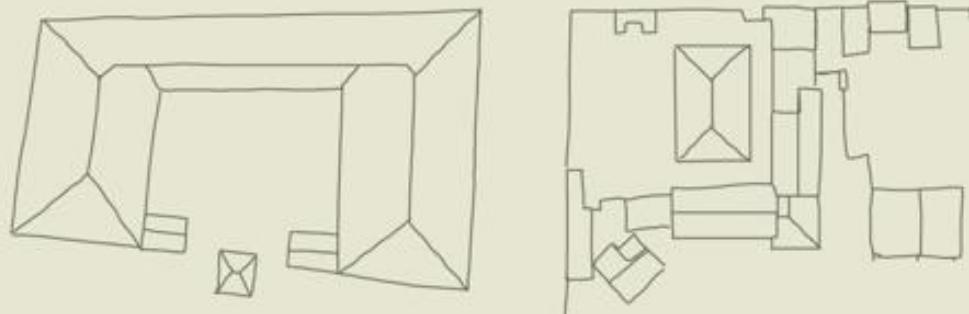
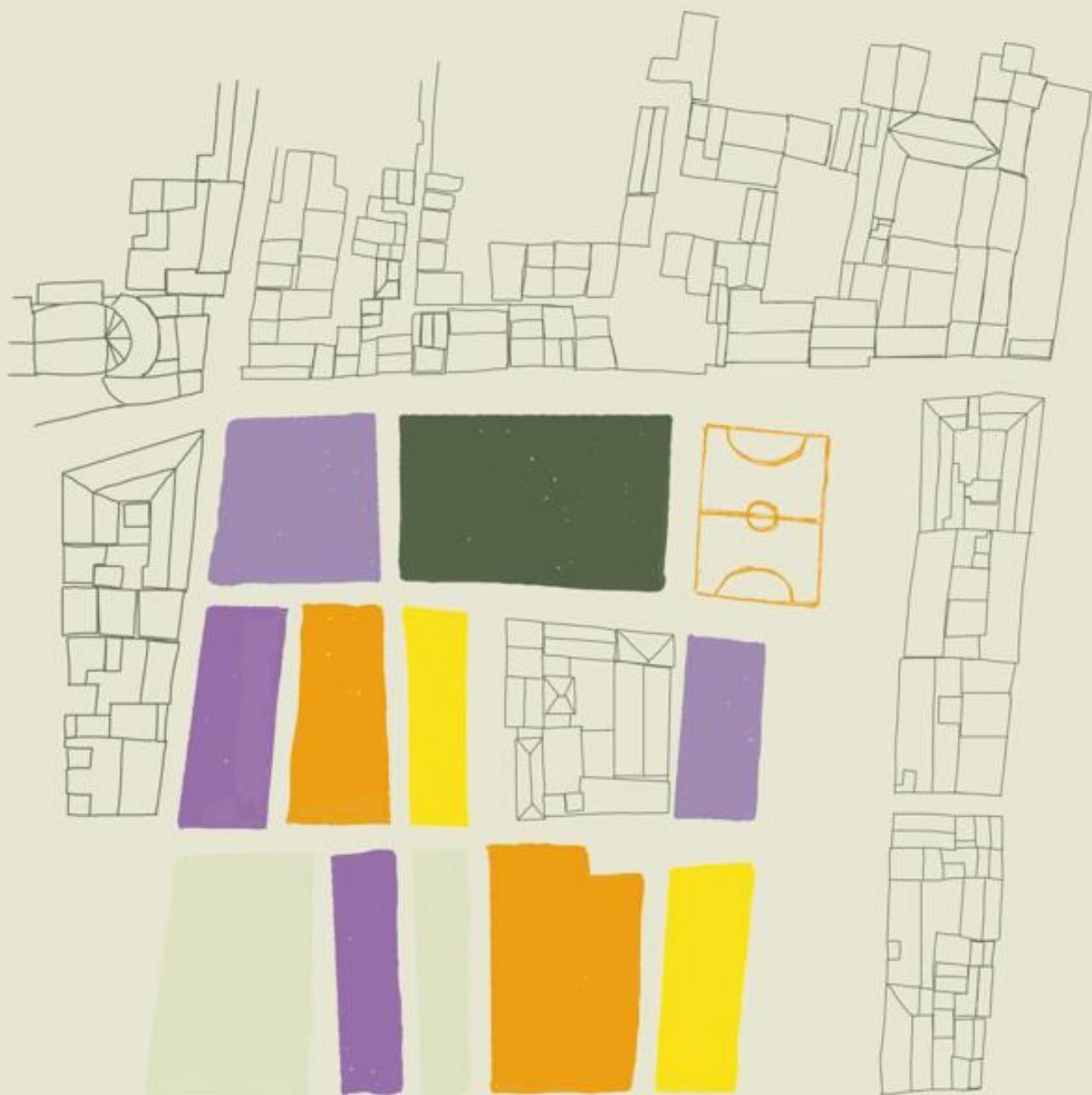


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31. MAY 2022 5-7 pm  
1. JUNE 2022 5-7 pm  
guided presentations

PIAZZA MAGiONE, CHiESA SS EUNO E GiULiANO, KALSA, PALERMO

**URBANISM ACROSS GEOGRAPHIES  
LAND(SCAPE)/SPACE  
SITE IMMERSION**

CRITICAL URBANISM  
DEPARTMENT OF URBAN STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF BASEL, SWITZERLAND

SPRING 2022  
PALERMO, SICILY

This collective publication documents the reflections, experiences, methodologies and themes mobilized by student participants and our local collaborators in the Spring 2022 Urbanism Across Geographies track at the Critical Urbanism program in the University of Basel.

Our block course focuses on land(scape) and (urban) space as both objects of investigation and as sites of intervention—the very medium within which movement takes place and through which power and resistance are represented and exerted. The course examines the tensions linking the urban spaces, territories, infrastructures and practices engaged with at a local level with broader geopolitical scales and dimensions, paying particular attention to the historical colonial and imperial legacies, and trans-local processes that cross the imagined ‘Global North’ and ‘Global South’ divide. In doing so, the course explores how cities and territories are formed and their entanglement in the global systems of movement, circulation, accumulation, and displacement that produce global conflict.

Within this conceptual framework, we engage with—and seek to (un)learn and challenge—sites that interrogate notions of layered state power, borders, violence, territorialisms, the militarization of space, and the movement of people, ideas, goods identities, and solidarities. Taking place alongside site immersions in Palermo, Sicily in the Spring 2022 semester, our sessions are designed to complement the field experiences and site visits, and involve assigned readings, collective discussions, and individual presentations that focus on both written and visual engagements with the course materials and topic.

### **Acknowledgments**

This course, our experiences and collective learning would not have been possible without the generosity in thought and resources of friends, colleagues, collaborators, local practitioners and the publics of Palermo and its surrounding areas. They include, but are not limited to: Sergio Sanna, Valentina Sansone, Roberto Albergoni and Associazione Meno, MARGINAL Studios, Addiopizzo, Iain Chambers, Francesco Montagnani, Alessandra Di Maio, Mario Zito and the Comune di Palermo.



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# COLLECTIVE ROUNDTABLE

**SCM:** Let's try an exercise. Writing is an isolating process—it demands distance between us and our reader. Let us try to undo the 1:1 relation that comes with writing by collecting our reflections together. Creating a common and dynamic writing experience, in real time, that documents both our reflections, insights and thinking process.

I'll get us started: have held a course in Palermo during Manifesta12 in 2018 and every year since. The aim has been to work from the unique political and territorial positionality of this city, and use it as a lens to examine possibilities of decolonial knowledge production, practices of unlearning, and undoing the 'Global North' and 'Global South' divide also in other places. In a similar vein, this year too, we have begun to explore how 'urban' spaces, territories, infrastructures and practices are engaged with, in this city, linking them to the historical colonial legacies and trans-local processes that make up its urban fabric. We started our discussions from a more historical look at the Black Mediterranean: the sea as a method, linking Sicily to its southern and eastern neighbours, and, in turn, turning the question onto Europe itself. The more time I spend in this city, the more I see and feel how the continuities, legacies and specters of exclusion, erasure and (re)presentation are today embedded in the public-facing stones, streets, walls and squares of Palermo.

