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Adriano
Mancini

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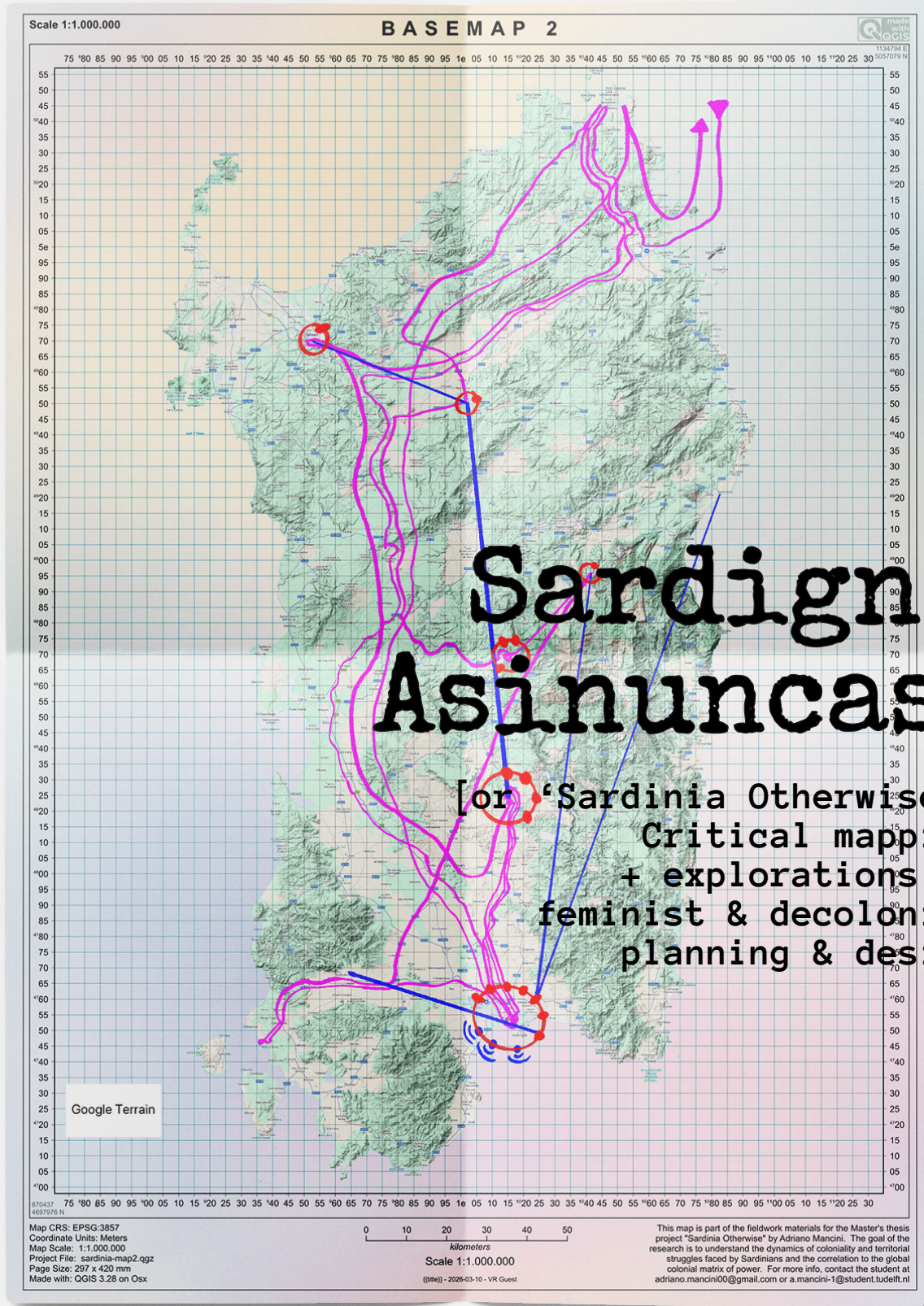
_studio
Design with
Feminist
Values

_mentors
Roberto Rocco,
Caroline
Newton

_track
MSc Urbanism

Faculty of
Architecture,
Urbanism and
Building
Sciences

T.U. Delft



Map CRS: EPSG:3857
Coordinate Units: Meters
Map Scale: 1:1,000,000
Project File: sardinia-map2.qgz
Page Size: 297 x 420 mm
Made with: QGIS 3.28 on OSX

0 10 20 30 40 50
kilometers
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[[094]] - 2028-03-10 - VR Guest

This map is part of the fieldwork materials for the Master's thesis project "Sardinia Otherwise" by Adriano Mancini. The goal of the research is to understand the dynamics of coloniality and territorial struggles faced by Sardinians and the correlation to the global colonial matrix of power. For more info, contact the student at adriano.mancini00@gmail.com or a.mancini-1@student.tudelft.nl

001

001

Sardinia Otherwise

Critical mapping
+ explorations on
feminist & decolonial
planning & design

Name: Adriano Mancini
Student Number: 6303323
Studio: Design with Feminist Values
Studio supervisors: Roberto Rocco, Caroline Newton

Delft University of Technology
Faculty of Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences
MSc Urbanism Track

“I wish to recall the Sardinia of my childhood – but above all, the deep and genuine wisdom, the almost religious way of thinking and living of certain old Sardinian shepherds and farmers. Despite their complete lack of formal education, they seemed guided by an ancestral habit of thought and a superior contemplation of life and of the things beyond life. From some of these old men I learned truths and insights that no book has ever revealed to me with such clarity and comfort. They are the great fundamental truths that the first inhabitants of the earth must have drawn from within themselves, teachers and pupils at once, in the presence of the grand mysteries of nature and of the human heart...”
G. Deledda
[Discoteca di Stato]



Sardigna
asinuncas
sinòncas
assinuncas
sinuncas
agnunca
galechinò
cancinò
chiacussu
chinonca
chiacussu
cidacheste
dassinuncas
diacussu
sinono
sintennuncas

The Bay of the Eagle's Nest.

a situated preface

Every year, I go back to sit on that rock. All of a sudden, after squeamish anticipation, I am sitting there, on that pinkish stone at the center of a quiet bay held in place by the rockish arms around it and the soft lingering sounds of the sea, penetrating with joy. The boats sway above the surface, the air slows down and so does the heart, and the curved line of the bay feels like an embrace. Through my breath, it whispers, welcome home.

This moment returns each year. I wait for it, and often I feel as if part of me never fully leaves, as though I knew that my phantasm still sits on that same stone where I rested as a child, suspended in time, waiting for my return. That same stone where I looked at stars and where my brother and I learned about our cosmic insignificance. Every milestone of my life, every ending and beginning, every knot of tension of growing older and messier and stupider, it all eventually leads me back to this ritual. This bay knows me. She understands. She smiles.

If life is a dream, a videogame, or a fiction whose edges we only half-perceive, then I can say I am one of the lucky fews who know their spawning point, the coordinate where I reappear, over and over again.

I always thought this attachment was a romantic indulgence, something I allowed myself to believe in before returning to the "real world." But with each passing year, I know it to be truer than I ever admitted. Often, when I sit silently by the water, my mother joins me. She sits beside me in the same silence, and after a while she says: "here is where we find our soul again."

In these small moments of (in)sanity, she teaches me to trust the intangible, to descend inward.

Years ago, while I was trying to choose what to study (torn between philosophy, engineering, political science, architecture, psychology...) it was in the stillness of that bay that I found my answer. As I asked myself what lies at the beginning of a person's soul, what connects everything we experience, I let myself consider: maybe it is places.

Places hold everything: the joy of returning to something that remembers us, the stories of those who walked before us, the work of those who built here, as well as the pain of those untold or untellable tales and the cravings of unexplored futures.

This is where the seed of this work was planted.

Baia di Nido d'Aquila (Bay of the Eagle's Nest), La Maddalena, Sardinia.



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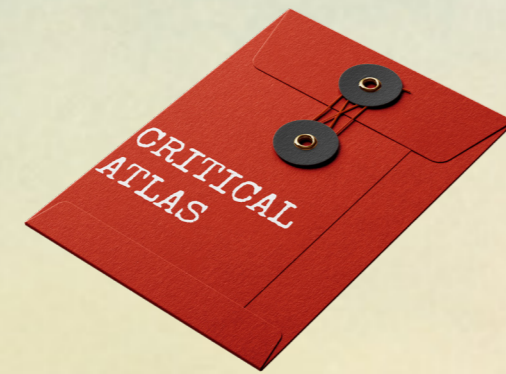
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*the bay of the eagle's nest:
a situated preface*

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abstract
glossary

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relevance
objectives+motivations
research design + methodology
methods and outputs



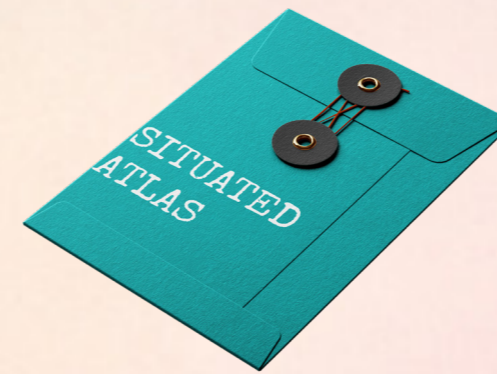
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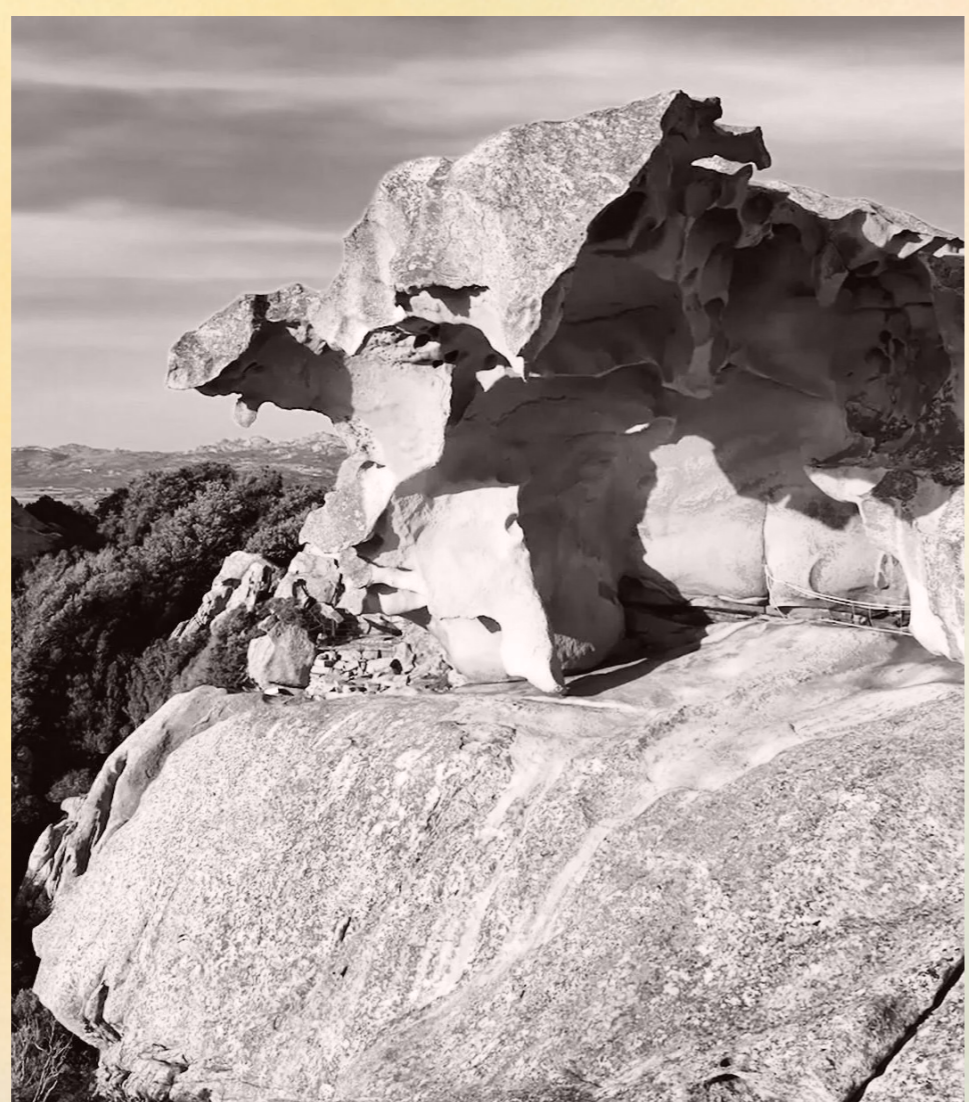
[01] INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

the bay of the eagle's nest:
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011 011

«A volte penso che l'Italia in fondo sia un'astrazione. Incollata male dai Savoia e Cavour. Riempita di retorica. E con il peccato originale di un Nord che ha depredato il Sud. E non paghe, le élite risorgimentali e postrisorgimentali hanno pure descritto questo Sud come irredimibile, da civilizzare, insomma usando lo stesso lessico e le stesse pratiche che poi saranno messe in atto nelle colonie (...)».

«Sometimes I think that Italy deep down is basically an abstraction. Badly glued together by the Savoy and Cavour. Stuffed with rhetoric. And with the original sin of a North who plundered the South. And not innocent, the elites of the renaissance and post-renaissance have even described this South as irredeemable, to be civilized, essentially using the same lexicon and the same practices that will then be enacted in the colonies (...)».

_Igiaba Scego, italo-somalian writer
> 2019. Future: Il Domani Narrato Dalle Voci di Oggi. Firenze: Efequ
or "Future [female plural]: tomorrow narrated by the voices of today."

012 012

abstract

This thesis is situated within debates on critical urbanism, decolonial theory, and feminist spatial praxis, addressing how contemporary planning and design practices in Europe continue to reproduce colonial, extractive, and epistemically exclusionary logics. Focusing on Sardinia, a region marked by historical subalternity, militarization, uneven development, and persistent center-periphery tensions, the research examines how processes commonly framed as modern development have shaped both material landscapes and dominant spatial imaginaries.

The central problem addressed by this study is the persistent invisibilization of extractive practices, social and environmental inequalities, and alternative ways of inhabiting space within ostensibly "developed" European contexts. Sardinia is approached as a paradigmatic case where multiple forms of domination—industrial, military, touristic, and epistemic—intersect, while local knowledge systems, feminist practices, and place-based life projects continue to challenge hegemonic models of planning and development.

Methodologically, the research combines archival and desk research, situated fieldwork, and critical cartography, informed by feminist, decolonial, and intersectional theoretical frameworks. Mapping is employed not as a neutral representational tool but as a critical and political practice, used to trace both hegemonic spatial formations and sites of resistance, conflict, and care. By following struggles, protests, and localized practices, the project foregrounds how alternative spatial narratives emerge in response to domination. The study uses spatial analysis, archival research, and field observation, guided by feminist and decolonial epistemologies, to produce:

1. A critical mapping of power relations across the island, showing how social hierarchies, extractive projects, and institutional norms are embedded in space.
2. A mapping of local practices, resistance, and knowledge that illuminate plural, relational, and 'sustainable' ways of living.
3. An intersectional understanding of the communities inhabiting Sardinia, highlighting their agency and the systemic constraints they navigate.
4. Recommendations and reflections on the role of the urbanist towards just, plural worlds; and for institutional actors interested in the autonomy and agency of Sardinians and their territory.

The thesis contributes to urbanism and planning by expanding design research beyond solutionist paradigms, proposing a critically engaged practice attentive to power, difference, and plurality. Rather than offering prescriptive models, it advances a methodological and conceptual framework for engaging with pluriversal, place-based futures, demonstrating how urbanism can function as an anti-hegemonic, reflexive, and ethically situated practice within contemporary Europe.

Note to the reader: disclaimer on intent, limits and responsibility

The European legacy of modernity, often associated with progress, development, and rational social order, is a deeply ambivalent project. While producing material and institutional transformations, it has simultaneously generated structures of extraction, erasure, and epistemic closure. These effects are uneven, historically contingent, and differentially distributed, yet their ecological, social, and epistemic consequences remain systematically undervalued. Europe is approached not as a site of equivalent victimhood, but as a historical laboratory in which the promises, exclusions, and failures of modernity can be critically interrogated.

This thesis is also an attempt to train myself in practicing an anti-hegemonic urbanism work. Urbanism is not neutral: territories are arenas of political contestation, shaped by power, inequality, and historical forms of domination. If the objective is to engage in planning and design that is ethical, relational, and just, one must first make visible the hierarchies, burdens, and resistances that exist. Working with subaltern communities, or in territories historically shaped by extraction and marginalization, requires both critical attentiveness to

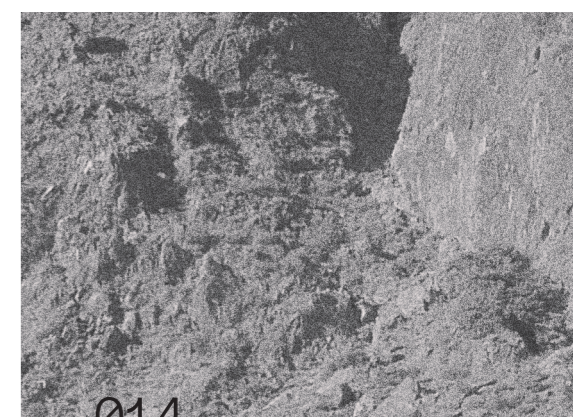
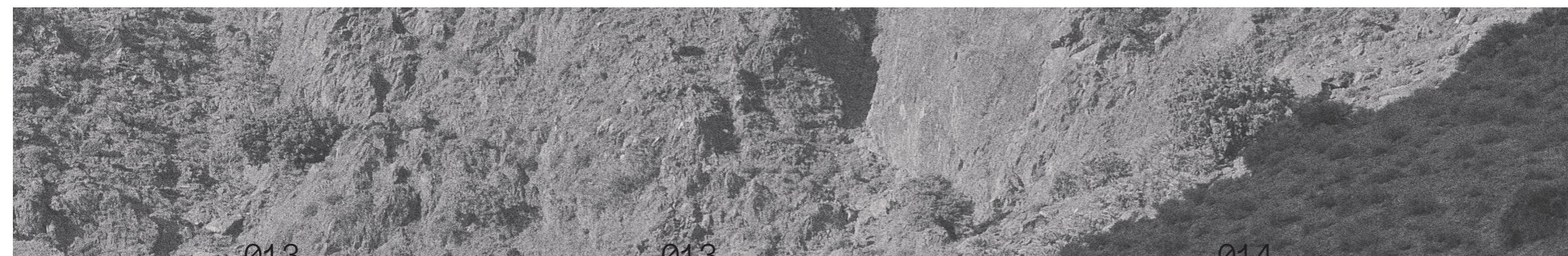
power and the ability to act as a translator and facilitator between worlds: to defend the oppressed, amplify subaltern voices, and foster plural, ecologically and socially diverse futures. This personal and ethical stance guides the research methods and choices presented throughout this thesis.

Sardinia is approached as a subaltern territory, explicitly theorized by Antonio Gramsci as marginalized within the Italian state. Gramsci's reflections informed later Subaltern Studies, demonstrating how localized subalternity connects to global debates on oppression, autonomy, and resistance. The island provides a site in which material and epistemic forms of domination—from militarization to industrial extraction, cultural erasure, and uneven development—intersect with local knowledge, resistance, and feminist practices, offering critical insight into how planning and design might engage these dynamics responsibly.

In undertaking this research, I am attentive to the imperative not to obscure or minimize the violences of European colonialism abroad, including Italian colonial histories in Libya, Eritrea, and Ethiopia. This work is also driven by

a sense of responsibility arising from contemporary institutional contexts: notably, my alma mater, IUAV, has been granted a consultative role in the reconstruction of Gaza, likely with a Zionist lens. Confronted with this fact, I feel compelled to examine and reflect upon how the epistemic and ethical frameworks of urbanism reproduce, or might counter, systemic failures, extraction and colonialism, and injustice. This project is an effort to practice relational, non-extractive, and critically informed urbanism, attentive to both local and global power structures.

Adopting critical positionality (Udah, 2024), and methods such as critical mapping (Crampton & Krygier, 2006; Mignolo, 2011), this thesis treats research as situated, ethical, and relational. It foregrounds the intersection of hegemony and resistance, aiming to illuminate structures of oppression while also attending to alternative practices and knowledge systems. The project does not prescribe a universal model, but contributes plural and relational insights for thinking about space, justice, and futures in contexts shaped by coloniality, marginality, and uneven development.



Glossary

Modernity

A complex narrative of the present and the future, originated in Europe, upon which western civilization was founded. Modernity celebrates its successes, such as capitalism and the scientific revolution, while hiding its dark side: coloniality, from which it is inseparable. Modernity is also associated with its rhetoric, constantly named and acclaimed, including concepts like progress, development, and growth. Historically and presently, it is considered by its beneficiaries the arrival point of all human existence and a model for the whole planet. (Mignolo, W. 2011)

Coloniality

Coloniality refers to the lasting power structures, knowledge systems, and cultural norms established by colonialism that persist long after formal independence, creating enduring hierarchies of race, culture, and economy, often centered on Western modernity and capitalism. It is the unit of the 'colonial matrix of power', the underlying logic that, since the renaissance, that allowed the west to establish its global domain, hiding its oppressive outcomes under the universal promise of modernity and progress. (Mignolo, W. 2011)

Subaltern

"Subaltern groups, lacking political autonomy, are constrained in their 'defensive' initiatives by laws of necessity that are simpler, more limited, and politically more restrictive than the laws of historical necessity that direct and condition the initiatives of the dominant class. Often, subaltern groups are originally of a different race (a different culture and a different religion) from those who dominate, and they are often a mixture of different races, as in the case of slaves. (...)
By definition, subaltern classes are not unified and cannot unify until they are able to become 'State'; their history is therefore intertwined with that of civil society, constituting a 'fragmented' and discontinuous function of the history of civil society and, through it, of the history of States or groups of States."
(Gramsci, A. 2001)

Objectivity

Objectivity is commonly understood as the ability to observe and describe the world independently of values, interests, or positionality. Critical and feminist epistemologies challenge this assumption by showing that objectivity is not a neutral condition but a historically produced ideal that obscures the socio-technical, embodied, and political conditions through which knowledge is generated. Scientific facts do not emerge from detachment but from constructed practices, negotiations, and institutional frameworks that present contingent outcomes as universal truths (Latour, 1993). Feminist standpoint theory further exposes the fiction of a disembodied observer, arguing instead for situated knowledge, whereby objectivity is redefined as accountability to one's positionality, methods, and relations of knowledge production (Haraway, 1988). In this sense, objectivity functions not as a guarantee of truth but as a regime of vision that shapes what can be seen, known, and validated across scientific, social, and design-based forms of knowledge.

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Critical mapping

Critical mapping (or critical cartography) refers to an approach and an ethics of cartography whereby maps are understood not as neutral representations of space but as cultural, political, and epistemic practices through which power is exercised, contested, and made visible. Mapping is conceived as an active process of selection, abstraction, framing, and omission, shaped by institutional agendas, technical standards, and situated viewpoints, and thus participates in the production of spatial realities rather than merely reflecting them (Crampton & Krygier, 2015). Critical cartography shifts attention from maps as finished objects to mapping as a practice embedded in social relations and regimes of knowledge, foregrounding questions of authority, authorship, positionality, and accountability, while challenging assumptions that participation alone can resolve structural power asymmetries (Kim, 2015).

context: framing Sardinia

Sardinia occupies a distinctive position within the geography and history of Europe. Geographically, it is the second largest island in the Mediterranean, separated from the Italian mainland by the Tyrrhenian Sea yet situated at a crossroads of northern and southern Mediterranean currents. Its physical distance from the mainland has historically contributed to marginality in terms of infrastructural, administrative, and economic integration, yet this isolation coexisted with continuous cultural contact and contamination. Over centuries, Sardinia interacted with various Mediterranean powers and populations, producing a layered cultural and social fabric that often falls outside standard narratives of Italian or European history. This combination of marginality and connectedness positions the island in a liminal space, both peripheral and central, local and global. After a Sardinian, Antonio Gramsci, came up with a word to describe the island's condition in relation to the surrounding Mediterranean states, that word traveled so far that it inspired the founding of an entire school of thought in post-colonial studies: the school of Subaltern Studies. Though its story differs from the ones of colonized territories overseas, Sardinia has historically been shaped by overlapping forms of domination and subalternity, from foreign rule to state-directed economic and military interventions. In addition to the multiple dominations it has faced over millennia, its incorporation into Italy took place during the 19th century alongside the controversial process of Italian unification of other southern regions: an ambition marked by forceful military annexation, violent state-building, and ongoing regional disparities. In the words of Gramsci, "The northern bourgeoisie has subjugated Southern Italy and the islands, and reduced them to exploitation colonies". Compared to the rest of southern Italy, which continues to face structural marginalization, Sardinia is not only materially under-resourced but also exhibits a persistent center-periphery cleavage in the political realm. Independentist and autonomist movements illustrate how this peripheral status translates into political contestation,

highlighting a persistent negotiation of authority and local autonomy. These dynamics are not merely symbolic; they reflect ongoing structural inequalities, as well as social and political frictions embedded in the governance of the island. As we read in Pala (2016), "Non-partisan analysis shows the substantial lack of interest of national Italian politics for Sardinia (Serri, 1999; Sotgiu, 1996)", which fuels independentist arguments. Within Italian and Mediterranean modernity, Sardinia exemplifies the tensions of incorporation and exclusion. Its territory has been mobilized for military, industrial, touristic, and recently, energy production purposes, often privileging external priorities over local needs, producing both material extraction and epistemic erasure. At the same time, the island retains rich local knowledge, vernacular practices, and relational ways of inhabiting space, offering a window into non-extractive, plural, and sustainable approaches to urbanism and spatial organization.

Sardinia's significance extends beyond its borders. Its layered subalternity, liminality, and marginality provide a critical lens for examining how European modernity, coloniality, and capitalist logics operate across spatial, social, and ecological scales. The island thus functions as both a site of study and a mirror for broader debates on urbanism, planning, and decolonial practice, revealing the stakes of inequity while highlighting possibilities for more plural and relational approaches to design and governance.

References

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problem statement



“Sardinian sheperds are nobody’s slaves”

February 11th, 2019. The Milk Revolts of Sardinia

Protests by the Sardinian Sheperds Movement about the price of milk: wholesale companies selling their products to supermarkets and other industries were paying them so little, they figured the milk would be better spent spilled on the ground, in an attempt to raise awairness to the issue.

Source: it.euronews.com / “The milk revolts in Sardinia” 13.02.2019 internazionale.it

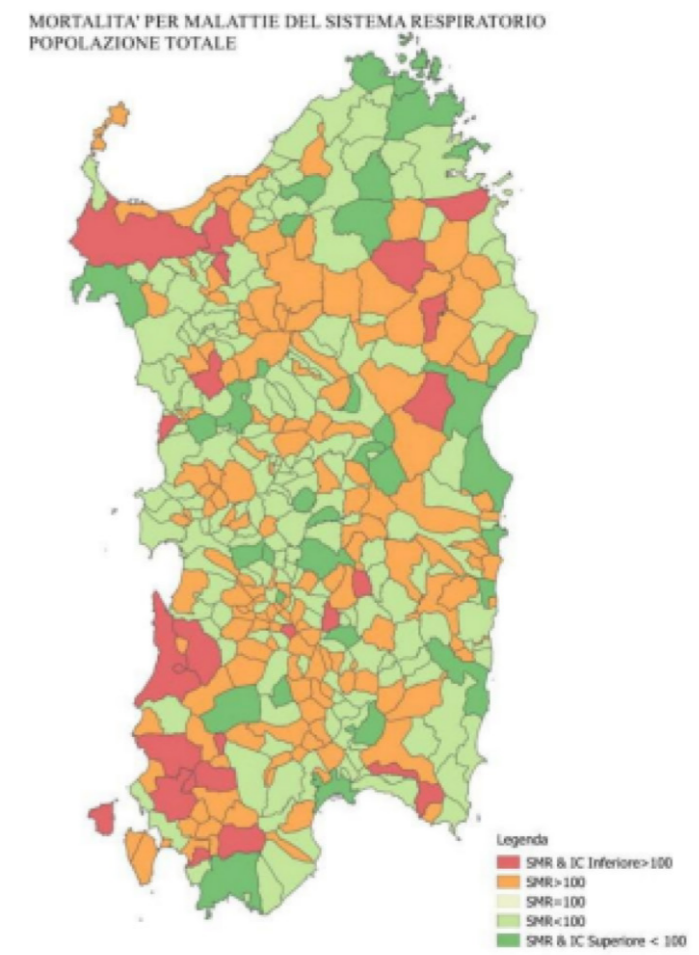
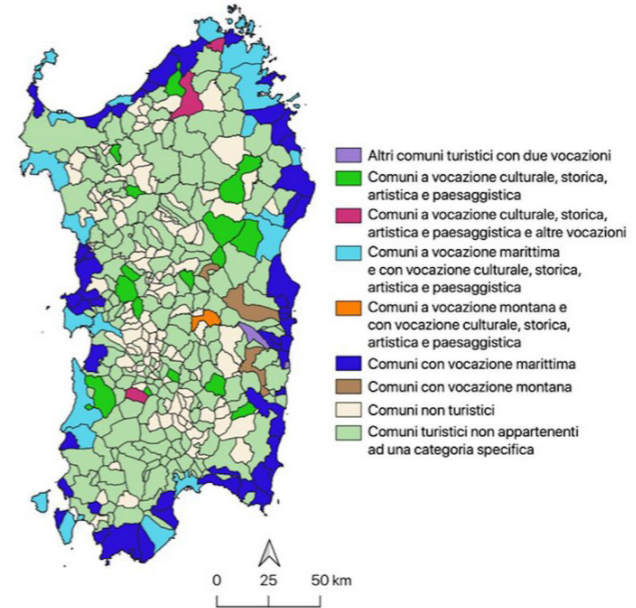
Sardinia is a territory marked by enduring subalternity, shaped by centuries of external domination, extractive development, and uneven modernization. Military presence, industrial exploitation, tourist and energy infrastructures, and chronic institutional neglect have embedded persistent social, ecological, and epistemic injustices, constraining local agency and territorial autonomy. These dynamics are not accidental but actively produced and maintained through planning instruments, infrastructural decisions, and hegemonic spatial imaginaries. At the same time, local communities continue to resist, adapt, and develop alternative knowledge systems and relational practices, revealing both the limits of imposed governance and the possibilities for more plural, place-based futures. This project addresses the urgency of making visible these overlapping forms of domination and resistance, situating urbanism and spatial planning as active participants in territorial power relations, rather than neutral tools, and exploring how critical, non-hegemonic design and planning practices might support Sardinia’s autonomy, diversity, and resilience.

In the summer of 2025, Sardinia was once again swept by widespread protests [1]. Military presence, energy infrastructures, chronic underfunding, and institutional neglect emerged as recurrent causes of discontent across the island. These mobilizations are not episodic reactions, but symptoms of a deeper structural condition shaping Sardinia's social, political, and spatial realities, a condition rooted in modern development paradigms that frame progress through technocratic, extractive, and growth-oriented logics while producing uneven territorial outcomes.

This condition is not new. Since before the Middle Ages, Sardinia has been marked by cycles of anti-hegemonic protest, reflecting its long-standing position as a territory subjected to external domination, shifting hegemonic ambitions, and overlapping forms of coloniality. The island's contemporary marginality mirrors this history, revealing continuity between past and present forms of domination, control, and configurations of urban and territorial governance. Sardinia underwent a far-reaching process of "colonization"

alongside urbanization and modernization. Rather than challenging these legacies, successive development projects often reinforced them, demonstrating not only the absence of material decolonization but, more critically, the persistence of unresolved cultural decolonization (Deplano & Pes, 2024).

Today, Sardinia embodies multiple overlapping layers of domination. It hosts one of the most militarized territories in Europe; it has been shaped by extractive industrial and mining activities; it has undergone large-scale tourist development and coastal commodification; and it functions as an energy hinterland within national and transnational systems. Together, these processes embed the island within external economic, geopolitical, and institutional logics that constrain local agency and territorial autonomy. The consequences are visible in ecological degradation, soil depletion, compromised public health, depopulation, labor displacement, aging demographics, and the transformation of coastlines and settlements in alignment with external priorities. Urbanism and spatial planning are not neutral observers of these



Categorization of municipalities based on touristic vocations | Mortality rates due to re-



"Stop military exercises / close all polygons / reclamations and lands to the community" / "AWAY"

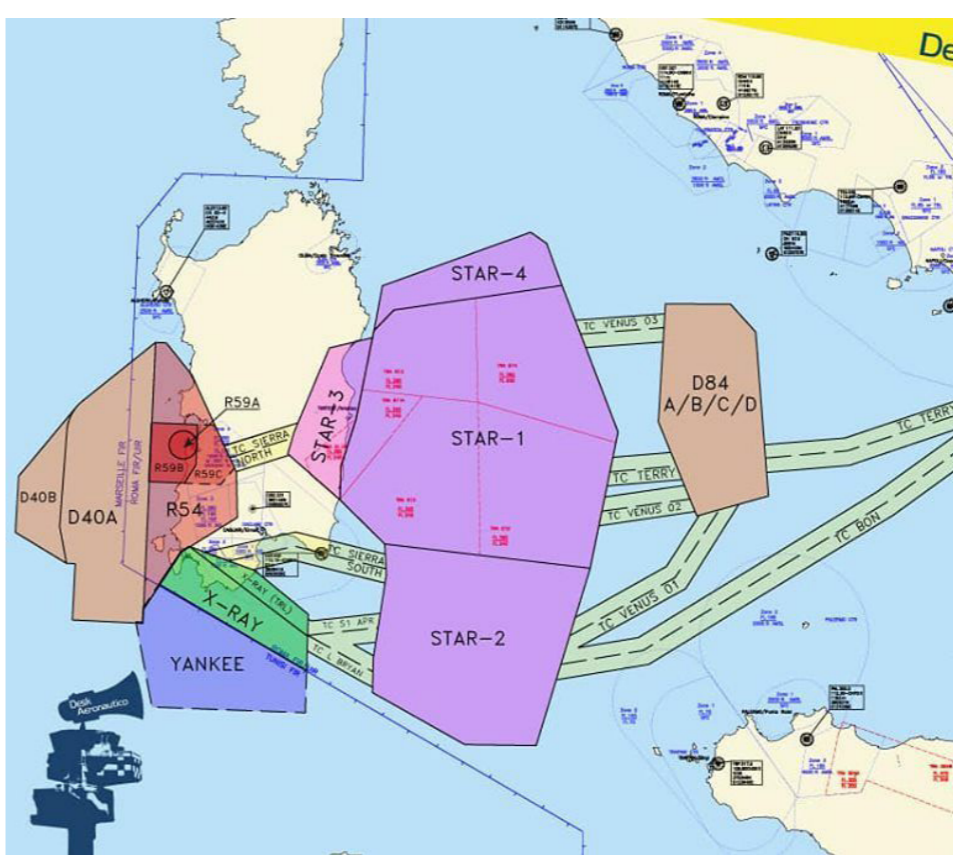
May 10-11th, 2025. Cagliari.

Protests following the controversial 'Joint Stars for Charity' and other initiatives; against military propaganda,



G. Maria Angioy enters Sassari (1795)

To this day, the Sardinian Peoples' Day, or 'sa die de sa Sardigna', commemorates the Sardinian Vespers, a two-year revolt against the piedmontese. On April 28th 1794, Sardinians started hunting down any piedmontese functionaries they could find, and by May all savoyards were sent away on



MANIFESTADA NATIONALE CONTRA A S'OCUPAZIONE MILITARE

AGABBARE DERETU IS ESERCITAZIONES SERRARE TOTU IS BASES E POLIGONOS BONIFICA E RICONVERSIONE DE IS LOGOS

SABADU SU 13 DE CABUDANNI h 16:30

BASE MILITARE CAPO FRASCA
S. ANTONIO DI SANTADI

conditions—they are active participants in the territorialization of power, shaping how Sardinia is governed, exploited, and rendered legible.

Equally significant is the epistemic dimension of marginalization. Local knowledge systems, vernacular practices, and alternative imaginaries of inhabiting space have been systematically invisibilized, devalued, or erased. This reinforces universalized Western models of development and governance, undermining plural ways of living and relating to the environment. Yet, this is not a story of total erasure. Despite historical losses, voices of resistance and alternative practices persist, testifying to ongoing struggles for self-determination, care, and relational life projects.

In response, this research has a dual aim. First, it seeks to identify and make visible the hegemonic structures that have shaped Sardinia and the territorial consequences of this condition, interrogating the categories, representations, and imaginaries through which planning has rendered the island

governable, profitable, and marginal. Second, it explores alternative approaches by listening to local knowledge, spatial attachments, and life projects, walking alongside subaltern and alternative perspectives—feminist, decolonial, and radical—as necessary lenses to address the biopolitical and epistemic dimensions of planning. Urbanism is approached not as a neutral problem-solving apparatus, but as a critical and epistemic practice capable of questioning how territories are framed, governed, and made legible.

Through this engagement, the project seeks to connect with alternative and desirable futures for Sardinia, approached as a liminal space within European modernity. By foregrounding both domination and resistance, and tracing the historical continuity of structural marginalization, the research contributes to critical urbanism as a practice of listening, translation, and exposure, attentive to conflict, plurality, and difference.

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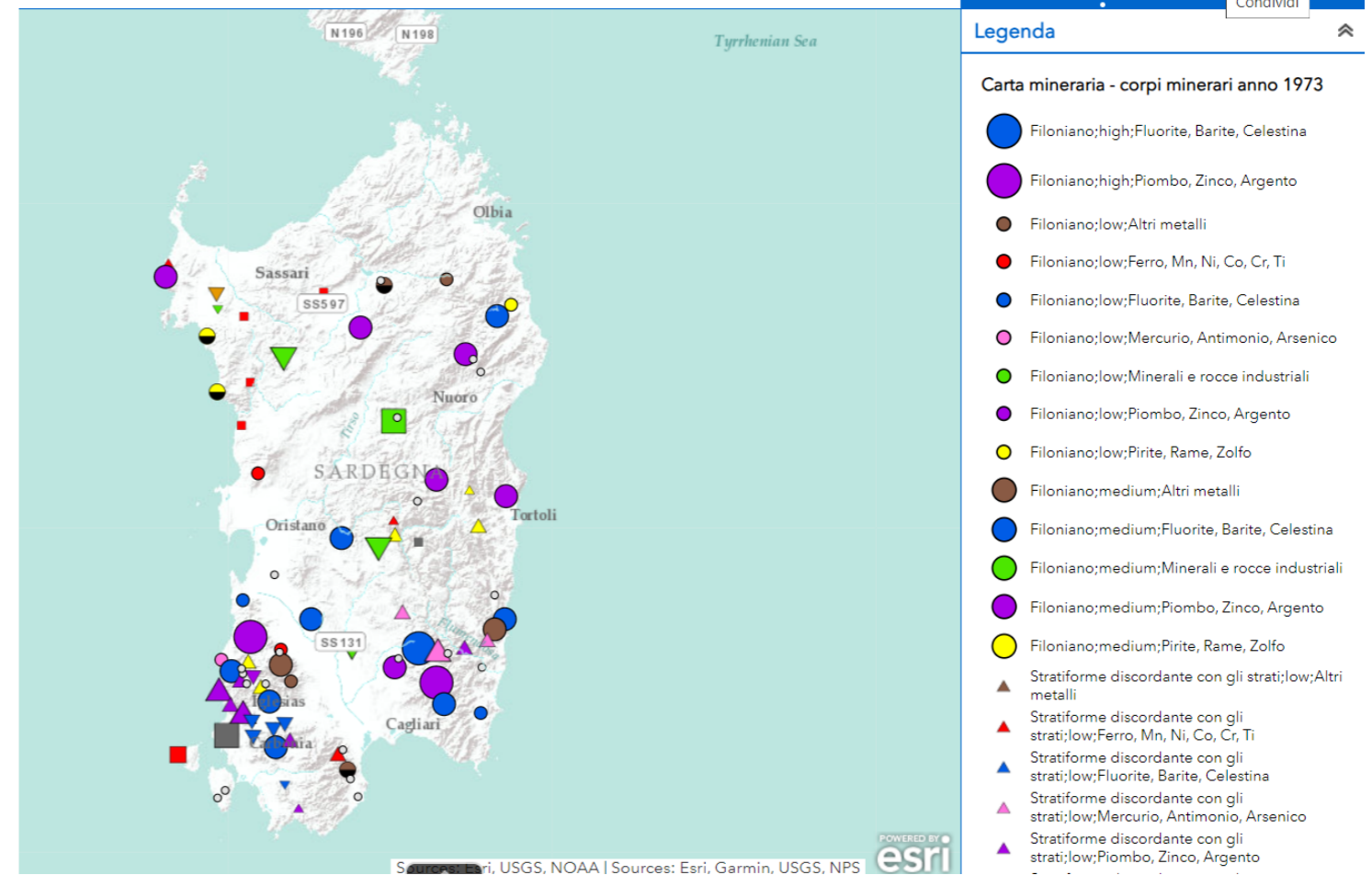


“No peace for who lives off of war”

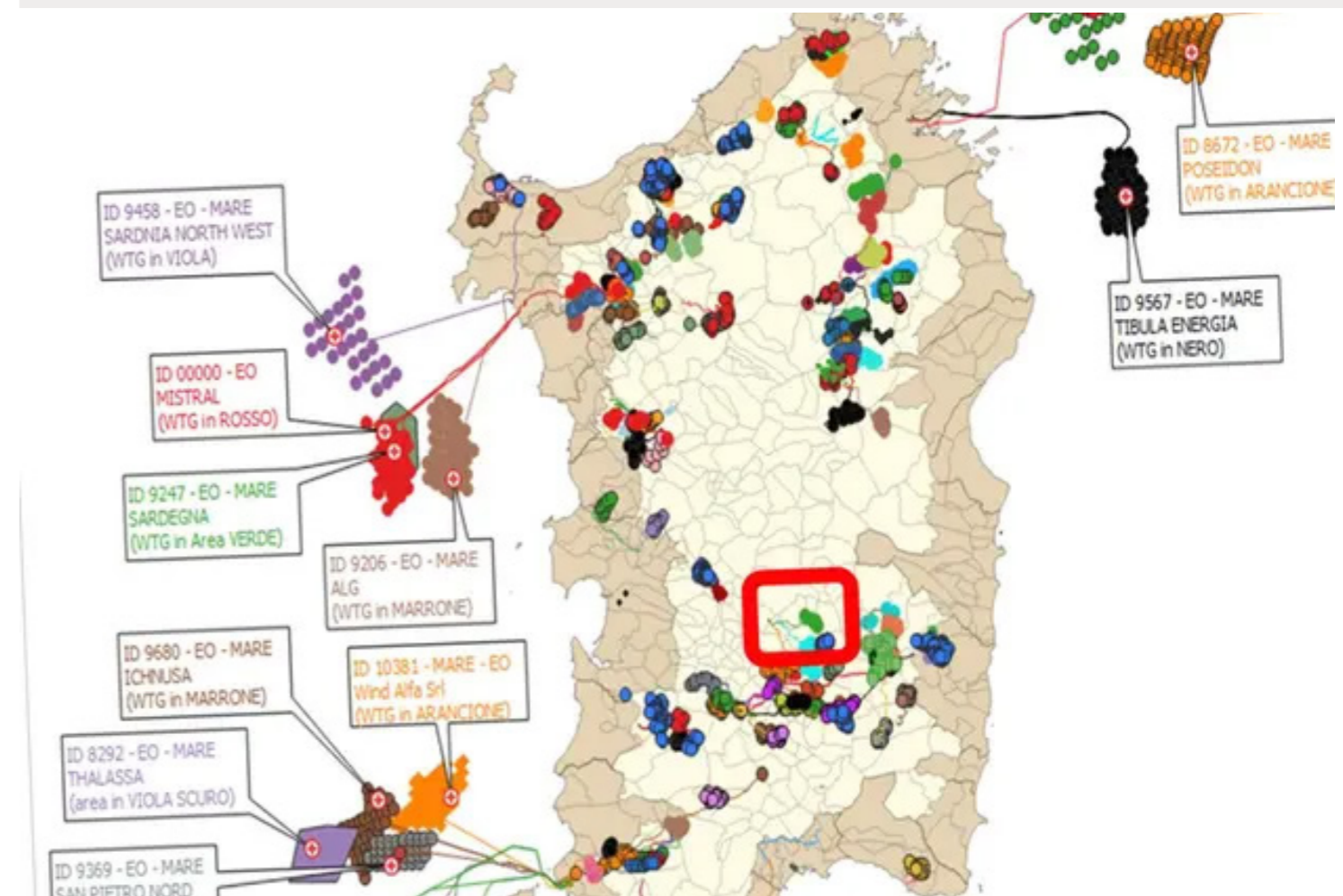
June 14th, 2025. Decimomannu.

Protest against Sardinia’s militarization and joint NATO exercises. On this day, police dispersed the crowd with a combination of tear gas and a dangerously low helicopter flight, whose strong winds created a forest fire nearby.

Source: [terzogiornale.it](https://www.terzogiornale.it) by the Foundation



Mining sites, 1973



Relevance

Academic relevance:

This project contributes to contemporary debates in urbanism, planning, feminist theory, and decolonial scholarship by interrogating the material and epistemic processes through which landscapes are produced. By combining critical urban theory with feminist and decolonial perspectives, the research expands understanding of how planning and design reproduce or challenge power relations, social hierarchies, and knowledge regimes (Escobar, A. 2018; Brenner, N. 2009).

Societal relevance:

Sardinia exemplifies ongoing spatial injustices, from military and industrial domination to coastal commodification and underfunded public infrastructure. The project addresses the broader environmental and social crises these processes produce, highlighting the entanglement of ecological degradation, depopulation, and cultural marginalization. By revealing neglected knowledge systems and alternative practices, the research supports socially and ecologically attuned strategies for more plural and just futures.

Disciplinary relevance:

The project challenges the dominance of solutionist approaches in planning and design, which often reduce complex socio-spatial problems to technical fixes. It proposes a critically engaged, situated, and ethically oriented methodology that foregrounds care, plural knowledge, and biopolitical responsibility, demonstrating how research can be a tool for revealing structural inequalities and imagining alternative spatial futures.

Objectives & motivation

Objectives and Motivation

Main research objective:

To investigate how historical and ongoing processes of material and epistemic coloniality have shaped Sardinian landscapes and spatial imaginaries, and to explore how critical mapping can reveal alternative spatial narratives that inform decolonial approaches to design and planning.

Secondary objectives:

- * Identify and make visible hegemonic structures shaping the island's territory.
- * Document and engage with local knowledge, vernacular practices, and alternative life projects.
- * Explore feminist, decolonial, and radical practices as lenses to inform planning and design interventions.
- * Produce design and mapping outputs that translate critical insights into spatial narratives and tools for reflection and dialogue.

Personal and ethical motivations:

The project reflects a commitment to ethical, non-extractive research, emphasizing solidarity with subaltern perspectives while acknowledging the researcher's positionality. It aims to co-produce insights without claiming authority over local knowledge or imposing external solutions.

Commitment to non-extractive, non-violent research:

All methodological choices—critical mapping, participatory engagement, and interpretive analysis—are guided by principles of care, listening, and reflexivity. Research interactions prioritize the autonomy and agency of local communities, recognizing the risks of epistemic and territorial imposition.

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Research & design questions

Main Research Question:

How have historical and ongoing processes of material and epistemic coloniality shaped Sardinia's landscapes and spatial imaginaries, and how can critical mapping reveal alternative spatial narratives that inform more decolonial approaches to design and planning?

Complementary/Expanded Main Question:

How can design and planning practices support pluriversal, place-based life projects in Sardinia, challenging extractive, modernist, and universalizing paradigms?

Sub-questions:

- * How have hegemonic planning and development models shaped Sardinian territory historically and contemporarily?
- * What forms of local knowledge, care, and resistance persist despite marginalization?
- * How can feminist, commons-based, and decolonial approaches inform the reimagining of territorial futures?
- * How can critical mapping function as a political and interpretive tool, revealing hidden power dynamics and alternative spatial imaginaries?

Scope and feasibility

Temporal scope:

The research was conducted over six months. Fieldwork took place around four months after the start.

Spatial focus:

Sardinia is treated as the primary scale of analysis, allowing investigation of island-wide patterns of coloniality, industrialization, militarization, and epistemic marginalization.

Town/local scale: the fieldwork included various clusters of towns and villages as well as cities. More on that in section 2.

Emerging focus areas: Based on ongoing and future critical mapping, additional sites will be identified according to thematic layers such as national park planning, industrial activity, or contested infrastructural developments. For instance, regions like Orgosolo-Genargentu may become central for studying conflicts over national park planning, epistemic erasure, and the tension between state-imposed norms and local ways of relating to land, while industrial zones in Santa Teresa di Gallura or the southwest of Sardinia could serve as foci for exam-

ining extractive economies and their consequences. This approach allows the project to remain flexible and responsive to spatially differentiated phenomena, while ensuring that regional and local dynamics are considered in tandem.

Fieldwork strategy:

Fieldwork combined tours and site visits across the island, aimed at observing, documenting, and engaging with multiple layers and sites. This ensured that insights from local landscapes, social practices, and infrastructural patterns would be integrated into the critical mapping process, supporting a nuanced understanding of Sardinia's spatial realities and imaginaries.

Justification of the case study:

Sardinia exemplifies overlapping processes of material and epistemic marginalization, from militarization and industrial exploitation to tourism-driven land commodification and underfunded public infrastructure. The island's history of resistance, migration, and adaptation provides fertile ground for studying alternative spatial practices and the reproduction or contestation of hegemonic power.

Constraints and limitations:

The project focused on accessible historical records, published studies, and fieldwork, conducted over six months. The approach ensures both regional coverage and depth of site-specific analysis.

Preliminary analysis and available data:

Existing archival documents, policy records, spatial datasets, and initial field observations provide a solid foundation for identifying key layers and sites. Additional data from the ministry of energy has been incorporated in the form of a geodatabase constructed by grassroots collectives.

Pratobello

a poem / folk song by Nicolò Giuseppe Rubanu

Orgòsolo pro terra de bandidos	Orgosolo, until yesterday known to all
Fin'a eris da-e totu' fìs connota	as land of bandits
Ma oe a Pratobello tot' unidos	but today in Pratobello all united
Fizos tuos falado' sun in lota	your children have gone down into
Contra s'invasione militare	battle
Ki a inie fì faghende rota	against the military invasion
Invetze' de tratores pro arare	that was heading towards here
Arriban carrarmados e cannes	Instead of tractors for ploughing
E trupas de masellu d'addestrare	tanks and cannons arrive
Mandada da-e sos solitos bufones	and slaughter troops to be trained
Ki keren ki rinasca' sa Barbaja	Sent by the usual buffoons
Cun parcus pro sas muvras e sirbones	who want the Barbagia to be reborn
Naran puru ki sa zente es' malvaja	with parks for mouflons and wild
Ki viven de furtos e ricatos	boars
In sa muntannya infid'e selvaja	They even say that the people are wick-
Pro ke finire custos malos fatos	ed
E dare a sa Sardinnya atera via	that they live by thefts and extortion
Custos bufones decidin cumpatos	on the treacherous and savage mountain
De mandarene galu politzia	To put an end to these criminal
Sos contadinos e-i sos pastores	facts
E totu canta sa zente famia	and give Sardinia an alternative way



Theoretical framework

History and Shifts of Urbanism and Spatial Planning

Urbanism and spatial planning emerged within the broader project of European modernity as technocratic and positivist enterprises aimed at managing industrializing cities, controlling public health, and imposing order on complex urban environments (Rocco, R. forthcoming. See also Boyer, 1983; Hall, 2002). Space was treated as neutral, measurable, and optimizable, while planning expertise claimed objectivity and rationality. Yet this neutrality was never politically innocent. Tools such as zoning, cadastral mapping, and infrastructural ordering historically reinforced feudal, capitalist, colonial, racialized, and gendered logics (Rocco, R. forthcoming. See also Home, 2013; King, 1976; Scott, 1998). For example, in Sardinia as elsewhere, industrialization and urban interventions profoundly redefined women's roles, labor participation, and household structures, reshaping social hierarchies and settlement patterns. Urbanism thus helped produce and enforce norms of habitation, labor, and social reproduction.

Mid-twentieth-century welfare-state planning partially reoriented practice toward redistribution, social provision, and collective goods (Rocco, R. forthcoming. See also Ward, 2002). Housing, infrastructure, and public services were increasingly framed as social rights, yet expert-led, managerial logic persisted. In Italy, INA Casa programs, postwar reconstruction, exemplify how urban interventions materially produced social hierarchies while attempting participatory engagement and attention to inequality. These examples show how planning practices are inseparable from social, ethical, and power-related concerns.

From the late 1970s onward, neoliberalization reframed cities as entrepreneurial spaces competing for investment, talent, and economic growth (Rocco, R. forthcoming. See also Harvey, 2005; Peck & Tickell, 2002). Planning subordinated itself to market rationalities, performance metrics, and public-private partnerships. In Italy, urban redevelopment, housing privatization, and coastal commodification illustrate these dynamics. More recently, digital platform spaces mediate urban life through data infrastructures and algorithms (Rocco, R. forthcoming. See also Dijck et al., 2016; Zuboff, 2019), shaping participation, visibility, and access in ways that reinforce hierarchies, including gendered inequalities.

These historical developments coincide with ontological and axiological shifts. The 'spatial turn' reframed space as socially produced and politically contested (Lefebvre, 1974; Massey, 2005; Harvey, 1973, 2003; Soja 2010). Space is not neutral; it actively reproduces or destabilizes social relations. Simultaneously, planning's values became explicit: ethical commitments to justice, care, plurality, and democracy are inseparable from its techniques and decisions (Rocco, forthcoming. See also Arendt, 1998; Escobar, 2018). Italian debates exemplify this alignment: Secchi (2013) emphasized participatory and socially aware planning; Tafuri critiqued architectural autonomy divorced from social responsibility; and Viganò (2024), in connection with Foucault, Esposito and others, framed planning as a biopolitical, life-making practice.

Pluriversal perspectives further challenge universalist assumptions, insisting planning account for multiple coexisting realities (Rocco, forthcoming. See also Escobar, 2018; Cadena & Blaser, 2018).

Planning is fundamentally biopolitical: it shapes conditions of life, from housing and mobility to care and social reproduction (Foucault, 1976; Lefebvre, 1974). Justice cannot rely solely on abstract democracy; it must attend to bodies, inequalities, and social categories, including gender.

Planning as a Biopolitical and Pluriversal Task

Feminist perspectives foreground care, social reproduction, and relationality, while decolonial perspectives challenge Eurocentric epistemologies embedded in planning (Mignolo, 2011; Escobar, 2018). Planning must actively engage with silenced voices and confront its own complicity in systems of domination – this includes valuing local knowledge, vernacular practices, and alternative imaginaries.

The goal is not to impose solutions, but to translate, document, negotiate, and maintain open difference. This approach positions planning as a tool for revealing power, fostering plural futures, and connecting critical theory to practice.

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Research design and methodology

This thesis approaches research and design as critically engaged practices that recognize urbanism and spatial planning as deeply political activities, embedded within systems of power and historical domination. The methodological framework is built around two complementary pillars: critically engaged urbanism and researching otherwise, which together provide both epistemic orientation and practical tools for engaging with Sardinia's landscapes, communities, and spatial imaginaries.

