

The secret life of urban margins

(Un)released and (in)formal relations between borders and urban margins peopled by Rom communities

disuguaglianze urbane
marginari urbani
slums
città multiculturale
città aperta
comunità romani
urban inequalities
urban margins
slums
multicultural city
open city
Romani community

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Nel sistema urbano planetario in cui viviamo, le città si configurano come punti di accumulazione, producendo spazialità in riferimento all'*alterità*. Con gli effetti della mondializzazione, che vedono il configurarsi di *città-mondo* e *mondo-città* (Augé 2007) si può "osservare" una proliferazione di marginalità urbane e sociali.

Il presente contributo intende esplorare una specifica marginalità, quella della popolazione Rom, che in parte, rappresenta l'emergere in Europa del fenomeno planetario degli esclusi (Careri e Romito 2016, 80) e vive la realtà dell'encampment. Quest'ultima consta di due configurazioni spaziali – l'insediamento informale e il campo – che traducono in modo diverso il concetto di *margin* e di *confine*; il primo autocostruito e dinamico all'interno del quale si possono osservare abilità nel saper utilizzare le aree al confine con l'ordine stabilito, mentre il secondo fisso e imposto come dispositivo di controllo. E sono proprio gli spazi marginali urbani, che accolgono questi insediamenti più o meno di transizione e che spesso attivano meccanismi paradossali di fare città. Il campo tende a diventare insediamento e l'insediamento tende ad essere città, rileggendo in modo inedito le condizioni presenti.

Entrambi portano al configurarsi di realtà urbane assimilabili alle baraccopoli del sud del mondo indagate dalla maggior parte della letteratura scientifica e da cui il nord del mondo non è immune.

Nell'orizzonte teorico della città aperta e multiculturale e dell'informal urbanism – che vede nello slum un concetto spaziale utile a pensare nuovi paradigmi di progettazione (Brillembourg) – si propone una lettura, parte di una ricerca dottorale in itinere, sul carattere dei margini urbani, per un ripensamento degli stessi come luogo di sperimentazione e di superamento delle dicotomie che dominano tanto il dibattito contemporaneo quanto le realtà urbane.

In the urban system in which we live, cities are shaped as points of accumulation, generating spatiality in relation to *otherness*. With the effects of globalisation, whereby the *city-world* and the *world-city* take shape (Augé 2007), it is possible to "observe" a proliferation of urban and social marginalities.

This paper aims to explore a specific marginality, that of the Rom population, which partially represents the arising in Europe of the phenomenon of the outcasts (Careri and Romito 2016, 80) and experience of the encampment. This latter consists of two spatial configurations – the informal settlement and the encampment – that transpose the concept of *margin* and *border* in different ways; the former appears self-constructed and dynamic in which abilities can be observed in being able to use areas on the border with the established order, while the latter is fixed and imposed as a control device. And it is precisely the marginal urban spaces that accommodate these roughly transitional settlements that often activate paradoxical mechanisms of city-making. The camp becomes settlement, and the settlement becomes city, giving an unprecedented reinterpretation of the present conditions.

Both lead to the configuration of urban realities similar to the slums of the Global South explored by the majority of scientific literature and from which the Global North is not exempt.

Within the theoretical horizon of the open and multicultural city and of informal urbanism – which considers the slum as a spatial concept useful to conceive new design paradigms (Brillembourg) – we propose an interpretation, part of a doctoral research in progress, on the character of the urban margins, in order to reimagine them as a place for experimentation and for overcoming the dichotomies that dominate both the contemporary debate and urban realities.



Fig.1 – Author's collage, another way of looking at borders.

BETWEEN THE BORDERS

In the last few years, there has been a proliferation of artistic images, installations and situationists attempting to work within the concept of the border as a paradox; making it clear that this is “the place where it is easy to come across the unexpected and move, often blindly, in discomfort” (Zanini 1997, 8).

The images of the *Teeter-Totter*

Wall by Ronald Rael and Virginia San Fratello and the *Kikito* installation from JR, both on the border between Mexico and the United States, are representative of the relational power that a physical or situational device can bring to a specific border.

The construction of unprecedented forms of relationship invites those who deal with space (and not solely) to look from other perspectives at that line, which is always a two-faced space. In these two installations, there are

visible material and immaterial, formal and informal relationships between the two sides of the border - through the pink swings - and the urge to look at it from another perspective, which JR delegates to *Kikito*: a child who leans out from the wall and looks at that table that opens up an (im)material gap in the slats of the physical dividing line (Fig.1).

Here, art clarifies the need to look at the things before our eyes in another way, in order to better understand the complexity of the

contemporary world, to explore the chaos of cities and to open up a gateway into them (Agier).

Complexity and chaos are all present within the city, this has always been the place in which to read the spatialisation of human history and the machinery of union and separation, in which social inequalities become spatial, as theorised by Bernardo Secchi in his famous text *The city of the rich and the city of the poor*. Moreover, as the world's population becomes urban (UN Habitat), cities seem to take shape precisely as accumulation points of the global system, continuously producing spatiality in reference to otherness¹. The otherness, from the urban point of view, is often linked to the urban exclusion that modifies cities and shows up in the spaces of the not-yet-citizens or those who are passers-by, forgotten spaces (by planning, design, disused spaces, etc.) for those “wasted lives” that Bauman defines in his 2007 text and that shape a systemic margin (Sassen 2015).

This paper explores a precise and specific marginality, that of the Rom community, which, partially, represents the emergence in Europe of the global phenomenon of the excluded (Stalker 2016, 80) and experiences the reality of encampment in its different specifications: the informal settlement and the camp. These configurations, in different ways, translate the concept of margin and border; both lead to the configuration of urban realities comparable to the Global South's slums, investigated by most scientific literature, from which the Global North is not immune, in its marginal urban spaces.

The article presents part of a doctoral thesis still in progress - as part of the doctorate in architecture at the University of Naples Federico II, with tutor Professor Paola Scala - which aims to learn about informal settlements inhabited by Rom communities, from an urban perspective and the development of a project methodology for the areas under study.