**RG:** From the moment we started to visit different sides and listen to presentations I got the feeling that it is hard to choose one topic and look at it in an isolated way because everything

is very much connected. The most enlightening moment in this regard – also due to the pedagogy of the visual experience – was Sergio's drawing session. There is a continuity of struggles over space and identity that has a lot to do with Sicily's position within Europe but also its history of domination. This struggle has somehow taken a specific form since the city opened up more to the international context through the seeming victory over the mafia, UNESCO nomination, the Migration Charta and Manifesta 12. Therefore, the idea of a book where different strings can come together under one roof speaks a lot to me. Not just for us but also for a next cohort of Critical Urbanisms and maybe even local organizations, groups who engage with the city in different ways. Since there already exists a Manifesta Atlas, I would understand our project more like an After-Manifesta Atlas that is less bound to the artistic context and form. Also, I would like to work in a group and kick off the process by switching between the clusters 'Charta of Palermo', 'UNESCO' and infrastructure with the study case of the Bellolampo trash dump.

Questions that interest me are: How do the Charta and UNESCO nominations contribute to a newly established identity or branding of Palermo? What positions do local activists and collectives claim in the face of heritageization processes of cultural goods but also narratives of differing identities? In what ways do intersectional struggles influence the city narrative – where are they (in)visible(ized)? And regarding the form of our engagement with the different topics and sights: How can we create an inter-

action with the local context?

**SR:** Every single person that introduced us to their perspective on Palermo so far has mentioned how the city is going through a process of «opening up», some with more proudness, some with a rather critical undertone. But to what and whom is Palermo opening up and why? While the Charta of Palermo is directing this gesture at migrant people living here, giving all residents legal status and right to participate in local politics, the Manifesta Biennale that was taking place at the same time seems to have invited a different international audience into the city. Curating the city's culture scape to be translated for a north-western gaze, the Manifesta refined the narrative of multiculturalism in Palermo. It's hard to ignore the parallelism of both movements, simultaneously happening around 2015-2018 they work on a rebranding that seems to complete Palermo's international visibility as a tourist destination (that had been installed already in 2014 through its UNESCO world heritage status), with a position in global networks of art and political activism. The city today comes across as one more flagship for the European self-image: multicultural, hip and politically aware.

Understanding how the legal and cultural work of this past years reframe Palermo and at what cost, by whom the 'opening up the city' is initiated and payed, what narratives are erased and why and who is profiting from it could be examined by looking at places in the city, institutions that supported or contested the changes and people that witnessed them. What rights do people gain through the Charta of Palermo and in which ways are they being made exploitable by it? Is an opening up of the city really in the interest of the residents or is this rebranding of Palermitan ideology just facilitating the access of other powers? The simultaneousness of intensification of both migration and tourism in the harbor of Palermo expresses a neoliberalized form of coloniality (?) on which Europe relies in both an economic way and in terms of cultural production. I would like to understand this mechanism by examining the city's spaces and actors, working in fluid group constel-

lations.

**SB:** Palermo is in transition – from a dangerous mafia city to a hip, artsy place to visit, or at least that is what I have heard a lot when talking to people. The centro storico was not a place to be around a couple years ago, nowadays there is one restaurant aligned after the other and the streets are regularly flooded with people when a cruise ship arrives at the harbor. I started to wonder how tourism has changed Palermo? What are the contributions of UNESCO and/or Manifesta to the influx of tourists? How are the Palermitians dealing with it? Is there resistance? If yes, from whom (graffiti: tourism is colonialism)? A lot of these questions are leading to questions of gentrification and our own engagement with Palermo. This is why an engagement with Piazza Maggione in some way or another would be an interesting starting point to tackle questions mentioned above but also of the use of public space, and opening up spaces that have not been accessible such as the church.

**CA:** Since we started the readings before arriving in Palermo I have been intrigued by decolonial methodologies. This particularly came through for me when reading Ian Chambers's text (as well as his presentation) when he mentions sound as a methodology. This is something that I feel has great potential in the unlearning of the western euro-centric gaze that is often shone over the Mediterranean as a space.

After arriving in Palermo and having now met a variety of citizens there is a feeling to me that Manifesta and the 'opening up of the city' are heavily linked. However, to me it seems that many public spaces within the city are not visibly accessible to the public but instead are fenced off from interaction. That is why for me exploring the use of public space and how the public spaces transform at different times of the day will be a fascinating insight into the workings of a city that has been described many times as a 'melting pot'.

As Piazza Maggione is the home of Manifesta I am very interested to see if the legacy of

Manifesta is actually seen, felt and/or heard in these spaces. And what of the public spaces that were not included in Manifesta? What sounds can be heard here in comparison? Did Manifesta and this new 'open' Palermo actually improve the landscape of social spaces and life in the cities or did it in fact further divide?

**TS:** Examining the ways in which Palermo is undergoing various opening processes along a temporal and spatial axis through discursive programs such as the Charta, the UNESCO World Heritage designation, and Manifesta, I feel is a useful lens for our final project. Adding to what others have already mentioned here, I also see in this approach a potential to be able to understand what places and issues are left untouched or undiscussed by the 'opening of the city.' It is possible that the rebranding of Palermo in its various facets requires that certain urban structures, narratives, places, and subjects are obscured in order to maintain the production of a desired representation to the outside? To what extent this assumption is true and what implications it entails is something I would like to explore in more detail. In my understanding this means a search for vacuums on the one hand and superimposition or overlapping in urban structures on the other hand, which are moving between legality, illegality and illegalization, orchestrating everyday life in Palermo. From this I would like to ask about the possibility of confrontation and resistance: How can there be resistance from communities when structures, buildings and spaces are not accessible, gated, redesigned, overwritten or rendered invisible? I see an example of this in the between legality and illegality preserved waste system, the trash dump in Bellolampo and in the origin/construction and embellishment of the Foro d'Italico, starting with the building of houses by the mafia and ending with the urban development project of the architectural office of Italo Rosa. These are projects I would like to investigate.

**LB:** For me, it is after the visit of Gibellina Nuova that everything finally came together. This visit shed light on the links between Art and Infrastructure, and most importantly between the

Art industry, capitalistic systems and structural violence. In Gibellina, the utopia of urban generation through the intervention of major (bankable) artists was unarguably a failure, and led to the desertion of the city (and also probably did not allow people to heal properly from the trauma of the earthquake). Gibellina is also a case study for the erasure of certain identities, as the mostly rural population of the region could not find itself in this concrete landscape without any job opportunities in their field.

One can find a lot in common between Gibellina and Palermo, especially during (and maybe after?) Manifesta12. Apart from the most obvious similarities (the strong involvement of a charismatic mayor in the cultural and artistic rebranding of both cities), other themes can be found in both situations. It is then not surprising that Marginal Studio organized a rather ironic visit of Gibellina as a side event of Manifesta.

An interesting starting point for those reflections could be Piazza Magione, being the square where the headquarters of Manifesta, as well as several sites used during the manifestation, used to be. Moreover, we can also see the remains of another Art festival, the Biennale Arcipelago Mediterraneo (BAM), in the form of the ruin of an installation made of dirt and pipes, that was left behind after the event. Some of the questions I would be interested to work on are:

How is Art used as a top-down process to rebrand or 'revitalize' a city? Is it in a way comparable to 'colonial' logics of settlement, without anything being given back to the local population? In the case of Manifesta, how were the organizers planning to include or exclude local communities? What are the legacies of Manifesta, architecturally speaking? How are the spaces used by the Biennale practiced today? Are they more open, or even more closed than before? If we talk about 'Art gentrification', who are the ones being pushed away, and by what means?

**MH:** It seems that the 'opening up of the city' has been a rather selective process, structurally leaving behind a large part of the inhabitants

of the city. Counteracting a positivist reading of the last decades developments can bring insights into the problematics generating the many layers of in- and exclusion. The Piazza Magione can offer a space to do just that. Its location in the Kalsa district, the main place of gentrification during the last decade, and further a place from which many organizations worked on the 'opening up' of the city could be a starting point for a more critical 'opening up': connecting the Piazza Magione to other places in the city, to histories and legacies of Colonialism, Capitalism and Neoliberalism and critically questioning the processes that have shaped the last decade(s) in the city. In this sense, working on the Piazza Magione — be it by working on the reconstruction of the playground, engaging with the limited access to our workspace, or by looking at other spots on the square like for instance the closed Moltivolti — can be a way to connect a central point in the general narrative of the city outwards with more peripheral locations, subjectivities and histories that have been erased by a process that is still today present in the square, as well as in the rest of the city.