Critically Engaged Urbanism: expose, propose, politicise.

One of the core methodological pillars of this research is the practice of urbanism as a critically engaged and politically informed discipline. Urban planning and design are not neutral processes; the territories they intervene in are inherently political, embedded with hierarchies, inequalities, and struggles over space. To engage responsibly in a subaltern context such as Sardinia, it is essential to understand how power operates spatially, how it shapes material landscapes, and how it influences social, cultural, and ecological life. This research conceptualizes urbanism as a practice that moves through three interrelated phases: exposing, problematizing, and politicizing. These are not linear steps but iterative movements through which knowledge is produced and applied.

1. *Expose.* The first phase aims to make visible the spatial, social, and epistemic structures shaping Sardinia. Methods deployed here include critical mapping, situated fieldwork, direct engagement, discourse analysis, and archival research. Together, these practices trace the material and symbolic manifestations of extraction, militarization, infrastructural hierarchies, and epistemic erasure, revealing the uneven distribution of power embedded in landscapes, settlements, and planning instruments.

2. *Propose.* In the proposing phase, insights from the exposing phase are translated into explorations of alternative futures. "Scenario building in urban planning are explorations of possible futures that are constantly moving between interrogating the current and imagining the future, between the known and the unknown, between the familiar and the alien" (Newton, C. E. L. 2022) Design becomes projective and propositional, generating scenarios and strategies that respond to structural inequalities, socio-spatial injustices, and environmental pressures. This involves imagining interventions that enhance resilience, relationality, and justice, while remaining attentive to local histories, alternative epistemologies, and community practices. Proposals are not fixed solutions but critical experiments: tools to test possibilities, question dominant planning paradigms, and engage with the territory in a reflective, anticipatory, and politically conscious way.

3. *Politicize:* In the politicizing phase, the ideas and proposals developed earlier are brought into public and political discourse, engaging with citizens, communities, institutions, and civil society to ensure that strategies gain support and can influence decision-making. Drawings, conceptual sketches, and scenario-building act as tools for dialogue, making visible alternative futures, exposing existing inequalities, and rethinking urban space in a count-

er-hegemonic and participatory way. While full public engagement may not be possible before graduation, this phase in the project serves as a preparatory and reflective stage, setting up the framework for future political and social action and providing an interrogative lens through which the work considers its potential real-world impact.

For this project, the politicizing phase is translated into a reflective and preparatory practice focused on two pillars:

- * Understanding how to interact and network across diverse political and social actors: understanding conflicts, resistances, and points of alignment among different groups, and even between similar political groups; situating the work as a reflective exercise to prepare for future action, without pretending to be already implementing large-scale activism.

- * Translating politicization into a preparatory stance for allyship and solidarity with the Majority World, where people and territories are subjected to much more dire conditions of oppression and disruption of democratic processes; ultimately aiming to make futures 'otherwise' visible and actionable, despite the state and the market.

Researching Otherwise and Spatial Agency

Complementing the critically engaged urbanism framework, this project adopts principles of researching otherwise (Bathla, 2024) and spatial agency (Awan et al., 2011). These approaches foreground:

- * Epistemic disobedience: challenging Eurocentric, technocratic, and extractive paradigms of knowledge production.

- * Pluriversality: embracing multiple ways of knowing, inhabiting, and governing space.

- * Mutual knowledge: fostering collaborative, transdisciplinary engagement with residents, activists, and non-human actors, creating spaces of solidarity and co-production.

- * Embodied and sensorily-informed methods: employing walking, sensory observation, and sonic research to attend to rhythms, textures, and experiences of the landscape often overlooked in formal planning.

Mapping, in particular, is treated as a world-making practice, not a neutral representational tool. It documents hegemonic spatial structures, material losses, and sites of resistance, while also enabling speculative engagements with alternative spatial imaginaries and relational practices. This approach situates knowledge production within ethical, relational, and non-extractive frameworks, emphasizing restitution, critical reflection, and alignment with local life projects.

Ethics, Positionality, and the role of the researches

All methodological choices are informed by a feminist, decolonial, and intersectional ethics of care. The researcher's positionality is explicitly recognized: knowledge is always situated, the production of maps and analyses is not neutral, and representation carries responsibility. By foregrounding relationality, reflexivity, and accountability, the project strives to act as a facilitator for subaltern perspectives, translating and amplifying voices historically marginalized in both local and global contexts.

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Methods and possible outputs

This project combines critical, decolonial, and feminist approaches with qualitative and quantitative methods to study Sardinia as a territory shaped by overlapping forms of material and epistemic coloniality. The research seeks to illuminate both structures of domination and local resistances, producing actionable insights for alternative, pluralist, and ethically engaged urbanism. Methods and outputs are interlinked, often iterative, and span archival, empirical, interpretive, and experimental practices.

Methods

1. Desk Research and Archival Analysis

- * Review of historical, policy, and planning documents to trace militarization, industrialization, tourism development, and energy infrastructure projects.
- * Analysis of media reports and local narratives documenting protests, social mobilization, and contested land use.
- * Archival exploration of local, regional, and national planning instruments, maps, and zoning regulations to understand governance logics.
- * Identification of recurring patterns of marginalization, inequality, and epistemic erasure.

2. Critical Cartography and Spatial Analysis

- * Multi-layered mapping of material infrastructures: military, industrial, energy, tourism sites...
- * Mapping demographic and social transformations: depopulation, migration flows, settlement shifts.
- * "Following the resistances": tracing sites of community-led initiatives, environmental activism, and collective memory practices.

3. Situated Fieldwork

- * Observation, walking tours, and immersive engagement
- * Informal and semi-structured interviews with residents, activists, local administrators, and knowledge holders.
- * Ethnographic documentation of everyday spatial practices, embodied interactions with the landscape, and localized strategies of care and resilience.

4. Narrative, Interpretive, and Sensory Methods

- * Construction of spatial narratives highlighting domination, resistance, and alternative imaginaries.
- * Qualitative analysis of interviews, field observations, and participatory outputs to capture plural, feminist, and decolonial perspectives.
- * Sensory and embodied approaches: walking, sonic observation, and immersive experiences to understand how space is lived and felt.
- * Reflexive journaling and photographic or video documentation to record subjective and situated insights.

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5. Design, Speculative, and Restitutive Methods

- * Imaginaries and design sketches that visualize alternative futures and plural spatial possibilities.
- * Spatial analysis of contested sites, balancing local knowledge, environmental care, and social justice.
- * Restitutive practices: returning findings and maps to communities, fostering dialogue, and supporting local strategies for advocacy or environmental stewardship.
- * Experimentation with counter-mapping, speculative infrastructure designs, and community-led placemaking interventions.

6. Networking, Allyship, and Political Awareness

- * Analysis of actor networks: local communities, institutions, grassroots organizations, and transnational solidarity groups.
- * Mapping political resistances and divergences between actors with differing agendas.

Outputs

- * Critical maps of material, social, and epistemic landscapes highlighting both domination and resistance. Representation of uneven distribution of benefits and burdens for spatial processes in the region.
- * Situated collection of reflections, fieldwork fragments, and partial knowledges
- * Speculative and explorative planning of engagement with pluralist and decolonial presents and futures in Sardinian territories.

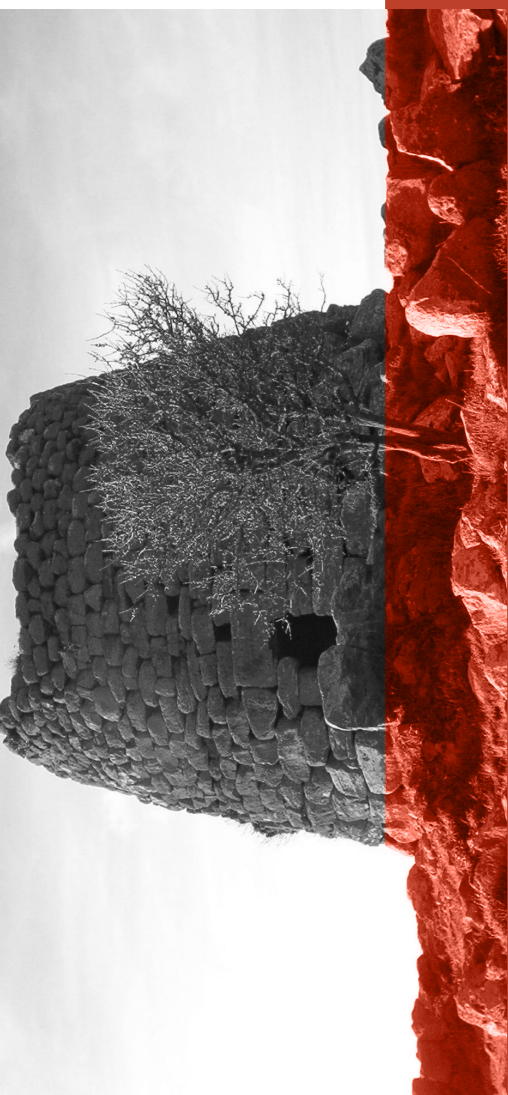
[02] CRITICAL ATLAS

context.
the palimpsest of hegemonies

_IMMATERIAL DOMINATIONS
about the inner layers of
sardinian subalternity

_MATERIAL DOMINATIONS
about the physical
manifestation of hegemony

ENERGY SPECULATION
about the most recent and
underestimated frontier



Source: google images

The Critical Atlas is a (partial) attempt at reconstructing the palimpsest of dominations and resistances that shaped Sardinia until today. The island emerges as a territory shaped by overlapping histories of domination, representation, extraction, and resistance. It brings together historical fragments, immaterial hegemonies, material transformations, and counter-practices in order to understand how the island's marginality has been produced across time.

This section does not aim to provide a complete history of Sardinia. It is a selection of historical, cultural, economic, and spatial processes, relevant for understanding how Sardinia has been governed, represented, consumed, and transformed through external logics. The atlas therefore works as an open-ended critical framework for reading the island as a contested territory, where political autonomy, cultural identity, land use, and development have repeatedly been shaped by forces operating beyond local control.

The Critical Atlas establishes the analytical ground of the thesis. It identifies the structures of hegemony that the later sections will respond to, while also tracing the existing practices of resistance from which alternative spatial imaginaries can emerge

context. the palimpsest of hegemonies

overlapping empires: layers of hegemony in sardinia

Sardinia's historical position cannot be reduced to a single colonial model. For much of its history, the island stood at the intersection of Mediterranean powers whose political centres were elsewhere. Byzantine authority, the maritime influence of Pisa and Genoa, Aragonese and Spanish domination, Savoyard administration, and later Italian state formation all left different institutional, cultural, and spatial traces. This succession did not produce a simple sequence of replacement, but a layered political geography in which land regimes, legal systems, religious authority, language, and social hierarchies were repeatedly reorganized through external centres of power (Cherchi & Pau, 2024).

The medieval giudicati complicate any image of Sardinia as politically empty or permanently passive. After the weakening of Byzantine authority, the island developed autonomous polities with their own legal and territorial structures. This period should not be romanticized as an untouched national origin, but it shows that Sardinian history included forms of local political organization before the island was increasingly drawn into the rivalries of the western Mediterranean. From the eleventh century onward, Pisa and Genoa extended their influence through commercial, ecclesiastical, and military networks, gradually inserting Sardinian territories into wider external systems of power.

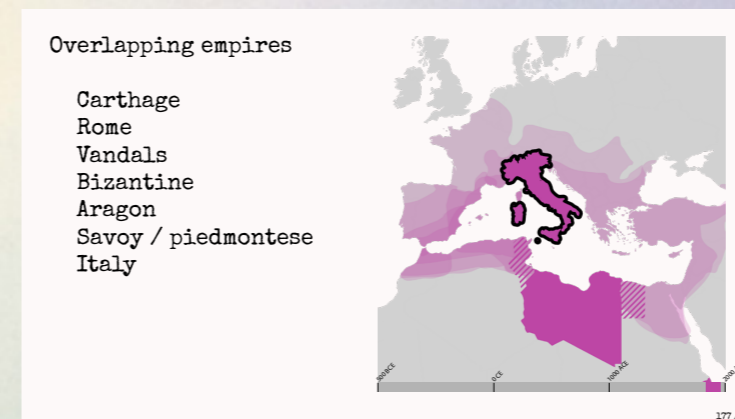
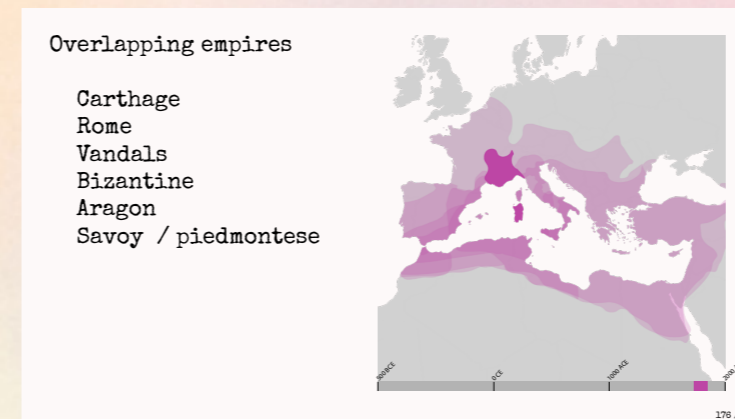
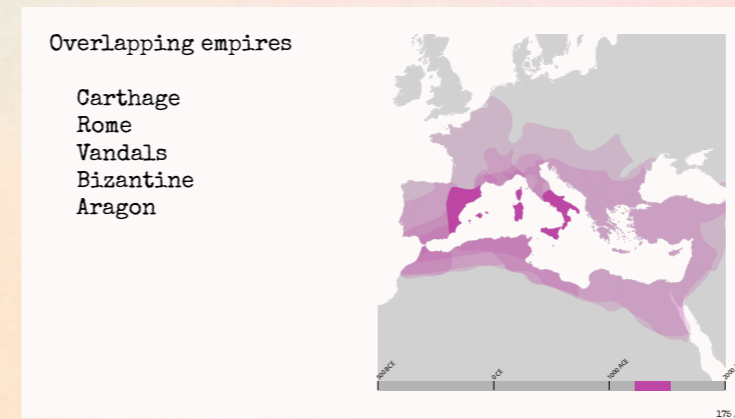
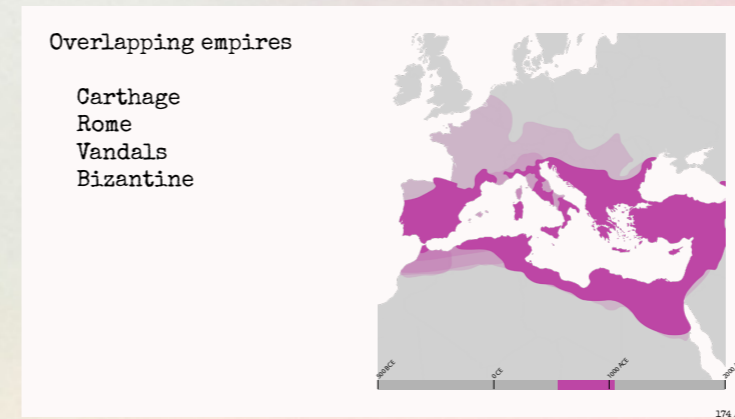
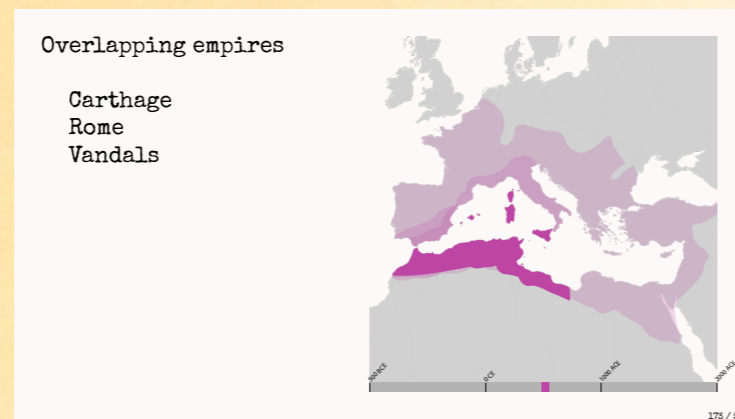
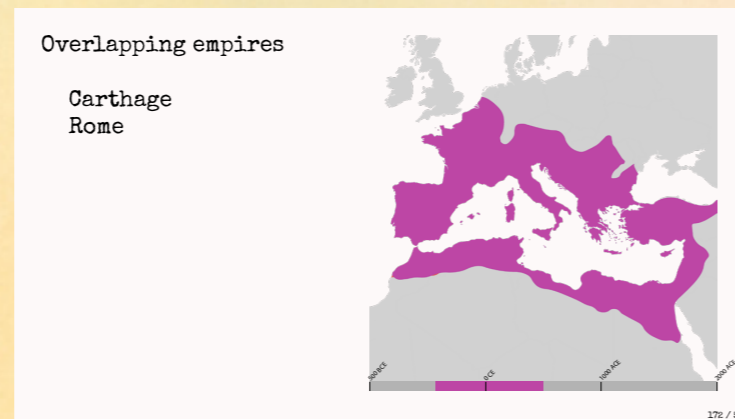
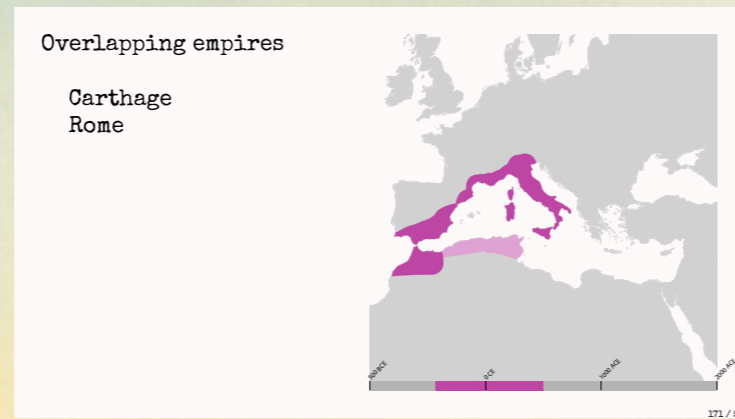
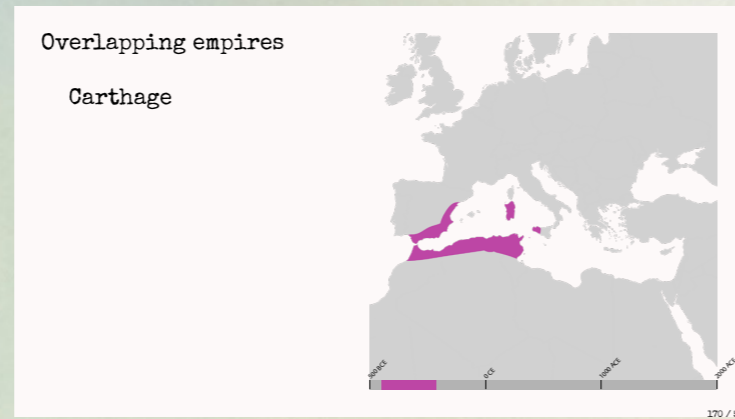
The Aragonese conquest in the fourteenth century marked a deeper incorporation into an imperial framework. Under Aragonese and later Spanish rule, Sardinia was integrated into administrative, feudal, legal, and religious structures tied to Iberian power. These transformations affected landholding, aristocratic authority, ecclesiastical institutions, and linguistic hierarchies. The point is not that Sardinian society was simply acted upon from outside, but that its institutional and territorial life was repeatedly reorganized through frameworks whose priorities were not primarily produced by local communities.

The passage to the House of Savoy in 1720 introduced another decisive layer. Sardinia became the nominal core of the Kingdom of Sardinia, while political power increasingly operated from Turin and through Piedmontese administrative rationality. Savoyard reforms gradually strengthened centralized governance and made territory more legible through legal, cadastral, and administrative tools. This shift connects older imperial and feudal forms of domination with modern state-making. Land was increasingly approached as governable property, while collective uses and customary arrangements became more vulnerable to reform, restriction, and conflict.

a contested unification: the formation of italy and the origins of the "southern question"

Italian unification is often narrated along the lines of a national liberation movement culminating in the creation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861. This narrative is not necessarily false, but it is incomplete. The Risorgimento was also a state-building process led largely by the Savoyard monarchy, whose administrative and political structures were extended across territories with very different histories, economies, and social conditions. The Kingdom of Sardinia played a central role in this process, yet this creates an important ambiguity: the island of Sardinia belonged to the political formation that unified Italy, while remaining socially and economically peripheral within the new national order.

This ambiguity is crucial for understanding Sardinia's later position. The island was attached to the name and



dynasty of the state that became Italy, but it did not become a metropolitan centre of Italian modernity. Like much of the South, it remained marked by rural poverty, limited industrial development, infrastructural weakness, and the marginalization of local languages and social forms. The Italian state therefore incorporated Sardinia through a paradoxical relation: politically central to the genealogy of unification, materially peripheral in the distribution of development and authority (Cherchi & Pau, 2024).

This contradiction belongs to the wider formation of the Southern Question. The new Italian state inherited and intensified uneven relations between North and South, often interpreting southern and insular difference through categories of backwardness, disorder, criminality, or cultural delay. Sardinia's position was not identical to that of the former Bourbon South, but it shared the condition of being measured against a northern model of modernity. In this sense, Sardinia was not only geographically marginal. It was also made marginal through administrative, economic, cultural, and epistemic hierarchies that defined what counted as progress, rationality, and national belonging (Panico, 2024)

garibaldi's disillusionment: brief history of a self-exiled hero

Garibaldi's presence in Caprera gives this history a symbolic tension. His role in Italian unification was decisive, especially through the Expedition of the Thousand and the collapse of Bourbon rule in the South. Yet the revolutionary and republican energies associated with Garibaldi were ultimately absorbed into a centralized monarchical state led by the Savoy dynasty. Riall shows how Garibaldi was transformed into a national hero while his political meanings were repeatedly reshaped by the state and by later memory (Riall, 2007).

His withdrawal to Caprera should therefore be treated cautiously, but it remains suggestive. It does not make Sardinia a centre of the Risorgimento in a simple sense. Rather, it places one of the central figures of Italian unification at the edge of the new nation, in a geography that itself embodied the contradictions of that process. Caprera becomes a useful image of unresolved unification: democratic aspiration, heroic myth, Savoyard consolidation, and peripheral retreat occupying the same space (Riall, 2007).

This three-part context prepares the later discussion of the Sardinian Question without replacing it. The point here is not yet to analyse twentieth-century development, planning, militarization, tourism, or energy infrastructure. It is to establish the longer historical background: Sardinia as a territory repeatedly reorganized by external powers; as an island tied to Italian state formation while remaining internally peripheral; and as a place where the contradictions of national unity can be read through both institutional history and symbolic geography.

elements of the sardinian question

The post-war settlement gave Sardinia a formal framework of regional self-government within the Italian Republic. The Special Statute of 1948 established regional legislative and administrative powers, defined the institutional architecture of the Region, and recognized Sardinia as one of Italy's special autonomous regions. Yet this autonomy was not primarily framed as cultural or national self-determination. Its central justification was the island's structural underdevelopment and insularity. Sardinian autonomy therefore emerged as a

developmental autonomy: a form of self-government closely tied to the promise of economic modernization (Statuto speciale per la Sardegna, 1948; Del Piano, 1971).

This orientation was made explicit in Article 13 of the Statute, which required the State, with the participation of the Region, to provide an organic plan for the economic and social rebirth of the island. The language of rinascita placed development at the centre of the autonomy project. Regional self-government and state-supported planning were imagined as complementary instruments through which Sardinia's historical marginalization could be overcome. From the beginning, however, this also meant that autonomy was institutionally connected to a model of modernization whose main instruments remained strongly dependent on state intervention (Statuto speciale per la Sardegna, 1948).

Imperfect autonomy and structural dependency

The Sardinian statute produced an ambiguous form of autonomy. Regional institutions gained administrative and legislative responsibilities, but the strategic direction of economic transformation remained closely tied to national policy frameworks, state funding, and development agencies. Many proposals associated with stronger political autonomy, and with the recognition of Sardinia's linguistic and cultural specificity, were reduced or excluded during the institutional formation of the Statute. The final framework prioritized economic development over political self-determination (Del Piano, 1971; Ortu, 1988).

This produced what can be described as an economicist model of autonomy. Sardinia was recognized as autonomous mainly because it was considered economically backward and in need of modernization. The Region was therefore granted powers, but those powers were largely oriented toward administering development programs whose financial and strategic conditions were shaped elsewhere. From a planning perspective, this is a central contradiction: autonomy created regional institutions, but the territorial transformation of the island continued to depend on national-scale development strategies and external expertise (Ortu, 1988).

The operational instrument of Article 13 was the Piano di Rinascita, approved in 1962 through Law 588/1962. The plan mobilized major public investments for infrastructure, agriculture, industrialization, and employment growth. It represented one of the most significant experiments in regional economic planning in post-war Italy and was closely connected to the broader framework of extraordinary intervention in the South, including the role of the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno (Law 588/1962; Clark, 1989).

The plan followed the dominant modernization paradigms of the post-war period. Development was associated with industrial growth, infrastructure expansion, technical planning, and the attraction of external capital. Sardinia was treated as a peripheral territory requiring large-scale transformation through state-led intervention. This framework did produce material changes, but it also reproduced a familiar hierarchy: the island appeared as a space to be modernized through planning models and industrial strategies developed outside its own territorial logics (Clark, 1989; Ortu, 1988).

A central component of the Rebirth Plan was industrialization through development poles. Investment was concentrated in specific territorial clusters, including Porto Torres, Sarroch-Macchiareddu, Portovesme, and Ottana. These areas became associated with petrochemical, metallurgical, and energy-intensive industries. The planning rationale followed growth-pole theory: concentrated industrial investment was expected to generate wider regional development through employment, infrastructure, and economic spillovers (Law 588/1962; Ortu, 1988).

In practice, this model produced serious contradictions. Many of the promoted sectors were capital-intensive, externally controlled, and weakly integrated with the local economy. Employment effects remained limited compared with the scale of public investment, while decision-making power and profits often remained outside the island. Instead of producing a diversified regional economy, the pole strategy generated industrial enclaves: highly transformed nodes surrounded by territories that continued to experience marginalization, weak productive networks, and dependence on public spending (Clark, 1989; Ortu, 1988).

The spatial consequences were therefore uneven. Industrialization reshaped specific landscapes, especially coastal and industrial zones, but did not generate balanced territorial development. Heavy industry introduced new infrastructures, environmental pressures, and employment expectations, while leaving much of the regional economy dependent on external capital, state transfers, and political negotiation with central institutions. The result was a partial modernization that strengthened some industrial capacities while failing to produce autonomous and self-sustaining development (Ortu, 1988).

By the end of the main implementation period, the Rebirth Plan had produced visible infrastructural and industrial transformations, but many of its broader promises remained unresolved. Sardinia gained roads, industrial areas, and new productive sectors, yet the island's economy continued to depend on public transfers, external investment, and decisions made outside the region. The development model produced a dual structure: a limited number of capital-intensive industrial enclaves on one side, and a wider territorial system still marked by fragile local economies and uneven development on the other (Clark, 1989; Ortu, 1988).

This is one of the central elements of the Sardinian Question. Autonomy did not simply fail, but it was constrained by the developmental framework through which it was institutionalized. The Region was formally recognized as self-governing, while the instruments of transformation remained embedded in centralized planning, extraordinary intervention, and external industrial strategies. The relationship between autonomy and development in Sardinia therefore cannot be read only as a story of modernization. It is also a story of dependency produced through modernization itself.

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«A volte penso che l'Italia in fondo sia un'astrazione. Incollata male dai Savoia e Cavour. Riempita di retorica. E con il peccato originale di un Nord che ha depredato il Sud. E non paghe, le élite risorgimentali e post-risorgimentali hanno pure descritto questo Sud come irredimibile, da civilizzare, insomma usando lo stesso lessico e le stesse pratiche che poi saranno messe in atto nelle colonie (...)».

«Sometimes I think that Italy deep down is basically an abstraction. Badly glued together by the Savoy and Cavour. Stuffed with rhetoric. And with the original sin of a North who plundered the South. And not innocent, the elites of the renaissance and post-renaissance have even described this South as irredeemable, to be civilized, essentially using the same lexicon and the same practices that will then be enacted in the colonies (...)».

_Igiaba Scego, italo-somalian writer
> 2019. "Futures [female plural]: tomorrow narrated by the voices of today."

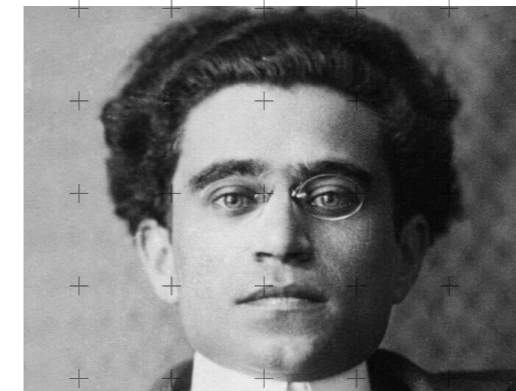
“The northern bourgeoisie has subjugated Southern Italy and the islands, and reduced them to exploitation colonies”

-Antonio Gramsci

Ranjit Guha

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

A. Gramsci



“Subalternity”

IMMATERIAL DOMINATIONS

whiteness and subalternity
the triangle of colonial gaze
language

it is not easy to write
these chapters. they are
squeezed out for a project
done abroad. sardinian reader,
forgive me.

whiteness and subalternity

brief journey into the ambiguous racial history of southern italy, and elements for a sardinian standpoint

The racial identity of Italians has not always coincided with the self-evidence it often assumes today. In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European and Atlantic racial hierarchies, Italians — especially southern Italians and island populations — frequently occupied an ambiguous position. They were European, but not always fully recognized as white in the same way as northern Europeans; Mediterranean, and therefore often described through categories of mixture, degeneration, backwardness, or proximity to Africa and the Middle East. This ambiguity also shaped internal Italian discourse after unification, where the construction of a modern national identity relied on a hierarchy between a supposedly civil, industrial, progressive North and a South represented as archaic, criminal, excessive, or insufficiently modern (Giuliani & Lombardi-Diop, 2013; Panico, 2024).

Whiteness, in this context, should not be treated as a neutral descriptor. Panico reads it as a historically unstable position of dominance, produced by contrast with an imagined other and repeatedly reaffirmed through cultural narratives, political discourse, and ideological apparatuses. Italian nationalism sought to present the nation as white, virile, and European, yet this project remained troubled by the position of the South and the islands, whose Mediterranean location was repeatedly associated with racial ambiguity. The racialization of southern populations, including Sardinians, therefore belongs to the same process through which Italy attempted to construct itself as a homogeneous modern nation (Panico, 2024).

The gradual “whitening” of Italians was tied to nation-building, colonial expansion, Fascist racial policy, and later cultural transformations. Giuliani and Lombardi-Diop show how Italian identity was reimagined through education, political discourse, colonial propaganda, Roman heritage, and Mediterranean whiteness. Fascist colonial policy intensified this process by using African colonies as a mirror through which Italy could define itself by difference, including through racial laws against mixed unions and madamato. The production of a unified Italian race required not only the racialization of colonized Africans, but also the disciplining of internal plurality: regional languages, southern cultures, island societies, and alternative historical memories complicated the image of a homogeneous national body (Giuliani & Lombardi-Diop, 2013; Panico, 2024).

Italian whiteness nevertheless remained stratified. Northern Italians could claim greater proximity to European modernity through the contrast between the industrial North and the backward South, while southern and insular populations were repeatedly described as more Mediterranean, Oriental, African, or primitive. In the United States, mass emigration further exposed the instability of Italian racial status: southern stereotypes were extended to Italians more generally, producing what Panico describes as a “southernization” of emigrated Italians. The same population that sought recognition as white Europeans was therefore internally divided by racialized distinctions and externally exposed to suspicion, segregation, and inferiorization (Panico, 2024).

Sardinia occupies a specific position within this history. It belongs formally to Italy and Europe, and Sardinians today generally benefit from the passability and privileges attached to whiteness. At the same time, Sardinia has often been represented as archaic, primitive, culturally delayed, or insufficiently modern. This produces a layered condition: Sardinians are not racialized in the same way as contemporary migrants or colonized African subjects, but they have been histor-

ically positioned as an internal margin of the nation. A critical reading of Sardinian subalternity must therefore avoid self-absolving uses of southern or insular marginality. The historical discrimination of Italians and Sardinians cannot be equated with the present violence faced by migrants, nor can it erase the participation of Italians and Sardinians in contemporary whiteness (Panico, 2024).

This distinction is especially important in contemporary debates on migration, citizenship, and national belonging. Panico connects the persistence of whiteness to citizenship legislation anchored in bloodline and to political fantasies of “ethnic replacement,” where the reproduction of the national body is imagined as something to be protected from racialized outsiders. The historical instability of Italian whiteness exposes a sharp contradiction: a society whose members were once ambiguously placed within racial hierarchies now often defends those hierarchies as natural, especially against migrants from Africa, the Middle East, and other parts of the Mediterranean. This history should not become another hierarchy of suffering. It is more useful as a warning against the ease with which formerly ambiguous or inferiorized groups can seek security by reproducing exclusion against those placed further outside Europeaness (Panico, 2024).

A more endogenous formulation of this terrain of thought appears in Placido Cherchi’s work on Sardinian identity. In “Per un’identità critica”, he attempts to articulate the standpoint of a Sardinian speaking from within the contradictions of Sardinian self-perception, rather than from the external classifications that have often defined the island. The text is difficult to access, but an online conversation with Cherchi offers a useful entry into the discourse. (Cherchi, 2013, p. 51).

Cherchi describes Sardinian identity as marked by a “sindrome della vergogna di sé”: a syndrome of shame of oneself, produced through comparison with what appears external, northern, modern, or socially superior. This shame is not abstract. He locates it in ordinary situations: speaking Sardinian in front of non-Sardinians, feeling embarrassed by domestic habits, clothing, poverty, or ways of living that seemed inadequate beside Italian norms of respectability and modernity. The result is a form of internalized inferiority, where Sardinians come to experience their own language and practices through the eyes of those who devalue them. Cherchi names this as a form of servile self-consciousness in relation to the supposedly superior consciousness attributed to the Piedmontese, Lombard, or more generally northern other (Cherchi, 2013; Cherchi, n.d.).

His response is not simply to affirm identity, but to reverse the meaning of what had been coded as lack. Our silence, for example, is often interpreted from outside as closure, awkwardness, or inability to communicate, but he argues, with the audience’s complicity, as a refined ethical practice: a way of not imposing one’s thoughts on others, of avoiding unnecessary harm, and of respecting the interiority of the other person. Against modern ideals of directness, transparency, and constant self-expression, he suggests that Sardinian silence may belong to a different social code, one less shaped by mercantile and capitalist expectations of verbal clarity, exposure, and exchange.

Cherchi also places Sardinian subjectivity within older Mediterranean horizons. The “North” internalized by Sardinians is usually the modern North: Piedmont, Milan, northern Italy, and the economic and bureaucratic world associated with them. Yet he recalls that other “Norths” existed before this one: Byzantine and Islamic

worlds that once represented centers of refinement, power, and cultural complexity in the Mediterranean. This unsettles the assumption that Sardinia’s distance from modern northern norms is simply backwardness. For Cherchi, Sardinian forms of consciousness preserve traces of other civilizational rhythms and inheritances.

The concept of fungudumine develops this argument further. The term names a form of inner depth: a dense, indirect, potential relation to thought, language, myth, and possibility. Cherchi connects this depth to Sardinian linguistic and cultural habits, including the richness of hypothetical, conditional, and subjunctive forms in their languages. Rather than vagueness or indecision, he interprets them as signs of a complex relation to reality, one in which the possible, the unsaid, and the indirect remain culturally significant. This is a polemical interpretation, but it is useful because it shifts the discussion from identity as essence to identity as a field of practices and sensibilities that have often been misread from outside.

The paradox is that this depth can appear as inadequacy in modern settings. Bureaucracy, technology, police suspicion, administrative speed, and everyday norms of efficiency often reward directness and practical fluency. Cherchi’s examples show how Sardinians may be made to feel clumsy or backward in precisely those situations where dominant society defines competence on its own terms. His language of Sardinian “superiority” should be read within this polemical reversal of shame: not as a stable hierarchy to be substituted for another, but as an attempt to transform inherited embarrassment into dignity by questioning the standards through which inferiority was produced (Cherchi, n.d.).

Read together, Panico and Cherchi clarify two scales of the same problem. Panico shows how Italian whiteness was historically unstable, internally stratified, and reproduced through colonial and national projects. Cherchi shows how internal hierarchies are lived through language, silence, embarrassment, bodily habits, domestic memory, and everyday comparison with an imagined North. Sardinian subalternity therefore cannot be reduced to biological race, nor to a simple regional grievance. It is a historically produced condition in which people may be incorporated into Italy and Europe while still being taught to see parts of themselves as inferior. This condition forms the background for the external narratives discussed in the following section: Sardinia as beautiful land, Sardinians as recognizable type, and Sardinian women and culture as objects of interpretation.

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language

The Sardinian language occupies a complex position in contemporary Sardinian society. It is recognized as a minority language by both Italian and European institutions, yet this recognition has rarely translated into a comparable presence within education, administration, media, or public life. At the same time, Sardinian is not a single homogeneous language but a continuum of closely related local varieties, spoken differently across the island and often carrying strong emotional, territorial, and familial attachments. This is not the place to provide a comprehensive history of the Sardinian language or of the policies that have shaped its present condition. However, several recurring tensions emerged throughout this research and are worth briefly mentioning.

A first tension concerns the very legitimacy of Sardinian as a language. Discussions about teaching Sardinian in schools often encounter resistance not only from outside the island but also from Sardinians themselves. One common objection is that there is no single Sardinian language to teach, only a collection of local dialects. Efforts to standardize or teach Sardinian can therefore feel artificial, distant from the language as it is actually spoken in everyday life. Yet linguistic research points in a more nuanced direction. While local variation is undeniably significant, scholars such as Roberto Bolognesi have argued that the different varieties share a deep structural foundation, particularly at the level of syntax, and form part of a broader linguistic continuum rather than entirely separate languages. The tension between linguistic unity and local diversity remains unresolved, but it continues to shape contemporary debates about language revitalization.

A second tension concerns the perceived usefulness of Sardinian in the contemporary world. During conversations and public discussions, it was common to encounter the argument that children would benefit more from learning globally dominant languages such as English than from learning Sardinian. Behind this position lies a widespread assumption that minority languages belong to the past, while economic opportunity belongs to other linguistic worlds. Yet the question is not necessarily one of substitution. Research on bilingualism has consistently shown that the

cognitive and educational benefits of growing up with more than one language do not depend on whether those languages are globally dominant or locally rooted. From this perspective, the value of Sardinian is not limited to its practical use within the island. It also lies in its capacity to sustain cultural continuity, enrich linguistic competence, and connect speakers to a wider repertoire of ways of understanding and describing the world.

A third tension concerns language shame. Throughout the twentieth century, many Sardinians experienced direct or indirect forms of stigmatization associated with speaking Sardinian, particularly within educational settings. Speaking Italian was often linked to social mobility, education, and modernity, while Sardinian became associated with rurality, informality, or lack of education. These attitudes have not disappeared entirely. Even today, traces of linguistic insecurity remain visible in the hesitation to speak Sardinian publicly or in concerns that its use may interfere with the correct use of Italian. Yet such concerns often overlook a basic characteristic of all living languages: they are constantly changing through use, invention, adaptation, and contact with other languages. Linguists have long distinguished between language as a standardized system and language as it is actually spoken in everyday life. The latter is always dynamic, creative, and hybrid. What may appear as linguistic impurity is often evidence of language's capacity to remain alive.

Ultimately, the question of Sardinian is not only linguistic. It concerns confidence, legitimacy, and the ability of people to recognize value in their own forms of expression. Shame rarely creates knowledge, creativity, or belonging. The history of Sardinian, like that of many minority languages, suggests the opposite: that intellectual and cultural potential emerges most fully when people are allowed to engage with the languages, memories, and experiences that have shaped them. Recognizing this does not require rejecting other languages or other worlds. It simply means acknowledging that every community contains far greater creative and intellectual resources than stereotypes of backwardness or irrelevance would suggest.

how different is each variant to other Sardinian dialects?
 CONTRASTO CROMATICO TRA LE DISTANZE DI CIASCUN DIALETTO DALL' INSIEME

what is the phonetic distance between variants?
 RAPPRESENTATIVITÀ FONETICA

dialects, depicted individually
 DIALETTI RAPPRESENTATI SINGOLARMENTE

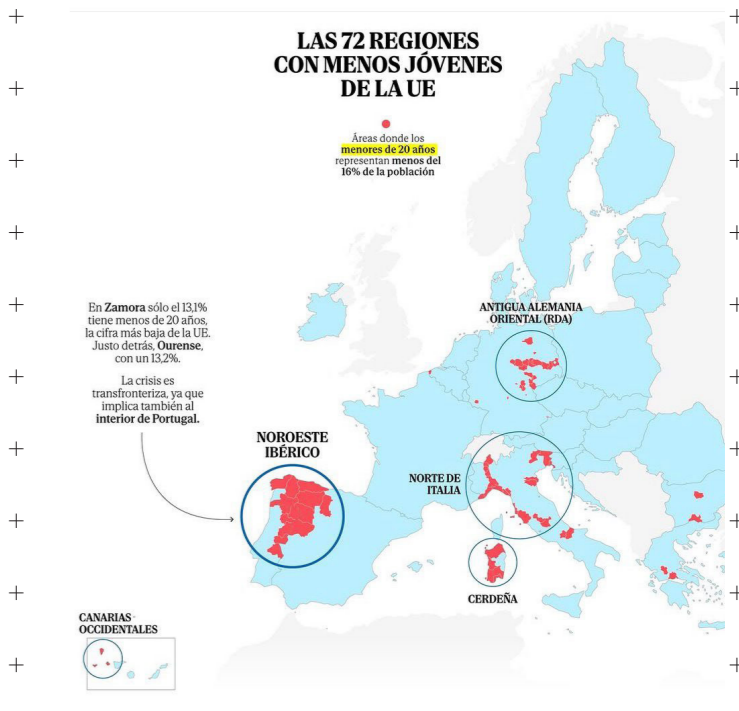
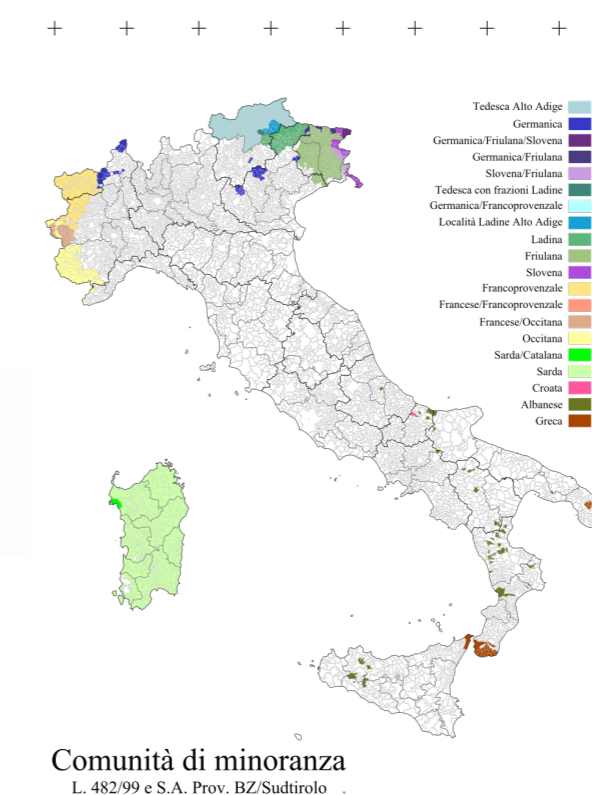
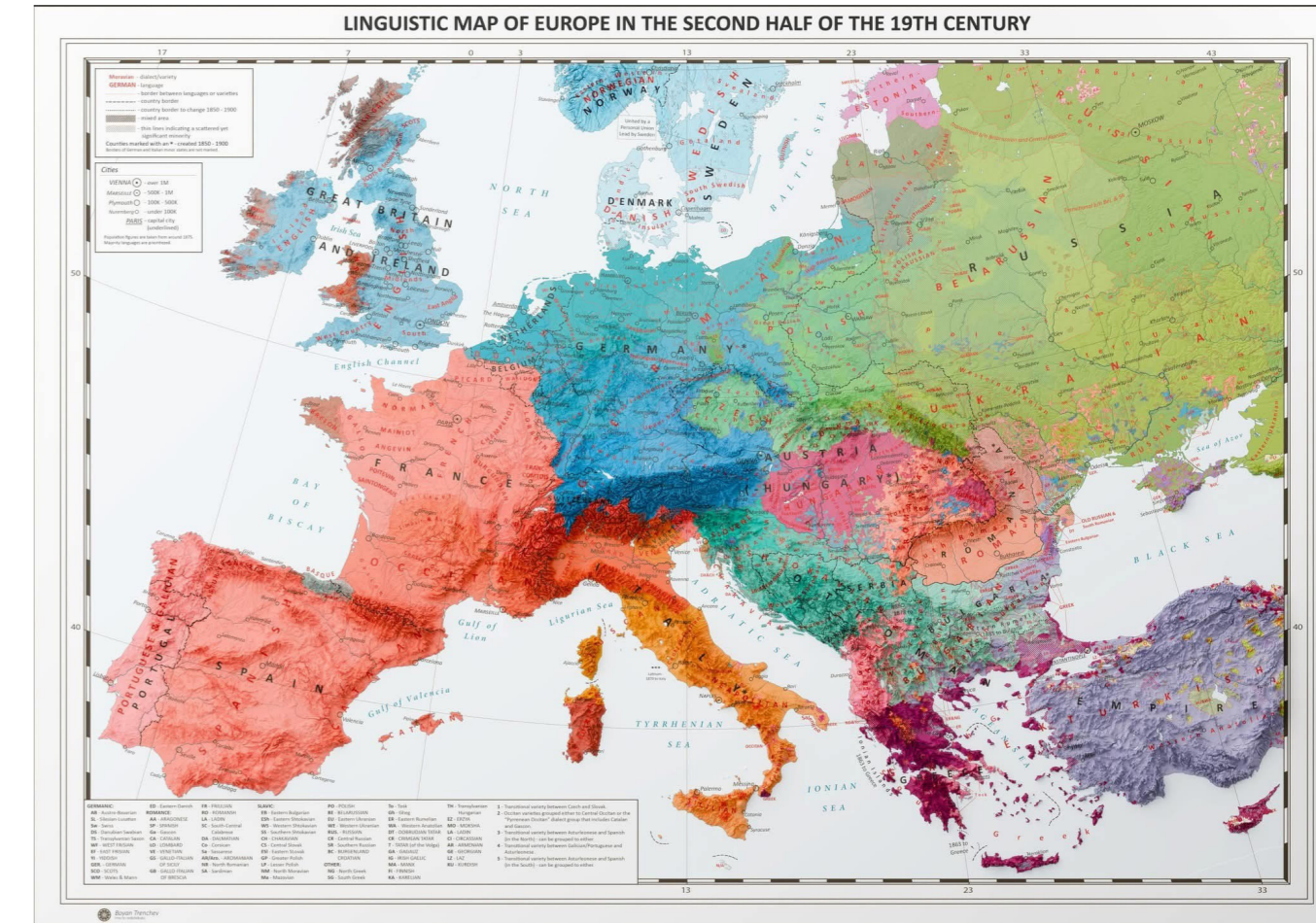
how distant is the common Sardinian language from other variants?
 DISTANZA TRA LSC E ALTRE VARIEtà

AREE DEFINITE SU LE DIFFERENZE LESSICALI
 areas of common vocabulary

SUBDIVISIONE IN 8 AREE
 division in 8 areas

SUBDIVISIONE IN 12 AREE
 division in 12 areas

DIVISIONE IN 20 AREE
 division in 20 areas



the triangle of colonial gaze

control of authority, knowledge and subjectivity

Sardinia is difficult to study from the outside. At first, this difficulty may seem to come from the island's long and fragmented history, from the coexistence of many local differences, or from the fact that Sardinia is often placed at the margins of Italian and European narratives. Yet the more one enters its histories and spends time within its social and territorial realities, the more another difficulty becomes visible: Sardinia is hard to understand also because it has so often been described from elsewhere. Its land, people, language, women, labour, and culture have repeatedly been interpreted through categories that did not emerge from Sardinian experience itself. This does not mean that there is one pure Sardinian voice opposed to one external gaze. Fieldwork made the situation more complicated. Many external narratives are also repeated, negotiated, or internalized by Sardinians themselves, as happens in any society exposed to dominant media, school systems, tourism, state institutions, and economic dependency. No people is politically or culturally unified. Still, it is striking how often these narratives place Sardinia in a secondary position: beautiful but available, authentic but backward, proud but irrational, ancient but not fully modern, culturally rich but rarely authoritative.

After many diverse lived occurrences and conversations, I can confirm that the tension between Sardinia and Italy, south and north, even just in their archetypal value reproduced in public and private narratives, is constantly a source of debate and strong feeling, and rightfully so in my opinion. The frustration of being less valued, of all the things left behind, of knowing what infinite potentials are alive in this region and in these peoples, was a recurrent element of the interviews and conversations I held. As explained in the previous chapter, the island and its people are and have been subjected to a series of erasures and misunderstandings; but there are also efforts, past and present, to reflect, deconstruct and counteract those gazes. Here is a more structured framework for understanding some complexities faced by and within sardinian standpoints.

A useful entry point into this opacity is provided by Giada Bonu's reading of Michela Murgia. The context is simple and ordinary: when a Sardinian person says that they are Sardinian, certain reactions tend to appear. Murgia identifies three recurring forms of recognition: Sardinia is so beautiful; Sardinians are so...; Sardinian women are so beautiful. These phrases do not sound hostile. They often are intended as compliments, memories of holidays, curiosity, or admiration. Precisely for this reason, they are useful to show how Sardinia can be recognized and reduced at the same time. The island is praised as vacation-landscape before it is understood as lived territory. Sardinians are described through traits before they are encountered as diverse people or historical and political subjects. Sardinian women are admired for their beauty, strength, or exceptionality before their knowledge and agency are taken seriously. The problem is not that beauty, hospitality, or admiration are false, but that these impressions are the echoes of actual systemic structures that underpin sardinian oppression and can become the dominant grammar through which Sardinia is made legible from outside, and sometimes from within (Bonu, source to verify; Murgia, 2008; Murgia, 2018).

These recurring reactions point to three connected forms of subordination. The first concerns land and spatial authority: Sardinia is repeatedly framed as landscape, resource, military space, tourist destination, or energy platform before it is recognized as inhabited territory. The second concerns subjectivity: Sardinians are described through stable traits that make them legible as hospitable, proud, backward, authentic, resistant, or irrational. The third concerns knowledge: Sardinian

language, oral memory, local history, women's labour, and territorial practices are often treated as secondary to external forms of expertise. Gender cuts across these dimensions, especially through figures such as the beautiful woman, the strong woman, the matriarch, or the keeper of tradition. These figures shape both the image of Sardinian society and the forms of knowledge that are recognized or dismissed.

The spatial form of this gaze is most visible in the repeated celebration of Sardinia as landscape. The island is approached as coast, paradise, wilderness, escape, or scenery. Such images are not simply false; they correspond to real experiences of beauty. Their political effect lies in what they leave out. Land appears as view before it appears as work, memory, conflict, or everyday use. Tourism makes this mechanism especially clear. In tourist imaginaries, cultivated by real estate agencies, architects and designers, Sardinia is often packaged through purity, timelessness, authenticity, and availability. Pili's critique of tourism as an industry of difference and Pau's distinction between territorio and paesaggio help clarify the spatial operation at work: lived, worked, and remembered territory is translated into landscape, view, and consumable experience. During fieldwork, this sparked a reflection with Professor M. Memoli, on the role of designers in operationalising the 'visual extraction' necessary to consume sardinian territory firstly as a background object for one's own creative freedom (the greatest schools of architecture were forming generations of designers on the lack of social accountability of their work), and secondly as a field for creating the 'heavenly atmospheres' of resorts and yacht clubs. (Pau, 2024; Pili, 2024).

This aesthetic reduction is not equivalent to extraction, militarization, or infrastructure planning, but it can share with them a similar habit of abstraction. The island praised as beautiful has also been treated as available land: for enclosure after the Editto delle Chiudende, for mining extraction, for petrochemical industrialization, for military training, for luxury coastal development, and today for large-scale renewable infrastructures. These processes belong to different historical periods and should not be collapsed into a single explanation. Their common element is more precise: Sardinia is repeatedly interpreted through external needs before it is recognized through local use, memory, and decision-making. In this sense, the tourist gaze, the military map, the industrial plan, and the energy suitability map do not say the same thing, but they can all contribute to making territory appear available (Corona, 2024; Loi & Salimbeni, 2025; Onnis, 2024).

A second form of subordination concerns the production of Sardinians as a recognizable type. The phrase Sardinians are so... remains open because it can be completed in many contradictory ways: hospitable, proud, primitive, stubborn, authentic, violent, traditional, resistant, closed, generous, backward. Positive and negative stereotypes may seem opposed, but they often perform the same operation. They turn a population into a stable object of description. This is close to what colonial theory describes as the control of subjectivity: people are not only governed through laws and institutions, but also through the categories by which they are described, expected to behave, and sometimes invited to recognize themselves. In the Sardinian case, this includes long-standing representations of backwardness, banditry, criminality, exotic authenticity, and cultural delay (Ghisu, 2024; Panico, 2024; Turtas, 2024).

Gender enters this field of subjectivity directly. Stereotypes of Sardinian society often pass through gendered figures: the "strong Sardinian woman," the "matriarch," the silent keeper of tradition, the woman who supposedly commands the household, or the woman who embodies the island's moral endurance. These

images can sound respectful, but they may also flatten social relations. They risk hiding patriarchal structures, unpaid care work, domestic expectations, and women's political and cultural agency behind a flattering image of exceptional strength. The critique of the myth of Sardinian matriarchy is important for this reason. It prevents a critical reading of Sardinia from replacing external denigration with romantic counter-stereotypes (Panico, 2024; Turtas, 2024).

A third form of subordination concerns knowledge. The phrase Sardinian women are so beautiful does not only concern appearance. It opens onto a wider epistemic problem: women, culture, and tradition are often interpreted through categories produced elsewhere. Sardinian women are made to represent beauty, authenticity, endurance, domestic continuity, or cultural purity, while the knowledge practices connected to women's lives are treated as secondary, private, or merely cultural. Lai's critique of patriarchal assumptions in archaeological narratives shows how even the ancient past can be reconstructed through gendered expectations. Panico's discussion of the patriarchal nation-state and Turtas's warning against simplified matriarchal myths show that gendered representation is also a question of knowledge: who is allowed to interpret Sardinian society, and which forms of memory, labour, care, and cultural transmission are recognized as public and political (Lai, 2024; Panico, 2024; Turtas, 2024).

