

# **A NEW DIALECTICS CENTRE/PERIPHERY: CONSUMPTION PATTERNS AND PRACTICES IN THE SUBURBAN AREAS<sup>§</sup>**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper deals with the analysis of current changes which have been recently shaping unprecedented urban structures in some suburban areas, due to the emerging of new consumptions spaces. In particular, the work aims at highlighting the effect of urban sprawl on the main Sicilian metropolitan areas, also moulded

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<sup>§</sup> Although this paper is the outcome of a shared work, Caterina Cirelli wrote par. 1, Teresa Graziano par. 2, Enrico Nicosia par. 3, Leonardo Mercatanti par. 4, Carmelo Maria Porto par. 5.

by the diffusion of the suburban retailing formats, in order to evaluate to what extent these dynamics have been contributing to the configuration of new urban landscapes and unprecedented socio-economic structures, not to mention the support in the process of containing social and economic marginalisation.

**KEYWORDS:** new consumption spaces, centre-periphery dialectics, urban sprawl, city, Sicily

## UNA NUEVA DIALÉCTICA CENTRO / PERIFERIA: PATRONES DE CONSUMO Y PRÁCTICAS EN LAS ÁREAS SUBURBANAS

### RESUMEN

Este artículo trata sobre el análisis de los cambios actuales que recientemente están transformando los sistemas urbanos en algunas áreas suburbanas, debido a los nuevos espacios de consumo. En particular este trabajo tiene como objetivo centrar la atención sobre el impacto de la expansión urbana en las principales áreas metropolitanas de Sicilia, caracterizadas por la difusión de formatos comerciales suburbanos, con el fin de evaluar en qué medida estas tendencias están contribuyendo a la configuración de los nuevos paisajes urbanos y inusual estructuras socioeconómicas, al igual que apoyar el proceso de contención de la marginación social y económica.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** nuevos espacios de consumo, lógica centro-afueras, expansión urbana, ciudad, Sicilia

### SUBURBAN AREAS IN CONTEMPORARY CITY.

Contemporary city is increasingly marked by functions and symbols which are influencing traditional urban structures at the point that many cities are committed to experience processes of revitalization in order to sustain a growing competition (SOJA, 2000; AMENDOLA, 2008). In this respect, consumption is no longer a tool to satisfy basic needs, but rather it can be regarded as a fundamental

moving force in the evolution of city morphology and functionality (CIRELLI, 2007; CIRELLI, 2008; BARATA-SALGUEIRO, 2011).

Particularly, the recent diffusion of suburban retailing formats, such as shopping centres and factory outlets, have been contributing to upset the traditional dialectics which the urban iconography was used to be build on, that is to say that one between centre and periphery. Such a phenomenon is inserted within the wider process of growing urban expansion, so that the contemporary city can be considered as an ever-changing territorial entity, where borders and spatial limits are constantly challenged.

As a result, the widespread process of urban sprawl does not concern only the growth of the urban fabric, but also the shift of activities, population and services towards the urban fringe, which has produced unprecedented models of land uses and representation of spaces. What is more, this implies an overall reorganisation of the city both from a physical standpoint and from the functional one.

Within such suburban landscapes, often deprived of strong identity marks, the symbols of urban modernism, such as the new “consumption cathedrals”, compensate for this lack through a completely different set of values, apparently superficial and hedonistic. However, their function is more and more fundamental in the process of reconfiguration of suburban areas, both physically and metaphorically. Those suburbs regarded as peripheral, not just from the spatial standpoint, but rather in terms of access and functions, have become the new centres, often substituting the old historic ones. Thus, centrality is no longer a matter of physical localization, but it has become the outcome of a multilayered process where traditional spatial parameters have been replaced by new social and economic patterns, marked by an increasingly widespread consumption symbolism.