I would be interested in linking questions of access, inclusion and exclusion within the Piazza Magione to more peripheral locations in the city, for example districts like Borgho Vecchio, Zen, Cep or Dannisini. While the Piazza Magione is located in the heart of the Kalsa, which was the center of the 'opening up' of the city, there is still large portions of buildings on the square that remain inaccessible to the public, hinting at the larger-scale issues the city is facing around these questions. At the same time, it is not that peripheral districts have been completely left out of the process of 'opening up', even if their inclusion is often minimal and in some instances against the will and wishes of their inhabitants. Looking at the legacies of this political and social movements in places where change was done, as well as in places where it was done but left behind and finally in places that were deliberately left out could offer a deeper picture of the exclusionary politics that have sought to 'open up' the city. Finally, an inquiry into these topics could also be fruitful since it urges us to critically assess our own

role in such processes: the case of our workspace remaining closed off for inhabitants of the city but open to visitors like us and further, in the case of me and Jan, living in an Airbnb within a working-class district which is becoming more and more gentrified, where its inhabitants are being stigmatized and pushed out of the city. In order to engage with topics such as access and in- and exclusion it is urgent that we critically reflect on our own position within ongoing processes shaping the city.

**JV:** What I have seen through our site visits, discussions, and presentations, fences and transformed terrains built a layer to the urban landscape or public landscape of Palermo. The public space is not necessarily considered public or accessible: a fence guarding the entrance to a public road up to Pizzo Sella, a fountain on Piazza Pretoria is fenced, the terrain of Piazza Bellini and Pretoria has been lifted.

In Piazza Magione, we can find similar elements. The terrain of the green spaces is lifted and framed by a little wall. In order to get on the green space, one needs to take a step or two. The church (in which we work in) has a little outdoor space towards Piazza Magione which is also lifted and in addition surrounded by a fence. The public landscape that shapes Piazza Magione separates, excludes, and restricts. For my project, I am interested in the following questions: In what way can those barriers / borders be used to re- or un-separate, exclude, and frame? How can those be a part of the public landscape that is more inclusive and accessible? What is being considered inclusive and accessible at Piazza Magione? Who constructs such public landscapes (as we can find it in Piazza Magione)? What does such a construction of the public landscape imply about the public? What is considered public then? I could imagine my project being an intervention on those *barriers / borders* in Piazza Magione.

**VA:** I'd like to approach the topic of urban policy regarding informality, especially the major challenges in implementing successful policy either to integrate or eliminate informality and informal 'actants' (meaning both human and non-human

actors). Most cities prefer the latter option, regarding informality merely as a parasitic mode of production (when as a mode of production at all) that needs to be abolished from the city. I'd like, instead, to explore the possibility of integration, hopefully assisted by a case study in Palermo.

Here in Palermo, the sites that interested me in this sense were both the Sbaratto association and their project of formalizing the flea market in Ballarò, and Danisinni, with the projects led by the local priest, Fra Mauro, in compensation for failed state-led intervention in that enclave.

While informality doesn't seem to be a problem by itself, it is the effect of increasing inequalities, and virtually every city has to deal with the challenges that incur from it. Indeed, the urban form of the enclave (or that of the informal settlement, more generally) is not exclusive to Palermo or any other city. Similarly to my colleagues, I want to argue that there is a specific urbanistic model that leads to this reality. More precisely, it regards a paradigmatic shift in urban governance that came with neoliberalism: the passage from a development-promoting state to a development-damping state, parallel to the rise of the global competitive city model, which principally aims at attracting foreign capital and accomplishing the general integration of the city within the global capitalist system. And here I refer to this exclusionary and elitist 'opening-up' that the others also talk about. Infrastructure is one of the means to accomplish this, but the form may vary a lot. The reconstruction of Gibellina has given us a great example of that.

Approaching this topic offers the possibility not only to interrogate the formal-informal divide that has been imposed by official urban planning (with what interest, by the way?), but also to investigate what gives rise to informality in the first place.

Moreover, it may be an opportunity to inquire into the role of identity in determining the successfulness of urban policy that addresses the issue of informality. By this I mean that the very

determining of the peoples that compose the enclaves of any city is not arbitrary, but rather respects continued legacies of oppression, most often under the form of racialized exploitation dynamics. And we've seen throughout the course how domination relations build upon and depend on the construction of whole mythologies, comprising a definition of the world and of the people inhabiting it – thus, it strongly involves questions of identity. Failing to understand this, as well as the psychological, cultural, and social impacts of being marginalized (resentment, frustration, mistrust of authorities/anyone from outside, but also a strong feeling of belonging to the community), leads, I'd argue, to a poor capacity at handling local issues.

**JW:** In 2015 a coalition of human rights activists and local Palermitan politicians published the Charter of Palermo; a manifesto against the fortification of EUrope towards migration. Among other things, the authors demand the right of free movement and the right to remain for everyone arriving in Palermo (by questioning the idea of national citizenship and demanding to completely abolish residence permits). Backed up by influential officials such as mayor Leoluca Orlando, the Charter eventually materialized as an official publication by the City of Palermo. With that, the Charter of Palermo can be understood as an attempt to offer an alternative reaction based on solidarity and hospitality to the so-called 'migration crisis' in the Mediterranean, resisting EU's and its member states ongoing efforts to criminalize and illegalize trans-Mediterranean migration and related humanitarian rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea.

Furthermore, and in contrast to complicating migrants' routes along their journey, the Charter pledges for facilitating safe routes and organized rescue operations. It speaks out to welcome people to become an active part of the Palermitan (and European?) society. With doing so, Palermo lines up with various other cities in Europe which oppose the way nation states and the European Union lock themselves up from migration and instead declare the will to open and offer sanctuary. This idea

of a 'sanctuary city' or a 'city of solidarity' for me is very much present in the Charta of Palermo. But as others wrote above, such an 'opening up of the city' is observable in different interests directed not only towards migration but also tourism, culture, capital, and space itself. Welcoming people to participate in society includes for them to subject themselves to existing exploitative and exclusionary economic and political realities present in and beyond the city of Palermo. So while the ideas formulated in the Charter are very tempting, there are several question that open up for me:

What evolved out of the Charter of Palermo and its demands (i.e., accessibility to residence permits, who took advantage of it, etc.)? What legal implementations of the Charter are even possible as it all plays out under the sovereignty of the Italian state and the EU? What flexibility do Italian and EU asylum frameworks allow to implement the charter's requirements? How is its enforcement perceived by local activists? What happened after its publication in 2015, how were the ideas and demands taken further (from the publication of the *Charter of Palermo* to the *Palermo charter process* to the *From the Sea to the City conference*)?

How is it ensured that migrants are not just pushed towards precarious work contracts or informal labor in the implementation of the demands of the Charter? How can the Charter be understood alongside efforts to open-up/rebrand Palermo as this formerly dangerous and mafia dominated but now diverse and multicultural city that welcomes everyone? Who is included/mentioned in this reference to the multicultural history of Palermo and who is left out?

**JR:** From the start, I struggled with the borders inside the city; borders that are often not explicitly identifiable. This includes the intended space for cars, bicycles, and pedestrians and just as often the not usable provided space for the same, as the borders between public and private (as already mentioned by others), which can be rather fluidly and brought me to the question which space is or can be used by whom and why (not even starting with barri-

er-free use).

To me, the public and private is not the visual obvious distinction here but rather the differentiation between claimed and unclaimed spaces, because even public space can be fenced and used as private property. The urge to demarcate space to claim it, whether the private property (like residential land) or not (the street in Pizzo Sella), to exclude others from using it seems to be a common need.

The obvious difference between permanently claimed and unclaimed space is often the condition: claimed space is taken care of, because it 'belongs' to someone (or as Valentina put it on a walk when looking at the trash in the street: Public space belongs to no one so no one feels responsible.), while public space 'belongs' to no one - but can be taken.