This epistemic problem extends beyond gender. Sardinian language, oral poetry, local history, pastoral knowledge, domestic knowledge, place names, and territorial memory have often been excluded from official recognition or reduced to folklore. The repression of *gare poetiche*, the marginalization of Sardinian history in schooling, and the reduction of oral culture to picturesque tradition show how knowledge can be controlled without being fully erased. It survives, but it is displaced from the places where authority is produced: schools, administration, planning, heritage institutions, and public

narratives. The colonial condition in Sardinia therefore cannot be understood only through land or economy. It also concerns the authority to name, explain, teach, and remember (Mameli, 2024; Onnis, 2024; Pau, 2024; Soddu, 2024; Turtas, 2024).

These forms of recognition help explain why Sardinia is such a difficult object for colonial analysis. The problem is rarely a simple absence of attention. Sardinia is recognized constantly: as beautiful, authentic, ancient, hospitable, wild, feminine, resistant, archaic, or exceptional. The difficulty lies in the terms of that recognition. The island can be praised while its land is reorganized for external needs. Sardinians can be celebrated while their claims are treated as emotional, local, or backward. Sardinian women can be admired while the knowledge and labour that sustain communities remain unrecognized. Domination does not always appear as open contempt. It can also appear as admiration that leaves the admired subject with little authority over its own meaning.

Fieldwork made these dynamics less abstract. In conversations with activists, educators, artists, union representatives, environmental groups, animal-protection and forestry actors, student-rights organizers, and territorial associations, the same tensions appeared in ordinary terms. People often had to explain that opposition to a project was not hostility to progress, that defense of language was not nostalgia, that attachment to land was not provincial closure, and that cultural work was not folklore. Many were working under precarious conditions while still producing legal objections, public assemblies, artistic work, educational activities, and forms of mutual support. These practices respond to distorted recognition through daily work: Sardinia as lived territory, Sardinians as knowledge producers, and Sardinian women and communities as political subjects rather than symbols (fieldwork notes, 2025–2026).

the colonial exotic (Said 78)

“Sardinia doesn't exist as autonomous place, but only as object of desire, paradise at the service of enjoyment (of some, the non-sardinian) ... as it happens in the experience of colonized territories, it does not enjoy the statute of independence and finiteness, but it is always a function of someone else's pleasure.” (Bonu, G. in Ghisu & Mongili, 2021)

+ the architectural issue of visualism and rhetorical exploitation

‘sardinian women are so beautiful’

GENDERED HEGEMONY

sexualized colonial gaze

orientalization and exoticization

modernization through women's bodies

suppression of women's knowledge systems and poetry

gendered restructuring of labour and social roles

the myth of the sardinian matriarchy



‘sardinia is so beautiful’

SPATIAL HEGEMONY

‘sardinians are so...’

SOCIAL/OTHERING HEGEMONY

sardinian people as a unity, comparable to Said's deconstructed “orientals”

sardinians are seen as one homogenous people with a series of attributes: “welcoming, hospitality, good heart, intensity, intelligence, a certain primitivism”

but on the other hand, they are also “short, black and stocky”, “not very clean, smelling of smoke and cheese” (Cherchi 2013, 51)

This heterodetermined ‘social body’

MATERIAL DOMINATIONS

land management, agriculture, natural 'protection'
migration
military industrial complex
mining and industry
tourism

ENERGY SPECULATION
the new frontier of coloniality
some dimensions of the conflict
elements for a spatial justice assessment
zoom: chilivani e ittiri

if you draw a line
connecting every stolen land
and tree and body
could you really see the
ground?

migration

Migration and the Production of Sardinian Space

Migration has played a fundamental role in shaping Sardinia throughout history. Rather than understanding migration solely as the movement of people from one place to another, this chapter approaches migration as a spatial process that continuously reorganizes settlements, infrastructures, landscapes, economies, and forms of belonging. Across different historical periods, Sardinia has functioned simultaneously as a destination, a point of departure, a place of transit, and a territory of internal redistribution. Each migration regime has left material traces that remain visible in contemporary landscapes.

The history of migration in Sardinia can therefore be read through three recurring dynamics: movements toward the island, movements away from the island, and movements within the island. These dynamics rarely occur independently. Most historical periods combine multiple forms of mobility whose effects accumulate over time and continue to influence present-day territorial conditions.

Mediterranean Connectivity and Early Settlement

Contrary to representations of Sardinia as an isolated island, archaeological evidence suggests that it has long been embedded within wider Mediterranean networks. During the Neolithic period, seafaring communities settled on the island and established exchange systems centred around Monte Arci obsidian, which circulated across large portions of the Mediterranean basin.

Migration during this period primarily consisted of movements toward Sardinia and exchanges between coastal communities. These mobilities contributed to the establishment of permanent settlements, agricultural systems, maritime routes, and early territorial networks. The spatial consequences were the gradual occupation of the island, the emergence of settlement patterns linked to resource extraction, and the integration of Sardinia into wider Mediterranean circuits.

The Nuragic period further intensified these connections. Although often portrayed as an isolated indigenous civilization, Nu-

ragic communities participated in extensive maritime exchanges involving trade, diplomacy, and cultural contact. The resulting landscape was characterized by dense territorial occupation, strategic control of routes, and the construction of thousands of nuraghi, creating one of the most extensive systems of monumental territorial markers in the Mediterranean.

Coastal Urbanization, Trade, and Imperial Integration

From the Phoenician and Punic periods onward, migration became increasingly concentrated along coastal areas. Maritime traders, merchants, settlers, and administrators established urban enclaves that connected Sardinia to wider commercial networks.

Under Roman rule these processes intensified significantly. Colonists, soldiers, administrators, merchants, and enslaved populations moved across the island as part of broader imperial systems. Migration toward Sardinia became tied to extraction, administration, military control, and agricultural production.

The spatial consequences were profound. New urban centres emerged and existing settlements expanded. Roads, ports, warehouses, agricultural estates, and mining infrastructures reorganized large portions of the territory. Coastal cities became increasingly integrated into Mediterranean networks while interior regions often retained distinct social and territorial dynamics. This period established enduring contrasts between coastal integration and inland autonomy that would reappear throughout Sardinian history.

Maritime Powers, Repopulation, and Territorial Hegemonies

Following the decline of Roman authority, Sardinia experienced successive phases of Byzantine influence, the rise of the Giudicati, Pisan and Genoese involvement, and later Aragonese and Spanish rule.

Migration during this period was strongly connected to political control. Movements toward Sardinia included administrators, military personnel, merchants, religious institutions, settlers, and populations involved in processes of repopulation. At the same time, episodes of displacement, conflict, and selective exclusion reshaped local demographic patterns.

The spatial consequences included the fortification of settlements, the strengthening of strategic ports, the restructuring of urban hierarchies, and the consolidation

of administrative centres. Coastal cities increasingly became interfaces between local populations and external powers. Defensive systems, castles, walls, and watchtowers transformed large portions of the coastline into militarized landscapes. Patterns of territorial control became inscribed into urban form and infrastructure.

State Formation, Enclosure, and Internal Territorial Reorganization

The transition to Savoy-Piedmontese rule and later incorporation into the Italian state introduced new forms of territorial administration and intervention.

Migration during this period involved both movements toward Sardinia and significant internal redistributions of population. New settlers arrived from neighbouring regions, while state-led reforms increasingly sought to reorganize land ownership and resource management.

One of the most significant processes was the enclosure of common lands through the Editto delle Chiudende and related transformations. Although not a migration event in itself, enclosure altered mobility patterns, access to resources, and relationships between communities and territory.

Its spatial consequences included the fragmentation of commons, the expansion of private property boundaries, the proliferation of fences and enclosures, and the reconfiguration of pastoral landscapes. Migration and territorial governance became increasingly intertwined as the state sought to render land legible, measurable, and administratively controllable.

Mining Frontiers and Industrial Labour Mobilities

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries marked the emergence of a new migration regime centred on industrial extraction.

Mining districts in Sulcis-Iglesiente, Montevecchio, Argentiera, and other areas attracted workers, technicians, managers, and entrepreneurs from mainland Italy and abroad. These movements represented one of the most significant episodes of migration toward Sardinia in modern history.

Migration was directly linked to extraction. Labour moved toward mineral resources, while minerals moved outward toward national and international markets.

The spatial consequences included the creation of company towns, workers' settlements, transport infrastructures, railways, industrial facilities, ports, and entirely new territorial systems organized around extraction. Mining landscapes transformed pre-

viously marginal areas into industrial territories and introduced new social and spatial hierarchies.

At the same time, the economic inequalities associated with these transformations contributed to the first significant waves of Sardinian emigration, creating an overlap between inward labour migration and outward Sardinian mobility.

Reclamation, Colonization, and State Planning

During the Fascist period migration became an explicit instrument of territorial engineering.

State-led reclamation projects drained wetlands, combated malaria, reorganized agricultural production, and established new settlements such as Arborea and Fertilia. Carbonia emerged as a planned industrial city linked to coal extraction and national energy strategies.

Migration during this phase included both movements toward Sardinia and extensive internal redistribution. Settlers arrived from various Italian regions while local populations were incorporated into new productive systems.

The spatial consequences were particularly visible. New towns, agricultural grids, drainage canals, road networks, farms, and infrastructures transformed entire landscapes. Migration became a tool through which the state actively produced territory, reshaping environments and social relations simultaneously.

The Sardinian Diaspora

The largest movement away from Sardinia occurred during the twentieth century, particularly after the Second World War.

Economic restructuring, industrialization elsewhere, agricultural decline, and limited local employment opportunities contributed to large-scale emigration toward mainland Italy, northern Europe, and overseas destinations.

Migration during this period was characterized primarily by outward mobility. Entire communities became connected through networks of departure, remittances, correspondence, and return visits.

The spatial consequences extended far beyond population loss. Many villages experienced demographic decline and aging populations. Agricultural systems were abandoned or transformed. Houses became seasonal dwellings. Public services became increasingly difficult to maintain. At the same time, emigrant networks generated new translocal



geographies connecting Sardinian villages with Turin, Milan, Germany, Belgium, France, Argentina, and other destinations.

Migration produced a territory simultaneously marked by absence and connection.

Contemporary Immigration, Return Migration, and Lifestyle Mobilities

Since the late twentieth century migration patterns have become increasingly complex. Foreign residents, asylum seekers, seasonal workers, lifestyle migrants, return migrants, tourists, and second-home owners contribute to overlapping forms of mobility. Sardinia has become both a destination and a point of departure, combining contemporary immigration with continuing emigration among younger generations.

Migration toward the island is increasingly linked to tourism economies, environmental amenities, lifestyle choices, care work, agriculture, and international mobility networks. Return migration has introduced new forms of investment, entrepreneurship, and heritage-oriented development, particularly in rural and inland areas.

The spatial consequences are uneven. Coastal areas experience growing pressures related to tourism, real estate development, and seasonal occupation. Interior territories continue to face depopulation while simultaneously becoming sites of selective repopulation and heritage-driven revitalization. Migration today therefore contributes both to territorial concentration and territorial fragmentation.

Contemporary Immigration and Mediterranean Border Mobilities

Since the late twentieth century, migration patterns in Sardinia have become increasingly complex. Alongside continuing Sardinian emigration, the island has become part of wider Mediterranean and global migration systems involving foreign workers, asylum seekers, refugees, seasonal labourers, students, and transnational families.

Unlike earlier migration regimes centred on colonization, mining, or state-led settlement, contemporary migration is embedded within global inequalities, labour markets, border regimes, and postcolonial relations that connect Europe to Africa, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Asia.

Sardinia occupies a particular position within these geographies. Located at the centre of the western Mediterranean, the island is simultaneously peripheral to Europe and central to many migration routes that connect the southern and northern shores of the

sea. Contemporary migration therefore cannot be understood exclusively through local demographic dynamics. It must also be situated within broader historical processes involving colonialism, economic dependency, geopolitical intervention, climate pressures, unequal development, and the global organization of labour.

The Mediterranean has become one of the deadliest migration corridors in the world. European border policies increasingly operate through mechanisms of externalization, surveillance, detention, and selective mobility control. While migrants are often represented through narratives of crisis, invasion, or emergency, migration itself is frequently a response to conditions produced by histories of colonial extraction, political destabilization, military intervention, and unequal economic integration.

Within this context, Sardinia has experienced both inclusion and exclusion. Migrants contribute to local economies, agriculture, care work, logistics, tourism, and everyday social life. At the same time, reception centres, administrative barriers, precarious legal statuses, and forms of racialization can produce spatial segregation and uneven access to housing, services, and political participation.

The spatial consequences of these processes are visible in reception facilities, temporary accommodation structures, labour geographies, transportation networks, and urban peripheries. Migration leaves traces not only through demographic change but through the infrastructures built to manage, channel, contain, or support mobility.

A critical reading of contemporary migration therefore requires moving beyond narratives of invasion or demographic replacement. Such narratives often obscure the historical asymmetries that shape migration itself. The question is not whether Sardinia is being transformed by migration—every historical period examined in this chapter demonstrates that mobility has always been central to the production of Sardinian space. The question is instead how mobility is governed, who benefits from it, who is excluded from it, and how the island positions itself within a wider Mediterranean geography of movement, inequality, and interdependence.

Contemporary migration thus represents not an interruption of Sardinian history, but another phase in a long sequence of Mediterranean mobilities that have continuously

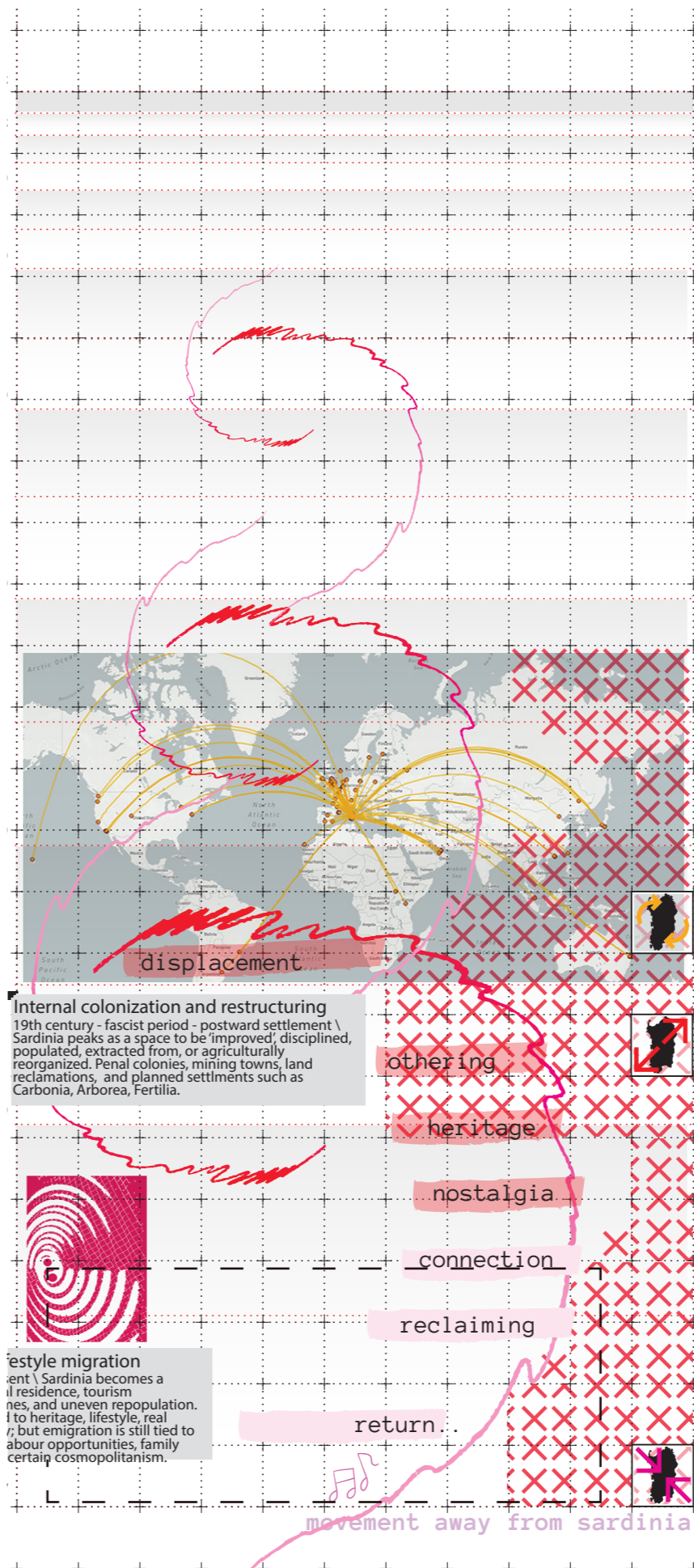
reshaped the island's territory, society, and relationship with the wider world.

Migration as a Layered Spatial Process

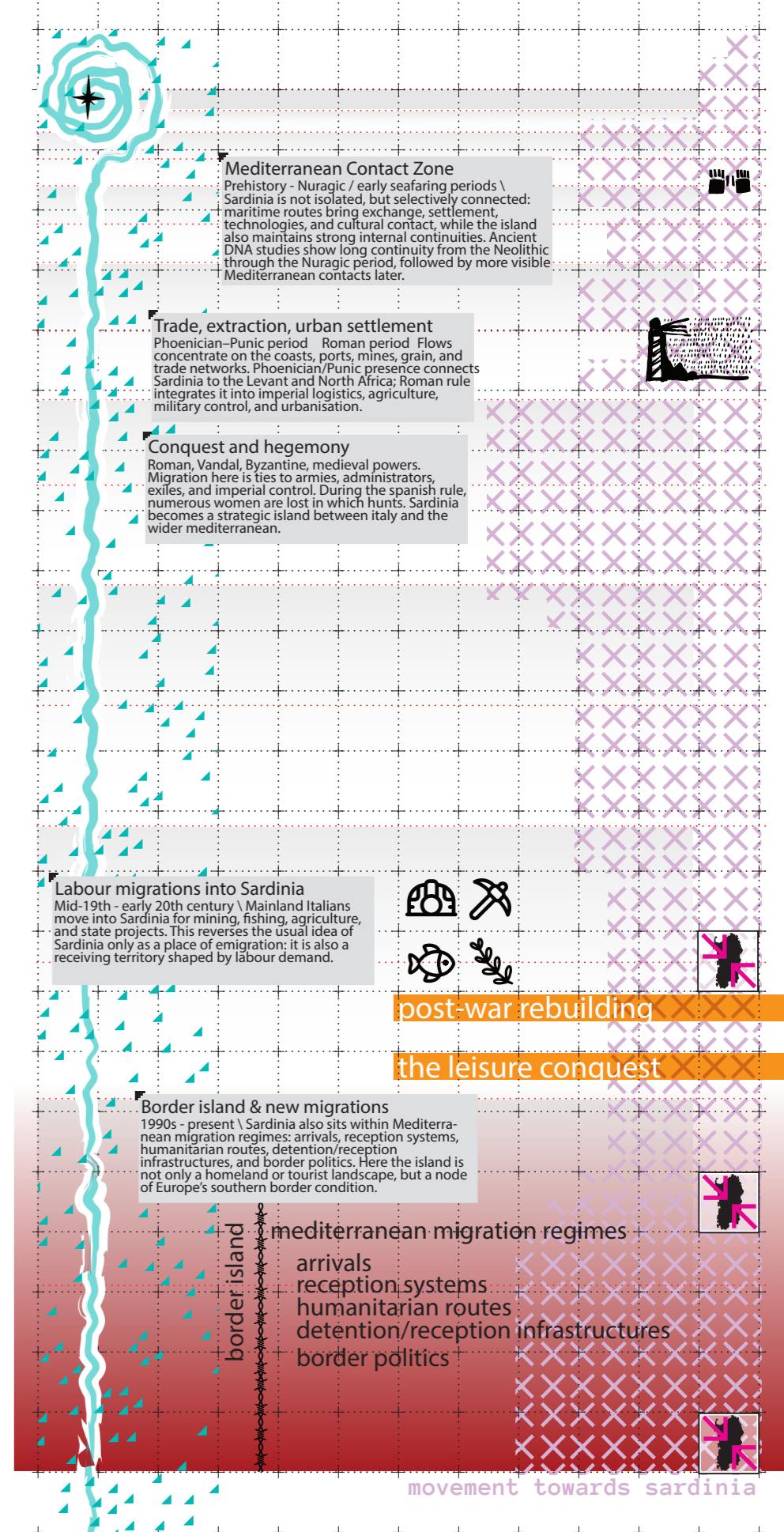
Across all historical periods, migration has operated as a mechanism through which Sardinian territory has been continuously reorganized. Settlements, infrastructures, agricultural systems, industrial landscapes, urban hierarchies, military installations, tourist enclaves, and transnational networks all emerged through specific forms of mobility.

Rather than a sequence of isolated demographic events, migration appears as a layered spatial process. Each wave of arrival, departure, and internal redistribution leaves material traces that remain embedded within the landscape. Contemporary Sardinia can therefore be understood as the cumulative result of successive migration regimes whose spatial successions continue to shape everyday life, territorial inequalities, and future development trajectories.

| Sardinian Diaspora

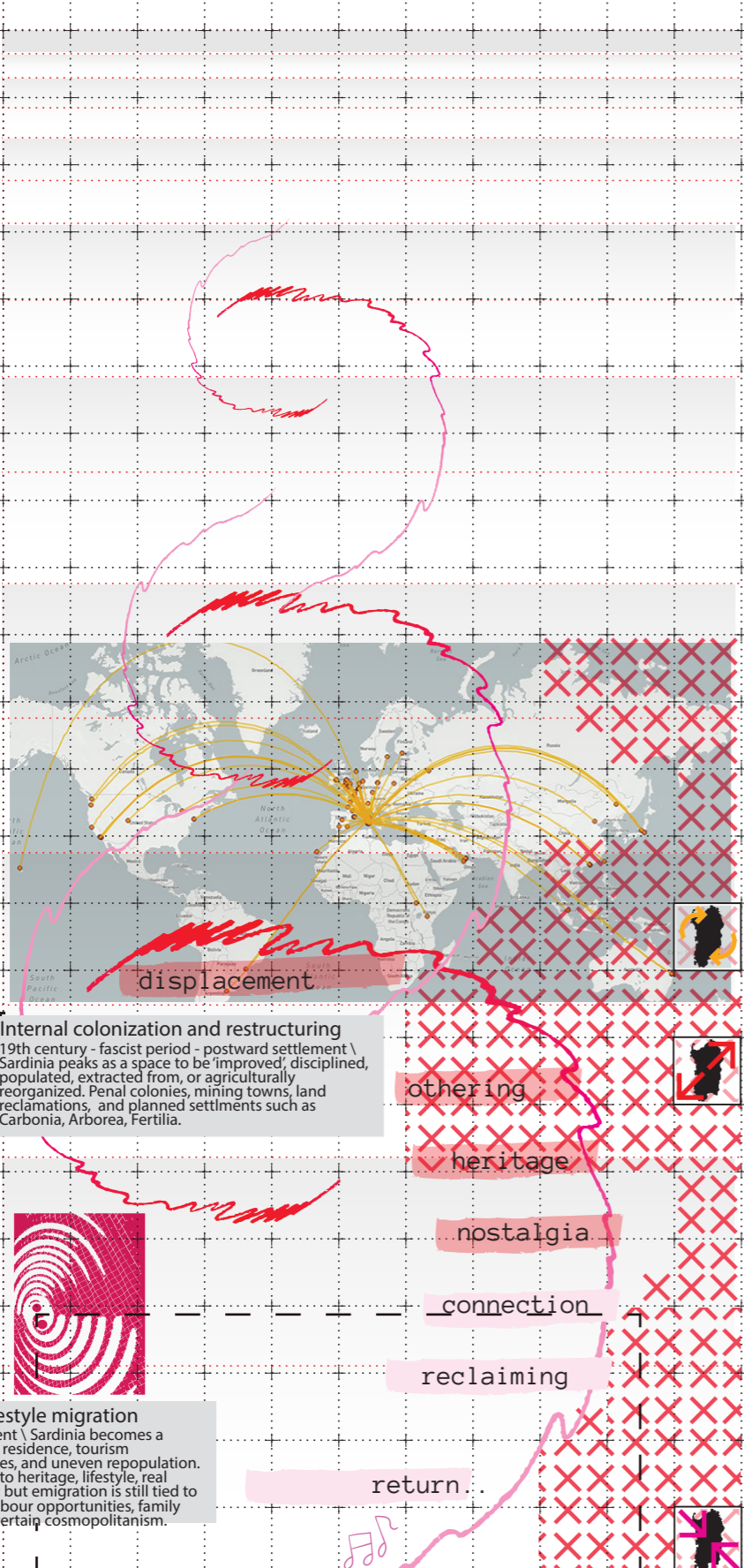


| Mediterranean Mobilities



Sardinian Diaspora

middle paleolithic
 upper paleolithic
 10'000 y/ago
 ~ 3000 years ago
 1000 years ago
 ~ 300 years ago
 100 years ago
 30 years ago
 now



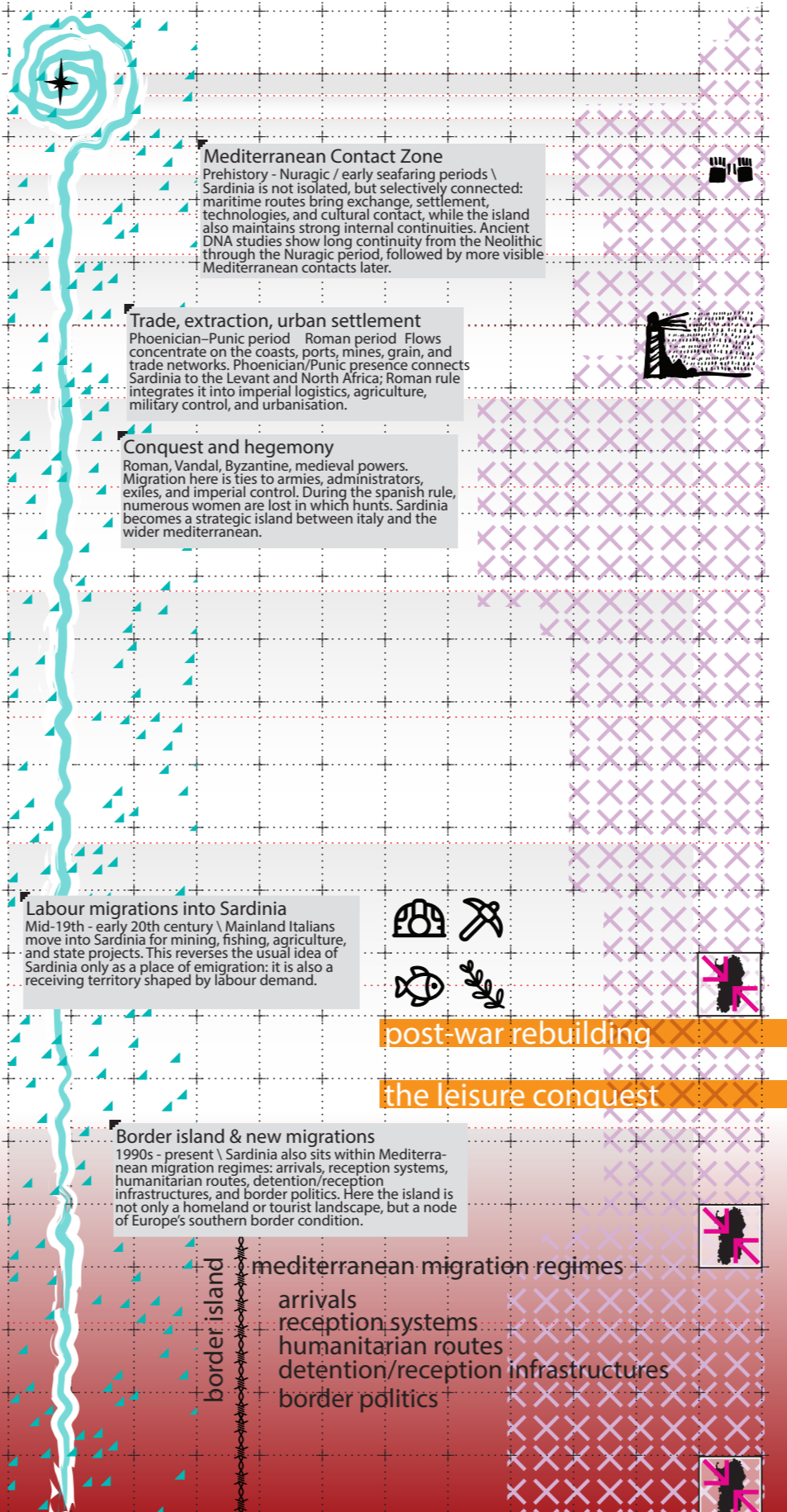
Internal colonization and restructuring
 19th century - fascist period - postward settlement \ Sardinia peaks as a space to be 'improved', disciplined, populated, extracted from, or agriculturally reorganized. Penal colonies, mining towns, land reclamations, and planned settlements such as Carbonia, Arborea, Fertilia.

Return, tourism, lifestyle migration
 Late 20th century - present \ Sardinia becomes a place of return, seasonal residence, tourism economies, second homes, and uneven repopulation. Migration becomes tied to heritage, lifestyle, real estate, coastal economy; but emigration is still tied to economic marginality, labour opportunities, family ties, and increasingly, a certain cosmopolitanism.

othering
 heritage
 nostalgia
 connection
 reclaiming

return
 movement away from sardinia

Mediterranean Mobilities



Mediterranean Contact Zone
 Prehistory - Nuragic / early seafaring periods \ Sardinia is not isolated, but selectively connected: maritime routes bring exchange, settlement, technologies, and cultural contact, while the island also maintains strong internal continuities. Ancient DNA studies show long continuity from the Neolithic through the Nuragic period, followed by more visible Mediterranean contacts later.

Trade, extraction, urban settlement
 Phoenician-Punic period Roman period Flows concentrate on the coasts, ports, mines, grain, and trade networks. Phoenician/Punic presence connects Sardinia to the Levant and North Africa; Roman rule integrates it into imperial logistics, agriculture, military control, and urbanisation.

Conquest and hegemony
 Roman, Vandal, Byzantine, medieval powers. Migration here is tied to armies, administrators, exiles, and imperial control. During the spanish rule, numerous women are lost in which hunts. Sardinia becomes a strategic island between Italy and the wider Mediterranean.

Labour migrations into Sardinia
 Mid-19th - early 20th century \ Mainland Italians move into Sardinia for mining, fishing, agriculture, and state projects. This reverses the usual idea of Sardinia only as a place of emigration; it is also a receiving territory shaped by labour demand.

Border island & new migrations
 1990s - present \ Sardinia also sits within Mediterranean migration regimes: arrivals, reception systems, humanitarian routes, detention/reception infrastructures, and border politics. Here the island is not only a homeland or tourist landscape, but a node of Europe's southern border condition.

border island
 mediterranean migration regimes
 arrivals
 reception systems
 humanitarian routes
 detention/reception infrastructures
 border politics

post-war rebuilding
 the leisure conquest

movement towards sardinia

Territorial Hegemonies



counter-hegemonies

nuragic age

roman age
 feudal age

'Giudicati' kingdoms
 independence

modern age

industrial age

post-war rebuilding
 the leisure conquest

post-war rebuilding
 the leisure conquest

technofeudal age

movement within sardinia

The Ice Age ends. Seafaring farmers arrive on the island, kicking off the Pre-Nuragic era. They begin mining Monte Arci's black obsidian (volcanic glass), turning Sardinia into the primary "tech exporter" of cutting tools across Europe.

Fig. 39 Planimetria del Recinto delle Feste.

Antonio, dance this round dance
 because of four years
 paying for pasture at the price of gold
 against my will, in this place
 I left my animals and my heart.

Now you are a computer
 working among every kind of smell you breathe,
 and your pale face
 slowly takes on the color of agony.

war

Now you are a computer
 working among every kind of smell you breathe,
 and your pale face
 slowly takes on the color of agony.

land management, agriculture, natural 'protection'

Land management in Sardinia should not be understood merely as a sequence of agricultural policies, but as a long history of colonial dependencies and ruptures that systematically dismantled traditional practices. The cultural and material roots of this process can be traced back to the nineteenth century with the Savoyard *Editto delle chiodende* (1820), which violently privatized centuries-old common lands. The subsequent abolition of the *adempri* (residual collective civic land uses) sparked immense popular resentment, culminating in the 1868 *Sa Connotu* revolt in Nuoro. These top-down enclosures shattered the deeply rooted aspiration for *Sa Comune* the communal ownership and fraternal collaboration of the land and marked a profound rupture, initiating the sustained extraction and marginalization of the Sardinian peasantry by external state powers (Onnis, 2024).

During the twentieth century, this dynamic of agricultural extraction and dependency worsened under the guise of state-led modernization. The *Piano di Rinascita* (1962, 1974) systematically neglected the agro-pastoral sector in favor of implanting heavy petrochemical poles, such as the one in Ottana. This exogenous industrialization treated the rural interior as backward and primitive, aiming to replace traditional agriculture with industrial wage labor. Instead of bringing widespread prosperity, it produced severe ecological degradation and accelerated the depopulation of inland villages. The result was a form of colonial extraction that disrupted the community's physiological and historical bond with the earth, transforming independent farmers into a dependent labor force (Onnis, 2024; Pau, 2024).

Sardinian agricultural struggles frequently manifested as direct territorial defense against state expropriation. A pivotal moment of modern resistance was the 1969 'moti di Pratobello', where the population of Orgosolo successfully mobilized to stop the militarization of their grazing lands for a NATO polygon. Rather than being a reactionary or pre-political spasm against modernity, this uprising was a highly conscious vindication of the community's right to manage its own land and maintain its pastoral economy. It stood as a clear rejection of the abstract spatial planning and expropriation attempted

by the Italian State (Onnis, 2024).

Another concern that repeatedly emerged during fieldwork, but which remained beyond the scope of this research to investigate in depth, relates to the relationship between Sardinian agricultural practices and broader European agricultural policy. Several interlocutors pointed towards a clear contradiction between the ecological and cultural diversity of Sardinian landscapes and policy frameworks that increasingly prioritise competitiveness, efficiency, and economies of scale. Within a territory historically characterised by extensive pastoral systems, small-scale agricultural production, and highly localised forms of environmental knowledge, such tendencies were often described as contributing to processes of concentration and intensification that place considerable pressure on smaller producers. While these dynamics cannot be reduced solely to contemporary agricultural policies, they can be understood as part of a longer history through which external economic models have shaped the organisation of Sardinian land and resources.

What emerged from these conversations was not simply a critique of specific policies, but a broader question concerning territorial self-determination. Participants highlighted the inevitability of environmental and cultural damage when sardinians are subject to economic frameworks that encourage standardisation, consolidation, and integration into larger competitive markets. These policy approaches were often perceived as being formulated according to priorities established beyond the island itself. The underlying concern therefore centred on the extent to which Sardinian communities are able to participate in defining what forms of agriculture, land stewardship, conservation, and development are considered desirable for their own territories. While a detailed examination of these issues lies beyond the ambitions of this thesis, they constitute an important dimension of wider debates regarding territorial sovereignty, economic and ecological governance, and the capacity of communities to shape their own futures.

The logic of expropriation and territorial alienation has also taken the form of top-down natural protection, leading to

what can be described as indigenous expulsions. The resistance against proposed environmental reserves, such as the Gennargentu National Park, exemplifies how conservation efforts can be perceived as an extension of colonial control. As highlighted by Tracey Heatherington's ethnographic research on the opposition in Orgosolo, the imposition of a national park threatened to alienate the inhabitants from their own countryside. For the locals, this *igreeni* expulsion ignored their role as historical custodians of the landscape, violating their right to self-determination and disrupting their autonomous life projects on the land (Corona, 2024).

Today, this legacy of land disputes continues through the contemporary struggle against renewable energy speculation. Multi-national corporations target rural areas for mega-wind farms through a process of *igreeni* grabbing. They deliberately devalue agricultural land as 'empty' or 'waste space' in order to acquire it cheaply. In response, contemporary agricultural movements such as the 2023 tractor protests in Barumini and the Marmilla region fiercely defend their 'vita-nel-luogo' (life-in-place). In this sense, land management in Sardinia remains a highly contested arena where communities continually resist exogenous extraction. They assert that their agricultural territory is not a void for corporate speculation or abstract conservation, but a living cultural archive requiring local resource sovereignty (Corona, 2024).



60 Envisioning the Supramonte

According to Gino, Orgosolo's old oak forest was "the only true forest" designated to become a national park. Orgosolo's Sarvades is a very rare example of a mature Mediterranean oak forest. About three-quarters of Sardinian woodlands like these were denuded during the nineteenth century, but Orgosolo's forest has long been treasured, used, and guarded by shepherds and the town administration. It lies at the heart of the local communal territory. When we reached this area of living sanctuary, we found oak trees of astonishing size, a few small cows of indigenous breed, a sow with a litter sired by an indigenous wild boar, and a handful of animal enclosures. Some of these showed us the "traditional" form built by local herders, fashioned from rock and juniper, while others were modified with newer materials. A couple of quaint old stone shelters were now roofed by garish plastic. Gino believed that this was the result of a mistake on the part of the forestry service, which had forbidden the herders to cut juniper branches for the construction of traditional-style roofs. The traditional and modified traditional animal shelters and shepherd's huts marked ongoing ecological bonds between the people and the land. When the tourists marveled at a dead trunk of magnificent girth, Gino explained that this "patriarch" oak had been hit by lightning in 1994.

There are herders who cried for that tree when it died! he told us. The authentic symbiosis of herders and forest was a key theme in Gino's narrative. The shepherds had made the place "a garden," he said, since by pruning juniper branches for their enclosures and shelters they rendered the shape of the trees aesthetically pleasing without harm to the ecology. The picnic lunch provided by our guide featured distinctive local meats and cheeses to further persuade us that pastoral traditions at Orgosolo remained authentic. The perception of inherent blending of nature and culture on the local landscape informed Gino's subtle argument against the institution of a centralized, government-administered national park incorporating Orgosolo's Supramonte.

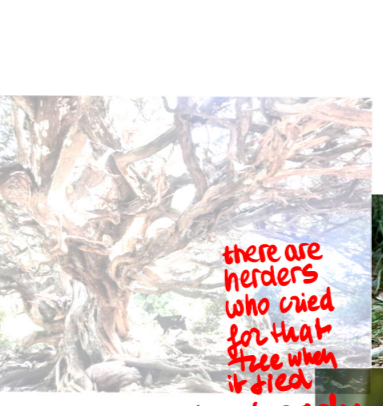
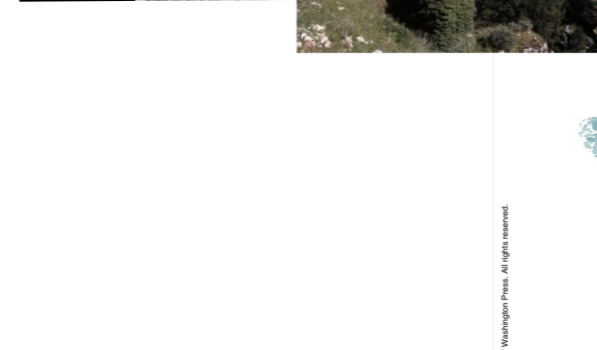
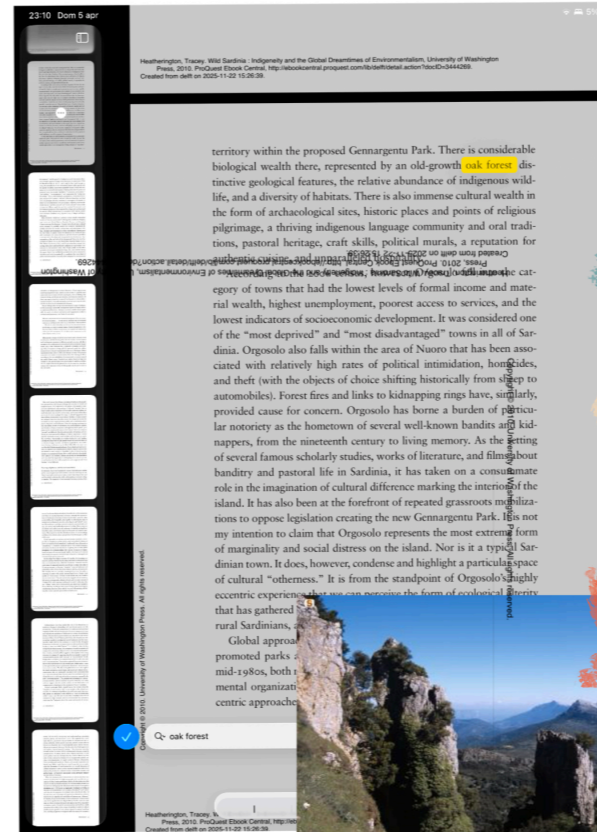
There is already a park, he said. "We have made the park ourselves."

The climactic finale of the day trip was the view from Monte San Giovanni. We left the Jeep and climbed on foot up toward the peak. Midway up the mountain slope there was an animal shelter still in use, built from natural materials by contemporary herders. Once we attained the view from the summit, Gino described how evidence of Orgosolo's "traditional" pastoral life was spread out for the eye to see, since around the base of the mountain there are high plateau areas of the Commons used for extensive pasture. He showed us the outlines of a chapel on the mountain crest used during medieval times and noted that Catholic processions were made on foot to visit the mountain once a year until just after the Second World War. Gino also introduced us to local men stationed by the forestry service to watch for fires. The visitors were offered local wine by the men and shown around the lookout, transformed from tourists into guests by the cultural magic of hospitality.

How does a landscape become a story, a narrative testament to the structure of time and the "nature" of history itself? Where strangers have seen wild spaces, rare species, the odd anachronistic shepherd, the potential to "preserve" a historically significant ecosystem, Gino saw signs of deeply rooted cultural habitation not only in prehistoric architecture and old-fashioned shepherds' huts, but also in the rich pastures, the pure springs, and the profusion of wildlife. Gino did not see the Supramonte of Orgosolo in a state of historical isolation, where the remnants of the world system have led to the abandonment and degradation of the rural countryside. Rather, his vision of the landscape positioned Orgosolo's communal territory, the Commons, in the center of a self-regenerating, custodial, and fluidly adapting pastoral unity. Our journey from the peak of Monte San Giovanni was not a stanced vision of a wilderness from on high, but a social vision of a landscape defined within a web of ongoing, distinctively localized and personal relationships.

This chapter introduces the landscape of the Sardinian Supramonte from two rather different, somewhat conflicting perspectives. It explores, on one hand, a landscape of rich but fragile ecosystems and biodiversity, highly valued by ecologists and nature enthusiasts. A brief history of the project to create Gennargentu Park suggests that this landscape of great value to the twentieth-century architects of Sardinian, Italian, and European identities. Yet attachments to landscape are defined by the residents of Orgosolo are of a different order. They derive from both a sense of history and a sense of community. Evidence of an epistemological gap emerges from the comparison of these viewpoints. I describe this in terms of the "museum effect" associated with the elements of landscape on display in connection with contemporary exceptions of legitimate authority and the nature of the landscape perceived according to perspective. The success of the park's designation has been drawn into doubt by the basic failure to negotiate a respectful middle ground between anthropocentric Sardinian and globally oriented, "environmentalist" conceptions of landscape. The failure of consensus is exacerbated by the transposition of colonialist to ritual landscapes, where local ways of seeing the landscape that are rooted in history and social experience are virtually erased. This process supports the problematic appropriations of local culture and nature that are associated with the global dreamtime of environmentalism.

One of the most celebrated peaks of central Sardinia, Monte San Giovanni, told me in Orgosolo, from its height of 1,316 meters, the way across from Arbatax to Oristano, on both sides of the island. This panorama and local residents. A forestry lookout is maintained there throughout the summer, when fires can quickly threaten the landscape. Monte San Giovanni is also Orgosolo's gateway to the famous Sardinian Supramonte, the high plateau linked to a romantic history of anti-colonial resistance, rugged shepherds, cowboys, and kidnapers. With its dramatic calcareous formations, Monte San Giovanni has long been a distinctive symbol of the town of Orgosolo, and in 1997, the town council petitioned to have the peak named a national monument. Its image is also frequently adopted as an emblem of the delineated "National Park of the Gulf of Orsoi and the Gennargentu." Today, the peak is managed under the auspices of the government forestry services of Sardinia, flanked on one side by state reforestation zones, and on the other by areas of communally owned lands still managed by the town. If the park plan is implemented, Monte San Giovanni will constitute an important designated visitor area, and most of the immediate surrounding Supramonte will fall under the centralized con-



there are herders who cried for that tree when it died!

there is already a park ... we have made the park ourselves.



Antonio, white-faced like sad snow thoughtful on the verge of tears as you look at these lambs you ask I already know what you're thinking about

Antonio, dance this round dance, or have you already forgotten it? they taught you another dance in Ottana - there they really make you jump.

Antonio, white-faced like sad snow thoughtful on the verge of tears as you look at these lambs you ask I already know what you're thinking about

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The Dance of Antoneddu (Il ballo di Antoneddu)

Antoneddu is a former shepherd who, forced by bad years but also dazzled by the myth of work "no longer leggings, dressed like a gentleman," has left the flock to become a petrochemical worker. But can it really be considered a leap in civilization? - his friend Peppeddu asks him.

Peppeddu Antonio, dance this round dance, or have you already forgotten it? they taught you another dance in Ottana - there they really make you jump.

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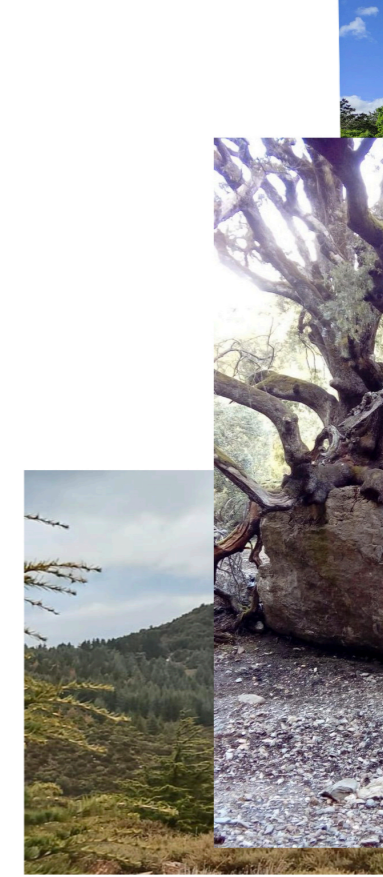
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Peppeddu The fault is the government, servant to schemers and capitalists. To them, they give everything, and they remain only eyes to cry through bitter days.

Peppeddu But where? If not against the slaves - shepherds and farmers all united - we fight against these bosses who have stolen all the factory.

Peppeddu Shepherds should not have had to migrate or go to Ottana, if the government had remembered us (Peppeddu) as any other Sardinian.

Peppeddu In Sardinia how much they gave away to the cows of Milan and Turin, if they had possessed it in the time now everything would be a garden.

Peppeddu Antonio, dance this round dance, or have you already forgotten it? they taught you another dance in Ottana - there they really make you jump.

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Antonio, white-faced like sad snow thoughtful on the verge of tears as you look at these lambs you ask I already know what you're thinking about

military industrial complex

Mediterranean islands share a long history of militarization efforts since ancient times, and Sardinia is no exception. The most recent phase of its militarization dates around the mid-1950s, when the island was inserted into a military geography that developed alongside post-war industrial modernization. In 1956, the Italian state established two of the largest military ranges in Europe: the Salto di Quirra Interforce Experimental and Training Range, covering about 12,700 hectares, and the Capo Teulada range, covering about 7,200 hectares. In parallel with the failed petrochemical industrialization of the island, vast portions of Sardinian territory were occupied to fulfil the international commitments of the post-war Italian Republic: large training and experimental polygons, the NATO airport of Decimomannu, radio and radar stations, bases, and connected restricted zones. Although this military industry was not formally the same as the development promoted through the Piano di Rinascita, it similarly introduced a heavy and externally directed use of Sardinian territory, modifying the island's economic and spatial structure (Onnis & Sedda, 2012; Onnis, n.d.).

The Salto di Quirra range is located in south-eastern Sardinia, near Quirra, Perdasdefogu, Escalaplano, and the coast of Capo San Lorenzo. Zucchetti describes it as the largest military polygon in Italy and Europe: an experimental range for ballistic missiles and a training base managed by the Italian Air Force and available to NATO. The range is divided into an elevated inland area of about 11,600 hectares and a seaside area of about 1,110 hectares, with missiles and weapons generally fired from the inland zone toward the small Quirra islands and the coastal sea range. This spatial arrangement shows that militarization was not limited to one isolated base, but connected inland plateaus, villages, mountains, coastlines, islands, and sea areas into a single operational landscape (Zucchetti, 2005).

Ordinary uses of land and sea became conditional on military functions: training, testing, firing corridors, restricted access, radar infrastructure, and interdicted areas. The same territory that contained villages, pastoral land, coastal ecologies, and areas of natural interest was reorganized as a platform for weapons testing and strategic experimentation. The socio-economic effects of this territorial insertion were not neutral: military and industrial activities, previously foreign to the local economy, reduced land available for agriculture and pastoralism, contributed to the decline of the active population in those sectors, and reinforced demographic movement from inland areas toward the coasts and industrial poles (Onnis & Sedda, 2012; Zucchetti, 2005).

In the same period, the Italian state also approached inland Sardinia through the language of public order and criminality. The "Parliamentary Commission of inquiry on criminality phenomena in Sardinia" known as the Medici Commission, established in 1969 and active between 1970 and 1972, was created to investigate "banditry and kidnappings in Sardinia, especially in the internal areas. In this context, Barbagia and the pastoral world were often treated as problems to be studied, corrected, and modernized, adding a policing and stigmatizing layer to the broader transformation of Sardinian territory. The Medici Commission later described Sardinian criminality as rooted in the pastoral world of Barbagia, illustrating how the social and cultural fabric of the interior had to be radically transformed; a narrative that was also used by the catholic democracy to motivate the creation of a nearby petrochemical plant in Ottana. Military planning, policing, and modernization therefore overlapped in a broader attempt to discipline inland society. Militarization was not only a matter of NATO bases or coastal ranges, but also a form of internal spatial control applied to populations already stereo-

typed as primitive, deviant, or criminal (Onnis & Sedda, 2012; Onnis, n.d.).

The revolt of Pratobello in June 1969 shows that this process also generated organized local resistance. The Italian Army intended to replace pastoral fields near the abandoned village of Pratobello with a firing and training range. On 27 May 1969, shepherds were told to move their livestock elsewhere because the area would be used for military exercises for two months. Assemblies followed, the population mobilized, and the shepherds refused both displacement and compensation. The protest was carried out through nonviolent resistance and ended with the withdrawal of the army from Pratobello ("Rivolta di Pratobello," n.d.).

Pratobello is therefore not only an anti-military episode. It is a territorial struggle in which pastoral work, assemblies, direct presence, and refusal of compensation became ways of defending land use and local decision-making. The revolt also produced cultural consequences, contributing to the emergence of muralism in Orgosolo and turning political resistance into a visible and durable form of public expression. The popular songs and poetic material connected to Pratobello adds another layer to this resistance: it contrasts the expectation of fertilizers and tractors, associated with more milk and bread, with the arrival of tanks, cannons, police, and military troops, while rejecting the representation of Orgosolo as a land of bandits (Rubanu, n.d.; "Rivolta di Pratobello," n.d.). The song "The dance of Antonello", which is a dialogue between a community and a shepherd who was forced to become a factory commuter, ends on the following hopeful note:

"Ma, Antoneddu, si nos organizzamos
Massajos e pastores tottu unidus
Lottamos contra custos guvernantes
Chi lassadu nos han semper famidos
...
Antoni, lassa Ottana, torra a Montes
Torra chin nois dezisu a lottare
T'ammentas s'ater'annu Pratobello?
Sas lottas zustas deven trionfare"

"Remember that year (in) Pratobello?
Just struggles must triumph"

The most serious controversy around Quirra concerns health and environmental damage. Zucchetti's study examines the so-called "Quirra syndrome," described as an apparently abnormal incidence of illnesses in the area, especially lymphomas and natal genetic malformations, with reported cases among both local inhabitants and military personnel. The study concludes that the "Quirra syndrome" exists, but that it is probably not entirely due to depleted uranium. This distinction is important: the issue is not reduced to one single proven pollutant, but to a more complex field of exposure, uncertainty, and possible causes (Zucchetti, 2005).

Zucchetti identifies several possible sources of contamination beyond depleted uranium. Since Quirra has hosted rocket propulsion tests for both military and civil uses, the airborne release of toxic and teratogenic substances from rocket combustion cannot be excluded. The study also points to the nearby abandoned arsenic mine of Baccu Locci, where lead and arsenic contamination may have affected environmental and trophic matrices. Quirra therefore appears as an overlapping risk landscape, where military testing, aerospace experimentation, and older mining contamination complicate any simple causal explanation (Zucchetti, 2005).

This uncertainty does not weaken the territorial argument; it clarifies it. The issue is not only whether one pollutant can be isolated as the definitive cause of harm, but how Sardinian territories have been repeatedly made available for external strategic functions while

local communities carry the spatial, environmental, and epistemic burden of uncertainty. Military infrastructures operate through restricted access, technical language, secrecy, and national-security justification. These conditions make it difficult for inhabitants to know what has happened in their own territory, to contest decisions before they are implemented, or to obtain accountability after damage is suspected (Zucchetti, 2005).

The military occupation of Sardinia also belongs to a broader continuity of territorial exploitation. Corona links military bases, deforestation, heavy industry, and imposed renewable energy projects through the collateral damage they generate on territory and local identity. In this reading, military servitudes are not an isolated historical problem, but part of a repeated pattern in which Sardinian land and sea are used for purposes decided elsewhere. The sea of Teulada, described as devastated by bombs and missiles, becomes one of the clearest examples of how military activity damages both physical landscapes and local meanings attached to them (Corona, n.d.). In addition, the case of La Maddalena (Santo Stefano base) highlights yet again the environmental consequences of the Italian post-war land concessions to the USA: an incredibly biodiverse and rich ecosystem poisoned by thorium and other chemicals after multiple crashes of nuclear-propulsion submarines.

