social tensions or explosions of protest. As Somma shows (1999, pp. 93–96), analysing the Italian context, the growing number of immigrants in the S. Salvario district in Turin and in the historic centre of Genoa precipitated an increase in social tensions and explosions of protest and intolerance. There the authorities usually treated the social conflict as a question of law and order.

The experience of Palermo is quite different, considering local reactions at the level of both public opinion and that of the City Council administration. The fact is that in Palermo immigrants had settled in a district that was already in a state of decline. We cannot identify in Palermo signs of what has affected other Italian and European cities, that is, processes of physical and economic decline, prompted by factors which are extrinsic to local society, tending to be followed by a mobilization of public opinion, which then focuses on a contingent situation in which the immigrant population functions as a catalyst (Somma, 1999, p. 94). At the same time, the city council's attention and policies for immigrants seem to be quite different by comparison with the national trends previously described.

In this context the role and tasks of the local-scale policies appear, in some ways paradoxically, even more important. There are not so many examples of policies carried out by Italian local authorities which take into account immigrants' needs and/or try to solve their problems. Most local authorities seem to be indifferent and unprepared for the phenomenon of immigration. Furthermore, in those cases in which decisions have been taken in respect to this, solutions show a lack of consideration of the consequences of such decisions on the general organization of cities and a poor awareness of the complexity of the phenomenon. Some interesting cases do exist at the level of local government, mainly in some medium-sized cities in Emilia Romagna and Tuscany (such as Modena, Parma and Pistoia) which have traditionally been governed by left-wing administrations and where there have been significant attempts to implement adequate policies of integration (Somma, 1999, p. 83), but they are few in number. Palermo, moreover, has no history of left-wing radicalism. Yet, in Palermo operative and theoretical shortcomings at a national level have, to a certain extent, been balanced by more appropriate actions on a local scale.

Until now, the municipality, supported by experts' contributions, has tried to act as a reference point for immigrants: by promoting 'exploratory' meetings with the ethnic minority communities with a view to establishing a mutual trust-based relationship; by setting up a network of contacts involving other associations and institutions operating in the field; by promoting various initiatives in the social, political, cultural and sports fields. This involvement has resulted in the acknowledgement of the immigrants' needs, giving indications of the necessity and feasibility of particular services.

The identification of local needs, determined by investigations and analysis carried out with the involvement of ethnic minority communities (Cammarata *et al*., 1996), can be summarized as follows: to provide new housing opportunities; to supply residents with new sites for work, commercial, meeting and religious activities; to create a multi-ethnic centre of leisure and cultural activities which will reflect the ethnic composition of the area's residents and with which the local population can identify; to provide employment instruction and training; and to provide language and literacy training courses. In recent times the municipality has implemented a new approach to immigration, aimed at

Table 1. A summary of the city council programme

The guidelines are as follows: whenever possible, avoid the creation of specialized services for immigrants, while improving and favouring access to those structures and services already in existence; work in close cooperation with the associations, community groups, agencies and private volunteer groups that are active in this field.

In the *communications sector*, the main goal is to improve the network of relationships and exchanges that exist in the city, promoting diversity in a non-conflictual manner through the following instruments:

(1) expansion of the multi-lingual information desk at the Office of Public relations;
(2) continuation of the decentralized Registry Office at the S. Chiara centre of emergency assistance.

In the *health and social services sector*, while keeping in mind the limitations imposed by national and regional norms, the initiatives include:

(1) the soon to be opened municipal centre of emergency and mid-term assistance, located in the buildings of via Chiappara al Carmine: the municipality intends to set up a first-help centre, but the main support is still given by the church (S. Chiara parish) and the volunteer organizations;
(2) the expansion of the polyfunctional social centre Al-Khalisa, in via Scopari, which operates as a consulting and planning centre, by the addition of an archive for regulations and statistics, the collaboration of foreign personnel, a secretarial service and a legal consulting service;
(3) the creation of a women's centre, should the desire be expressed by immigrant women in the study currently being conducted by the LIA Project (Local Integration/Partnership Action), an arm of the EU, in cooperation with immigrants' group and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

In the *cultural exchange area* the activities are mainly oriented towards the organization, management and funding of shows, film festivals, plays, meetings, ethnic and multicultural festivals. A project is being prepared for a soon to be opened multicultural centre with a multilingual library including newspapers and periodicals.

In the *sector of schools and education*, many projects and initiatives are devoted to promoting and developing the culture of origin in Palermo's schools:

(1) classrooms are made available for after-school classes run by immigrant groups;
(2) adult literacy courses and Italian language courses for minors with language problems or learning deficiencies are carried out in cooperation with immigrant or private volunteer associations;
(3) 'A multiplicity of stories in Palermo', a multicultural education project, has been proposed for the second consecutive year by the Board of Education (*Assessorato alla Pubblica Istruzione*). During the 1996/7 school year, 60 schools and about 100 teachers participated. Under the supervision of project personnel, sometimes immigrants themselves, the teachers contributed to the creation of an attitude to brotherhood, starting with stories dealing with their lives and experiences. The issues concerned some universal aspects of human experience that transcend cultural differences: space, time, the body, speaking, life's passages and the ways in which we all transmit knowledge.