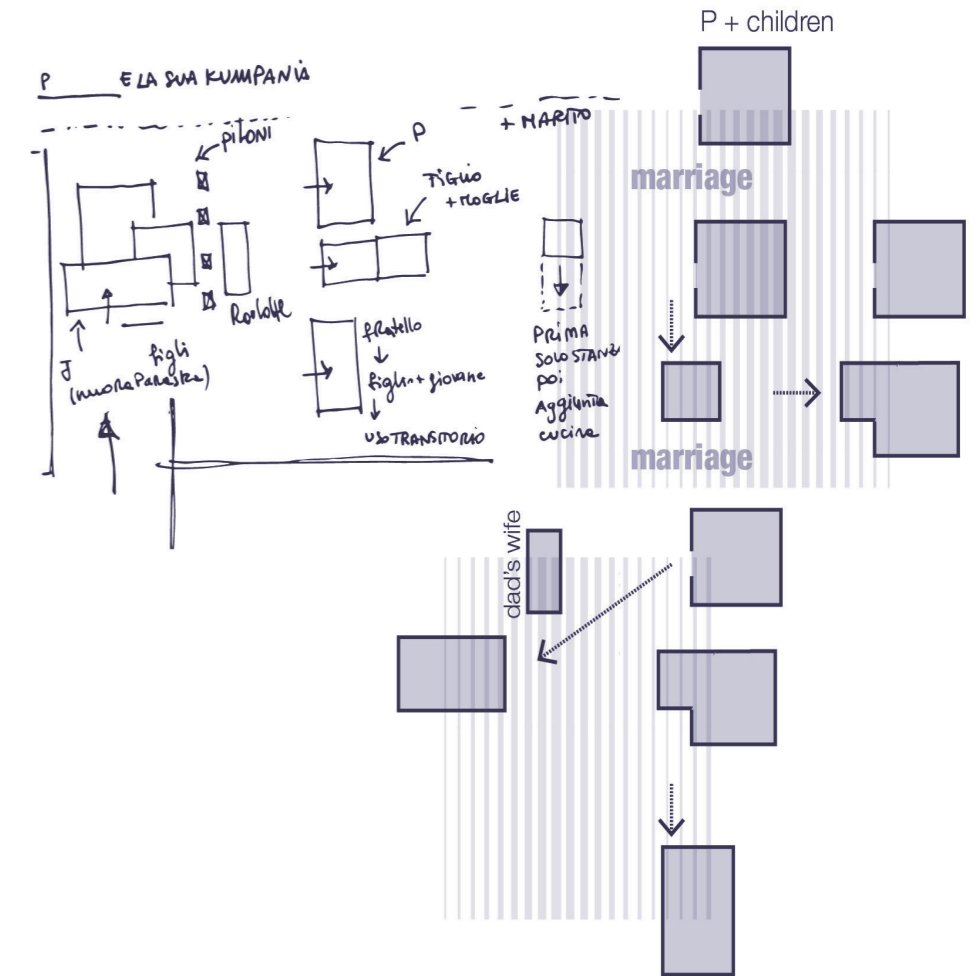


Fig.2 – Author's diagram of informal household arrangements and notes of the camp.

The research question aims to verify if and how the architectural project can learn from the informal city, in order to intervene in specific contemporary urban spaces of the European city where we observe informal living practices. Also the research work interrogate the role of the project - as device/ infrastructure - in the broader questions of the right to the city, of the disconnect between project and reality. The hypotheses on which the research is based focusses on other communities, as actors capable of interpreting a space by design, proposing alternative models of living and uses, adhering to the character of the non-places in which they settle or to which they are confined.

This hypothesis becomes concrete in the theories that envisage the transformation of a geometric space into a place in the anthropological sense, through use and by developing a social territoriality. With Rom communities,

this becomes evident in the spatialization of family networks and the separation between different groups that are forced to share parts of the city (Fig.2).

The specificity of the Rom issue makes it possible to contribute to the academic discussion on sustainable urban regeneration and on the bidonville. Slums represent one of humanity's greatest challenges and, according to Yona Friedman “they are the laboratories of the future, for a world sliding towards generalised poverty [...] they are social inventions” (2009, 99).

In the European context and space, they develop between the dominant folds of the contemporary city constructing another city, intermediate, residual, undecided and restless spaces which have exploded quantitatively and qualitatively, becoming one of the characteristic features of urban realities. In the context of this contribution, we return a part, not

complete, of a precise research tool - the observatory - built through the mapping and identification of case studies through which we work on make visible specific (in)visible and (in)formal urban conditions. More precisely, the first observed invariants are returned and also the initial criticism through the concept of margin.

It is, in fact, an experiment with the project as a tool of knowledge, which is important in order to confront (in)edited design problems [...] and the need to construct complex answers that, apart from specific issues such as housing, apply to possible and multiple future communities (Stalker 2016, 130). Moreover, it is hard not to agree on the urge to confront the project with global challenges, on the significance of the practice of architecture as caring, and in reducing, inequalities (Boano 2020).

THE MARGIN BETWEEN WORD-CITY AND CITY-WORD

The investigation is part of informal and social urbanism research line which - among others - gathers a series of design experiments that give a key role to the project that works in informal and marginal conditions, and that can generate other conditions and possibilities, without needing to consider a tabula rasa.

The slum is perceived as "an organising urban logic [...] a design problem by definition but also a research problem - it is in fact an issue that is simultaneously one of design and research." (Rao 2010, 10). We look at marginal areas because they are understood as those spaces where the 'soggetti della mente locale' ('subjects of the local mind') can fully exercise their activity, margins that can become laboratories from where we can rethink our places (La Cecla ed. 2020, 13).

The most recent architecture biennials have helped a focus on the role of design in the complex processes that dominate the now

out-of-control urban development. *Report from the front* first and then *How we can live together*, have marked contemporary research perspectives that question the connection between exclusion, social marginality and spatial structures. They show the possible role of the architectural project in the construction of multicultural and inclusive cities; reiterating that among human practices, architecture is the one that exerts the greatest responsibility for the quality of life.

