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Immigration, urban regeneration and contested space: the case of Piazza Garibaldi in Naples

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Abstract:

This paper will examine the relationship between immigration and urban renewal in Naples by analysing the conflicting representations and uses of a large piazza located in front of the city's central railway station. Reimaged as the 'gateway' to the city's regenerated historic centre during the 1990s, this space became a focus for public debates on security, tourism and, in particular, immigration. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and analysis of local newspaper reports, the paper will look at how the piazza has been appropriated by different immigrant groups for social and economic purposes, and, at the same time, discuss the ways in which they have been excluded from political and media discourses about a new Naples and a reinvigorated sense of municipal citizenship[1].

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[1] This paper is an abridged version of a section of my phd thesis (completed and discussed in 2001) entitled "Urban Change and Contested Space in Contemporary Naples". Piazza Garibaldi is one of three in-depth case studies. The other two are: Piazza Plebiscito, a former car park closed to traffic in 1994 and adopted as the city's new symbol, and DAMM, an occupied *centro sociale* ('social centre') situated in an abandoned neighbourhood park.

Introduction

Piazza Garibaldi, the largest piazza in Naples, a principal traffic node and the hub of the city's public transport network, is situated on the eastern edge of the *centro storico* (historic centre) in front of the squat and sprawling, modern central railway station. The space is surrounded on the three remaining sides by late nineteenth-century buildings housing a mixture of electrical and general stores, bars, restaurants and basic hotels (with the notable exception of two large, four-star hotels *Terminus* and *Cavour*).

From the early 1980s onwards, Piazza Garibaldi and its immediate surrounding area became the multifunctional space for a number of immigrant groups[2] drawn by cheap rents and hotels and by its traditional role as a meeting place and point of commercial exchange. The 'established' communities of North and West Africans first arrived in the 1980s, many of whom still reside in the area. The majority of immigrant businesses in the Vasto neighbourhood to the immediate north of the piazza are owned or run by these groups, some of which supply the mainly North African, Senegalese and Pakistani street traders who sell their wares in Piazza Garibaldi and the rest of the city. Since the mid-1990s, with the rise in immigration from Eastern Europe, the piazza has become a meeting place on Thursdays and Sundays for hundreds of mainly Poles and Ukrainians, most of whom are female and work in the domestic sector. More recently, the station area has become a centre of distribution for the Chinese clothing industry based in the towns at the foot of Vesuvius and for products imported from the Far East which has resulted in a growing influx of Chinese street traders and workers employed in nearby wholesale shops and warehouses[3].

Until less than a decade ago, Piazza Garibaldi was rarely a major source of public interest. With a new political emphasis on tourism and a heightened concern for the city's image under

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[2] Immigrants refer here to citizens arriving from outside advanced capitalist states. An immigrant is legally classified as such if he or she stays in the country for more than three months (Apap 1999: 107) and is therefore distinguishable from the foreign visitor on a tourist visa. I choose to use the terms immigration/immigrant rather than migration/migrant aware of the problematic nature of both sets of categories. While migration captures the cultural, social, economic as well as the more positive libertarian-utopian apects of transglobal movement, immigration underlines the political and legal limits in which this movement takes place and therefore seems a more appropriate critical term. Certainly, immigration implies a uni-directional experience, while it is often the case that the (im)migrant will often make (or hope to make) homeward journeys.

[3] It is almost impossible to estimate the number of immigrants in the station area. Firstly, most use Piazza Garibaldi but live elsewhere. Secondly, the piazza is divided between three districts: San Lorenzo-Vicaria, Mercato-Pendino and Poggioreale-Zona Industriale which cover a large swathe of the *centro storico* and the east end of the city. According to council records from 1999, there are less than 2,000 immigrants officially living in these districts (Comune di Napoli 1999) but this figure does not reflect the actual number of residents who might have been registered elsewhere or who did not possess documents.

the centre-left administration elected at the end of 1993, the piazza, revisioned as the gateway to a resurrected *centro storico*, would be conceived as a strategic place in urban debates. But while more monumental piazzas were redesigned during the period and deployed as symbols of a 'Neapolitan Renaissance' (Bassolino et al 1996)[4], Piazza Garibaldi instead came to embody material and social problems of the city: traffic, pollution, crime, marginalized groups such as the homeless and, in particular, immigrants.

This paper focuses on the relationship between immigration and urban and democratic renewal in Naples. It examines how and why political and public narratives about Piazza Garibaldi shifted during the 1990s and explores the multivarious ways in which immigrants have appropriated and resignified the same space. Recent studies of urban conflicts over immigration in Italy have tended to focus on Northern cities such as Turin, Milan and Florence (Masotti 1990; Foot 2000; Petrillo 2000). Immigration has traditionally not been considered a social problem in Naples. While Piazza Garibaldi was not a place of major disputes between 'indigenous' residents and immigrant groups, it was nevertheless very much the everyday site of contested representations of urban space and citizenship. By adopting a "multi-dimensional" approach (Shields 1996), which included extensive analysis of local media reports and political documents and ethnographic fieldwork in the piazza itself, the study of Piazza Garibaldi intends to highlight the contradictions and limitations surrounding the politics of public space in contemporary Naples.

1. Redefining the city. Urban renewal during the Bassolino administrations 1993 -2001

Naples has traditionally been seen as embodying the apparently anomalous status of the Italian South; a city characterized by poverty, underdevelopment and dependence on the central state, a fragmented, isolated working class, an unproductive, parasitic middle class, and a political system where personal ties and clientelism prevailed (Allum 1973, Chubb 1982)[5]. During the 1980s and early 1990s, Naples was considered by many both in Italy and

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[4] This was the case, for instance, of the neo-classical Piazza Plebiscito. Restored and permanently closed to traffic in 1994, it was officially adopted as the city's new symbol and as the setting for large public events.
[5] The traditional image of Naples as an 'aberrant' European city and Southern Italian society as static and homogenous has been severely criticized in recent years. It has been argued that a lot of studies in the past were built around a functionalist dichotomy between modernity and backwardness and were therefore more concerned with what Neapolitan society lacked in contrast to an ideal Northern Italian or European standard (Lupo 1996; Leontidou 1996; Gribaudi 1997).

abroad as an ultimate symbol of urban decay. The 1980 earthquake badly damaged the old city, much of which was already in an advanced state of disrepair, and severely disrupted the fragile informal economy upon which thousands of people depended. The flow of reconstruction funds into the city had led to extensive corruption in the public administration and collusion between politicians, entrepreneurs and organized crime. Unemployment had reached astronomical levels. The city lacked essential public services, from schools to clean tap water, and suffered from some of the most chaotic traffic and worst atmospheric pollution in Western Europe.

During the early 1990s a series of sweeping changes appeared to signal a new direction for the city. The closure of former key industries, such as the steelworks in the western suburb of Bagnoli, and the dismantlement of the post-war system of public investment in the South in 1992 shifted much of economic planning away from the central state and subsequently resulted in a growth in localized strategies aimed at encouraging home-grown medium and small businesses, and, above all, at marketing and developing the city's cultural and tourist industry (Bodo and Viesti 1997). The *Tangentopoli* anti-corruption trials in 1993 practically wiped out the local ruling class and with it the clientilistic machine which had politically and economically controlled the city in previous decades. This was shortly followed by a major institutional reform which introduced the direct election of mayors (previously elected by the council and thus vulnerable to inter-party feuding and shifting alliances) and strengthened the powers of the public administration (Vandelli 1997).