According to this programme, the municipality rejects the logic, which is also shared by some recent state legislative measures, considering immigrants as a 'problem' to be faced and solved mostly in terms of public order; in Palermo, a city which has always been a melting pot of races and peoples, the presence of so many people from non-European countries must be seen as a 'resource', a tremendous opportunity for the meeting of cultures and for a mutual enrichment.

As a consequence, the tendency should be avoided to plan services, structures and interventions for immigrants only, which would isolate foreign communities from the city social context; meeting and exchange opportunities should instead be promoted among the different communities. The best service the municipality can offer to foreign citizens is to start or develop primary services, facilitating access to them by all citizens, without regard to their nationality. To this end, the municipality should remove all obstacles, including those deriving from regional legislation, preventing the full use of city services, and should extend information networks by establishing new offices in various city locations according to a functional distribution.

This is not meant to rule out, at least at the beginning, the need for a number of *ad hoc* structures and services, mainly targeted at immigrants; but the intent of this administration is to focus attention on all the needy sectors of the population (including immigrants), so that all services can adequately meet the needs of those groups.

The municipality is aware of the remarkable variety of religions professed among the city population and thus engages to promote the free expression of any religious faith, also contributing to the diffusion of places of worship.

Special attention must be focused on family issues: most of the foreigners now in Palermo live in households. It is thus necessary to start and improve first of all those services which can promote family integration as well as a wider access to city structures. Furthermore, if we consider the fundamental role women (and children) play in family integration, we can easily understand the importance of 'women's issues' (Cammarata *et al.*, 1996).

creating an unified programme that values the different cultures present in the area and removes social, religious and economic barriers that impede foreign residents in the exercising of their rights.

In order to achieve this goal, the municipality set up a general project acting as a framework for the different initiatives, both those in progress and those still under discussion, pointing to the aims pursued by the municipality, to its specific programmes, to the available and necessary resources, as well to the related timetables (Cammarata *et al*., 1996). (See Table 1.)

Even if we agree in general with the good intentions of this programme, some points raise concerns, notably emotional assertions of tolerance and solidarity which hide the conflictual nature of the phenomenon. One basic misunderstanding has its origins in a comforting vision according to which the encounter between different cultures and ethnic groups in the context of one society will necessarily bring about effects which are beneficial and homogenizing. Even if in the common opinion Italy is not considered a country significantly affected by racism and xenophobia, some data show that reality is different (Caritas diocesana di Roma, 1994). In 1993, 352 cases of xenophobic/racial violence and harassment against foreigners were recorded, with 504 individuals victimized. With reference to ethnicity and countries of origin, the largest percentage of victims belong to Northern Africa (mainly Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria); people from Eastern Europe (Poland, Bulgaria, etc.), Central Africa and the Indian sub-continent follow. It seems that a great percentage of racial violence episodes happen during festivities: about 65% of cases are registered at the weekends, mainly at night. People perpetrating these crimes are, on average, very young: they are usually under the age of 25 and there is an increase in the involvement of young women and teenagers. The majority of these cases were registered in the Lazio region, mainly in the province of Rome (about 230 cases).

Even if Palermo has a low proportion of episodes of racial violence, it cannot be ignored. The issue, unfortunately, is not only one of racism versus tolerance, nor does a multi-ethnic society turn out to be a kind of neo-folkloric entity, eating couscous and dancing exotic folk dances into the night. As has been correctly observed, ethno-cultural forces are among the strongest of our age, and the conflicts which such forces give rise to in the absence of adequate institutional frameworks are among the most persistent and least negotiable (Pacini, 1989). Moreover, we must bear in mind that the different demands formulated within a city are expressed by (social and/or ethnic) groups which, more often than not, do not represent general interests, but partial and sometimes even opposing interests and which consequently can clash rather than cooperate. One of the basic principles of this thesis concerns the necessity to proceed not so much in terms of solidarity, which concerns individual behaviour, as in terms of the affirmation and recognition of rights, and also by means of procedural forms of legitimization and participation (Indovina, 1991; Holston, 1995; Pinna, 1993).

The issues of political representation and the right to citizenship are naturally involved, with reference to what remains the basic issue—the relationship between minorities and the majority. As regards the relationship between minority and majority, even when the disparity between their respective conditions and treatment is acknowledged, and the will is shown to direct more attention to the needs of immigrant ethnic groups, another widespread prejudice is commonly encountered—that of considering the entire body of ethnic minor-

ities as one static whole, a homogeneous and undifferentiated entity (Krishnarayan & Thomas, 1993; Ratcliffe, 1998). This is a preconception which results from a superficial level of knowledge and can give way, perhaps unconsciously, to substantial errors of evaluation and, in turn, initiatives which will be inefficacious or damaging. The refining of an analytical methodology (including through appropriate forms of involvement and participation) is of great importance, not only with the aim of recording present conditions, but also trying to understand the processes of transformation which take place over time within the ethnic community in relation to the spaces and the uses of the city. The dynamics running through different ethnic groups, which are not independent of the local context, must not be ignored, in that the processes of integration and assimilation condition, and are at the same time conditioned by, the urban environment, by living conditions, by the policies in force and by the localization of services.