In 2007, Marc Augé wrote about the effects of urbanisation and the contradictions that endlessly multiply within urban systems. He coined two terms that, almost twenty years later, are still relevant for the description, reading and interpretation of contemporary conditions, with their spatial and social implications. These are the configurations of world-city - in which there is violence, exclusion, ghettos, youth and old, different generations, immigrants, illegal immigrants: in a word, all the complexity and inequality present in the world - and world-city, which conversely incarnates all the contradictions and historical tensions generated by this system. Indeed, it is the (hyper, mega, post, no more...) city, the place where all these issues are channeled (Augé 2007, 10-12) and where human and urban changes increasingly intersect. These arguments have been reworked by many authors by rediscovering Henri Lefebvre's *Right to the City*, which identifies the city as a "superior form of right, as a right to freedom, to individualisation in socialisation, to habitat and habitation" (2014, 11), and contextualising the reasons and developments of the complex urban and housing crisis to the present time. While, in terms of form, the city grows to the point of losing its measure, the phenomena of spatialisation and re-spatialisation on a global scale involve an ongoing reconfiguration of spaces within the city. In this process of growth (and implosion), "a multitude of residual segments, grey zones [...] take shape, in which ethnic and religious minorities, new poverties,

immigrants, the marginalised and excluded sometimes settle [...]. Urban margins in uncertain expansion [...]. It is the walls of the city that become the walls in the city" (Settis 2017, 70-75). This image of walls in the city recalls that of the proliferation of margins and borders that mark the earth's surface and "produce serious inequalities between nations, regions, cities and between classes and ethnic groups", as one of the introductory panels of the last Biennale stated. The exhibition, therefore, invited to transcend borders through design.

Multiplicity and mutability express different and contradictory needs, confronting the project with new challenges. Moreover, even if contemporary phenomena concern different domains, some of them - such as migratory waves, multiculturalism, the right to the city and the sustainable urban regeneration of some degraded parts of cities where complex conditions of discard are summed up - are held together by relegation to the margin. So, the margin is a complex semiotic object that intersects many levels of reading and interpretation. It reinvents or rewrites the concept of the outskirts, no longer just as a geographical condition but as a place that becomes a space of segregation and rebellion, of exclusion and defence but also of potential redemption.

The "new" outskirts, rising on the margins of dominant systems, are made up of "out-of-place, placed on the edges or limits of the normal order of things [...] marked by confinement and a certain extraterritoriality" (Agier 2020, 102): these are informal settlements and refugee camps. A landscape of exclusion and housing crisis for subjects banned from economic, social and political circuits, self-excluded or pushed into urban marginality. On the one hand are, the excluded confined to "residential structures" on the margins of the city; on the other, those not yet absorbed by the metabolism of the generic city, who informally respond to the need for housing.

THE MARGIN AS A SPACE OF THE POTENTIAL

Paraphrasing Andrea Staid, in the introduction to his book *Abitare illegale* (2017) he writes that: The margins, which I have tried to investigate both bibliographically and ethnographically are many and different from each other. The first major distinction [...] is between those who live in the margins by choice and create, redefine their spaces and those who are forced into the margins and enact rituals of resistance [...]. In both cases one can pause, and he does so in the text, to understand the possibilities of informal living.

For those dealing with space, this renewed perspective opens up otherwise unexplored possibilities. Within the architectural and urban discipline, the possibilities of informal living are described by A. Brillembourg², who defines informality from three points of view: human as it implies conditions of poverty and discomfort; theoretical by attempting to analyse informality as a complex system that can change in relation to certain factors; and finally from the point of view of the project by considering it as an opportunity to create an urban laboratory able to identify hypotheses for intervention in these contexts. It is about reading, describing and interpreting the thickening of the urban margins where something happens. To obtain a complete reading of the urban margins, it is necessary to incorporate a literature of the social margins, but the physical description is only the starting point that then expands to gather news, stories, reports, anthropological research, inspections, interviews, etc... To do this, the observatory has worked with a specific cases-study, and it is made up of two parts, a first one providing complex descriptions and a second one, the first results of which are presented here, which constitutes an initial inventory of invariants and variations.

The cases were elaborated with a multi layering approach that

discretises the eclectic description and circumscribes the framework within which the research moves, the urban one. Also referring to the latter, the layers of knowledge overlap and, for this paper, the specific reading of the margin - as a "physical and symbolic space of transition: space that surrounds something, that happens at its end, that is in-between; space that filters and allows the passage from one state to another, from one place to another; space that triggers or can trigger relations" (Amore 2020, p.120) - is a first invariant and is linked to urban (in)relations. Thus, we "narrate" the inhabitation of the margins on the margins of rom communities, both as zenithal as well as the flaneur's vision.

Crossing points of view, the paradoxes of the margins are made evident through the iconographic apparatus. This is composed by photographic manipulations, collages and diagrams that simultaneously become tools for thoughts and descriptions. The construction of the observation brings together different tools that make up the eclectic gaze: remote mapping, explorations with Google Earth, bibliographic explorations, breaking news, inspections and dialogues with inhabitants or privileged interlocutors. It traces its theoretical origins back to the season of eclectic atlases: "investigation tools of the relationship between space and society, made up of heterogeneous materials which reveal new relationships within the elements of physical space and refer to unusual words, terms often unrelated to those proper to the disciplinary tradition but capable of referring to more effective images in the description and interpretation of the phenomena observed" (Scala 2021). The proposed results relate to the field of knowledge from the architect's point of view and aim to fill the information gap of spatial thinking, albeit partially.

A clarification must be made: all the conditions being described today are obviously 'of the moment' and could change as this is being written because in informal

morphologies there is a strong temporal dimension concerning the processes of incremental adaptation to the small scale.

THE MARGIN AS A SPACE OF THE ROM MISCONCEPTION

"There is a paradox of a proliferation of borders, material and immaterial, physical and symbolic. Boundaries break down, become heterogeneous and mobile and are rebuilt everywhere. [...] for the future of cities: identities, cultural differences, citizenships, forms of coexistence. Within these spaces, there is a new articulation of cultural, ethnic and national identities. In this context, cities provide the space in which emerging forms of citizenship are experienced. The city can generate a material and symbolic sense of belonging [...]. Here it becomes possible to exert the right to the city, the possibility for citizens to take control of urban space, understood in its material and immaterial, relational and symbolic dimensions." - F. Careri.