But what does it take for people to claim a space - briefly or permanently - and identify with it? Could this identification and care be implemented in the use of public space? What keeps people from claiming not used public space? Who does the public space belong to anyway? Everyone? No one? Is there an unofficial right to use abandoned space for oneself?

My project could revolve around these questions and maybe even refer to the playground project, the short-term claim of the space by various actors, the arising frictions, and the misappropriation of the already existing infrastructure.

**SCM:** I wonder, can we consider Piazza Magione a microcosm of the tensions in the city as a whole? The square where we are located, and have been for these weeks, certainly captures the imagination around discussions of the many 'publics' that exist in the city, its relation to private space, legacies of Manifesta12, excluded/erased spaces, and the opposing use of the same space by the city's various 'publics' – among others. What does Piazza Magione tell us about Palermo? And by extension, what can it tell us about limitations to the ways we conventionally understand 'public' space?

**CA2:** Having now discussed this method in more detail and also progressed on the research side of the project I feel like this will be a very interesting course to take on and explore.

An archive of the sounds of Piazza Maggione, taken over the course of different days and times, is where my thoughts are leading me. As this will showcase the multiple uses of the public space within the city, as well as how many people with different backgrounds interact with not just space but other people within the city.

As well as recording the sounds I shall also note down the day, time, place and what I observe in the square at the time of the recording to add depth to the field research phase of the project.

As well as being compared to spaces not covered by Manifesta, this archive of sounds can also be compared to visual archives of how Piazza Maggione looked pre manifesta. This would have the aim of visibly showing the legacy of Manifesta in the metaphorical birthplace of the project.

Once I have collected as many sounds as I can in Piazza Maggione, a session can then take place in which the sounds are played in the workspace. This would lead to connections between the sounds being made but also the vast array of components in this social space to be highlighted.

These connections and disconnections will then lead into the written portion of the research. When they have been finalised I can then discuss the legacy of Manifesta within the space using my research to back to any arguments that I formulate regarding the outcome of Manifesta in the context of social spaces In Palermo.

**LB2:** How to concretely work on the legacy of Manifesta ? How to see Art as an Infrastructure and thus understand how it affects space, landscape and people?

In the 'Review and Reflections' booklet published after Manifesta, Leoluca Orlando writes:

*'Manifesta 12 gave Palermo the opportunity to reflect upon its roots and to launch itself towards a glorious future' (p.4) ... 'Manifesta 12 has helped the citizens of Palermo to rediscover the material and immaterial heritage of their city, and to transform disused buildings into cultural spaces.'* (p.5)

Those quotes raise several questions: Is there really any positive repercussions of Manifesta on Palermo, and particularly on the 'disused buildings'? One can wonder, after the visits of the past weeks. Casa dei Mutilati, Maggazzino Brancaccio, Pizzo Sella, even teatro Garibaldi and the church we work in... Why couldn't those places stay open to the public (Casa dei Mutilati) or at least at the disposition of local artists (Brancaccio)? What happened? What struggles are at stake? What is the role of the municipality, Manifesta itself, the artists chosen in the current state of things?

Here it would be interesting to talk with Roberto and eventually the Mayor Orlando.

Another interesting point is the idea of Manifesta as an external input 'helping Palermo to rediscover its identity'. I found the same discourse in the description of the Pizzo Sella project : 'Following the traces of human beings and animals, Rotor discover an ancient mountain path that joins the building complex to the Monte Gallo nature reserve.' Did Rotor, a Belgian design collective, really 'discover' the path? They also state in an interview : 'We therefore hope that we have given Palermo a new place for discussion, a place which encourages the emancipation and accountability of the people.' What is left of those great speeches and ideas?

In order to investigate this subject, I would like to talk with some of the people who participated in the opening of Palermo's spaces during the Biennale. Ideally, I would like to go back to the sites with them (for example Sergio in Pizzo Sella, Valentina in Brancaccio, Alessandro Petti in Casa dei Mutilati...) or at least conduct semi-directive interviews with them, asking how they reflect on their projects today. I would like to have a clearer image of the post-Manifesta

Palermo through its closed spaces.

Also: question of periphery. Are sites on the periphery of Palermo more closed? (cf. Brancaccio// Pizzo Sella). If so, what does it say about Casa dei Mutilati, being in the city centre? Also, if we think about Sicily as a periphery in itself, it would be interesting to compare the legacy of Manifesta there and in other cities. Was the legacies more sustainable in 'central' Europe??

As a method, I would like to use photography, but I still need to think about a way to convey information effectively. Maybe a series of photos showing the 'closeness' of the sites put in contrast with images from the events?

Conversation continues...

# ON THE REQUALIFICATION PROCESS OF THE SECOND-HAND MARKET OF ALBERGHERIA.

VINICIO ALTMANN

From late March to early June 2022, part of the Critical Urbanisms cohort was in Palermo attending a block course and doing field research related to it. The themes that were studied and discussed varied a lot, but always comprised a critical perspective on knowledge production and power relations, revealing for instance the ever-present influence exerted by colonial legacies on our daily lives. As the course's name, 'Land(scape)/space', indicates, we did not miss to observe what the aforementioned relations meant to geographies and built environments, and vice versa.

As critical urbanists, we applied these general epistemological considerations to varied urban phenomena observed in the city we were visiting. We searched everywhere – in the uneven sidewalks taken over by across-parked cars and scooters; in the balata stones used to pave the streets of the historical center; in the fascist patterns in the architecture and murals of specific state institutions; in the colonial iconography of some of the city's landmarks; in garbage piles and dumpsites; in unfinished civil constructions; in closed and/or abandoned buildings; in historically military infrastructural sites including airports, oil refineries, planetary antennas, concentration camps, and refugee centers; in botanical gardens; in international cultural events and design interventions; in monumental landscape art; in illegalized markets; in urban regulations and policies; in political campaigns for an approaching mayoral election; and even in textbooks – we searched for traces of continued legacies of exploitation, or, inversely, for counter-narratives disrupting the current hegemonic system of power perpetuation, in order to grasp and demonstrate the very much concrete impacts of these 'intangible' forces on the lived environments of people.

My attention was particularly drawn to the process

of formalization of a flea market situated close to the historical market of Ballarò, the oldest and most important market of Palermo. We had briefly visited it with our professor and a couple of guest lecturers, and were informed of the recent efforts of various actors to regularize it in the context of re-qualification of the Albergheria district. Indeed, many areas of the city were undergoing drastic changes in a short period of time, partly due to tourism, and mostly in the sense of gentrification. As the flea market area was in a state of serious degradation, and was almost entirely run by informal forces, it was a question of time before it became a target of urban change as well. Or, the fact that it needed change was an undisputed matter for all actors involved. What was up for debate, though, was: how should it change?

Thus, the formalization of the flea market of San Saverio, also known as the second-hand market of Albergheria, as well as the regulation of the historical market of Ballarò – both of which can be regarded as processes of urban re-qualification –, became my objects of research. I was to dig into the negotiations that had been happening since 2015, along with the rise of tourism, gentrification, the emergence of a new regulation on 'urban decorum', and the surfacing of SOS Ballarò, a public assembly / social movement whose goal was to address the issues of political and economic marginality of the markets' main agents, as well as to preserve the neighborhood's millennial role of a marketplace.

Notably, what I found throughout my investigations is that there were different moments in this process of re-qualification in regards to the application of regulation and urban policy. Whereas at first regulation was mobilized as a tool of exclusion and further marginalization, illegalizing hundreds of in-



Second-hand market of Albergheria (Vinicio Altmann, May 2022)

dividuals by default and favoring a form of urbanism that would mainly privilege economic interests at the expense of social interests – implying the delocalization of those 'made illegal', making space to new actors able to adjust to the set of enforced regulations –, it gradually became a different kind of tool. Through the mediating work of grassroots activists, a new way of approaching policy – or rather, of doing politics – was 'institutionalized', allowing for the formalization process to become a pathway to a new field of political possibilities, instead of a direct threat to the livelihood of many. Concretely, that meant switching from a top-down application of a formal system to which life had to adapt, to a bottom-up formulation of regulation based on real life experiences.

This transition thus became my research question: how did we go from one legal regime to the other? And what did it entail concretely for the individuals subjected to such regimes? To answer these questions, I gathered data through different sources, composing three different cate-

gories of information: data that I collected on site; data that others collected on site and were given to me; and data that I gathered on the internet, notably from the Municipality of Palermo's website.