Post-1993 Naples was dominated by the figure of its new mayor: the former communist and prominent exponent of the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS)[6], Antonio Bassolino. During his first years in power, Bassolino rapidly built cross-cleavage political consensus by projecting a perception of urban change through reorientating the city's image and by reasserting legality and respect of rules in local institutions and among the public. While the administration pursued long-term objectives, such as the redevelopment of the Bagnoli steelworks as a new tourist and service district and the construction of a comprehensive underground system, much initial emphasis was placed on small-scale, low-cost interventions such as cultural events, pedestrianization schemes and the restoration of monuments (Macry 1998). These were directed at harnessing the city's cultural and architectural heritage and reimaging the immense *centro storico* as both a tourist destination and the site of civic pride.

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[6] In 1998 the PDS was renamed the Left Democrats (DS) after absorbing other minor centre-left groups.

The centre's public spaces played a pivotal role in narratives about a new Naples. The reclamation of streets and piazzas from traffic and general disorder was conceived as a way of removing the signs of past neglect and creating a sense of collective belonging among the city's inhabitants (Bassolino 1996, 1999; Governa 1997; Barracco 1999; Pasotti 2000)[7].

The importance attached to public space connected with an emergent discourse about a renewed sense of citizenship. While the prominence of this category in local debates responded to an urgent desire on the part of the Italian and European social democratic left to revise its ideological "grammar" (Zolo 1994)[8] and reflected the need to seek cross-class support for urban policies (McNeill 1999), its public use was particularly noticeable in a city which was generally considered to lack 'civicness' (Putnam 1993). The notion of 'municipal' citizenship in Naples operated at three levels. Firstly, it was employed by Bassolino (1996) to underline a new interactive relationship between local citizens and the administration and greater participation in public affairs in contrast to the clientilism and political inertia of the past. In order to enrich and broaden local democracy, the mayor sought to mobilize cultural associations and third sector organizations in urban policies. Secondly, it was used to refer to a series of collective and individual rights which, in the face of the crisis and growing uncertainty of welfare provisions, were no longer simply linked with traditional social rights such as jobs and housing but increasingly encompassed wider issues such as the quality of the environment, mobility, public access to the city's cultural heritage and guaranteeing the security of residents. Thirdly, it alluded to a rebuilding of affective ties between the city and its inhabitants. This was reflected in discourses about civic pride and a positive and enlightened local identity which rejected what the mayor considered a masochistic attachment to the dirt, disorder and illicit practices of the 'old' Naples (Bassolino 1996: 55).

While Bassolino was able to draw on the experiences of environmental and heritage groups which had campaigned in the previous decade to salvage and protect the *centro storico*[9], it

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[7] Bassolino's urban strategy based around 'good government' and "symbolic policies" (Geremicca 1997) was very successful in building personal support and in November 1997 he was re-elected with 73% of the overall vote, the highest margin in the whole of the country. Although the initial public enthusiasm waned, largely as a result of growing frustration at not seeing structural improvements (for instance in terms of employment and housing), the importance of heritage and tourism as economic resources and the revaluing of the city's 'identity' remained key areas of urban policy.

[8] Significantly, the term 'citizenship' was not publicly used or discussed by the Italian Communist Party until one of its final congresses in 1989 (Ginsborg 1998: 299)

[9] In 1992, environmental and heritage groups successfully campaigned to get rid of a car park in the central Piazza Bellini which was subsequently transformed into a proto-symbol of an enlightened public's fight against the city's neglect. In the summer prior to Bassolino's election, the courts also played their part by confiscating

was a single event – the hosting of the G7 summit in the city in July 1994 – which was to become the ideological cornerstone for urban revival and a fortuitous springboard for the new administration. For the occasion, central government released 55 billion lire (£20 million) to fund hasty adjustments to the *centro storico*. Over one hundred interventions were successfully carried out on time ranging from the restoration of buildings, fountains and statues and the repaving of streets and piazzas to the removal of almost a thousand abandoned car wrecks. The event itself also involved an unprecedented security operation. A large part of the *centro storico* was blocked off to the general public while eight thousand soldiers and military police were drafted from across Italy to patrol the streets. Demonstrations and street trading were temporarily banned, while an "Operation Tramp" transferred the homeless to makeshift hostels on the outskirts of the city. During the three-day summit, Naples enjoyed an intense moment of international publicity which, thanks to the injection of public funds and draconian security measures, played a pivotal role in transforming the city's dismal reputation.

However at the same time, the G7 paradigms of *la città bella* (the beautiful city) and *la città blindata* (the fortress city) would resonate over the following years in political and media debates about the city and its public spaces. The restructuring and rescripting of urban places involved drawing up boundaries around appropriate behaviour and definitions about an acceptable public. Discourses about decorum and heritage raised issues of access and control, and tended to privilege those people who possessed certain levels of cultural capital and who lived and acted within formal legal limits (Savino 1998)[10]. Similarly, the discourse of citizenship and the rhetoric about the all-inclusive city barely concealed the underlying tensions and dilemmas. The vast majority of residents in Naples had very little say in the reordering of the city. The exclusion from decision making was most blatant in the case of immigrants. Although many were city dwellers (and therefore '*cittadini*' in the everyday Italian sense), they were not entitled to the political rights of citizenship, and, as shall be examined below, had a very limited voice in debates over the city. Meanwhile discourses about a positive, rehabilitated sense of 'Neapolitan-ness' as a common denominator and the basis of collective identification did not only automatically exclude immigrants (who could not make any 'authentic' claims to being Neapolitan) but also marginalized those 'natives'

(and subsequently pedestrianizing) eight small piazzas in the heart of the *centro storico* which had been used as illegal car parks.

[10] For conflicts over the transformation of Piazza Plebiscito see Dines (in print).

whose social, cultural or economic practices stood in opposition to officially promoted ideas about civic pride or urban decorum.

2. From elegant forecourt to giant hole: a concise history of Piazza Garibaldi 1860 -1994

The origins of Piazza Garibaldi are directly connected with the history of the city's railway system. The hasty building of the first central station after Italian Unification on the eastern edge of the city on what was then open marshland thwarted plans for a comprehensive industrial and residential expansion of Naples (Savarese 1983). Public attention in the late nineteenth century instead turned to planning a wide boulevard link between the new railway terminal and the adminstrative centre which would allow for swift transit across the medieval city as well as improve the visual impact on visitors arriving by train. This idea was to later materialize with the massive slum clearance programme which followed the cholera epidemic of 1884 (De Seta 1981; Alisio 1984; Snowden 1995). The new thoroughfare (Corso Vittorio Emanuele) led to the demolition of the city walls and the creation, in front of the station, of a small piazza arranged around an ornamental fountain and gardens[11].