Generally speaking, marginality can be described as a condition in which a subject/group/territory is close to the limit of the system to which it belongs. Roma marginality is emblematic of this definition, and we deal with these communities and their settlements because they are paradigmatic of the denial of the right to the city and of urban expulsions, just think of the notices issued in cities to get such people out of the walls.

They are a population that defies the concept of the nation-state, and despite extreme difficulties, resists, planning and enacting survival strategies, the spatial configurations of which we can observe in informal settlements, in the occupations of abandoned factories, etc. Investigating the rom issue involves coming to terms with the uncertainty of quantitative data.

Information is very elusive and much of the phenomenon is invisible numerically, while it

becomes (roughly) visible in urban reality. While it is true that there is a lack of data, an important gap in knowledge is to be found above all in the spatial aspects of living conditions that have persisted in specific urban transects for several decades and which are suggested here through the interpretative key of the limit and the margin.

Exclusion and marginalisation can be observed in the construction of ghettos in Bucharest, in the anti-rom walls in Slovakia, in the expulsions from historical centres in Romania, in informal settlements and in the Italian "Rom issue". In Europe, in particular, the proliferation of bidonvilles depends on the migration crisis and the concrete reality experienced by rom people in most European countries tells of a paradox: that of a people who are not allowed to settle down and who are instead forced to live in the waste (spaces) of non-nomadic citizens (Orta 2010). While they were considered nomads, they were migrants, refugees and, in some cases, stateless. Thus, Rom are migrants who have built bidonvilles, with a longer persistence than the short-lived migrants from other countries and different conditions. Slums became highly visible in the local political debate of the early 2000s to the point of triggering the Rom emergency³. The emergency attempted to give a formal response to the slums, instead what happened was the dislocated creation of camps. Often ignored, rendered invisible or left to live in a tolerated manner in the name of housing cultures that relegated them to the margins; when considered, they were more enclosed and excluded from urban systems. Emblematic of this is the case of Rome, which relocated entire communities outside the GRA ring road and replaced parts of the self-built city with inhuman, fenced and guarded camps (Fig.3).

Among informal shanty towns and authorised camps, Italy was named *Country of the Camps by the European Roma Rights Centre*, as it had invested more than any other country in the creation of camps, which excluded and marginalised.



Fig.3 - Author's expulsions.

Regarding this, it should be pointed out that generally in dealing with the issue of "spaces for the excluded", architecture and the urban dimension were not taken into account for several years, while today, as the latest strategy document⁴ testifies, there is a re-evaluation of the housing questions. In particular, there is reference to the possibility of reflecting on a "wide range of housing solutions. [...] Favouring the coexistence of different, complementary and multiple solutions [...] considering [...] the need to provide meeting and temporary living spaces for certain groups on occasion. There is a need to experiment with coexistence, different and multiple solutions considering the requirements of the inhabitants". This new project questions that and suggests the possibility of reinterpreting what exists and takes place in marginal spaces. Instability and uncertainty, exclusion from the social fabric and the impossibility of integration, have brought about a transformation of "certain corners of the city, often hidden, almost invisible to the gaze of passers-by (which) are gradually transformed, until they become stable points of reference. Nurtured and cared for by their inhabitants, dwellings in their own right" (Staid 2017, 9) (Fig.4).

INHABITING THE MARGIN ON THE EDGE

"The Athens Charter has progressively been replaced by the Charter of Survival [...] when in town, do as the slum dwellers do" with these statements, Y. Friedman (2009) seems to anticipate contemporary conditions.

As a matter of fact, the Rom slums are just a fragment of the universe of camps that populate our planet: camp-institutions - political devices - and informal settlements that structure themselves by self-organising and referring to the *familje*, shaping adaptive, flexible systems that we could define as open. Both are associated with being on the social and urban margin and, as F. Floris (2011) explains, "entering a slum is not easy, it is not easy in Africa or Brazil but not even in Italy. Over there it is the colour that blocks you, here it is the place itself: its barriers, its abandonment, its geographical marginality, but that is not all."

We present the different conditions of inhabiting the margin on the edge in relation to rom communities through the



Fig.4 - Photographic frames 2022.



Fig.5 - Author's diagram from camp to settlement to city.

metropolitan city of Naples.

The rom population in the metropolitan city of Naples has been present for quite some time and is, as in the rest of Italy, around 0.22-23% of the local population. However, these are only approximate assumptions; the only more plausible information dates back to 2008 when the Berlusconi government issued emergency ordinances in Campania, Lazio and Lombardia. At that time, the prefectures organised a census of the rom camps, complete with fingerprinting. It was clear from the data collected that these were not real numbers, as all those who feared fingerprinting did not turn up. The metropolitan city of Naples "hosts" several emblematic conditions of living on the margin: the camp (administrative solution), the camp verging on becoming a settlement, the informal settlement tending to become a city, and the occupation of a disused industrial enclosure (Fig.5).

And if "a border is a line but also a paradox and an element of ongoing change" (Granata 2012, 49), the different urban characters and (in)edited relations are explored through the investigation of the (in)tra/visible cities⁵.

It swings between two poles, architecture without architecture and architecture without architects, but the least common denominator remains the construction of invisibility that happens across borders.

"The border is the place of antinomy: it both divides and unites, separates and retains, aggregates and distances, assigns a dwelling and establishes otherness, distinguishes and is a front of meanings. Borders represent the actual condition of our existences, the place where our identities find expression and verification. Inhabiting a place requires the experience and experience of borders, of margins. At the same time, borders are the ground where antagonisms and conflicts originate. They either lead to separations or to encounters with otherness. Borders keep the other out of our space, at the same time they allow relationships to open up" (Granata 2012, 51).

Although the intravisible is a construct shared by all forms of encampment, the two poles - camp and settlement - originate with two totally different logics, the settlement makes itself invisible to ensure its enduring existence, while

the camp is made invisible by urban expulsion.

The orderly collection of samples (campionario) is needed to identify possible design themes for the interaction between parts of the city and communities that coexist in the complex contemporary urban system.