Lastly, we must remember that which, more than being a prejudice, is the basic problem—the distribution of resources, and the conflicts which derive from it. To the prejudices already described we must add the belief that in the framework of the current economic recession the idea of employing further resources in favour of immigrants is not plausible. It is nevertheless true that economic recessions worsen social conflicts, increasing problems and favouring discrimination. It is thus even more necessary to make the effort to find solutions to problems which are complex and destined to worsen in a framework of general instability or economic crisis. In other words, if economic recessions and welfare-state crises pose problems of shortage and related conflicts, they are not a good excuse for attempting to elude the issue. The recognition of rights and the redistribution of resources is called into play, emerging as central, and certainly controversial, issues, raising many questions about the potential of public policies as regards possibilities of access and the redistribution of opportunities.

According to the city's programme, the mayor and the city council appear to be truly sensitive to immigrants' needs. Even if the relatively high degree of tolerance and acceptance shown by the population in Palermo can be explained by reference to many social and cultural factors (some of them not to be considered/evaluated entirely in positive terms), the policy adopted by the local government administration also seems to play its part. On the other hand, there are more words than deeds, such as the frequent and quite instrumental use of a 'rhetoric of tolerance'. A minor but interesting example is the 'elevation' of a hitherto obscure patron saint of the city, Benedict (1526–1589), who accidentally (but now significantly) was black, to the same prominence as the generally accepted and honoured patron saint Rosalia (1125?–1160), who (not less significantly) was white. This could be a constructive gesture, but only if accompanied by actions which address the day-to-day problems of immigrants. Furthermore, the rhetorical use of this image (these couple of saints, different in race but 'working together', in alliance and harmony, to protect the city) seems to gloss over divisions and conflicts, as well as existing inequalities.

Planning Tools and Related Problems: The Detailed Executive Plan of the Historic Centre and Its Implementation

This leads us to consider the planning policies carried out by the City Council specifically for the historic centre and its revitalization, which have—directly

and indirectly—consequences for the life conditions of the resident ethnic minorities.

As described elsewhere (Lo Piccolo, 1996), the physical structure of the historic centre can be briefly summarized as follows. The historic town, today surrounded by massive urban development, has access to the sea via the *Cala*, a small natural bay, which was the harbour of Palermo until 1500. The historic town is crossed by the *Cassaro*, the oldest street and backbone of the medieval urban structure. The present urban structure still shows the imprint of the medieval urban settlement and its transformations in later years: all the streets running from east to west, more or less parallel to the *Cassaro*, belong to the medieval urban structure, developed between 1400 and 1500. The medieval centre is mainly formed of large and irregular blocks, marked by the winding layout of the streets following the topography of a small promontory between the rivers *Papireto* and *Kemonia*, both of which were covered between 1400 and 1500. In those years *via Maqueda* was planned and realized at right angles to the *Cassaro*; this development, with the construction of the new large military harbour, rotated the axis of development of the town by 90°. After the creation of *via Maqueda*, the historic town was divided into four parts, called *Mandamenti* (La Duca, 1964; De Seta & Di Mauro, 1980). During the 17th and 18th centuries all the existing buildings were substantially modified under the influence of the baroque culture; at the same time the town began to expand outside its walls.

Palermo is today one of the few large Italian towns to have a local executive plan for the conservation and restoration of the historic centre. In 1988, after decades of negligence and lack of interest, marked by unrealized programmes and failed attempts, the new city council commissioned Leonardo Benevolo, Pierluigi Cervellati and Italo Insolera to prepare the *Piano Particolareggiato Esecutivo* (PPE, that is, detailed executive plan) for the restoration of the historic centre. This programme represented a reversal of the previous urban policies, that were all devoted to realize massive new urban developments in peripheral areas and to leave the historic centre to its destiny of decay and abandonment, waiting for a good chance for its speculative major development (Lo Piccolo, 1996; Caudo & Lo Piccolo, 1998). The new programme—supported by a political coalition, led by Mayor Orlando and composed of the left wing of the Christian Democratic Party, some civic parties and movements, and a group of the PDS party (Cannarozzo, 1988)—entirely focused on the political goal of the rehabilitation of the historic centre as a core strategy for the future of the whole city.

Drawn up in little more than one year, in a climate of renewal and democratic participation, the PPE was presented to the city council in the summer of 1989. It has been adopted despite strong divisions, among both political and cultural organizations, and it has been supported by intellectuals, cultural and voluntary associations, local inhabitants and shopkeepers (Cannarozzo, 1991).

The plan is based on a careful analysis of the processes of development and transformation of the historic town, involving a comparison between the present state and the chief historic cartographic and land registry documents. The comparative analysis of the land registers of 1877, 1930 and 1954 has allowed an authoritative review of processes of change in the historic urban texture, and precise definition of its history (Benevolo *et al.*, 1989).

With a similar methodology to that adopted for the restoration of the historic centre in Bologna, great attention has been given to the analysis of the historic building typologies (public buildings, religious houses, churches, aristocratic

palaces, common housing) as a basis for the guidelines for intervention. In Palermo, as in Bologna, the identification of the building typologies is used as a basis for the determination of standards and guidelines for policy intervention, but is complicated by the complex stratifications peculiar to the southern historic towns.