It is no accident that “retail geography has come to occupy a central position within social-scientific research” (CREWE, 2000, p. 275), since places,

spaces and practices of consumption lie at the core of a reconstructed economic geography (CRANG, 1997). However, during the 1980s, retail geography remained undertheorized, since it was principally focused on descriptive accounts of store location. During the 1990s, retail geography became a relevant topic for research, principally dealing with the study of corporate strategy, market structures and the spatial switching of capital (CLARK, 1993; DOEL, 1996) and it has become even more important during the last decade, because of the growing diffusion of new patterns and spaces of consumption in completely different urban and socio-economic landscapes (COHEN, 2003).

In effect, “there has been a remarkable increase in academic production on the subject, both through the intensification of research on the socio-spatial organization of retailing and practices of shopping and by expansion of the field as we have followed consumers into new contexts of consumption” (GOSS, 2004, p. 276).

This is principally due to the widespread consciousness that “Not only is shopping melting into everything, but everything is melting into shopping [...] Shopping is the medium by which the market has solidified its grip on our spaces, buildings, cities, activities, and lives. It is the material outcome of the degree to which the market economy has shaped our surroundings, and ultimately ourselves” (LEONG, 2001, p. 129).

As a result, this paper aims at evaluating the impact of new retailing spaces and patterns in some suburban metropolitan areas of Sicily, in order to understand to what extent they have been moulding not only unprecedented consumption practices, but also new dynamics of territorial evolution.

### **CATANIA, A HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL METROPOLITAN AREA.**

The recent socio-economic and urban evolution of Catania, the main economic centre of Eastern Sicily, is a meaningful example of settling dynamics and spatial patterns in a geographical area marked by sharp contradictions, where

new suburban consumption spaces have been fostering unprecedented socio-economic dynamics.

In spite of the ancient settling, the city is perfectly inserted in the frame of the urban dynamics typical of Southern Italy: that is to say, the so called urban typology of “underdevelopment” (SANFILIPPO et al., 1976; FINOCCHIARO, 1989; SANFILIPPO, 1991), since its economic structures are mainly based on an irrational urban growth not supported by advanced economic processes.

During the booming sixties, the city underwent a process of uncontrolled expansion in the surrounding suburban rural areas that completely upset the traditional categories centre/periphery, even though the city centre was predominant in the field of trade, due to a highly dynamic entrepreneurial class. It was this entrepreneurial ferment that supported the unexpected post-war economic growth, apart from fostering such an urban growth that the city was considered as one of the main Italian metropolitan areas (DEMATTEIS, 1993).

However, this unprecedented metropolitan status was principally due to the irrational and totally spontaneous expansion *extra moenia*, that implied a series of malfunctions in terms of governance dependent on the lack of urban planning. As a result, the urban scenario was made of a chaotic patchwork of sub-cities gravitating around the main centre, which provoked only traffic congestion and the saturation of spaces, without efficient social services necessary to an increased population.

Thus, Catania was at the core of unprecedented urban dynamics in common with other cities of same rank and typology. Classified as a metropolitan centre in the eighties, due to its demographic weight (about 500.000 inhabitants, except the hinterland), the city had already started to line up to the main trends of centrifugal counter-urbanisation, which revealed two main trajectories: one was directed towards new suburban urban centres punctuating its perimeters which boasted better life conditions compensating the distance; the other one was directed towards low cost rural areas, marked by social and economic decay,

often within specifically conceived projects, as in the case of the satellite neighbourhood of Librino<sup>1</sup> (D'AMICO, 2001).

The urbanised area crossed the traditional urban borders owing to an anthropised continuum because of the demographic and residential displacement from the core to the ring, even though without a long term planning vision. So, this demographic decentralization was not followed by a contemporary production delocalisation, economic diversification or decentralization of governance functions. In spite of the ever-lasting demographic decay, the centre of Catania remained for many years the main pole of trade, services and economic activities, so that the suburban nodes of the metropolitan network could be regarded as bedroom-suburbs.

