

PALERMO

Urban Design Studio 2019



PALERMO

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PALERMO

Introduction

Palermo - the interest in dealing with this city arose, as with so many, through a visit to Manifesta that was held in Palermo in 2018. For the first time in the city, Manifesta made it possible for me as to visit many otherwise inaccessible spaces in the city. Palazzi, churches, gardens and courtyards were opened and activated for visitors and residents. All the exhibitions, workshops, events and performances reinforced the image of an extremely differentiated and diverse city.

The dense and varied narrative of the city of Palermo, created in the past, can be traced back to its central location in the Mediterranean Sea on the threshold from Europe to North Africa. Since the Middle Ages, a unique Arab-Byzantine-Norman symbiosis in cityscape and culture has developed, shaped by changing European and Arab occupiers.

Damaged at the end of the Second World War, the subsequent massive expansion of the city, the so-called „Sacco di Palermo“, enforced and supported by Mafia structures greatly changed the cityscape. The neglected old quarters of the city became places of arrival for migrants of the most diverse cultures, meanwhile the quickly built outer quarters showed structural deficiencies and the Mafia entangled itself deeply.

One has the impression that the fight against the Mafia through politics and civil courage generated a special climate in the city from the 1990s onwards. Although it is a hotspot in the current refugee crisis, there is an extraordinary welcome culture and an almost defiant attitude in an otherwise right-wing characterized Italy, to see the challenges posed to the city as a potential and an opportunity to develop further Palermo's communities.

This was at least the impression we got when we (27 bachelor and master students) visited the city in April 2019. For 10 days we met various people who showed us their perspective on the city in walks and conversations: Mario Schwarz, professor at the University of Vienna but living in Sicily, Mauro Filippi from the office PUSH, which initiates and accompanies participative urban development processes, Renzo Lecardane, professor at the University of Palermo and his students, who impressively presented their commitment to the city, Luca Cinquemani from the art collective FARE ALA, who works on the city and its fascist and colonialist heritage, Fausto Melluso from the initiative Arci Porco Rosso, who is a new member of the city administration and now engaged in urban development policy, Tanino Bonifacio, the culture assessor of Gibellina, who is trying to reactivate Gibellina Nuova, and many more.

The students were free to choose the topics they wanted to work on. They explored ruins, gardens, markets, wastelands, neighborhoods, restaurants, bars and people. In the following weeks, eleven very different projects were created back in Vienna, working in a wide variety of scales and locations.

As external observers of the city of Palermo, we could only fail in our efforts to have an impact on Palermo's urban development - but we hope to be able to provide thought-provoking impulses and new approaches for discussion through our unconscious view from the outside.





PALERMO 2030

PALERMO 2030: The Mediterranean City in Transition

by Renzo Lecardane

Cities are currently facing deep contradictions: on one hand they produce economic growth, on the other hand they are the cause of social and environmental poverty. Since they include all the questions concerning globalization they represent the key to face any initiative aimed at fulfilling sustainable development.

The Mediterranean cities in particular, thanks to the concentration of complexity / diversity and multiplicity are the most suitable places to start a transition so as to turn the contradictions of the urban system into an opportunity for transformation.

The process of knowledge based on the observation of the cities becomes fundamental in a context such as that of Palermo, which is characterized by growing levels of complexities and uncertainty. In this context a critical process has been initiated just to recognize the city of Palermo and its main characters. Starting from this process several priority elements and different alternatives have been identified with continuous reviewing just to find out the best ways to reach the targets. Observation multiplies preferences and allows the combination of several values and the involvement of many participants as valid support, able to operate in risky situations.

In the case of Palermo, the heritage of historic and urban values makes the observation more complex. Such observation has been broken up into 3 levels of study: strategic, tactical and managerial.

The first strategic level refers to the capacity of attracting some context of the project, selected to construct a shared vision of the city, and to orientate, to change, with the support of several factors. The second tactical level, supporting the urban and architectural criteria, refers to the choice of instruments to intervene in the consolidation of the city. Finally the third managerial level is a source of reflection on the multiplicity and conflicting points of view and on the objectives to reach so as to meet different subjects to involve in the current processes of transformation.

That being said, it is highly important to examine the city of Palermo as a complex place of connections, identities, conflicts and integration but also as a place of production of tangible and intangible assets. This factor continues to be the main aim for future projects.