Housing in the historic centre chiefly consists of monumental palaces of the aristocracy and simpler building layouts, the present shape of which took form in the 19th century. Old buildings are internally stratified into a complex mix of uses and subdivision, and even monumental buildings, more easily recognizable and classifiable, are built on the remains of older structures (Cannarozzo, 1990, 1992). This presents a series of physical discontinuities which make analysis and interventions difficult. In fact, the medieval blocks have over the centuries suffered large transformations through progressive infilling, extensions and the addition of further storeys. The building estate, as we see it today, is a product of a succession of transformation processes, differing in character from those of the historic towns in the centre and the north of Italy. Of particular importance is the, often chaotic, process of the merging and subdivision of the building estate, with the boundaries of ownership varying floor by floor, occupying different areas from the ground floor up to the roof, creating complex patterns of ownership and use which are difficult to understand or analyse (Cannarozzo, 1990). This process has not spared either the great aristocratic palaces or the numerous places of worship.

In addition to the guidelines for state intervention, preferred uses are also defined in the PPE, again based on the typological analysis. The plan is particularly sensitive to the maintenance of existing uses, and to the compatibility of potential new uses. Thus the safeguarding of the historic town is interpreted as encompassing not only the design of buildings and spaces, but also activities and functions, traditions and uses (Benevolo *et al.*, 1990; Cervellati, 1990).

The plan provides for about 50 000 people to come back and live in the historic centre, confirming substantially the analysis of the preceding plans, commissioned from the university or from professional groups and never implemented. The plan calculates the appropriate level of facilities for the existing and new populations. For example, open space is to be increased from 6 to 36 ha. In some policy areas the plan recommends further studies and proposals by the local authority, but within specified acceptable or unacceptable use categories inside the historic centre (Cannarozzo, 1989).

Notwithstanding the positive and speedy conclusion of the plan approval procedure, the restoration of the historic centre is considered to be an unreachable goal without strong political will and without coordinated commitment from the relevant public institutions (including, first of all, the present city council). These must formulate programmes of intervention and the priority agenda for a long-term strategy (Cannarozzo, 1991).

If it is accepted that the historic centre should regain its previous residential use, the repopulation will inevitably involve either the return of the middle and lower classes living in the peripheries or the maintenance of the present ethnic communities, trying to avoid social, racial and functional polarization (Cannarozzo, 1996, 1999; Lo Piccolo, 1996; Caudo & Lo Piccolo, 1998). This process will not have any chance of starting if the city council is unable to organize effective housing and social policies, and to launch coordinated programmes for

conserving and reusing its estate so as to encourage private investment and to support the most disadvantaged groups. So far, the works undertaken by the city council consist mainly of the restoration of some palaces near the sea front as public housing, well executed but small in number, and the restoration of a few other prestigious monuments, such as the Church of *Spasimo*, for cultural activities.

The Future of the Historic Centre: Saint Benedict *versus* Saint Rosalia

It is evident that the reconstruction of the historic centre, the cost of which should be of the order of some thousands of millions of lire, cannot be based exclusively on public intervention, or on financial subsidies indiscriminately given to private operators. Today's economic circumstances do not allow many hopes to be pinned on public financial support alone, even if this is indispensable, at least for a certain number of years, to ensure some support for the initiatives of cooperative societies and of small owners. The restoration and reconstruction of the historic town will involve at least 25 or 30 years of building work devoted exclusively to that task. However, it is also certain that so long as opportunities for peripheral expansion in Palermo are available, it will be difficult to direct building activity into the historic centre (Cannarozzo, 1992; Caudo and Lo Piccolo, 1998).

The historic centre has not been affected by any process of gentrification to date, a consequence of the condition of its estate properties and the general decay, as well as of the lack of public investment. Recently some indicators have seemed to show slow changes in that respect, and it cannot be excluded that gentrification processes will start in the near future (Cannarozzo, 1999).

The decay of the area has, in the past, brought about a decrease in the value of property and in rents, despite its central location. Historically, immigrant communities have chosen to settle in areas such as this for precisely these reasons of low-cost housing and location. In recent years the first initiatives for the revitalization of the historic centre have been taken. Doubts are raised about the survival of the ethnic communities, which risk being swept aside by redevelopment which will change the appearance, structure and function of the whole area substantially. The predicted future redevelopment work will raise property prices with a consequent rapid loss of low-cost housing. Such an increase in prices inevitably triggers off a process of expulsion of the lower-income groups.

In 1993 the city council commissioned a survey to identify the characteristics and size of the special needs demand for housing (Gruttadauria, 1994). This survey is according to the guidelines and goals of the National Housing Law 179/92; in particular Article 4 of the law assigns a part of housing financial resources and initiatives to 'particular social categories', that is, to special needs groups such as the elderly, disabled people, ex drug dependents, non-resident students, and immigrants. The law also recognizes that these special housing needs can be satisfied by standard housing units as well as by specific housing typologies, such as mini-units, communal housing, dormitories, hostels, accessible and sheltered housing.

