The Planetary Garden. Cultivating Coexistence

Manifesta 12 Palermo explores coexistence in a world moved by invisible networks, transnational private interests, algorithmic intelligence and ever-increasing inequalities through the unique lens of Palermo — a crossroads of three continents in the heart of the Mediterranean. Closely collaborating with Palermitan partners, Manifesta 12 coinhabits Palermo, an ideal place to investigate the challenges of our time and look for traces of possible futures.
"I think it was Paulo Freire who said that education is functioning as a bridge. The collaboration with the Education department of Manifesta 12 made me think about this sentence often, as a confirmation on how many important resources are working here [in Palermo] and how we would need to avoid remaining an oasis, but instead try to connect, get to know each other, work together and share goals. I'm thinking about the work we have done in the group of the Social Innovation Map that tells about operators and activists who work on an actual crossroad of disciplines combining art, education and social intervention. It was nice to discover from those who have been travelling around Europe, that Manifesta has chosen to investigate and experiment these new hybrid forms of cultural work and this has given me energy, courage and awareness to continue along the path started."

Cristina Alga
Cultural Manager, Educator, Activist

"The Mediation programme in Manifesta 12 responds both to local requests for new practices and approaches, as well as recent curatorial developments, by integrating mediation within the artistic projects from the initial stage. The emphasis on social and ethical responsibility is the result of challenges that cultural institutions face operating in economically and educationally impoverished neighbourhoods. Our approach was reflected in contributing to existing infrastructures and resources, investigating both slow-moving institutional policies and resilient grassroots initiatives."

Yana Klichuk
Manifesta's Head of Education and Learning
Manifesta 12 Palermo Education and Mediation
Introduction
Yana Klichuk

This booklet gives an overview of the entire life cycle of the Education and Mediation programme of Manifesta 12 Palermo. Starting two years before the opening of the biennial, the Mediation programme aimed at building the ground and getting into a dialogue with the context of the city which was waiting for Manifesta. The overview explains the research methodology, ambitions and challenges of co-creation, it presents projects and activities as well as notes on future development of particular education and mediation initiatives of Manifesta 12.

The education team is the first to begin developing programmes in a host city of Manifesta. The programmes in Palermo derived from conversations, extensive field research, sociocultural and educational mapping, pilot community projects, and projects at schools developed collaboratively with artists and associations and conducted during the two years prior to the opening of the biennial. The Education and Mediation programme aimed to enhance Manifesta 12 by broadening and engaging diverse audiences, catalysing viable community projects, developing and legitimising new educational methodologies and implementing participatory models in a responsible and meaningful way.

The development of the programme started in 2016 and followed the principles of co-design, sharing protagonism with local partners in decision-making and creative processes. The programme of Manifesta 12 emerged from the field research and experimental pilot collaborations with educators and students, associations, social workers and artists. This approach is based on attempts to share the decision-making, creation and mediation processes, which can never be fully ascertained, but reflected in the continuous process of trying.
Inside Education
Manifesta 12
16.06-04.11.18
Palermo, Italy
Expanded research was crucial in order to situate the project within the city and its urban and social contexts, and to identify the potential role of Manifesta alongside existing cultural and socio-educational entities. The education research was conducted in parallel with the Manifesta 12 Palermo Urban Study and the curatorial research. It began in 2016 with socio-cultural mapping and field research in various neighbourhoods. Continuous mapping sessions resulted in an overview of active grassroots initiatives of the city, having strong social, cultural or educational impact in the neighbourhoods of Palermo. Many of these initiatives became collaborators in educational and artistic projects of Manifesta 12 and the most prominent practices were included in the Social Innovation Map of Palermo (see p. 14). More than 150 people were interviewed during Research Journey — a field trip in the neighbourhoods of the city — and the research trip became an important tool to reach out to potential audiences for Manifesta 12 in the neighbourhoods, and understand their perspectives on the cultural and the social context of the periphery of Palermo.

Similar to botanical gardeners, Manifesta 12 Gardeners are caretakers who are cultivating the coexistence of visitors’ opinions around the biennial. Having witnessed the growth of the Manifesta 12 Palermo projects, they shared their knowledge and inquired about the experiences of the audience.

