



The Sustainability of Urban Heritage Preservation

The Case of Siracusa, Italia

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**Inter-American
Development Bank**

Institutional Capacity
and Finance Sector

DISCUSSION

PAPER

No. IDB-DP-123

August 2010

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Inter-American Development Bank
2010

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1. Introduction

The city of Siracusa (Syracuse in English) is situated in the southeastern part of Sicily, an island in the south of Italy. It is the capital of the homonymous province, and borders on the north with the Province of Catania and on the west with the Province of Ragusa. Catania is the most advanced industrial and economic “pole” in Sicily, while Ragusa is a cultural/archeological site of great historic value.



Sicily's low level of economic development—determined also by historic and political factors—is evident in the economic indicators of the region, whose values are within the average for the Southern Italy (*Mezzogiorno*). Overall unemployment is at 13.8 percent of the active population (Istat, 2008), compared to a national average of 6.74 percent, while unemployment among the population with ages between 15 and 24 years old is 38.5 percent (Confartigianato March 2010). Sicily is the largest producer of oranges in Italy—producing half of the entire national crop—, mainly from Palermo and Catania. It is also a leader in the production of other agricultural products, such as grapes, olives, eggplant, zucchini, and vegetables. Apart from the areas mentioned, Ragusa (at the foot of the Iblei mountains) is a highly concentrated agricultural zone. The grapes grown there are largely destined for direct consumption (table grapes), while the wine is used mainly as *vino da taglio* (a wine with high alcohol levels and a that is added in tiny quantities to adjust the characteristics of other wines during production). However, they are also harvested to make some high-quality wines, such as Corvo di Salaparuta. Marsala, a fortified wine from Marsala—an area in the extreme west of the island near Trapani—is well known internationally.

Sicily is the only region in Southern Italy with a true “vocation” for fishing. In fact, the fish caught there represent more than 25 percent of the catch in Italy. The traditional catch is tuna (caught in the past with archaic methods) and swordfish. The amount of shellfish collected in Sicily is particularly high. The principal fishing port on the island, and possibly in all of Italy, is Mazara del Vallo, in the Province of Trapani, with ships that also work in distant waters.

2. The City of Siracusa

The Greek origins, the incomparable monumental and archeological patrimony, and the natural beauty make Siracusa—and the ancient island of Ortigia in particular—a fascinating and suggestive urban and territorial reality.¹ However, the history of the city has seen periods characterized by the devastation of its historic and cultural resources; by the abandonment of the historic center of Ortigia; by the uncontrolled—and often contrary to the public good—growth of the suburbs and the periurban area. Over the years, these factors are at the root of a “disorderly urban growth” and the decaying of the monumental and historic resources of the city.

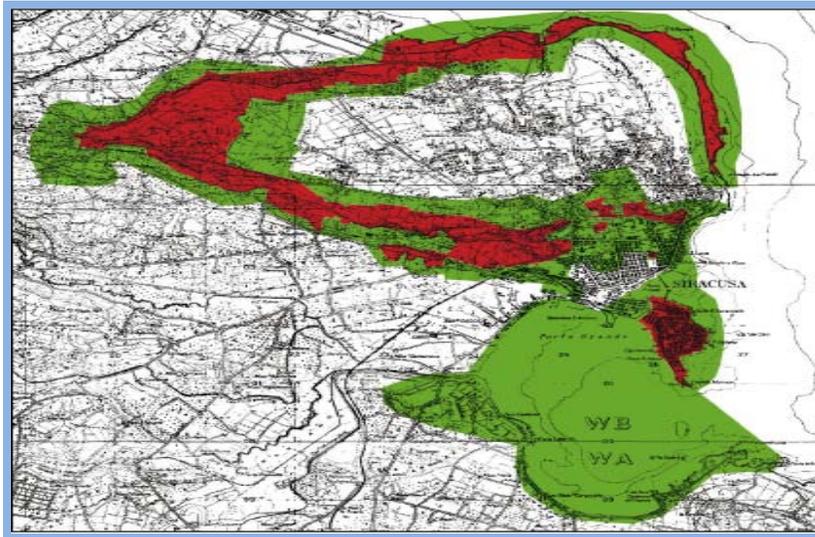
¹ Ortigia was the name given by the Greeks to the island south of the city of Siracusa, the greatest city in the Greek Empire after its capture in 415 BC.

In fact, following World War II there was an uncontrolled expansion of the city on mainland Siracusa, which ignored the value of the archeological, historic, and the environmental assets of the area and accelerated a depopulation of Ortigia, which began at the beginning of the twentieth century. The “Cabianca” plan, drawn up in the 1950s, called for a slowing of urban development, the formation of a system of archeological parks, and the controlled development of the city towards the South; however, it was never approved. In the 1960s, the form of the city transformed through the urbanization of the surrounding territory. This growth continued in the 1970s and spread toward the north to areas such as Epoli—toward Santa Panagia—, along the coast to the east, and to the west reaching Belvedere. The Acradina, Tica, and Neapoli quarters, characterized by hilly terrain and monuments, were covered with the new buildings. This happened also in the natural areas, which extended from the forum of Siracusa to Temenite hills. Buildings surrounded archaeological treasures such as the Greek theater, the Roman amphitheater, the Altar of Ierone, the Latomia del Paradiso (quarry).

In the 1980s the city appeared “with all its unhealed wounds: illegal building on the coast, expansion to the west, absence of reliable rules for the most ancient parts” (Agnello, 2001). At the end of the 1990s the administration took a new course to radically change the growth pattern of the city. In a setting characterized by chaotic urban growth over a territory with complex land delimitations (due to the presence of the historic reserves and the archeological zone), the administration’s plan put forward the objectives of limiting urban expansion, of requalifying the existing city, and of evaluating the historic center.

This triggered a series of interventions and special laws (and ad hoc financial instruments—mostly public funds transferred as grants—which made it possible to introduce radical interventions in the rehabilitation of buildings, monuments, residential structures, and public spaces; this brought back the lost splendor of the “Hellenic” city to the island of Ortigia.

3. Siracusa: UNESCO World Heritage Site



Thanks to the profound restoration and “healing” of the city between the late 1990’s and the following decade, the city qualified for consideration by UNESCO to be added to the World Heritage List (WHL) in February 2004. On July 15, 2005, Siracusa and the rocky Necropolis of Pantalica (in the Cassaro, Ferla, and Sortino areas) were inscribed on the list, an event that may be considered the official recognition of the beauty and uniqueness of the historic, artistic, architectonic, and natural heritage of these sites. The following are four specific motivations for the inscription of Siracusa:

- The archeological sites and monuments constitute a unique accumulation, through the ages and in the same space, of remarkable testimonies to Mediterranean culture;
- Through their remarkable cultural diversity, the sites and monuments are an exceptional testimony to the development of civilization over some three millennia.