In the historic centre the demand for housing for immigrants is for about 250–400 housing units and for 4–7 communal housing establishments. An optimum standard could be represented by not less than 500 housing units and

10–12 communal housing establishments, but this estimate will not have any possibility of being put into practice, because of financial and political constraints. An emergency provision, in the short term, considers the possibility of interventions for 100–150 housing units and two communal housing establishments. It is a provision of the city council to support the institution of housing associations which will include immigrants both in the realization of the interventions and their management (Gruttadauria, 1994, p. 18).

In the housing sector the municipal planning department scheduled some interventions—not yet done—in the Capo district, reusing old buildings for public housing units to be assigned to immigrants (89 in total). Public funds will be used according to the Housing Law 179/92. As these funds can be assigned for residential interventions only, there is the provision of involving private partners, such as banks, from the immigrants' countries of origin, to finance the realization of handicraft and commercial sites at the street level of the buildings; the same procedure of public–private partnership will be adopted for a library and a garden to be located in the same area.

The 'Genoardo' Pilot Project should also be mentioned, even though it has not yet been realized. This project aims to identify some small areas in the historic centre for urban revitalization for Islamic immigrants; projects of restoration will be applied to some historic residential buildings and will use traditional low-cost techniques of intervention, also according to Islamic housing typologies. Financial partnerships between the city council and Islamic institutions and banks—as well as the direct involvement of immigrants—will, it is hoped, guarantee the efffective implementation of the project (Brugnoni, 1997).

With reference to social and cultural policies, the municipality intends to realize in the near future a multi-ethnic centre, possibly in partnership with the provincial administration, with non-profit associations responsible for its management. The selection of the site has not yet been done, as two or more possible locations are under discussion, all near but none within the historic centre. Consultations with ethnic communities have been partially carried on, but an effective participatory process has not been fully developed.

This lack of direct involvement of local communities in the decision-making process has to be considered one of the principal points of weakness of the city council policies, despite good will and intentions. The existing social ethnic centre 'Al-Khalisa', located in the historic centre, set up in 1996 and directly managed by the municipal administration, shows the gap between the city council initiatives and the responses of ethnic communities: in fact, the 'Al-Khalisa' centre is actually rarely used by immigrants, having been organized and managed with a very low level of involvement of the immigrants themselves.

A successful example of the city council policy towards local ethnic minorities, and in particular the Muslim community, is the restoration of the church of *S. Paolino dei giardinieri* in the Capo district and its conversion into a mosque. The church, which was in a state of decay and not used for celebration (like many others in the historic centre), was restored with public funds and given to the Muslim community for its religious and cultural activities. Many other places of worship are now being requested by different groups and this will require an appropriate strategy of intervention and an adequate planning response.

This is certainly feasible, as there are in the historic centre a number of suitable places and buildings, which are not used and, in some cases, are already the property of the city council or other public institutions. A programme, fixing

priorities, timetables, feasibility of uses, compatibility with planning standards and performances (e.g. related parking spaces, proximity with other places of worship and public functions in general, safety measures as requested for any sort of meeting places), could be developed. At the present time the municipal planning department does not seem particularly concerned about this, or at least not clear and determined enough in purposes, methods and strategies.

Recent technical discussions related to the problem of including, or not including, mosques and temples of other religions in the standard that is fixed for places of worship shows doubts and uncertainties that have still to be solved. Furthermore, any effective attempt at involving ethnic communities in the process of selecting new sites for their religious practices and in the definition of the related strategy of intervention has not yet been developed.

In more general terms, the programme for the restoration of the historic centre needs at one and the same time a huge policy of promotion, connected to a stringent control and safeguarding policy on speculative plots, while avoiding discriminatory policies (Lo Piccolo, 1996). According to this goal, the theoretical and practical objective is that of employing disciplinary instruments to deal with problems arising from the encounter/conflict between differences.

Some contradictions also emerge, as a consequence of contrasting aims and interests. For example, despite the municipality attention towards immigrants, a recent regulation for the assignation of public funds to private individuals for the restoration and reuse of old buildings in the historic centre was discriminatory in practice. In fact, the municipality decided to assign funds only to long-term residents, with the reasonable aim of preventing speculative plots, but also with the result of excluding most foreign residents that have not been so long established in Palermo, due to the recent character of migratory processes.

The aim of promoting a 'multi-cultural' city, as stated by the municipality programme, should influence the different areas and different phases of the planning process, from the analyses aimed at identifying needs, both expressed and unexpressed, satisfied and not, to the drawing up and implementation of planning instruments. Such instruments should and can reflect the necessary attention to the protection and promotion of equal opportunities, through the activation of targeted policies, adequate procedures and differentiated norms. These tasks can be summarized thus: (1) to verify the impact of policies, actions and procedures with regard to different ethnic groups, with the aim of bringing to light current or potential forms of discrimination; (2) to introduce differentiated indicators into investigations, analyses and monitoring systems with the objective of identifying the specific needs of various ethnic groups; (3) to undertake 'positive action' in planning policy, both through direct intervention aimed at local ethnic communities and through measures which guarantee equality of access and the use of services and benefits by the same ethnic minorities (Royal Town Planning Institute/Commission for Racial Equality Working Group, 1983; Gilroy, 1993).