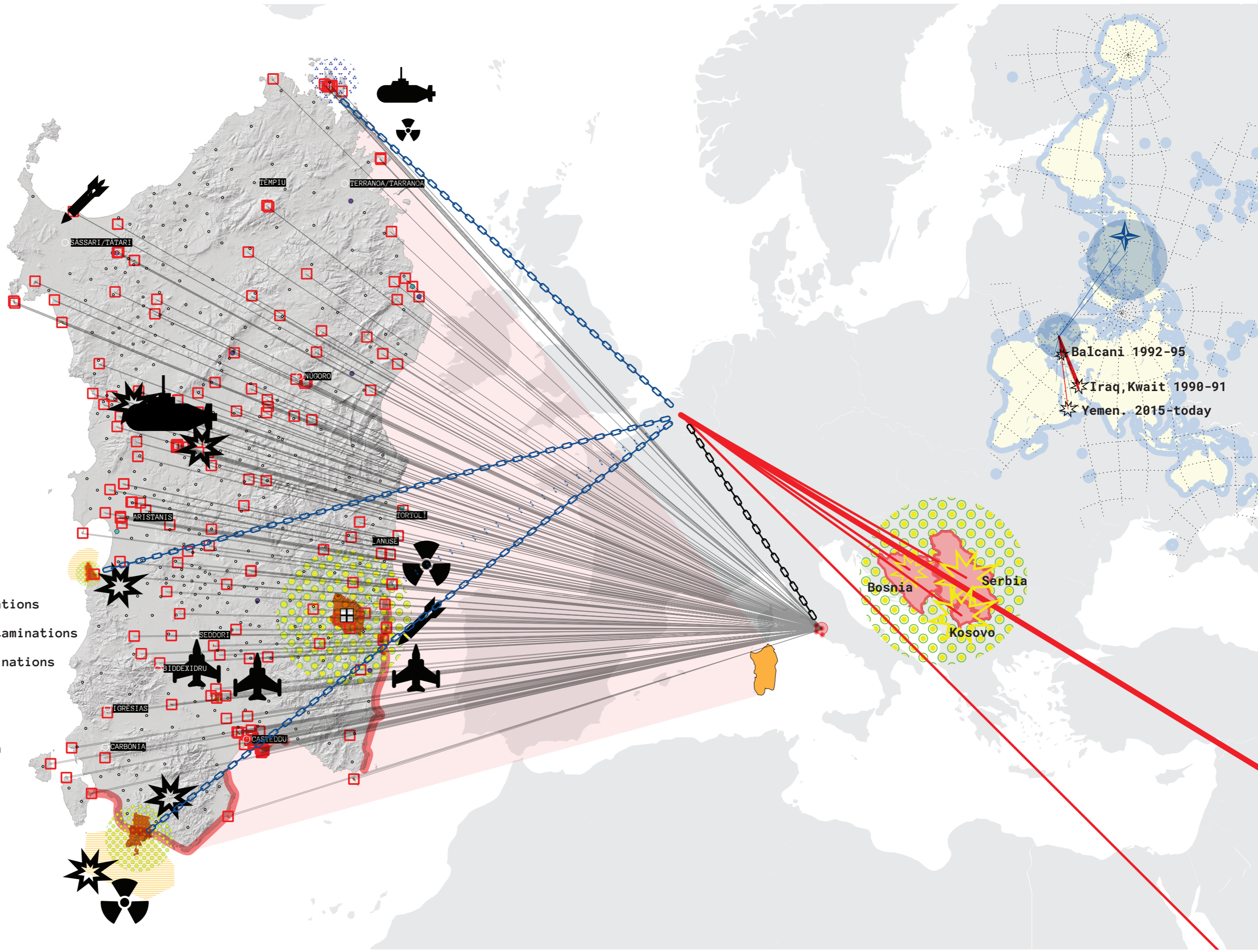
Mameli adds a further layer by framing military presence as a conflict with cultural heritage and landscape care. The massive military presence in Sardinia produces a short circuit between the protection of local cultural landscapes and presumed international "war needs." This makes military occupation a land-use conflict as much as a geopolitical one: cultural, environmental, and social values are subordinated to strategic priorities, while new opposition movements emerge around these military geographies (Mameli, n.d.). This tension is of course persisting today and I had a chance to observe it during fieldwork, both on the March 8th demonstrations of 'Women against war, colonialism, rearmment and genocide', and during multiple conversations: it seems like the use of such intense military efforts both undermines the claims of peacekeeping that justify them, and loses sense when considered from the point of view of a sardinian who lives separate from the rest of the continent, and probably doesn't wish to prepare for war with anyone.

Seen all together, sites such as Quirra, Teulada, Decimomannu, and Pratobello show connected sides of Sardinia's military geography. Quirra represents the long-term insertion of the island into national, NATO, aerospace and weapons-testing systems, with restricted land and sea zones and unresolved environmental-health controversies. Teulada as well, and it shows the damage of military activity on coastal and marine landscapes. Decimomannu represents the infrastructural role of Sardinia within NATO systems.

Pratobello represents the refusal of a local community to accept the conversion of pastoral land into a military range. These cases show how territory can be made available to external strategic uses, but also how local communities defend land, work, memory, identity, and decision-making through collective action (Corona, n.d.; Onnis & Sedda, 2012; "Rivolta di Pratobello," n.d.; Zucchetti, 2005).

Sardinia's military geography is therefore not an exceptional layer outside ordinary planning questions. It affects access to land and sea, pastoral economies, environmental risk, public health, cultural landscapes, and the right of communities to participate in decisions about their own territory. Military landscapes are lived territories, not empty strategic surfaces. Their history shows how national security, industrial modernization, scientific experimentation, internal policing, and cultur-

al-landscape conflict can converge on the same island spaces, while also producing resistance, territorial consciousness, and demands for self-determination (Corona, n.d.; Mameli, n.d.; Onnis & Sedda, 2012; Zucchetti, 2005).



- municipality
- military base
- fenced land
- uranium contaminations
- nuclear fuel contaminations
- ☢ confirmed contaminations
- ✈ missile testing
- ★ bomb testing
- ✈ air force polygon

★ Balkan 1992-95
 ★ Iraq, Kuwait 1990-91
 ★ Yemen 2015-today

Bosnia
 Serbia
 Kosovo

mining and industry

Even before capitalist modernity, Sardinia's mining history was shaped by repeated interest in the value of its subsoil. Obsidian from Monte Arci connected the island to Mediterranean exchange routes, while later metallurgy made the Iglesiente, Sarrabus, and central Sardinia important mineral areas. Under Phoenician, Punic, Roman, Pisan, Aragonese, and Spanish powers, extraction was repeatedly reorganized through external demand, legal control, labour discipline, concessions, taxation, decline, and reactivation. These phases do not yet amount to modern industrial extraction, but they form a long material background: the same mineral landscapes remained available to successive political powers before modern states became able to intervene more deeply through law, infrastructure, finance, and industrial planning (Wikipedia contributors, 2026).

From the nineteenth century onward, the mining question became part of a broader transformation of land, law, and popular life. Onnis places this transformation within the history of Sardinian popular movements, beginning with the Savoyard reforms and especially with the Editto delle chiudende of 1820, which allowed the enclosure and privatization of common lands. The later abolition of the ademprivi, the residual collective rights of use over land, intensified this rupture and contributed to uprisings such as Su Connotu in Nuoro in 1868. Modern extraction therefore developed in a society already affected by the loss of communal land, the weakening of subsistence mechanisms, and the growing capacity of the state to reorganize territory through law (Onnis, n.d.).

The liberal mining boom after 1840, and especially after 1848, marked a decisive shift. The separation between land ownership and subsoil rights enabled extraction to proceed through legal and economic frameworks that often worked against local landholding logics. The Iglesiente, Sulcis, Montevecchio, Buggerru, and Sarrabus became part of a rapidly expanding mining geography controlled largely by private, non-Sardinian capital, with Giovanni Antonio Sanna at Montevecchio standing as an important partial exception. Roads, railways, ports, pits, washing plants, company settlements, and export corridors reorganized selected territories around extraction and transport rather than balanced island-wide development. Mining changed the relation between people and land through concrete mechanisms: subsoil concessions, wage labour, company-controlled settlements, export infrastructure, and the legal separation between surface ownership and mineral rights (Wikipedia contributors, 2026).

This is where the decolonial and Gramscian interpretation becomes useful. Cristiano Sabino recalls Gramsci's reading of Sardinian lands and mineral wealth as an "expropriation of natural resources" with a colonial character. Used carefully, this frame helps interpret the modern and capitalist phases as moments in which Sardinian territory was made productive for external accumulation, while local communities absorbed dangerous labour conditions, restricted control over resources, and long-term environmental consequences (Sabino, n.d.).

The early twentieth century made these tensions politically visible. In places such as Montevecchio and Buggerru, mining labour generated worker consciousness and collective organization. Buggerru became especially symbolic because of the contrast between the elite world of managers and the conditions of miners, culminating in the 1904 massacre and its wider political consequences. The later 1920 massacre in Iglesias, where carabinieri fired on a workers' demonstration leaving six dead and around fifty wounded, further shows that mining districts were shaped not only by extraction, but also by labour mobilization, police repression, and the political organization of workers (Onnis, n.d.; Wikipedia contributors, 2026).

Mining labour also entered Sardinian cultural and

political expression. Onnis recalls Bore Poddighe, who worked in the Iglesiente mines in the 1910s and wrote *Sa Mundana Cummèdia*, a work of social and political denunciation later censored by fascism. Onnis treats popular songs, poetry, and workers' writing as part of the political life of mining communities, because they helped circulate criticism and give language to shared conditions of exploitation. Sabino also notes that early Sardinian socialist projects invoked *sa comune sarda*, a Sardinian commune belonging equally to farmers, miners, and shepherds. These references prevent the mining landscape from being read only as a damaged or exploited space: it was also a place where workers produced critique, political imagination, and collective claims over land and resources (Onnis, n.d.; Sabino, n.d.).

Under fascism, extraction entered a new phase through coal, autarky, and planned industrial urbanism. In the Sulcis, especially around Serbariu-Sirai, Bacu Abis, and Carbonia, the fascist state built an extractive city organized around coal production, labour discipline, and state industrial ideology. Carbonia shows that mining could produce not only pits and industrial sites, but also housing, mobility patterns, and urban forms organized around state-backed production (Wikipedia contributors, 2026).

After the Second World War, the industrial question became tied to the meaning of Sardinian autonomy. Piras notes that Article 13 of the 1948 Special Statute required the State, with the Region, to prepare an organic plan for the island's economic and social rebirth. The parliamentary commission worked between 1951 and 1958, and the resulting Piano di Rinascita, approved in 1962, initially contained stronger support for the primary sector. However, the industrial boom in northern Italy redirected the strategy toward industry, especially petrochemicals. In this shift, the promise of balanced development was replaced by a model centred on large industrial poles, public financing, and external investors (Piras, n.d.).

This postwar industrialization changed the geography of the island. Porto Torres became one of Europe's major petrochemical poles through the SIR of Nino Rovelli, while Sarroch became the site of the Saras refinery of Angelo Moratti, described by Piras as the largest refinery in the Mediterranean and supported by major public contributions. In the Sulcis, the crisis of coal after the 1950s was addressed through Enel intervention, a thermoelectric plant, and the development of Portovesme as an aluminium and heavy industrial pole. These projects produced work and urban growth, but they also concentrated dependency in a few industrial territories whose survival depended on public funding, energy prices, ownership changes, and decisions taken elsewhere (Piras, n.d.).

From 1956 onward, military infrastructure added another heavy territorial layer through the Salto di Quirra and Capo Teulada ranges, even if not formally part of the Piano di Rinascita. Agriculture and pastoralism, which had originally been central to the idea of rebirth, lost land, labour, and political centrality. Population moved from internal areas toward the coasts and industrial poles, accelerating demographic imbalance and inland depopulation. The promise of diffuse development was therefore contradicted by the spatial concentration of industry, military land use, and employment opportunities (Piras, n.d.).

Ottana shows this logic with particular clarity. After the Medici Commission on banditry framed Barbagia and pastoral society as the source of a specific criminal problem, the second Piano di Rinascita supported the creation of an industrial pole in central Sardinia. Ottana was presented as a way to transform the social fabric of the internal areas through industrial employment. Yet the promised employment figures were never reached,

transport conditions were weak, and several projects remained incomplete or dependent on public subsidies. Ottana was therefore not only an economic failure, but a spatial attempt to correct a society through industry, with limited attention to the actual conditions of place (Piras, n.d.).

The environmental consequences of this model are not secondary. Piras notes that the main industrial areas of Sardinia coincide with two of Italy's largest Sites of National Interest for remediation: Porto Torres and the Sulcis-Iglesiente, including Portovesme, Sarroch, and the mining area. He reports that Sardinia reached the highest national extension of contaminated areas, with 445,000 hectares, and refers to the SENTIERI epidemiological study to connect industrial contamination with health concerns in polluted sites. The industrial landscape therefore remains present not only through abandoned factories and unemployment, but also through soil, water, air, legal disputes, and the unresolved work of remediation (Piras, n.d.).

The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries show the persistence of this structure through recurring crises involving Carbosulcis, Alcoa, Eurallumina, Rockwool, Vinyls, Keller, and other companies. Piras describes this not as isolated emergencies, but as a structural condition embedded in Sardinia's economy for decades. A different perspective appears in the Rockwool workers' struggle: after the Portovesme company entered crisis in 2009, workers demanded retraining and employment in environmental remediation rather than simply the reopening of the factory. This introduces a crucial planning question: whether workers and residents can become active subjects in remediation rather than passive recipients of closure, unemployment, or external rescue plans (Piras, n.d.).

Today, mining and industry survive through heritage, contamination, selective extraction, and unresolved transition. Serbariu has become the Museo del Carbone, Iglesias hosts mining heritage, IGEA manages former mining sites, and some extraction continues in limited forms. The broader history is therefore not only a sequence of mining, petrochemicals, military infrastructure, and industrial decline. It is a history of how Sardinian territory was repeatedly reorganized through projects that promised development while concentrating decision-making, risk, and damage unevenly. Onnis's contribution is to show that these processes were not met only with passivity: Sardinian subaltern classes developed movements, poetry, assemblies, labour struggles, and territorial refusals that challenged the idea of backwardness. Piras adds that the postwar industrial model produced dependency, contamination, and crisis, but also that workers themselves sometimes proposed more grounded alternatives, especially through remediation (Onnis, n.d.; Piras, n.d.; Wikipedia contributors, 2026).

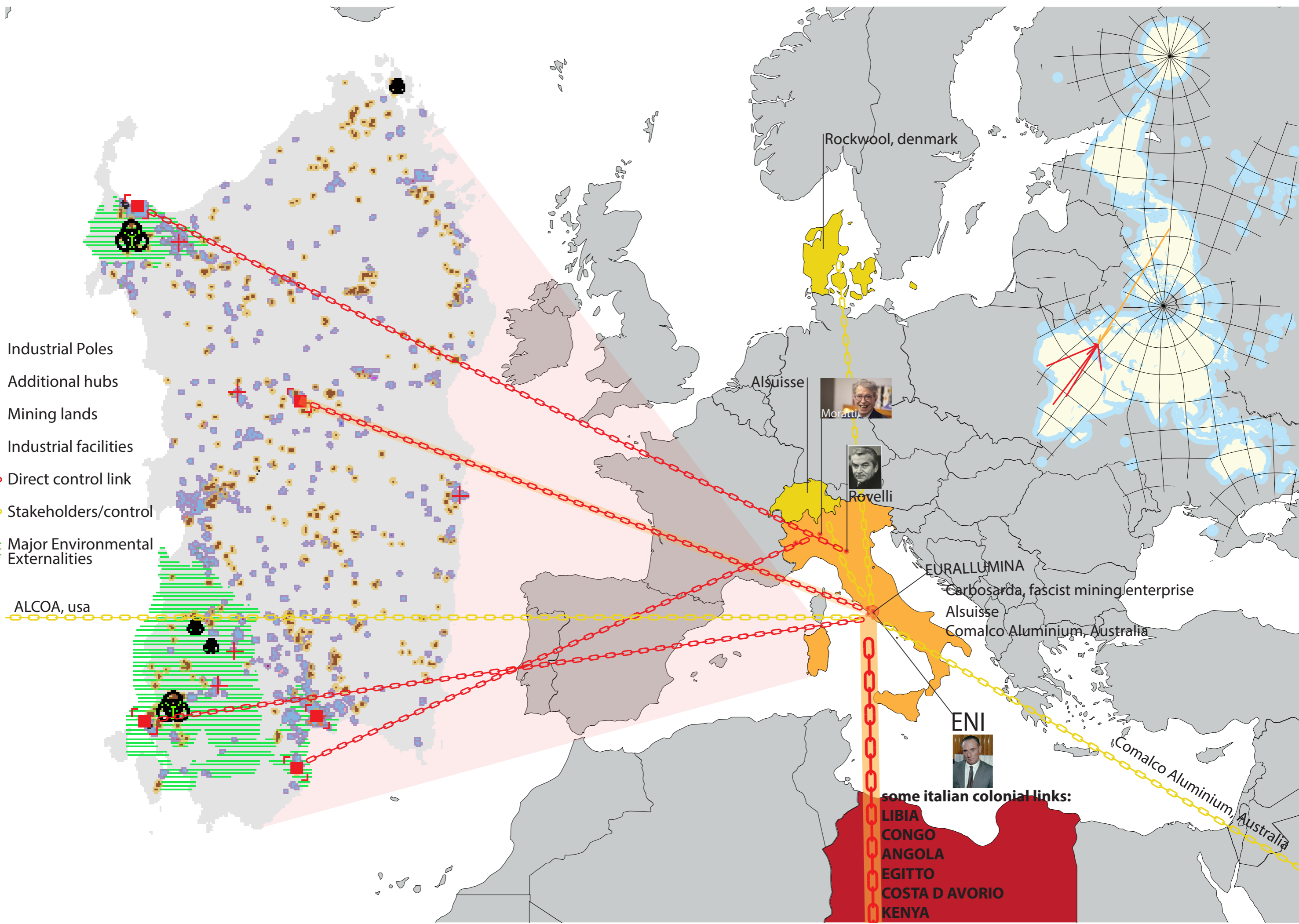
_Carta, M.: Antoneddu Antoneddu [poem/song].
 _Rubanu, N. G.: Pratobello [poem/song].
 _Corona, S. (2024). Signori del vento. La mobilitazione contro le pale eoliche in Sardegna come battaglia per l'identità sarda. In G. _Cherchi & F. Pau (Eds.), Logu e Logos. Questione sarda e discorso decoloniale. Melt-emi Press SRL.
 _Pili, A. (2024). Per una critica decoloniale del turismo in Sardegna. (ibidem)
 _Sabino, C. (2024). Le tasche cucite. Il



- x mining site
- shaded industrial complex
- circled main industrial hubs
- biggest mediterranean oil refinery
- shaded above average mortality

- Industrial Poles
- + Additional hubs
- Mining lands
- Industrial facilities
- ⋯ Direct control link
- ⋯ Stakeholders/control
- ⋯ Major Environmental Externalities

ALCOA, usa



some italian colonial links:
 LIBIA
 CONGO
 ANGOLA
 EGITTO
 COSTA D AVORIO
 KENYA

075

075

076

076

tourism

Tourism in Sardinia should not be read only as a recent economic sector, but as part of a longer history in which the island was first represented from outside and then reorganized around the expectations of visitors, investors, and public development strategies. Pili places the cultural roots of this process in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel writing, where Sardinia was often described as archaic, wild, insecure, and distant from European modernity. Before mass tourism, this gaze already prepared a marketable image of the island as an exotic place inside Europe: close enough to be visited, but distant enough to be imagined as primitive, uncontaminated, and available for discovery. Early tourist practices appeared in the nineteenth century, especially around Alghero and thermal sites, but the island remained marginal to major tourist circuits because of transport difficulties and its reputation for insecurity (Pili, 2024).

The modern tourist sector began after the Second World War, in connection with autonomy, malaria eradication, infrastructure, and the first regional development policies. The tourism overview identifies 1948 as a starting point for modern tourism, when the first investments and development plans began alongside Sardinia's autonomous status and the definitive defeat of malaria along the coasts. Through ESIT, the Region promoted early hotel construction, including the Miramar hotel in Alghero in 1953, while the first tourist growth concentrated between the 1950s and 1960s around Alghero and the Riviera del Corallo.

The decisive symbolic shift came in the early 1960s with the foundation of the Costa Smeralda by the Aga Khan. The creation of Porto Cervo and related settlements such as Porto Rotondo, Romazzino, Cala di Volpe, and Porto Raphael turned Gallura into the image of luxury Sardinia. Pili's interpretation is useful because this was not simply the growth of tourism, but the production of a coastal enclave: privately organized, architecturally curated, socially selective, and largely detached from the surrounding territory. Local people entered this model mainly as workers, service providers, or folkloric background, while land value and decision-making were concentrated elsewhere (Pili, 2024).

From the 1970s onward, the success of the coastal model encouraged widespread construction across many coastal municipalities. The general tourism history itself notes that the increase in land value produced excessive exploitation of the coasts, with many new buildings and second homes, often of poor quality, placing natural balances at serious risk. This is important for the thesis because tourism did not only bring visitors: it changed land markets, building patterns, seasonal economies, and the relation between settlements and the coast. The later attempts to create a regional landscape plan can be read as a response to this pressure, even if such planning has remained politically contested.

The crisis of postwar industrialization made tourism appear increasingly attractive as a cleaner alternative to heavy industry. Yet the shift from factories to beaches did not necessarily restore local control. Coastal tourism expanded through real-estate speculation, seasonal labour, private investment, and dependence on external demand. In this sense, tourism did not simply replace industrial development with a softer economy; it reorganized Sardinian territory through another model of extraction, based on landscape, image, land value, and access (Pili, 2024).

From the 1990s onward, the tourist gaze increasingly moved inland. Mameli's historical framing is useful here because it shows that "heritage" itself changed meaning over time: from the protection of monuments, as in the 1954 Hague Convention and 1972 UNESCO Convention, toward intangible heritage and community meaning, especially through the 2003 UNESCO Conven-

tion and the 2005 Faro Convention. However, from the 1990s, this community-oriented language increasingly overlapped with the economic use of heritage in the service sector. In Sardinia, identity, memory, food, craft, domestic spaces, and village life became resources in tourist competition (Mameli, 2024).

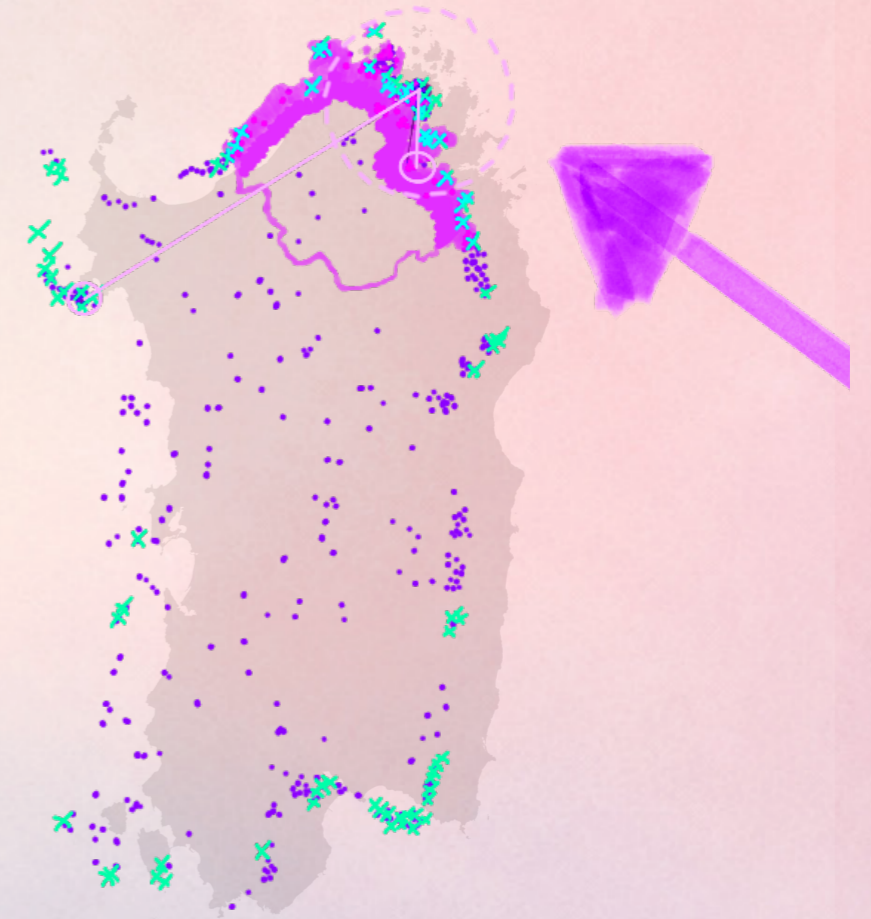
Initiatives such as Cortes Apertas, born in 1996 and later rebranded as Autunno in Barbagia in 2003, belong to this inland turn. They created opportunities for villages by opening courtyards, houses, workshops, and local traditions to visitors. At the same time, Mameli warns that this model can reduce complex local life to a staged image of "authentic" Sardinia: traditional clothes, tenores, food, pastoral symbols, and an idealized archaic past. The problem is not cultural tourism itself, but the pressure placed on communities when heritage becomes one of the few available economic resources (Mameli, 2024).






This pressure also has spatial effects. Mameli's example of Mamoiada in 2022, when the mayor asked visitors to turn back because the village could no longer absorb the influx of cars and tourists, shows that inland tourism affects roads, parking, public space, waste, everyday mobility, and the ordinary use of villages by residents. Without structural investment and local control, heritage tourism can produce a form of inland overtourism: less visible than coastal speculation, but still capable of turning inhabited places into temporary stages for visitors (Mameli, 2024).

Mameli also connects this to a deeper educational and institutional problem. Sardinian history, monuments, and cultural specificities were often marginal within national narratives, especially after Savoyard rule and Italian unification. This produced an epistemic void in which many Sardinians were not given strong public tools to understand their own historical landscape. The rise of pseudo-archaeological myths, including fantasies that identify Sardinia with Atlantis or with a lost ancient supremacy, can be read partly as a distorted response to this erasure. These myths attempt to reverse subalternity by inventing greatness, but they also risk weakening scientific knowledge and simplifying Sardinian identity in another direction (Mameli, 2024).

The same heritage field, however, can also support territorial self-defence. Mameli's discussion of community archaeology and the use of archaeological landscapes against speculative wind and solar mega-projects shows that heritage is not only a tourist product. It can become a civic infrastructure through which communities read their territory, defend landscapes, and produce shared knowledge. The example of the "LUMINU" wind project in Marmilla, challenged through the dense presence of Bronze Age settlements, suggests that cultural heritage can help communities argue for the value of places beyond their immediate economic profitability (Mameli, 2024).

The tourism history of Sardinia therefore moves through several connected phases: external representation, coastal luxury development, mass construction, landscape regulation, diversification, and inland heritage tourism. Pili shows how tourism reproduced colonial patterns through exotic representations, privatized coastal enclaves, speculative construction, and seasonal service labour. Mameli adds that heritage tourism can deepen this process when identity becomes performance, but can also become politically useful when communities use cultural knowledge to defend landscapes and produce more grounded forms of self-representation. Tourism, in this sense, is not only about visitors. It is about who defines the island, who benefits from its image, and whether Sardinian places can be inhabited as living territories rather than consumed as scenery (Mameli, 2024; Pili, 2024).



-  "costa smeralda" project
-  hotels
-  resorts
-  biggest financial assets
-  Quatarian ownership

_Mameli, F. (2024). I differenti valori del "patrimonio culturale" sardo: Definizioni, significato e impatto sociale ed economico. In G. Cherchi & F. Pau (Eds.), Logu e Logos: Questione sarda e discorso decoloniale. Meltemi Press SRL.

Pili, A. (2024). Per una critica decoloniale del turismo in Sardegna. In G. Cherchi & F. Pau (ibidem)

_Wikipedia contributors. (2026). Turismo in Sardegna. Wikipedia.org

energy speculation

[the new frontier of coloniality]

The renewable energy layer documents one of the most recent and rapidly evolving territorial transformations affecting Sardinia. While presented as part of broader European and national decarbonization strategies, the deployment of large-scale wind and photovoltaic infrastructures has generated widespread debate concerning land use, democratic participation, territorial autonomy, and environmental justice (Loi & Salimbeni, 2025). The information included in this layer trace the current and projected geography of this transition and the conflicts that have emerged around it, situating current developments within a longer history of territorial transformation.

Throughout the research process, a recurring set of concerns emerged during interviews, public discussions, field observations, and document analysis. Conversations with representatives of anti-speculation movements, researchers, activists, and local actors repeatedly returned to questions that can be understood through the lens of spatial justice related to the specific, current crisis of speculation around renewable energy infrastructures. Long phone calls and interviews with grassroots organizers of anti-speculation collectives such as Mariagrazia Demontis, Luigi Pisci, Emilio Demuro, Cristiano Sabino, and Paola Lai revealed a remarkable density of issues related to the coloniality of today's renewable energy transition in sardinian territories. These conversations also revealed an overwhelming volume of legal, administrative, technical, and territorial information that extends far beyond the scope of the present thesis. As the research progressed, it became clear that individual valleys, municipalities, and geographical areas often contained multiple overlapping forms of injustice, including conflicts over civic uses, pressures on local social fabrics, contested approval procedures, speculative development dynamics, and competing or misleading public narratives. On the other hand, another dense layer that is emerging clearly is composed of the countless forms of resistance and counteraction conducted by the volunteers of grassroots movements, which include communication, documentation, organization, outreach, as well as legal, political and administrative action. Properly investigating these interconnected issues will require a much more extensive research agenda than is possible within the timeframe of this work. For this reason, the information of this thesis, the benchmark exercise and accompanying maps should be understood as exploratory tools that document and organize some initial observations on available materials, while also identifying areas that warrant deeper investigation in future research.

The findings presented here identify a series of spatial justice dynamics that emerged consistently across interviews, observations, legal documents, technical reports, academic literature, and field notes. By placing these sources in dialogue, it becomes possible to identify patterns, tensions, and contradictions. At its core, the conflict concerns the relationship between the urgency of decarbonization and the conditions under which territorial transformation takes place. Beyond the environmental benefits associated with renewable energy production, recurring questions emerge regarding who defines the transition, who benefits from it, who bears its consequences, and whose understandings of the territory are recognized within the process. The debate therefore extends beyond energy production itself and becomes a broader discussion concerning territorial governance, democratic participation, and the future of the island.

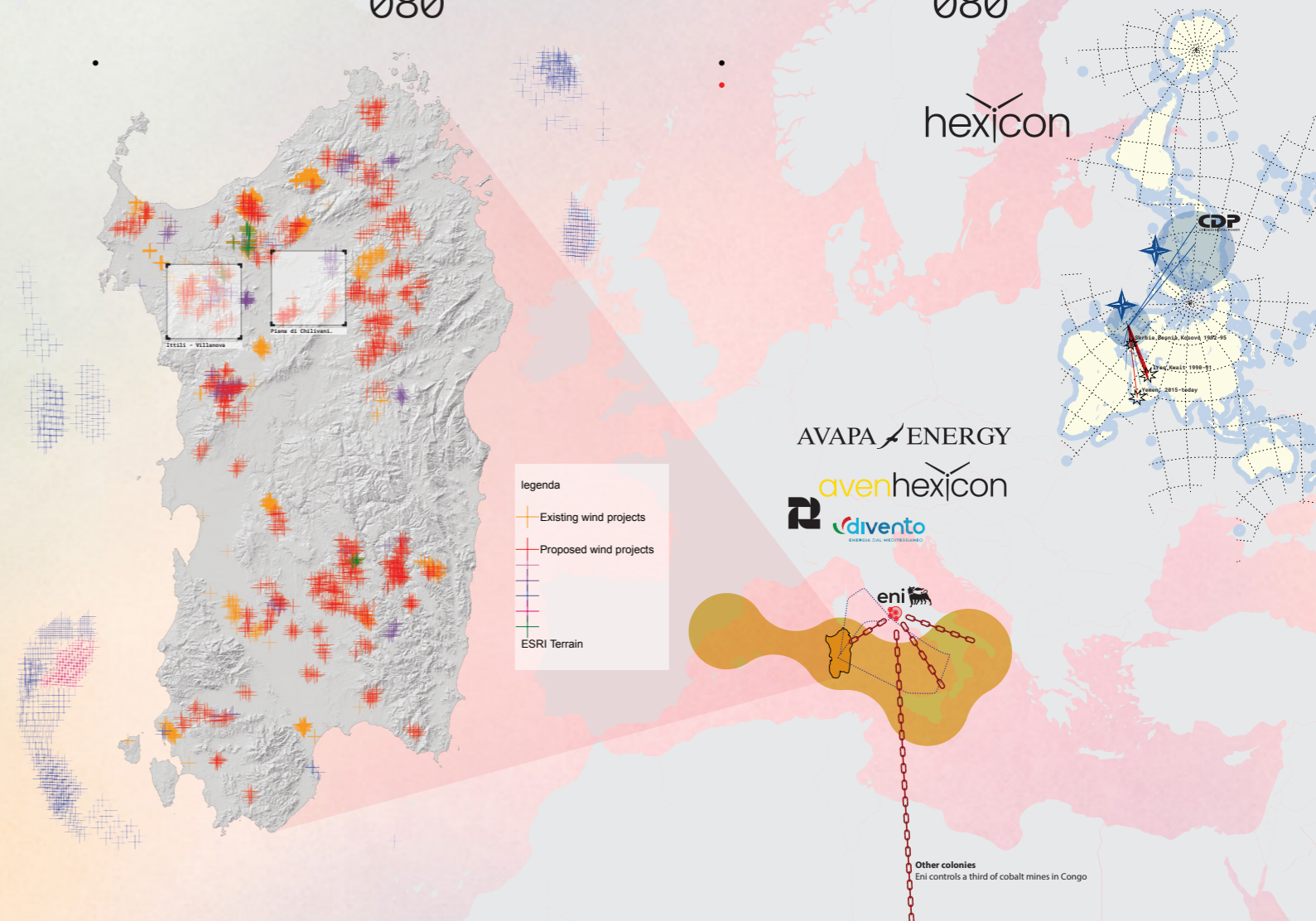
Firstly, particular attention should be given to the

scale of the proposed transformation. Authorization requests have reached capacities that significantly exceed Sardinia's own energy consumption, raising concerns regarding the relationship between local needs and broader national or international energy markets (Loi & Salimbeni, 2025). Several researchers, activists, and local organizations interpret this imbalance as evidence that Sardinia is increasingly being positioned as an energy-producing territory within wider national and European systems (Loi & Salimbeni, 2025; Corona, 2024). From this perspective, the conflict concerns not only the environmental impacts of individual projects, but also the possibility that the island's land, resources, and infrastructures are once again being reorganized around priorities defined elsewhere rather than around locally negotiated territorial needs. This concern constitutes one of the principal reasons why the current transition is frequently discussed through the language of extraction, coloniality, and territorial self-determination.

What distinguishes the current moment from previous territorial transformations is not only the nature of the infrastructures involved, but also the speed and cumulative scale at which proposals have emerged. Communities are often confronted not with a single intervention but with multiple overlapping projects, surveys, transmission infrastructures, and authorization procedures unfolding simultaneously and often silently across large geographical areas. This creates a widespread perception that decisions concerning the future of the territory are advancing faster than the collective capacity to understand, evaluate, and discuss their implications.

In the various rhetorics of public debate, the impact of these interventions is often considered relatively low, but in reality each of the technologies involved in the transition have multiple underestimated spatial implications. Although renewable energy infrastructures are frequently discussed primarily in terms of energy production and decarbonization targets, their implementation entails a wide range of territorial transformations and relative externalities that often remain insufficiently documented within public debate. In order to fully map them, the collection of multiple layers of data is necessary in order to outline the distribution of onshore and offshore wind and photovoltaic projects, but also the infrastructures that accompany them, including substations, transmission corridors, access roads, and export-oriented energy megastructures; in addition, one must consider the direct impact of all the general surveying activities on the local wildlife, and their repercussions on people's lives. The relevant data is, however, often hard (or sometimes impossible) to access, including layers that technically should be public; or requires extensive effort to collect or produce. These difficulties create significant asymmetries between developers, institutions, and local communities, affecting their ability to independently assess, contest, or influence proposed transformations.

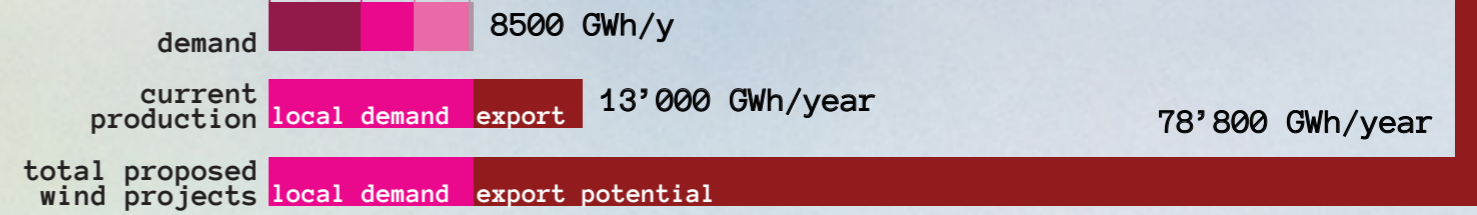
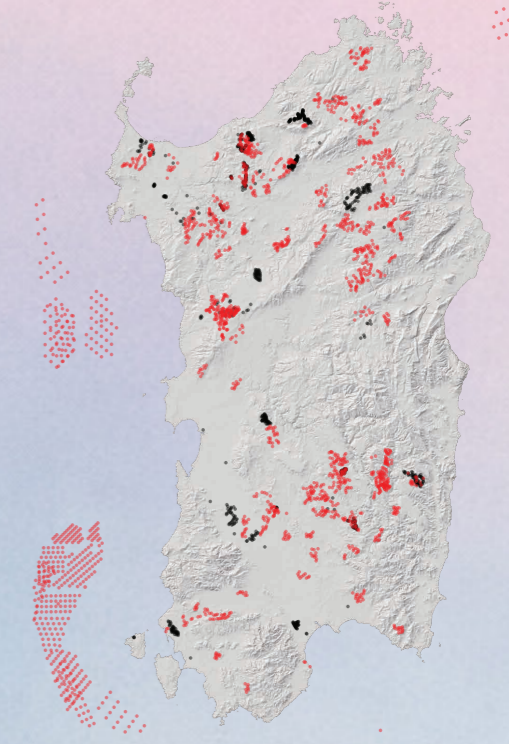
Several interviewees also pointed to forms of impact that remain difficult to quantify within conventional assessment procedures. This is also why research efforts must involve grassroots organizations and qualitative public participation. For instance, a recently produced travelling documentary called 'Quo Vadis Sardinia?' explores this topic in dialogue with countless communities, and points the camera to a group of fishermen whose concerns relate to biodiversity as well as job precarity: though no offshore plant has been constructed yet, the sonar surveying activities conducted by companies to evaluate projects' feasibility are causing worrying changes in the behaviour of multiple species of fish, which either disappear for long periods of time, or



existing wind farm projects



existing wind farm projects
proposed wind farm projects



081 exhibit aggressive behaviour (towards fishnets and each other), or wash up on the shore (in the case of dolphins). These initial elements reveal how the energy transition materializes physically within the territory, reshaping the lives of millions of people and living beings, as well as entire valleys, towns, agricultural areas, commons, and everyday environments.

The overwhelming amount of data collected by grassroots organizations through meticulous collection and analysis of all the submitted projects further clarifies the spatial implications of these ‘developments’. In the case of wind energy, technical documentation associated with proposed projects describes extensive earthworks, road widening, construction compounds, transport corridors, and other interventions required to accommodate each of the turbines of these industrial-scale infrastructures. Beyond their environmental impacts, these transformations raise broader questions concerning access, appropriation, and the future use of rural territories. In this sense, the conflict is not limited to the visual presence of turbines or solar fields, but concerns competing claims over how land should be used, governed, and valued, a land in which millions of beings have long ties to.

In fact, equally important are the procedural dimensions of the conflict. Throughout the island, citizen committees, local associations, and activist networks have challenged the transparency and inclusiveness of planning and authorization processes, criticizing what they perceive as highly technical and centralized decision-making procedures that often remain inaccessible to non-specialists. Many interviewees also questioned the implicit hierarchy of knowledge embedded within planning procedures. Place-based forms of expertise, (such as long-term agricultural knowledge, familiarity with local ecological dynamics, and the ability to interpret subtle territorial changes accumulated across generations) are often treated as anecdotal or irrelevant despite being essential for understanding the practical implications of proposed developments, such as in the case of agrivoltaic (Coordinamento Gallura, 2026a; Coordinamento Gallura, 2026b). In response, new forms of civic engagement and counter-expertise have emerged, with local actors increasingly engaging with environmental assessments, legal procedures, engineering reports, and planning documents in order to contest, interpret, and influence proposed developments (Coordinamento Gallura, 2026a; Demontis, 2026).

While media representations often frame the conflict as a simple opposition between supporters and opponents of renewable energy, fieldwork revealed a much more nuanced landscape of positions. Many actors explicitly support decarbonization and ecological transition while simultaneously questioning the ownership structures, scales of intervention, governance arrangements, and distributive consequences associated with current development models (Demontis, 2026; Loi & Salimbeni, 2025). Public assemblies, educational initiatives, legal actions, community mapping projects, and discussions surrounding energy democracy and energy communities demonstrate that the debate concerns not only energy production itself, but also the possibility of imagining different relationships between territory, infrastructure, and collective well-being (Demontis, 2026; Loi & Salimbeni, 2025).

Within the broader structure of the Critical Atlas, renewable energy is therefore interpreted as a contemporary arena through which older tensions re-emerge in new forms. Questions of extraction, territorial sovereignty, participation, development, and self-determination continue to shape the debate, even when articulated through the language of sustainability and ecological transition (Loi & Salimbeni, 2025). The layer ultimately reveals that the energy transition is not only a technological process but also a political and territorial one,

081 involving competing visions regarding how the island should be governed, transformed, and related to wider ecological and economic systems.

[some dimensions of the conflict]

While the previous section has outlined the broader territorial context of the conflict, the following paragraphs briefly unpack some of the specific mechanisms repeatedly identified by interviewees, technical observations, legal documents, and grassroots organizations. Drawing from fieldwork interviews and from the extensive legal, technical, and environmental observations produced by the Coordinamento Gallura and other experts, it is possible to describe briefly some of the mechanisms through which this crisis unfolds. (Coordinamento Gallura, 2026a; Coordinamento Gallura, 2026b; Demontis, 2026).

The first dimension concerns procedural opacity and what several observers describe as forms of territorial blocking. According to the observations submitted by civic committees, developers systematically exploit transitional legislative frameworks and safeguard clauses by submitting administratively incomplete projects in order to secure a position within authorization procedures. Even when lacking essential elements such as validated wind data, safety studies, or other fundamental documentation, these applications may nevertheless function as a mechanism through which territory is effectively reserved in advance. This practice has been described as a form of distortive position booking, allowing private actors to secure priority while simultaneously limiting alternative territorial uses and forms of local initiative (Coordinamento Gallura, 2026a). These concerns are compounded by recurring accusations regarding the omission or incomplete publication of key technical documents, including acoustic impact studies, raw wind measurements, and other datasets necessary to independently evaluate project viability and risk. From this perspective, procedural opacity constitutes a significant obstacle to informed public participation and democratic scrutiny (Coordinamento Gallura, 2026c).

A second dimension concerns the epistemic validity of the technical knowledge used to justify projects. Existing observations argue that developers frequently bypass the requirement for long-term in-situ measurements, relying instead on simulation models and remote estimations to establish the producibility and economic viability of proposed infrastructures (Coordinamento Gallura, 2026d). Particular criticism has been directed towards the use of systems such as MASS (Mesoscale Atmospheric Simulation System) and WASP. According to technical critiques, these models were developed under assumptions that differ substantially from the geomorphological and meteorological conditions of Sardinia and are therefore incapable of adequately representing the island’s complex topography (Coordinamento Gallura, 2026c; Coordinamento Gallura, 2026e). Critics argue that the application of such models transforms the territory into an abstract computational surface, replacing situated environmental knowledge with generalized simulations that fail to capture local conditions. Similar concerns have been raised regarding the use of so-called phantom reference stations, namely meteorological stations whose locations, ownership, or environmental comparability remain uncertain, thereby undermining the reliability of productivity estimates used within project documentation (Coordinamento Gallura, 2026c).

The third dimension concerns the assessment of physical risk and proximity to settlements and heritage sites. Several observations argue that developers employ highly simplified mathematical models when calculating the potential trajectory of detached turbine components. In particular, critiques focus on the treatment of turbine blades as inert point masses moving

082 according to basic projectile-motion equations, while excluding aerodynamic lift and other physical forces that would significantly influence their movement after detachment (Coordinamento Gallura, 2026g). According to these analyses, such simplifications substantially reduce the estimated extent of danger zones. Additional concerns concern the exclusion of local topographical conditions and atmospheric turbulence phenomena from safety assessments, despite their potential relevance in mountainous and highly variable environments (Coordinamento Gallura, 2026c; Coordinamento Gallura, 2026g). These methodological choices are considered particularly problematic where proposed infrastructures are located in close proximity to residential buildings, agricultural activities, or protected archaeological sites, such as the Nuraghe Sos Muros in the case of the ALAS project (Coordinamento Gallura, 2026d; I.A.T. Consulenza e Progetti, 2021).

The final dimension concerns the broader socio-ecological consequences of the renewable energy boom. Several observations highlight the systematic exclusion of health considerations from planning and authorization procedures. Civic committees argue that developers exploit regulatory gaps to avoid the preparation of comprehensive Health Impact Assessments, operating under the assumption that renewable energy infrastructures do not generate significant impacts on human well-being (Coordinamento Gallura, 2026a; Coordinamento Gallura, 2026b). Critics contend that this approach neglects broader understandings of health that include physical, psychological, and social dimensions, as reflected in the definition adopted by the World Health Organization (Miserotti, n.d.). Particular concerns relate to the effects of low-frequency noise, sleep disturbance, chronic stress, and the cumulative consequences of living in close proximity to large-scale industrial infrastructures (Coordinamento Gallura, 2026a).

Beyond these direct impacts, fieldwork material and civic observations point towards broader processes of social fragmentation. The introduction of highly lucrative land-lease agreements and asymmetrical economic incentives alters existing social relations within rural communities, creating tensions between neighbours, landowners, and residents who may experience the transition very differently (Demontis, 2026). Relationships previously structured around cooperation, reciprocity, and shared territorial practices become increasingly strained as economic interests diverge. Similar dynamics have been documented by Corona (2024), who describes how individual negotiations between energy companies and landowners may contribute to the fragmentation of rural communities by placing competing economic and territorial interests in direct tension. According to several interviewees and observations, these dynamics generate forms of alienation, psychosocial stress, and environmental grief associated with the perceived transformation of familiar landscapes and ways of life (Coordinamento Gallura, 2026b; Demontis, 2026; Corona, 2024).

These concerns also extend beyond questions of environmental impact or visual landscape change. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in central Sardinia, Corona (2024) argues that the territory is often experienced as a repository of embodied memories, everyday practices, and intergenerational relationships rather than as a neutral physical surface available for development. Through daily routines, agricultural work, sensory experiences, and long-term inhabitation, places become deeply integrated into personal and collective life projects. From this perspective, the rapid transformation of rural environments through large-scale energy infrastructures is experienced not only as a modification of land use, but also as a disruption of existing relationships between communities, territory, memory, and everyday practices. The conflict therefore concerns not only the ownership or management of land, but also the preservation of ways of inhabiting, knowing, and identifying with place. In essence, what is being contested is not

082 Coordinamento Gallura. (2026a). Esposto ALAS 19-01-2026 [Legal submission to the Procura della Repubblica presso il Tribunale di Cagliari].

Coordinamento Gallura. (2026b). Integrazione al primo esposto [Supplementary legal submission to the Procura della Repubblica presso il Tribunale di Cagliari].

Coordinamento Gallura. (2026c). Osservazioni tecniche e documentazione integrativa sul progetto ALAS [Unpublished technical observations].

Coordinamento Gallura. (2026d). Analisi della documentazione progettuale e delle procedure autorizzative [Unpublished technical report].

Coordinamento Gallura. (2026e). Osservazioni sui modelli previsionali eolici e sulle stazioni di riferimento [Unpublished technical report].

Coordinamento Gallura. (2026g). Osservazioni tecniche sui modelli di rischio e sulle distanze di sicurezza [Unpublished technical report].

Corona, S. (2024). Signori del vento. La mobilitazione contro le pale eoliche in Sardegna come battaglia per l’identità sarda. In G. Cherchi & F. Pau (Eds.), Logu e Logos. Questione sarda e discorso decoloniale. Meltemi Press SRL.

Cònzù, A. (Director). (2025). Quo vadis Sardinia? [Documentary film].

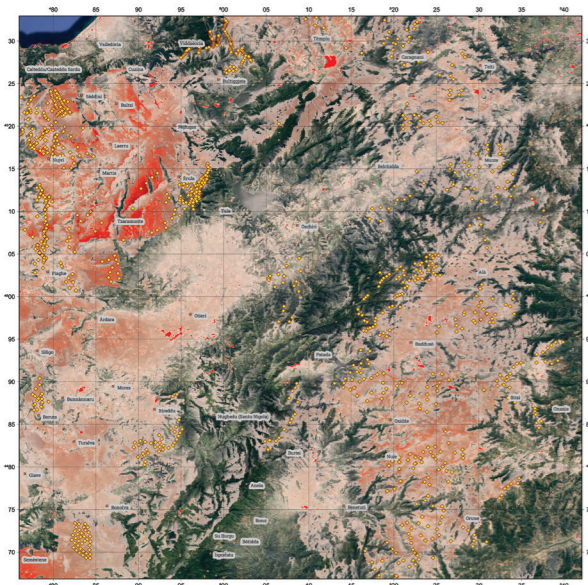
Demontis, M. G. (2026). Fieldwork interviews and personal communications regarding renewable energy speculation in Sardinia [Unpublished fieldwork material].

Escobar, A. (2018). Designs for the pluriverse: Radical interdependence, autonomy, and the making of worlds. Duke University Press.

Hydro Engineering. (2024a). Relazione tecnica generale (Documento n. PEALAS_PE_00002_01_00): Progetto esecutivo opere civili, Parco Eolico ALAS [Technical report].

Hydro Engineering. (2024b). Piano di cantierizzazione (Documento n. PEALAS_PE_00500_01_00): Progetto esecutivo opere civili, Parco Eolico ALAS [Technical report].

I.A.T. Consulenza e Progetti. (2021). PEALAS-S02.27.01: Relazione sulla gittata



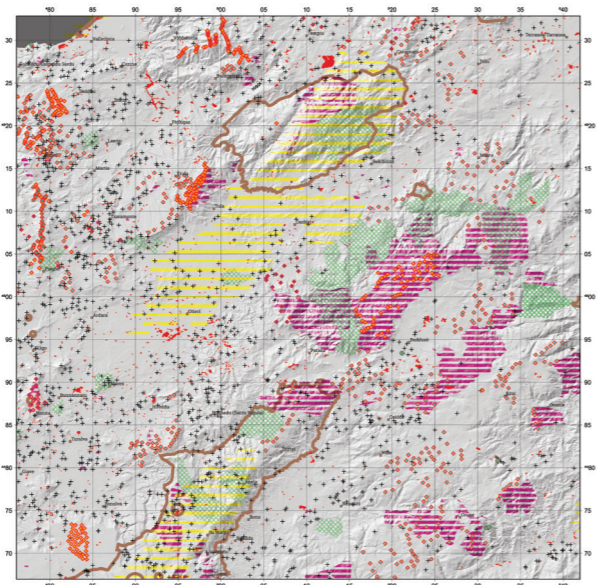
- Toponyms
- All wind turbine projects (existing+future)
- Viewshed (turbine visibility)
 - max
 - min
- Google Satellite

[visual impact over satellite imagery]

The visibility analysis highlights the territorial scale of the proposed developments beyond their immediate physical footprint. While the turbines occupy a limited number of locations, their visual presence extends across a much larger geography, reaching valleys, agricultural areas, settlements, infrastructures, and surrounding landscapes. The resulting pattern suggests that the territorial influence of these projects cannot be understood solely through the surface occupied by the infrastructures themselves.

The distribution of visibility is strongly influenced by topography. Areas of lower visibility often correspond not to greater distance from the projects, but to the screening effect of hills, ridges, and changes in elevation. As a result, visibility fluctuates across the landscape without producing a clear separation between affected and unaffected territories. The proposed developments remain embedded within a continuous territorial system in which visual relationships extend well beyond the project sites.

The map therefore provides a first indication of the scale at which the transition operates spatially. Rather than appearing as isolated interventions, the projects emerge as territorial presences whose influence extends across a large portion of the surrounding landscape. This broader geography forms the context within which questions of environmental value, land use, cultural heritage, and territorial governance become relevant.



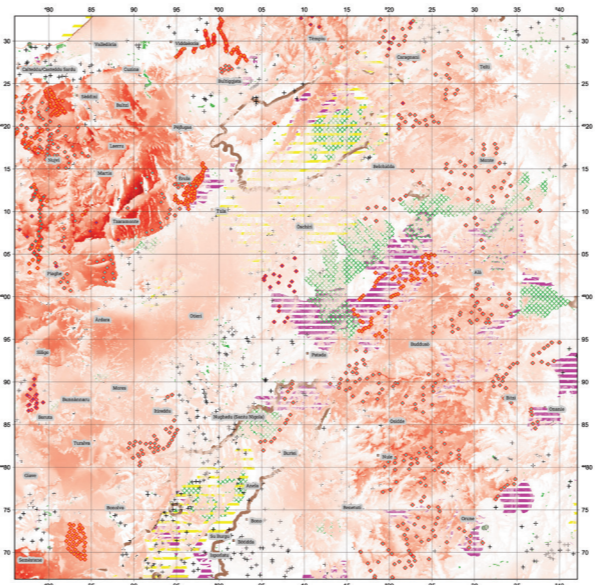
- Toponyms
- All wind turbine projects (existing+future)
- Places of value (hist-cult-land)
- Parks and reserves national system
- Animal protection permanent oasis
- Civic uses
- High socio-environmental value
- Built environment
- Hillshade terrain (ESRI)

[spaces and beings of immense value]

The second map situates the proposed infrastructures within a territory characterized by the coexistence of multiple environmental, cultural, historical, and collectively managed spaces. Civic-use areas, protected environments, archaeological sites, landscape assets, cultural heritage elements, and ecological corridors form a dense territorial mosaic whose significance extends beyond any single category of protection or value.

Rather than presenting isolated points of interest, the map reveals a landscape structured through overlapping systems of ecological processes, historical traces, productive activities, and collective relationships to land. These layers indicate that the territory already contains multiple forms of use, meaning, and stewardship that coexist within the same geographical space.

Viewed in relation to this broader territorial context, renewable energy infrastructures appear not as interventions introduced into an empty landscape but as projects inserted within an already complex and highly differentiated environment. Understanding the implications of these developments therefore requires attention not only to the infrastructures themselves but also to the relationships that already exist across the territory. The maps combine publicly available geographical information with datasets on the existing and proposed wind farm projects produced by grassroots organizations and technical experts, which geographically maps public records for spatial analysis. They also contain a viewshed analysis developed for this project: a spatial analysis operation that calculates which areas of a landscape are visible or hidden from a specific vantage point. Viewsheds are used here to show the visual impact of wind farm projects available from public record.



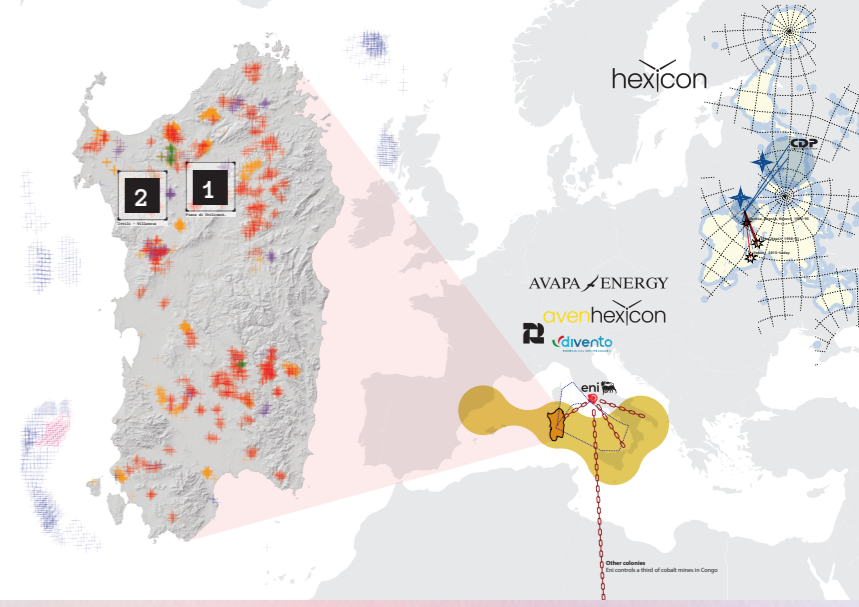
- Toponyms
- Viewshed (turbine visibility)
 - max
 - min
- All wind turbine projects (existing+future)
- Places of value (hist-cult-land)
- Parks and reserves national system
- Animal protection permanent oasis
- Civic uses
- High socio-environmental value
- Built environment
- Hillshade terrain (ESRI)

[the encroachment of wind farms]

The overlap between visibility and territorial value reveals the extent to which the proposed developments intersect with spaces already recognized for their environmental, cultural, historical, and collective significance. The map does not imply that visibility alone constitutes an impact, nor that all forms of value are affected equally. Rather, it illustrates the spatial scale at which interactions between infrastructures and existing territorial systems become possible.