The present piazza was enlarged after the old station was pulled down at the end of the 1950s and replaced by a modern building three hundred metres further to the east at the head of the main tracks. The state-funded project in 1954 for a new terminal and piazza stemmed from a series of short-term criteria[12]: to modernize the railway service, to rejuvenate the immediate surrounding area which had been particularly damaged by Allied bombing during the Second World War, and to deal with road congestion (the old station created a bottleneck for traffic which converged on the miniscule Piazza Garibaldi). The plans were enthusiastically patronized by the right wing Lauro administration as confirmation of the city's modernization and an indirect endorsement of the uncontrolled expansion and open planning abuses which it had sanctioned during the same period. It heralded the new Piazza Garibaldi as the "grand reception to a resurrected city" (*Roma* 25/3/56). However, for all the initial fanfare and official promotion in state railway and tourist publicity (Borriello 1961), the new station and

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[11] This space was a third the size of the present piazza. Originally called Piazza dell'Unità Italiana, it was given its present name in 1914 after the fountain was replaced by a statue of Giuseppe Garibaldi.

[12] The 1939 master plan proposed to rebuild the central station two kilometres to the east next to the main north-south line which would have cleared the way for a grand avenue and a radical tertiary development of the eastern periphery. This proposal, abandoned during the reconstruction period of the 1950s, would later be considered one of the greatest missed opportunities in the city's modern history (De Luca 1987; De Lucia 1998).

layout of the piazza were not greeted with much public enthusiasm. The local press attacked the uncompromising modernist design of the station building and the disharmonious aspect of the piazza. Moreover, the giant clearing, which was now intersected by fourteen streets (six of which were principal arteries for transit across the city) only further aggravated the traffic situation. By the early 1960s, even the Lauro-owned newspaper *Roma*, once a staunch supporter, began to doubt the merits of the project and openly acknowledged a general nostalgia for the neoclassical station and its 'intimate'piazza.

The public's conception of this "'hole' of vast dimensions" (Amato 1992: 91) has traditionally been closely tied to the social and economic character of the surrounding area, popularly known simply as '*la Ferrovia*' ('the Railway'). This part of the city was historically poor. The journalist Matilde Serao, in her famous account of Naples after the cholera epidemic, declared that the station piazza had acquired a "vastness worthy of a metropolis" (1994 [1884 and 1904]) but that this functioned as a "windshield" to the deprivation in adjacent alleyways. Although general conditions would improve over the course of the century, the surrounding districts are still today among the poorest in the city centre (Mingione and Morlicchio 1993; Coppola 1997).

More than anywhere else in Naples, the station area's economy has long been based on intense commercial exchange as a result of its proximity to the city's principal road and rail system and some of its main street markets. The piazza and its immediate environs also traditionally attracted a high number of unlicensed street traders and vendors of contraband or stolen merchandise as well as a more or less stable host of swindlers (such as the infamous *paccottari*[13]), which occasionally gave rise to conflicts with local shopkeepers (Pessetti 1977). In addition to this diffuse informal economy, most of the street prostitution in Naples during the post-war period was concentrated along the pavements of Piazza Garibaldi and Corso Vittorio Emanuele.

However, it is important to point out that this unregulated dimension of Piazza Garibaldi was rarely represented in a negative way. For instance, amidst criticisms over the new layout of the piazza in the early 1960s, a long article in the city's main newspaper *il Mattino* focused

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[13] The *paccotto*, part of modern Neapolitan folklore, was the art of duping a person into believing that he or she was buying an expensive watch (or, more commonly today, a mobile phone or video camera) at an astonishingly low price. By an act of dexterity the packaged item would be swapped for an identical box containing a stone or something of similar weight. Often the *paccottaro* was, and still is, the first person one meets on exiting Naples Central Station

attention on its illicit nocturnal activities (1/11/63). The piazza at night is described as an exotic place of prostitutes, illegal taxi drivers, hotel hawkers and pizza sellers. These are revealed to be part of a functional night economy: the prostitutes are disciplined and keep within their boundaries, the '*autonoleggiatori*' offer an honest service and cost less than the official taxis, the '*affittacamere*' are the envoys of respectable local hotels, while the young dexterous pizza sellers are able to slip past the police into the station to offer travellers a taste of authentic Neapolitan pizza.

Until the late 1980s the depiction of the station area was like that of any other '*popolare*'[14] part of the city centre. Issues such as crime, the poor state of the urban fabric and rubbish were considered city-wide issues and not space specific. Rather, the piazza's promiscuous, unruly aspect was often considered part of its allure, as in the case of the above article where the empty expanse, robbed of its picturesque nineteenth-century station, is rendered 'Neapolitan' by the presence of idiosyncratic activities which elsewhere would be considered undesirable. When Piazza Garibaldi was not a source of newspaper reports about the state of the city's traffic or public transport, it was most regularly represented as a place of protest. It was the traditional starting point for political marches and a common location for spontaneous forms of direct action such as the blocking of traffic or the scaling of the Giuseppe Garibaldi monument (popularized by the organized unemployed groups during the 1970s). With the steady decline in numbers of visitors from the mid-1960s onwards, the piazza was seldom associated with tourism. Its vast dimensions were criticized as 'un-Neapolitan' and would never feature in the city's symbolic cartography (the vast majority of postcard images of the piazza date from the 1930s), while after the 1980 earthquake, many of the small hotels around the piazza were paid by the government to house homeless families.

From the middle of the 1980s the station area also began to attract various immigrant groups. Initially, this presence did not alter the general attitude to the piazza and neighbouring districts. Immigration was treated politically as a national rather than a specifically urban question, and while the local press began to identify Piazza Garibaldi from the late 1980s onwards as one of the city's principal 'immigrant spaces', reports on incidents (such as the arrest of North Africans involved in fights) and investigations (for example into the poor state of hotels) were connected with news about immigration and not about Piazza Garibaldi.

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[14] The term *popolare* in Naples refers to those parts of the old city characterized by a residential mix of working class, petite bourgeoisie and 'lumpenproletariat' (for want of a better name) inhabitants.

Indeed many articles sympathized with the plight of immigrants at the hands of unscrupulous Neapolitans.

3. New contexts

During the course of the 1990s, Piazza Garibaldi did not markedly change apart from a increased diversification of the immigrant presence. This in itself does not explain why there was such a deep (and sudden) shift in public representations of the space. Under the Bassolino administration its significance was totally transformed with the inception of an official discourse of urban renewal which would become inseparable from the inter-related issues of tourism, security and immigration. Not only was it reconceived as the portal to the *centro storico* but it became the focus of political and public debates over the control, use and shape of what was now widely perceived as a problematic public space.

3.1 Tourism

One of the principal immediate aims of the administration's strategy for urban renewal was to revive the city's moribund tourist industry. The general situation in the piazza, traversed in all directions by a continual flow of traffic and surrounded by numerous, poor quality and overcrowded hotels, was not consonant with the tourist revival to which Naples officially aspired in the 1990s. By its very nature, 'cultural' tourism targetted a more elite, higher-spending visitor who not only demanded adequate hotel facilities and efficient services but also a clean and, above all, safe environment. In contrast to 'gated' urban leisure attractions (Eisinger 2000), the 'art city' cannot fully function without eliminating risk or acquiring the approval and cooperation of its residents. Otherwise it risks becoming a destination for a different class of intrepid independent traveller, which was the reputation that Naples had acquired in the late 1980s, or a place of transit, as summed up by the commonplace: "before tourists would go straight to the port to take the ferry to Capri". Tourist regeneration in Naples under the Bassolino administration involved opening monuments, marking out itineraries (Comune di Napoli 1996) and providing safe and pleasant places where visitors were encouraged to linger. At the same time, however, this delicate process of renewal was hampered by persistent images among tourists and tour operators of Naples as a 'dangerous' and 'violent' city (Colella 1999: 37; Solima 1999: 90).