Nevertheless, the current lack of an appropriate planning strategy is an obstacle to quick and efficacious implementation, as illustrated by the limited number of interventions and projects already realized.

An evaluation of recent years' initiatives and interventions conducted by the municipality's planning department leads us to highlight the insufficient, and in many cases inconsistent, level of involvement of all residents—and not only the ethnic minorities—in the decision-making process. This is partially due to the

lack of coordination and the absence of a general strategy, the result of which is a sequence of fragmented single interventions; it is also due to a classical top-down approach, quite rigid and centralized, that affects both political decisions and technical solutions.

The City as Place of Differences: Future Conflicts amongst Majority Claims, Laws of the Market and Ethnic Communities?

We have described above relatively new developments in Palermo, the presence and needs of ethnic minorities and their problems related to their living conditions in the historic centre. In terms of urban dynamics and the uses and transformations of city spaces, the implications are many and problematic. Ethnic minority groups not only live the city in their own time and manner, but also develop different forms of spatial organizations. Ethnic minorities have distinctive cultural and religious outlooks which can affect the way they wish to use the built environment. Consequently, ethnic groups tend to make different uses of, and different demands upon, the local urban environment. New demands for social services and new forms of possible conflicts also emerge (Indovina, 1991; Friedmann, 1995).

There are specific needs, depending on the characteristics of the ethnic groups, on the peculiarities of the various migratory processes, and on cultural specificities. For example, an analysis of the immigrants' presence within the local job market suggests that there is a strong relationship between the nature of people's work and their ethnic status (Gruttadauria, 1994, p. 17).

The existence of these needs leads us to criticize the narrowness and the unitary character of our planning models and policies. The basis of this paper is the conviction that the multi-ethnic issue closely concerns urban planning, which is called upon, and will be more often in the near future, to offer its own specific solutions.

Obviously the problem cannot be faced only by urban planning as it depends, above all, on immigration policies (and their respective restrictions) enforced in every country, as well as on current social policies and on the extension of the right to citizenship. Nevertheless, to affirm that this issue does not concern planning, but policy, is erroneous: it would be true only in a narrow and bureaucratic interpretation of the discipline. A hard task concerns planning—to define and promote specific urban policies. For the most part urban policy initiatives fail to acknowledge the specificity of ethnicity and remain largely ignorant of the needs of ethnic communities (Thomas & Krishnarayan, 1994).

Even if it is a theoretical and methodological issue beyond the field of planning, the subject of integration cannot be disregarded or ignored (Lo Piccolo, 1995b). The construction of a 'standard' model of citizenship imposes on all subjects not corresponding to that model the acceptance of the 'game rules' fixed by others, confusing equality with assimilation. Forms of forced integration, which do not consider specific identities, are characterized by a violence not so different from that expressed by segregation and discrimination (Taylor, 1992). Planning standards, which reflect the values of those social groups which have historically been influential and powerful, may not recognize the diversity of a multi-ethnic society, with its plurality of cultures and values (Royal Town Planning Institute/Commission for Racial Equality Working Group, 1983; Somma, 1991; Gilroy, 1993; Krishnarayan & Thomas, 1993).

One of the tasks for the future is to study ways in which planning can understand the causes and configurations of different settlements, apart from the needs which have created them, and consequently how to intervene to modify the built environment and/or the circumstances determining such contexts. In other words, in what ways can planners recognize differences and, where such differences relate to differing usage of the built environment, reflect them?

Migratory flows have a considerable effect on the definition, the transformations and the use of space, and on urban spaces in particular:

> the distribution of urban spaces, on both a local and national level, responds to a delicate balance: migrations have a modifying effect and modify the normative organisation and the symbolic, traditional organisation. To some extent all the inhabitants of an area, whatever their position is in the social hierarchy, are affected by the changes brought about by the arrival of new groups, if for no other reason than that the political pressure of the non-privileged local groups becomes greater than that of the privileged groups. (Manconi, 1990, pp. 80–81)

The stability of a group and its capacity for affirmation can be expressed through the consensus towards its 'own' normative codes. The stability of the majority is also expressed through the consensus towards consolidated and commonly accepted normative codes. The presence of 'other' normative codes can thus become a threat to stability and generate conflict. All this is transferred into the spatial arena within which the diversity of 'codes', of customs and rules, often acquires a concrete and symbolic significance (Manconi, 1992). The first reaction to immigrants is generally one of distrust, suspicion, or hostility. This does not reflect only the defence of 'objective' interests and resources, but transfers into the spatial dimension the desire to protect identity—an identity which, rightly or wrongly, feels threatened by the 'invasion' of difference (Cotesta, 1992).

The various uses urban spaces are put to by different social groups presuppose different forms of recognition and belonging. Similar considerations can be advanced regarding the plurality of ethnic groups making up the current urban panorama. These groups not only live in the city in their own manner and timescale, but also contribute to shaping different forms of spatial organization (Indovina, 1991).

In Palermo, for example, there exists an important relationship between the activity of illegal and legal immigrants, mostly those coming from Africa. The former produce handicrafts at home—using materials and techniques from their countries of origin—some of which are sold via the legal immigrants. Therefore there is a significant informal economy taking place, allowing mutual help and self-sustenance in both groups (Gruttadauria, 1994, p. 18).