- The group of monuments and sites is the finest example of outstanding architectural creation spanning several cultural aspects (Greek, Roman and Baroque); and
- Ancient Siracusa was directly linked to events, ideas, and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (UNESCO, 2005).

Siracusa is the 40th Italian site inscribed on the WHL—the fifth in Sicily. Three years earlier (June, 26, 2002), the Late Baroque Towns of the Val di Noto were inscribed, which includes Caltagirone, Militello Val di Catania, Catania, Modica, Noto, Palazzolo, Ragusa and Scicli. Of these eight cities, two are in the Province of Siracusa: Noto and Palazzolo. The main justification behind their inscription is the exceptional quality and exuberant genius of the late Baroque art and architecture, which flowered after the disastrous earthquake of 1693. The constant threat to the urban form of this region—given the particular seismic nature of the area and the nearness to Mount Etna—is another reason for the care and conservation.

The recognition by UNESCO certainly gives Siracusa an element of prestige on an international level, and one of pride within the local community. Above all, it indicates a clear responsibility for all those involved—from the public administration at different government levels, to the informal groups that live and work in the area—to preserve, improve, and strengthen the uniqueness of the site so that both present and future generations may enjoy a city that stimulates the consolidation of their cultural and heritage roots, as well as their creativity and well-being.

The city and territory of Siracusa have an extraordinary variety of cultural assets. Even in the very rich Sicilian context, Siracusa presents a strong and coherent cultural identity, inserting first-class monuments of *Magna Graecia* and an urban network of important buildings and spaces from the Baroque period into its own harmonious landscape. These can be found within a grid of cultural activity that ranges from the classics par excellence to contemporary creativity, demonstrating in this sense the ability of Sicilians to place the cultural patrimony of the past as a foundation for the elaboration and realization of creative and cultural activities in the future. The expressive and productive combination of the wealth of the archeological, artistic, and architectonic patrimony of the internationally relevant cultural activities—within an high-quality environment—, make Siracusa a quintessential cultural pole in which the opportunities appear as

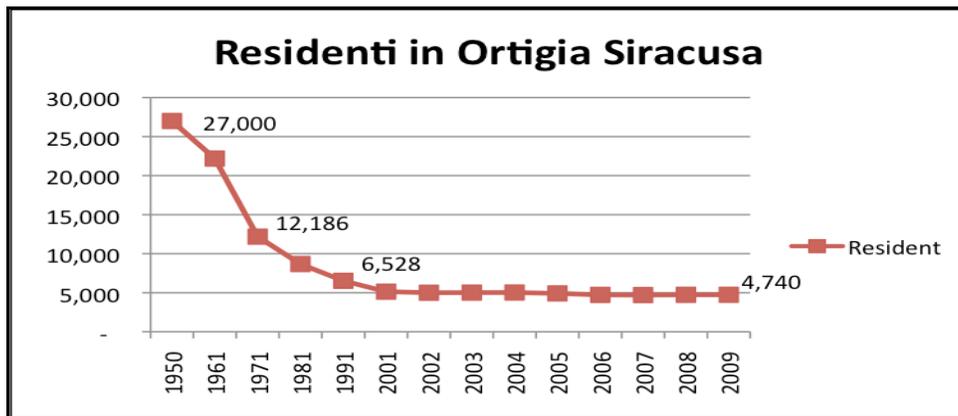
high as the risks, and the challenges require responsibility and awareness. If the recognition by UNESCO is the conclusion of a cultural trail (effectively stratified in time), it is then necessary to develop a strategy to face—in the next decades—the dual wager on sustainability and compatibility with the urban demands of the future. In this context the analysis that follows encompasses the entire historic center of Siracusa (HCS), as well as the island of Ortigia. The development of Ortigia was controlled by the urban regulations derived from the Detailed Plan for Ortigia (*Piano Particolareggiato per Ortigia*) (PPO).²

The Island of Ortigia

When the PPO was approved, the island of Ortigia was in a state of physical and social decay. Next to fascinating archeological and architectonic structures were equally bad examples of dwellings, an environment worsened by the scantiness of public areas that had been occupied over time during the building craze. These conditions progressively led to the abandonment of the area by the residents moving to the rapidly growing suburbs. According to the plan, the “rebirth” of Ortigia could rest on the quality of the urban structure and the stock of the ancient monuments and other buildings. These assets could be reconverted, after suitable studies, to house “dwellings, tourism, cultural, administrative, and educational activities ” (Pagnano, 1989). Seventeen years after the approval of the plan, Ortigia is an urban reality in evolution. Today, spread throughout 45 hectares, there are 4,725 inhabitants, compared with 6,528 in 1991, 12,186 in 1970, and 27,000 in 1950.

² The PPO was realized by Regional Law no.70 of 05/07/1976 “Protection of the historic centers and special norms for the Ortigia Quarter and for the historic center of Agrigento,” approved by the Region of Sicily in 1990 after a long and difficult procedure.

Figure 1. Residents in Ortigia, Siracusa



On an urban scale, there is an imbalance between the areas recovered—mainly near monuments, archeological remains, and along the sea—and the zones that form pockets of physical decay and social isolation in the inner part of the center. Also, access and traffic flow are still unresolved problems in an area characterized by a narrow network of roads connected by only three bridges to the mainland. In recent years, various programs have worked in Ortigia, including: PRU (Urban Recovery Program); URBAN³; PIT (Integrated Territorial Project); PRUSST (Programs of Urban Retraining and Sustainable Development of the Territory); URBACT (an EU program targeted at urban and metropolitan regions); and Plan for Environmental Restoration (*Piano di risanamento ambientale*). The protagonists of the recovery have been private individuals and groups, the municipality and other institutions like IACP (Public Housing Autonomous Institute), the Ministry for Public Works, the Ministry for Infrastructure and Transport, the Superintendency of Cultural Heritage, and the universities.

The municipality allocated funding for the private sector in accordance with regional Laws no.70/1976, no.25/1993, and no.34/1996, which provided funds to finance restoration works on facades, parts of the buildings held in common, and structures destined for commercial or artisan activities. Between 1990 and 2002, the city released about 900 licenses and concessions to the private sector; out of over 2,000 applications for funding, and little more than

³ A community initiative program sponsored by the EU that unites restoration and conservation investments with measures to strengthen the social and economic structure of the area.

300 rehabilitation operations were financed. At the same time, about 40 private undertakings were financed by the PRU.