As a result of the growing economic importance of tourism, the tourist became a sort of new 'virtual' urban class which directly influenced debates about the city's transformation. If some aspect of Naples was deemed disagreeable to the imaginary tourist, then it was considered detrimental to the whole of the city. Piazza Garibaldi, conceived as the city's 'lobby', became a testing ground for first impressions of the city and was therefore commonly labelled a *'biglietto da visita'* (visiting card). This term is a highly ambivalent concept. While rhetorically used to mean a positive advertisement, *'biglietto da visita'* also refers to how a city objectively presents itself to a newcomer. In this sense one can claim that Piazza Garibaldi indeed lives up to its title: the multiple systems of commercial exchange both in the piazza and in the surrounding markets represent a typical aspect of the economic and social foundations of Neapolitan society. Therefore, the fact that it would be continually reprimanded for failing to fulfill this role reflects as much a redefinition of the city as an antipathy towards the urban flurry and certain subjects and practices in the piazza itself.

3.2 Politics of security

Although a constant motif in the history of modern urban development (Cohen 1985), the issue of law and order has increasingly dominated public debates about the city in Italy over the last decade, as it has across Europe and North America (Petrillo 2000). In the wake of economic and political restructuring[15] and a consensual shift to the right in criminological thought and social control policy[16], security has no longer been conceived principally in terms of defending the state (for instance from the threats of the mafia and terrorism) but more in terms of defending 'citizens' from everyday street crime and eliminating public perceptions of insecurity.

The issue of security has also pervaded local political agendas. Traditionally, the technical aspects of social control were the domain of the police while local administrations were

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[15] Sociologists and urban theorists have argued that increasing uncertainty and confusion in the face of economic and political restructuring has translated into a diffuse sense of insecurity (Bouchard 1997; Landuzzi 1999a; Pitch 2000). Traditional forms of "endogenous social control" (Palidda 1999: 95) such as the church, trade unions and political parties have been divested of their former public roles, or have, in the case of the welfare state, been dismantled, leaving the police forces and judiciary as the only stable, responsive institutions in the eye of public opinion.

[16] The socially and economically determined vision of crime in which offenders were to be rehabilitated back into society has been superseded by a stress on protecting the real or potential victims of crime and the categorization and control of dangerous classes and environments (Bouchard 1997). The extreme (but common)

primarily concerned with providing deterrents in the form of social welfare. As a consequence of shifting attitudes to crime prevention and following the 1993 electoral reform which increased the public visibility and accountability of the mayor and administration, local policy would concentrate on addressing and resolving public sentiments of insecurity and disorder. Antonio Bassolino regarded security a fundamental principal of municipal citizenship and a priority for a new urban left:

"Just as in the past the right to jobs, healthcare and housing were the stable conquests of a civil existence, now we need to guarantee the right to security as one of the fundamental rights of citizenship. Concepts such as security, public order and legality must enter fully into the language of the left..It's not a right-wing matter. It's a matter of democracy." (Bassolino 1996: 63)

Despite the administration's concern to tackle the social and economic causes of crime (Tedesco 2000) and his own reticence to label any particular group as criminal, Bassolino stressed that social exclusion could no longer be considered an excuse for illegal practices or delinquent behaviour (ibid.: 60)[17]. He called for a greater collaboration with police forces, arguing that mayors should play an important role because of their far-reaching "knowledge of the territory" (ibid.: 62).

As in the rest of Italy, public attention in Naples focused on strategic parts of the city perceived to be vulnerable to public disorder and crime. Nowhere was this more the case than in Piazza Garibaldi, which in the late 1990s was considered the principal "*zona di degrado*" of the city centre. The term '*degrado*' is a key term in popular and political lexicons of the contemporary Italian city. Like *biglietto da visita*, it is also extremely ambivalent. On the one hand it refers to material decay and poor environmental conditions. The area around Piazza Garibaldi had long registered the highest levels of noise and atmospheric pollution in Naples (Marciano and Saulino 1995; Macaluso 1995). At the same time, '*degrado*' alludes to a moral degeneration of city life and when this distinction between the moral, physical and social is not foregrounded, the term tends to be used to categorize (and stigmatize) certain areas. Therefore, while crime levels in the station area during the 1990s did not markedly rise and were lower than other neighbourhoods (Cantiere Sociale di Napoli 1999), a host of 'deviant

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consequence of this shift has been the rise of new ideologies, such as 'zero tolerance', premised on the need to suppress all forms of public disorder (Wacquant 1999; De Giorgi 2000; Merrifield 2000, Mitchell 2001).

[17] It is important to point out that the inescapable problem of organized crime in the city – the Camorra – was not a theme which constantly mobilized local policy and public opinion and was more often than not confronted with spectacular police and army 'blitzes' organized by the central government in emergency situations (for instance in response to particularly violent inter-clan feuds).

others' were nevertheless identified and placed under public surveillance: tramps, junkies, prostitutes, petty swindlers, alcoholics and, above all, immigrants.

3.3 Immigration

The 1990s also saw a marked shift in debates and definitions about immigration. In contrast to the general public indifference to the phenomena for most of the 1980s, during the following decade, immigration was increasingly conceived politically and publicly as a social problem that needed to be regulated[18]. Legislation after 1990 was primarily concerned with restricting entry and combating irregular immigration in order to bring Italy into line with European Community directives on Schengen (Apap 1999; Sciortino 1999). Social and civil measures were, in comparison, very limited. The present Turco-Napolitano law passed by the centre-left government in 1998 sets out a series of immigrant rights but these are overshadowed by mechanisms to fight 'illegal' immigration such as expulsions and detention centres. Many of the more progressive proposals of the original bill (including, significantly, the right to vote in administrative elections) were removed when the law was rushed in following public alarm surrounding a series of crimes involving immigrants during the summer of 1997 (Dal Lago 1999: 27)[19].

More than any other group, immigrants were a target of law and order offensives in cities. The conspicuous concentration of immigrants in particular parts of cities (such as station areas), coupled with the unclear or misunderstood nature of their relationship with urban space, has often led to these areas being labelled as "dangerous" or "at risk" (Foot 2000). It is the tension between this physical presence and social distance which renders the immigrant in the eyes of the public "an "unknown" subject who is dispossessed of all *spatial legitimacy*." (Landuzzi 1999b: 93 author's italics). However, the negative reception and representation of immigrants cannot be solely explained in terms of insecurity or simple prejudice. Immigrants are incessantly constructed as the other by a situation of political-legal limbo which excludes them not just from the rights enjoyed by Italians, but from hegemonic notions of national and

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[18] Comparative analyses have shown that while in 1988 only 34% of Italians thought there were too many immigrants, this had shot up to 64% in 1993, one of the highest rates in Europe (Dal Lago 1999: 26).
[19] The 'Bossi-Fini' bill of the Berlusconi government currently being discussed in parliament, proposes the most restrictive measures to date with regards to expulsion and detention and at the same time intends to limit a series of rights provided in previous legislation such as family reunification. Moreover, it plans to link the issuing of resident permits to the possession of employment contracts.

local 'identity' (Mezzadra 2001; Rigo 2002)[20]. This positioning of immigrants on the margins of society is reaffirmed by the political and popular use of terms such as *'extracomunitario'* (literally 'non-EC' but conceived as 'from outside advanced capitalist geo-political space'[21]) and '*clandestino*' (irregular immigrant).