In this regard, the work carried out by the research group LabCity Architecture, headed by prof. Renzo Lecardane, Architecture and Urban Design, Polytechnic School, Department of Architecture, University of Palermo, offers some observations from a didactic and research point of view in Palermo on the theme of inter-active infrastructure infras-

tructure about architecture seen as a discipline to learn and to act in society.

The inter-active infrastructure is an interpretative and operative figure that has a central role in the project of the city. The research offers the observation of two “remarkable sites” in the city of Palermo starting from the design of the relations of connection and disconnection of the infrastructures¹.

If the connection allows the construction of interactive and connected urban settings which reminds us of the “urban archipelago”, then the disconnection produces ‘the enclave’ which, undermines the idea of city and the concept of public space.

The first site of intervention, which is referred to the theme of the “urban archipelago”² is to be found in the future stations of the railway ring that will offer possibilities of expanding urban connections in the proximity of the stations of Politeama, Port, and Libertà, strongly characterized by the relationship between infrastructural stations and public space. The second site which refers to the theme of ‘the enclave’ finds in the project of a Greenline³, a sequence of urban spaces strongly characterized by specific activities, three areas of interest which spread out from the Royal Palace included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, the Hospital Policivico down to the valley of the Oreto river.

The main part of the research is based on the figure of the hybrid that comes from some spatial strategies elaborated from the designing experimentation. This figure relates to the scale of the building and it identifies two main properties: the anti-typological and multi-programmatic values.

The hybrid becomes a meaningful contribution that fully enters into the research of the experimentation of the city in transition.

In this context, the urban and architectural project has been oriented on two remarkable sites of the city of Palermo: the city of the railway ring and the Greenline. They are sites where the main relation between architecture and infrastructure is a priority to initiate a new lifecycle of the city. The system of public transport, entrusted to the faster mobility of the subway of the railway ring and the one of the slow mobility of the greenline, is linked to the urban fabric⁴. The increasing attention to the environmental protection contributes to relaunching the topic of mobility not only as an opportunity to extend the public space of the city but also as an occasion to integrate it to the multimodal transport system. The responsibility of the choice emerged in all projects. Such a choice whether it may innovative, smart or sustainable, implies the exclusion of possible alternatives, that are the synthesis and feature of the project. Among the possibilities of transformation the crisis has drawn the attention back onto the theme of necessity reinforcing the choice of the project.

Dealing with such remarkable sites allows the university experience to become a driving force of the cultural, economic and social system of the territory.

1 R. Lecardane, “Temi e progetti di architettura nella città al tempo della crisi”, in F. De Simone, R. Lecardane, A. Sarro (dir.), MODIFICAZIONI URBANE. Architetture e connessioni a Palermo, Aracne Editrice, Roma, 2017, pp. 57-61.