As far as the urban scale is concerned, the (in)tra/visible cities are structured in transects in which different levels of criticality and hazard follow one another and overlap. The spaces in which these spatial conditions are embedded can be defined through the concept of borderlands: frontier areas where different spheres are activated and interact (Sassen 2006). The definitions and viewpoints for focusing on these fragments of the urban landscape are provided to us by a substantial literature on marginal spaces associated with a theoretical exploration of other spaces - *heterotopias* of crisis and deviation (Foucault ed. 2011, 25).

Many terms have been coined in the last decades to describe these "kind of spaces": non-places (Augé 1992), terrain vague (Solà-Morales 1996), junk space (Koolhaas 2006), third landscape (Clément 2004), waste land and drosscape

(Berger 2006)... For an exhaustive examination of the authors' key interpretations, please refer to the individual definitions, but what is fascinating is the reasoning on marginal spaces, now also defined as intermediate spaces, catalysts for change (Kamalipour), useful to identify the unprecedented possibilities of interpretation and design. However, in order to understand and design marginal places, it is necessary [...] to develop tools to read residual spaces (Marini 2010). Whether they are called marginal areas, urban fringes, boundary landscapes, these spaces that are not easily accessible, take on a singular significance due to their ambiguous nature of separation, encounter and regulation of mechanisms of exchange and their visibility in relation to the rest of the city.

The (non)relationship with the rest of the city is defined, at a basic level, by urban relations, proximity to other spaces and distance to city services (Fig.6).

In relation to the sample of cases taken into consideration, we identify:

- The proximity to infrastructures, especially to elevated roads and infrastructural which, as in the cases of Cupa Perillo, Cantariello and the recent Barra settlements, which are used as elements of shelter and reference for the settlement. The linear development of the infrastructure element allows an "arrangement" of the dwellings below the viaduct, redefining and reinterpreting that otherwise blank space. The thickness of the viaduct and the of the pylons allow for the settlement of extended families and the construction of a certain invisibility. Furthermore portions of the viaducts are positioned at the margins of city edges, along the arteries connecting different urban centres. Moreover, the settlements connect the differences that exist on either side of the infrastructural "line", metabolising them within the informal configuration. In contrast, in the case of Secondigliano and Mastellone, the road axes configure the urban repelling limits. Especially

in Secondigliano, the high-speed road is added to the presence of the camp wall, thus configuring a double condition of exclusion that distances the inside of the camp from everything that is city.

- The proximity to decommissioned (and not) specialized territories, such as at Cupa Perillo for the former milk plant that may never have come into operation, or at Cantariello with its nearness to several commercial districts. Again, in Giugliano, the proximity to the ASI area also worsens the already severely compromised environmental conditions. These dislocations are the urban metaphor of the margins; where the dislocated twentieth-century city functions and where housing conditions outside the city centre are added to the mix.

- The proximity to other heterotopias of the city as in Via del Riposo where to the already enclosed cemetery, is added an administration camp which generates enclaves that seem to repel each other through walls and changes in altitude - even at Cantariello which is located in the same district as the cemetery of the municipality of Casoria, and again at Secondigliano where the municipal camp is placed in close proximity to the Poggioreale prison. To the places of twentieth-century expulsions - prisons, cemeteries, asylums, etc. - are added those of contemporary expulsions.

Apart from Via del Riposo, which is embedded in a highly urbanised context even though it is on the edge of the historic city, the others graft on where the city is squeezed along the edges between conurbations. The case of Cinquevie is indicative of this condition; it is only visible when travelling along a provincial road that connects Afragola to Caivano as far as Caserta. Cut off from any neighbouring urban centre, grafted into the agricultural fabric between Caivano, Afragola and Acerra. These conditions of confinement, marginality and proximity to other conditions are configured as invariants and are also present in other cities where these "shanty

towns under our homes" proliferate, such as in Rome, Milan and Turin. This identifies the urge, therefore, to introduce reasoning at a larger scale that takes into account entire urban transects.

In addition to the scale of urban (non)relations, other invariants are identified that particularly reduce the difference between border and margin.

From field to settlement, the boundary line seems increasingly thickened. The time variant, especially with regard to the settlements, leads to a continuous reconfiguration of the margins. For example, reconstructing the Cupa Perillo's morphogenesis: the settlement first occupied the space available under the viaduct that dominates the area between Scampia and Mugnano. As the number of people and families grew, the settlement moved towards the free margins and towards the road that leads from Scampia's centre to Cupa Perillo, but always maintaining a certain distance from the latter and from the urban system. It has, therefore, occupied the buffer zone of the elevated road while maintaining a certain distance from the limits that would have been more visible. The Mastellone's morphogenesis also implies a similar logic. The settlement developed close to the motorway and pushed towards some farmland. The first nucleus settled at the furthest point from the motorway, and only when it had to expand, did it achieve visibility from the infrastructural axis and also built an elevation (Fig.7).

The strong, constructed border of the camp. The camp, born as a control device, is a space cut off from the city system, sometimes even being inside it as in the case of Via del Riposo. It is hence surrounded by a wall, a reinforced concrete fence that regulates the exchange with the city through a single opening. The camp archetype is a fenced-in military camp, for the form it has been configured as a space of organised exclusion. The fence works to separate what is inside and outside, between us and