Naples has experienced immigration from non-Western countries since the 1960s (with the arrival of small groups of Eritreans and Moroccan itinerants) but it was not until the 1980s that it became a sizeable, publicly recognized phenomenon (Calvanese and Pugliese 1991). According to statistics for the end of 1997, there were approximately 17,500 regular immigrants in the city. To this figure must be added approximately 10,000 individuals who applied for documents during the most recent amnesty (De Filippo 1999). These figures are guided estimates and do not account for irregulars; in other words, new arrivals or those whose documents have expired. Like the rest of Italy, immigration in the city is characterized by numerous different national groups[22].

It is very difficult for immigrants to find regular employment in Naples. Work in the industrial or building sector is highly precarious and badly paid, and mostly located to the north of Naples and around the Vesuvian towns (Amato 2000). Significantly, almost seventy per cent of immigrants, including the most 'stable' communities (Sri Lankan, Phillipine, Cape Verdean and Somalian) are employed in the domestic sector. The other principle group, smaller but much more visible, is engaged in informal commercial activities such as street trading. The lower cost of living and housing means that for many immigrants, Naples is an ideal 'port of call' prior to onward migration to the north of Italy and the rest of Europe and acts as a suitable base for those employed in seasonal agricultural work in the South of Italy.

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[20] Immigrants are subjected to a continual negotiation of status with the Italian state. A regular immigrant by law must posses a permit to stay which needs to be continually renewed every one to four years. After five years continual residence in Italy an immigrant may apply for a *'carta di soggiorno'* which endows a greater degree of legal stability and is only removed in the event of conviction for serious crime. The application for Italian citizenship is an extremely drawn-out process and was made more difficult to acquire after legislation in 1992 which limited the principle of *ius soli* (Sciortino 1999).

[21] The term *'extracomunitario'* is directly constituted by the discriminatory context of transnational movement, given that it entered into popular usage at the same time as Italy began to negotiate its traumatic passage into Schengen; an agreement which would open the internal borders with fellow EC member states on the proviso that it sealed its external borders.

[22] The countries of origin of the 'official' population according to most recent municipal records (November 2000) include (in descending order of numbers): Sri Lanka, The Philippines, Cape Verde Islands, Dominican Republic, Somalia, Tunisia, Peru, Albania, China, Algeria, Poland, Senegal, Ethiopia, Brazil, Ex-Yugoslavia (quoted in Caponio 2002).

There is a general tendency, both nationally and locally, to view Naples as a more open and tolerant city for immigrants. This image is only partially true. Immigrants do indeed appear to be more accepted and have managed to insert themselves into the local informal economy. The Neapolitan axiom "*l'arte d'arrangiarsi*" – the art of getting by in the face of adversity – is often attributed to the practical experiences of the city's new residents as evidence of their 'assimilation' into a distinct urban way of life. However, although immigrants are perhaps more readily employed by locals, they usually earn extremely low wages and do not enjoy any form of job security (for instance, they account for a high proportion of fatal injuries in the building trade). Moreover, in terms of social services and support for immigrants, Naples does not possess the extensive voluntary and local government networks of some northern Italian cities. The administration's interventions were limited to providing information and funding 'inter-cultural' education programmes (Caponio 2002). The city has acquired a reputation for political mobilization around the issue of immigrant rights, exacerbated by the particularly inefficent police and state bureaucracies, but these have largely been organized by non-governmental organziations and extraparliamentary political groups. Meanwhile, local newspapers continue to regard racism (perceived as physical attacks on immigrants) as a problem of elsewhere. Yet, 'common sense' associations between immigrants and urban decline have been as frequent in public debates in Naples as in the rest of Italy. As non-Neapolitans and non-voters, immigrants (unlike tourists) were not perceived as beneficiaries of urban regeneration. The immigrant had to earn his or her place in this narrative through good behaviour and authentic cultural 'beingness'.

4. The management and representation of Piazza Garibaldi as a problematic space

The G7 summit in July 1994 played a pivotal role in redefining Piazza Garibaldi as a key public space in the city. It also had the catalytic effect of merging debates about regeneration, tourism, security and immigration and projecting them onto a particular space. The piazza was one of the strategic 'nodes' during the summit: it greeted participants and journalists who arrived by train and, more importantly, it lay on the route of the motorcade which transported international statesmen and delegates from the city airport to their hotels on the seafront. Three billion lire were spent on cleaning the piazza and surrounding buildings, repaving the road surface and laying out new green areas. The occasion also involved stringent security arrangements. A municipal decree which temporarily banned authorized and unlicensed street

traders from the city centre focused attention on the station area. The local prefect, who presided over preparations alongside the city council, justified the measure not simply on the grounds of public order but because immigrants involved in such activities "presented a distorted image of Naples" (*il Mattino* 5/5/94). In other words, despite the fact that Neapolitan hawkers often featured on postcards of 'real life' Naples, this visible presence of immigrants threatened the urban décor crafted for the event. The local media's depiction of a "besieged" Piazza Garibaldi (*la Repubblica* 21-22/6/94) was confirmed by the administration. The Head of Commerce (aka 'Assessor for Normality') exclaimed:

"This is the period when the city is most choked up with blacks, but in a few weeks time they will disperse to work in the countryside. In the meantime, however, they will all have to move towards the periphery or neighbouring towns."

As a counter measure, the council promised to create three 'ethnic suk' after the summit (but away from Piazza Garibaldi), on the condition that immigrants sell 'authentic' products from their countries of origin and that the markets become an attraction for tourists and Neapolitans. As with the city's neglected monuments and open spaces, immigrants needed to be '*rivalorizzati*' (thier potential value harnessed). But after the hype of the summit subsided, and despite drawing up a deadline for applications for licences, these plans were shelved.

The empty piazza embodied most acutely the complimentary paradigmatic visions of the 'G7 city': *la città bella* (traffic and immigrant free) and *la città blindata* (militarily guarded). The failure of the event to permanently change the face of Piazza Garibaldi and institute order was measured in the press by the speed with which it returned to 'normal'. Instead, the summit instigated a more or less permanent monitoring of the piazza and its problems. From this point, the immigrant presence and the piazza's transformation were to become inseparable issues.

Over the following years various schemes were drawn up to improve the piazza's appearance including a plan to reopen a system of subways which would have provided much needed public facilities and an official place for street traders to sell their wares away from the pavements. However beyond reorganizing the street layout, car parks and waiting areas for buses, little was done. Hope has recently switched to large-scale infrastructural projects, namely the planned refurbishment of the central station along the lines of Roma Termini (renovated for the 2000 Jubilee celebrations) and the construction of a new metro line which commenced in 2001 and has closed off the central part of the piazza.