In this regard the theme of the identity of the city acquires new, further significance (Lo Piccolo, 1995a), both in terms of the variation in the identity expressed by the city with its new ('different') inhabitants, and from the point of view (opposing and complementary) of the recognition of the urban spaces by ethnic immigrant groups. This recognition does not have as its exclusive object individuals, but also the spaces and forms of the city.

Despite the limited number of initiatives effectively implemented and the gap between intentions/programmes and results, the present policies for immigrants undertaken by the Palermo City Council indicate a possible alternative by

comparison with models of action widely adopted in the rest of Italy and in many other European cities. Risks are still present in the Palermo context, and those policies effectively implemented to date do not appear sufficient: other strategies have to be explored, developing the undoubtedly positive directions and programmes previously formulated.

In this context, marked by such strong inequalities and differences, the self-organization of local communities appears as the primary source of popular resistance and direct political participation (Fisher & Kling, 1993), and can lead to new forms of 'cultural politics of difference' (Sandercock, 1998). According to this general framework, and to future trends, the historic centre of Palermo is going to be marked by conflicts of interests and values where residents' and immigrants' needs, market rules and public interest, the reason of equity and of revitalization, face each other.

Conclusions. The Multi-ethnic City: An Opportunity for Disciplinary Reformulation

The multi-ethnic composition of the local community, and the expectations and demands for recognition which have been developed, have forced the city council to face these themes in a new and unconventional way.

A central role is therefore to be granted to participation, even given the difficulty of putting it into practice. The first attempts carried out by the city council demonstrate once again that participation is a slow and difficult process requiring an expenditure of time and resources which is considerable and often seemingly out of proportion to the results obtained: it is an 'imperfect' process, for just this absence of a direct causal link between effort expended and results obtained, as well as for the lack of a guaranteed relationship between the demands expressed and the real demands (Arnstein, 1969). This latter is important, and brings into play the delicate question of representation and of the relationship of correspondence or non-correspondence between a group or local community and its individual components (Fisher & Kling, 1993).

Reference to ethnic plurality weighs this issue with still more problems, as a consequence of the heterogeneity of the groups and of the lack of connection between the different individual identities and the identity of the ethnic group, which can in no way be taken for granted (Prashar & Nicholas, 1986). Each ethnic minority cannot be considered—in cultural, social, anthropological or political terms—as a homogeneous and undifferentiated group, fossilized in time, but contains different specificities and individual characteristics, as well as several levels of integration/non-integration which do not make the question of 'who represents who' in the participative process any easier to resolve.

In Palermo this clearly appeared when consultations with ethnic communities were carried on for the project of the multi-ethnic centre, as in some ethnic groups disputes arose on the selection of representatives; such a problem also occurred in developing projects in the health and social service sector for immigrant women. The unsuccessful management of the municipal polyfunctional social centre 'Al-Khalisa' seems to be in part due to the lack of correspondence between communities and those few individuals directly involved in running the centre: in many cases ethnic communities have seen the

latter as 'people working for the city council and having benefits from this', consequently not recognizing them as their representatives.

The legitimacy of representation in the process of participation, or better, of the loyalty of individual representation in expressing the needs, desires and expectations of the community or of the group, remains a problem which is, to a extent, unresolved. Once again, if this is a problematic aspect of the act of participation, independently of the plurality of the ethnic group in question, then a further degree of complexity can be ascribed to the presence of ethnic plurality, there being in this case less mediation using traditional forms of political representation (particularly with reference to the objective of involving the minorities themselves). It is maintained, nevertheless, that through exactly this involvement of minority immigrants in the acts of transformation and governing a city it is possible to guarantee—beyond the traditional forms of political representation—a recognition of the rights to citizenship which are often denied on a political level, and almost always on a practical level. In other words, the hypothesis which could emerge from the experience of the historic centre of Palermo is one of participation in the planning process as an 'alternative' form of representation on the part of the minorities discriminated against or excluded, or anyway unable to gain access to the traditional forms of representation: a form of insurgent citizenship (Holston, 1995; Sandercock, 1998).

This is easier to talk about than to carry out, not only because of the evident resistance generally expressed by the majority, but also because of the difficulties which are intrinsic to an 'alternative' form of representation. However, in Palermo there are some areas of intervention in which this involvement can be experimented with, as the reuse of some historical buildings owned by the municipality as places of worship for different faiths and pivotal public housing projects. In the housing sector the involvement of immigrants and minority communities could provide direct support to the realization of the projects of rehabilitation, by the use of traditional low-cost techniques, by the adjustment of historical typologies to new and different needs, and by the individuation, implementation and management of the related essential social services.