The team of M12 Gardeners was composed of eight young professionals — the major part coming from Palermo — bringing together local knowledge with international experiences in various fields such as architecture, dramaturgy, archaeology, photography, dance, art research and education. The training of the group started four months before the opening of the biennial by developing tools and background information through workshops, reading sessions, meetings with artists and curators and methodological and content research.

The Gardeners were responsible for all guided tours, workshops, activities of the Manifesta 12 Education Hub, and Family Days, involving children, students, teachers, families, schools, local and international art professionals, as well as communities of Palermo.

8,925 people participated in 822 tours with Manifesta 12 Gardeners. 40% of all the tours were free of charge, including schools’ and social tours, open and special tours in the neighbourhoods for individual visitors.

Vera Mormino
Manifesta 12 Gardener

"Manifesta made me reconcile with myself, my city, with my past, and with the hateful and painful things I experienced as Palermitan in my life because of our bloody history of Mafia. Now I have a more complex understanding of the identity of my city, maybe more connected also to the rest of the global dynamics of power."

Bianca Maria Fasiolo
Manifesta 12 Gardener

"On the one hand, I experienced Palermo from the point of view of Manifesta, and so how an international institution like M12 can read through the lines of such a complex and layered city. On the other, I could discuss extensively with Palermitans, Italians and foreign visitors about the identity of this place, collecting personal impression and analysis, understanding and deconstructing stereotypes, always learning from the intuitions and the impressions of the others."
"After the mediation in Palazzo Butera (Uriel Orlow), I’m often clearly emotionally involved; until the point that my voice brakes and my eyes are wet. I apologize to visitors, but often in the end they thank me to be so authentic in my mediation, as a gift shared with them. I think revolution can only start from a more human approach, from below, dialoguing sincerely and focus on the common urgencies of this out of control world. Sharing visions with people from different parts of the world about global urgent topics is a huge enrichment."

Vera Mormino
Manifesta 12 Gardener

For the first time in Manifesta, the education space of the biennial was not isolated in one of the exhibition venues but was turned into a travelling education platform connecting the programme of Manifesta 12 with the neighbourhoods of Palermo, reaching out to its inhabitants and diverse communities.

The Education Hub was set up in a city bus, radically transformed by the students of the University of Palermo (Industrial Design course) and Academy of Fine Arts (Graphic Design course) under the guidance of Madrid-based architectural bureau ENORME Studio and with the involvement of the M12 artists’ collective Fallen Fruit. The programme of site-specific interventions of the Education Hub, including a series of thematic workshops, community events and open-air screenings of M12 video artworks, was carried out by M12 Gardeners in collaboration with the local associations. The workshops were developed together with several M12 artists: Malin Franzen, Leone Contini, Filippo Minelli and Fallen Fruit.

The main challenge of the project was to activate in a limited timeframe social and educational networks of the neighbourhoods which are lacking cultural opportunities and community engagement. Taking this into consideration, to many of the neighbourhoods the bus came back several times.

Over the duration of the biennial, the Education Hub made forty-one-day stops in sixteen neighbourhoods of Palermo, involving thirty associations and schools and reaching out to 3,500 people. Following the agreement between Manifesta, the Municipality of Palermo and public transport company AMAT, the bus will remain at the disposal of local non-profit associations for mobile educational and cultural projects.
Manifesta 12 Education Hub
Workshops at Parco Uditore
© CAVE Studio
Social Innovation Map

The map presents information on the city’s most dynamic grassroots initiatives of culturally driven social innovation and offers walking tours in places and neighbourhoods guided by local inhabitants. The project seeks to highlight local initiatives that play a major role in social transformation through art and culture in Palermo. The initiatives and locations are spread out all over the city. The map was created by the Manifesta 12 Education department in collaboration with Local Advisory Group of professionals operating in the social and cultural fields of Palermo. An online map as well as its 5,000 printed copies were published for the opening of Manifesta 12.
Dialogue between cultural organizations and the institutes of formal education in Palermo still has a spontaneous nature. Cultural associations and artists face challenges in collaborating with schools and finding a common language with the teachers. The same can be said in reverse. Through the Schools projects the Manifesta 12 Education department made an attempt to create a sustainable collaboration between educators, students, teachers, local creatives, activists and civil servants and act as a mediator. The results of this experience have been discussed at the Education Club, the international education conference, organized in October 2018 in Palermo.