Only during the last decade, the controversial relationship centre-periphery has been undergoing a process of reconfiguration, principally due to the unprecedented changes of the social and economic urban fabric because of the proliferation of new suburban places of consumption. These so called “urban cathedrals”, which fragment and disrupt geographical space and time (CREWE, 2000; GOSS, 1993), are often regarded as “iconic of contemporary retailing” and “hegemonic consumption spaces” (CREWE, 2000, pp. 276-277) in the most recent research fields of contemporary geography of consumption (MANSVELT, 2005).

What is more, because of the “material transformations in the retail economy, consistent with conditions of postmodernity” (GOSS, 2004, p. 371), consumer spaces can be considered “at once material sites for commodity exchange and symbolic and metaphoric territories”, (CREWE, 2000, p. 271), since retailing spaces contribute to the (re)production of meanings and the constitution of identities.

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<sup>1</sup> This overpopulated quarter is the result of a disastrous urban planning. Conceived in the early seventies as a futuristic suburban area, provided with all the advanced services and functions, it was destined to hold the population of a decayed quarter situated in the historical centre, completely demolished. Nowadays it embodies the very emblem of social and economic marginalisation, since its development was not supported by a long-term approach.

Thus, even in the case of Catania, the peripheral retail overgrowth has been producing a deep impact within the city centre, often unable to follow the evolution of consumption patterns. As a result, the impact of new “consumption cathedrals” such as shopping centres and factory outlets must be evaluated in terms of reformulation of retail patterns and the evolution of the overall urban landscape, both the central and the suburban one.

As a matter of fact, in the current post-ford and post industrial era, the retail spaces imply the transformation not only of consumption and fruition patterns but also of the whole urban fabric from a spatial and socio-economic point of view. Apart from stimulating new ways of consumption (both of products and spaces), this process upsets the traditional dialectics which the traditional urban iconography was based on, that is to say that one between centre and periphery.

Thus, on one hand, the retail vocation of city-centres needs to negotiate its own role due to the proliferation of new peripheral suburban spaces (DIXON, 2005; FEATHERSTONE, 1991). On the other hand, until some decades ago the suburban retail formats had functions almost exclusively linked to retail and consumption of goods and products, whilst they have recently underwent a functional process at the point to have become new relational and recreational spaces. Undoubtedly, peripheral retail areas attract visitors, because they are not any longer “non-lieux” (AUGÉ, 2010) deprived of an emotional impact, but rather spaces destined to leisure which offer products, events and above all “emotional experiences”.

## **THE COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF PERIPHERAL AREAS OF THE CITY OF CATANIA.**

The southern part of the city of Catania, corresponding to a suburban area, developed the second half of the Twentieth century. It includes two municipalities, the ninth and tenth and covers an area of 14.000 hectares that constitute nearly two-thirds of the municipal area. The two municipalities were largely formed made

of popular settlements, some of which are bedroom communities or areas of the ghetto, growing out of public intervention, would have constituted an independent “satellite city”. Other peripheral areas, however, have grown and developed spontaneously in an abusive manner, but are equally lacking in equipment and services including basic needs (CIRELLI, 2007). The ninth municipalities, Librino-San Giorgio, from the urban point of view is the most recent, and its urbanization, under the urban plan conceived by Piccinato in 1969, began with the realization of the project drawn up by the Japanese architect Kenzo Tange, made enforceable in 1976, which was completed in the eighties of the last century. The area, which was to house about 60.000 inhabitants, distributed among the villages of Librino, Castagnola, Bummacaro, Sant’Agata and San Giorgio, was intended to house the workers of enterprises of the nearby industrial area of Pantano d’Arci (RUGGIERO and CIRELLI, 1989). Inhabited today by more than 42.000 people, the ninth municipalities is one of the most populated city. From the economic point of view we can see the sharp contrast between its size, second only to tenth, and the paucity of commercial activities. Today, businesses are less than a hundred and mostly it comes to neighbourhood activities. While the breakdown sees a small presence of food and non-type activities which demonstrates how the area is still far from being independent from Catania, even for the low profile of most of the activities and for the clear and limited role the sole purposes of meeting the most basic of the area (CIRELLI et al, 2006; CIRELLI, 2007, NICOSIA, 2007).