I will start by the second category of information gathered – data which was given to me by another – because it's what makes most sense chronologically, and also because it greatly influenced how I then gathered data on my own.

When I shared my interest in the formalization process of the flea market of Albergheria with my colleagues and instructors, Valentina Sansone, curator in contemporary art and one of the guest lecturers I briefly mentioned earlier, promptly put me in contact with people that were involved in the matter. After only one redirection, she found what could be considered, in my case, a 'perfect match': an ex-scholar having done his PhD on a similar topic to my own interests, that is, in some ways related to the management of informality in the Ballarò and San

Saverio areas. As a bonus, the person in question, Francesco Montagnani, was an anthropologist, so we had a common disciplinary background, which in many ways helped our communication of what was observed.

In our first meeting, he told me in detail about his involvement with SOS Ballarò, the network of activists who organized weekly assemblies to discuss issues and solutions for the marketplaces of Albergheria. He also told me about the functioning of the San Saverio flea market, which interested me more specifically, and about some particular events that had there taken place and that he judged important to understand the different interests of each of the parties involved in the neighborhood, whether they were residents, vendors, consumers, investors, or agents of the state. Finally, he told me about the latest political trends of Palermo, giving me the context of the upcoming mayoral elections, and what that could mean for the future of Albergheria.

As if all that contribution was not enough, he also sent me his PhD thesis, where I could find detailed accounts that referred to the events told before. Thanks to that, I had from the very start a pretty good overview of the different positionalities relating to the processes of urban change revolving around the marketplaces of the oldest district of Palermo, as well as of where conflict was situated.

With the above in mind, I started to scheme how I would start my own collection of data, which, first of all, should aid me in formulating my own research questions, and, at a later stage, fill the eventual gaps

in the database I had just received in order to be able to answer these newly formulated questions. For two consecutive weeks, then, I went to San Saverio everyday, normally twice a day: between 6-7 am, because, as informed by Francesco, that was when the vendors were setting up their stalls; then again around 1 pm, when they were putting away their stuff; I would also occasionally go there around 10-11 am, when the movement was quite different from that of 7 am.

I lived 10-15 minutes away by foot from the flea market, and that's how I commuted there and back everyday, for two weeks. After each visit, on my way back home, I would audio-record my observations with my phone, by fear of forgetting important details if I were to wait until I could put them down on paper. I was particularly worried about that when it was early in the morning. Then, once I got home to my computer, I would add part of these observations on a document where I kept track of things, associating aspects of the market – such as yellow demarcations on the floor, storage structures, covered areas, or the number of garbage containers I saw – to particular regulations, accounts of conflicts, and other kinds of events, which were organized both chronologically and causally, in two different guiding threads.

# PERIPHERAL HOPES IN PALERMO

LEAH BONVIN

Piazza Magione, on a Thursday afternoon. The square is lively - children are playing ball against the walls, people are laying on the grass enjoying the first beams of summer's sun. All around, bars and restaurants are starting to set their terraces, for the first costumers have arrived and are waiting for their Aperol Spritz. Some probably enjoy the relaxed atmosphere of the square, while some see in their 7 Euro beers the first signs of the gentrifying processes that have already swallowed up other areas of central Palermo.

But is Magione really central? Not so long ago, the square was still part of the periphery of Palermo. A geographically central periphery, but a periphery nonetheless. A periphery managed by organized crime - which nobody dared to enter. Now, Piazza Magione is in a state of in-betweenness. Central enough to be chosen as the headquarters of the Art Biennale Manifesta in 2018, and peripheral enough to fit the agenda of the art event, whose goal was also to 'activate the periphery' of Palermo (and more generally, of Europe.)

As I sit there in Piazza Magione, in the middle of cafés and improvised football games, I wonder why Teatro Garibaldi and Chiesa Ss Euno e Giuliano, who both hosted several events during Manifesta, remain (usually) closed to the public. Is this somehow linked to the 'centrality' of Magione? Are there more opportunities in the periphery, hidden, out of the responsibility but also out of the gaze of the municipality? How can we change our gaze and look at the peripheries, the margins, as places of potential and agency?

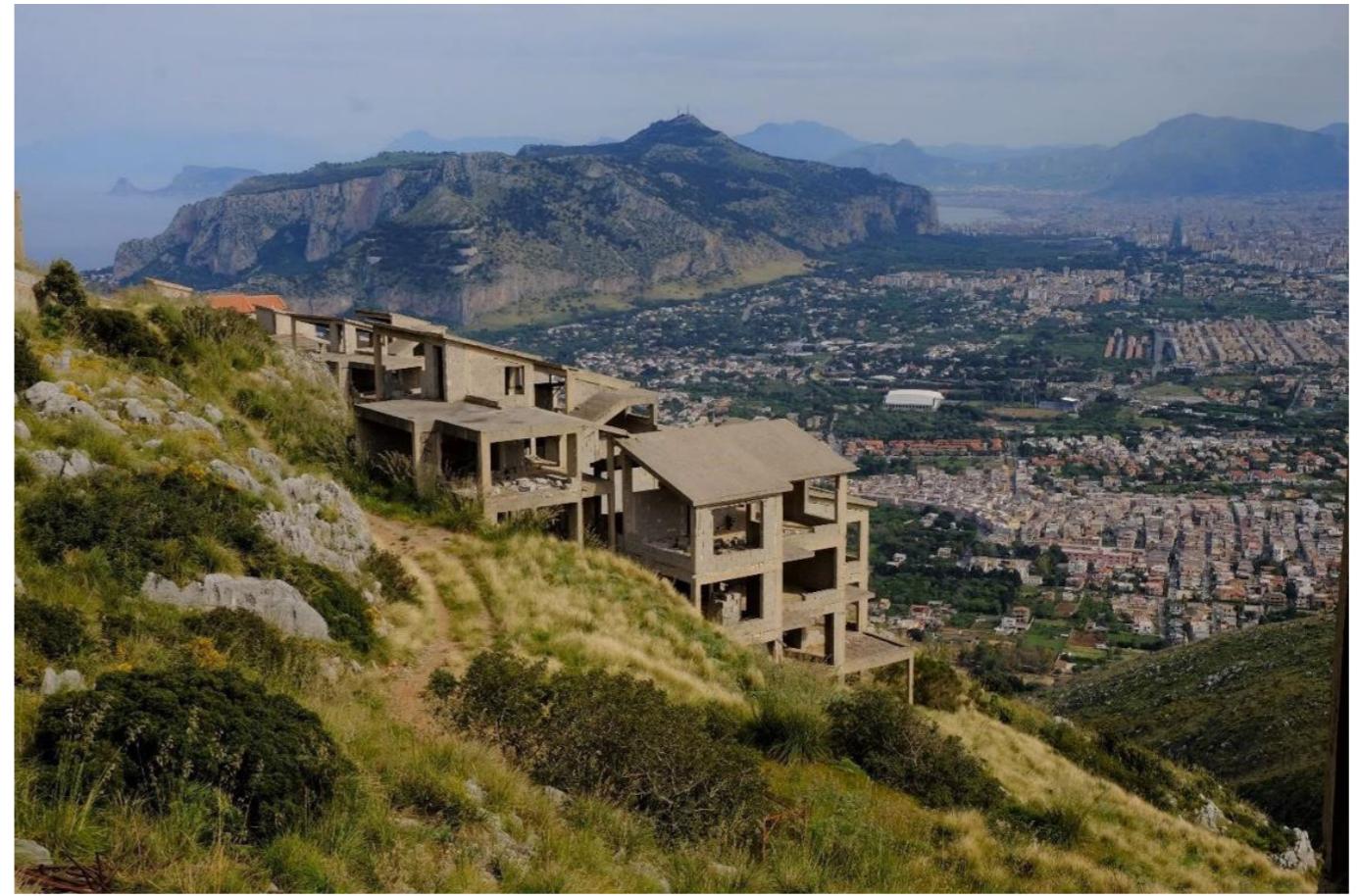
In order to answer those questions, I decided to connect to my sensations and my feelings. I chose

three sites that had been activated during Manifesta and visited them several times with my camera. In order to feel what peripherality means, I focused on my corporality and on the challenges I experienced to access the three sites. This resulted in short texts in a diary-like style, that I completed with photographs. Through those pictures, I tried to show three themes that were common to all of the sites: their spatial disconnection from the city centre, the ways in which their access is denied to the public, but also what (social and spatial) openings are possible.