Little was done in public housing, even though there were some very good projects in that field, such as the pilot housing rehabilitation projects in Graziella and Giudecca. The executing agency, the IACP, acquired the buildings by eminent domain and rehabilitated them for public housing. The work of the IACP in these areas slowed down due to the difficulty in tracing the ownership of the buildings in the extremely fragmented tenure structure of the area. The need to rehabilitate public spaces in the area was also an impediment. Pursuing one of the PPO's objectives to promote higher education activities in the island to bring in students and related activities, four university schools were located in rehabilitated buildings: the School of Architecture of Catania (1,000 students), some courses valid towards a degree from the School of Letters and Philosophy (1,000 students), Mathematical, Physical, and Natural Sciences of Catania (500 students), and the School for Foreign Students (36 students). Regarding education for children, three nursery schools, two elementary schools, one intermediate school, and two secondary institutes were set up. In addition, there are a number of public administration offices in Ortigia (e.g., the Office of the Historic Center, which has been there for some years), which in the past guaranteed the survival of the island as the privileged center of the city, even though they are still today the cause of traffic jams based on the number of people who commute to work there.

Currently three bus lines serve the island. The administration is progressively turning the island into a pedestrian area, creating areas of limited traffic, developing a system of public transportation on water, and increasing electric public transportation (six electric mini-buses), financed by the URBAN program. The administration has tended to focus mainly on promoting cultural activities and attracting tourists to the island. When the PPO was formulated, only two hotels existed on the island. Today, Ortigia has 15 hotels (one of which is a five stars luxury hotel) and 43 bed and breakfasts. There are 51 restaurants, 13 wine shop/bars, 14 tourist agencies, 23 commercial activities, and 28 artisan activities. There are also six museums on the island. The URBAN program promoted the use of vacant buildings for cultural activities, which include the School of the International Institute of Ancient Drama, the International School for Papyrus Restoration, and the Center for Mediterranean Studies. The administration is currently working on the revision of the PPO. Inspired by the principles of flexibility, teamwork, and

strategic planning, this planning instrument seems destined towards the promotion of functioning systems of commerce and handicrafts to promote the cultural heritage of the area.

4. Evaluation of the Impacts

The information available only allows for a cursory analysis of the impact of the development policies implemented by the different organizations involved in the rehabilitation process of Ortigia. Also, the sustainability of the conservation effort can be analyzed by assessing the evolution of less quantifiable variables. It is difficult to assess the impact that the inscription of Siracusa on the WHL has had on the conservation of the heritage site, as this is a process and not a turning point. It is, however, important to point out that Siracusa's inscription has led to an "awakening" on the part of the community and the authorities, providing a stimulus to the preservation efforts in the historic center by acknowledging the progress made and organizing support to those underway (both private and public). While UNESCO's recognition may appear to be already consolidated, in terms of urban development, it is still very recent (2006) and the rehabilitation of the site is still in need of support and coordinated action work by the various participants in its development.

5. Sustainability of the System

Over the decades, the HCS has attracted the attention of institutions belonging to different levels of government to the extent that an estimated 80 million EUR have been allotted to Ortigia alone. This support—which seems advantageous considering that are mostly nonrefundable grants for the preservation of the infrastructure, public spaces, and buildings on the site—has allowed for an acceleration of the urban development process. Preservation regulations are used throughout Italy for the protection of the heritage. However, the Region of Sicily has enacted those in Ortigia, as it is one of Italy's semi-independent regions due to historic and cultural reasons with autonomous regional regulations also in the field of cultural heritage.

Two historic benchmark laws (and their successive modifications) are of significance: Law no.1497 of 1939 and the first special laws of the Region of Sicily in 1976. Over time, laws concerning urban planning were added, such as the PPO, which set the public objectives concerning the site in two main directives: first, a highly detailed planning document regarding the preservation of public spaces and other structures, (not only monuments); and second,

policies to promote the functional rehabilitation and development of the historic center, encouraging the installation of public service agencies and service activities for tourism and commerce. The availability of these strategic guidelines for the preservation and development of the HCS enhanced the capacity of the city to outbid other European cities to obtain resources from the URBAN program; the city was awarded about 22.5 million EUR for urban rehabilitation and requalification of heritage assets. The approval of the regional Law no.34 in 1996—which followed the lead of the preceding law “Ortigia” of 1985 (referred to herein as the Special Law)—further stimulated the positive dynamics of urban renewal. Briefly, this law promoted private investment ventures by simplifying the licensing procedures for the rehabilitation of single-owner buildings (in structural and nonstructural terms). It recognizes the “specialness” of Ortigia by setting up the Office of the Historic Center (*Ufficio Centro Storico*) (UCS) with specific technical functions. It also made it possible to bridge the traditional separation of the various technical and administrative sectors involved in the development of a city (private construction, urban planning, public works, public budget and programming, or financing policies). Furthermore, this law, which gives the historic city a role in of the development of the city, draws the attention of the residents and encourages them to participate in the urban development, breaking the habit of seeing Ortigia as a decayed quarter on the outskirts.

This model of centralization on local development policies, with emphasis on Ortigia (through the UCS), has stimulated an integrated approach to rehabilitation, and has brought together physical investments in infrastructure with investments in economic activities related to tourism and commerce. The policies of economic stimulus implemented by this intervention model integrated the actions of public (University) and private sectors, drawing them to invest in Ortigia. The synergies between the PRU, the URBAN Project, and the decentralized administration of the UCS launched and propelled the rehabilitation process. This helped to integrate some strategic actions such as the development of a “tourism transportation terminal,” hotels, commercial activities, and public spaces under the incentives of the Special Law, which also stimulated the rehabilitation of privately owned buildings. This urban development model, instilled on the logic of economic sustainability of the investments, has generated synergies between the regional Superintendency of Cultural Heritage (*Sovrintendenza ai beni culturali ed*

artistici) and the Curia, and produced tangible results in the policies and strategies of urban rehabilitation.

The strong collaboration between the various institutional levels involved—with the help of the UCS—integrated the efforts of the following actors:

- The City Administration, responsible for the Detailed Plan and in general for the management of the process;
- The Region of Sicily, responsible for supplying the funds allocated by the Special Law, that has guaranteed the regular flow of financing;
- The Regional Superintendence, which actively participates in the control of restoration policies; and
- Other participants, such as the State with the PRU and the EU with its URBAN program—both special financial programs.

In practical terms, this collaboration has provided the financing for the rehabilitation of those parts of historic buildings held in common (façades, roofs, structures) in both private and public buildings. It has supported the planning system paying for the studies and the preparation of projects and promoting the involvement of the private sector. The URBAN program has generated interest in the implementation of large projects, such as the waterfront redevelopment, the rehabilitation of city squares, and the restoration of public buildings of symbolic value destined for cultural activities. These efforts have generated a concrete and visible scaling up of the rehabilitation activities that contribute to the new image of Ortigia and gives incentive to public institutions of all levels of government and private individuals and groups to believe in and invest in the rehabilitation process.