The ninth municipalities, due to its strategic location near the airport, not far from the industrial area and major thoroughfares, such as the axle of the services and highway CT-PA, in the last decade, however, have sprung oversized shopping centers that have bid in the Etna area and large specialized areas, such as IKEA, who have contributed to less marginal from an economic standpoint the entire functional area. The private action was organized and impressive. Among the most important locations are mentioned, following a chronological order,

making a second shopping center, Auchan, in addition to those which exist in the 10<sup>th</sup>, called “Porte di Catania”, in the “Gelso Bianco”, along the end of the motorway axis CT-PA, a structure which occupies 12.500 square meters and with its 150 stores and approximately 5.000 parking spaces, offers a structured and diverse range of products (food and otherwise) and ensuring good accessibility.

Moreover, the recent completion of the new “Centro Commerciale all’Ingrosso” in the area of Bicocca, may represent a further breaking of the marginality of these peripheral areas. It is a meeting point for the development of transactions, not pulverized, but localized and respectful of all the most modern business and organizational needs. As shown by the figures of the project, the work is impressive, in fact, It covers a total area of 897.500 sq. m., divided into 217.000 sq. m. of covered areas, 349.500 sq. m. parking and nearly 195.000 square meters of green facilities. It is a structure that is at the service of the entire subway system and that Etna is an important step in the process of urban regeneration of the entire area south of the city. Furthermore, just over a year, the first IKEA store of Sicily with 30.000 sq. m. was inaugurated in the district “Buttaceto”, 19.000 sq. m. dedicated to the exhibition, a restaurant with 465 seats and 2.500 parking spaces, confirming the commercial attractiveness of the area south of Catania. While in June 2011 was inaugurated the mall called “Centro Sicilia” inspired the design of shoppertainment, ie entertainment and shopping. “Centro Sicilia” is an ambitious project in size and innovative in structuring the offer. The center covers 96,000 sq. m. total, with a great choice and opportunity to purchase. Food Court, Fashion Mall, Young Mall, Mall House, Family Mall and Hypermarket: a unique merchandise mix, with internationally renowned brands to purchase an exclusive, luxury and avant-garde architectural ambience. The core business of the center is the area of catering, entertainment and gaming. The shopping area has a hypermarket of 10.000 sq. m., a prestigious gallery with 300 stores in medium and high level and 6,000 sq. m. sales averages for specialized areas. Finally under the program of redevelopment and redeployment of the area between Playa from the

airport, in a tourist area, the city of Catania has made operational the Urban Implementation Plan (SFP) which involves the construction of a large convention and tourism center. The project named “Polar Star” will be located in an area of 35 hectares, of which only 55.000 seats and everything else green. A Palace of Congresses (approximately 10.200 sq. m. with 4.000 seats), a Palace of Exhibitions (15.000 sq. m. Covered), connections covered, outdoor exhibition area and underground parking will be built (CIRELLI et al, 2011, p. 162).

Also in Librino, we must then remember the propulsive action that may arise public-private initiative called “Zona Franca Urbana” that government should provide tax incentives in the future the creation of new businesses.

Also, it is certainly the construction of the new hospital San Marco in the territory of the ninth municipalities , the most important element of functional change that you can read in the short term.

The new hospital, which will replace at least part of the ancient Vittorio Emanuele, the historic regional hospital located in the heart of the Old Town, you can count on a total of 570 beds, services and specialties to which is better expressed by a user 'High demand for assistance and which is high compared to the use of health facilities outside the region.