In addition to the vast programme of the biennial presentations in schools and free tours with M12 Gardeners, it was important to involve schools in the development process of the Manifesta 12 education programme. This process aimed at revising our educational methodologies and creating new pedagogical tools together with teachers and students to encourage children and teenagers to reflect and share their visions of the city, which were not reflected in the urban study of Palermo Atlas.

Schools in Tandem
The pilot schools project of Manifesta 12 Schools in Tandem, started one and a half years before the opening of the biennial, coinciding with the urban and curatorial research. Eight schools from eight different neighbourhoods were paired in four thematic tandems led by local artists and creatives. Almost 150 children participated in the Tandems, investigating four topics that emerged during the Manifesta research in Palermo: relationship between the city and the sea, children’s playgrounds, mental opposed to the geographical distances and coexistence.

The Tandem of two coastal schools, Arenella and Sperone Pertini, under the guidance of architect Valentina Mandalari and anthropologist Lorenzo Bordonaro, explored the seaside of the city in search of the fragments of construction materials and ceramic tiles from abusively demolished liberty villas. Beyond the real excavation work carried out by the participants, archaeology in this project intended to uncover the stories and trace how urban transformation lead to social change. The project resulted in a public archaeological exposition of the found objects at the crypta of the Church of SS. Euno and Giuliano.

Mediation Kit Un Sacco di Palermo
The interest of the teachers generated by the Tandem #Mare encouraged the design of the pedagogical kit focused on the sensitive topic of recent urban, social and environmental development of Palermo. The Kit Un Sacco di Palermo was created in partnership with Ecomuseum Mare Memoria Viva and three city schools. The research for the kit was carried out in collaboration with the University of Palermo, local activists and Manifesta 12 artists.

The kit contains a set of activities encouraging students to investigate the multiple aspects of the city’s urban transformation through collective, class-based games, neighbourhood field trips, individual research, and cross-institutional collaborations. All the activities were designed in order to reflect upon the complex impact of the events that began in the 1950s, during what was called ‘Il Sacco di Palermo’, and the repercussions of this period, which affected the life of the city on all levels. Teachers from 35 schools professionally trained to use the kit. 100 kits were distributed for free among public schools, libraries and educational associations of Palermo.
Community Programme

The most ambitious and challenging pursuits of Manifesta lie in the realm of urban commons of the host city. The path to commons consciousness in Palermo is very twisted, and no cultural initiative can develop successfully and meaningfully without participating in social interactions and situating themselves in relation to the community. The Community Programme concentrated primarily on two areas of the city: Piazza Magione and ZEN2 neighbourhood. Both of these locations became the focus points of Manifesta 12 interventions and were paired in Schools in Tandem.

Piazza Magione

Along with Teatro Garibaldi, Piazza Magione, a square in the historical centre of Palermo, became the headquarters of Manifesta 12. During the Arab dominance of Sicily, the square was reputedly a lush garden of the Fatimide dynasty. It was significantly damaged by Second World War bombings, including a complete destruction of the square’s surrounding palazzos. In recent years, the City of Palermo has carried out renovations in Piazza Magione, including a new soccer field for the neighbourhood, and a central meadow with pedestrian pathways built on restored foundations of pre-existing buildings. The reopening in 2017 of Teatro Garibaldi, which was closed for several years suffering vandalism, theft and deterioration, was a part of the revitalisation programme of the square.

The Community Programme in Piazza Magione aimed at understanding and participating in the existing sociocultural ecosystem of the area by introducing the team and the idea of the biennial to our neighbours and giving recognition to their participation in the future development of the square starting from the retracing of collective memories.

In the pre-biennial projects *Fatimide Tales* and *Fatimide Garden*, local artists and creatives investigated together with school and out-of-school children various time layers of the neighbourhood through storytelling and visual narration. In the following project *Memorie in Rima* a Sicilian rapper and social worker Christian “Picciotto” worked with the children and parents of the square. Together with Christian, the children formed a band and wrote a song about their life in the neighbourhood. Parallel to that he interviewed their parents, listening and collecting their personal stories, photographs and ephemera tracing the changes of the square. The project culminated in a final party in Teatro Garibaldi two weeks before the opening of the biennial with the concert of the newly born band *Memory Crew*, the concert of Christian “Picciotto” and a small documentary exhibition.