6. Criticisms

The criticisms in terms of the sustainability and economic impact of the rehabilitation efforts in the historic center of Ortigia can be summarized in three keys aspects.

6.1. Bureaucracy

Even though the UCS has centralized the urban development policies, there are still long delays in the approval and release of funds. Available funding is used very sparingly and is decreasing due to the mistrust on the incentives and other promotion mechanisms on the part of investors. Also, the slowness of the contract procedures has held up some of the large projects that are of priority to the community.

6.2 Resources

The concentration of the financing on projects aimed at recovering the physical heritage—to the detriment of incentives to attract private resources—is causing a slowdown of an otherwise successful policy. One example is the preservation of the heritage of the Giudecca and Graziella quarters. The slowdown of the investments by the IACP and the lack of policies to promote private sector financing for the rehabilitation and reuse of properties—not only in patrimonial terms but also in terms of revenue—has stopped the process of recovery in these decayed quarters of the city. The lack of a similar policy directed towards commercial activities to help develop the economic “fabric” of the community strongly reduced the resources available for private investment and the necessary enticement to maintain the system begun in recent years.

6.3 Urban Politics

Political instability obstructs the process of rehabilitation, not only by slowing down the process of funding, but also—because of the changes in the administration—by losing sight of the objectives and changes in priorities from time to time. In fact, this generates a contorted effect that works against the efforts made in the past and strongly dampens the existing possibilities for growth.

6.4 The Nonrefundable Grants Mechanism

This source of financing, if used for a long period of time, may turn from an opportunity into a risk, by turning a policy of support into one of assistance. This means that the excessive use of

public funding—if not managed in terms of promoting interest and stimulating the economy—can induce a “wait-and-see” attitude in the community and investors, which blocks the dynamics of the development. The results of a poll taken among the stakeholders show a fear, or uncertainty, over what will happen when the public subsidies end.

7. Flow of Finances

The restorations were implemented with funding from *Assessorato Beni Culturali* (Cultural Office), POR, FEC, Law no.433/1991 between 1997 and 2009. The total funding was 1,262,044,228 EUR in nonrefundable grants. Table 1 illustrates the programs that financed the recovery and development of the HCS through 2000.

Table 1. Funding Allocated for the Recovery of the HCS, 1985–2000

Provision	Supplying entity	Millions of EUR	Percent	Spending period
Special Law for Ortigia LR76/79 e LR34/85	Region of Sicily	35.1	53.67%	1985–2000
URBAN program	EU, State Ministry of the Budget, Region of Sicily	22.5	14.05%	1997–2000
PRU	State Ministry of Public Works	9.2	14.05%	1997–2000
State Law no.433/1991; provisions in favor of the zones hit by the earthquake 12/13/1990 (2)	State	11.9	18.23%	1992–2000
Total		78.76	100.00%	

As previously mentioned, the URBAN is a community initiative program sponsored by the EU that unites restoration and conservation investments with measures to strengthen the social and economic structure of the area. It is subdivided into measures, each of which has a specific goal that affects the overall outcome of the project (Table 2).

Table 2. URBAN Program

	Millions of EUR
Measure 1. Startup of new economic activity; contribution to artisan, tourist, and commercial ventures	5.47
Measure 2. Formation and promotion of occupation	2.27
Measure 3. Social Services, health, and public order	1.08
Measure 4. Infrastructures and environment	12.91
Measure 5. Actuation and diffusion of the results	0.77
Total	22.52

Table 3 illustrates the allocation of the funds devoted to the restoration and rehabilitation of the urban fabric of Ortigia, though not all have been definitively allocated or distributed. For example, the office in Ortigia has reported that out of 669 requests for funding for the rehabilitation of private buildings submitted between 2000 and 2009, only 237 projects under Regional Law no.34/1996 to private individuals/groups and only 25 projects under the National Law no.433/1991 for public buildings have been approved and disbursed. It is also important to consider that during this same period, other funding (from various sources) influenced the development of Siracusa, particularly in the field of tourism (though not always directly) (Table 4).

Table 3. Allocation of the Funds (in euros)

Destination	Assess. LL.PP.	Assess. Terr.Am b.	URBAN	PRU	Law no.433/1991	Cassa DDPP	exGescal
Public buildings	10,333,429	2,174,284	1,742,009		18,850,677		
Residential buildings	15,850,936			7,684,879			4,389,884
Public spaces	1,730,131	1,965,635	5,432,610	1,497,725	6,197,483	387,343	
Technical office Ortigia	284,051						
Studies/projects	1,239,497						

Table 4. Other Funding Sources

P.I.T. no.9 “Ecomuseum of the Mediterranean	Amount spent: 27,765,774 EUR for 15 projects	Sections involved public structures for the tourism sector
P.I.T. no.28 “Hyblon-Tukles	Funding: about 23.4 million EUR	Sections involved public structures for the tourism sector, support for PMI (Public Ministry of the Interior) tourism sector, handicrafts, third sector
Measure 1.11 “Highly natural integrated systems”	Funding: about 2.5 million EUR	Actions funded programming; planning; and implementation of ancillary structures for the use of the Natural Reserve (NOR) of Pantalica; restoration of the ex-stations of Pantalica and Giambra; restoration of the structure near the Anaktoron; pathways
Measure 1.4B POP Sicily 1994/99	Public funds distributed: 9,022,063.55 EUR	Sections involved tourism/hotels
PIR (Integrated Regional Project) of the Sicilian Ecological Network (Natural integrated system of the Iblei Mountains)	– 840,000 EUR	Ventures during realization: restoration of the ex-station of Fusco, Villa delle Rose, Casello San Nicola, and Casello Bisanti (in the area of the RNO of Pantalica)
Patto Territoriale Agricolo (Agrarian Territorial Pact) of Val d’Anapo	Funding: about 7.4 million EUR	Actions financed: system of aid for the PMI, strengthening tourism
Plan for Local Action “Leader Plus Hyblon Tukles”	Funding: about 2.6 million EUR	“Actions in favor of the completion of the cognitive outline of the values, goods, products, and services that function towards the exploitation of the RES and the reallocation of the people of Hyblon and Tukles.”