**TAB 1: MALLS AND LARGE AREA SPECIALIZED PRESENT IN THE PERIPHERAL AREAS OF CATANIA. SOURCE: PERSONAL PROCESSING.**

Name	S. m.	Parking spaces	Municipality	Point of sale
Auchan	4.500	1.800	X	16
Porte di Catania	12.500	5.000	IX	150
IKEA	30.000	2.500	IX	/

Centro				
Commerciale				
all'Ingrosso	897.500	/	IX	/
Centro Sicilia	96.000	5.000	IX	140

The tenth municipalities, are formed by San G. La Rena with the nearby public housing areas, the Villaggio Sant' Agata, Santa Maria Goretti, Zia Lisa. Its origins<sup>2</sup> coincide with the urban expansion of the sixties of last century. This suburb of the city of Catania, is characterized by the presence of areas that have significant potential for development, such as those used for industrial and commercial.

Moreover, in this part of the city are located the most important metropolitan infrastructures (port, airport, roads), and the sandy coast, undergoing major redevelopment thanks to which we tried to improve the inadequate accommodation facilities, sports and leisure.

The absence of a real economy, together with the marginalization of the urban areas of municipalities, characterized by low levels of income per capita, compared to the city and the entire metro system, will affect negatively on the attractiveness.

The 10<sup>th</sup> municipality is both the largest and least populated, this is because the residential area is limited to: Villaggio Sant'Agata, Zia Lisa I - II and Villaggio Santa Maria Goretti, all characterized by public housing and concentrated in the northern part, while the southern part is occupied by the industrial area, with many large and medium-sized settlements.

<sup>2</sup> The oldest of the villages is that of Santa Maria Goretti designed to accommodate 1,400 residents left homeless after the floods of 1951 and only equipped with facilities such as primary school, church and small businesses. Nearby, a few years later, the village was built Sant'Agata, also known as Zia Lisa. Further south, on the way Gelso Bianco, lies the village Pigno, a peripheral spontaneous settlements on the characteristics distinctly rural. This settlement, established by immigrants who work as laborers, small traders, farmers or unemployed, had different origins and developments over the first, but these can be associated to the precariousness of the economic and social, environmental degradation and the common lack of services (CIRELLI, 2007, p. 109).

We also note here the prevalence from the dimensional point of view of neighborhood. Although the presence of the only shopping center, Auchan, built in the urban area, at least until a few years ago, had triggered slowly, partly due to the attractiveness that this caused to the residents of the more central areas of the city, a gradual process of urban regeneration, by encouraging the location of other businesses.

In conclusion we can say that the suburbs of the city of Catania, especially the districts of ninth municipalities represent an attractive area capable of attracting foreign investors to have glimpsed this area a significant untapped potential. This dynamic, which was not governed by appropriate policy choices by local governments that have failed so curb the use of new commercial space, saturating the request of the application, has triggered an important phenomenon of shared urban space that has become a place of collective recreation and leisure.

#### **PALERMO, IN PURSUIT OF COMMERCIAL PHENOMENON IN CATANIA.**

Palermo is the capital of his Province and of Sicily and is the fifth most populated city in Italy, with 655.875 people at 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011 (approximately the same value of 1971). Its metropolitan area, established with a regional law in 1986 and a Regional Presidential Decree in 1995, includes 27 municipalities but until now there is not a clear definition of boundaries (SCHILLECI, 2008, p.51-56). In Italy the period of overbuilding has increased its consistency after the Second World War, particularly during the so called Italian “economic miracle” (1953-1963) and was manifested mainly in the South. In particular Palermo is one of the emblematic cases of this phenomenon.

Palermo has grown too fast and chaotically during the sixties of the twentieth century and is the product of some years of bad policies and politics. The legacy of years of dreadful corruption at the political level, shown by a widespread overbuilding, without any respect of the aesthetic of the city is so evident today that someone defined this phenomenon as the “sack of Palermo”.

This building boom has not gone along with the real needs of population and territory, resulting in a few years an aesthetic transformation of the city often in a negative sense. As well as for Catania the quite absurd urban growth was not supported by advanced economic processes or urban planning.

