

REFRAMING SPATIAL PRACTICES IN PROCESSES OF SOCIAL INCLUSION OF MIGRANTS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THE REACTIVATION OF HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPES

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In recent years, there has been an unprecedented exodus of persons displaced from conflict torn regions to Europe. In the third quarter of 2016, about 183,000 people were granted protection status by the European Union member states (Eurostat, 2017) that allowed them to become refugees. This is by far the most significant influx of people the European continent has experienced since WWII.

So far, current European public urban management, planning models, urban and architectural design methodologies have proven to be unable to give creative, dynamic and sustainable responses to this complex and rapidly evolving crisis.

In this context, it is crucial to reframe the role of architecture and spatial practices, as agents of social and spatial inclusion and regeneration at different scales. We are interested in analysing how participatory design strategies might facilitate a collective engagement of diverse communities in the regeneration of their built environment and how this foster the production of local social capital (Gaunlett 2011), nurturing empathetic communities and delivering ‘collaborative inclusion’ (Manzini, 2015) as a mean to assert their civic identity.

This paper explores the potential that tactical urbanism and tactical placemaking have in articulating inclusive processes of spatial production in the public realm that might enable migrants, refugees and locals in risk of social and spatial exclusion, to participate in the (re)definition and (co)production of social space, fostering their active participation as an agent of their own resilient empowerment.



Sicily, as most of the South of Italy, has been exposed to massive waves of immigration; with 300,000 immigrants disembarking in 2015-2016. Palermo, the sicilian capital, has adopted a rather welcoming approach towards the refugees, from its society to its government. Leoluca Orlando, the Mayor of Palermo, conceived the “Charter of Palermo” at the core of its political agenda, framing migration as an inalienable human right. It affirms

the right to work, health care, social assistance, and housing to all refugees and migrants that are arriving to the city. Palermo presents an unique scenario to explore the issues related to migration and urban, social and economic stagnation and potential regeneration.

This paper proposes to explore how the dilapidated urban fabric and heritage of the Albergheria district in the historic city centre of Palermo, with its complex multicultural identity and vibrancy, could be reactivated through participatory design strategies that could foster the social integration processes of both migrants and local communities, as well as a way of developing the deprived economy of the district.