The areas highlighted through the visibility analysis extend across landscapes containing multiple forms of ecological protection, cultural heritage, collective land management, and everyday territorial use. As a result, the influence of the projects cannot be reduced to the immediate surroundings of the turbines, but unfolds across a wider geography composed of interconnected environmental and social relationships.

The map provides a spatial representation of one of the central questions emerging throughout this chapter: how large-scale energy infrastructures interact with territories that are already inhabited, valued, used, and understood through multiple perspectives. In this sense, visibility functions as a proxy through which broader questions of territorial coexistence, cumulative impact, and spatial justice can begin to be explored.



[Chilivani e Ittiri]

The following zooms explore two areas that have become emblematic in my exploration of the current renewable energy transition in Sardinia: the Piana di Chilivani, between Ozieri, Oschiri, and Berchidda, and the area between Villanova Monteleone, Ittiri, Uri, Putifigari, Borutta, and Thiesi. They do not necessarily represent the most heavily affected territories, nor do they attempt to provide an exhaustive account of local conditions. Rather, they function as exploratory spatial readings intended to visualize some of the territorial relationships discussed throughout the chapter.

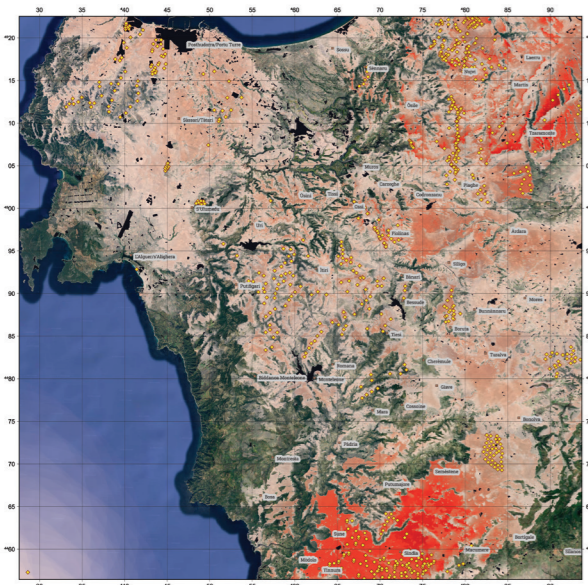
The maps combine publicly available geographical information with datasets on the existing and proposed wind farm projects produced by grassroots organizations and technical experts, which geographically maps public records for spatial analysis. They also contain a viewshed analysis developed for this project: a spatial analysis operation that calculates which areas of a landscape are visible or hidden from a specific vantage point. Viewsheds are used here to show the visual impact of wind farm projects available from public record.

The visibility analysis (viewshed) is derived from terrain models and the projected location and height of the wind turbines. It estimates the areas from which the turbines would be visible across the territory. The scale ranges from transparent white, indicating lower visibility, to dark red, indicating the highest cumulative visibility. Transparency is intentionally retained in the lower values in order to preserve the readability of the underlying terrain and satellite imagery. While visibility alone cannot account for the full range of environmental, social, cultural, acoustic, or infrastructural impacts associated with these projects, it provides a spatial indication of their territorial reach and offers a first approximation of the extent to which these infrastructures become present within the wider landscape.

The first zoom, centred on the Piana di Chilivani, is composed of three maps. The first combines satellite imagery, projected wind farms, and a visibility analysis. The second represents the same area through the territorial layers of spatial value described above, together with the projected infrastructures. The third overlays the visibility analysis onto the spaces of value, allowing areas of overlap between proposed developments and existing territorial values to become visible.

The second zoom, centred on the Villanova Monteleone-Ittiri area, follows the same structure. The first map combines satellite imagery, projected wind farms, and visibility analysis. The second focuses on environmental landscape components, including woodlands, shrublands, grasslands, wetlands, dunes, beaches, specialized arboreal and herbaceous cultivations, and artificial forest plantations. The third overlays the visibility analysis onto these landscape components, highlighting the extent to which the projected infrastructures intersect with a highly diverse territorial mosaic.

The aim of these maps is to reveal the territorial complexity within which renewable energy projects are being proposed. By making visible the relationships between infrastructures, landscapes, and existing territorial values, they highlight the need for further research and spatial analysis capable of engaging with the multiple dimensions of these transformations.



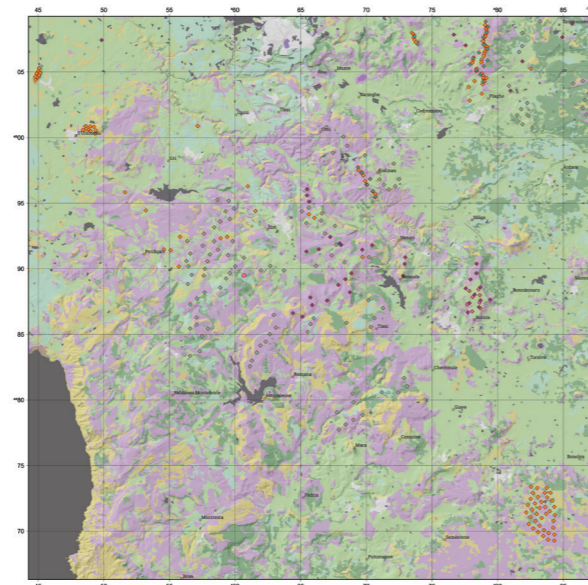
- Mores Toponyms
- All wind turbine projects (existing+future)
- Viewshed (turbine visibility)
 - max
 - min
- Google Satellite

[visual impact over satellite imagery]

The visibility analysis reveals a territorial reach that extends across a large portion of north-western Sardinia. Although individual turbines occupy specific locations, their visual presence spreads across a highly articulated landscape composed of plateaus, valleys, ridges, agricultural areas, and settlements. The resulting geography demonstrates that the influence of the proposed infrastructures exceeds the boundaries of the project sites themselves.

As in the previous case, topography plays a decisive role in shaping visibility. Differences in elevation produce alternating areas of exposure and screening, generating a fragmented but extensive pattern of visual influence. This variation does not eliminate visibility from the territory; rather, it reproduces it across different portions of the landscape.

The map therefore illustrates the scale at which the proposed developments become territorially present. Even before considering construction activities, ecological impacts, or changes in land use, the projects establish a spatial relationship with a large surrounding area, connecting distant locations through a shared visual field.



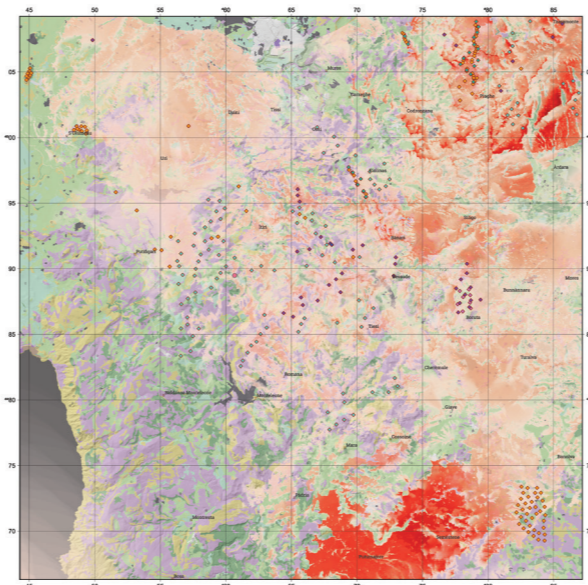
- Toponyms
- All wind turbine projects (existing+future)
- Places of value (hist-cult-land)
- Built environment
- Forests
- Specialized arboreal cultures
- Specialized herb cultures
- Artificial forests
- Marshes, dunes and microecologies
- Meadows and beaches

[spaces and beings of immense value]

The second map highlights the diversity of landscape components present within the study area. Woodlands, shrublands, grasslands, wetlands, dunes, beaches, specialized agricultural systems, and artificial forest plantations contribute to the formation of a highly heterogeneous territorial mosaic. Together, these elements reveal the coexistence of multiple ecological conditions, productive activities, and landscape structures within a relatively limited geographical area.

This diversity reflects not only environmental variation but also long-term interactions between human activities and natural processes. Agricultural systems, managed forests, open grasslands, and semi-natural environments contribute to the character of the territory and to the ecological relationships that sustain it.

The proposed wind developments are situated within this complex landscape structure. Their location therefore intersects not with a single environmental condition but with a territory characterized by multiple forms of ecological, productive, and spatial diversity operating simultaneously.



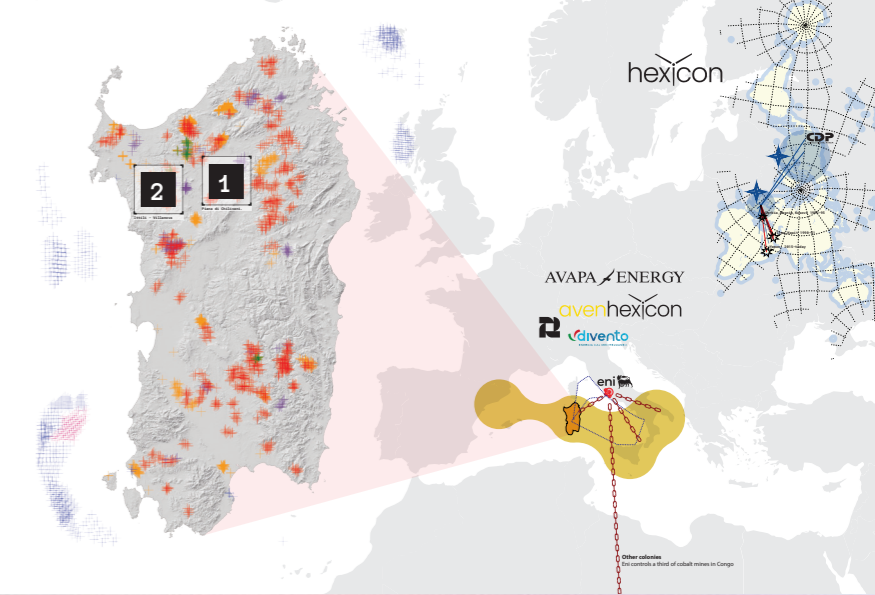
- Toponyms
- Viewshed (turbine visibility)
 - max
 - min
- All wind turbine projects (existing+future)
- Places of value (hist-cult-land)
- Built environment
- Forests
- Specialized arboreal cultures
- Specialized herb cultures
- Artificial forests
- Marshes, dunes and microecologies
- Meadows and beaches

[the encroachment of wind farms]

The final map combines landscape diversity with the projected visibility of the proposed wind developments. The resulting image illustrates the extent to which the visual reach of the projects overlaps with a territory composed of multiple environmental conditions and landscape types.

The visibility pattern extends across woodlands, shrublands, agricultural systems, grasslands, and other landscape components, suggesting that the territorial presence of the projects is distributed across a wide variety of ecological contexts. Visibility alone cannot account for all dimensions of territorial transformation, yet it provides a useful indication of the breadth of interaction between the infrastructures and the surrounding environment.

By placing landscape diversity and visibility within the same frame, the map highlights the spatial scale at which renewable energy infrastructures become embedded within existing territorial systems. The question that emerges is therefore not simply where the turbines are located, but how their presence relates to the wider environmental and cultural geography of the territory in which they are proposed.



[Chilivani e Ittiri]

_zooms

The following zooms explore two areas that have become emblematic in my exploration of the current renewable energy transition in Sardinia: the Piana di Chilivani, between Ozieri, Oschiri, and Berchidda, and the area between Villanova Monteleone, Ittiri, Uri, Putifigari, Borutta, and Thiesi. They do not necessarily represent the most heavily affected territories, nor do they attempt to provide an exhaustive account of local conditions. Rather, they function as exploratory spatial readings intended to visualize some of the territorial relationships discussed throughout the chapter.

_data

The maps combine publicly available geographical information with datasets on the existing and proposed wind farm projects produced by grassroots organizations and technical experts, which geographically maps public records for spatial analysis. They also contain a viewshed analysis developed for this project: a spatial analysis operation that calculates which areas of a landscape are visible or hidden from a specific vantage point. Viewsheds are used here to show the visual impact of wind farm projects available from public record.

_viewshed

The visibility analysis (viewshed) is derived from terrain models and the projected location and height of the wind turbines. It estimates the areas from which the turbines would be visible across the territory. The scale ranges from transparent white, indicating lower visibility, to dark red, indicating the highest cumulative visibility. Transparency is intentionally retained in the lower values in order to preserve the readability of the underlying terrain and satellite imagery. While visibility alone cannot account for the full range of environmental, social, cultural, acoustic, or infrastructural impacts associated with these projects, it provides a spatial indication of their territorial reach and offers a first approximation of the extent to which these infrastructures become present within the wider landscape.

_zoom 1

The first zoom, centred on the Piana di Chilivani, is composed of three maps. The first combines satellite imagery, projected wind farms, and a visibility analysis. The second represents the same area through the territorial layers of spatial value described above, together with the projected infrastructures. The third overlays the visibility analysis onto the spaces of value, allowing areas of overlap between proposed developments and existing territorial values to become visible.

_zoom 2

The second zoom, centred on the Villanova Monteleone-Ittiri area, follows the same structure. The first map combines satellite imagery, projected wind farms, and visibility analysis. The second focuses on environmental landscape components, including woodlands, shrublands, grasslands, wetlands, dunes, beaches, specialized arboreal and herbaceous cultivations, and artificial forest plantations. The third overlays the visibility analysis onto these landscape components, highlighting the extent to which the projected infrastructures intersect with a highly diverse territorial mosaic.

_aim

The aim of these maps is to reveal the territorial complexity within which renewable energy projects are being proposed. By making visible the relationships between infrastructures, landscapes, and existing territorial values, they highlight the need for further research and spatial analysis capable of engaging with the multiple dimensions of these transformations.

[02] SITUATED ATLAS

_CRITICAL (UN)CONCLUSIONS
to see the interconnectedness
of sardinian struggles

_REFLEXIVITY AND POSITIONALITY
to report what limited me, what
drove me, what changed me

_FIELDWORK FRAGMENTS
to show just a little bit about
what i encountered



Source: google images

091 091

This is the part where the research can no longer be detached from the researcher, takes over the critical atlas, acknowledges the evolution of the process and the changes within the researcher themselves, embodies the research in fieldwork, recognizes the people and collectives that have shaped it, uncovers emergent 'otherwise' spaces, practices and stewards, and then concludes it (for now).

the situated atlas is made of parts, but the parts are sometimes shuffled. if you get lost:



01

(conclusions of the critical atlas)

matrix of power

[for a sardinian consciousness]

logu - popoli - saperi

[retracing colonial ruptures and counteractions]

resistances



02

(reflexivities)

reflexivity 1

[at the beginning]

initial awareness, doubts, privileges, limits
initial values, intentions, positionings

file: 'notebook_november-december_2025.txt'

joys & fears



03

(fieldwork fragments)

journey trajectory & interview constellation

+ meeting resistance >

meeting resistance

stewards of the otherwise

reflexivity 2

[during fieldwork]

how encounters shaped my position
how my role shifted

reflexivity 3

[after fieldwork]

relationality creativity evidence agency design
justice collective arenas care humility continuity
interconnectedness

092 092

The Critical Atlas is a (partial) attempt at reconstructing the palimpsest of dominations and resistances that shaped Sardinia until today. The island emerges as a territory shaped by overlapping histories of domination, representation, extraction, and resistance. It brings together historical fragments, immaterial hegemonies, material transformations, and counter-practices in order to understand how the island's marginality has been produced across time.

This section does not aim to provide a complete history of Sardinia. It is a selection of historical, cultural, economic, and spatial processes, relevant for understanding how Sardinia has been governed, represented, consumed, and transformed through external logics. The atlas therefore works as an open-ended critical framework for reading the island as a contested territory, where political autonomy, cultural identity, land use, and development have repeatedly been shaped by forces operating beyond local control.

The Critical Atlas establishes the analytical ground of the thesis. It identifies the structures of hegemony that the later sections will respond to, while also tracing the existing practices of resistance from which alternative spatial imaginaries can emerge

090

logu popoli saperi

[retracing ruptures and counteractions]

The Critical Atlas has sought to reconstruct some of the historical processes through which territory, authority, knowledge, and subjectivity have been shaped in Sardinia. Yet understanding domination is only one part of the task. The same histories also reveal the persistence of relationships, practices, memories, forms of care, and situated knowledges that continue to sustain collective life despite repeated processes of extraction, marginalization, and displacement. If the previous sections have focused on the forces that weaken or interrupt these relationships, the following diagram also shifts attention towards the relationships themselves. Rather than asking only how territory has been governed, represented, or transformed, it asks what resources remain available for imagining, repairing, and cultivating different futures. The framework of terra-popoli-sapere emerges from this shift: not as an alternative to critique, but as a way of identifying the territorial, social, and epistemic bonds through which communities continue to make and remake their worlds.

‘logu-popoli-saperi’ began from a political intuition found in one of Michela Murgia’s independentist speeches. In that context, Murgia argued that Sardinia had been deprived of its own resources, and that any future project would require rediscovering them. These resources, however, should not be understood only in a material sense. They refer also to the sources through which a society imagines, organizes, repairs, and reinvents itself: land, economies, people, languages, memories, practices, and forms of collective intelligence; sources of a place whose capacities for world-making have often been extracted, interrupted, or made invisible. In this sense, the framework attempts to recenter sardinian ‘gazes’, experiences and ways of thinking, and help reflect and move forward.

This intuition was then expanded through fieldwork, archival materials, qualitative encounters, and the decolonial reflections gathered in Logu e Logos. The result is not a closed theory, but an interpretative device for reading how territorial relations are damaged or nourished. It can support a colonial analysis, but it does not depend entirely on a colonial premise. Even without naming coloniality, there are actions, infra-

structures, policies, representations, and practices that rupture bonds; and there are others that maintain, repair, reactivate, or transform them.

For the reader with an ‘ontological design’ sensibility, this is the manifestation of the original attempt of this thesis, which is to help uncover the ‘worlds otherwise’ of my mother’s homeland. It is just one of the many ways I can try to make sense of the wounds and the gems I found through many layers of interaction, this common sense of intending the world, reality, time, sacrality, and meaning, that I encountered in readings and during fieldwork. It is, perhaps, an exercise in translating an ontology, which is essentially a flawed, silly, naive endeavour; it is absolutely intended as such, as a tool for play.

The first pole is logu, the sardinian equivalent of place, but it can also be thought of as ‘terra’ in the way it is said by those who really care for it: ‘la terra / questa terra ...’. This does not refer only to land as physical surface, resource, or landscape. It includes territory, ecology, infrastructures, settlements, more-than-human relations, material conditions, and the specific place from which experience and speech begin. Logu is not neutral space, but the here-and-now of situated life. It is the place of ‘the foot and the step’ before it is the place of distant vision. It is the ground from which a way of seeing, speaking, thinking, and theorizing becomes possible. Every ‘logos’ begins from a logu.

The second pole is popoli. This does not mean an abstract or homogeneous “people.” It refers to the plurality of subjects, communities, and beings that inhabit or relate to a place: residents, workers, farmers, shepherds, migrants, women, youth, elders, activists, associations, animals, plants, and other more-than-human presences. The point is not to replace “users” or “residents” with a romantic idea of community, but to ask who actually composes a territory, who cares for it, who depends on it, who is displaced from it, and who is allowed to speak for it. In this sense, every place contains multiple peoples, defined by different relations with land, memory, labour, movement, and responsibility.

The third pole is saperi. This refers to situated forms of knowledge that emerge from inhabiting, observing, working, remembering, moving through, and caring for places. It includes Sardinian language and languages, oral

memory, pastoral and agricultural knowledge, ecological observation, embodied experience, care practices, artistic work, political consciousness, archives, and technical expertise when it remains accountable to place. It also includes forms of knowledge that are difficult to translate into dominant categories: the secluded wisdom of shepherds, the ‘sapienza riposta’ of everyday practices, the corporeal knowledge of paths, weather, animals, soils, gestures, and distances. If territory is the place of the foot and the step, then knowledge is also produced through bodies moving through specific worlds.

The bond between logu and popoli concerns access, dwelling, labour, care, displacement, attachment, and responsibility. The bond between popoli and sapere concerns language transmission, education, shame, memory, self-recognition, political consciousness, and the legitimacy of different voices. The bond between sapere and terra concerns ancestral knowledge, the spirit of place, place names, macro- and micro-ecological knowledge, construction and the art of building, territorial memory, and the authority to define what land is and what it is for.

The framework is intentionally open. It does not claim to map the totality of Sardinian experience, nor to reduce it to three categories. It offers a starting point for collective reflection, mapping activities, and open contributions. Different actors can use it to locate their own experiences: farmers, shepherds, students, educators, artists, activists, migrants, workers, associations, researchers, and residents. Its value lies in creating a shared language through which different forms of knowledge can enter conversation without being forced into a single narrative.

The value of the framework lies not only in identifying the three poles, but in drawing attention to the relationships that connect them. A territory is not simply a physical environment, a population is not simply a demographic category, and knowledge is not simply information. What matters are the bonds through which places, communities, and forms of knowledge continuously shape one another. These relationships produce particular ways of inhabiting, understanding, caring for, and imagining a territory.

Many of the processes explored throughout the Critical Atlas can be understood as forms of rupture acting upon these bonds. Some weaken the relationship between people

and territory through dispossession, extraction, enclosure, displacement, industrialization, tourism, militarization, or speculative forms of development. Others separate knowledge from place through abstraction, external expertise, the marginalization of local languages, the erasure of place names, or the reduction of living territories to simplified representations and resources. Others operate through subjectivity itself, producing shame, deculturation, distorted narratives, epistemic violence, and the gradual weakening of collective self-recognition.

When these ruptures accumulate, territories risk becoming detached from the people who inhabit them, people from the knowledges that sustain them, and knowledges from the places that generated them. The following diagram illustrates some of these recurring dynamics as they emerged throughout the research.

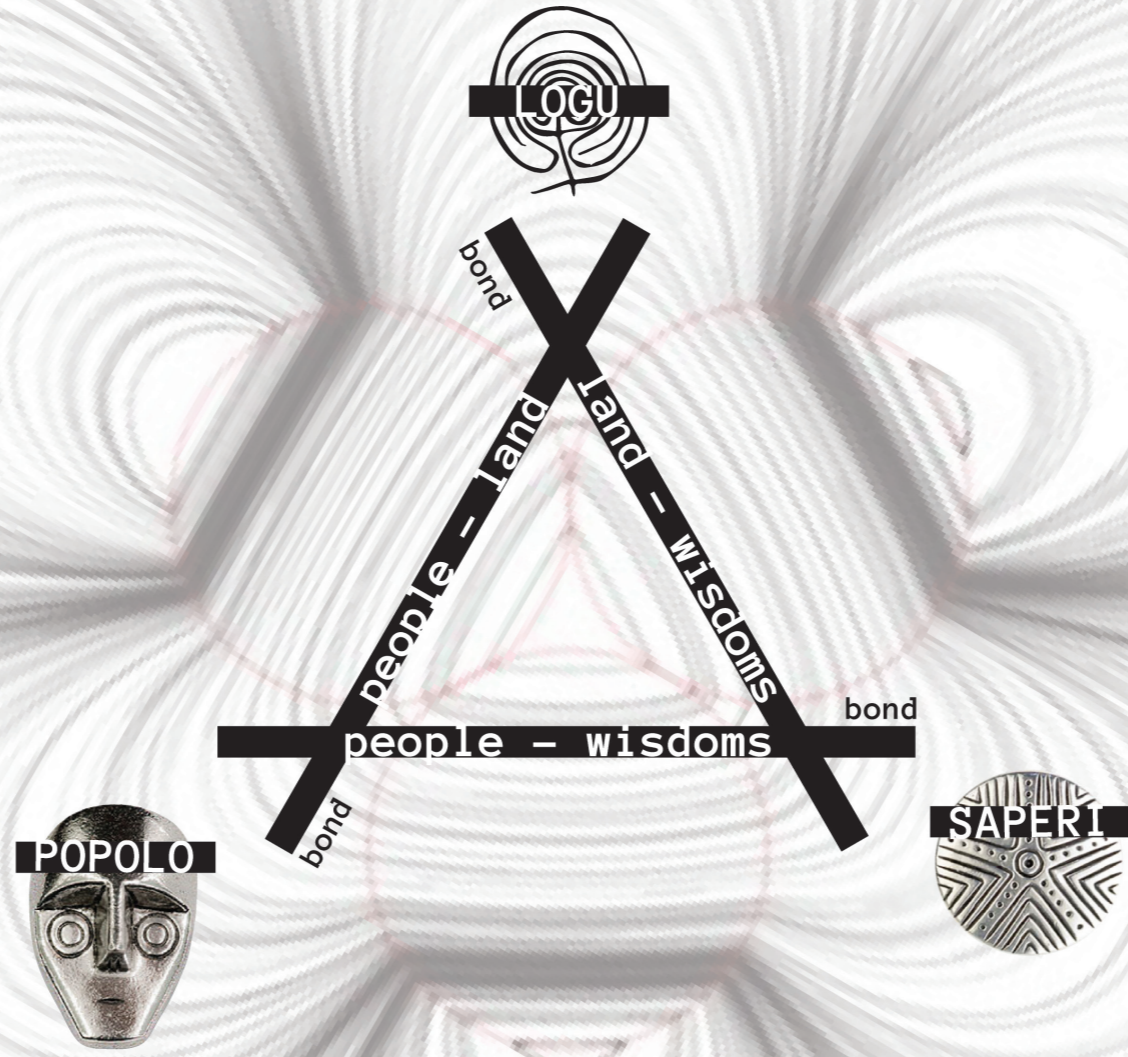
Yet the history of Sardinia cannot be reduced to a history of rupture. Throughout the same processes emerge practices that maintain, repair, reactivate, or reinvent the bonds between logu, popoli, and saperi. These practices rarely take the form of a single political programme. Instead, they appear through everyday acts of care, cultural work, ecological stewardship, collective organization, memory-making, language preservation, artistic production, feminist networks, grassroots research, and territorial struggles.

Defending a landscape may simultaneously mean defending a language, a livelihood, a form of knowledge, a memory, or a way of imagining the future. Community archaeology, resource sovereignty, embodied forms of inhabiting, affective attachments to place, and the production of endogenous yet translocal perspectives all represent different ways through which communities continue to cultivate connections between territory, people, and knowledge.

If rupture separates, these practices reconnect. If extraction reduces territory to a resource, they reassert it as a living archive. If abstraction detaches knowledge from place, they restore its situated character. If domination displaces agency, they create spaces through which communities can once again participate in shaping their own worlds. The following diagram gathers some of these dynamics of nourishment, repair, and regeneration.

land, place, presence, origins
neutral space > active subject

the 'now and here', the 'spatial moment-ness', a 'specific materiality'
paesaggio_landscape > territòriu 'the place of the foot and the step, not of vision'
the community context of origin; the place of production of theory and discourse
'un logos si produce sempre a partire da un logu'



communities, subjects

humans, non humans, spiritual entities

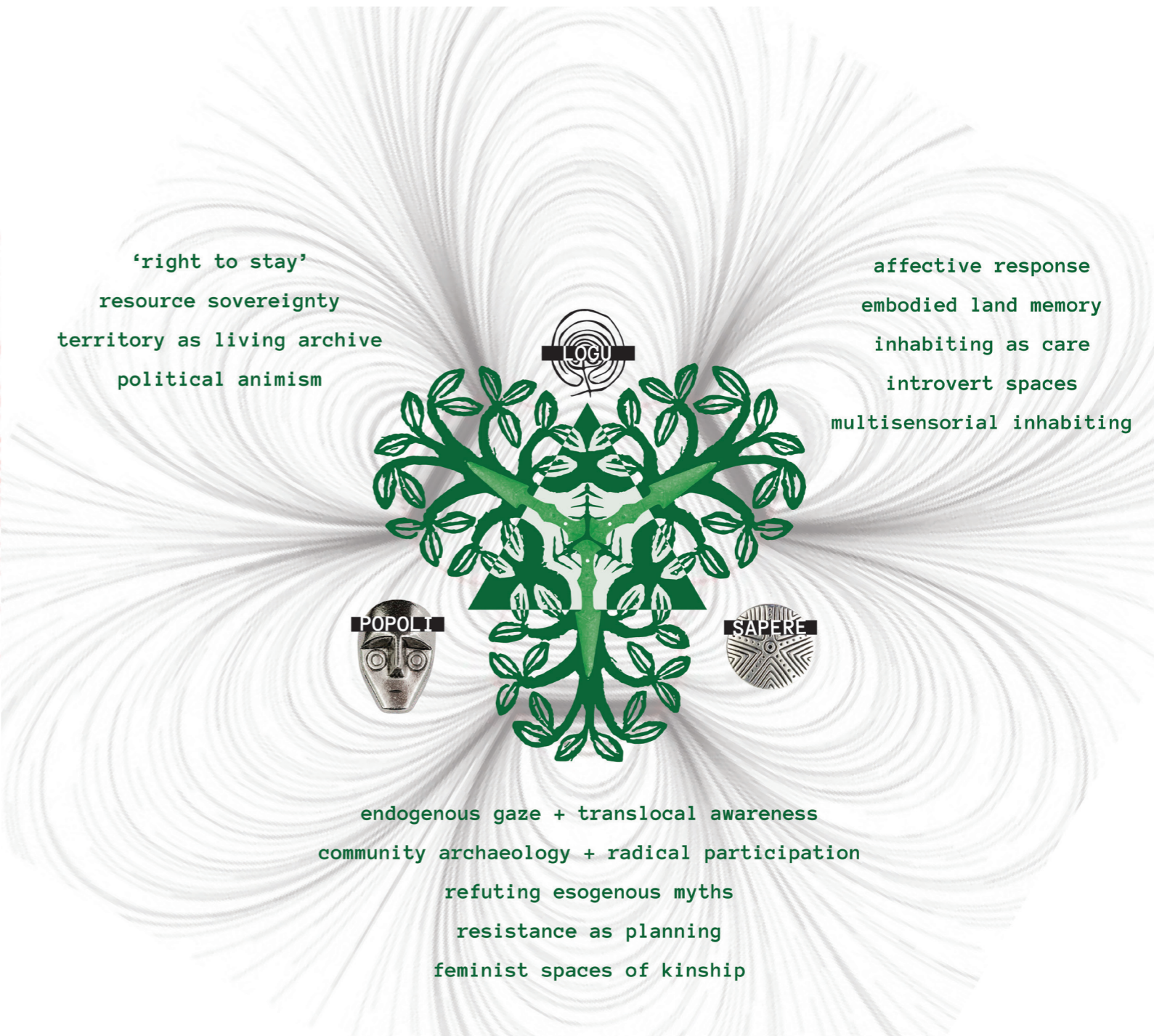
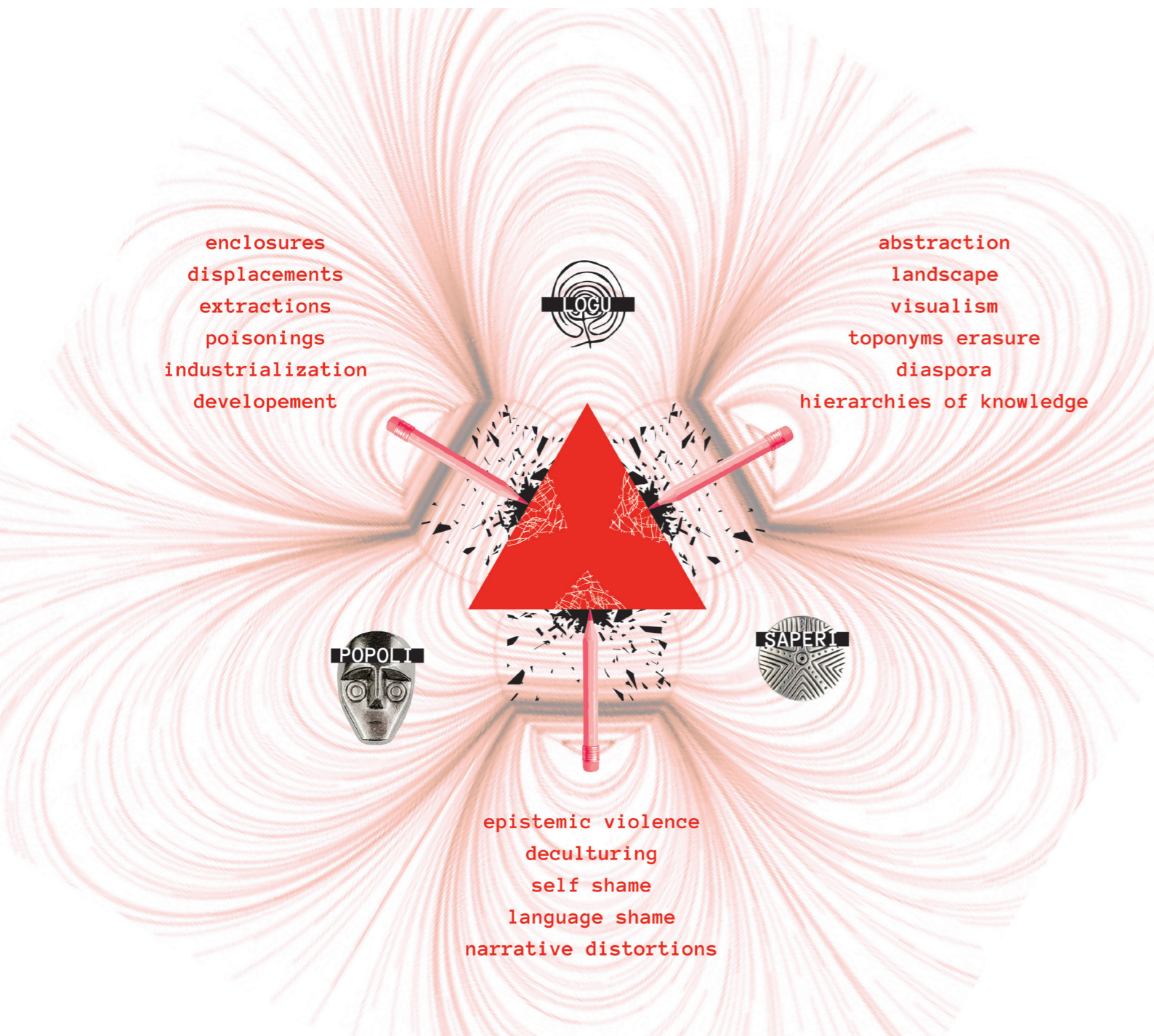
~~users, residents~~ → stewards

identities defined by different relationships with territory

situated knowledges
emerging from inhabiting

the 'secluded wisdom' of sheperds
'sapienza riposta'

the language
which has words for every shade of
this territory, but cannot express
'landscape'



Resistance

Throughout the Critical Atlas, resistance repeatedly emerged alongside the processes of domination, extraction, marginalization, and epistemic violence discussed in the previous chapters. Yet the contributions collected in **Logu e Logos** suggest that resistance cannot be understood solely as opposition to these processes. Rather than appearing only in moments of open conflict, resistance emerges through a wide range of practices by which Sardinian communities have defended territorial rights, reproduced cultural and linguistic traditions, challenged dominant representations, generated alternative forms of knowledge, and articulated competing social and political projects. Taken together, these contributions invite a reading of resistance not as an episodic interruption of history, but as a recurring dimension of Sardinian social and territorial life that links struggles over material resources to broader contests over memory, identity, knowledge, and collective futures (Cherchi & Pau, 2024).

Resistance against dispossession

The most visible and historically documented forms of resistance in Sardinia emerge around the defense of territory against processes of dispossession. Throughout modern Sardinian history, land has repeatedly been subjected to forms of enclosure, extraction, militarization, industrialization, and externally imposed development. Consequently, many of the island's most significant mobilizations have revolved around defending the material conditions of collective life and resisting the expropriation of common resources, while also asserting alternative understandings of territorial governance and collective rights that reappear throughout

[A] *Omnimaximpero te et aut restem dolorum harum, sit et eos dolupta volorem quatis dit rem vellacia quunditae re, con pa nonseni mincium alibus.*

[B] *Omnimaximpero te et aut restem dolorum sit et eos dolupta volorem quatis dit rem vellacia quunditae re, con pa nonseni mincium alibus.*

[C] *Omnimaximpero te et aut dolorum harum,*

this chapter.

Onnis (2024) demonstrates that the history of Sardinian popular movements cannot be understood through the stereotype of an isolated or passive population. Rather, many of the major uprisings of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were directly connected to struggles over land and collective rights. Following the **Editto delle Chiudende** of 1820 and the progressive dismantling of communal uses, rural communities resisted the privatization of lands that had historically been managed collectively. The revolt known as **Su Connottu** in Nuoro in 1868 emerged precisely from this context. Onnis interprets these mobilizations not as residual reactions to modernization but as political responses to the dismantling of collectively recognized rights and territorial arrangements, anticipating later debates over autonomy, self-government, and alternative forms of land management.

A similar dynamic reappears in the twentieth century. The 1969 **Pratobello** mobilization in Orgosolo successfully opposed the extension of military activities onto pastoral lands. Again, the conflict was not simply about land use, but about the capacity of local communities to participate in decisions affecting their territory and to defend locally grounded forms of inhabitation and livelihood. The experience also became an enduring symbol of Sardinian collective resistance, later echoed in the political murals (**murali**) that transformed Orgosolo's public spaces into visual archives of local memory, social struggles, and territorial defense. In this sense, the murals extended the cultural and mnemonic dimensions of resistance discussed later in this chapter, preserving histories of mobilization while connecting local experiences to wider political struggles. Onnis (2024) argues that these struggles reveal a long tradition of popular political agency that has often been ignored by historiography, which frequently portrayed subaltern mobilizations as irrational, spontaneous, or pre-political.

The same dynamics continue to characterize contemporary conflicts surrounding renewable energy infrastructures. In her ethnographic study of anti-wind-farm mobilizations in Marmilla, Corona (2024) argues that opposition to large-scale renewable energy projects cannot be reduced to environmental conservatism or NIMBYism. Rather, these mobilizations must be understood as responses to what she describes as new forms of territori-

al expropriation. Drawing on the literature on green grabbing, Corona argues that multinational energy companies frequently frame rural territories as underutilized, marginal, or empty spaces available for development, thereby legitimizing forms of extraction whose benefits largely leave the island while their social, environmental, and territorial consequences remain localized. As in earlier struggles over common lands and military occupation, the conflict concerns not only resource use but also questions of territorial authority, representation, and self-determination.

For many of the actors documented by Corona (2024), these projects are perceived as part of a longer historical continuity linking contemporary energy speculation to previous forms of external intervention, including military occupation, petrochemical industrialization, and earlier colonial appropriations of land. Corona notes that these mobilizations frequently frame the conflict through the language of autonomy, territorial rights, and political self-determination, as illustrated by protest slogans against the expropriation of Sardinian land and by public refusals to identify with state institutions. These narratives connect contemporary environmental conflicts to broader efforts to reclaim the authority to define the meanings and futures of Sardinian territory. (Corona, 2024)

The contributions collected in **Logu e Logos** suggest that struggles over land and resources represent only one dimension of a broader field of resistance. Several authors argue that domination also operates through representation, historical interpretation, language, memory, and knowledge production. Consequently, many of the practices they describe focus not on defending territory directly, but on defending the capacity to interpret, narrate, and inhabit it on different terms.

Labo. Nemquam vident omniscitatem esentinelit quae as everro quae id eumet illit, untur? Pid moluptae dolument der miliet banner.

Labo. Nemquam vident omnisc-

Resistance through reproduction

Many of the forms of resistance discussed throughout **Logu e Logos** do not take the form of open confrontation. They operate instead through the reproduction of relationships between territory, people, and knowledge. If dispossession acts by separating communities from their lands, histories, languages, and forms of expertise, these practices work in the opposite direction: they maintain, reactivate, and transmit the social and cultural infrastructures through which collective life remains possible. In doing so, they complement the more visible territorial struggles discussed above by addressing the epistemic and cultural dimensions of domination explored elsewhere in the report.

A recurring theme across several contributions concerns the relationship between domination and knowledge. Ghisu (2024) argues that colonial and national hegemonies do not operate solely through political or economic control, but also through the production of identities and narratives that shape how people understand themselves. One of the most profound effects of colonization is the internalization of the colonizer's gaze, whereby subaltern subjects come to view their own history, language, and culture through categories generated elsewhere. Resistance therefore requires what Ghisu describes as the construction of an endogenous gaze (**sguardo endogeno**): the capacity to interpret one's own reality using concepts, experiences, and historical references rooted in the territory itself. In this perspective, historical interpretation becomes a political question, since recovering the capacity to narrate one's own past also involves questioning the categories through which identities have been constructed and represented. This concern with epistemic autonomy resonates with later discussions of archaeology, literature, and territorial knowledge. (Ghisu, 2024)

Similar concerns emerge in Soddu's (2024) analysis of the work of Sergio Atzeni. Through literature, Atzeni challenges what decolonial scholars have described as the "rhetoric of modernity": the narrative through which European modernity presents itself as the universal horizon of progress while simultaneously portraying other peoples as backward, incomplete, or in need of development. Soddu argues that Atzeni's writing dismantles these representations by recovering the complexity of Sardinian histories and by situating the island within broader

Mediterranean networks rather than at the margins of civilization. Literature becomes a space through which alternative historical and geographical narratives can be articulated, restoring complexity to experiences that dominant discourses often reduce to stereotypes and contributing to the broader effort to construct endogenous interpretations of Sardinian reality. (Soddu, 2024)

Questions of knowledge production also emerge in Lai's (2024) discussion of Sardinian archaeology. For much of its history, the Nuragic civilization was interpreted through conceptual categories derived from colonial and classicist frameworks. Archaeological evidence was frequently forced into narratives emphasizing kings, princes, warrior elites, and hierarchical state structures, reflecting assumptions about civilization inherited from external intellectual traditions. Lai argues that more recent approaches open the possibility of reading the archaeological record differently, challenging the idea that social complexity necessarily requires centralized domination. These approaches contribute to broader efforts to reconsider how Sardinian history is narrated, who possesses the authority to interpret it, and what kinds of political imaginaries become possible through alternative readings of the past. (Lai, 2024)

The reproduction of relationships between knowledge and territory also occurs through everyday forms of inhabitation. Pau (2024) highlights how the Sardinian language itself reveals a different relationship to space. Rather than emphasizing the visual category of **paesaggio** (landscape), Sardinian traditions often refer to **territòriu**: a lived environment shaped through movement, work, memory, and care. Drawing on Bachi-sio Bandinu, Pau describes territory as "the place of the foot and the step, not of the vision." This distinction offers a useful lens for interpreting practices of inhabitation that prioritize use, memory, and care

[A] *Omnimaximpero te et aut restem dolorum harum, sit et eos dolupta volorem quatis dit rem vellacia quunditae re, con pa nonseni mincium alibus.*

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[C] *Omnimaximpero te et aut dolorum harum,*

over visual consumption and external representation, echoing broader critiques of detached and externally imposed ways of knowing territory. (Pau, 2024)

Corona's (2024) ethnography reaches similar conclusions. Drawing on phenomenological geography and David Seamon's concept of **body-ballets**, she argues that attachment to territory is produced through daily routines, sensory experiences, agricultural practices, and intergenerational memories. For many of the inhabitants involved in anti-wind-farm mobilizations, the territory functions as a living archive through which personal biographies, collective histories, and future aspirations become intertwined. Within this perspective, conflicts over land use simultaneously concern memory, attachment, livelihood, and the continuity of everyday territorial practices, linking contemporary mobilizations to the embodied forms of territorial knowledge highlighted by Pau. (Corona, 2024)

Resistance also unfolds through cultural reproduction. Onnis (2024) notes that popular poetry, oral traditions, and collective forms of cultural expression played a fundamental role in Sardinian political life. During periods when formal political representation remained inaccessible to large portions of the population, poets such as Sebastiano Satta, Pepinu Mereu, and Bore Poddighe became important vehicles for articulating popular grievances and aspirations. Alongside later forms of visual expression such as the murals of Orgosolo, these practices helped preserve collective memory, circulate alternative interpretations of social reality, and sustain political agency beyond formal institutions. The political significance of these cultural practices was recognized even by authoritarian regimes. The censorship of Poddighe's **Sa Mundana Cummèdia** and the suppression of oral poetry competitions under Fascism demonstrate the extent to which cultural production could function as a counter-hegemonic force. (Onnis, 2024)

Sabino (2024) further illustrates how resistance can emerge through seemingly ordinary practices. Revisiting Gramsci's observations on Sardinian peasants and workers, he discusses the tactic of the "sewn pockets" (**tasche cucite**), through which participants attending political meetings would sew their pockets shut to prevent police from planting knives and fabricating criminal charges. Beyond its immediate practical function, Sabino interprets this gesture as a form of practi-

cal intelligence developed under conditions of surveillance and repression. Such practices reveal how political creativity often operates through subtle forms of adaptation, mutual learning, and collective ingenuity rather than through direct confrontation alone, while also prefiguring the collective organizational capacities discussed in the following section. (Sabino, 2024)

Although these authors work with different materials and disciplinary traditions, a common concern runs through their contributions. Each, in different ways, challenges the tendency to treat Sardinian populations as objects of history rather than subjects capable of historical action. Whether through literature, archaeology, oral traditions, everyday practices, forms of inhabitation, or the production of alternative territorial narratives, they draw attention to the capacity of communities to generate interpretations of their own past and present. The question of resistance therefore becomes inseparable from the question of who possesses the authority to define the meanings of territory, identity, history, and collective possibility.

Resistance as future-making

If the previous section has shown how communities reproduce relationships between territory, people, and knowledge, a final dimension concerns their capacity to articulate alternative political and territorial horizons. Several authors included in **Logu e Logos** challenge the tendency to interpret subaltern struggles exclusively through the lens of opposition, preservation, or reaction. Instead, they reveal how many of these experiences contain explicit proposals regarding land ownership, political organization, social relations, and collective futures. In this sense, future-making emerges not as a separate domain but as an extension of the cultural, territorial, and epistemic

Labo. Nemquam vident omnissitatem esentinelit quae as everro quae id eumet illit, untur? Pid moluptae dolument der miliet banner.

Labo. Nemquam vident omniss-

practices discussed above.

This argument emerges clearly in Onnis's (2024) critique of traditional historiography. One of the recurring themes in dominant accounts of Sardinian history has been the tendency to portray popular uprisings as irrational reactions to change or as instinctive expressions of social discontent. Such interpretations deny political intentionality to subaltern actors and obscure their capacity to formulate collective projects. Onnis argues instead that many of the island's major mobilizations reveal sophisticated forms of political agency. The struggles surrounding common lands, **Su Connottu**, and **Pratobello** were not simply acts of refusal. They expressed alternative understandings of property, governance, territorial management, and collective rights that continue to inform contemporary debates over autonomy and territorial self-determination. (Onnis, 2024)

A similar perspective emerges in Sabino's (2024) reading of Gramsci. Revisiting the experiences of Sardinian peasants and workers during the early twentieth century, Sabino highlights the importance of **Sa Comune**: the aspiration towards collective ownership and management of land by those who actively worked it. Rather than representing a nostalgic return to a lost past, **Sa Comune** embodied a political horizon through which rural populations sought to reorganize social and economic life. Historical attempts to establish local soviets and forms of communal self-government demonstrate that subaltern actors were not merely resisting dispossession but actively experimenting with alternative institutions, extending the forms of collective ingenuity and organization discussed earlier. (Sabino, 2024)

The projective dimension of these experiences also appears in Turtas's (2024) engagement with Emilio Lussu, Frantz Fanon, and decolonial thought. Her contribution focuses on the ways colonial domination affects not only institutions and economies, but also the categories through which reality itself is understood. Against modern frameworks that separate humans from nature and privilege rationality as the sole basis of political life, she revisits animistic elements in Lussu's work as resources for imagining alternative forms of coexistence. In this reading, animism does not appear as a relic of a pre-modern past, but as a critique of anthropocentric and hierarchical understandings of political community. The significance of this perspective lies less in recovering

[at the beginning]

initial awareness, doubts, privileges, limits

at the beginning, i understood sardinia as a place whose claims seemed to resonate with postcolonial and indigenous struggles elsewhere, but i also understood that this comparison was immediately problematic. sardinia is formally part of a democratic state, with institutional representation and legal belonging to italy. this made the use of postcolonial or pluriversal frameworks feel both intellectually productive and ethically risky: why use authors such as escobar to speak about a territory whose people are not formally colonized in the same way as many other peoples across the world?

a central fear was that the connection i perceived was only intellectual, and that it did not reflect the lived realities of people in sardinia. i feared that my argument was naïve, that i did not understand the sardinian situation deeply enough, and that this lack of understanding would weaken the entire thesis.

my relation to sardinia was intimate and emotional, but also partial. it was connected to women in my family, to water, to rock, and to a feeling of marginality: the feeling of being at the edge of the world, where the world does not care, where change arrives late or not at all. sardinia appeared to me as the "south of the south": south of europe, south of italy, and then somehow even further away, too sparse and too distant from the continent to have a real space in which to be heard.

at the same time, many parts of sardinia felt distant from me. daily life there, winter there, the experience of actually living in that distance, were not fully relatable to me. i feared that my intellectual attitude would make me appear as someone projecting ideas onto the island: a random outsider using sardinia for a writing project.

my ability to study this topic from a university abroad was shaped by privilege. my family history matters here: my parents managed to establish themselves away

from sardinia while maintaining a relationship with the island that was, in many ways, enjoyable and affective. this also has a class dimension, even if not in the sense of wealth. it has to do with being closer to where things happen, with having access to university, support, mobility, and the possibility of turning a topic like this into an academic project.

this privilege also appeared in the fact that i could "ponder" sardinia without carrying the same immediate responsibilities as people who live there. i do not experience the daily consequences of distance in the same way: the difficulty of accessing hospitals, the feeling that the world is happening somewhere across the sea, the need to turn studying abroad into a concrete life opportunity. i could afford, to some extent, to make an unconventional thesis, while others may need their thesis to prove employability, secure a visa, support a family, or create immediate professional stability.

language was another privilege. being able to read foreign literature and speak with people who had lived casteism, religious dictatorship, racial struggle, or other forms of oppression gave me a global or translocal lens. but this also produced anxiety. i feared that this "wokeness" might make me unrelatable, part of an elite bubble, distant from the realities i wanted to discuss.

i already knew that spatial justice and feminism are often dismissed as idealistic, unprofessional, or a waste of time in certain academic and professional contexts. i feared that my thesis would be seen as the extreme version of that: politically excessive, naïve, and not serious enough.

i felt ashamed of not knowing enough sardinian history, especially the history of sardinian feminism, personal memories, family relations, and the biographical material that could have grounded the thesis more honestly. i had not reconstructed my family history, and i knew that this

initial values, intentions, positionings

at the beginning, i wanted the thesis to be a denunciation. i wanted it to uncover a world of possibility and to show that the situation was not natural, inevitable, or neutral. looking back, this ambition was probably too large, but it came from a real ethical and political urgency.

the work was motivated by relationality: relations between people, families, places, territories, and forms of care. it was also motivated by the idea of translocal allyship: the possibility that, within our own spheres of influence, we can learn how to build more inclusive and relational worlds.

i wanted to refuse technocracy, neutrality, extractive planning, eurocentrism, coloniality, and the external gaze within my own thinking. i wanted to defend the possibility for people to belong to their surroundings, and for those surroundings not to be taken away from them.

what i wanted to defend was not only "local knowledge" in an abstract sense, but the dignity of people who cannot choose where they are born, and the dignity of the constant inventiveness of daily life. i wanted to defend the ordinary capacity of people to make worlds, even under conditions of marginality.

at first, i imagined my role partly as an ethnographer, or at least as someone who could listen, collect, interpret, and translate. this later changed, but initially i wanted to approach the thesis as a form of situated inquiry.

i hoped that an urbanism thesis could denaturalize hierarchical oppression. i wanted to show that spatial planning is not neutral, and that it could be done differently. concretely, i believed that many solutions already exist in practices, relationships, and forms of life; the problem is often not the absence of solutions, but the absence of political and cultural willingness to recognize them.

i did not want to reproduce the attitude of the leftist intellectual who instrumentalizes other people's suffering

for their own project. i also did not want to reproduce the idea that europe is the center of knowledge production, or that what feels rational and intuitive from my own context is the only valid way to understand a territory.

notebook_november-december_2025.txt

" from where do i speak? I approach this research as someone neither fully inside nor fully outside Sardinia. I am not Sardinian by upbringing or cultural immersion, but Sardinia is part of my familial and emotional landscape through my mother's lineage and decades of lived experience in La Maddalena. That island, often seen as "the least Sardinian part of Sardinia", has taught me as much about isolation, marginality, intergenerational justice, gender struggles, capitalization of land, and state neglect; as about beauty, longing, solitude, home, liberty, identity, kinship and intimacy. Just in that little bay around my house I've

seen a resort come up over the years, nested on the profile of the mountain. A few years ago, part of the bay was fenced from the edge of the street to the sea's edge, and covered in white gaze-bos. Under legal concession of the national park authorities. The whole archipelago is being encroached upon by the the relentless consumption of soil, view, coast, sea... but we lack a real hospital, for instance, or affordable ways to reach the continent. ... what is my role, approach, intent? I think my role is not to speak for Sardinia, but to learn how to listen responsibly, to amplify existing voices, and to attend to knowledge

that is already being produced locally. My methodology is grounded in feminist and pluriversal epistemologies, prioritizing care, situated knowledge, and relational ethics over extractive research. I am aware of the risk of projecting external analytical frames or romanticizing belonging. Thus, I position myself consciously: close enough to be emotionally implicated, distant enough to remain critically aware. This work is not an attempt to reclaim a homeland, nor to romanticize one. This project is not about claiming identity, nor about appropriating local narratives. It is an attempt to understand how worlds are lost, how futures are foreclosed, and how other futures can be nur-

tured through attention, respect, responsibility, and solidarity. My task is to help reveal, never to replace, the knowledge that is already there, already emergent, already speaking. It is about tracing how modernity and coloniality materialize within everyday landscapes, and supporting the articulation of alternatives already alive within Sardinian society. My task is to approach the work with humility, attention, and accountability."

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The relentless consumption of soil to create absence of basic services, such as a functioning hospital, is not anecdotal: it is evidence of systemic disregard toward peripheral territories.