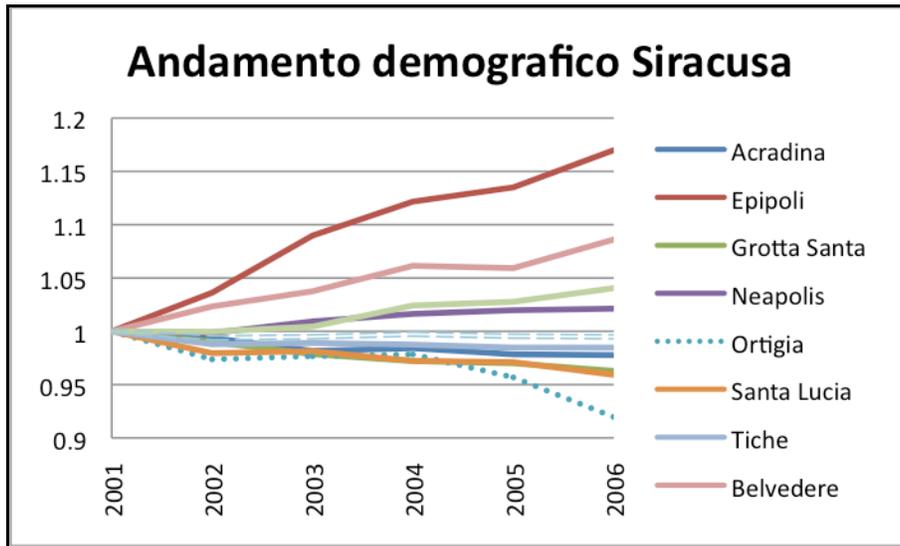
It is possible to affirm that in this past decade, a great quantity of nonrefundable grant resources have been spent in Siracusa and its province. Certainly these resources have stimulated the general economy, supporting the implementation of policies directed at the exploitation of the natural and historic heritage of the zone, giving strong incentives to the development of tourism as the key to economic growth. According to some informants, this is due also to a favorable political juncture at the level of various institutional organizations, from the city to the province, all the way up to the EU. These organizations are sensitive to the needs of the area, translating them into direct interventions and impulses to the economic development of the area.

It is important to remember that these funds, coming from organizations such as URBAN, PIT, PIR, and PRUST, are based on the partnership model—promoting the concerted action of the different stakeholders to intervene in the territory, not only in its physical structure but also in its human resources and organizational and financial capabilities. This attitude, in fact, is consolidating and seems to bear positive fruits over time, as can be seen in the analysis of the system of management of the site and the movement towards the “integrative model” of the district

8. Demographic Situation

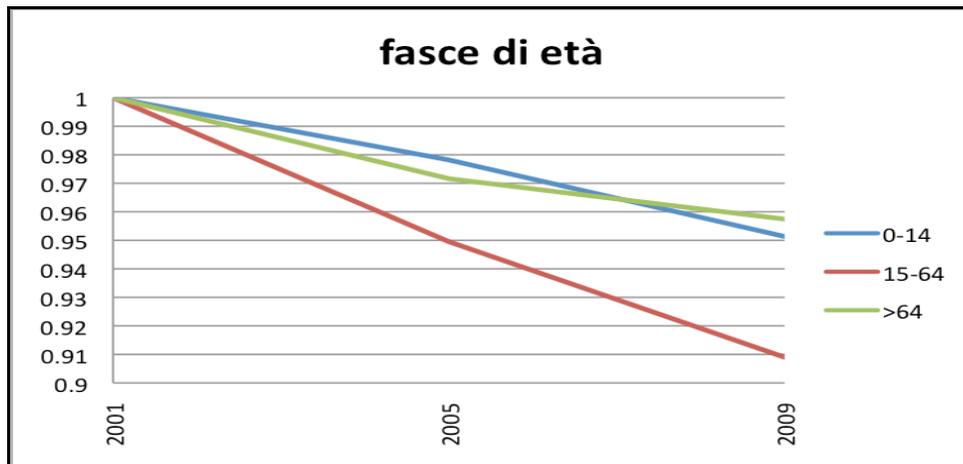
In terms of the effects generated by the strategies discussed, it is possible to analyze the recent demographic dynamics in Siracusa. The overall population of the city, as shown in Figure 2, marginally decreased between 2001 and 2006. During this period, the district with the greatest decrease in population was Ortigia, contrasting with the districts of Acradina, Belveder, Grotta Santa, and Neapolis that grew at a constant rate. However, since 2006 there has been little fluctuation in this sense in Ortigia, where there are now around 4,700 inhabitants. The areas that tend to attract more people are those on the outskirts of Siracusa, where, beyond a large concentration of housing, there are new centralities around the large shopping centers such as Auchon and Carrefour.

Figure 2. Demographic Fluctuation in Siracusa, 2001–2006



A study of the demographic variables in Ortigia shows that residents between 15 and 64 years old, the age level that corresponds to the economically active population (EAP), are leaving the historic center at the fastest rate, most likely to seek better employment opportunities elsewhere in the city (Figure 3). Conversely, the elderly and families with children between 0 and 14 years old are leaving at a slower rate; in regards to the families, the assumption is that they want to maintain a stable residence when their children are young so they remain. Nonetheless, this must be weighed against the low birthrate in Italy in general.

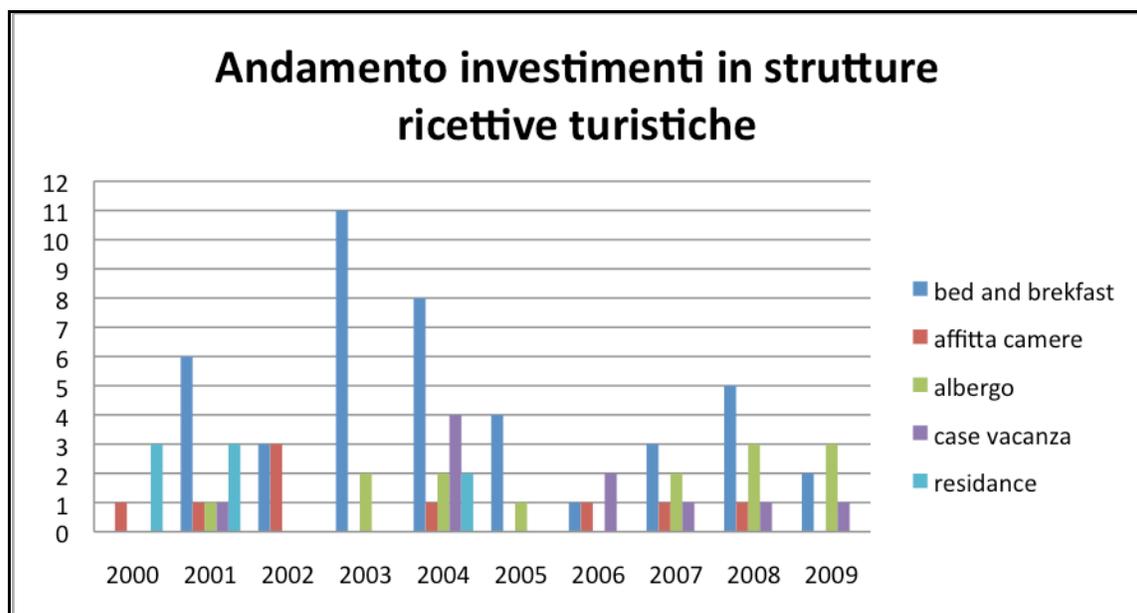
Figure 3. Abandonment of the HCS by Age, 2001–2009