Attempts and failures to redesign the piazza were overshadowed by calls for greater controls in the area. During the second half of the 1990s, political decisions regarding Piazza Garibaldi were greatly influenced by a vocal group of local hoteliers, shopkeepers, business associations and, to a lesser extent, local district councillors. A frequent figure to intervene in debates was Mario Pagliari, until 1999 the owner of the four-star Hotel Terminus in Piazza Garibaldi and President of the Association of Hoteliers in Naples. For instance, in a letter addressed to the city's mayor in 1998 published on the front page of the local section of *la Repubblica* (17/5/98), Pagliari complained that police had been switched from Piazza Garibaldi to patrol more monumental parts of the *centro storico* during the city's annual cultural heritage festival "*Maggio dei Monumenti*". Given the piazza's importance for tourism, he urged that it receive equal attention. Bassolino's rejoinder in the same paper two days later laid down the administration's position on the piazza. He recognized the pressing issue of urban security in the area (among the marginal groups he singled out '*clandestini*' as a physiognomically identifiable condition and as a potential source of crime) and promised to raise the issue at his impending meeting with the city's police forces. However, more law and order was not enough. Rather, the public significance and function of the space had to be transformed:

"Piazza Garibaldi in the heads of Neapolitans remains that muddle of things, a confusing and perhaps dangerous place, where one goes only when it is really necessary and passes by in a great hurry. Our challenge..before everything else is to change this very idea that Neapolitans have about this piazza which must remain *popolare* [see footnote 14], a space of transit and a meeting place, but at the same time it must become a lively and welcoming piazza. This is because, as Pagliari rightly points out, there is a considerable number of hotel beds in the surrounding area. The revaluing of Piazza Garibaldi is a very important goal for the whole city. Let's work together." (19/5/98)

Bassolino argues that the autochthonous (Neapolitan) view of the piazza as a disordered space of transit needs to be changed if it is to live up to its tourist potential. "Let's work together" is therefore an invitation to Pagliari and Neapolitans but one which does not automatically extend to immigrants who cannot legitimately define the conditions of a "lively and welcoming piazza". The debate over the Piazza Garibaldi is therefore set by the hotelier and expanded by the mayor. On the very same day, the administration announced plans to transfer buses from under Hotel Cavour which had waged a two-year campaign to get them removed. *La Repubblica* interviewed the proprietor who affirmed the latent link with immigrants: "we've got nothing against the *extracomunitari*..if only their presence didn't provoke such noticeable disorder" (19/5/98). Traffic and immigrants were therefore part of the same overall problem.

Self-proclaimed experts or 'moral entrepreneurs'[23] played an important role in defining what was at stake in Piazza Garibaldi and in doing so were able to forge a general consensus of opinion that it was at risk and required greater attention. The '*extracomunitario*' was explicitly singled out as a non-citizen whose presence had transformed the very meaning of the piazza. The administration's actions were subsequently conducted within this consensual frame, both on the intermittent occasions when it pressed for a greater police presence or suppressed informal economic activities such as street trading, and in the rare moments it involved immigrant representatives in local urban renewal schemes, such as the setting up of a small 'multi-ethnic' market in a side street[24]. Despite isolated attempts at confronting a hostile 'public', the general political slant did not contest, but rather often confirmed, the widely held view that immigrants posed a (or *the*) problem for a permanent improvement of the piazza.

The city's mainstream press, generally supportive of the Bassolino administration, played a fundamental role in formulating dominant representations of Piazza Garibaldi as well as transmitting the the definitions of public figures. After the G7 summit the piazza became a constant topic of news[25]. A set of common paradigms – the piazza as a space of urban decay, invaded by outsiders, an obstacle to tourism, crime-infested and dangerous – were conveyed through a 'public idiom' replete with metaphors, allusions and simple stereotypes[26]. It would be distinguished from the rest of the city centre by resorting to racial imagery: "miniature Africa" (*la Repubblica* 27/10/96), "the world of Iusuf" (*la Repubblica* 19/5/98), "multiracial chaos" (*la Repubblica* 20/5/98), "frontier zone swarming with people of every race" (*il Mattino* 12/9/99), "the dirty face of Naples" (*il Mattino* 3/5/00) and "African bidonville" (*Corriere del Mezzogiorno* 3/5/2000). Reports often took the form of personalized accounts in which the journalist-explorer would speak on behalf of Neapolitans. On occasions parody and sarcasm were deployed to heighten the drama:

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[23] Alessandro Dal Lago defines moral entrepreneurs as "a vanguard which assumes the task of rousing a passive and ignorant public opinion" (1999: 64).

[24] As with the 1994 plan, the conditions were a regular permit to stay and the commitment to trading 'indigenous' products which were compatible with tourism.

[25] For instance, during the second half of 1999, over 90% of articles about immigration in *il Mattino* concerned the station area (this is excluding the coverage of the aftermath of the arson attacks on Roma camps in the northern suburb of Scampia in June). Conversely, almost 70% of reports regarding Piazza Garibaldi over the same period referred in some way to immigrants, even if the central question was the new parking arrangements or changes to the bus services.

[26] Roger Fowler defines 'public idiom' as "the negotiation of a style with which targetted readers feel comfortable, and which allows writers [a] band of flexibility..The familiarity of a habitual style has ideological consequences: it allows the unnoticed expression of familiar thoughts. The establishment of this 'normal' style is fundamental to the building of an assumption of consensus" (Fowler 1991: 48).

"Greetings from the casbah! No this isn't the Medina of Tunis or the market in Algiers but Piazza Garibaldi, one of the postcards of Naples reduced to a wretched fair of street stalls. It's easy to imagine what sort of impression this had on the middle-aged Austrian tourist and his buxom wife who arrived yesterday with the overnight train." (*il Mattino* 15/9/99)

There were few voices against the tide of opinion. The catholic charitable organization, Caritas, which continues to run a drop-in centre for Italian homeless in the central station (immigrants are able to use canteen facilities in the city centre), hardly ever entered into discussions. The CGIL trade union, whose regional headquarters is located in a side street off the piazza, was accorded limited space in media debates about the piazza. Pleas for sensitive social policies and fairer treatment of immigrants nevertheless coincided with calls for stricter police controls, crime prevention measures and public-private investments to encourage the economic revival of the area[27]. On rare occasions, Piazza Garibaldi would be used by the local press to represent the 'experience' of immigration (in other words what they ate, wore or sold and what they thought about new legislation). Immigrants, themselves, were typically at the mercy of the journalist's discretion. After being misquoted in an interview over financial aid given to fellow nationals, the president of the Senegalese Association decided to write a letter of complaint to *la Repubblica*:

"I ask you to rectify the way in which you described the position of our association which firmly rejects all illicit activities as well as every racist attempt to marginalize one of the communities which is collaborating most with our city to create a peaceful and tolerant multi-ethnic society." (letter dated 19/5/00, copy given to me in interview)

This letter was not published nor was there any form of public or private response from the journalist concerned. In spite of his references to "our city" (ironically the Senegalese Association is based next door to the Hotel Terminus), the president had no public means of contesting the way in which his words were interpreted.

The local media did not conspire to silence the voices of immigrants: they simply were not included in the construction of consensual representations of Piazza Garibaldi. The press worked through and built on the primary definitions of politicians, local public figures and the police. Dominant meanings commanded the field of signification relatively unchallenged

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[27] The spokesperson in these cases was the regional leader of the CGIL and not the head of its immigration service.