ZEN2

ZEN (Zona Espansione Nord) is a social housing district located in the northern outskirts of Palermo, re-named San Filippo Neri in the nineties, and divided in two well-defined areas, ZEN1 and ZEN2, where Gilles Clément and Coloco created their project for Manifesta 12. ZEN2 was constructed in 1969, designed by an Italian architect Vittorio Gregotti. The project was inspired by the idea of the walled city and is organised in blocks of insulas. The political situation between 1975 and 1980 disrupted the overall transformation of the neighbourhood and left ZEN2 without services and various infrastructure. Furthermore, due to an extreme housing shortage, squatting in these buildings became common. These factors created a difficult social environment and resulted in the degradation of the area.

Social mapping of neighbourhood revealed many active associations doing social and educational programmes in ZEN2: Zen Insieme, Handala, Lievito, Bayty Baytik, L'albero della Vita, Nuova Oppurtunità. The future communal garden of Gilles Clément and Coloco was located right behind one of these associations — Zen Insieme. Anticipating this long-term project, the M12 Education department in collaboration with Zen Insieme initiated a programme of workshops with the children and parents living next to the abandoned square. The workshops by three collectives of artists and activists (Studio Pica, Orto Capovolto, and Teatro degli Spiriti), well-known for their participatory practices, aimed at introducing Clément’s idea of the planetary garden and co-creation and co-ownership, as well as sharing public space. During the biennial Orto Capovolto were in charge of cultivating the garden with the inhabitants in cooperation with Coloco. At the moment, August 2020, the garden infrastructure is being developed further by the community under the guidance of the association Zen Insieme together with Orto Capovolto and Ground Action.
During the Family Days children and their parents were invited to discover the world of the Orto Botanico through the projects of Manifesta 12 presented there. Thematic episodes of the Family Days were looking into the first forms of life in our planetary garden, the origin and the language of plants, their sylvatic and toxic neighbours and so-far-unknown hybrids.

The workshops and special tours played with time travel, botanical expeditions, bacteria examinations, guerilla gardening, and the expertise of supermarket fruits and vegetables.

• **Episode 1:**
  *Greetings from the Carboniferous Period*
  Travelling 300 million years back, discovering the new Carboniferous Period

• **Episode 2:**
  *Like seeds on the wind!*
  Like seeds on the wind we fly, run and walk to discover the projects of Manifesta 12

• **Episode 3:**
  *Tomorrow — The future belongs to us*
  On plant life, the culture of gardening and the coexistence with toxicity

“Is it actually your task? Are you as cultural educators prepared for this?” These questions were often asked while discussing continuously emerging social and intercultural challenges in community and education programmes in Palermo. While doing a project in a school, how much do we take into account the family situation of the pupils? When rehabilitating abandoned premises with cultural programmes, how ready are we for ongoing intrusions of kids hanging around? Within our parameters as a cultural organisation with a history of similar experiences and driven by concrete objectives we think that we are ready enough. As soon as we step into a new endeavour we find ourselves balancing between cultural and social practice, and the question of readiness does not matter anymore.

The Manifesta 12 Education Club took shape of an international conference examining the intersection between cultural mediation and social practice. The starting point of the sessions was the experience of building relationships, creating and engaging communities in the specific projects of Manifesta 12 in Palermo, as well as situating this new experience in relation to similar practices in Sicily, in other Italian cities and in Marseille, another Mediterranean hub and the host city of Manifesta 13. Responding to the challenges of each particular case, the programme was divided into three thematic sessions to discuss certain aspects of participatory design, non-formal education in schools and the confluence of cultural mediation and social practice. The real-time graphic facilitation during the sessions has been done by communication office Housatonic (Bologna, Italy).

The third working session **Looking for a Place in School** was organised in collaboration with Cidi Palermo (Centre of teachers’ democratic initiative). 37 teachers participated in the session. 148 people participated in the conference as members, following the 2-day programme of case studies and workshops: 55% were local and 45% national and international (UK, France, Netherlands, Russia, Ukraine, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, Austria). Around 90 people participated as audience, following selected sessions of the conference.