At the same time, to maintain that difficulties can be resolved exclusively on a technical level is equally illusory, especially in the presence of the marginalized groups that are ethnic minorities. In the face of indifference and apathy, participation cannot be imposed by authority, nor can it be realized in a centralized form, but must necessarily develop within the groups and local communities themselves, giving rise to what could be defined as a collective process of self-legitimization (Friedmann, 1992a). Informing and consulting the local community is not synonymous with participation. In order that there be an effective (and efficacious) participation, a redistribution of power and the possibility to choose are necessary (Arnstein, 1969; Royal Town Planning Institute/Commission for Racial Equality Working Group, 1983; Friedmann, 1992b). The inviting of ethnic communities to public hearings would provide a first sketch of fruitful information as well as a propitious climate for the municipality's future work; it would also contribute to strengthening immigrants' presence in the political community (Friedmann & Lehrer, 1997; Sandercock, 1998).

One of the primary objectives is therefore to fight indifference within the local community, eliminating distrust in those who in the past have been excluded from decision-making processes, as happened, for example, in the case of the

polyfunctional social centre 'Al-Khalisa'. A platform of political objectives—along the lines of those expressed in the municipality programme—is necessary towards this end, to win consensus and to direct the conflictual energies present within the community towards common objectives.

As was mentioned in the introduction, fundamental to this paper is the idea that a subject as specific and 'marginal' as that of sensitivity to ethnic minorities, besides possessing its own 'intrinsic' interest, can offer a significant contribution in the tackling of more general aspects that have until now been rather neglected by urban planning. The road ahead is still far from clear and the questions more numerous than the solutions advanced.

This paper presents a preliminary survey of 'open questions' and does not set out to, nor could it, supply prescriptions or certainty. The necessity emerges to be open to a new language, and to measure ourselves against a pluralist principle which the discipline has rarely until now tackled. The limited and incomplete studies conducted in similar areas, such as that of feminist theory, bear witness to the difficulties of opening a dialogue of which only fragments exist (Forester, 1992; Milroy, 1992; Gilroy, 1993). There are difficulties in comprehension of both a conceptual and terminological nature which give rise to preconceptions and misunderstandings. Uncertainties shown by the Palermo municipal planners in treating the problem of standards for places of worship in relation to the increasing number of religions, or the discriminatory effects of the regulation for the assignation of funds for the rehabilitation of the old housing estate, are significant examples.

It could be said that reflections on ethnic minorities and the city force us to reconsider a number of principles which have been neglected or only partially dealt with by the disciplinary debate, beginning with the concepts of equality and inequality, dignity and autonomy, political responsibility and representation (Gianformaggio, 1993). At the same time it is possible to hypothesize that what is at the present moment denied or opposed on the political front can nevertheless be achieved through local action, and by participation in government, in the transformation of the city: as, for example, in contributing to the identification of possible new uses of historical buildings for public services. Such actions assume the role and the characteristics of a true plan for emancipation (Friedmann, 1992a), which refers to an ethical dimension of the planning discipline.

This perspective concerns groups which represent minorities, and underlines the existence of interests and respective demands which are in turn minority and consequently almost cannot be expressed in politically significant terms. We are thus induced to measure ourselves against an ethical dimension which legitimizes the objective of identifying, interpreting and providing answers to what could be defined as the silent demands of the plan (Naddeo, 1995). In order to reach this goal, one of the future indispensable initiatives to be undertaken by the municipality has to be the preparation of a register of all organizations run by ethnic groups. This register would provide the necessary basis to allow an effective dissemination of information, to improve the direct involvement of ethnic communities in the programmes of the municipality, and to help its mandate of mediation and consensus building.

The existence, or the expectation of the existence, of multi-ethnic cities and thus of urban settlements which are in one form or another the expression of a society of minorities, will very likely force us to rethink the common interpretation of the planning process. Precisely because of the presence of silent or

unexpressed demands which reflect the unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunities, it is desirable to reformulate the planning process so that it can be not only an instrument of regulation and a solution to conflicts (in a variety of ways and adopting varied criteria), but also a means for redistributing opportunity.

As has correctly been observed, all of this demands and presupposes a different relationship between citizen and planner, which goes beyond the simple formulation of requests on one side, and the more or less successful attempts to satisfy needs on the other, in more or less automatic forms (Moroni, 1995; Fera, 1998). If it is true that "if we wish to enhance the value of the constitutive and statutory dimension of the plan (the shared rules), especially the local plan, we 'cannot do otherwise' than adopt a participatory approach" (Borri, 1994, p. 122; see also Venti, 1995), it will thus be necessary to examine the role of the local communities and the forms of participation in the planning process (Forester, 1989). This requires, among other things, that citizens are just that in the full sense of the word, both on the plane of juridical recognition (and from this point of view ethnic minorities still have, in Italy as in the rest of Europe, a long way to go) and on the level of the consolidation of a common identity that the idea of citizenship presupposes.

Regarding the latter aspect, the tasks of the planning process are anything but marginal, acting through mechanisms and opportunities to form a common awareness which up to now has only been partially explored and which regards both the community as a whole and the specific local communities which are ethnic minorities. I am supported in advancing this 'modest proposal', on the one hand by the conviction that planning activities can have a function in the reconstruction of the political community, or in other words, in the construction of local democracy (Friedmann, 1987; Mazza, 1990), and on the other hand by initiatives undertaken by a number of Italian city councils—such as the Palermo Municipality—regarding the recognition of ethnic minorities' rights, which seem to confirm, although in a limited number of cases, the possibilities for local action.

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