(Hall et al. 1978: 69). Because the situation in Piazza Garibaldi was already considered dramatic, there was little concern for setting up alternative viewpoints. Immigrants were therefore unable to balance primary definitions, even though they may have possessed a deeper knowledge or could have offered a different opinion on the piazza. As non-citizens, they forfeited their "rights of reply" (ibid.). Just as there were no serious attempts in the local press to account for immigrant experiences, there was very little interest to understand the contextual reasons for their presence in the piazza. For instance, in March 2000, two Polish males died inside the station after the parked railway carriage they were sleeping in caught fire. The tragedy was blamed on a lit cigarette and the drunken state of the two men. During the media frenzy that followed not one of the local centre-left newspapers dealt with the severe housing crisis facing immigrants. Rather, the ultimate 'victim' of Piazza Garibaldi was the image of Naples.

5. Mapping immigrant experiences of Piazza Garibaldi

Fieldwork consisting of interviews and 'guided visits' to the piazza with immigrants as well as periods of observation was conducted in and around Piazza Garibaldi between 1999 and 2000. The pretext of this research was not to demonstrate the unmediated 'real' nature of the piazza or to provide a definitive account but to examine uses of the piazza and open up (excluded) points of view[28].

The principal informants were West African (Senegalese and Guinean), Pakistani, Polish and Ukrainian and were mostly aged between 25 and 40 years old. All Africans and Asians met were male, while Poles and Ukrainians were predominantly female. Many of the East European domestic workers met in the piazza were irregulars who were employed *'al nero'* (unofficial, cash in hand work) and were therefore not in a postion to regularize their position. The Pakistanis and the Guinean had applied for documents and were awaiting the outcome, while the majority of Senegalese, having been in Naples for longer periods (between five and ten years) possessed permits to stay or *'carte di soggiorno'* (see footnote 20). Each individual had a different migrancy project. Some intended to eventually return home, others planned to settle in Italy. Many of the African and Pakistani immigrants who were irregular or who had

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[28] The only previous studies of the immigrant presence in the piazza – two short accounts of street traders by local geographer Fabio Amato (1992, 1997) – were used as historical reference points and, where appropriate, were compared with reserch findings.

only lived in Naples hoped to move to the North to look for more stable forms of employment, while most of those who had spent time in the North, said that they preferred Naples because it was less racist and more relaxed, despite the precarious economic situation and the hectic nature of everyday life.

Despite the typical media image of the area as a chaotic mass of '*clandestini*', Piazza Garibaldi is very much a structured space that possesses its own order. The immigrant presence changes with the time of day and year. None of my informants had anything to do with the space at night. During August, the piazza is much emptier. Domestic workers are laid-off by their employees and return home, while many street traders sell on beaches or at inland festas or go to work on the tomato harvest. West Africans and Asians (Chinese and Pakistani) are concentrated on the northern side of the piazza and in the streets of Vasto, while East Europeans tend to stick to the southern side when they visit the area during their free time on Thursday afternoons and Sundays. North Africans (principally Algerians and Tunisians) are perhaps the most spatially dispersed although they are more present on the northern side[29]. This 'ethnic-national spread' is reflected by the clientele of bars. A bar on corner of Piazza Principe Umberto has become a haunt for Algerians, the bars along the north side of Piazza Garibaldi are frequented by West Africans and immigrant street traders, while the pizzerias and bars on the south side are meeting places for Poles. The area in front of the station is a meeting point for East Europeans, primarily Ukrainians but also Poles, Moldovans and Romanians. The market in La Duchesca on the west side of the piazza is a sort of interstice where East Europeans, North and West Africans all go to buy clothes and shoes. In the streets to the west and north of this area are concentrated most of the Chinese-owned wholesale shops (usually distinguishable by the red lanterns hanging outside) which sell clothes produced in local factories or cheap electrical and household items such as alarm clocks and radios imported from China.

Immigrants possess multiple perceptions of 'Piazza Garibaldi'. For West Africans, for example, the name encompasses the streets of Vasto where their economy and meeting places are situated. As a transport hub 'Piazza Garibaldi' is considered by many users as the centre of Naples. For Poles and Ukrainians who work in private houses dispersed over a wide geographical area, it is their main contact with the city centre. Young Polish domestic workers

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[29] Amato noted in 1997: "The Maghrebis are the ones who use the piazza the most: they meet in couples or in groups and discuss animatedly leaning on the steps of shops in the streets on the northern side of the piazza." (F. Amato 1997: 22).

interviewed in a middle class residential suburb referred to the piazza as *'Il centro storico'*. This was the only part of the city centre which they would regularly visit in order to send parcels home or catch the coach to Poland. For them it represented the quintessential Neapolitan space and claimed to be put off by the chaos and the incomprehensible dialect.

Piazza Garibaldi is also a multifunctional space. As well as a recreational place of meetings, the piazza is a link with countries of origin. Polish and Moroccan coach lines and travel agencies operate in and around the piazza (although in 2001 most coaches were moved to Bagnoli after work began on the new underground line). Until the beginning of 2000, an unofficial postal service with the Ukraine and Poland was run on Sunday mornings by an assortment of vans parked in the centre of the piazza. Despite accusations in the local media that this was a cover for the Russian and Albanian mafia, all those asked said that they often used the service. A middle-aged Polish male explained that it was quicker and cheaper than the Italian post. Parcels and money would arrive two days later on the doorstep in Poland. The man had never experienced any problems; he knew the driver and therefore trusted him. Following their removal at the start of 2000, the vans switched to an area in front of Campi Flegrei, Naples' second railway station on the west side of the city, but shortly afterwards reappeared, albeit in fewer numbers, behind Hotel Terminus on the south-east corner of Piazza Garibaldi.

The station area is also a residential space due to the cheaper rents and the presence of 'communities' which have evolved over two decades. Some of the informants lived in the immediate vicinity although most of those who had more stable forms of income or who lived with Neapolitans had moved out of the area. Certain hotels in Vasto had an 'ethnic' base. For instance, hotels Mignon and Dora were both predominantly patronized by Senegalese while Hotel Charlie was the preferred base for Algerian traders when they came to the area to buy goods.

Piazza Garibaldi's principal function is as an economic space. Even for the East Europeans, the piazza is a place where domestic jobs are advertised, bought and sold. In between the periodic clampdowns, the pavements on the northern edge of the piazza were lined with street traders. Although not strictly adhered to, there was a recognized, general 'ethnic' division of work: Pakistanis would sell cheap *bijouterie* (either bought from Vasto, the traditional centre of jewellery wholesalers in Naples, or imported directly from Pakistan), Chinese traded in

electronic gadgetry or clothing items, a number of North Africans hawked casettes of Arabic music (Amato 1992 and 1997), while West Africans often "specialized" (as one Senegalese put it) in counterfeit goods such as caps, belts and CDs produced by Neapolitans. The majority of stalls in the new 'multi-ethnic' market were run by West Africans and offered a variety of items ranging from green tea and peanut butter to hair gel and bootleg copies of Senegalese soap operas.

As well as the centre of 'ethnic businesses' such as North and West African restaurants and clubs, grocery stores, halal butchers and hairdressers, the Vasto neighbourhood is the heart of a wholesale economy which has developed around immigrants[30]. This area attracts buyers from across Italy (Senegalese street traders interviewed ten years ago in Catania referred to their trips to Naples to purchase wares (Scidà and Pollini 1993: 164)) and from abroad, for instance Marseilles or Algiers (Coppola and Cattedra 1998), and even as far afield as Dakar and Lagos. Many wholesalers have employed immigrant assistants in order to maximise sales. Some immigrants have opened their own shops such as two Senegalese-run stores specializing in African and Asian crafts. From the end of the 1990s there had been a downturn in trade, partly due to increased police controls deterring immigrants away and partly because of Rome establishing itself as a new commercial centre, especially in the wake of an influx of Chinese wholesalers.