9. Investments in Tourism in Ortigia

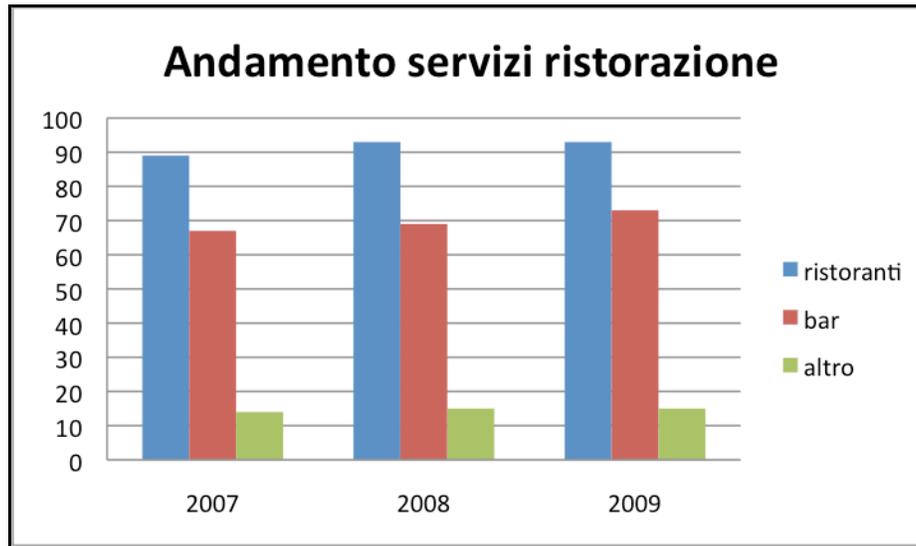
Out of a total of 214 tourist accommodations in the province, Ortigia alone lists 84, which includes a mixture of hotels, boarding houses, and bed and breakfast lodging. This is the result of the support by the programs (*Programma Operativo Regionale* [POR] Sicilia, 1994–2000 and URBAN, which closed in 2000) that helped to establish a new trend in terms of lodging, favoring the development of bed and breakfast lodging and new hotels.

Figure 4. Investments in Tourist Accommodations, 2000–2009



In the past three years, there has been an increase in investments in food services in Ortigia, with the opening (release of licenses) of restaurants and bars in particular, because tourism is becoming a significant and growing source of income in the city.

Figure 5. Food Services in Ortigia, 2007–2009

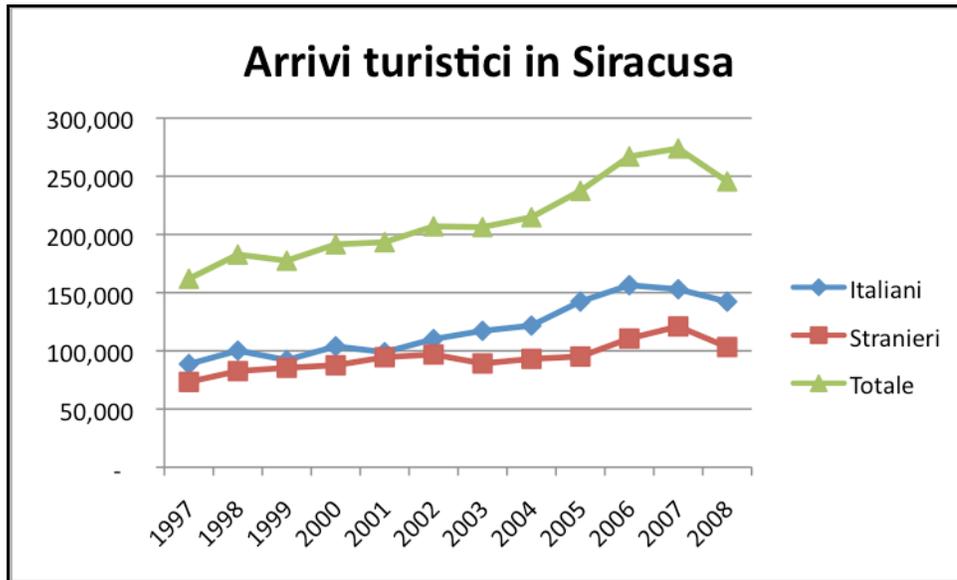


Tourism in Ortigia

Overall, the strategic choice to bet on tourism has been a winning one, and the increase in visitors, both Italian and foreign, to Siracusa in recent years is proof (Figure 6). Of course there have been downturns in the tourism industry throughout Europe, but these can mostly be attributed to outside factors, such as the SARS epidemic and the events of 9/11. Another consideration is the fact that in recent years the Italian national policy on tourism has become less competitive, with obvious negative results.

As mentioned, the flow of tourists into the area has been increasing and projections for the future are optimistic. The opening of the final section of the highway that connects Catania and Siracusa, on one hand, has facilitated the use of the Catania Airport for international arrivals to Siracusa, and, on the other, offers residents of Catania the chance to spend an evening in Ortigia (as they can now reach the city in less than an hour). However, an important aspect that affects the projections is the limited data that has been collected on tourists. There are no data on excursions to nearby tourist areas, such as Catania, Taormina, Modica, or Agrigento, which include side trips to Siracusa in their package tours.

Figure 6. Tourism in Siracusa, 1997–2008



10. Impact on the Population

In order to deepen the studies of the population, and as a substitute for information that is not directly available for the district of the HCS, a survey was conducted via personal interviews on a sample of the population to verify the social impact of the rehabilitation process. There are contrasting views by residents about the issue as shown by their answers. It is interesting to underline how interviewees review their community's commitment to preserve the heritage of Ortigia. Figure 7 provides an example of their varied responses.