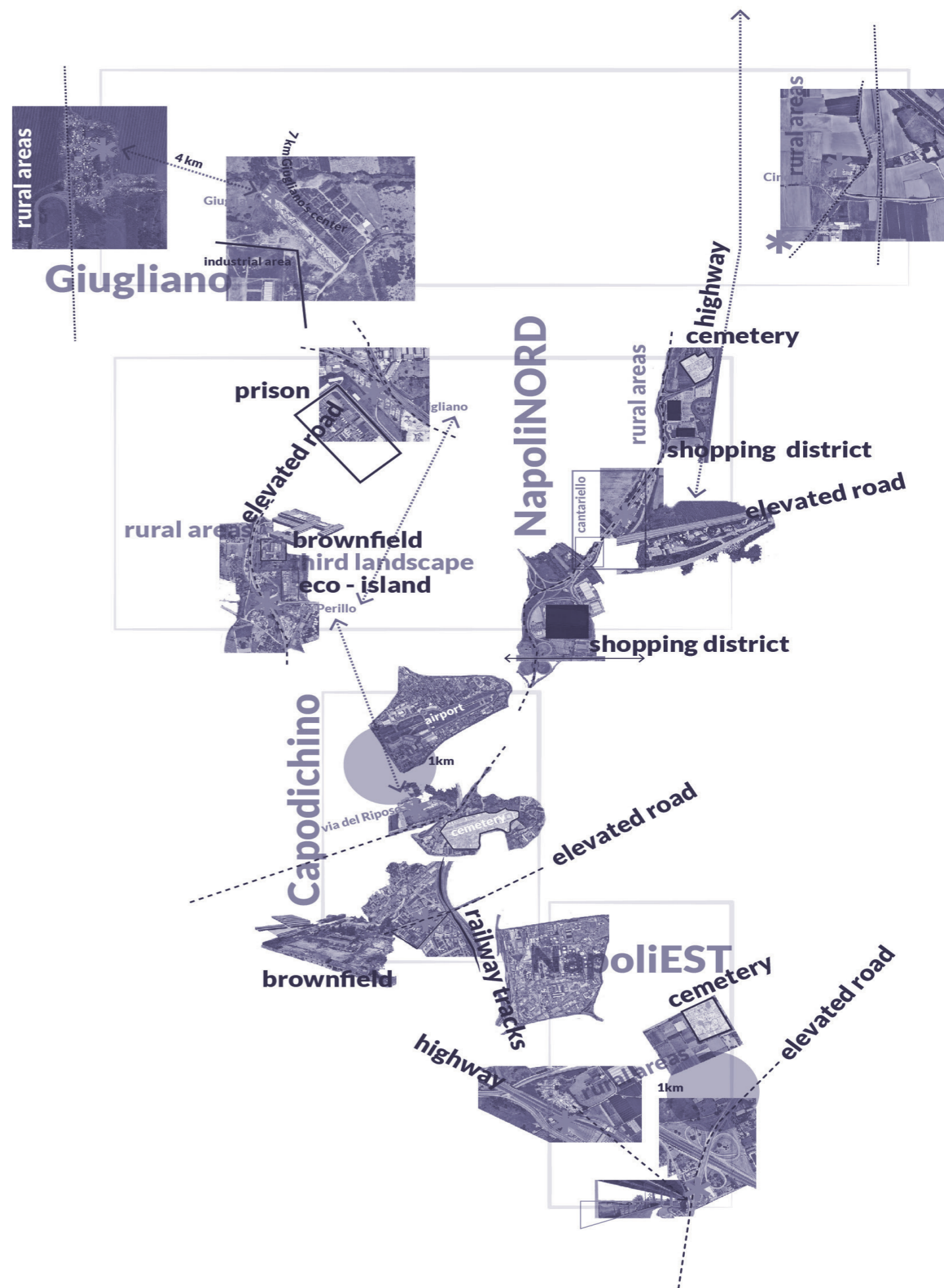


Fig.6 - Author's map with places and spaces of proximity.

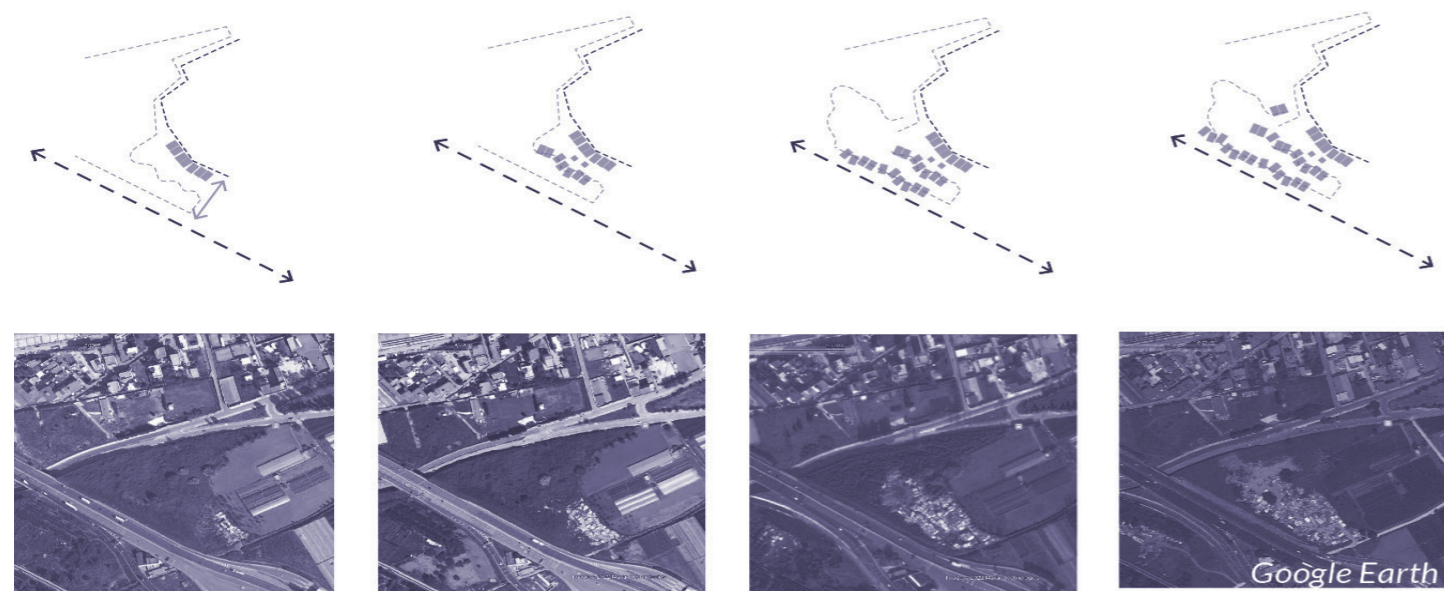


Fig.7 - Author's morphogenesis diagram and picture.

others. The strong line of the border refers to the construction of mental, cultural, religious, ideological, normative, sexual fences. Each with its own possible and concrete spatial projection. Thinking about a border and building a fence means inventing a sphere and enclosing it, circumscribing it through elements that highlight its dimension, its form, its functions. (Zanini 1997, 75). Frequently, as in the case of Secondigliano, the enclosure of the camp is further isolated through the succession of other fences such as at the elevated road and the Secondigliano prison. Islands surrounded by walls where relative points are absent; even in Via del Riposo, the camp's wall comes close to the presence of the cemetery's borders and, walking past, there is no perception of life within those walls. In Giugliano, as in Cinquevie, the fence rises in vacant lands, already marginal spaces compared to the development of urban centres; an unnecessary enclosure in which a specific community is relegated.