Participants: Nico Angiuli (visual researcher, filmmaker and performer, Bari), Annabelle Arnaud (FRAC, Marseille), Marco Berni (service designer, Prato), Annamaria Cilento (Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Torino), Hedwig Fijen (Director, Manifesta), Miguel Georgieff (Coloco, Paris-Montpellier, Manifesta 12 participant), Stefan Kalmár (Director, ICA, London), Valentina Mandalari (architect, Palermo, Mediation Kit ‘Un Sacco di Palermo’, Manifesta 12 Education Programme), Jean-François Neplaz (Quartiers Créatifs, Marseille), Stephen Pritchard (Newcastle, UK), Céline Rousseau (Le Gare Franche, Marseille), Marilena Verro (La scuola adotta la città, Palermo), Gloria Vitaio (facilitator, ecological communication trainer, Florence).
Manifesta 12 Education Club
Real Time Facilitation Graphics by Hausatonic.
Principles of participation are not confined to projects and their participants, but rather challenge the way we work, collaborate, formulate and reach our goals. Historically, participation is an inherent part of Palermitan citizen culture reflected in activism, politics, education, social integration and ecology. However, participation in culture and the arts per se, apart maybe from independent theatres, is a step still to be made. Museums, galleries and festival programmes address mostly peers and loyal audiences. In Palermo, culture manifests itself best and in most interesting and successful way through social practices. The Manifesta 12 Social Innovation Map highlighted some of the today’s grassroots initiatives where culture is closely intertwined with education and social engagement. The work on the Manifesta 12 Education and Mediation programme, therefore, has been strongly tied up with the context of social practices. The questions of social and ethical responsibilities of initiating a temporary collaboration were put on the table before discussing the programme and its pedagogical methods. These questions kicked off the training of Manifesta 12 Gardeners, who mediated the biennial programme in the venues and the neighbourhoods.

Despite our awareness, we still faced many challenges balancing between mediation and social practice in ZEN2 and Piazza Magione, as well as in other neighbourhoods where the M12 Education Hub unfolded its programme. We were urged to reflect upon this transversal and challenging experience together with our collaborators at the end of the biennial. These discussions culminated in the Education Club, an international conference on cultural mediation and social engagement, which brought together artists, cultural mediators, teachers and social practitioners from Palermo, Marseille and many other European cities. We hope that the experience of Manifesta 12 will encourage more of the local arts organisations to look into and learn from social practices not as an instrument for audience development and fundraising, but as an inclusive institutional policy.

Conclusion
Cultural mediation in the context of social practice

Thank you

Cultural Española
Laboratorio Zen Insieme, AMAT, Acción Social
Department, The Regional School of Fine Art of Palermo, City Schools’ Office, Amari Roncalli-Ferrara School, Ecomuseum Mare Memoria Viva, Laboratorio Zen Insieme, AMAT, Acción Cultural Española

Manifesta 12 Education Institutional Partners
The Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities, University of Palermo, Academy of Fine Art of Palermo, City Schools’ Department, The Regional School Office, Amari Roncalli-Ferrara School, Ecomuseum Mare Memoria Viva, Laboratorio Zen Insieme, AMAT, Acción Cultural Española

Manifesta 12 Education Institutional Collaborators


Social Innovation Map: Multivolti, Laboratorio Zen Insieme, Ecomuseo Mare Memoria Viva, Comitato Cittadino il Mare di Sferracavallo, Vivaio Ibervillea, Craplus, British Council, Casa della cooperazione, Arci Porco Rosso, Associazione Santa Chiara, CRESM, Piccolo Teatro Patafisico, Bayby Baylyte, Lievito Onlus, Handsala e Spazio Donte, Cafè Internazionale, Danisinni Lab, Naunòi, Per Esempio Onlus, Plus, Stato Brado, Teatro Atlante, Teatro Ditrammu

As well as: Orto Botanico di Palermo, Palermo Scienza, Anciay Palermo, Famiglie Arcobaleno Palermo, Centro di iniziativa democratica degli insegnanti Danisinni Lab, Fondazione Sandretto Re Debadengo (Turin), Open Design School, Fondazione Matera-Basilicata 2019, La Gare France (Marseille), FRAC (Marseille), Yes W