I take seriously Gayatri Spivak's question, "Can the subaltern speak?": I maintain that subaltern communities can and do speak; the issue is that their speech is too often ignored, filtered, or misinterpreted. My role is not to speak for Sardinia, but to learn how to listen responsibly, to amplify existing voices, and to attend to knowledge that is already being produced locally.

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narratives. It is an attempt to understand how worlds are lost, how futures are foreclosed, and how other futures can be nurtured through attention, respect, responsibility, and solidarity. My task is to help reveal, never to replace, the knowledge that is already there, already emergent, already speaking. It is about tracing how modernity and coloniality materialize within everyday landscapes, and supporting the articulation of alternatives already alive within Sardinian society. My task is to approach the work with humility, attention, and accountability.

* Who am I, and from where do I speak?

I am essentially an average Italian, white, from a lower-middle-class background, with a fairly fluid male gender identity, and an Italian citizen with the ability to choose my engagement with Sardinia in terms of mobility and presence. I have always spent summers there in a privileged context, while my life has mostly taken place in Pisa, a city historically linked to Sardinia as one of the dominant powers, which in some ways transformed it. Pisa also offered me access to resources and opportunities far beyond those available in Sardinia. I had the possibility to move to Venice to study architecture, to return or leave whenever I wanted, including during the pandemic, and to go to Sardinia to study and take some exams in concentrated periods, as for me that place represented an opportunity for chosen, healthy isolation rather than forced confinement. My educational level and the types of schools I attended likely had far more resources than a Sardinian school: if I had lived in La Maddalena, my educational experi-

ence would have been completely different.

* In what contexts do these identities confer power or disadvantage?

The only disadvantage I can think of relates to not speaking the local language and being a visibly effeminate queer person. In interactions with locals, I anticipate some discomfort or the need not to fully expose my sexuality, although this may be an assumption based on narratives of the island's backwardness. Nevertheless, there is often much openness. Everything else represents for me a significant power and advantage. That said, it is important to question what is actually seen as advantage or disadvantage: perhaps my education could be perceived as a disadvantage, as it brings an academic approach somewhat distant from local realities, whereas my epistemological humility—the awareness of the limits of my perspective and the willingness to listen and learn from participants—could represent a genuine advantage. Additionally, I am currently an "educational migrant" in an academic sense: I conduct my research from the Netherlands, at a technical university, which gives me legitimacy when I return and discuss my research, a legitimacy that is likely higher than what local participants would otherwise grant. The point is that I exist within an academic bubble in Delft that seeks to question the paradigms of technical education and to emphasize the importance of a human and cultural perspective to improve the quality of thought, even that which is oriented toward pragmatic guidance for future actions.

* How do my positionalities influence what I can or cannot say?

Despite my sensitivity to social justice issues, I occupy a position of great privilege, and when I speak with a migrant or a Sardinian woman, I cannot fully grasp their experience except through empathy and listening. The place from which I speak is Delft, within a technical university: on the surface, I am not speaking on behalf of a community, but in reality, I am trying to give voice to and amplify communities that have expressed

themselves in certain contexts without obtaining the resonance or contaminative potential they deserve. I try to speak with communities through my ability to collect data and study the context, recognizing that the validity of my observations depends on confrontation with local communities and my communicative capacity with them.

* Complicity in colonial logics

The use of western literature has a significant impact, yet I am also trying to incorporate ideas and thoughts from other parts of the world, which I consider of greater value than the Western perspective. I take local knowledge into account, although I recognize an ontological discomfort in approaching it, but I am willing to accept and incorporate it. For example, there are suggestions within my family, particularly from the women, regarding the spiritual relationship with the land and the significance of dreams as symbolic and premonitory factors. While studying and reading local ways of being and living, I find myself recognizing aspects of my own experience: my already written preface speaks of a cyclical vision of the land, recurrence, and social time. I can be complicit in practices that the project intends to critique, particularly those linked to Western academic formation, but I am actively seeking to integrate them with more embodied and relational knowledge, creating a space of dialogue between my education and local ways of knowing.

[the joys that brought me forward]

Joy of care between students, friends, colleagues, and teachers moving through difficult times together
 Joy of endless conversations about how the world is failing everyone and how another one might still be made
 Joy of finding people who could hold on to despair without giving up on imagination
 Joy of phone calls with people from Sardinia who recognized something true in the way I was trying to understand the situation
 Joy of feeling that the work resonated beyond my own head
 Joy of my family seeing this thesis as something meaningful
 Joy of conversations with people from everywhere else that confirm I was not alone
 Joy of realizing that disagreement can also be a form of construction
 Joy of learning from people whose lives are different than mine
 Joy of teachers who go against the grain
 Joy of being encouraged to think more bravely
 Joy of looking at someone in the eyes and recognizing that a bond is forming
 Joy of small smiles and exhausted sighs and silent complicities between people who are tired but still hopeful
 Joy of curiosity about the lore of each other's home countries
 Joy of asking something about where someone comes from and receiving stories instead of straight answers
 Joy of realizing that every place contains infinite myths, scars, jokes, recipes, songs, and unfinished histories
 Joy of carefully prepared tea on a quiet windy gray day
 Joy of friendship made through small gestures
 Joy of morning banter with the baristas
 Joy of laughter at Bouwpub
 Joy of the countless beers bought for whoever wants them
 Joy of understanding that another or otherwise world is not only an abstract political demand, but something briefly rehearsed in friendships
 Joy of feeling that the work should belong to a collective rather than only to me
 Joy of finding hope in the middle of intellectual and emotional exhaustion
 Joy of discovering that the thesis was also a record of people trying to stay human together

[the fears that brought me down]

Fear of not really understanding Sardinia
 Fear of being a fraud for speaking about Sardinia without having fully lived it
 Fear of using the word colonialism too easily
 Fear of making Sardinian suffering sound equivalent to other colonial histories without enough care
 Fear of my friends from outside Europe finding the comparison ridiculous
 Fear of turning a European island into a victim while ignoring the scale of colonial violence elsewhere
 Fear of grounding a justice thesis in something that began from anger at a resort near my house
 Fear of not knowing enough about my own family history
 Fear of realizing that my first archive should have been my family and that I had not opened it yet
 Fear of reproducing the same external gaze I am trying to criticize
 Fear of describing Sardinia as a victim without showing its agency
 Fear of making claims that would require years of historical study
 Fear of using decolonial language without enough historical precision
 Fear of forcing Sardinia into a colonial framework too simplistically
 Fear of confusing ideology with academic reading
 Fear of using buzzwords like feminist epistemologies and pluriversal thinking without proving what they mean in practice
 Fear of saying "methodology" when I only have values
 Fear of not showing those values through the work itself
 Fear of turning an urbanism thesis into political science or anthropology because one discipline feels too small
 Fear of having a political argument but not a spatial argument
 Fear of having a spatial argument but not a design method
 Fear of proving critique but not competence
 Fear of making beautiful diagrams that do not say anything
 Fear of making an atlas that is evocative but not rigorous
 Fear of romanticizing resistance
 Fear of romanticizing rural life
 Fear of essentializing Sardinian culture
 Fear of treating Sardinian identity as fixed
 Fear of making hegemony explain everything and therefore explain nothing
 Fear of turning every transformation into oppression
 Fear of not giving enough room to ambiguity
 Fear of sounding anti-modern rather than critical of imposed modernization
 Fear of not showing who benefits and who loses
 Fear of only denouncing extraction without proposing a way to read or repair it
 Fear of using suffering as thesis material
 Fear of losing the ethical core of the project while trying to make it acceptable
 Fear of turning Sardinia into a case study instead of treating it as a living territory
 Fear of making a thesis that is radical in language but conventional in method
 Fear of making a thesis that is critical but not useful
 Fear of making a prescriptive technocratic project that betrays everything the thesis was trying to defend
 Fear of not proving that an anti-hegemonic approach can produce spatial knowledge, design value, and academic seriousness

journey trajectory & interview constellation

The fieldwork took place over approximately two weeks of travel across Sardinia during March 2025. While La Maddalena functioned as a logistical base and occasional place of rest, most of the research was conducted through continuous movement across the island. Travelling primarily by car, I moved between cities, villages, protests, workshops, cafés, homes, community spaces, and landscapes, often staying in temporary accommodations or accepting invitations from people encountered throughout the research process. Although several interviews had been arranged beforehand, many of the most significant encounters emerged unexpectedly through introductions, recommendations, shared meals, and informal conversations.

Day 0 - Arrival in Cagliari (6 March)

I arrived in Cagliari on the evening of 6 March. Before the official beginning of the fieldwork, I encountered a permanent solidarity gathering for Palestine in Piazza Yenne. What began as a moment of observation quickly became a first conversation about Sardinia, colonialism, militarization, and territorial struggles. When I explained the purpose of my research, one participant responded: "Then you're one of us." Although seemingly anecdotal, this encounter proved significant. It introduced a recurring theme that would accompany the entire fieldwork: the tendency to understand Sardinian territorial issues not as isolated local problems, but as part of broader questions of colonialism, self-determination, militarization, environmental justice, and collective dignity.

The evening also provided a first opportunity to explore the city itself. Moving from the port towards the historic centre, through its steep topographies, layered urban fabric, and public spaces, I began to familiarize myself with a city that would become the primary point of departure for much of the fieldwork. The encounter between monumental historical layers, modern infrastructures, military presences, and everyday urban life offered an early glimpse of the complexities that characterize Sardinia's contemporary territorial condition.

Day 1 - Health, protest, and first networks (7 March)

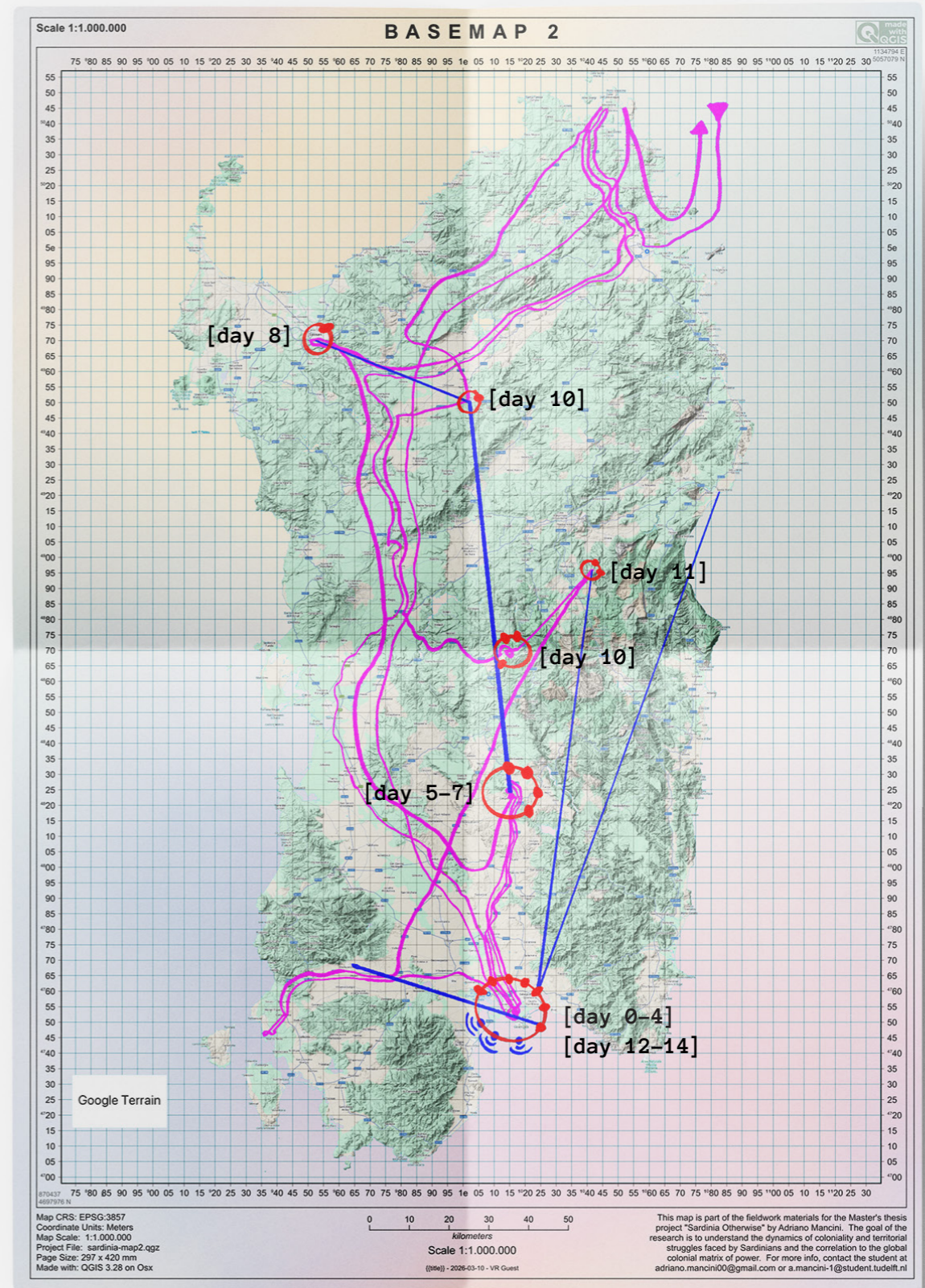
The first full day of fieldwork was spent at a large demonstration concerning the healthcare crisis in Sardinia. Beyond the protest itself, the event provided an opportunity to meet activists and community organizers with whom I would remain in contact throughout the rest of the fieldwork. Conversations that began in public squares continued over lunch and informal discussions, revealing the extent to which different political, environmental, cultural, and social struggles intersected through overlapping networks of people.

What initially appeared as a sectoral protest concerning healthcare increasingly revealed itself as part of a broader landscape of territorial concerns and civic mobilization. Questions of public services, depopulation, regional inequalities, political representation, and territorial abandonment repeatedly emerged alongside discussions concerning healthcare provision. The day provided a first introduction to the interconnected nature of many Sardinian struggles and led to several contacts that would later prove central to the research.

Day 2 - Women against colonialism, war, and militarization (8 March)

On 8 March I attended the gathering Donne contro il colonialismo, la guerra e le armi. The event brought together activists, researchers, and community members engaged with questions of feminism, anti-militarism, anti-colonialism, and peace activism. Discussions frequently moved between local and international scales, connecting Sardinia's military presence, territorial struggles, and environmental concerns with broader global dynamics.

The evening extended beyond the formal event and continued around a shared dinner, providing further opportunities for conversation and introducing new perspectives that would later resonate with many of the themes emerging throughout the fieldwork. It was one of the first moments in which it became clear how strongly different forms of activism intersected across the island, creating spaces where environmental,



social, cultural, and political concerns were discussed simultaneously rather than separately.

Day 3 - Feminist mobilization and youth political engagement (9 March)

The following evening I participated in another public event connected to feminist mobilization in Piazza Costituzione. Particularly striking were the interventions of high-school students who connected questions of gender justice to broader concerns regarding education, political participation, social exclusion, public infrastructure, and youth disenfranchisement. Their contributions reflected a generation that appeared both politically engaged and deeply aware of the structural challenges facing Sardinia.

Informal conversations afterwards reinforced the impression that younger activists were developing increasingly sophisticated connections between social justice, territorial questions, and everyday experiences. Walking with several student organizers towards the train station after the event provided an opportunity to discuss their work, their organizations, and their perspectives on the future of Sardinia. These exchanges would become an early indication of the important role played by youth-led initiatives throughout the island.

Day 4 - Banne Sio and Sardinian cultural history (10 March)

The first formal interview took place with Banne Sio, whose knowledge of Sardinian history, culture, oral traditions, and the social life of the Barbagia provided an important introduction to several themes that would later reappear in different contexts. Discussions ranged from local forms of social organization to canto a tenore, historical memory, oral traditions, and the changing relationship between communities and territory.

The conversation offered an early framework for understanding how cultural practices, language, and collective memory continue to shape contemporary Sardinian life. Many concepts and historical references introduced during this encounter would later reappear through different voices and in different regions of the island, suggesting the existence of shared concerns that transcended local contexts.

Day 5 - Isili and the encounter with Luigi Piscis (11 March)

A decisive moment occurred during the visit to Isili, where I met Luigi Piscis and his family. What initially began as an interview evolved into a much deeper exchange. Through conversations held in their literary café, over dinner, and during daily activities, the encounter opened access not only to new contacts but also to a broader understanding of cultural activism, language revitalization, territorial struggles, and community life in central Sardinia.

Through Luigi and his network I was introduced to several people who would subsequently become important interlocutors for the research. The evening extended into a shared dinner and an overnight stay, allowing conversations to unfold beyond the formal structure of an interview. The encounter highlighted the extent to which cultural work, political engagement, language promotion, hospitality, and community-building were deeply intertwined within everyday life.

Day 6 - Gergei, Santa Vittoria, and learning from heritage (12 March)

The following day was spent in Gergei, where I joined an international architectural workshop involving students from Sardinia and the United Kingdom. Hosted within a local agriturismo, the workshop focused on questions of conservation, restoration, and heritage management around the Nuragic sanctuary of Santa Vittoria, located between Gergei, Isili, and Serri.

The workshop revealed both the extraordinary density of archaeological heritage present throughout Sardinia and the difficulties associated with its protection, maintenance, funding, and public recognition. Conversations with students, professors, organizers, and local residents repeatedly returned to questions concerning cultural stewardship, heritage management, and the relationship between contemporary communities and the material traces of the past.

Day 7 - Isperdas and cognitive archaeology (13 March)

The days spent in Gergei also provided an opportunity to spend time with the founders of Isperdas, an experiential tourism project deeply rooted in the landscape and cultural heritage of the region. Near the

workshop venue stands an unusual structure: one of the first newly built nuraghi constructed in contemporary Sardinia.

The project emerged from what its founders describe as a process of "cognitive archaeology": an attempt to rediscover ancestral forms of learning from, listening to, and relating to land and place by reconstructing Nuragic building techniques through direct experimentation. Conversations with the founders ranged from archaeology and education to ontology, design, memory, and territory. Their reflections resonated strongly with several theoretical strands informing this thesis, particularly those concerning relational worldviews, situated knowledge, and the capacity of design practices to reproduce or transform ways of inhabiting the world.

Day 8 - Energy and anticolonial struggle (14 March)

Before leaving the area, I met Emilio Demuro, whose reflections expanded several themes that had already emerged during previous conversations. Discussions ranged across cultural production, Sardinian identity, collective memory, and contemporary social challenges. The encounter provided an opportunity to consolidate insights gathered throughout the preceding days and to further understand the relationships connecting different actors active in cultural and territorial initiatives across central Sardinia.

I later drove to Sassari where I met Cristiano Sabino, a core grassroots organizer against energy speculation as well as other causes. We discussed sardinian history, current mobilizations related to energy, and future prospects for social collaboration.

Day 9 - Return to La Maddalena (15-16 March)

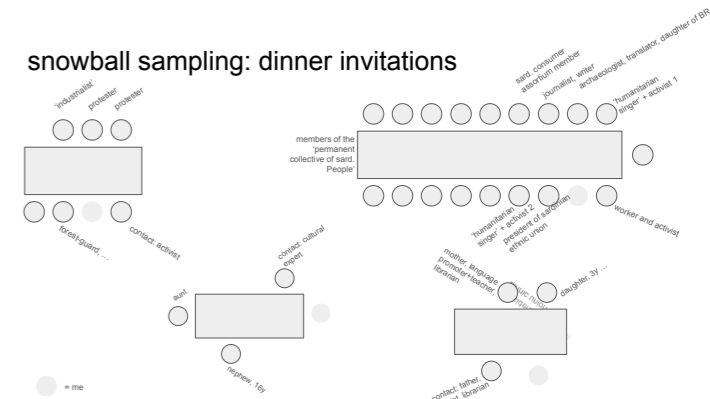
After several days of continuous travel, interviews, and events, I returned briefly to La Maddalena. The pause provided an opportunity to reorganize notes, reflect on the growing volume of material collected, and prepare for the second phase of the fieldwork. It also allowed time to reconnect with family and to process the many conversations, documents, and impressions accumulated during the first week.

Day 10 - Ozieri and Sorgono: anti-speculation and feminist territoriality (17 March)

starting on the ground



snowball sampling: dinner invitations



books



A particularly important encounter took place in Ozieri with Mariagrazia Demontis, one of the most active voices within the anti-speculation mobilizations opposing large-scale renewable energy developments. The meeting provided an entry point into the complex legal, technical, environmental, and political dimensions of the current energy transition. Through documents, maps, reports, and extensive discussion, it became clear that what initially appeared as a debate around wind farms and renewable energy was in fact embedded within much broader concerns regarding territorial autonomy, environmental justice, democratic participation, and the historical relationship between Sardinia and externally driven development models.

Later that same day, the journey continued towards Sorgono, where I met members of Avrotadoras, a feminist collective working on questions of gender, culture, territory, and community life. The encounter highlighted the extent to which feminist perspectives were intertwined with broader discussions concerning depopulation, intergenerational relationships, care, cultural reproduction, social infrastructures, community engagement, and the future of rural Sardinia. The meeting extended well beyond the formal conversation. The collective's headquarters occupied the basement of a family home, and the evening continued around a shared dinner with members of the collective and their family. As would happen repeatedly throughout the fieldwork, domestic spaces became important sites of learning, revealing how political engagement is often sustained through networks of friendship, kinship, care, and everyday social reproduction.

Day 11 - Tonara and Orgosolo (18 March)

Travelling through Tonara on the way to Orgosolo provided an opportunity for several informal conversations that, while not formally planned, contributed to a growing sense of how frequently discussions concerning work, migration, depopulation, territorial belonging, and future prospects emerged in everyday interactions. These brief encounters often reinforced themes already encountered elsewhere, revealing remarkable consistencies across different geographical contexts.

The visit to Orgosolo marked another decisive moment in the research. There I met Paola Lai, whose reflections on activism,

community organizing, local history, cultural life, situated forms of sustainability, and translocal engagement provided a particularly grounded perspective on contemporary Sardinian struggles. The encounter extended beyond a formal interview and developed through shared meals, conversations, and time spent with the family within the rhythms of everyday life. Being welcomed into a domestic environment offered a different form of access than public meetings or organized events, making it possible to observe how political commitments, territorial attachment, family life, and cultural practices intersect in ordinary settings.

Day 12 - Landscapes of extraction and return to Cagliari (19 March)

Leaving Orgosolo, I crossed the southern plains during a day marked by heavy rain and hail, passing through Domusnovas, Iglesias, and Portoscuso before eventually returning to Cagliari. The journey itself became another occasion to observe the territorial contrasts that characterize the island, from industrial landscapes and mining legacies to agricultural areas and coastal settlements.

Moving through these territories after the previous days of interviews and discussions encouraged a different reading of the landscape. Many of the themes emerging throughout the fieldwork—resource extraction, marginalization, development, environmental transformation, and resistance—could now be observed directly through the material traces they had left across the territory.

Day 13 - Students, critical geography, and academic conversations (20 March)

The last days spent in Cagliari were characterized by a growing overlap between fieldwork, friendship, and academic exchange. Staying with students and recent acquaintances opened opportunities for long conversations that frequently continued late into the evening, expanding beyond the immediate focus of the thesis towards broader questions concerning identity, migration, political participation, education, and the future of Sardinia.

These discussions highlighted the presence of a younger generation of students deeply interested in questions of spatial justice, feminism, critical geography, and socially engaged forms of planning and design. Through these conversations I was introduced to academic networks within the

University of Cagliari, including a professor working on feminist and critical geography and one of her former doctoral researchers, whose work would later become relevant to the chapter on renewable energy speculation. These encounters offered an opportunity to reflect on the relationship between academic knowledge production and the broader political and cultural debates unfolding across the island.

Day 14 - Shardana and the digital field (21 March)

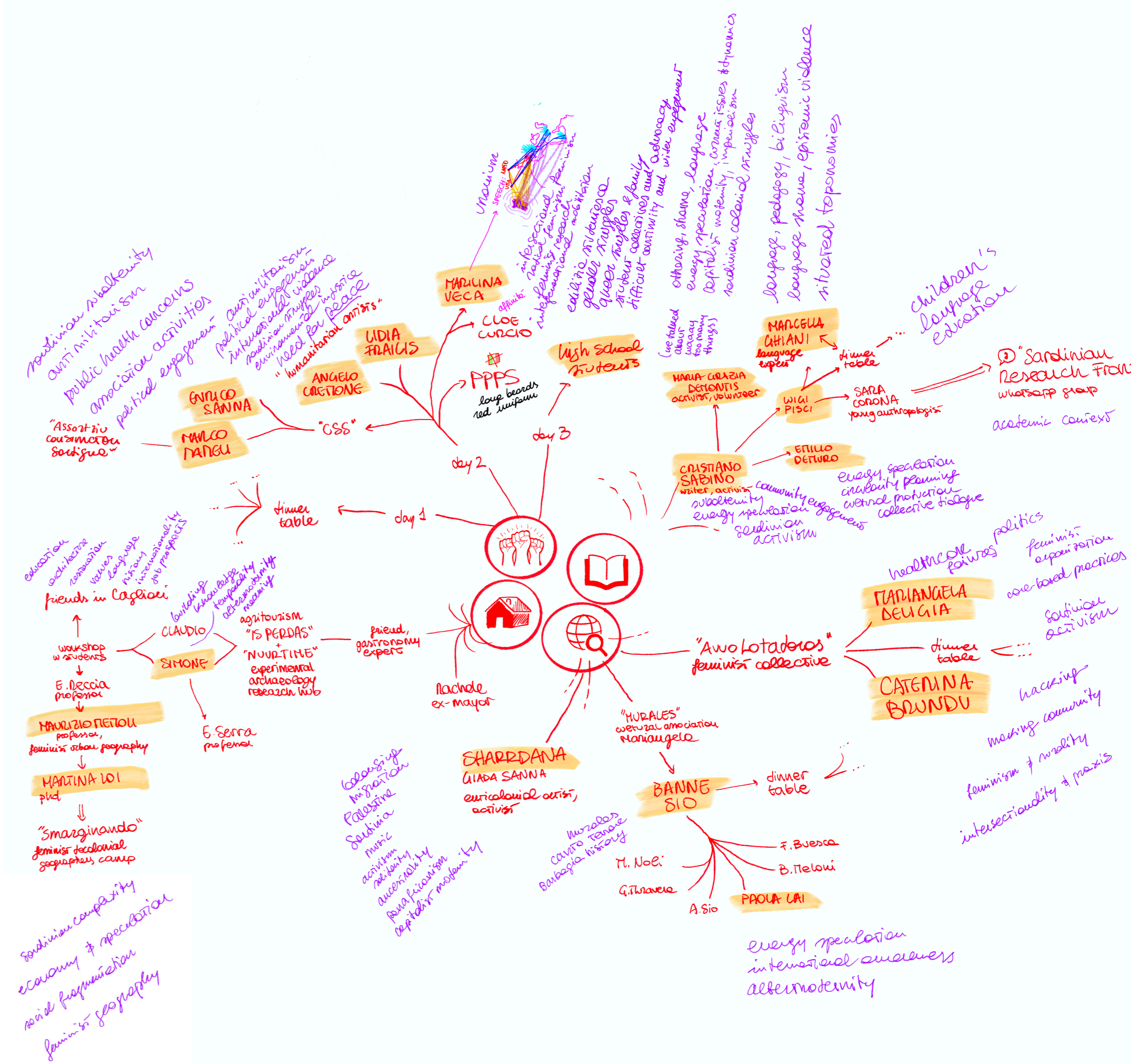
Towards the end of the fieldwork, a planned return to Orgosolo was interrupted due to unforeseen personal circumstances affecting one of the scheduled meetings. Remaining in Cagliari instead led to another significant encounter, this time with Shardana, whom I had initially discovered through social media.

As had happened several times throughout the research, digital spaces unexpectedly became extensions of the field itself. Algorithms, local news, activist networks, and cultural initiatives increasingly shaped what appeared on my screens, producing new opportunities for connection and encounter. The conversation with Shardana and her friends opened yet another perspective on Sardinian identity, representation, and cultural production, while further demonstrating the diversity of people engaged in rethinking the island's future.

Departure and reflection

The final days were spent moving between Cagliari, Orgosolo, and ultimately La Maddalena, revisiting places, gathering remaining observations, and consolidating relationships established throughout the preceding weeks. By this point, the fieldwork had evolved far beyond its initial research plan. Rather than following a predefined itinerary, it had become a process of progressively entering networks of trust, hospitality, and mutual curiosity through which new people, places, and ideas continually emerged.

What began as a study of territorial conflict increasingly revealed itself as an exploration of the relationships, practices, and forms of care through which people actively imagine and defend alternative futures for Sardinia.



meeting resistance

One of the most striking observations emerging from the fieldwork was the realization that resistance in Sardinia rarely appears in a single form. Rather than being confined to protests, political parties, or organized movements, it unfolds through a wide range of cultural, social, legal, educational, artistic, and territorial practices. Some are highly visible, while others operate quietly through everyday acts of care, memory, teaching, documentation, hospitality, and community-building. Taken together, they reveal a dense ecosystem of actors attempting to defend, reproduce, and imagine collective futures in the face of processes perceived as dispossessing, marginalizing, homogenizing, or rendering invisible.

While contemporary public discourse often associates resistance with demonstrations or direct political confrontation, the fieldwork revealed a much broader repertoire of practices. Resistance frequently emerges through the production of knowledge, the preservation of language, the organization of cultural events, the creation of spaces of encounter, the transmission of memory, the construction of legal arguments, and the cultivation of relationships capable of sustaining collective action over time. In many cases, these practices do not simply oppose unwanted transformations. They actively construct alternative ways of inhabiting, understanding, and governing territory.

Protest and Collective Mobilization

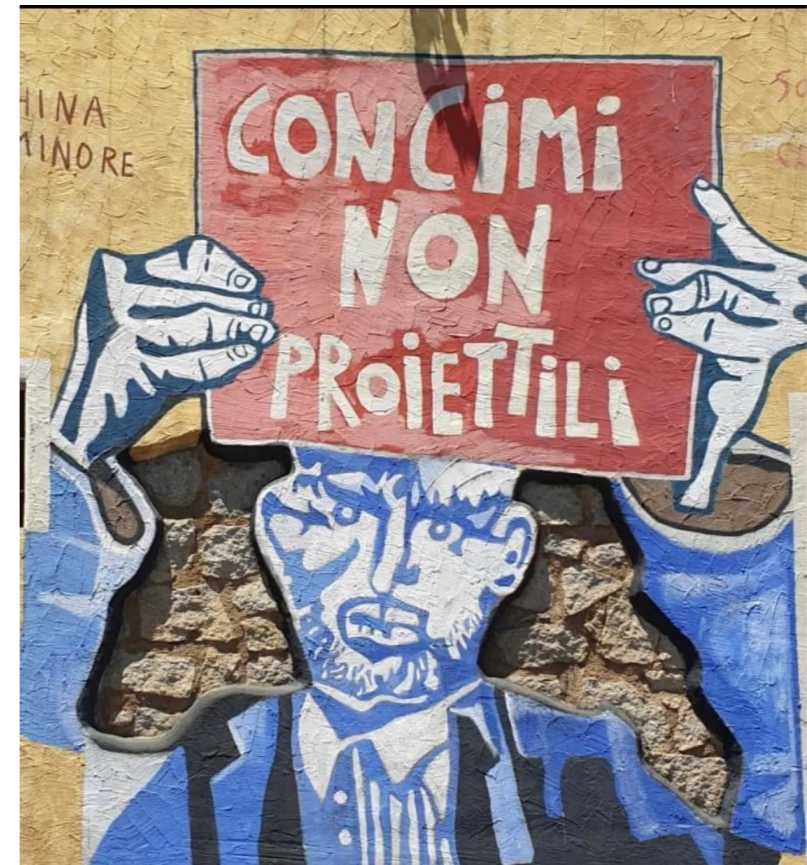
The most visible forms of resistance encountered during the fieldwork were protests, assemblies, demonstrations, public meetings, and grassroots mobilizations. Contemporary examples include demonstrations concerning the healthcare crisis in Sardinia, feminist mobilizations, anti-militarist initiatives, and international solidarity movements. These struggles exist within a much longer Sardinian history of resistance, ranging from anti-colonial revolts and peasant mobilizations to campaigns against military occupation, environmental contamination, industrial exploitation, and territorial dispossession.

Among the contemporary examples

encountered during the fieldwork were demonstrations concerning healthcare, feminist mobilizations, anti-militarist initiatives, and international solidarity movements. Together, they revealed a surprisingly active civic landscape in which local concerns are rarely treated as isolated issues, but are instead connected to wider questions of justice, democracy, autonomy, and collective futures. While not all territorial struggles manifest through public demonstrations, conversations throughout the fieldwork repeatedly pointed towards a dense ecology of committees, associations, advocacy groups, and informal networks working on issues ranging from environmental conflicts and renewable energy speculation to language preservation, cultural heritage, public services, and social welfare.

Perhaps most importantly, these mobilizations rarely appeared as isolated events. Rather, they functioned as points of encounter through which new relationships, collaborations, and initiatives emerged. Many of the interviews, invitations, and subsequent encounters that shaped this research originated directly or indirectly from these spaces of collective gathering. Beyond their political objectives, demonstrations and assemblies often became moments of collective meaning-making, where experiences, frustrations, hopes, and interpretations could be publicly shared and recognized. Speakers were met not only with applause but with visible forms of resonance and empathy. People listened, nodded, laughed, disagreed, reflected, and often recognized parts of their own experiences in the words of others. In this sense, protests functioned not only as acts of opposition but also as spaces where collective narratives could be constructed, reaffirmed, and transformed.

Yet conversations with activists repeatedly highlighted the difficulties associated with collective mobilization. Territorial fragmentation, demographic decline, unequal access to resources, political divisions, and the coexistence of competing ideological positions often make alliance-building difficult. Resistance therefore appears not as a spontaneous expression of unity but as a continuous effort to create common ground among highly



“fertilizers not bullets”

Music as resistance: an interesting continuity



Sharrdana: young diasporan artist (english)

Orgosolo's tenor singing tradition (sardinian)

Lidia&Angelo: 'humanitarian song-writers' (italian)

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diverse actors. Maintaining alliances often requires as much work as confronting external threats.

Music, Poetry, and the Transmission of Worlds

One of the most fascinating continuities encountered during the fieldwork concerns the role of music, poetry, storytelling, and performance as vehicles of resistance. Sardinia possesses a long history of oral traditions through which collective memory, social critique, and political expression have been transmitted across generations.

Particularly significant are the historical traditions of female poetry and singing, which provided important spaces for expression, memory-making, storytelling, and social commentary. Far from being merely folkloric practices, these traditions constituted forms of cultural transmission through which knowledge, emotion, collective memory, and social values could be preserved and shared across generations.

This continuity remains visible in contemporary cultural practices. In Orgosolo, for example, canto a tenore represents much more than a musical tradition or a form of recognized heritage. Throughout different historical periods it has intersected with questions of collective identity, political engagement, and community memory. More broadly, oral traditions continue to preserve perspectives and narratives that are often absent from official accounts of Sardinian history.

The fieldwork also revealed contemporary expressions of this lineage. Activists and musicians such as Lidia Frailis and Angelo Cremonese continue to use music as a vehicle for communicating anti-militarist, environmental, feminist, and anti-colonial messages. Their songs do not simply communicate information; they translate complex political issues into emotional and accessible forms capable of reaching audiences beyond activist circles.

At the same time, younger artists such as Sharda operate within translocal cultural networks, connecting Sardinian experiences to broader struggles for decolonization, Indigenous resurgence, international solidarity, and justice. Singing primarily in English while remaining deeply rooted in Sardinian realities, her work illustrates an attempt to place

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local histories into dialogue with global conversations. These different practices suggest that music functions not only as cultural expression, but also as infrastructure: preserving memory, creating emotional bonds, sustaining political engagement, and transmitting worlds across generations.

Territorial Listening, Collective Dialogue, and Cultural Production

A recurring theme throughout the fieldwork was the creation of cultural spaces designed not simply to communicate messages, but to foster collective reflection, territorial listening, and public conversation. These initiatives take many forms, including documentary screenings, concerts, archaeological and immersive walks, multisensory experiences, public discussions, and other cultural events that bring people together around shared questions concerning territory, memory, and collective futures.

The most prominent example is *Quo Vadis Sardinia?*, developed within the broader anti-speculation movement. What distinguishes the project is not only the documentary itself, but the way it is used. Screenings are intentionally organized as collective events and are almost always followed by facilitated discussion. As the producer emphasized, the objective is not simply to distribute information or maximize online visibility, and in fact, the movie is not available publicly: rather, the film serves as a catalyst for gathering people in the same space and creating opportunities for dialogue around energy transitions, territorial sovereignty, environmental justice, democracy, and development.

Yet cinema represents only one expression of a broader cultural repertoire. The anti-speculation committees and other grassroots actors regularly organize concerts featuring Sardinian artists, public gatherings, territorial walks, archaeological initiatives, and other forms of embodied engagement with place. These activities encourage participants to experience territory directly, to encounter different perspectives, and to reflect collectively on ongoing transformations. In many cases, the events blur distinctions between education, culture, activism, and social life.

What unites these diverse practices is their capacity to create temporary arenas of encounter. Rather than presenting fixed



narratives or ready-made solutions, they open spaces where experiences, memories, concerns, and aspirations can be shared and discussed. Listening becomes as important as speaking. Participants are invited not only to receive information but also to contribute their own interpretations and situated knowledge.

In this sense, cinema, concerts, immersive walks, and multisensory cultural initiatives function as forms of social infrastructure. They cultivate relationships, strengthen collective awareness, and create conditions for democratic conversation. Their significance lies not only in their cultural content, but in their ability to generate spaces where people can come together, listen to one another, and collectively imagine alternative territorial futures.

Knowledge, Education, and Counter-Expertise

Many of the actors encountered throughout the fieldwork engage in forms of resistance centred on the production and circulation of knowledge. This includes historical research, journalism, documentary filmmaking, legal documentation, territorial mapping, language revitalization, public education, technical counter-expertise, and the preservation of collective memory.

Figures such as Banne, Marcella Ghiani, Mariagrazia Demontis, Cristiano Sabino, Marilina Beka Colavu, and the founders of Ispervas demonstrate that knowledge production is itself a contested field. In many cases, resistance begins by documenting what would otherwise remain invisible: environmental contamination, territorial transformations, historical injustices, disappearing languages, or neglected forms of cultural heritage.

Particularly significant is the role of spaces such as the literary café Godot in Isili. Functioning simultaneously as bookshop, café, meeting place, archive, cultural centre, and political forum, it acts as a form of social infrastructure where conversations, solidarities, and collective learning can emerge. Similar functions are performed by cultural associations, language initiatives, informal networks, and community projects encountered throughout the fieldwork.

The Ispervas and NURTime initiatives provide another particularly striking example. Through what their founders describe

as “cognitive archaeology,” archaeological reconstruction becomes not simply a matter of historical curiosity but a process of rediscovering alternative relationships with territory, learning, materials, and collective memory. Here, knowledge production becomes inseparable from questions of identity, imagination, and future-making.

Legal Action and Institutional Engagement

Resistance also takes place through legal and institutional channels. Throughout the fieldwork, activists repeatedly referred to ongoing efforts to challenge environmental contamination, military pollution, speculative developments, and administrative decisions through courts, legal procedures, and regulatory frameworks.

Organizations such as the Confederazione Sindacale Sarda, Assotziu Consumadoris Sardinia, and the Coordinamento dei Comitati Anti-Speculazione exemplify this dimension of resistance. Their work reveals both the possibilities and limitations of institutional pathways. Legal action often requires immense amounts of time, expertise, documentation, and personal commitment, while outcomes remain uncertain.

Conversations repeatedly returned to the difficulties posed by bureaucratic complexity, asymmetries of power, unequal access to resources, and the challenge of translating lived experiences into legally admissible forms of evidence. In several cases, participants described how proving environmental and health-related harms can become an obstacle in itself, requiring communities to mobilize technical expertise and resources that are often unavailable. Nevertheless, these efforts continue because they represent one of the few available mechanisms through which communities can formally contest decisions affecting their territories.

Feminist Practices of Community-Making

The encounters with Avvolotadoras revealed another important form of resistance: the deliberate creation of spaces for dialogue, care, reflection, and collective storytelling. Rather than focusing exclusively on confrontation, many feminist initiatives seek to strengthen social fabrics, foster intergenerational exchange, and create opportunities for people to reinterpret their own experiences

collectively.

Particularly striking was the inventiveness characterizing many of their activities. Public discussions, workshops, storytelling events, cultural initiatives, and gatherings centred around personal objects and memories become opportunities for producing shared narratives and creating connections between generations. These practices do not attempt to prescribe a singular understanding of feminism. Instead, they create conditions in which people can encounter different perspectives, share experiences, and collectively reflect upon their own lives.

One example involved inviting participants to bring personal mementos and use them as starting points for conversations about memory, identity, gender, and everyday experience. Through these exchanges, women were often able to reinterpret their own life trajectories, recognize forms of agency previously taken for granted, and situate personal experiences within wider social histories. Particularly powerful was the idea of creating occasions through which people could rediscover themselves as protagonists of their own histories, recognizing forms of courage, resilience, and transformation that had previously remained unnamed.

The conversations also highlighted the challenges faced by contemporary feminist organizing. Differences in political positions, generations, priorities, and experiences often complicate alliance-building. Yet these difficulties were approached not as reasons for fragmentation, but as opportunities for dialogue. As one participant explained, feminism cannot simply be taught to someone. What can be created are spaces for conversation, listening, storytelling, and mutual recognition.

Resistance here takes the form of creating spaces where stories can be told, relationships strengthened, and collective meaning produced. Rather than offering ready-made answers, these initiatives cultivate the conditions through which people may begin asking new questions together.

Planning and Urbanism as Resistance

Perhaps the most unexpected form of resistance encountered during the fieldwork emerged through planning itself. The grassroots proposal known as Pratobello 24 represents an attempt to translate widespread



stewards of the otherwise

Throughout the fieldwork, I encountered a remarkably diverse constellation of individuals, associations, committees, artists, researchers, activists, educators, cultural practitioners, and community initiatives. While their objectives, methods, and political positions often differed, they shared a common commitment to caring for, defending, interpreting, and reimagining Sardinian territory and society.

Some engaged in direct political mobilization, legal advocacy, or environmental struggles. Others worked through culture, education, language revitalization, historical research, artistic production, community organizing, or the preservation of collective memory. Some sought to oppose specific projects or policies, while others focused on creating spaces of encounter, producing knowledge, strengthening communities, or cultivating alternative ways of inhabiting and understanding territory.

Together these actors form what might be described as an ecology of territorial

stewardship. They operate across different scales, sectors, and fields of action, yet all contribute in various ways to maintaining collective capacities for self-determination, cultural continuity, democratic participation, and social imagination. Rather than understanding them solely through the language of resistance, this chapter approaches them as "stewards of the otherwise": people and organizations engaged in keeping alive alternative possibilities, knowledges, relationships, and futures that might otherwise remain marginalized, forgotten, or excluded.

The following profiles provide a brief overview of the individuals and initiatives encountered throughout the research and the diverse forms of territorial care, cultural production, knowledge-making, and collective action through which they engage with contemporary Sardinia. Each 'card' attempts to depict briefly who they are, our encounter, and something they taught me or that stayed with me.

Lidia

A lifelong activist, artist, musician, and community organizer whose work bridges feminism, environmental justice, anti-militarism, and anti-colonial struggles. She brings extraordinary creativity, passion, and dedication to the causes she supports.

I first encountered Lidia during the gathering *Donne contro il colonialismo, la guerra e le armi*. Like many of the people met during those first days in Cagliari, she moved effortlessly between artistic expression, political commitment, and community engagement. She embodied them simultaneously.

Creativity without cynicism. Empathy and the capacity to really see people. The refusal to separate art from justice. The feeling that another world must also be sung.

Angelo

A militant activist, musician, entertainer, and community advocate. Deeply knowledgeable in history and geopolitics, he is actively involved in pursuing justice for the victims of industrial and military-related environmental contamination in Sardinia.

Angelo's interventions repeatedly connected personal stories, environmental injustices, and broader political processes. He has an ability to hold an entire square with only a microphone, speaking about difficult topics such as gender or colonial violence or with clarity, intimacy, and accessibility.

Anger without bitterness. Serious things spoken simply. The dignity of remembering those who have been forgotten.

anti-militarism
political engagement
intersectional violence
Sardinian struggles
environmental justice
"need for peace"
"humanitarian artists"
 ANGELO

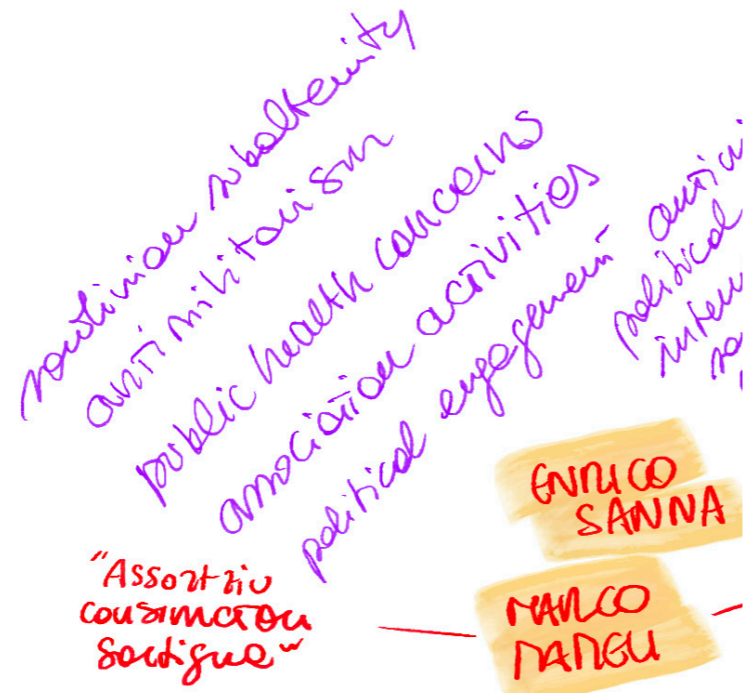
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Enrico

A trade unionist, advocate, and organizer committed to defending the rights of Sardinian workers and communities. His work includes legal counselling, collective action, direct support to workers, and the cultivation of spaces that encourage dialogue, participation, and solidarity.

Through him, discussions about labour, rights, and self-determination remained grounded in the everyday realities faced by workers and communities. His experience is not only about advocacy, but also providing practical support, building relationships, and creating spaces where people can come together to address shared concerns.

Looking outward without abandoning home. Solidarity across borders. The idea that struggles recognize each other.

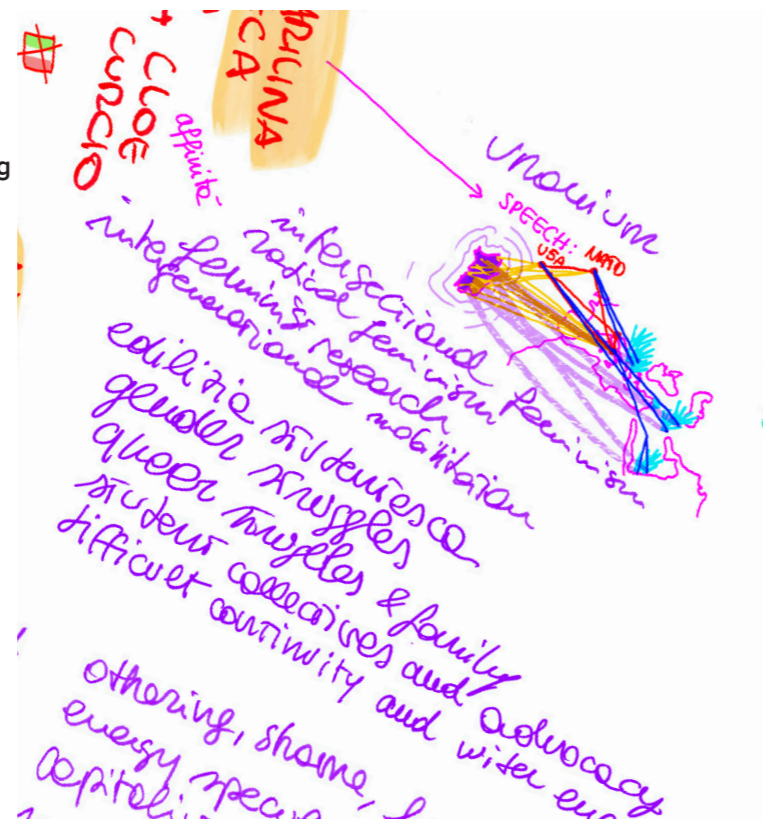


Marilina

A journalist, writer, investigator, and public intellectual. Her work has been instrumental in exposing injustices affecting the victims of depleted uranium contamination in Sardinia and abroad, earning her recognition for her commitment to truth and accountability.

Marilina participated in the panel alongside others, and our conversations touched on depleted uranium contamination and the diverse networks of injustice and violence that characterize contemporary capitalist modernity.

Persistence. The courage to keep asking questions. The responsibility of making hidden things visible.



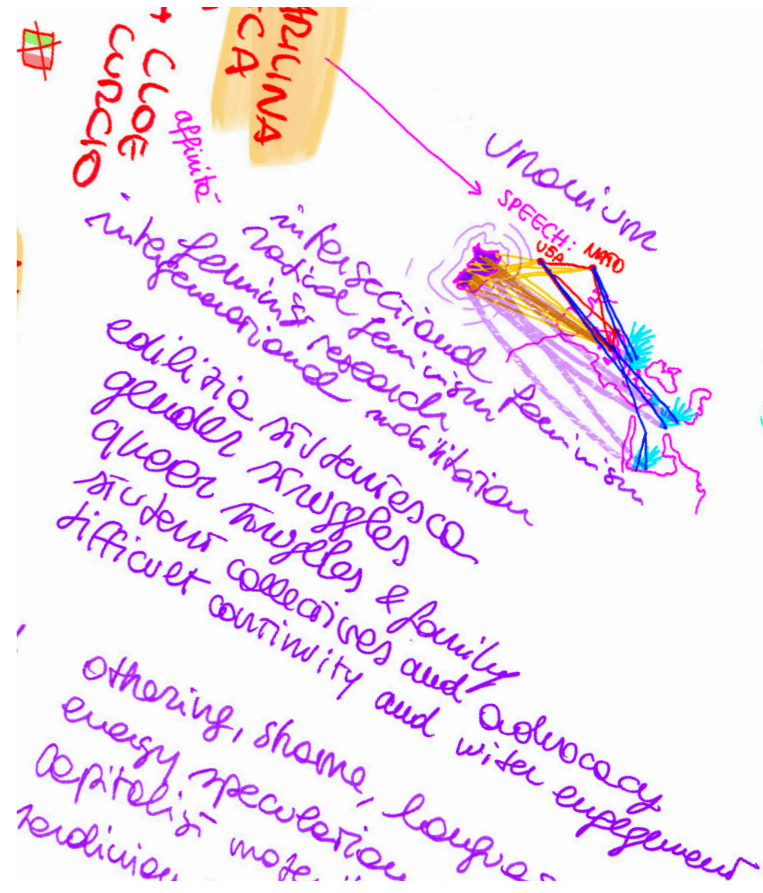
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Cloe

Archaeologist, doctoral researcher, and dedicated activist. Her work bridges heritage, research, civic engagement, and questions of identity, demonstrating how archaeology can contribute to contemporary discussions about culture, memory, and territorial futures.

I met Chloe during the days of feminist and anti-colonial mobilizations in Cagliari. Although our encounter was brief, I was struck by her ability to move across different worlds: academic research, cultural heritage, political engagement, and everyday activism. Her presence challenged the common separation between scholarship and public life, showing how research can remain connected to communities and contemporary struggles.

Knowledge that remains grounded. Research that does not withdraw from the world. The possibility of caring for the past while remaining committed to the future.

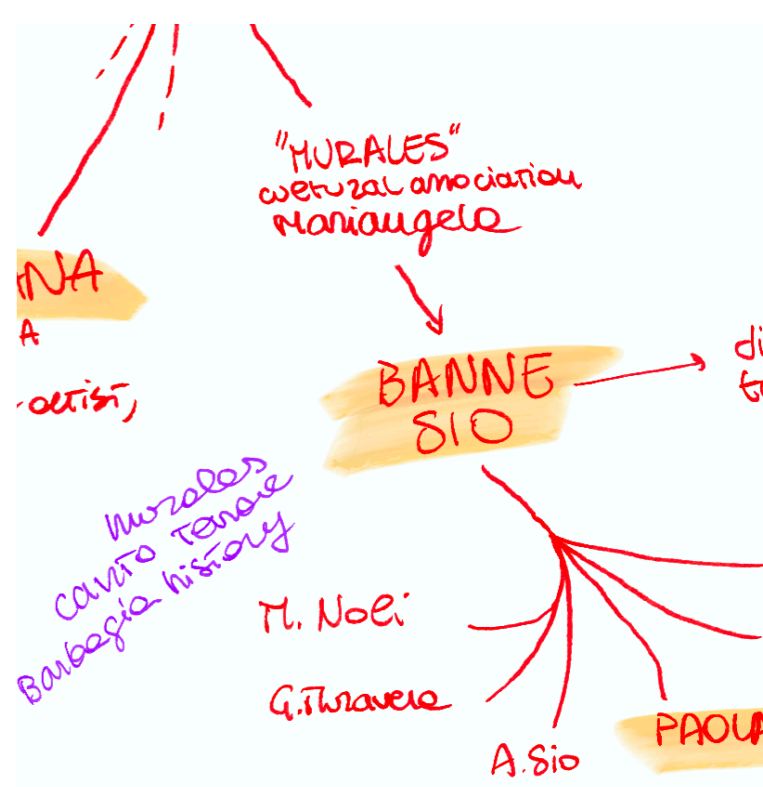


Banne

A researcher, educator, public speaker, and expert on Sardinian culture, history, oral traditions, and social life. His work contributes to the preservation and transmission of collective memory and cultural knowledge.

Our conversation ranged from social history to oral traditions, from canto a tenore to everyday life in the Barbagia. Banne also welcomed me into his home, where I had the opportunity to meet his family and experience firsthand the generosity and hospitality that accompanied our exchanges.

Stories that refuse to disappear. History as something alive. The feeling that memory is also a form of resistance.



Gigi

Lifelong activist, anti-militarist advocate, cultural organizer, and one of the most visible figures within the anti-speculation movement. Together with Marcella, he co-manages the literary café Godot in Isili, a space where culture, politics, and community life intersect.

What began as an interview quickly transformed into friendship. Through Luigi I was introduced to people, projects, and conversations that would shape much of the rest of the fieldwork. The literary café itself appeared less as a business than as a social infrastructure where ideas, solidarities, and relationships could emerge.