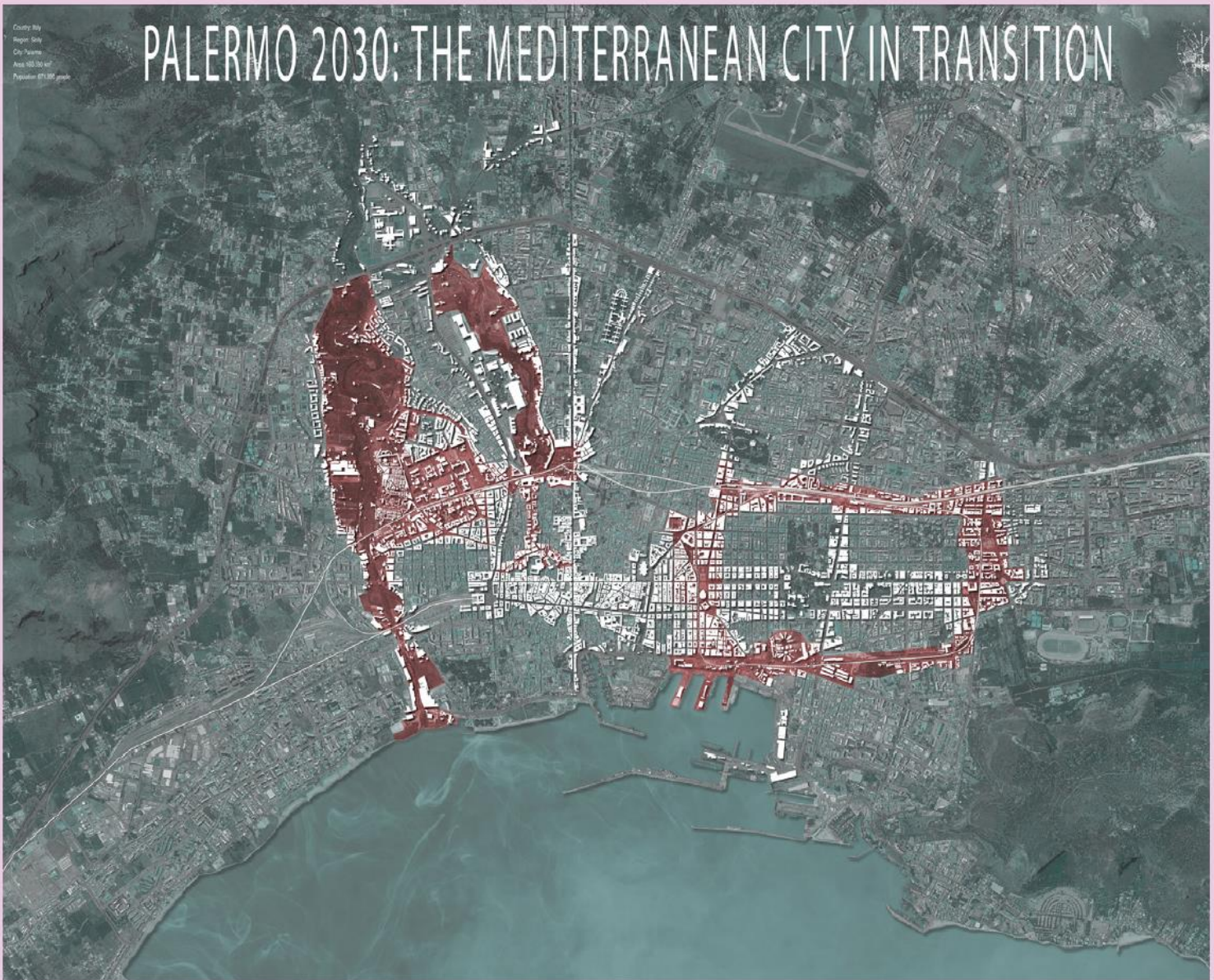
2 F. Hertweck, S. Marot (dir.), The City in the City: Berlin: A Green Archipelago, Lars Müller Publishers, Zürich, 2013.

3 R. Lecardane, I. Marotta, Multicultural City in the Mediterranean Territory. Green City Palermo 2019, in AA.VV., “Proceedings of the 7th Annual Conference of the University Network of the European Capitals of Culture”, Marseille, 2013.

4 R. Lecardane, I. Marotta, “Futurs durables pour la ville méditerranéenne. Palermo 2019: Green line / Trapani 2020: Recycle city / Marseille 2030: Effect event”, in GwennGayet-Kerguiduff, Mathilde Lavenu, Projet et Approche(s) du Temps, Ed. Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Clermont-Ferrand, Clermont-Ferrand, 2017, pp. 75-90

Country: Italy
Region: Sicily
City: Palermo
Area: 160,000 km²
Population: 671,000 people

PALERMO 2030: THE MEDITERRANEAN CITY IN TRANSITION



It depends on the community to understand the value of real resources and the necessity to reveal a synergy among the participants in the transformation of the city. In this vision, the knowledge of the cultural and social heritage of these places increases the awareness of the citizens about the actions of the institutions and to boost projects to a higher level in line with other European cities.

The awareness of the active role that the scientific community must have on the city, as well as the attention on the architectonic and patrimonial themes and the international debate contribute to stimulate fertile ideas within the designing of the city. Some new questions emerge relating to the practices, groups, individuals and new sites of the city. The complexity of situations and the multiple dimensions of the project forces us to face new challenges, imagine new ways of living and building new types of societies for the future cities. To rewrite and transform a specific context is what the city is looking for. The architecture designing project finds its own form in the reaction that it triggers in the existing city.

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Renzo Lecardane, Architect, PhD in Architectural and Urban Design (University of Palermo_UniPa) and in Urbanisme et Aménagement du Territoire (Ecole Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées-Paris), is Associate Professor in Architectural and Urban Design at the Department of Architecture, UniPA. Chercheur associé in Paris at the Laboratoire de Recherche Infrastructre Architecture Territoire-ENSA Paris Malaquais, is part of the Academic Board of Doctoral Program in Architecture - Design and Theories at the University of Rome „La Sapienza“. He has founded the Research Group LabCity Architecture (2013) which focuses on the connection between architecture, city and territory.



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