At the end of the sixties was born the social housing quarter ZEN (Zona Espansione Nord – Northern Expansion Area), now called “San Filippo Neri”. Today this area has many unauthorized occupants and is characterized by serious problems of architectural degradation, social marginality and youth delinquency.

In the opposite part of the city is Brancaccio, between the central part of the city and its south-east suburbs. It is a site characterized by a residential and industrial vocation and like ZEN it is an area of great expansion, but with some interesting cultural sites, such as the Castle of the Favara at Maredolce built between 998 and 1019 by Emir Jafar.

Brancaccio is sadly known for Mafia events. Don Pino Puglisi, well known anti-mafia priest, was killed here in 1993.

Between the late fifties and the early eighties was born Borgo Nuovo (New Town), located at the far western suburbs of the city. It is mainly an area of social housing partly populated with immigrants or families forced to relocate due to crumbling buildings of historical center.

These three areas were born to allow a demographic decentralization. However the ambitious project was not supported by a more significant strategic role to oversee and make decisions on project orientation beyond the level of operations management.

The commercial activities of Large Retail Chains generally contribute to defining the character of increasingly large territories, which are organized or reorganized under the aim of several new functions. The consequences are relevant economically but also socially and culturally. Until a few years ago the district of Palermo was not marked by a significant dynamism in this sector and its

distribution structure appeared to be fairly traditional, with a low attitude to organizational innovation. Today, however, Palermo tends to imitate the model of Catania and its metropolitan area in an ever more effective way.

It has been underlined today in Palermo a growing trend of retail sales area. This phenomenon, as has already happened in other urban areas, could bring many urban customs in crisis. For instance the historical markets, places of tradition, are trivialized and increasingly oriented by improbable tourism occasions or sporadic initiatives sponsored by public authority (MERCATANTI, 2010).

The aspect of employment offer resulting from these initiatives appear attractive at first sight, although it is common practice to propose short contracts and without confirmation (NAPOLI e SPICA, 2010, p.5).

The new direction taken in Palermo, however, involves at least two reflections. The development of a second commercial pole of attraction in Palermo also will attract users from the provinces of Trapani and Agrigento. This suggests, in a few years, for the peripheral commercial areas of Catania, the loss of users from the western part of the island.

A second consideration stems from the obvious deficiencies relating to the accessibility in Palermo. Palermo and its metropolitan area will be able to handle a new influx of visitors and users of new shopping centers? Consider the case of Poseidon megastore in Carini (15 Km from Palermo), opened in June 2010 and already blamed for the great inconvenience caused to users who have to go to the Falcone Borsellino international airport.

The fervor that characterizes Palermo from the commercial point of view and some of its surrounding areas also requires bold choices for a new way of thinking about the organization of urban spaces and viability. This one is of course affected by the particular shape of the mountainous hinterland and artificially affected by the policies of urbanization already discussed and the choice of solutions frankly unintelligent.

This refers in particular to the change of viability layout inside and outside the city, too often incomprehensible or inappropriate to traffic conditions.

### **OLD SUBURBS AND NEW CENTRAL BUSINESS IN PALERMO TODAY.**

Despite numerous redevelopment and urban regeneration operations in recent decades, Palermo - like other Italian metropolitan cities - is affected by the little attention to the needs of citizens and more generally to urban quality and the errors of a chaotic urban growth during the last twenty years. Palermo confirms that the suburbs have grown after the II World War with different dynamics, without “quality spaces” or spaces in harmony with the urban system.

The urban evolution of the Sicilian capital can be summarized in three phases. A first period, characterized by the expansion of the population and the immigration, until approval of the General Plan (1956). This period is characterized for having emphasized the attention to the ancient north-south road, Via Maqueda (Maqueda Street) (PECORA, 1974; CALDO, 1979; GUARRASI, 2002).