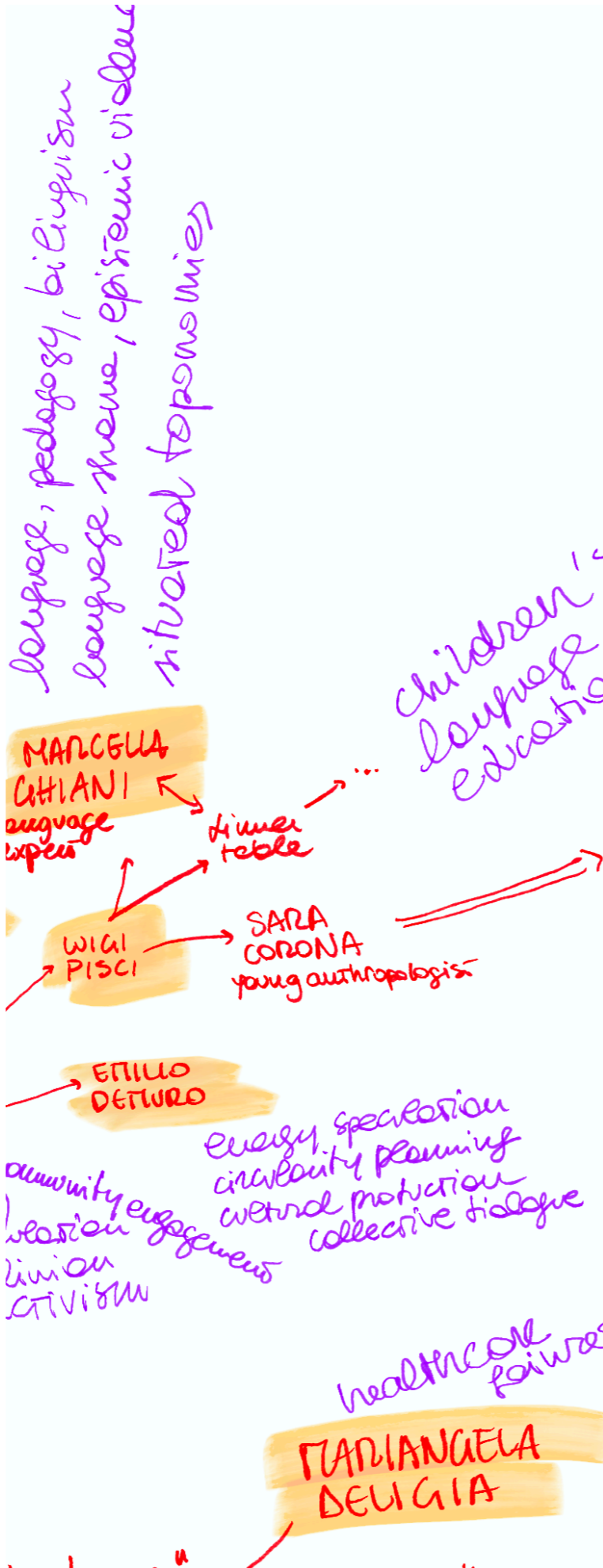
Generosity without calculation. Altruism, sacrifice, class consciousness, solidarity. Hospitality as a political practice. The rare feeling of immediately being among friends.

Marcella

Language promoter, educator, cultural worker, and community activator. Through her professional and civic engagement she contributes to the preservation, teaching, and everyday use of Sardinian language and culture.

Marcella's work revealed how much cultural preservation depends on everyday labour that often remains invisible. Through education, language promotion, and community engagement, she contributes to keeping cultural practices alive not through nostalgia, but through continued use and participation.

Patience. Quiet determination. Prefigurative care. Recognition of language, meaning, diversity, solidarity.



Emilio

A cultural producer, entrepreneur, and anti-speculation activist. He is the producer of the documentary Quo Vadis Sardinia? and brings extensive technical knowledge related to territorial protection and environmental governance.

Introduced through the Isili network, Emilio expanded several of the themes emerging throughout the fieldwork. Beyond his role in documentary production, he contributes technical expertise to the anti-speculation movement and frequently helps facilitate conversations, connections, and collective reflection around territorial issues.

Vision. Initiative. The willingness to create things instead of waiting for them to exist. Strategy, allyship, advocacy.

Simone e Claudio

Brothers, entrepreneurs, cultural innovators, and founders of a project (Isperdas / nurtime) combining heritage, tourism, experimentation, and what they describe as "cognitive archaeology." Through the reconstruction of a contemporary nuraghe and a wide range of educational activities, they explore alternative ways of learning from territory, history, materials, and collective memory.

Our conversations often moved far beyond archaeology. Discussions about learning, memory, place, experimentation, and ancestral knowledge repeatedly converged with many of the theoretical concerns that had originally motivated this thesis. Meeting them felt like discovering a practical counterpart to ideas I had previously encountered only in books.

Trusting intuition. Learning with hands. The possibility that ancient stones still have something to teach. Brotherhood and kinship.



Cristiano

Philosopher, historian, activist, and one of the most visible voices within contemporary Sardinian self-determination and anti-speculation movements. His work combines political analysis, historical reflection, public engagement, and a long-standing commitment to territorial justice. He introduced me to all the grassroots leaders!

Cristiano provided one of the clearest articulations of the broader political, historical, and structural dimensions surrounding contemporary territorial conflicts. He also spoke extensively about public engagement, grassroots organizing, territorial sovereignty, and the practical challenges of building collective political action.

Intellectual clarity. Historical depth. The importance of naming things for what they are.

and wider engagement
othering, shame, language
energy speculation, language
capitalist motility, current issues & know
Sardinian colonial struggles
language, pedagogy, bilingualism
language theme, epistemic violence
situated toponymies

Mariagrazia

Lifelong activist, humanitarian worker, community organizer, and one of the most dedicated figures within the anti-speculation movement. Through years of advocacy, research, documentation, and public engagement, she has become an important reference point for communities confronting speculative territorial transformations.

Our meeting in Ozieri opened a door into an entirely different scale of the renewable energy debate. Maps, legal documents, technical reports, and territorial analyses accumulated on the table while Mariagrazia patiently reconstructed years of mobilization, research, and resistance. What emerged was not only an environmental conflict, but a much broader struggle concerning democracy, territorial autonomy, knowledge production, and justice.

Dedication beyond measure. The extraordinary will to nurture collectivity. Trusting intuition, experience and ancestrality.



Mariangela

Feminist activist, community organizer, and community-builder deeply involved in questions of care, participation, rural futures, and social cohesion. Through her work she contributes to creating spaces where people can meet, learn, organize, and support one another.

I met Mariangela through Avvolotadoras, in a space that was simultaneously a headquarters, a home, and a place of gathering. Conversations moved effortlessly between feminism, depopulation, rural life, culture, and everyday challenges. The evening continued around a shared dinner, making visible how much political work is sustained by relationships rather than institutions alone.

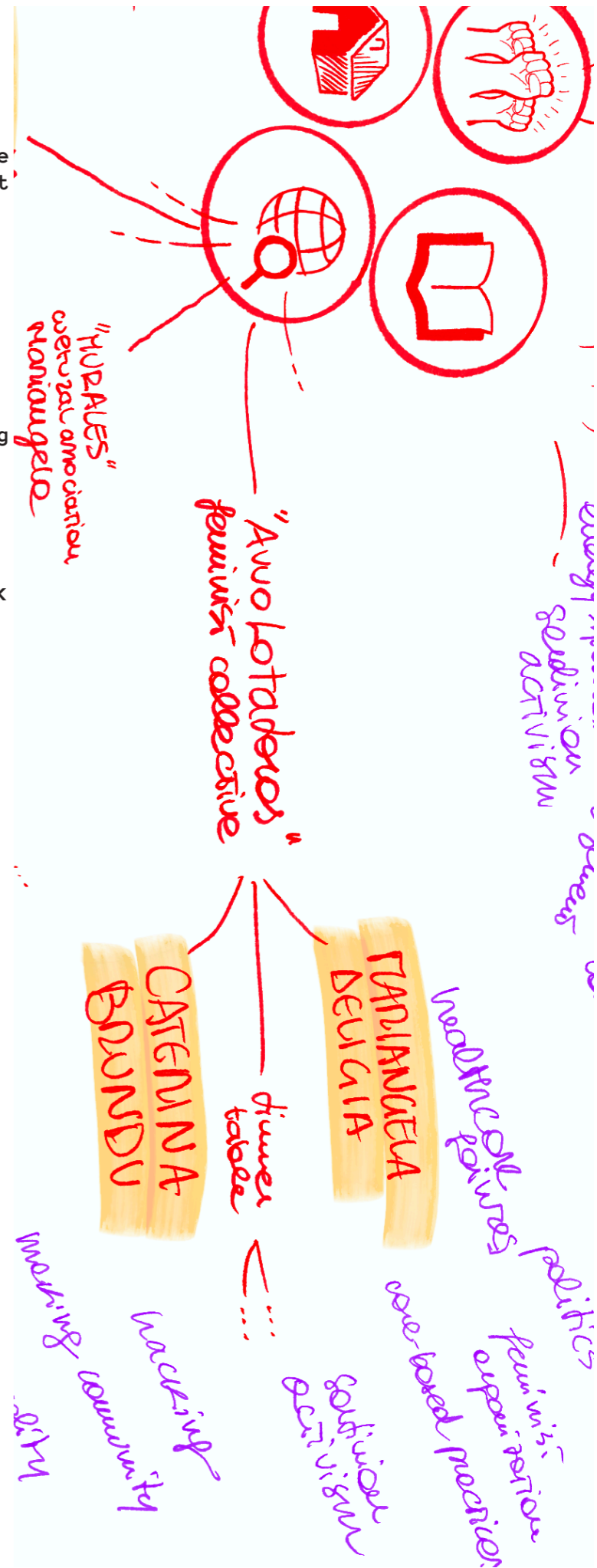
Energy. Warmth. The invisible work that keeps communities alive.

Caterina

Feminist activist, lifelong learner, organizer, and advocate engaged in questions of social justice, participation, and community empowerment. Her work combines political engagement with a strong emphasis on communication, listening, and collective learning.

What struck me most was Caterina's ability to create connection. Discussions never felt abstract or ideological. They always returned to people, relationships, emotions, and the practical realities of collective life. Her presence revealed how organizing often depends on capacities that rarely appear in official accounts of political action.

Empathy as strength. Listening as action. The intelligence of paying attention. Sneaking through the cracks. Theory without elitism.



Paola

Activist, community organizer, and care worker deeply involved in the social, cultural, and political life of Orgosolo. Her work combines territorial stewardship, collective memory, social engagement, and a commitment to alternative futures rooted in local realities.

Arriving in Orgosolo felt like entering one of the places that had long inhabited my imagination before I had ever visited it. Conversations with Paola moved between local history, activism, community life, sustainability, and everyday struggles. The encounter extended into dinner and family life, allowing the research to momentarily dissolve into the rhythms of ordinary hospitality.

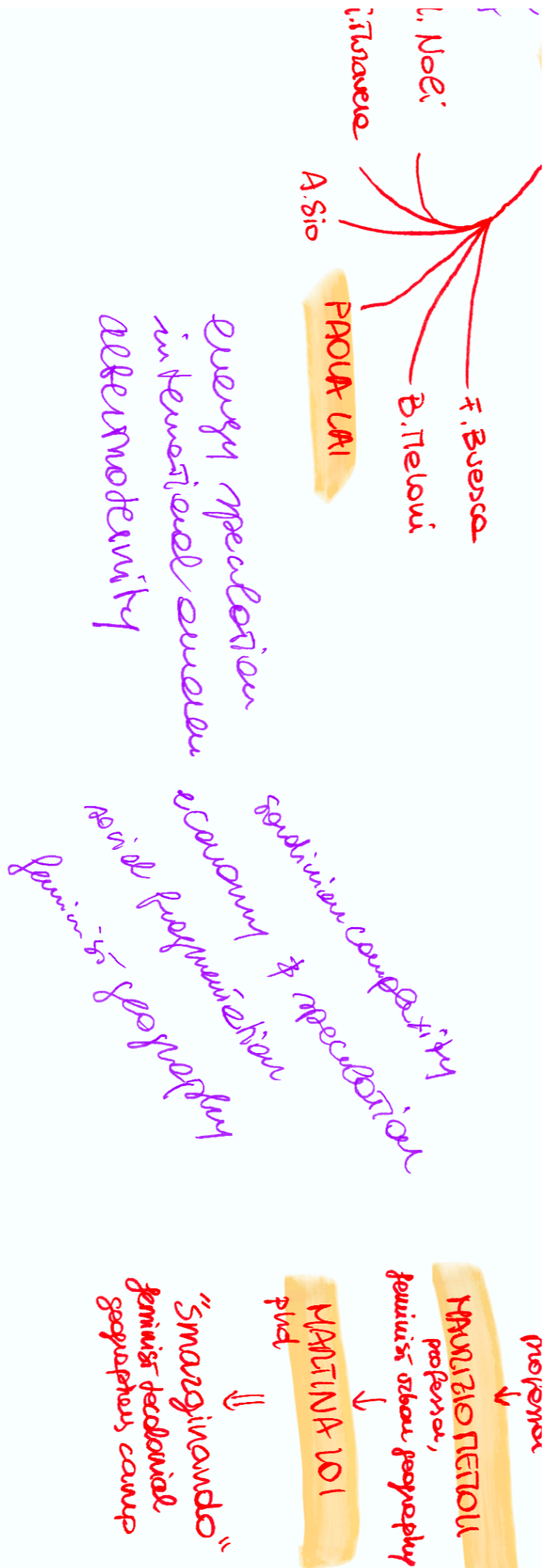
Openness. Kindness. The feeling that politics can still be deeply human.

Maurizio

Critical geographer, educator, and researcher whose work explores questions of space, justice, marginality, and social transformation. His scholarship combines theoretical rigor with a deep attentiveness to lived experience and territorial realities.

I met Maurizio through recommendations from students who had repeatedly spoken about him with admiration. Our conversation revolved around critical geography, pedagogy, academia, and the role of engaged scholarship. The encounter offered a glimpse into forms of teaching that attempt to create space for critical thought while remaining attentive to social realities.

Seriousness without arrogance. Critical thinking without detachment. Making room for difficult conversations.



Martina

Researcher, activist, and critical scholar working at the intersection of feminist geography, territorial politics, environmental conflict, and decolonial perspectives. Her work combines academic inquiry with long-standing commitments to social and territorial justice.

By the time we met, Martina's work had already begun appearing throughout the research. Our conversation revealed how scholarship and activism can work together when both are motivated by a commitment to justice. Her work demonstrated the possibility of producing knowledge without abandoning political responsibility.

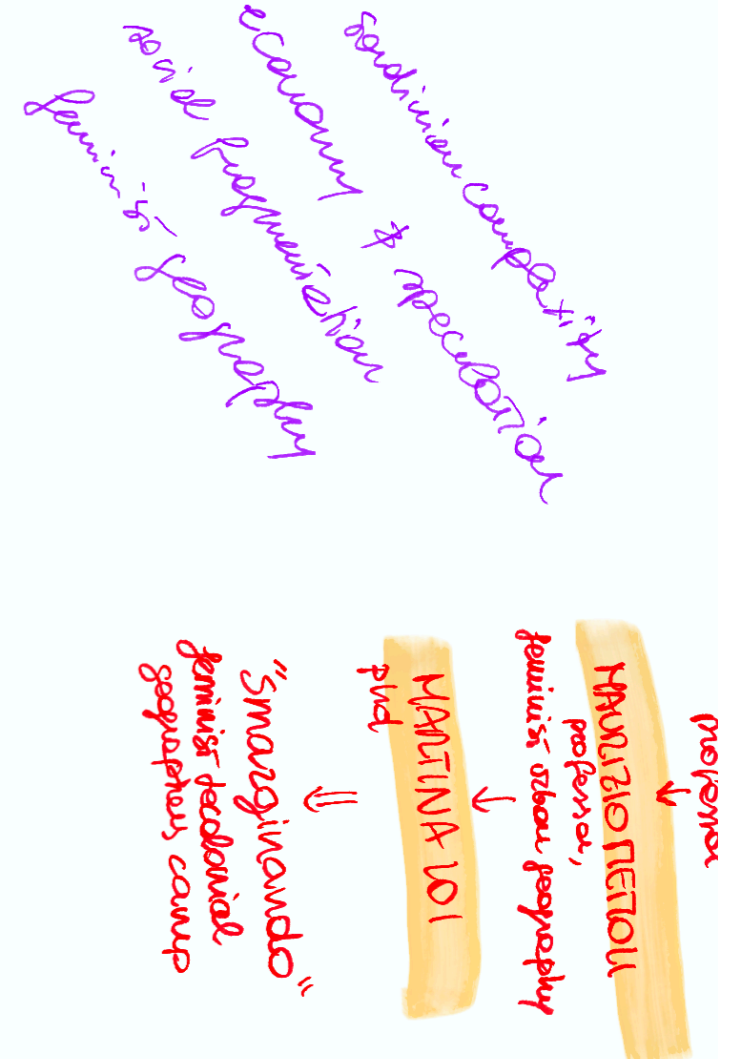
Research as responsibility. Critical engagement. Welcomness, kindness and comradery.

Alice

Researcher and critical scholar engaged with questions of territory, social justice, and spatial transformation. Her work contributes to broader conversations concerning power, inequality, and the possibilities of more just futures.

Although our encounter was shorter, it formed part of a broader constellation of researchers attempting to rethink territory through critical and constructive perspectives. Conversations repeatedly returned to questions of responsibility, positionality, and public engagement.

Curiosity. Precision. The value of remaining open to complexity.

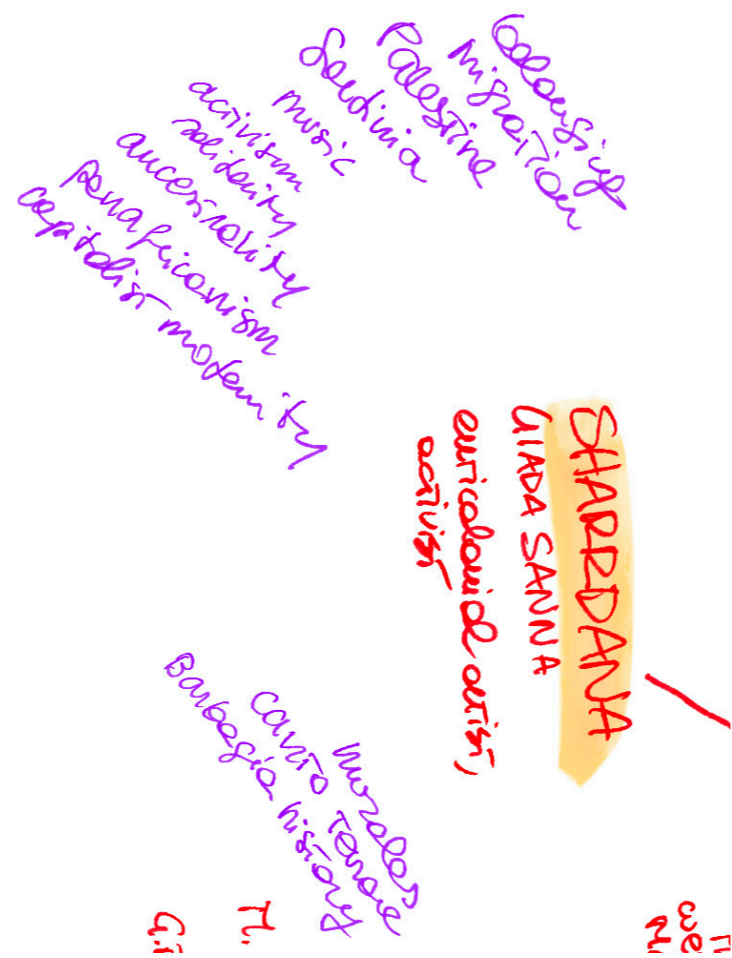


Shardana

Artist, musician, organizer, activist, and decolonial cultural worker. Through music, cultural production, advocacy, and political engagement, she combines artistic practice with a strong commitment to social justice, solidarity, and collective liberation.

Our encounter emerged unexpectedly through social media, a reminder that the field increasingly extends into digital spaces. By then, Sardinia had begun reshaping my algorithms as much as my itinerary. Conversations with Shardana moved effortlessly between music, identity, decolonial thought, activism, Palestine, cultural production, and contemporary Sardinian realities. She carried all of these dimensions simultaneously, without contradiction.

Empathy. Solidarity. Dedication. Charisma. Conviction. Using your voice. Innate talent. The feeling that culture can still move people to action.



ichnusa

The final steward of the otherwise. A territory shaped by memory, contradiction, resistance, extraction, care, and imagination. Through its landscapes, communities, histories, and struggles, the island continuously generates new ways of understanding relationships between people, place, and future.

The fieldwork was originally conceived as a sequence of interviews and observations. It gradually became something else. Long drives, chance encounters, invitations, meals, demonstrations, villages, roads, coastlines, mountains, industrial ruins, archaeological sites, cafés, kitchens, and conversations all became part of the research. The island repeatedly redirected the project, introducing people and questions that could not have been planned in advance.

A territory that refuses simplification. Layers upon layers of histories, wounds, solidarities, and possibilities. The realization that alternative futures are often already present, quietly practiced at its margins.

reflexivity 2

[during fieldwork]

how encounters shaped my position

what surprised me first in sardinia was the permanent palestine gathering every evening in the square. it revealed a political atmosphere that was not isolated or provincial, but deeply connected to global struggles.

i was surprised by the camaraderie, irony, rage, despair, and hope that emerged naturally with activists, protesters, and many other people from different walks of life: people met in bars, theology students, union workers, older women, teenagers, former mayors, and others. sardinia appeared much more globally conscious than i had expected, not only in cagliari but also elsewhere.

i was also surprised by the way people treated me as fully sardinian. many people immediately felt contact with me, resonated with what i was trying to say, and then complicated it further. they did not simply confirm my argument; they problematized it, expanded it, and sometimes entered into a kind of collective fabulation about possible futures.

a shared sense of urgency appeared across conversations, but it was often lived with a strange patience. people recommended books, knew some of the literature i was referencing, and carried a disillusionment that felt familiar to me: the feeling of living in the south of europe, the south of italy, or a whole region separated from everything else by a day of ship travel.

fieldwork also complicated my assumptions. i encountered racism, financial mindsets, complicities, and forms of common sense shaped by capitalist modernity, globalist assumptions, and everyday distinctions between "us" and "them." these moments showed me that sardinia could not be romanticized as simply oppressed, resistant, or innocent.

a major complication was the difficulty of coalition. across conversations, i noticed dissensus, disagreement, and sometimes negative narratives between people who were, in many ways, politically close. men-

tioning certain names or positions could generate strong reactions. this showed that even within engaged or critical circles, there are fractures, rivalries, mistrusts, and difficulties in building on disagreement.

i felt that i was listening well when i realized that the structures i had prepared would not work. i often spent three hours with someone and asked only three questions. the rest was active listening. people seemed ready, even eager, to tell me what they thought, and the conversations felt natural, as if i were speaking with neighbours while organizing something together.

i also felt i was listening well when i understood that people were not surprised that i would never be able to tell everything. they knew that many histories do not exist on paper, that many lived realities are layered and untold, and that this is a work of a lifetime. they did not dismiss the thesis for that reason. instead, they welcomed me into that work.

there were moments when i felt i was projecting my framework onto others. this was especially clear around archaeology, anthropology, and ancestral culture. i sometimes hoped too strongly that sardinian ancestral culture would immediately appear analogous to indigenous cultures elsewhere. yet this was also complicated by the fact that many people, especially in rural areas, expressed a deep sense of being of the land without necessarily using the word indigenous.

this became one of the most important renegotiations of distance. people were not necessarily adopting global indigenous language in an appropriative way; rather, they were saying things that resonated with anthropological and ontological readings without needing those terms. i could recognize something in their tones, words, and ways of speaking, partly because they echoed the speech of women in my own family.

i noticed spatial attitudes, bodily orientations, and ways of inhabiting that readings alone could not have shown me. i noticed tiredness and franticness in daily life, but

also the peace of meals, communal eating, hospitality, jokes, kindness, and physical intimacy. many encounters carried an extended-family feeling, almost a cousins-like atmosphere.

fieldwork taught me that there is an important distance between intellectual work and direct experience. this is not a hierarchy where one is valuable and the other is not. both are forms of knowing. but the distance between them is real, and it becomes an unavoidable field of negotiation if communication is to be reciprocal.

this made relation itself appear as a central method and barrier. being able to relate, resonate, think with, walk with, and make with others became one of the most important political and methodological questions. the difficulty is that people do not automatically enter into commonality with different ways of thinking. every word can either open or close that possibility.

fieldwork also made clear what i still had no right or ability to fully explain. gender became one of those areas. i realized it was important to me and probably part of my future work, but i could not fully explain it within this thesis. i also could not fully explain shame: both the shame attached to place and the desire to transcend the place one feels shackled to from birth.

this was especially visible with people my age. my advocacy for local worlds was appreciated, but sometimes also felt unrelatable to young people who wanted to see the world, leave, move, and escape. this may also have been shaped by the fact that many young people i met were from cagliari or studying there.

the emotions of fieldwork included closeness, scandal, disgust, anger, tenderness, confusion, and recognition. the field made everything more ambiguous. the colonial dialectic was not the only dialectic. the situation also appeared through ordinary disagreements about values, pasts, presents, futures, priorities, and ways of listening.

cristiano sabino's point was important here: sardinians

are not a united people, and no people in history is truly united except perhaps under extreme despair. diversity of political approaches is normal. the issue is not that sardinia should become one unified subject, but that across many differences there is still an emergent need for another way of inhabiting, engaging, and building futures together.

how my role shifted

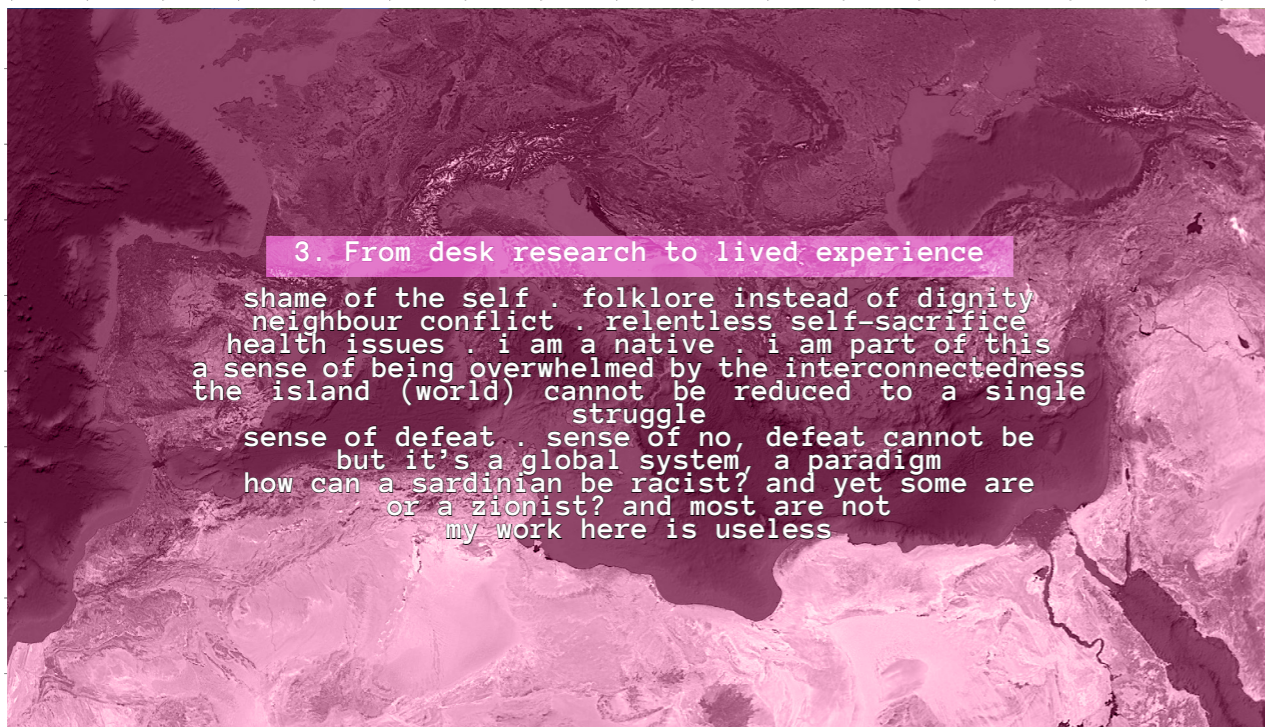
my role did shift from speaking about sardinia toward listening with sardinia, but not in a simple way. fieldwork did not only teach me to be silent. it also gave me encouragement to speak from sardinia, or at least from a position of engaged relation with it.

the turning point was realizing that many people did not treat legitimacy as a matter of pure origin. when a struggle is just, and when something needs to be heard, what matters is not only whether someone is from sardinia, but whether they are seriously engaged with the reality. this does not erase positional limits, but it changes the meaning of responsibility.

at the same time, there are things i cannot claim. i cannot claim the same geographic, class, or material position as people who are forced into seasonal work, who must travel long distances for healthcare, or who experience the island's infrastructural limits as daily constraints. my position is connected, but not identical.

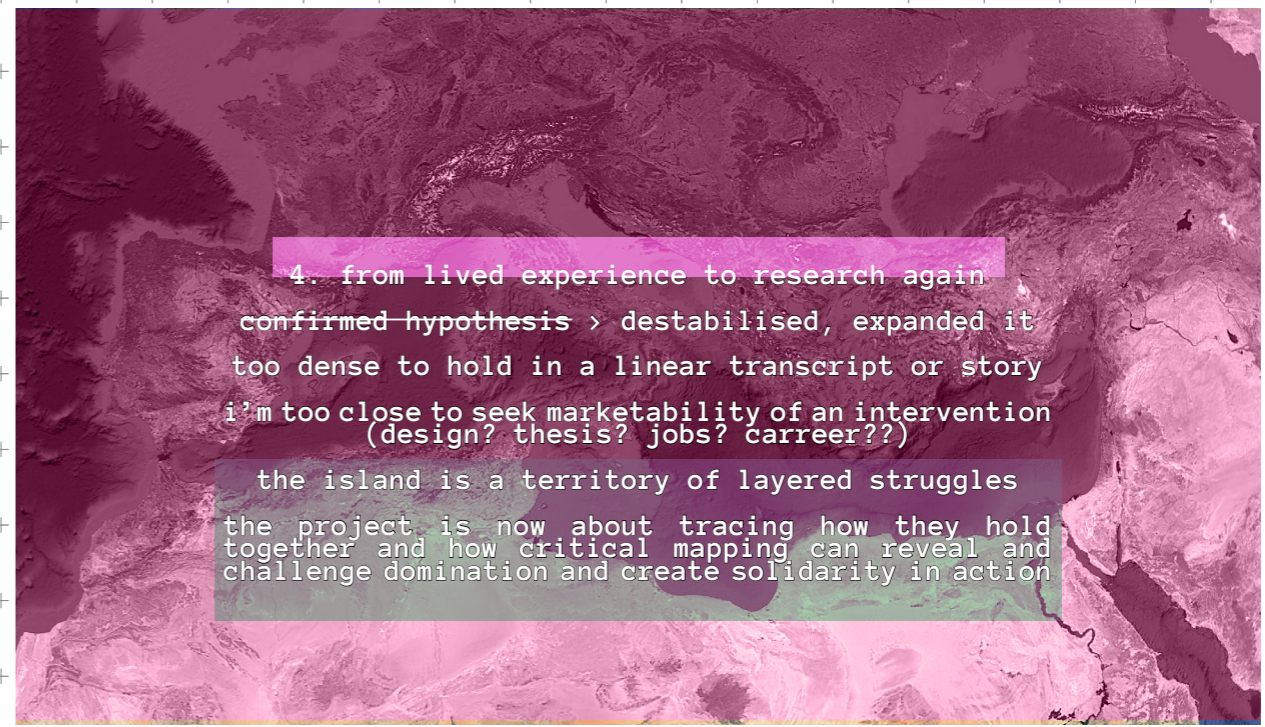
what became central was not the idea of speaking for everyone, but the need to build a spatial language that could hold different voices, disagreements, places, practices, and forms of knowledge without flattening them.

file.txt



3. From desk research to lived experience

shame of the self . folklore instead of dignity
neighbour conflict . relentless self-sacrifice
health issues . i am a native . i am part of this
a sense of being overwhelmed by the interconnectedness
the island (world) cannot be reduced to a single
struggle
sense of defeat . sense of no, defeat cannot be
but it's a global system, a paradigm
how can a sardinian be racist? and yet some are
of a zionist? and most are not
my work here is useless



4. from lived experience to research again

confirmed hypothesis > destabilised, expanded it
too dense to hold in a linear transcript or story
i'm too close to seek marketability of an intervention
(design? thesis? jobs? career??)

the island is a territory of layered struggles
the project is now about tracing how they hold
together and how critical mapping can reveal and
challenge domination and create solidarity in action

reflexivity 3

[after fieldwork]

**relationality creativity evidence agency design
justice collective arenas care humility continuity
interconnectedness**

after fieldwork, the central actors were not only formal stakeholders, but activist work of many kinds: collectives, researchers, artists, educators, public participation groups, grassroots organizers, and people creating spaces of curiosity and pedagogy, but the deeper point was not simply which actors became central. it was that any meaningful proposal would have to be relational. there was no serious way to speak on this topic, design around it, or continue working after the thesis without engaging with others.

this changed the meaning of creativity. creativity was no longer something personal, individual, or expressive alone. it became something necessarily relational: the effort of meeting people where they are, offering support, creating space for reflection, and accepting that some degree of sacrifice is part of the work.

fieldwork changed my idea of evidence. speaking with people about health concerns, environmental damage, and institutional struggle made clear that evidence is not simply something that exists and then gets recognized. power determines whether evidence is collected, transmitted, believed, or allowed to matter. many stories remain unheard because collecting evidence requires time, money, institutional access, legal capacity, emotional labour, and continuity.

evidence also needs agency. it has to stick together across time, people, institutions, and places. without collective effort, good chances, and structures that can carry it forward, evidence can remain fragmented, even when it is true.

fieldwork also changed my idea of design. looking at the social and spatial realities of sardinia, i saw not only bad planning, but often the absence of planning capacity. many administrations do not have the resources, continuity, or institutional strength to address these

issues. institutions alone are not enough. what matters is how life actually happens, how people organize, and how spaces of negotiation can be created.

design therefore became less about producing drawings immediately and more about creating conditions for collective spatial agency. it could involve institutions, private actors, activists, and communities, but the work has no obvious 'market'. if one sides with people who have little say in how their territory is managed, then part of the work initially falls into care, facilitation, research, volunteering, and relation-building.

spatial knowledge began to mean the slow construction of shared arenas: tables, maps, pictures, conversations, public moments, and spaces where people can make sense of what is happening together. the need was not only for representation, but for coordination, accessibility, continuity, and collective interpretation.

this brought me back to an older dream i had about architecture: working in service of people's well-being, facilitating belonging, placemaking, and coexistence with the more-than-human. critically engaged methods of spatial justice and urbanism do work, but they require time, continuity, and what olufemi calls affective technologies: the relational capacities that allow people to think, walk, speak, and make together.

care as method if anything because it was the most direct way to understand. before fieldwork, i questioned whether i could write a feminist thesis about care while not always showing care toward myself. in sardinia, care became more spontaneous, but also more demanding in the sense that in a way it helped bring up a certain flood of emotions for all the parties involved. it opened conversations, created transparency, allowed people to imagine together, and made sense-making possible. care is difficult to call a "method" because it is more like a condition that opens other possibilities. but it works like a method because the more you learn how to make space for it the more encounter and change become possible. is care the first prefigurative politics? ...

humility as method, but not in the sense of self-erasure. in everyday interactions, humility meant listening, not assuming, and accepting the limits of my understanding. but with any curious or engaged person, as well as activists, organizers and civic actors, humility also had to coexist with conviction. people recognized that my position (educated abroad, able to speak in certain academic and professional spaces) gave my words a certain weight. so the task was not to disappear, but to use that affordance carefully: modestly, provocatively when needed, and always factually. so my political language became more precise, but my anger is still boiling, and most times emotions still win over word choice.

but fieldwork also showed me how much research and continuity are still needed. to work responsibly with historical civic societies, grassroots organizers, and territorial struggles, one encounter is not enough. continuity is the only way this work can become real.

the real task of the thesis became to show interconnectedness and to set up the basis for something useful. it could not solve the issues it encountered right now, but it could begin to document them and identify what kinds of spatial, relational, and institutional conditions would be needed to continue.

file.txt

emotion <> analytical recognition

anger > institutional blind spots
anger > lack of accountability
anger > violence hidden in normal development

admiration > invisible political labour
admiration > territorial care
admiration > knowledge outside institutions

confusion > systemic entanglement
confusion > multiple overlapping regimes
confusion > coloniality beyond one sector

overwhelm > scale of the struggle
overwhelm > coloniality beyond one sector

disillusionment > limits of institutional planning
disillusionment > market logics vs collective life

clarity > planning knowledge as partial
clarity > lived experience is expertise

what persists, despite everything

territorial dignity
language recovery
community autonomy
solidarity economies
internationality
land stewardship
collective memory
agro-pastoral knowledge

music as resistance
murales
present struggles
feminist efforts of hacking
protests

[03]

EXPLORATIVE-ATLAS

_FRAMEWORKS

to see, to hear, to imagine

_TOOLKIT

how to exercise my spatial agency



The Explorative Atlas develops the propositional and operational section of the thesis. It organizes frameworks, methods, activities, processes, and platforms through which the critical and situated research can be translated into future spatial practice.

This section works with the concepts and analytical recognitions emerged from the previous ones, and recognizes the student's spatial agency as interrelated to the multiplicity of sardinian struggles, efforts and grassroot action. The result is a series of planning and design tools: ways to evoke conversations, make conflicts visible, support collective imagination, and develop possible territorial trajectories; a series of adaptable processes and frames that can be declined and evolved across different themes, actors, conflicts, temporalities and scales.

The Explorative Atlas becomes the thesis's proposal for continuing the work beyond the document itself. It translates the previous analysis into operational grammars, public formats, and collective infrastructures for anti-hegemonic spatial imagination in Sardinia.

01

(frameworks)

towards ontological design

[living bonds, emergent practices, relational spatialities]

towards radical imagination

[an ever-evolving framework for radical design]

space for dissensus

[postures for reading and engaging conflict and dissensus]

spatial justice and critical engagement

02

(toolkit)

the truck

liberating spaces

this is a series of frameworks which, to a certain degree, means absolutely nothing.

i think of them as sketchbook prompts, mental maps, doors to landscapes of thought, and ways to not forget.

this is the first output of this thesis, the result of research and fieldwork, not designs but proto-design, ways to prepare the mind for designing sincerely.

beyond personal use and continuous reinterpretation i imagine these could be used to spark conversation, sketching or mapping.

believe it or not, i ended up wishing i had made these before fieldwork.

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towards an ontological design

[Logu - Popoli - Saperi: A Sketchbook for Situated Resistance]

this is a framework or sketchbook that can be used to reflect on the bonds between beings, knowledges, and places

to visualise what breaks those bonds, and what nourishes them

a small triangle to spark conversations, which perhaps can become drawings, mappings, and imaginaries

do not ask me how it is useful, i just know it was my compass but i could also throw it away tomorrow

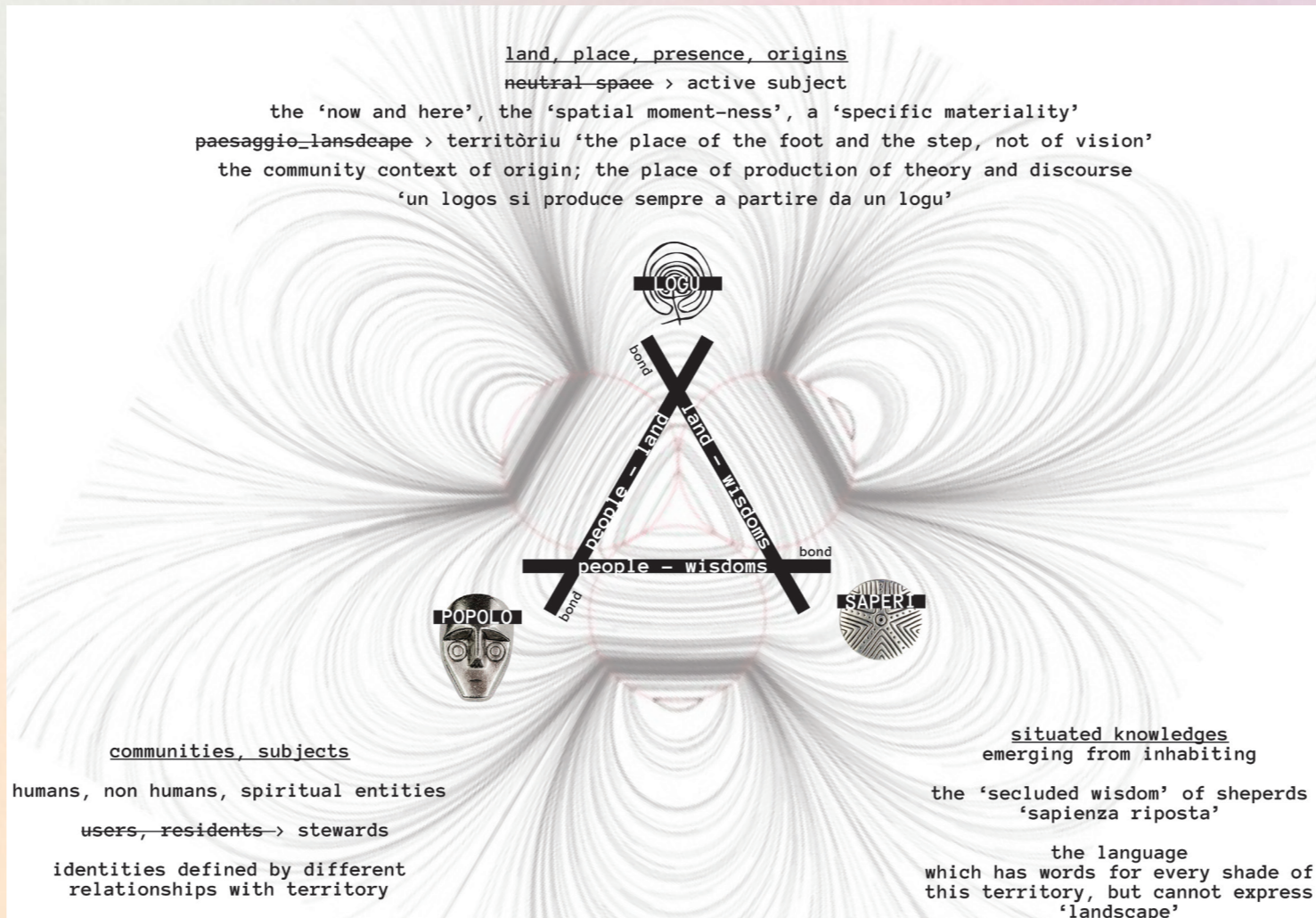
Following my bachelor's degree in architecture, I became increasingly interested in anthropology and in the role that spatial practices play in shaping the relationships between people, environments, knowledge, and ways of life. Questions that had accompanied me throughout my architectural education—questions concerning development, modernization, heritage, identity, participation, and justice—gradually led me toward literatures that challenged the assumption that there exists a single universal way of inhabiting, understanding, or transforming the world.

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During my studies at TU Delft, I encountered these debates more directly through courses, conversations, and the work of teachers and colleagues concerned with questions of justice, plurality, and situated knowledge. Among these encounters, Arturo Escobar's *Designs for the Pluriverse* represented a particularly important turning point. The book provided a language for concerns that had accompanied me for years: the feeling that many design practices continue to operate through assumptions of universality, neutrality, and progress, often overlooking the plurality of worlds, values, and relationships that coexist within and beyond modern institutions.

Initially, these reflections directed my attention toward Indigenous struggles and decolonial movements in other parts of the world. Yet over time, they also encouraged me to look more carefully at places closer to home. Living between different regions of Italy, moving through international environments, and reflecting on the histories of my own family led me to reconsider Italy not as a culturally homogeneous national space, but as a palimpsest of overlapping worlds, histories, and territorial experiences. It became increasingly difficult to ignore the uneven relations that continue to shape the country's internal geographies, particularly in the relationship between northern and southern regions, between centres and peripheries, and between dominant narratives and local forms of knowledge.

Entering the fieldwork phase of this thesis, I expected to encounter a significant degree of distance between my own perspective and those of the people I would meet. Instead, I found recurring themes, intuitions, and concerns that resonated strongly with many of the questions raised by pluriversal thought. This did not erase difference or opacity. Rather, it reinforced the idea that meaningful collaboration does not require complete understanding. It requires the willingness to listen, to remain open to transformation, and to step out of the comfortable.

The framework presented in the following pages should therefore not be understood as a definitive theory of Sardinia, nor as a complete account of its histories of resistance.

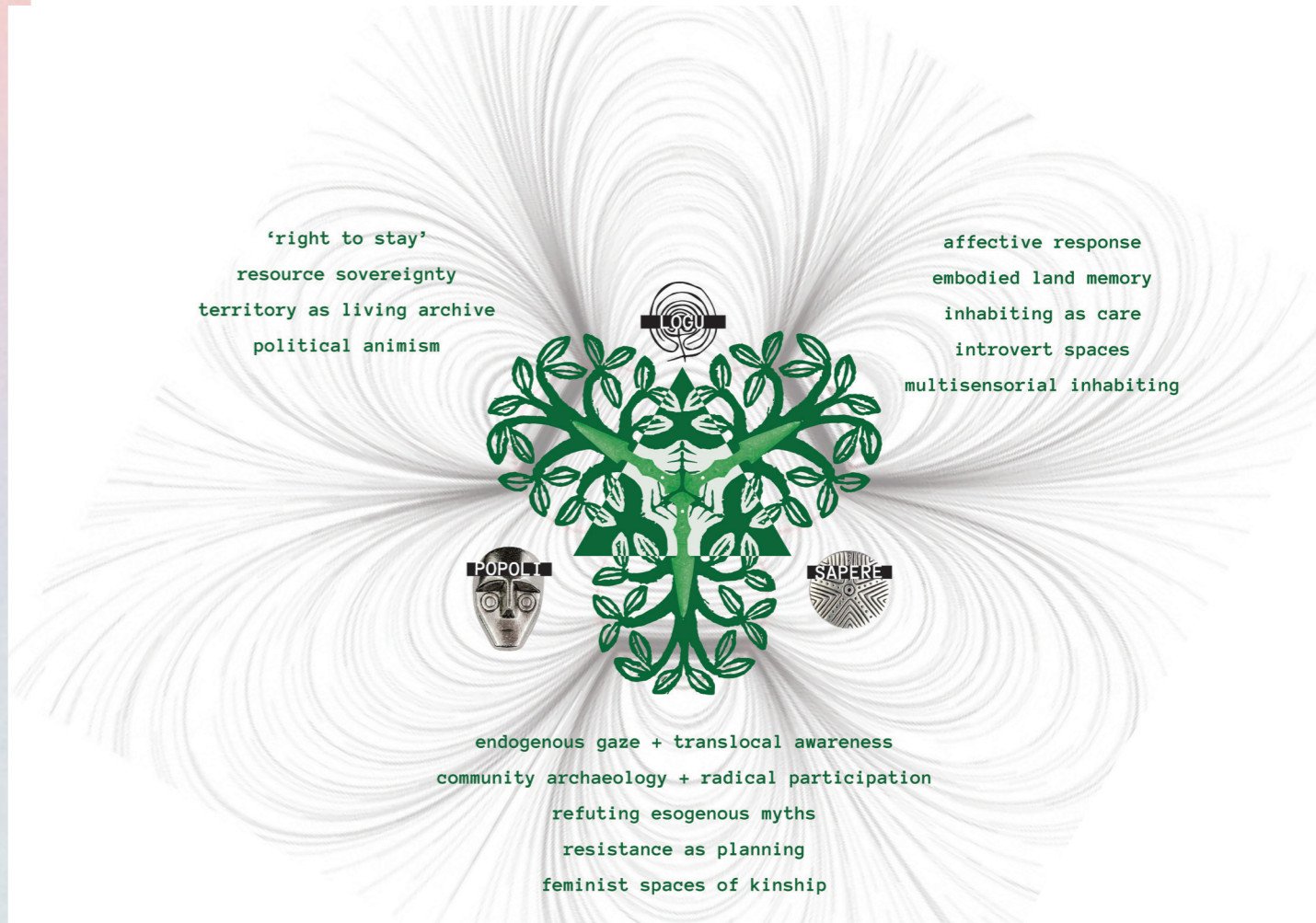
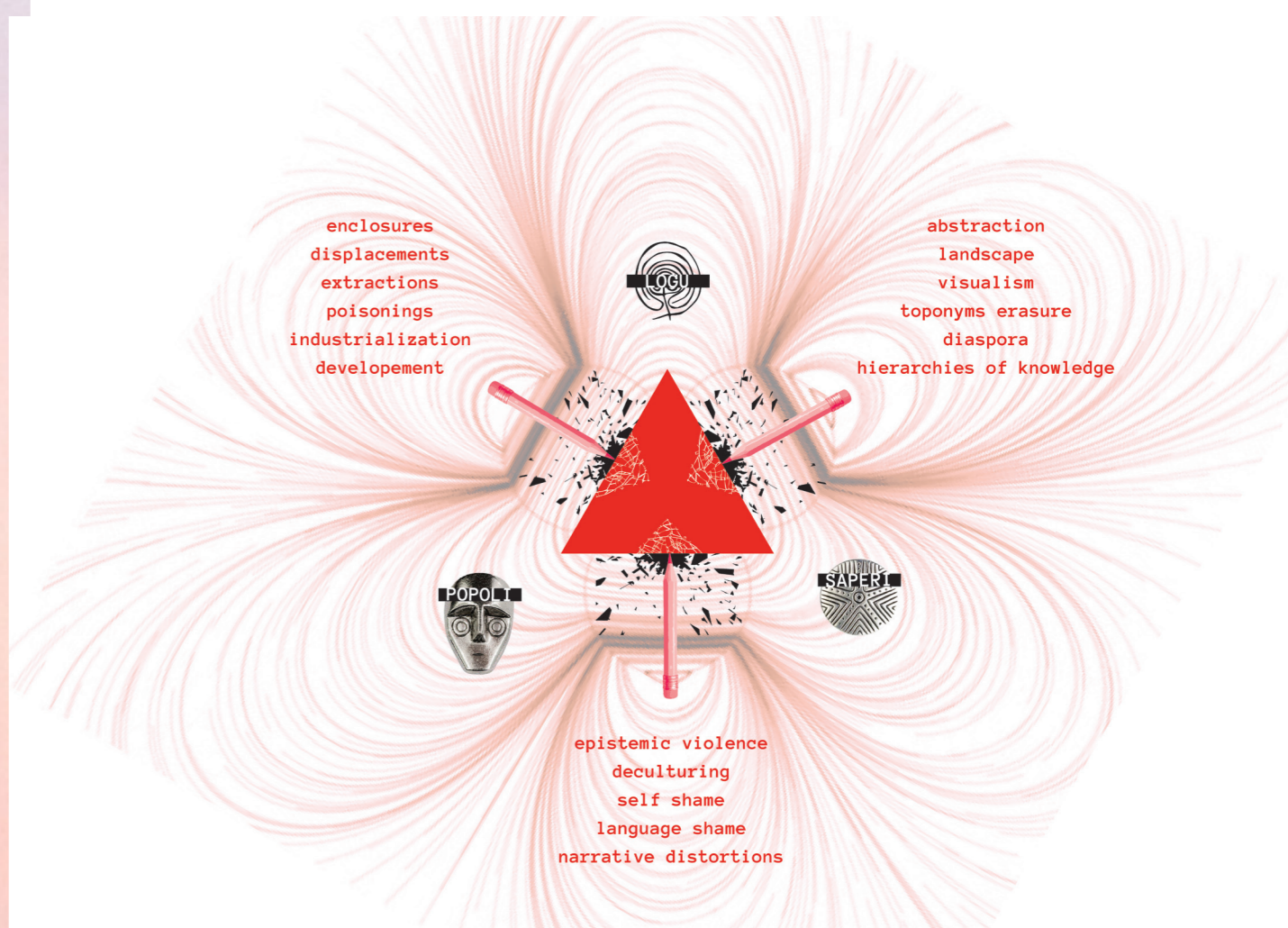


It is better understood as a sketchbook: an attempt to organize and connect observations, concepts, stories, practices, and struggles encountered throughout this research. It offers a provisional map through which different forms of territorial knowledge, resistance, self-organization, and collective imagination can be read in relation to one another.

Understanding how these relationships are maintained, disrupted, defended, transformed, and reimagined provides one possible way of approaching Sardinian territorial struggles, not as isolated events, but as part of a broader history of situated resistance and world-making.

Labo. Nemquiam vident omniscitatem esentinelit quae as everro quae id eumet illit, un-tur? Pid moluptae dolument der miliet banner.

Labo. Nemquiam vident omnisc-



space for dissensus

[a set of postures for reading and engaging territorial conflict and dissensus]

This is an 'anti-framework': its purpose is of course not to provide a unique method for resolving spatial conflicts, but an expandable set of complementary perspectives through which conflict can be interpreted and navigated.

As always, this anti-framework emerges from a combination of personal, pedagogical, and research experiences. It has been shaped by conversations with friends, colleagues, activists, community members, and teachers who approached conflict not simply as a problem to be solved, but as a condition through which different experiences, values, and futures become visible. It also reflects lessons drawn from fieldwork, collective projects, and encounters with situations in which disagreement, uncertainty, and asymmetries of power could not be reduced to technical questions alone.

It is further developed through an engagement with spatial studies and political philosophy. Each lens draws on the work of different groups and networks of authors, namely: Boano and Frediani's discussion of participation, capability, dissensus, and coalition-building (2012), which in turn engages with the work of Mouffe, Rancière, and so on; on Mollett and Faria's spatial reading of intersectionality and territorial power, building upon broader feminist and intersectional traditions (2018); on Awan, Schneider, and Till's work on spatial agency (2011); on the Italian geopolitical school, exemplified in Dario Fabbri's and the Limes school's understanding of strategy and tactics, and on a different reading of the same duality from another standpoint: de Certeau's everyday strategies and tactics of resistance (2024, 2019, 1984).

The starting point is the recognition that territorial conflicts rarely concern a single issue or spatial concern or solution. They often involve competing understandings of place, unequal relations of power, different experiences of the same territorial processes, and contrasting visions of what should be protected, transformed, or made possible. Conflicts therefore reveal not only disagreement, but also the social, political, and spatial relationships through which territories are continuously produced and contested.

The framework is organized around four 'postures' or ways of seeing, that allow for different 'backgrounds' or perspectives to inform our views:

- * the agonistic posture allows to consider the value of dissensus, and focus on what is being contested and why it matters.
- * the critical posture considers how power, difference, and positionality shape the experience of conflict.
- * the designerly posture opens towards our spatial agency, and explores the various roles or attitudes designers can assume in relation to conflict.
- * the strategic posture considers the relationship between structural conditions and situated forms of action, paying attention both to long-term constraints and to the possibilities for intervention that emerge within and around them.

Taken together, these postures are not intended as a sequence of steps nor as a checklist to be completed. They represent complementary ways of approaching conflict that can be mobilized individually or in combination depending on the situation at hand. Different conflicts may require different emphases, and the same conflict may benefit from being revisited through multiple perspectives over time. Their purpose is not to simplify contested situations, but to reveal different dimensions of reality that might otherwise remain unnoticed.

[agonistic]

The agonistic posture begins from the recognition that conflict is an inherent and irreducible dimension of collective life. Rather than assuming that social and territorial disputes can ultimately be resolved through consensus, this perspective emphasizes that plural societies are composed of actors with different interests, values, identities, and political projects that cannot always be reconciled. Territorial conflicts therefore reveal the political character of space, making visible the tensions, exclusions, and competing claims that shape places and their futures. Rather than viewing disagreement as a problem to be eliminated, the agonistic perspective understands dissensus as a legitimate and productive condition through which political



questions become visible and contestable.