Figure 7. Interview Question: The Community's Efforts in Heritage Preservation

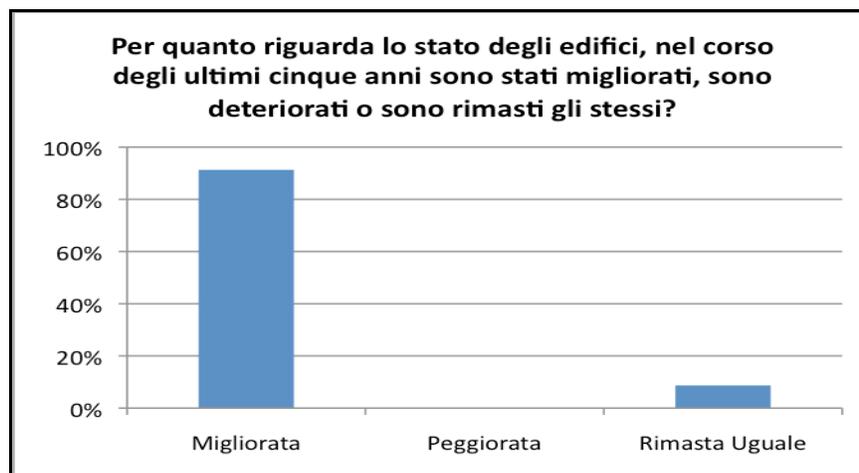
(Question: From the point of view of the appreciation the community has and its commitment to preserve the heritage, would you say that in the past five years the area has improved, worsened, or remained the same.)



Clearly there was a tendency to report an improvement in this area, but also an observation of the permanence of the status quo, even though the interviewees noted an overall improvement in the physical conditions of the buildings (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Interview Question: Building Conditions in Ortigia

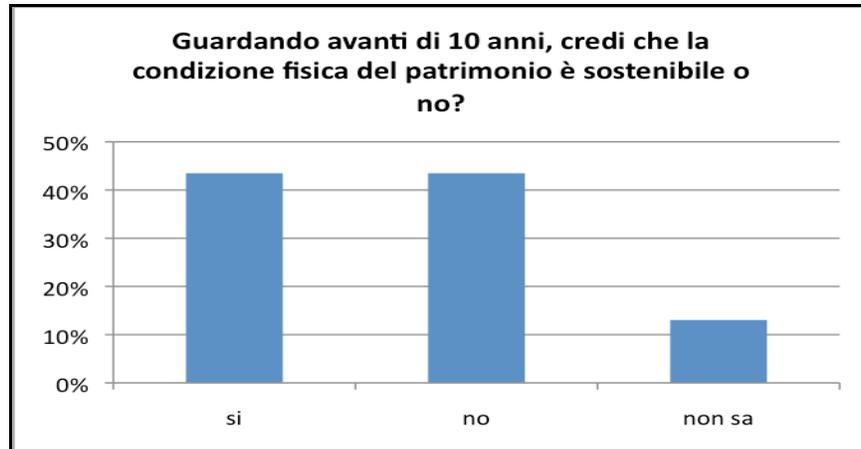
(Question: As far as the conditions of the buildings, over the past five years have they improved, deteriorated, or remained the same?)



The respondents gave contrasting responses when questioned about the possibility of sustaining the heritage in the future (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Interview Question: The Sustainability of the Heritage

(Question: Looking ahead 10 years, do you believe the physical condition of the heritage is sustainable or not?)



Among the categories that were answered negatively, one in particular reflected the fact that many of the tradesmen had lost all hope and did not believe there could be significant improvements in a short period of time. The professional people blame the non-sustainability on an insufficient ability to organize. The functionaries and public employees associate the non-sustainability with a strong dependency on funds, which they feel will diminish. Based on the data, it is apparent that many residents do not believe that the conditions of the historic area are economically sustainable (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Interview Question: The Sustainability of the Economic Conditions of the HCS

(Question: Looking ahead 10 years, do you think that the economic conditions of the historic center are sustainable or not?)

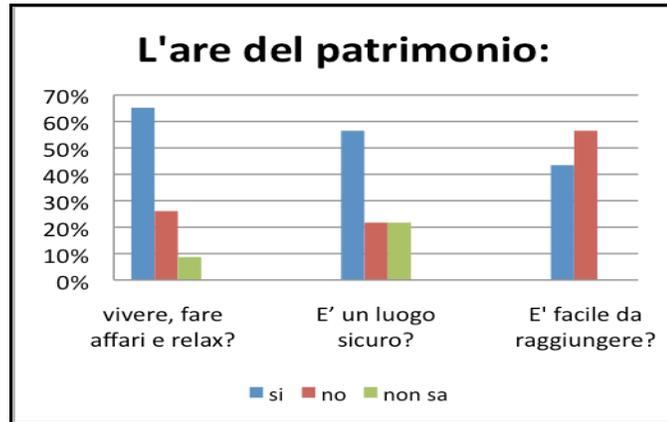


The justifications given by those interviewed who answered no or not certain were the insufficient ability of the administrators, the insufficient use of strategies to incentivize private investors, the hardships of the economic crisis, and difficulties in finding other sources of public funding.

Another interview question had to do with the quality of life in the historic center (Figure 11). The results show clearly that it is seen as a good place to live, work, and relax and it is a safe place; however, it is not easy to reach. The respondents did not identify a leader in the rehabilitation and management of the heritage listed by UNESCO. The majority feels that the local government does little to sustain the area—even less the national government—, while they do recognize a greater effort by the regional government. They did recognize that private individuals/groups support the historic center, through investment in tourist activities and sponsoring events.

Figure 11. Interview Question: The Quality of Life in the HCS

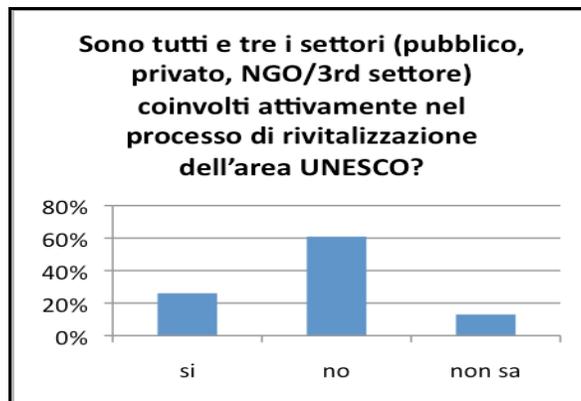
(Questions: Is the historic center a good place to live, work, and relax? Is it a safe place? Is it easy to reach?)



Another question had to do with support for the rehabilitation efforts on the part of the financial community: the response was strongly negative. However, the local media strongly support the rehabilitation projects because they see the inscription on UNESCO's WHL as an important resource for the city.