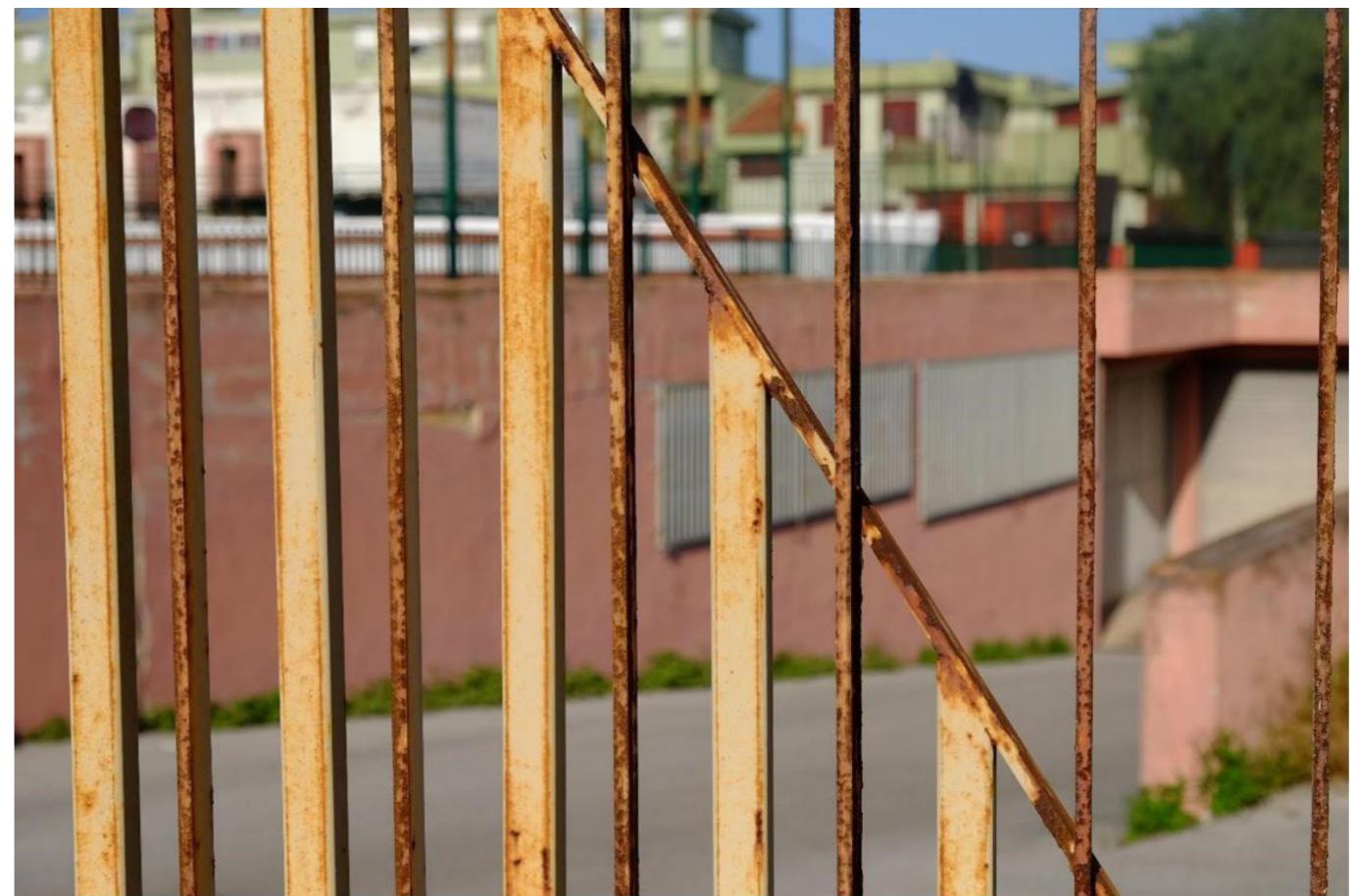
Some of those openings were not easy to translate into visuals. For example, how to show what Magazzino Brancaccio has become after being closed? How to depict what the founder of the space, Valentina Sansone, describes as 'a service to the community rather than a space'? Some of the pictures were also difficult to take as they challenged my own positionality. Roaming between the abandoned blocks of ZEN with my fancy camera and my non-existent Italian, I was feeling out of space, intruding.

How those difficulties could have been overcome? By spending a significantly longer time on the field, by building a network, by making friends. But in the scope of this semester abroad, we must accept that the final projects are just small snapshots, imperfect but representative of a time.

## 1. Disconnection



2. Closure



**In terms of conceptualization, ZEN is at the centre of Manifesta**

Train from Palermo Centrale to Palermo S. Lorenzo. From S. Lorenzo, bus 619 to Zappa, then to Carnera. One hour if everything goes on schedule. ZEN is what some call a 'foundation periphery', purposefully designed to be on the margins of society. ZEN is also a symbol for what we could call 'peripheral citizenship', as most of the inhabitants occupying the apartments are paying rent directly to the Mafia, which means they are not officially registered as citizens of Palermo. But ZEN is only a periphery when looked at from the old city of Palermo. In terms of the legacies of Manifesta, ZEN is probably right at the centre. The project 'Becoming Garden' aimed to create a garden in one of the courtyards of ZEN, involving the community in the process, but also in its sustainability. For Pietro Airolodi, ZEN's garden had been perceived at the time as the biggest failure of Manifesta.

It was not a garden. It was a few square meters of burned grass, a few stunted trees and mostly a lot of rubbish on the ground. But what is a clean space in a place abandoned by the municipality? What is a clean space in a neighbourhood that literally faces a toxic waste dumping site? Today, the garden is still there. The day of the commemoration of Judge Falcone's killing, the national TV made a live broadcast from the garden. Grassroot associations are still activating it from time to time and it is still accessible to the community. Maybe that's where the real success story of Manifesta is. A few square meters of burnt grass in a failed social housing utopia.

**3. Opening**



# THE SOUNDS OF PIAZZA MAGIONE

## A DECOLONIAL METHODOLOGY

CHRISTOPHER ALLEN  
JOANNA ROTHER

As I arrive in Palermo, I am already considering something new and fresh that will break the boundaries that have previously been set in my research experience. Why should methodology be a set-in stone practice that also empowers an individual over another?

With time, the space of Piazza Magione becomes much more familiar and I start to notice there seems to be a temporality to the space, an unwritten time table. There appears to the naked eye a time in which the space is used for certain activities, an ebb and flow that is the background for the everyday life of the urban dweller in this space.

This is where sound as a method really speaks in this place. To get a sense of the tensions that occur in this social temporality, you cannot just observe, you must listen as this gives a voice to those elements that are not visible. This act of giving a voice to those that cannot be heard otherwise is a step towards the unlearning of the Eurocentric view of social space as well as the process of decolonising methodology itself.

It can be argued that research itself can be viewed as a colonial practice because it 'involves the activity of undressing other people so as to see them naked. It is also a process of reducing some people to the level of micro-organism'<sup>1</sup>. The power of defining a person, immediately 'othering' them and creating a hierarchy within the project.

To unlearn the Eurocentric view on the Mediterranean we must first examine the discourse within the

context of social space through Europe. Within this discourse temporality is defined as a norm that is the catalyst for the values of a place, as well as the identity of the place. One of these identity relations is 'sameness'<sup>2</sup> which is seen to be that a temporary use of the public space can take place and fit in line with the social space without changing the feel or identity of the people and place. This sameness is seen as a direct response to the identity of the social setting.

Furthermore, throughout western social space studies the discourse of 'the West European City'<sup>3</sup> is present. This is seen to be a European city has a distinctive set of ideologies and identity within the social realm, ones that are never challenged and are the hallmark of 'Europeanness'.

When observing and recording the sounds of Piazza Magione I am thinking of this European Discourse on Social Space and am thinking does the place I find myself within now exist in this framework? Is this unwritten timetable of space not actually changing the identity of social space in Palermo and those that navigate around it?