In the first case it is impossible to see it from the driveway that serves the circulation inside the city, in the second case it is outside any anthropised system, in a strongly rural context with only one connecting artery. Both the authorised camps in Giugliano and Cinquevie - which are surrounded by a strong line - have informal satellites outside the wall. Probably the very nature of vacant land has allowed the development of self-built settlements that look like the beginning of a possible new city. In Giugliano, in the area of the fenced and authorised camp (in which no inspections have yet been carried out), micro-family 'grafts' are being set up, living without any kind of service or connection with other urban forms. The buffer zone between the camp fence and the ASI zone has been reconfigured as the space "of the latter", those expelled from the large informal settlement nearby and those who have not had access to the space inside the fence. In Cinquevie, on the other hand, along the road axis that serves the camp, family units have

grafted themselves onto the road and repurposed some agricultural land by proposing the clustered occupation of these plots; they have pushed as far as the motorway that passes through Caserta and Naples, making themselves invisible to a watchful eye. When the field goes over the wall, new intermediate spaces are constructed, between what is formal and what is not, between the fence and the settlement, between the settlement and the road, etc (Fig.8).

In the camps' surroundings, rigid configurations are proposed, and over time there is a process of the humanization of spaces and of manipulation to re-construct relational spaces of family ties, spaces that separate and prevent the cohabitation of different *famiglie*. Moreover, the dimensions of the containers are manipulated as they are not designed to accommodate families that on average comprise 6-8 people. The space of the camp does not take into account the spatial construction of the extended family, the spaces of community

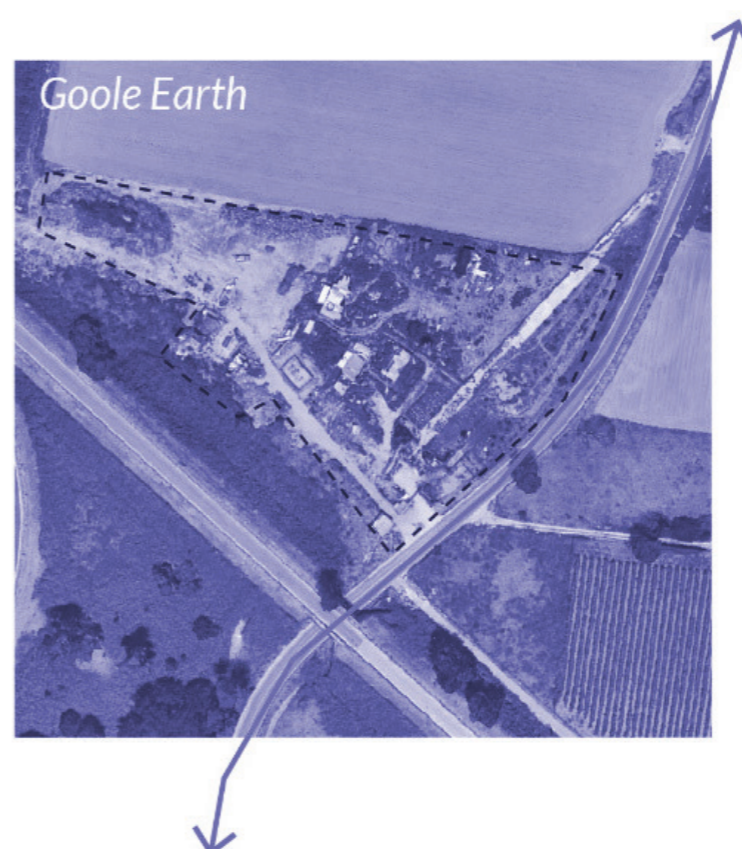


Fig.8 - Author's diagrams with fences and trespassing.

and relationship with the rest of the city.

The enclosure can rarely be manipulated. Friedman (2003,106) suggests how it can be “exclusively reserved for one person who uses it for various purposes; meant to be open to many; reserved for only one kind of object or equipment”. The camp tends to become a settlement, as witnessed by the emblematic case of Calais, where in-formal life took possession of the space in an anti-geometric manner, adapting to the orographic features and the landscape.

The settlements’ margins have a much more porous character and dilate. The line becomes a thickness that hosts relationships’ and defines levels of visibility.

An informal configuration inhabits a marginal space leaving a built, infrastructural or natural edge. These margins, however, are all configured as strong, that is, not only visually prominent but also continuous in form and impenetrable in crossing (Lynch, 1960). In the case of Cantariello, the margin is an intersection of infrastructural bundles; in fact, between an elevated road, a junction and several connecting roads, the settlement has been located there for about thirty years, totally embedded into waste spaces and buffer strips. In Cupa Perillo, on the other hand, the margins are of varying thickness and, although they are built, natural and infrastructural, together they define the settlement’s lack of relationship with the road. A complete perception of the dwellings, in fact, only occurs when one is at a point that is already inside the settlement. The accesses along the edges regulate the mechanisms of exchange. In fact the main road, Viale della Resistenza becomes the axis from which more capillary routes that serve each cluster unwind. In the case of Mastellone, on the other hand, the edges have strongly modified with the evolution of the settlement. Besides the motorway, which clearly remains stationary, the first configuration of the settlement was surrounded

by greenery and green spaces that, in fact, defined its margins. As the settlement expanded, the houses consumed the margins which, as far as possible, remained as a buffer with the motorway. And whilst the borders are rigid lines where manipulation can take place within or over the wall, the margins of the settlements are more spasmodic and accommodate the evolution of the slum.