The second phase, between the sixties and the eighties of last century, is characterized by the inability of the new urban development plan (operational only in the early 60's) to plan the re-location of residential and economic activities (Scrofani, 2008), proposing a residential development in the north area of the city: ZEN (northeast) and CEP (northwest), characterized by affordable housing.

Borgo Nuovo, Zen and Sperone, were the subject of the most important measures of public housing, to represent the failures of urban planning dictated by planning instruments often inadequate, contributing to the formation of a sub-urban area disconnected from the center of the city. Even today, these The "satellite districts" are characterized by the degradation of the building and social malaise.

Only during the second half of the nineties governments become aware that the disjointed expansion of city and its activities, feed inequality and popular discontent, with the risk of violent protests. Local governments, especially in the

last decade, have proposed a lot of redevelopment projects about urban regeneration, as a part of a strategic planning process of urban activities and urban transformation. In this process of remodeling of urban functions, that even involves all existing eight districts of Palermo, the suburbs are certainly the most difficult challenge to follow a balanced and polycentric urban model. In recent years it is just in the suburbs we can see a reconfiguration of the commercial offer (until now located in more central areas of the city) through the location of large shopping centers.

Starting from the idea that the commercial activities of the Large Retail Chains generally help to define the character of increasingly large territories, which are organized or reorganized under the range of several new urban functions, we tried to understand if there is a cause-effect relationship between these new locations and the improving, from the socio-economic point of view, of suburbs that house them.

On the other hand, from a first reading of this commercial phenomenon, it emerges clearly that in the whole province is just Palermo, the capital, that holds most of the sales areas of the same province. With regard to the Large-area Specialized, twelve of these are located in Palermo and in only one in the rest of the province (CIRELLI et al., 2011).

It is interesting to focus our attention on new fervor that is sweeping the city of Palermo from the commercial point of view: despite the alarming drop in consumption due to the general crisis affecting our society in the XXI century, six shopping malls in the suburbs of the city have been opened between 2009 and 2010 and six more will be operational by the end of 2012 and early 2013, with a greater impact on employment. Of these three the most important have been made in the suburbs, Brancaccio, Borgo Nuovo and ZEN.

The first “cathedral” of shopping that was inaugurated in Palermo (November 2009) is called “Forum”, located in the industrial area Brancaccio. It was realized by *Multi Development Italia* in joint venture with *Multi Corporation*

from Holland, the leading commercial developer of inner-city retail space in Europe. Forum covers an area of 65 thousand square meters and 3,500 parking spots.

The latest openings were the hypermarket “La Torre” (The Tower), near Viale Michelangelo in the suburb of Borgo Nuovo, and the store located at Fund Raffo, in the suburb of ZEN. The first has a mall with 70 shops and a very specialized area with *Ipercoop* brand, over an area of approximately 30.000 square meters and about 500 employees. Particularly important from our point of view are the interventions made in the area with several projects under an agreement with the local authority. For example was realized a green area of about 30000 square meters, equipped with areas for children and seniors.

The last and perhaps most important location of retail is due to the property company owned by known Italian entrepreneur Maurizio Zamparini. His commercial town of 300 thousand square meters called “Conca d’Oro” (Golden shell) has moved to the district ZEN an investment of about one hundred and 100 million euros and over a thousand workplaces. Inside the Center Conca d’Oro there is a hypermarket Auchan brand, 116 shops, a large shop for furniture and home (Mandi), and three large surfaces, seven restaurants and 3.000 parking spots.

This new location is important because in the same area just four years ago there was only an illegal dump and the territory was known only for crime and unemployment. Thanks to the shopping center and to entrepreneurs involved in these years were realized also a lot of facilities to serve the residents, a municipal center, municipal offices, a clinic, a library, a center for the blind and elderly, a private school, public gardens , a gym, an olympic-size swimming pool and four soccer fields.

The social and economic consequences for the neighborhood are very interesting, and this experience could be an important geo-economic laboratory to evaluate the effects of a model of redevelopment of neighborhoods through the construction of a new shopping center.

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