Figure 12. Interview Question: Revitalization Efforts in the HCS

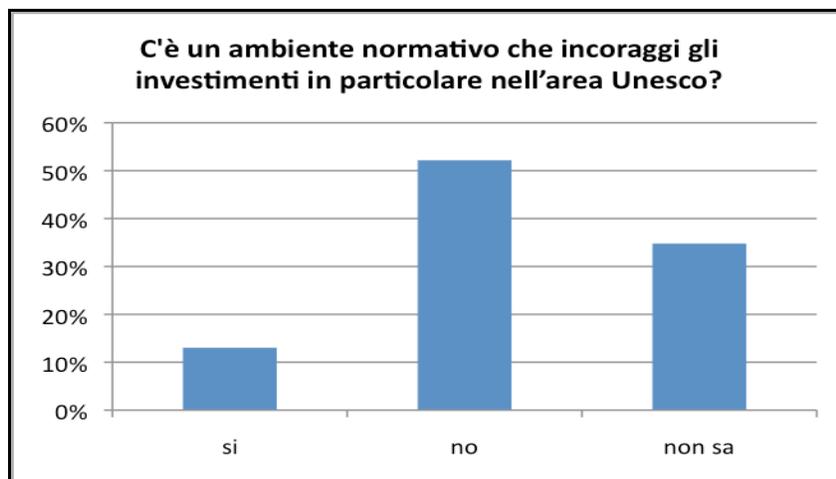
(Question: Are all three sectors (public, private, NGOs/3rd sector) actively involved in the process of revitalization the UNESCO area?)



The views of those sampled shows that there are no joint policies between the various participants in the rehabilitation and revitalization process in the historic center. In terms of the respondents' knowledge of a system for monitoring the economic changes in the territory, 65 percent of those interviewed responded that an auditing system capable of determining the impacts in the territory does not exist. Lastly, it is interesting to point out the results to the question regarding the existence of a normative that gives incentive to investments (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Interview Question: Investment Rules

(Question: Is there a set of rules that encourage investments in the World Heritage Site in particular?)



It is surprising, given the volume of funds used to revitalize the HCS, that more than 80 percent of those interviewed feel there is no real support system for its development. The greatest risk regarding the future of the HCS is, according to the sample, the lack of attention to, and the scanty recognition of the value of its inscription on the WHL (50 percent of those interviewed). Another risk is that there will no longer be funds and nonrefundable grants (25 percent) to support the preservation efforts. A few referred to risks beyond man's responsibilities (i.e., natural disasters) (15 percent). The remaining 10 percent answered that the risk lies in the inability to manage the change. One fact that must be underlined is that in the end, almost all interviewees still recognize the value of the heritage area as a center for social activities (the Greek *agora*), declaring that the HCS is the privileged site for shows, protest, and other city-centered events.

11. Conclusions

The type of intervention adopted in Siracusa undoubtedly have permitted the achievement of the primary objective: starting the process of rehabilitation and, above all, the revitalization of the historic center, which reached a peak in 2006 with the UNESCO's inclusion of the city on the WHL. The process, as shown previously, has stimulated—and continues to stimulate—economic and media interest that keeps the discussion about the territory alive (the active participation of the media in debates and discussions is proof). In fact, the model can be reproduced and transferred abroad (as Fontanari sustains) only—and exclusively—if the same fundamental steps are followed, thus allowing the same results to be obtained.

First, the creation of a central management office (UCS in Ortigia) has made it possible to keep the management of the process and the strategic coordination always in the hands of technicians. This point presents some negative aspects in terms of the “democratization” of choices, which depend heavily on the political process and can influence the deadlines for the completion of the activities. It would be an objective, in any reproduction of this model, that more attention be placed on this aspect, placing more emphasis on “technical independence,” thus reducing “political” pressure.

Second, a detailed urban development plan has been established for the historic area which defines three important elements: 1) the limits of the intervention, or better, the geographical limits of authority; 2) the characteristics of the heritage site and the exact definition of the policies and criteria of the intervention; 3) the functions compatible with the historic urban fabric in order to localize the large homogeneous areas of intervention under a single strategy.

Third, the use of pilot projects for the recovery of important historic buildings has proven to be a winning move. It gave a symbolic (but also functional) value to the restoration—on one hand, raising the city's image, and on the other, quickly stimulating the creation of economic ventures that revitalize the historic city.

Fourth, various types of funding have been used to avoid using only public funds. These funds are exclusively for the physical restoration of buildings, but attract and promote the development of productive activities.

Fifth, there has been a streamlining of the procedure for the use and management of the funds (though, in fact the implementation of the law for the restoration of private property has

suffered from bureaucratic slowdown), and the contribution of private capital—the so-called cofinancing—has helped reduce the dependency on nonrefundable grants.

There is still much to do to modify the model and mold it into the most suitable form to adapt to the local reality. The greatest risk—which was limited as much as possible by setting up offices and other types of tertiary activities—is that of turning Ortigia into a “theme park,” which is caused when the excessive use of policies focused on tourist development is not balanced with policies that make the area an attractive place to live and work for the citizens of Siracusa. This could distance the residents in favor of foreign investors (for years the Americans and British have been buying up homes in the historic center). However, while these investments could make Ortigia into an area of definite historic and architectonic value, it may lack the added value of local culture, which is part of the intangible elements of heritage.

What are the Current Tendencies?

In the current phase of reform, there is a new model that widens the spatial horizon of the intervention efforts. This is the result, on one hand, of the variety of historic/architectonic sites which exist in all of southeast Sicily, and, on the other, of the EU’s preference to address poles and strategies, promoting the creation of districts.

The Region of Sicily has recently created a line of financing for those territories that for thematic reasons, or for reasons of homogeneity, can be grouped together to form a district. In the case of Siracusa, authorities are thinking of creating a UNESCO cultural district, which would put together not only the existing heritage sites, but also all the historic/architectonic resources of the region. This would, on one hand, strengthen the negotiating capacity for funds that will be spent in the next program, and, on the other, help implement unambiguous policies of exploitation, conservation, and requalification for the entire territory.

The new association that should cover the district is called the Southeastern Cultural District Association. Its charismatic leader is Superintendent Mariella Muti. It covers all the communities that are UNESCO World Heritage sites, including previously recognized sites in Italy and places outside the province. In this new scenario, the reproduction of the new positive model for Siracusa is fundamental, as is the creation of a dynamic monitoring system for tracking the effects of the development policies in order to know the results and, in the shortest time possible, the effects of the events that could cause changes in the strategy.

The static criteria of monitoring (often incomplete or nonexistent), which capture the situation *ex ante* and evaluate the results *ex post*, could be inefficient and ineffective towards reaching the proposed objectives. Consequently, they could generate a series of equivocal results, particularly as far as public opinion is concerned. Often, the public expresses great expectations when an initiative is proposed, but, during the course of the work, loses enthusiasm simply because the process is too slow when the results are not favorable. A glaring example is the effect on the funding for restructuring private property—less than 50 percent of the requests were granted, and there were delays of more than eight years.

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