The piazza is also the setting for ingenious entrepreneurial ventures. For instance, Madji, a Pakistani who was still awaiting regularization, would earn about 100,000 lire (just over £30) by buying up an international phone line on his mobile phone for a day which he would then proceed to sell to immigrants at 1,000 lire a minute. Elsewhere, a Pole would set up a portable newspaper and magazine stand in front of the station on Sundays, which he would stock up on weekly visits to Poland.

Nearly all those workers who had been in Naples for a few years stressed the important contribution that immigrants had made to the local and national economy. Petra, a Pole, argued that the market in La Duchesca depended on Polish and other immigrant clients:

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[30] According to the head of the council department for commerce, there were approximately sixty registered immigrant businesses centred around Vasto and the northern edge of Piazza Garibaldi at the beginning of 2000 (interview with Raffaele Tecce 2/6/00).

"They live off our money. Many Poles come here because it is cheap and they buy stuff which many Italians would never buy."

Indeed, Neapolitan street hawkers and market stall holders have adapted themselves to a new clientele. Some have learnt basic Polish and Russian, while most recently a Neapolitan has started selling (fake) replica Senegal football shirts following the African nation's recent success and forthcoming World Cup appearance.

At a more general level, there is a noticeable degree of interaction with Neapolitans and an appropriation of local routines. Diop (Senegalese) who had worked for four years in the Italian warehouses on the north side of Piazza Garibaldi appeared to know everybody in Vasto. The level of contact is linked to the length of time spent in the area. Both Madji and Ousmanne (Guinean), who had been in Naples for two and five years respectively, did not know any locals in the piazza although they were acquainted with the various immigrant circuits. In the case of East European women, on the other hand, the amount of time spent in the city and legal status were not criteria for contact with locals. Their meetings on the station forecourt attract an entourage of middle-aged Neapolitan men (as well as North Africans) and in some cases have led to long-term relationships and marriages. Many immigrants have picked up Neapolitan habits and expressions, including those who speak little Italian. For instance, Madji greeted other immigrants and clients with the dialect salute '*ué guaglio!*', while all those who invited me for coffee left 100 lire tips on the bar counter. Piazza Garibaldi has also been adopted by immigrants as their principal space of protest. Like the *disoccupati organizzati* and other social groups, demonstrations for legal rights start or are carried out by the Garibaldi monument[31].

The 'poly-national' presence in the piazza is simultaneously marked by interconnectedness, juxtapositions and distance. While street traders of different nationalities shared the same strip of pavement and would take in turns to watch out for municipal police, in contrast, there was little apparent contact between groups on the two opposite sides of the piazza (although more Poles ventured north to visit the bars and shops than their West African counterparts whose day-to-day existence was centred on Vasto). Some informants referred to frictions between different groups. For instance, over half the Poles met complained that Ukrainians were cutting the prices in the domestic sector.

Most informants were generally aware about public images of Piazza Garibaldi. All of the informants who touched on the subject were indignant about being labelled criminals. The real culprits were Neapolitans (or Algerians and Tunisians according to some of the Senegalese and Pakistanis, or Nigerians according to Tunisians). During the day, for those who regularly frequented it, the piazza was considered "an easygoing place". There were certain areas where one needed to be more vigilant, in particular the Duchesca market. Madji recounted the story of a fellow Pakistani who would come to Piazza Garibaldi when he needed the phone service but who refused to meet on the northern side because he had been pickpocketed on more than one occasion. For all the street traders the principal wish was to work in peace. Senegalese shop assistants in Vasto complained that police controls damaged the trade and the general economy of the area. One compared the spate of controls in 2000 with the G7 summit; a memorable moment when immigrants had to lie low:

"Throughout that month nobody set their stall up and nobody worked. It was real bad luck for all immigrants living in Naples. Those who had saved a bit of money got by. Others left and travelled to other cities."

The extraordinary financial and security measures taken to militarize the city during the G7 summit could never be maintained in ordinary circumstances. A common theme among both immigrant informants and residents interviewed in the local press was that the police knew what was happening (a police station is actually located on the west side of the piazza) but they would not intervene. Controls in the piazza were usually characterized by what Salvatore Pallida terms the "rules of disorder"[32]. Nevertheless, in the second half of the 1990s, immigrants, especially street traders, were increasingly on the receiving end of law and order initiatives directly targetted at them *in Piazza Garibaldi*. The conflicts over the piazza were less spectacular than the night patrols and torch processions organized by resident committees in northern cities (Foot 2000; Sebastiani 2001). However the focus on immigration as a cause of the area's decline was particularly conspicuous in a city which had traditionally tolerated a pervasive presence of illegal, informal and irregular activities.

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[31] Although many of the early protests were coordinated by Neapolitan political groups, some demonstrations are now independently organized. Groups involved in protests include West Africans, Pakistanis and North Africans. On no occasion in the last five years have East Europeans or Chinese been involved.

End

This detailed description of Piazza Garibaldi underlines the complex nature of 'immigrant space'. Dominant meanings about the piazza as an urban gateway or as a dangerous place were internalized and reinterpreted, spatial boundaries and itineraries were (continually) redrawn through a variety of divergent relationships with the station area. It is this unmediated diversity of the piazza which is considered by many commentators to be a central virtue of 'democratic' public space (Berman 1986; Walzer 1986; Mitchell 1995; Amin 2000). Indeed, in many ways, it is as a result of the immigrants' multiple appropriations of the space that the vast, traffic-congested "hole of vast dimensions" is rendered a 'piazza'. This is not simply the entrance to the *centro storico* but an opening to the diverse and alternative worlds which constitute the increasingly heterogeneous urban experience of Naples.

However, there are two 'public spaces' to Piazza Garibaldi: that of the actual piazza and that of the discursive realm of public debates. Immigrants' definitions of the piazza are excluded from this public sphere, despite the fact that they are among its principal users. The complexities of the piazza are simplified in official debates which are imbued with stereotypes linking immigrants with the area's problems. As "unknown subjects" and, by legal and political definition, non-citizens, immigrants are represented as an 'illegitimate' public. They are not conceived as private citizens who *voluntarily* associate in public (Mitchell 1995), but are instead usually described as an incoherent mass of foreigners who physically take over the space. Activities normally connected with the private space of the home but which are carried out publicly in the piazza – such as sleeping, drinking alcohol or eating dinner – are often highlighted by journalists to accentuate the sense of disorder and to further delegitimate the immigrant presence.

While immigrants have continued, regardless, to reappropriate and renegotiate urban space in Naples, they have occasionally made themselves publicly heard through collective action and protest. It is in the material realm of public space that other voices "may arise and contest issues of citizenship and democracy" (Mitchell 1995: 117). It is significant that political struggles should take place, or at least begin, in Piazza Garibaldi. Although action is primarily concerned with explicitly legal issues, such as demanding the release of blocked documents,

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[32] "Police action is limited to ensuring that behaviour and activities respect the "rules of disorder"; that they do not provoke too many hostile reactions among the public or the excessive expansion of illegality." (Pallida 1999: 90).

these moments offer the chance to assert their right to the city and to publicly project alternative definitions of immigration.

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