These soundscapes of Piazza Magione were collected over the course of a month whilst observing the interactions that citizens had both with each other but also with the space itself. This was done with the aim of challenging the European discourse on social space, showing that there are far more processes at work than people are led to believe.

Sound has the ability to 'signify and sound out the composite realisation of a differentiated communal; they give voice to the invisible'<sup>4</sup>.

This is where this project comes in, it gives a voice to social tensions that are a factor in everyday life in the context of Piazza Magione but also the identity of the space that is the Black Mediterranean.

During the time that has been spent in Piazza Magione there have been many soundscapes, all of which I argue change the identity and feel of the space.

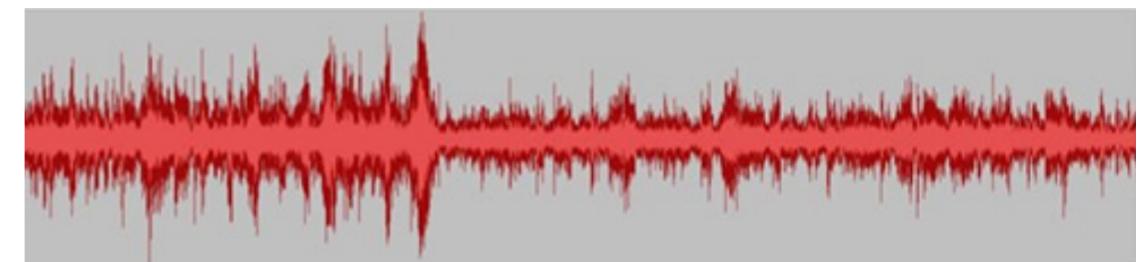


Figure 1: May the 1st in Piazza Magione

This soundscape above was recorded on May the 1st and depicts a BBQ that a restaurant in the piazza has put on for the celebrations occurring at the time of recording. The sizzle of the BBQ, the group singing and the playing of musical instruments are all present within the space.

These multiple publics using one space for a wide range of activities depict how in Piazza Magione the temporality of the space is activated. This also brings forward a social tension that is ever present within the piazza; the claiming of space. The space claimed by the restaurants decreases access to the public in this space.

This claiming of space and the police presence brings thoughts of the creation of borders and how borders stretch beyond the states they surround but actually 'reach within it, pervading even the most mundane experiences of everyday life'<sup>5</sup>. This state of living within borders and surveillance can be seen as an extension of control on all actors that co-exist in the Mediterranean as a whole, particularly in the post migrant experience.

<sup>1</sup> Ndlovu – Gatscheni, (2017), Decolonising research methodology must include undoing its dirty history in The Conversation. Pp 1 – 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ferguson, Harvie, (2009), Self identity and everyday life, Oxon: Routledge.

<sup>3</sup> Burtenshaw, D, (2021), The European City: A Western Perspective. Routledge.

<sup>4</sup> Chambers Iain, (2004), The Mediterranean in Third Text, 18:5. Pp 423 – 433

<sup>5</sup> Davewid, I, (2021), Introduction in The Black Mediterranean, Springer Nature Switzerland AG, Switzerland.

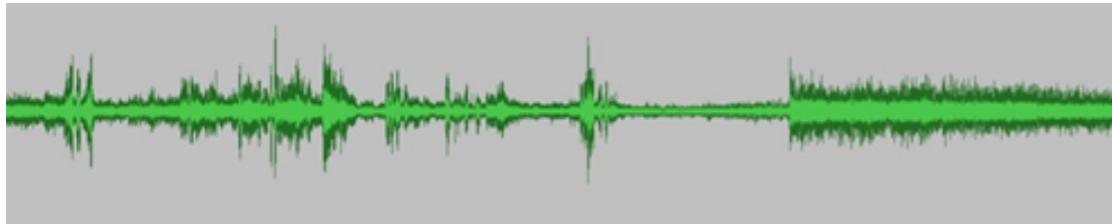


Figure 2: Early morning in Piazza Magione

This second soundscape is recorded first thing on a school day in Piazza Magione, the school is opening, the children are activating the playground in the piazza with families gathering. All the while the deep tones of the police helicopter that is circling the piazza provide an undertone of surveillance and control unlike anything I have personally seen before.

This continuation of surveillance shows how far these non-material borders stretch, even children attending school under the watchful eye of the authorities. This soundscape shows how the identity of a social place can change due to its temporality. One moment children are having fun before a day of classes; a feeling of happiness. The next the identity changes to a much harsher environment with the helicopter closing in; a feeling of tenseness. Whose space really is this?

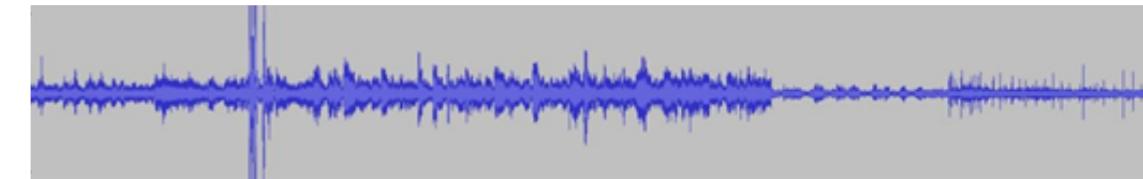


Figure 4: Multiple temporary uses

As previously mentioned, the space of Piazza Magione is used for many purposes, in this soundscape the space has been activated in many forms. There is an electoral speech being held in the backdrop. This is behind the sound of sections of the square that at the time of recording were being activated as a space for musical performances.

This clash of local government campaigning and the creative arts shows that this tension of multiple publics claiming the social space is not just limited to residents, it also stretches into municipality workings as well. These very different activations of the space also showcase the potential the temporality of the space has within the context of Palermo, this unwritten timeline finds the way to inform the local people of the upcoming elections but simultaneously provide an

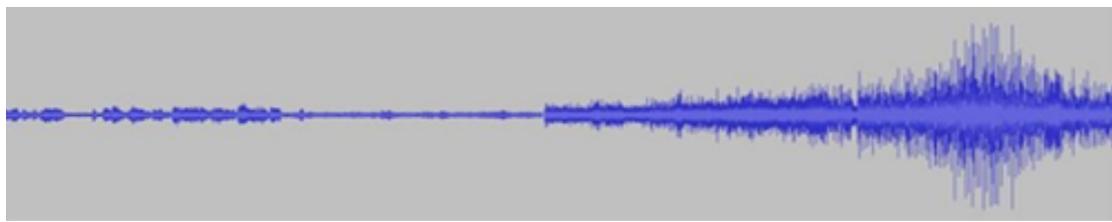


Figure 3: Iftar and Adhan

Soundscape 3 is that of Iftar and Adhan the cultural practices in Ramadan that then as the day goes on begins to merge with the party scene that arrives in the square as night falls. A scene of families and community becomes one of party music. This once more brings the social tension of the claiming of space between multiple publics and the temporality of the space. How long can the Ramadan event take place before it clashes with the night time revellers before the unwritten timetable of the space is broken?

This also aids in the unlearning of what it means to be 'European' as well as the Eurocentric discourse on migration. The stereotype that migrants are a 'criminal threat'<sup>6</sup> and should be feared by Europe. Does the sound of families together, enjoying each other's company in peace sound like a threat? To me it brings forward this melting pot of cultures that Palermo and the Black Mediterranean truly is. The temporal balance and complexities that are a fundamental to everyday lives within this space.

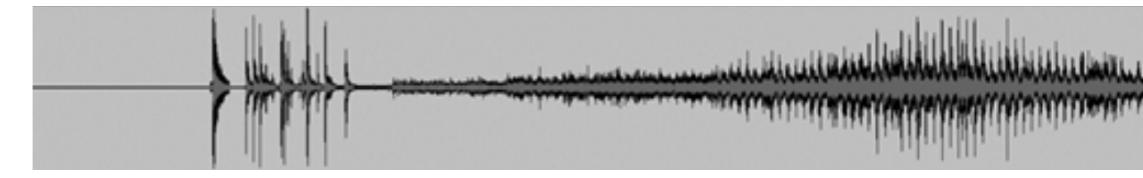


Figure 5: A journey from the church

The final soundscape of the research is that of a journey from the church located in Piazza Magione that has been used as the headquarters for Manifesta 12 as well as the base for this research itself.