Within an informal settlement, in fact, the margin, as a device, is configured at different scales and takes on different roles in its development; in a slum it is also a privileged position where different conditions meet. In the slums, the public dimension is given to the space that is not home. In a settlement such as a favela this results in streets and interstitial spaces that remain empty. In the Rom slums what is not home returns various levels of publicness, managed with the presence of margins, baffles and borders. The outermost elements define the degrees of visibility; once inside, the most defined boundaries are those between different *kumpanie*, the streets between family enclosures become everyone’s and, therefore, no-one’s spaces, so they also become spaces of conflict.

Crossing a family border, there is an intermediate, semi-public space that functions as a living border between the family’s outside and inside. From this space the houses are entered, guests are welcomed and the thresholds of the houses are intertwined. The threshold space in front of each house, a baffle between inside and outside, is marked by a carpet, a different flooring, a canopy or a piece of furniture; it establishes the osmosis between the living area of the house and the outside, which, in fact, during the day is all one. Between borders, thresholds and edges... all the way down to the final separation of living and sleeping areas of houses, the architecture of survival takes shape. Settlements take root, welcome different communities and become pieces of the city, or better said, paradoxical mechanisms of city-making.

The Casilino 900’s case in Rome is significant because looking at it from above, it appeared to be a piece of the city, born with different logics that responded flexibly to the needs of the inhabitants, it was a 40-year-old piece of the city, then replaced with containers... This is also what happens in Calais where, at some point, a real temporary city is set up with “neighbourhoods”, streets, services and collective spaces. It is the settlement that becomes a city.

The camp and the settlement can be traced back to the concepts of Deleuze and Guattari in the opposition between smooth and striped space, between nomadic and sedentary space, and challenge the limits of architectural and urban design.

URBAN MARGINS’ SECRET LIFE AND PERSPECTIVE

This research work investigates and unveils the secret life of the urban margins. It has involved stumbling upon a complex concatenation of short-circuits related to being in reality. What we try to focus on is the project’s possibility of having a relationship with social, economic, political factors etc... without which the work would have no real dimension. There are many invisible threads for Rom communities, legal, administrative, legislative and urban planning issues, which are outside the remit of urban design. However, this does not preclude the emergence of design research questions. If, for different criteria, including invisibility, some families do not have the requirements to qualify for social housing, can architecture’s answer only be the camp? Or can we imagine a public infrastructure for living that would accommodate unforeseen uses, different communities? The study of invariants enables precisely the identification of design themes and the understanding of what the informal city suggests. Architects have been interested in the world’s shantytowns, starting with Turner, Friedman, Constant... and

in recent years this theme has acquired a new urgency due to the urbanisation of the planet and the migrations that resettle people and bring out new design questions. Teddy Cruz demonstrates through *Living at the Border* that it is possible to build a multifunctional urban space according to the needs of the population. Flexible dwellings shared communal places and spaces that catalyse new possibilities for the neighborhood.

For the specificity of the Neapolitan case study, even if one imagines a relocation in economic and social housing, with the criteria on which this is based, where are the spaces for the extended family located? Or spaces for rituals, meetings, occasions and, in general, the uses that different communities can have? Can we perhaps learn from informal configurations? In the “Housing - Paraisopolis” project, in having to plan the relocation of a number of communities living in a portion of favelas under severe conditions of housing emergency, C. Kerez recognises and reinterprets the characteristics of a favela and re-proposes them in the project. While, on the scale of the European city, “La Balba cooperative housing” from Lacol and LaBoquería, constructs a bridge building for families involved in a process of social integration and does so by articulating flexible and extendable housing and proximity spaces.

The project, in reading and interpreting existing configurations can, therefore, work on the dual physical and social edge, providing... through catalysing elements, meeting spaces and “inventing” ways of making the city for all.

Awareness of these settlement patterns makes it possible to identify new possible architectural devices that shift the project’s objective from a purely formal outcome to an open strategy that stems from a reading of contexts. We can image work around borders and using informal settlement as a project’s reference. Questions remain open, one among them, how do we ‘inhabit’ the short-circuit between formal and informal?

In asking these questions, the project focuses on the possibilities of the project with respect to real issues and their observation and description, then interpretation.

“The life of multiple and changing communities, expressing different and often contradictory needs, has confronted design with new challenges. Architecture as infrastructure is the one that seeks new spaces of benefit, more closely adapted to contemporary conditions, with the total awareness that the scope of these possible utilities is, and always will be, above all political and that it is therefore necessary to assume responsibility for them. [...] can architecture, in short, effectively be an infrastructure for living? Can it, that is, learn to grasp, as the Chinese tacticians did, the potential of the situation in order to build the conditions for other things to be born, to grow, to live? (Pone 2021, 27).

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NOTES

1. The anthropological tradition has related the matter of otherness to that of space, because the processes of symbolisation implemented by social groups needed to understand and dominate space in order to understand and organise themselves. Otherness in an era in which nomads are forced into the sedentary way of life and in which rural dwellers are transformed into the suburbs, it is precisely the category of place that blurs and that makes it more difficult to conceive of the other; today the category of the other has become confused, unable to think of the other, one constructs the stranger.
2. Alfred Brillembourg is co-founder of U-TT (Urban Think Tank), an interdisciplinary architectural and urban design group founded in 1993 in Caracas. They develop projects and research on architecture and urbanism, focusing in particular on the interaction between the formal and informal spheres of the city.
3. In 2008, the Italian government headed by Romano Prodi declared a ‘state of emergency in relation to the settlements of nomadic communities in the territory of the regions of Campania, Lazio and Lombardy’.
4. National Strategy for Rom and Sinti Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2021-30.
5. By n (in)tra/visible cities of Naples, we refer to those of which we are so far aware and which are known as follows: Cupa Perillo, Cantariello, Campo Secondigliano, Via del riposo, Campo and settlement Cinquevie, settlement Mastellone (now destroyed), the new satellites of Barra and the four camps of Giugliano. The names are deliberately generic and not always referable to specific parts of the city.