The silence of the church and the echoes of an object being moved within this in-between space, it is not quite private but it is shut off from the public ebb and flows that occur outside of this space. As soon as the door to this place is unlocked the soundscape provides an insight into how the identity of this space changes, the sounds become more vibrant with bird song and the hum of social activity.

This movement from the silence of the church to the social space outside adds another layer onto the tensions that are present between the multiple publics within this space. There are physical barriers between the publics that have access to the outdoor space but then have no access to a space many feel should be accessible to all, this also crosses into the realm of public versus the municipality.

Through this soundscape the Black Mediterranean comes through as this can be argued as being a very physical control of not just accessible spaces but also the bodies that have access to these places that should have been made public by the municipality. One could argue that this is very much an extension of the control at borders that migrants are subjected to whilst trying to enter Europe.

<sup>6</sup> Davewid, I, (2021), Introduction in The BlackMediterranean, Springer Nature Switzerland AG, Switzerland.

These soundscapes collected throughout the time spent in Piazza Magione have helped aid in the unlearning of the Eurocentric discourse on social space as well as the Mediterranean as a whole. This method has added to the conversation on decolonising methodology itself by giving a voice to people and processes that have been made invisible previously. Through the use of sound Piazza Magione, by extension the Mediterranean, can be seen as a complex process of social temporality and tensions. Where the fluidity of sounds suggests the histories and cultures that merge in this melting pot is in a constant state of sounding out, transforming, and transfiguring each other.

I have become more accustomed to the temporality of this space and there appears more and more this perceptible boundary – that never is actually defined – between multiple publics and social space. This public space could be therefore be seen as a communal space where not only multiple public relationships are being challenged but also relations are also a constant evolving process.

This process is not a temporality that will eventually become permanent, such as previous art installations or playgrounds within the space, but is actually a reactivation type of temporality that multiplies socialisation with a regular pattern. This process is very visible through the recordings of the BBQ and how the restaurants within the piazza claim the space of the only accessible footpath in the corner of the square to create a temporary space in which socialisation for party goers can flourish whilst actually increasing social tension with other publics who use this space for recreation and relaxation.

The changing of the feel and identity of the Piazza through sounds shows that this space does not fit in with the Eurocentric discourse on social space. A very uniform controlled environment that has a set identity and feel. This project breaks this discourse both through method and results, I argue that if this project was conducted under what is seen as a 'scientific' method in Europe this would then be a continuation of the Eurocentric view on public space rather than something fresh that breaks this stigma. This project does this, by first decolonising methodology and then breaking the discourse that is presented throughout Europe on social space. In the context of Piazza Magione and Palermo social space is far from uniform, it has a fluidity that changes with the time of the day. This liquid state causes tensions between the publics that use this space on

a temporary basis which affects every day experiences within the space. This can also be seen as a metaphor for process that occur within the Mediterranean as a whole. Process of control, surveillance and the right to space. A constant battle to belong in an ever-shifting society.

Whilst looking back at both my project and my time in Palermo Sicily, I really feel that due to the freedom and support provided this track allowed me the opportunity to explore new forms of research that I was never previously encouraged to do. I believe that sound as a methodology has huge potential that can be used to open further conversations in decolonising methods, as well as the importance of recording experiences worldwide.

For using this method in future projects, I shall definitely invest in proper recording equipment as in some situations the use of phone recordings felt a bit invasive. The quality was also of a lower quality than with specific equipment. However, due to the potential of this method and the fresh sense on research that it gives me, sound is definitely something I will explore in my research from here on. Which is something I didn't think would happen until this course, I feel reinvigorated to explore social processes and really test how far sound can be used.

If I were to return to Palermo and continue this project, or for anyone else inspired by sound like I was, I would be very interested in merging the project with social projects such as Manifesta 12. By recording sounds of places that this project did not

# PERMANENT FUTURES?

SASKIA BRYNER, REA GRÜNENFELDER,  
MANUEL HILDEBRAND, JAN WEBER  
SALOME ROHNER, ANTONIA SELVA.

Different historical and political factors have contributed to a phenomenon that is symptomatic for the city of Palermo and its surroundings: the occurrence of a large number of temporarily or permanently inaccessible spaces that disrupt the urban fabric like slivers of unused potential. Space is thereby not necessarily thought of as a building but can be an inaccessible landscape or an urban space without clear boundaries. Instead of asking why they subsist, this project concentrates on the mind game of opening them up. Who would claim them? How can they be common goods? Is there a possibility to maintain a space over time without clarified responsibility?

Focusing on two examples that we encountered during our research in Palermo we act out the scenario. The former church SS Euno e Giuliano has been our workspace for the last months and represents the case of a municipal space located in the city center that has been given new but non-permanent uses. By contrast, Pizzo Sella is a natural reserve with a complex history of privatization. In 2018, a hiking path has reestablished the access to the terrain only to be overgrown due to a lack of maintenance. The aspects that unite the two sites are their temporal accessibility, the lack of a community claiming them as well as a political situation that further complicates the interaction. As a group of six people, we engaged with the notion of the common in a methodological way and in terms of content. Through interviewing different social organizations, we learned about related experiences and processes that accompany the findings of opening up the former church to the local community. The performative act of clearing the path to Pizzo Sella allowed us to further reflect upon the temporality of keeping spaces accessible.



*Voices of different Palermitan associations on the reality and political issue of closed spaces in Palermo.*



*Screening of the video 'What a View' in the exhibition space.*

### **PIZZO SELLA**

Pizzo Sella, one of the hills of the Capo Gallo nature reserve in the west of Palermo has experienced a history of organized crime and corrupt politics that enabled illegal construction of a settlement in the late 1970s. Around 180 villas and a wide access road were built and partially sold, before the construction was stopped by the local authorities in the wake of the national anti-mafia struggles. Today, the nature reserve in which the gated community is located is covered by a mix of unfinished and finished inhabited villas. It has become a space that is frozen in bureaucratic complexities, remaining inaccessible to the public.

However, Pizzo Sella is not only part of the Capo Gallo nature reserve but also provides an overarching view over Palermo, enabling a new sense of understanding the city as a whole as well as one's own positionality in it. As an experience, we understand this view as a common which should be accessible for all people in Palermo. The starting point of our project is the path built for a Manifesta intervention on Pizzo Sella in 2018. Due to bureaucratic obstacles and a global pandemic, the path experienced a lack of maintenance, hence nature overtook it again.

With this project, we aim to critically re-activate the discussion about accessibility to Pizzo Sella by adding the dimension of temporality to it. Through conversations with people who are interested in the path's maintenance as well as by physically reconstructing the path and mapping it, we hope to contribute to a transmission of the knowledge about the path. The final act of publishing the map during the exhibition makes it possible for people to hike up Pizzo Sella on their own and see Palermo from above

## SS EUNO E GIULIANO

This is not a church; it is a space. After its renovation and reopening in 2017, the building has been used sporadically for cultural events. However, it has not become permanently usable for the community of Kalsa but instead often remains inaccessible and hidden within Piazza Magione. With this premise we became aware of the former church SS Euno e Giuliano as an opportunity to be claimed. By temporarily appropriating this space as a forum to discuss its own status of unsettled use and (in)accessibility, we playfully provoke people who are around Piazza Magione to engage with the space.

As foreign students who had access to the space for a limited time, we used our presence to invite people inside. Questions about ideas for a possible permanent use in the future, such as: What permanent use could you imagine for this space? Who should this space belong to? What are your wishes for this neighborhood? provoked various encounters and conversations circling around the theme of accessibility and usage of common space. Since SS Euno e Giuliano does not stand for itself but is part of a phenomenon observable throughout the city, we asked people to mark other inaccessible spaces they know on a map of Palermo. Those open days were accompanied by interviews with associations experienced in finding spaces for non-profit activities in Kalsa and beyond. Interacting with various people helped us to understand the struggles and practices in claiming, maintaining, and making space accessible with and for different communities.



*Performance by the Palermitan dj collective \*asterisco on the closing night of the exhibition at SS Euno e Giuliano.*



ma anche le strade, le scuole.

Videostill, overgrown entrance of the ancient mountain path



Videostill, view over Mondello.