This perspective also questions the assumption that consensus necessarily produces better forms of participation. As discussed by Boano and Frediani, several critiques of participation have shown how consensus-oriented processes can conceal inequalities, restrict debate, and reproduce existing relations of power. Participation may become a mechanism through which certain interests appear universal while alternative perspectives are marginalized or excluded. From this perspective, the objective is not to eliminate disagreement but to create the conditions through which different positions can be expressed, recognized, and confronted. Dissensus therefore becomes a way of resisting the closure of political debate and maintaining space for alternative understandings of a situation to emerge.

The value of dissensus lies in its capacity to make differences visible, generate political agency, and create the conditions for contingent forms of coalition among actors who continue to disagree. Through conflict, participants cease to be passive recipients of decisions and become active political subjects capable of articulating claims, defending positions, and challenging dominant narratives. Dissensus also reveals actors, knowledges, identities, and futures that might otherwise remain invisible. At the same time, disagreement does not necessarily prevent collective action. Actors may continue to hold different interpretations of a situation while recognizing shared concerns and acting together around common objectives. Coalition therefore emerges not from unanimity, but from the temporary convergence of actors who remain different while pursuing overlapping goals.

[critical]

The critical posture begins from the recognition that conflicts do not occur between equal actors. Territorial disputes unfold through unequal relations of power that shape access to resources, visibility, institutions, expertise, representation, and decision-making processes. As a result, actors possess different capacities to influence outcomes, define legitimate forms of knowledge, and make their concerns heard. Understanding conflict therefore requires moving beyond the immediate object of disagreement and examining the broader social, political, economic, and historical conditions through which different positions are produced.

These relations of power cannot be

reduced to a single category or axis of analysis. As emphasized by Mollett and Faria, experiences of conflict emerge through the interaction of multiple and overlapping processes, including class, gender, race, citizenship, age, ability, and colonial histories. Different forms of privilege and marginalization intersect and interact, shaping how conflicts are perceived, experienced, and negotiated. The same territorial process may therefore produce profoundly different consequences for different actors, even when they inhabit the same place or are formally involved in the same decision-making process.

Power is not only exercised through institutions and formal political structures. It is also embedded within behaviours, narratives, places, infrastructures, property relations, environmental conditions, administrative systems, representations, and everyday spatial practices. Territorial conflicts therefore unfold through a complex geography of relationships in which actors occupy different and often changing positions. These positions may shift depending on the issue, scale, or territorial process under consideration: an actor who appears marginalized in one context may possess significant influence in another.

Understanding conflict consequently requires attention not only to what is happening, but also to how it is experienced across different social and spatial positions and scales. Processes that appear beneficial at one scale may generate burdens at another, revealing how power operates through territory and everyday life.

[designerly]

The designerly posture shifts attention from the interpretation of conflict to the possibilities of action within it. Design is understood here not primarily as the production of objects, plans, or spatial interventions, but as a situated practice operating within ongoing political, territorial, and social processes. Conflicts are not treated as external conditions to which design responds from a neutral position. Rather, design itself becomes one of the many practices through which contested realities are interpreted, represented, negotiated, and sometimes transformed. The central question therefore becomes not what should be designed, but how design chooses to position itself in relation to a particular situation.

From this perspective, design may assume different roles depending on the nature of the conflict and the opportunities available

for intervention. Design as research contributes by making visible realities that remain hidden, fragmented, or difficult to communicate. Through mapping, documentation, storytelling, visualization, and other forms of inquiry, it helps reveal relationships, histories, exclusions, and opportunities that might otherwise remain outside public attention. Design as critique questions dominant assumptions and demonstrates alternative possibilities, expanding the range of futures that can be imagined, discussed, and contested. Rather than providing definitive answers, both positions seek to broaden understanding and open space for reflection.

At other moments, design may become more directly involved in processes of collective action. Design as resistance contributes skills, representations, organizational capacities, and spatial imaginaries to broader struggles for social and territorial transformation. It supports the ability of communities and groups to articulate demands, strengthen claims, and develop alternatives. At the same time, design as refusal recognizes that intervention is not always desirable. In some situations, participation may reinforce unjust processes or lend legitimacy to predetermined outcomes. Choosing not to design, not to build, or not to participate can therefore become an ethical and political position in its own right. Taken together, these positions understand design less as a profession delivering solutions and more as a situated practice capable of moving between research, critique, resistance, and refusal according to the needs and conditions of a particular conflict.

[strategic]

The strategic posture situates conflict within broader historical, territorial, institutional, economic, and geopolitical conditions. Territorial conflicts do not emerge on a blank slate, nor can they always be understood solely through the intentions of the actors involved. They unfold within inherited landscapes, administrative structures, legal frameworks, demographic dynamics, infrastructures, and distributions of power that shape what different actors can realistically pursue. Some tensions therefore persist over long periods of time because they are rooted in structural conditions that cannot be easily altered through local agreements, technical solutions, or individual decisions alone. Understanding conflict requires attention not only to immediate events but also to the larger

Posture
values
voices
knowledges



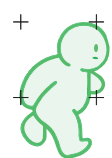
fundamental recognitions <
ways of seeing<
questions <
what/who/which... < .
how... < .

Boano, C., & Frediani, A. A. (2012). *Processes for just products: The capability space of participatory design*. In I. Oosterlaken & J. van den Hoven (Eds.), *The capability approach, technology and design* (pp. 203-222). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-3879-9_12

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agonistic posture
agonistic democracy
political theory
participation studies
dissensus
coalition-building

fundamental recognitions

Conflict is an ordinary condition of collective life rather than an anomaly.

Different actors attribute different meanings, values, uses, and futures to the same territory.

Consensus may conceal disagreement and reproduce existing inequalities.

Dissensus has value because it makes differences visible and creates political agency.

Coalitions do not require unanimity.

Conflicts emerge within broader historical, territorial, institutional, and geopolitical conditions.

Strategy concerns both aspirations and necessities.

Territorial and anthropological conditions generate recurring opportunities and constraints.

Tactics are adaptive responses to changing circumstances.

Agency emerges through the interaction of long-term horizons and situated actions.

Meaningful change requires operating across multiple positions and scales.

fundamental recognitions



strategic posture
Geopolitics
territorial studies
political geography
de Certeau
everyday resistance

What / Which / Who?

- What is actually being contested?
- Which values, meanings, futures, or ways of life are in tension?
- Who benefits from the current arrangement?
- Who perceives a threat, loss, or opportunity?
- Which disagreements are explicit and which remain hidden?
- What common concerns exist despite disagreement?
- Which actors might be able to cooperate without sharing the same vision?

How?

- How can disagreement be made visible without forcing consensus?
- How can conflicting positions be represented fairly?
- How can political differences remain productive rather than destructive?
- How can participation avoid suppressing conflict?
- How can temporary coalitions emerge among actors who continue to disagree?
- How can conflict become a source of learning rather than polarization?

- What structural conditions shape this conflict?
- Which territorial, historical, ecological, or cultural factors constrain action?
- Which long-term objectives are different actors pursuing?
- What recurring challenges emerge from the territory itself?
- Which institutions, actors, and processes shape the field of possibilities?
- Where does agency currently reside?
- Which scales are most relevant to the conflict?

What / Which / Who?

- How can long-term aspirations be translated into concrete actions?
- How can actors navigate constraints without becoming trapped by them?
- How can opportunities be identified within existing structures?
- How can tactical interventions contribute to broader strategic objectives?
- How can different forms of agency reinforce one another?
- How can action connect everyday practices, institutional opportunities, and territorial visions?
- How can change be pursued simultaneously across multiple scales and temporal horizons?

How?

What / Which / Who?

- Who is most affected by the conflict?
- Who is least visible within current discussions?
- Which actors possess decision-making power?
- Which actors possess knowledge but little influence?
- What inequalities shape participation?
- Which histories, identities, or experiences influence how actors understand the conflict?
- At what scales are costs and benefits distributed?

How?

- How can marginalized experiences become visible?
- How can unequal capacities for participation be addressed?
- How can knowledge from different positions be recognized?
- How can power relations be mapped and discussed?
- How can the consequences of decisions be evaluated across scales?
- How can the analysis avoid treating communities as homogeneous entities?

fundamental recognitions

- Conflicts do not occur between equal actors.
- Power operates through institutions, territories, infrastructures, narratives, and everyday practices.
- Different actors experience the same conflict differently.
- Positionalities are multiple, relational, and changing.
- Benefits and burdens are unevenly distributed across scales.

Design is never neutral.

Design is a position within conflict rather than an external response to it.

Different situations call for different designerly roles.

Not every conflict requires a spatial intervention.

Refusal can be as meaningful as action.

fundamental recognitions

- What role should design assume in this situation?
- Which forms of knowledge remain invisible?
- Which realities require representation?
- What assumptions structure the current debate?
- Which alternative futures are absent from discussion?
- Who is already acting?
- Who might benefit from designerly support?

What / Which / Who?

- How can design reveal hidden relationships and histories?
- How can design support critical reflection?
- How can representation strengthen collective agency?
- How can design contribute without dominating?
- How can spatial imaginaries support transformation?
- How can designers avoid legitimizing harmful processes?
- How can one determine when refusal is more appropriate than intervention?

How?

spatial agency
participatory design
ontological design
critical design
designerly posture



More than any specific theory or methodology, spatial justice is perhaps the idea that most strongly unites many of the friends, colleagues, teachers, researchers, and practitioners who have made Delft feel like home to me over the past years. Of course, this is a remarkably diverse community, composed of people with different backgrounds, political positions, disciplinary interests, and visions of the future. Yet beneath these differences lies a shared commitment to pursuing justice through design, planning, and spatial practice, and to approaching the world through situated, critical, and reflective forms of inquiry.

This is not the place to reconstruct the intellectual genealogy of spatial justice, nor to provide a comprehensive overview of the debates surrounding it. Readers interested in these discussions can find far richer accounts within the work developed by the Centre for the Just City and the wider body of scholarship from which the concept emerges. What matters here is that spatial justice has become not only an analytical framework, but also a living conversation: a space of debate through which scholars, practitioners, activists, and communities continuously question how justice can be understood, pursued, and translated into spatial practice.

Throughout this research, many of the concerns expressed during fieldwork resonated strongly with the language of spatial justice. Questions of access, exclusion, participation, territorial inequality, recognition, care, and collective self-determination repeatedly emerged across conversations and encounters. At the same time, the framework itself appeared largely absent from local discussions, despite the fact that several actors showed considerable interest in its potential as a tool for advocacy, reflection,

[A] *Omnimaximpero te et aut restem dolorum harum, sit et eos dolupta volorem quatis dit rem vellacia quunditae re, con pa nonseni mincium alibus.*

[B] *Omnimaximpero te et aut restem dolorum sit et eos dolupta volorem quatis dit rem vellacia quunditae re, con pa nonseni mincium alibus.*

[C] *Omnimaximpero te et aut dolorum harum,*

and proposal-making. This observation motivated the decision to include the Spatial Justice Conceptual Model within this thesis, not only as an analytical device, but also as a design output capable of supporting future conversations and collective action.



This work emerged from a combination of pedagogical, relational, and methodological influences. It is shaped first by everyday forms of learning encountered through generous professors, shared studio cultures, friendships, associations, conversations, and collective moments with people who have treated spatial practice as a political and caring activity. It is also informed by fieldwork and by the awareness that an ideal radical spatial imagination studio does not simply exist ready-made: the space for it has to be occupied, constructed, and maintained. Methodologically, the framework has been developed through dialogue with Radical Spatial Futures, participatory utopian sketching, counter-mapping, and radical imagination field-guide practices, each of which offers a different way of connecting imagination, conflict, situated knowledge, and collective action (Matheney et al., 2024; Radical Spatial Futures, n.d.; Törnroth et al., 2022; van Beek et al., 2025).

The protocol is organized around five recurring moments: Seeding, Emergence, Encounter, Grounding, and Nurturing. These are not fixed phases in a linear method, but conditions that can be activated in different orders and at different scales. A process may begin from an existing conflict, from an activist network, from a public event, from a research question, from a site visit, or from an institutional opening. What matters is not that the moments follow one another mechanically, but that the process remains attentive to what is missing, what is already active, and what kind of relation needs to be strengthened next. In this sense, the protocol is a diagnostic and compositional framework: it helps read a situation and decide what kind of spatial-political work is needed.

Seeding refers to the preparation of the conditions that allow the process to exist. This includes ethical positioning, initial research, invitations, permissions, resources, bureaucratic steps, funding, and the clarification of the researcher's or organizer's role. Seeding is not only administrative. It is also the moment in which the process asks what kind of space is being opened, who is being invited, who may be excluded, and what responsibilities are created by beginning the work. In this

sense, the role of the researcher is closer to scaffolding than directive facilitation: the aim is not to guide participants toward a predetermined outcome, but to build temporary conditions in which collective interpretation can emerge (van Beek et al., 2025).

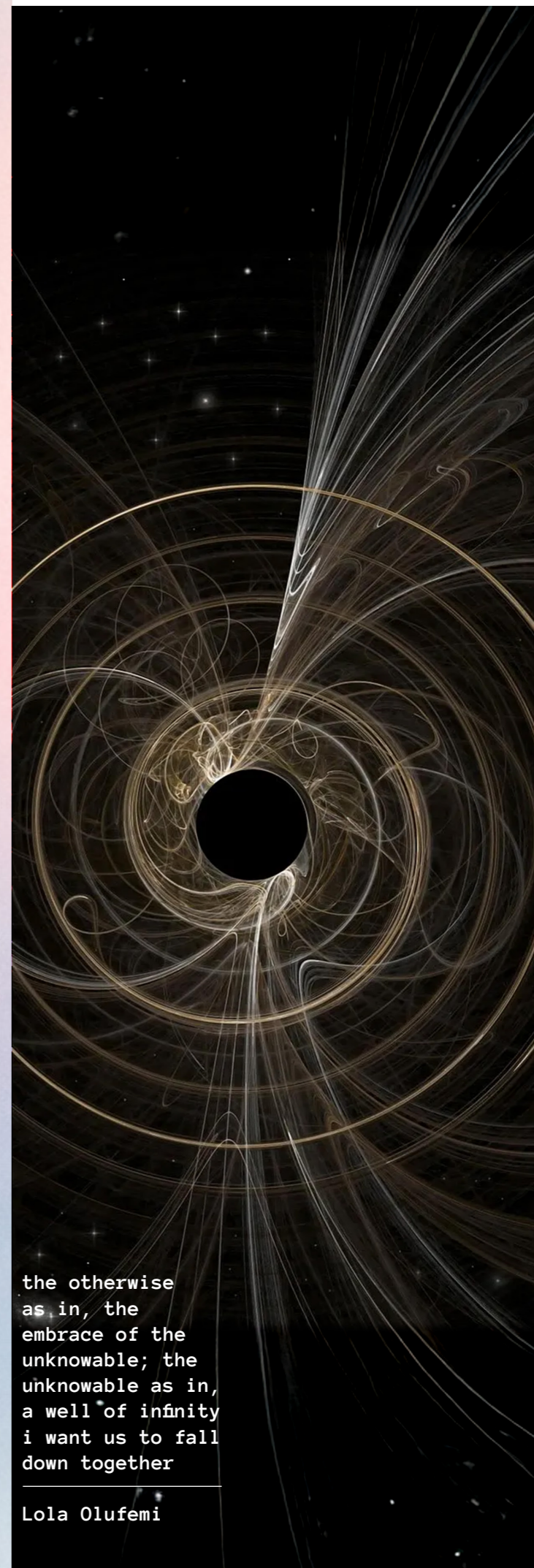
Emergence refers to the moment in which existing realities are brought into view. It begins from situated knowledge: memories, conflicts, fears, attachments, practices, daily routes, ecological relations, and forms of experience that may not yet be publicly recognized. Emergence can begin from conflict, but it does not have to remain trapped in conflict. Participatory utopian sketching is useful here because it shows the importance of values-based imagination: asking not only what is wrong with a place, but what qualities, relations, and futures people want to make possible (Törnroth et al., 2022). At the same time, counter-mapping shows that future visions are often shaped by historical spatial trauma, displacement, and previous experiences of imposed transformation; for this reason, emergence must make room for both desired futures and inherited wounds (Matheney et al., 2024).

In practice, emergence may begin from any situation in which knowledge is unevenly distributed, fragmented, or difficult to access. This can involve interviews, territorial listening, participant observation, archival research, fieldwork, media analysis, oral histories, legal documentation, technical reports, activist archives, counter-mapping exercises, or the systematic collection of local experiences. The objective is not only to gather information, but to progressively structure it into forms that become legible and discussable. Maps, timelines, actor networks, territorial biographies, visual documentation, thematic archives, and public repositories all become tools for making visible both injustice and possibility. Emergence therefore produces the first spatial and political questions of the process. Through the identification of recurring tensions, values, absences, and aspirations, it begins to reveal what requires further collective attention and what forms of planning, design, or action may eventually become necessary.

Encounter refers to the construction of situations in which different actors, knowledges, and positions can meet. These may include residents, activists, experts, practitioners, associations, public administrations, and other affected groups. Encounter is not simply participation or consultation. It is the careful composition of a space where differences can become legible, tensions can be addressed, and possible alliances can begin to form. The aim is not necessarily consensus. Radical spatial imagination may require disagreement, friction, and plural imaginaries to remain visible, especially when different groups experience the same territory through different histories, risks, and expectations (Matheney et al., 2024).

Encounter becomes operational through the deliberate construction of situations in which different actors can engage with one another around shared materials and questions. Depending on the context, this may take the form of assemblies, exhibitions, documentary screenings, territorial walks, workshops, collective mapping sessions, public discussions, travelling installations, or informal gatherings. These events are not conceived as isolated participatory exercises but as opportunities to compare perspectives, surface disagreements, and identify common concerns. Particular attention is devoted to actors who rarely occupy the same space, including residents, activists, researchers, planners, technical experts, institutions, and political actors. Through repeated encounters, individual experiences begin to accumulate into collective understandings, while emerging questions become increasingly precise and actionable.

Grounding refers to the translation of imagination into situated commitments. It is the moment in which conversations become accountable to place, limits, institutions, actors, and possible forms of action. Grounding does not necessarily mean producing a final project. It may mean identifying a conflict that needs mediation, a group that needs to be involved, a proposal that can be tested, a public arena that can be opened, or a responsibility that must be carried forward. The idea of the perceptual bridge is useful here: imagination becomes stronger when it is anchored to material traces such



the otherwise
as in, the
embrace of the
unknowable; the
unknowable as in,
a well of infinity
i want us to fall
down together

Lola Olufemi

Seeding

how to expand reach & limits?
what has been learned?
achieved, unresolved?
unresolved?

Emergence

what is emerging?
what is invisible?
what matters?
who speaks?

Encounter

who needs to meet?
who won't meet?
what brings us together / away?

Nurturing

how do we sustain relationships & capacity & continuity?
what needs focus, design, sounding?

Grounding

Seeding

Marcella + her job → LANGUAGE, EPISTEMIC JUSTICE + TOPONYMS, collective map, interested focus group!

Emergence

analyse existing info
define more collective mapping
→ identify semantic spatialities (material agents)

Encounter

complex mapping
imaginative exercises
artistic involvement
schools
artists
musicians

Nurturing

send copies to everyone
togetherness + celebration
newsletter
begin participatory videos

Grounding

collective representation principles
imaginaries

Seeding

identify future actions
conditions unresolved tensions

Emergence

propagandous
OBSERVATION
BODY TELLING
STATUE PLACEMENT
ETROBODIMENT → walk, pictures, videos, memories, trainings, poems

Encounter

VOICES
"speed of non-telling"
embodied empathy e

Nurturing

food case
in formality
togetherness
memories

Grounding

RECOGNITIONAL JUSTICE
fishbowl
"THE ENERGIES"
value clusters
recurrent conflicts

Seeding

possibilities changes of tactics
in part 4 next cycle
public outreach

Emergence

what is emerging here that we have yet to grasp or visibility
what remains insufficiently understood, heard?
whose absent voices experiences, knowledge, which conflicts tensions require further attention

Encounter

which perspectives remain disconnected?
which dialogues are missing?
what values + common concerns emerge despite difference?

Nurturing

what relations need to be maintained or cultivated?
how can we include remain accountable to all subjects?

Grounding

what alternative futures begin provided the right focus?

Seeding

planning 2nd round
reassess, outreach, tension focus

Emergence

NURTITIE → experiential / cognitive ideology
CONTEXT SANGUARY → accessibility conflicts

Encounter

ancestral spatiality + RSI
stakeholders
regular ppe
spatial designers
public administrators

Nurturing

stories
dinner
sharing moments
whatsapp group
collect comments, jobs, and doubts
what left unhealed

Grounding

RSI → RSD
designers
stakeholders
clusters
residents

Seeding

planning 2nd round
reassess, outreach, tension focus

Emergence

NURTITIE → experiential / cognitive ideology
CONTEXT SANGUARY → accessibility conflicts

Encounter

ancestral spatiality + RSI
stakeholders
regular ppe
spatial designers
public administrators

Nurturing

stories
dinner
sharing moments
whatsapp group
collect comments, jobs, and doubts
what left unhealed

Grounding

RSI → RSD
designers
stakeholders
clusters
residents

as maps, photographs, archives, walks, drawings, or spatial objects that connect possible futures to the physical reality of the present (Törnroth et al., 2022).

Grounding involves translating emerging concerns into situated forms of understanding and proposition. Materials collected during previous phases are analysed, spatialised, and connected through maps, atlases, diagrams, viewsheds, conflict analyses, scenario-building exercises, and other forms of territorial representation. These outputs help identify recurring variables, critical uncertainties, spatial tensions, territorial values, and potential areas of intervention. Grounding therefore becomes the moment in which planning and design begin to operate more explicitly. Rather than seeking immediate solutions, the process focuses on identifying what needs to be designed, negotiated, protected, repaired, connected, or transformed. Scenario-building, speculative proposals, governance strategies, and spatial explorations are used to test possible responses and make alternative futures discussable.

Nurturing refers to the maintenance of trust, care, memory, and continuity. It includes follow-up, feedback, documentation, shared meals, informal communication, celebration, and the creation of spaces where people can remain connected beyond the single workshop or event. This moment is necessary because radical imagination can be emotionally demanding, especially when it deals with ecological loss, territorial conflict, or long histories of marginalization. The idea of sanctuary or holding space is useful here: not every moment of the process must produce solutions. Some moments exist to hold uncertainty, fatigue, grief, disagreement, and care, so that the collective capacity to imagine and act does not collapse into extraction or burnout (van Beek et al., 2025).

Nurturing requires the continuous maintenance of both relationships and knowledge infrastructures. This may involve follow-up meetings, shared meals, communication channels, feedback sessions, educational activities, collective celebrations, and ongoing forms of mutual support. Equally important is the maintenance of archives, maps, photographs, videos, interviews, publications, and other materials generated throughout the process. Rather than being treated as final outputs, these materials become active resources capable of

supporting future conversations, informing new participants, and strengthening collective memory. Nurturing therefore ensures that knowledge, trust, and collaboration do not disappear once a specific event or project concludes.

Them again, seeding focuses on translating accumulated insights into new forms of action, alliance, and influence. This may include the development of planning principles, policy recommendations, governance proposals, educational programmes, advocacy campaigns, public communication strategies, exhibitions, publications, or new participatory initiatives. Seeding also involves expanding networks and building coalitions capable of carrying ideas beyond their original context. Particular attention is devoted to identifying how emerging knowledges can travel across scales, reaching communities, institutions, researchers, municipalities, unions, associations, and wider publics. At the same time, each cycle of seeding generates new questions, new relationships, and new opportunities that become the starting point for subsequent rounds of emergence, encounter, grounding, and nurturing.

The protocol is interscalar. Within one afternoon, emergence may happen through stories or spatial observations, encounter through facilitated discussion, grounding through the definition of next steps, and nurturing through shared closure and follow-up. Across several months, the same moments may become a programme of site visits, assemblies, working groups, institutional meetings, public documentation, and revised ethical commitments. Across a longer platform, they may form a repeating cycle of research, communication, alliance-building, feedback, archiving, and territorial care. The same logic can therefore operate inside a single workshop, a local conflict, a civic campaign, or a broader territorial process.

The protocol also treats spatial imaginaries as performative rather than only representational. Mapping, storytelling, sketching, gathering, and documenting are not neutral ways of recording opinions; they can change what becomes visible, who is recognized as a knowledge-holder, and which futures become discussable. Counter-mapping is especially important in this regard, because it shows how spatial imaginaries are enacted through practices of resistance, memory, occupation, assembly, and alliance-building (Matheney et al., 2024).

The protocol therefore does not only ask participants to imagine alternative futures; it recognizes that the process of imagining together can already begin to reorganize relations around a place.

First, imagination must be both critical and affirmative: it should expose conflicts and historical wounds, but also create space for and sometimes start from values, attachments, and desired futures. Drawing on participatory utopian sketching, the protocol therefore does not only ask what is damaged or contested in a place, but also what qualities of collective life participants wish to make possible (Törnroth et al., 2022).

Second, imagination must be materially anchored through perceptual bridges: maps, photographs, archives, stories, walks, and objects that connect speculative thought to the lived and physical conditions of place. Drawing on Törnroth et al.'s use of transparent overlays on site photographs, the protocol treats material supports as devices that allow speculative futures to remain connected to the spatial reality from which they emerge (Törnroth et al., 2022).

Third, the role of the organizer should be understood as scaffolding rather than control: drawing on The What If Garden, the protocol understands facilitation as scaffolding, a temporary structure that holds open the conditions for collective rehearsal, care, and emergence without predetermining the form or outcome of what participants imagine together (van Beek et al., 2025).

Fourth, the process must include sanctuary and care, because collective imagination requires emotional and relational maintenance. Drawing again on The What If Garden, sanctuary names the need for moments in which the pressure to produce solutions is suspended, allowing grief, uncertainty, fatigue, and trust to be held as part of the work rather than treated as obstacles to it (van Beek et al., 2025).

Finally, the protocol must remain open to multiple entry points, because different situations require different beginnings: some need emergence, some need encounter, some need grounding, and some need nurturing before any further political or spatial work can continue. Drawing on counter-mapping work on radical spatial imaginaries, this openness is necessary because spatial imagination may begin from historical trauma, active

resistance, community memory, or already existing insurgent practices, rather than from a neutral or predefined starting point (Matheney et al., 2024).

02
(toolkit)

the truck
[my spatial agency]

affective technologies toolbox
[liberating spaces for radical design]

towards the otherwise
[programs for territorial imagination]

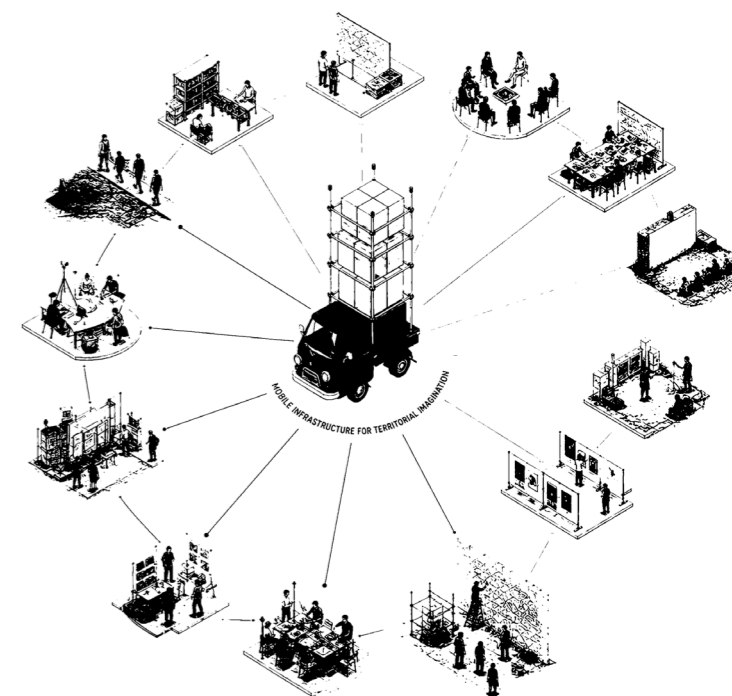
this is an initial exploration of my spatial agency within the complexity emerged from the site.

the truck is in its most ideal form a mobile infrastructure for territorial imagination. more essentially, it's just a spatial manifestation of my 'being there', and 'interacting with -', the true prerequisite for my current understanding of rsi.

what follows is a series of activities, methods, excercises for conducting meaningful conversations about the spaces around us

do not think of these as final, prescriptive or fixed. think of this quote:

'here are strategies for resistance, they're not total, they're not right, they are there. pick them up and put them down depending on the horror of the day.' -L0



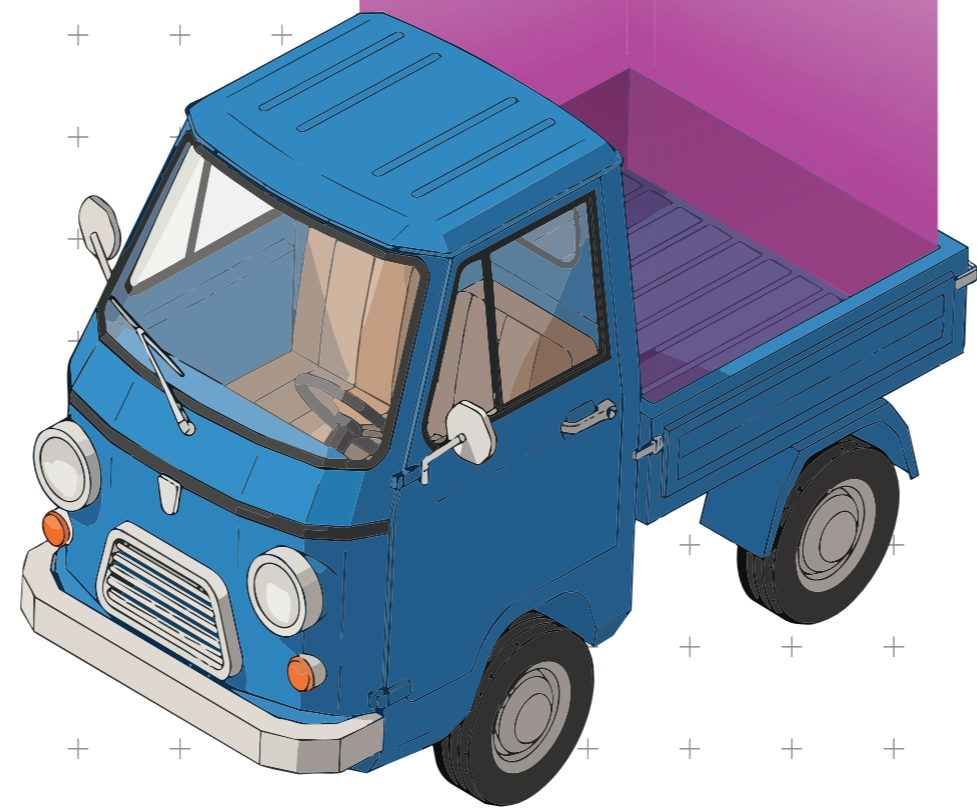
the truck is a hybrid conceptual space that encompasses my ability to move around, with objects and ways of relation that vary according to the season or project or event.

at the same time it represents my limit: the capacity to be in a sociospatial reality.

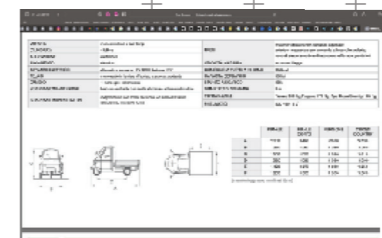
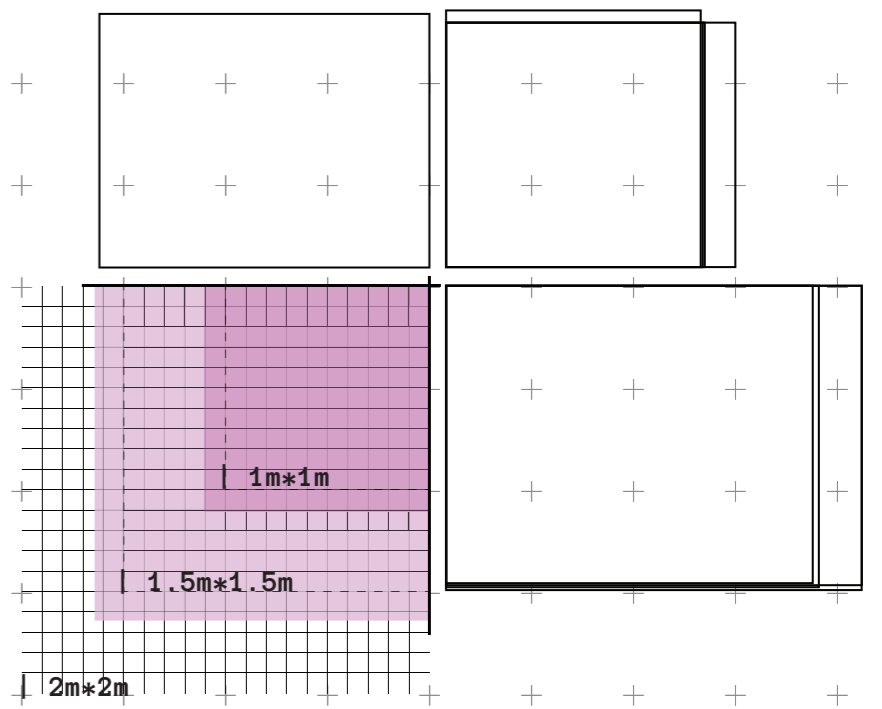
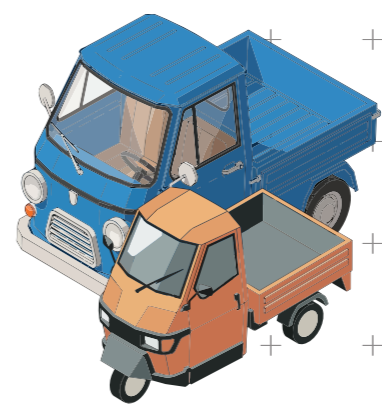
it begins with a study of the cargo dimentions of a quintessential small vehicle for local transport commonly used by farmers in the island.

various models were analized, namely the classic ape 50 and tm, as well as an elecrical chinese model available in europe.

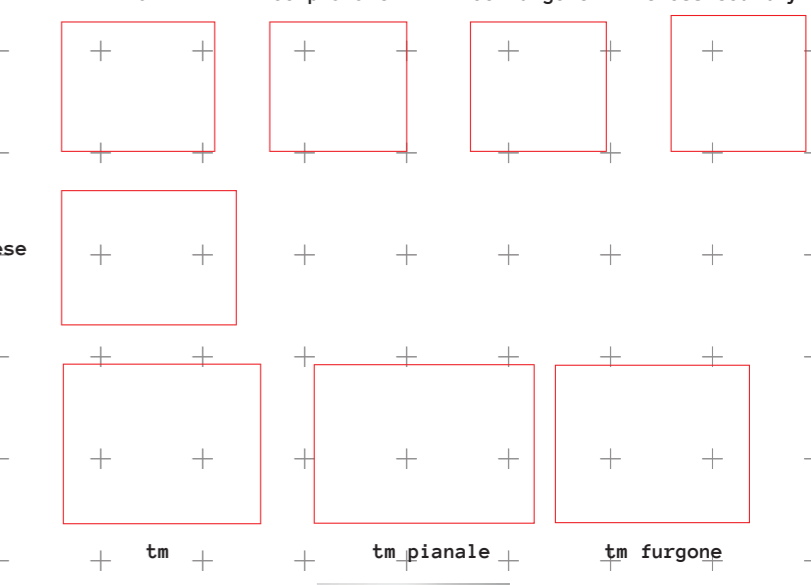
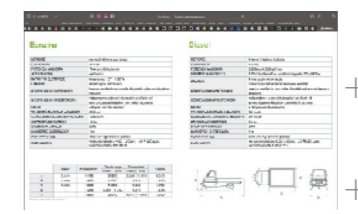
the dimentions were then averaged together and a provisional unit emerged, along with its subunits.



sketchbook sketchpaper
workshops sdouyskom
structures tent
microphone speakers
cameras light stands
projector reaper of stands
tablets of speakers
carabiners tent
rope sweaters
volunteering interviews
debates ...



similar cheap, electrical chinese truck



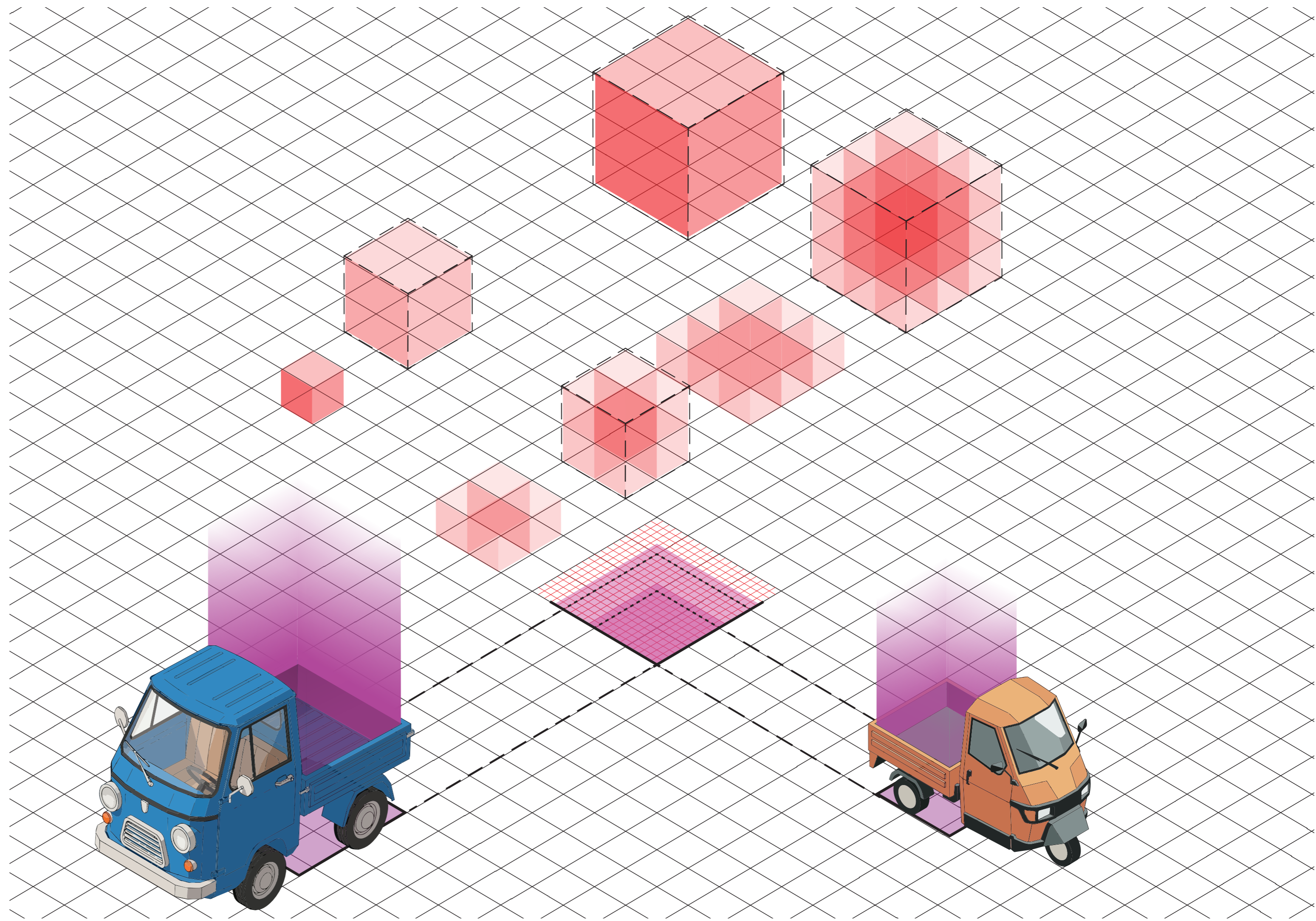
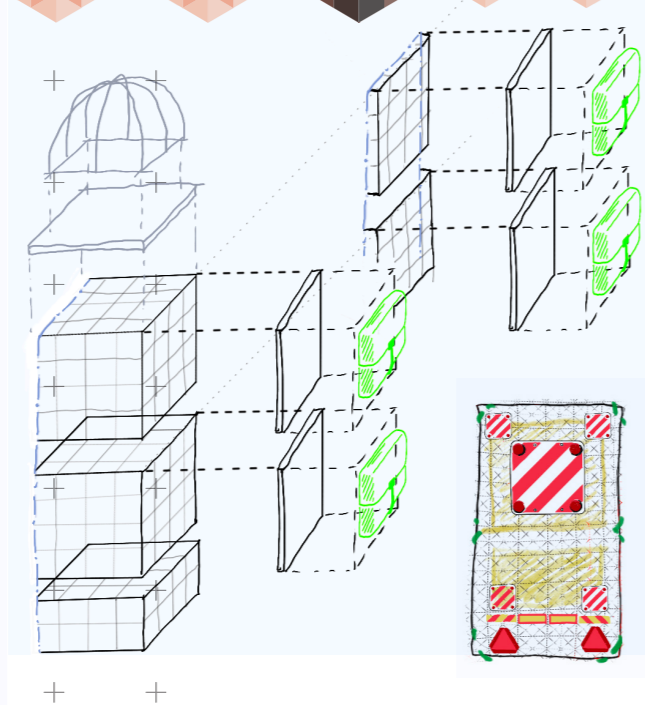
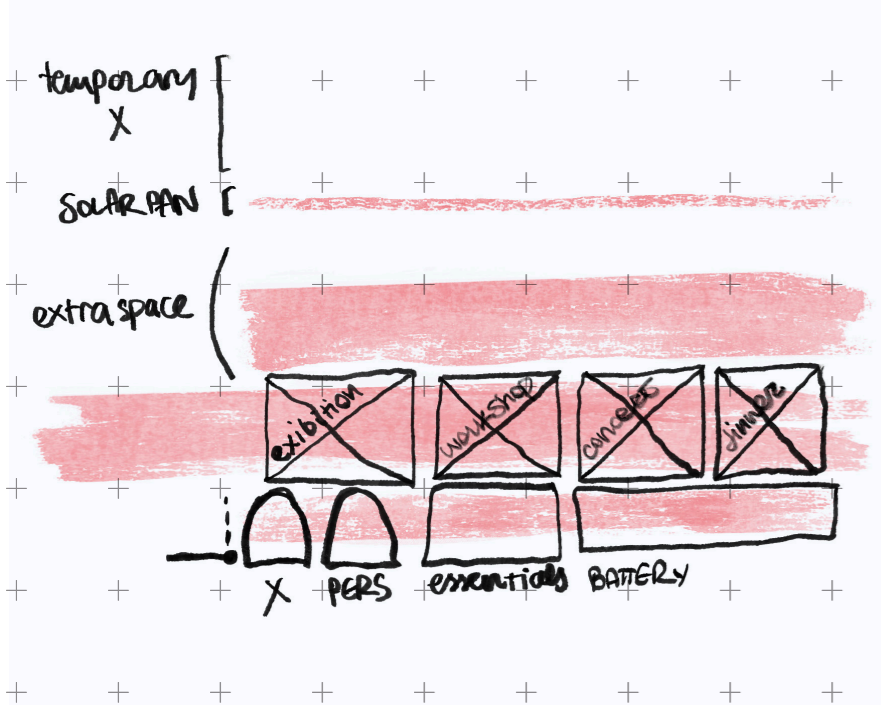
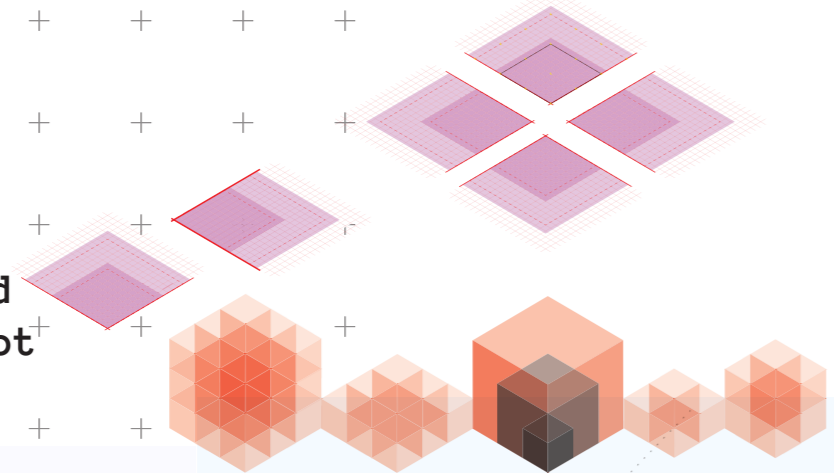
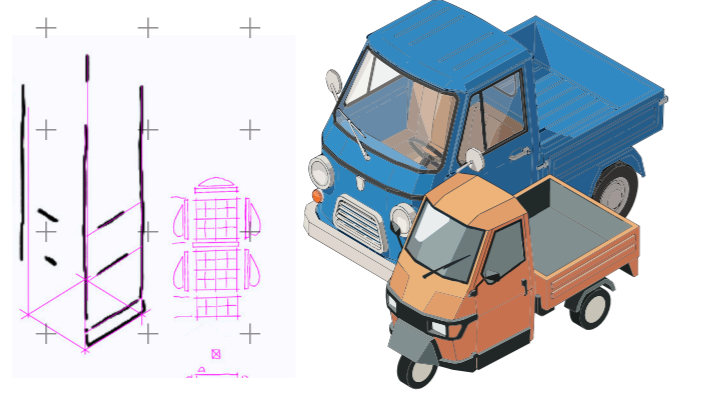
in abstract 3d space, we can visualise the cargo space as a nested space.

the top of the truck can be used for a solar panel and occasional extra cargo.

in reality, part of the space would be used more permanently, such as for batteries, versatile equipment, basic necessities.

but with a smart design, we could reduce this part and still have a solid space to use for transporting workshop materials or technical equipment.

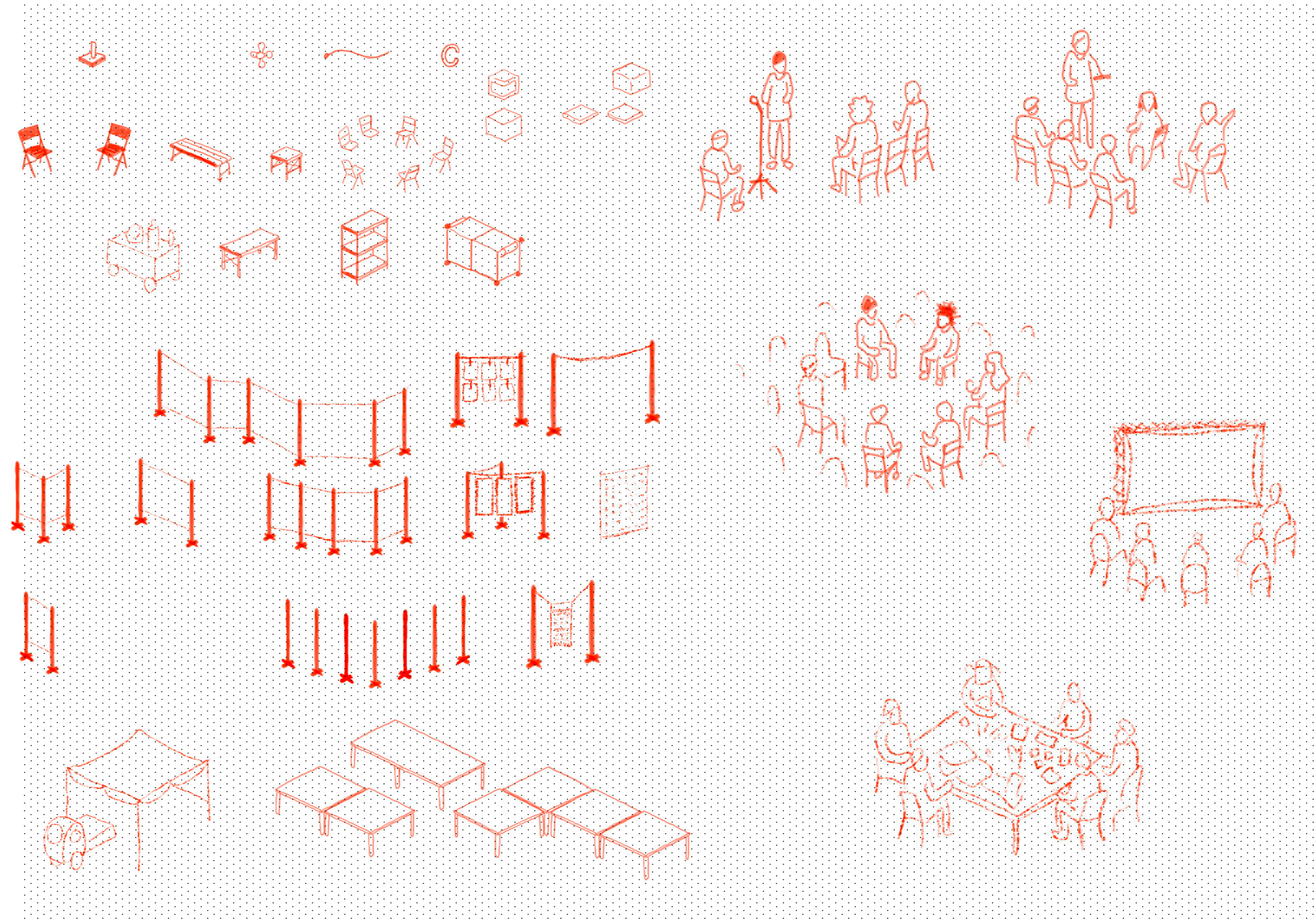
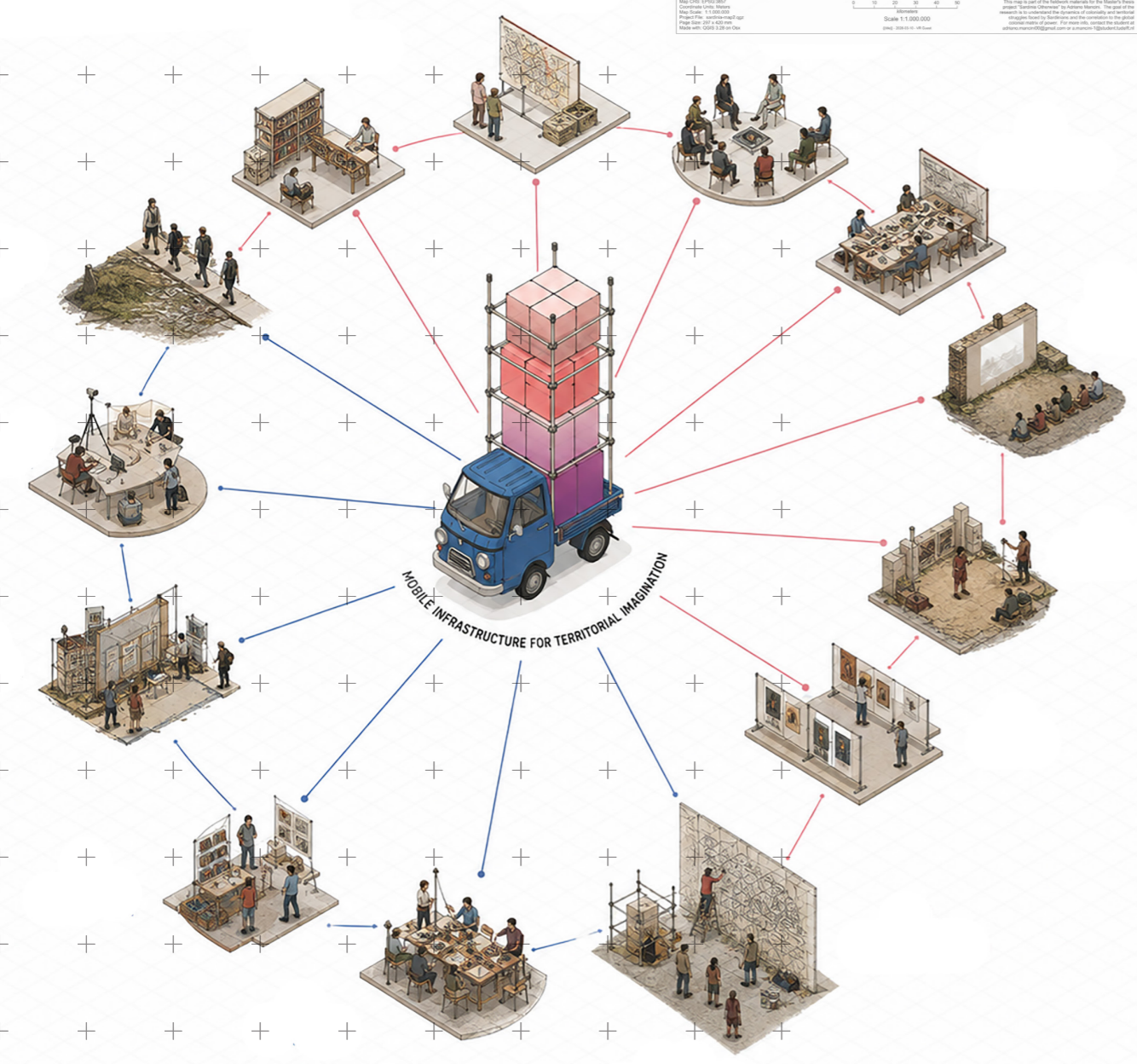
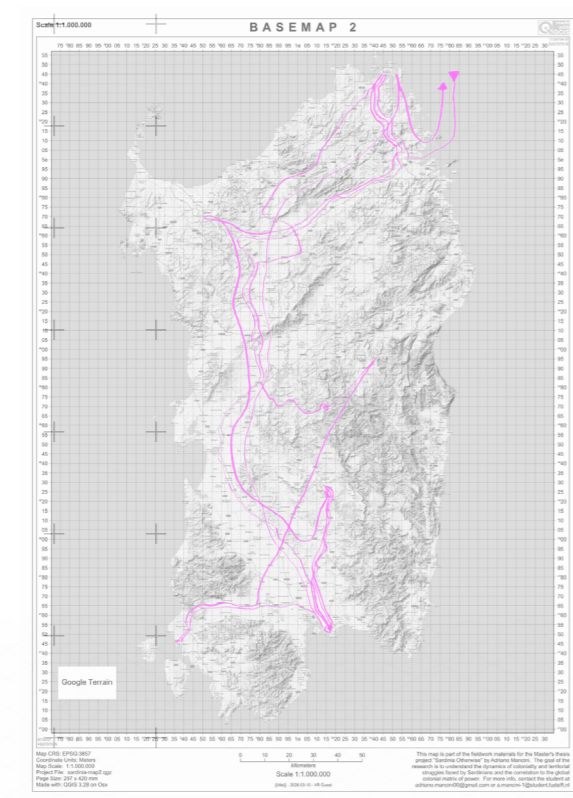
with the help of an additional cargo box, attached to the back of the truck, a lot of space can be useable.



+ the truck can follow
whichever priority comes first
after it is built or obtained.

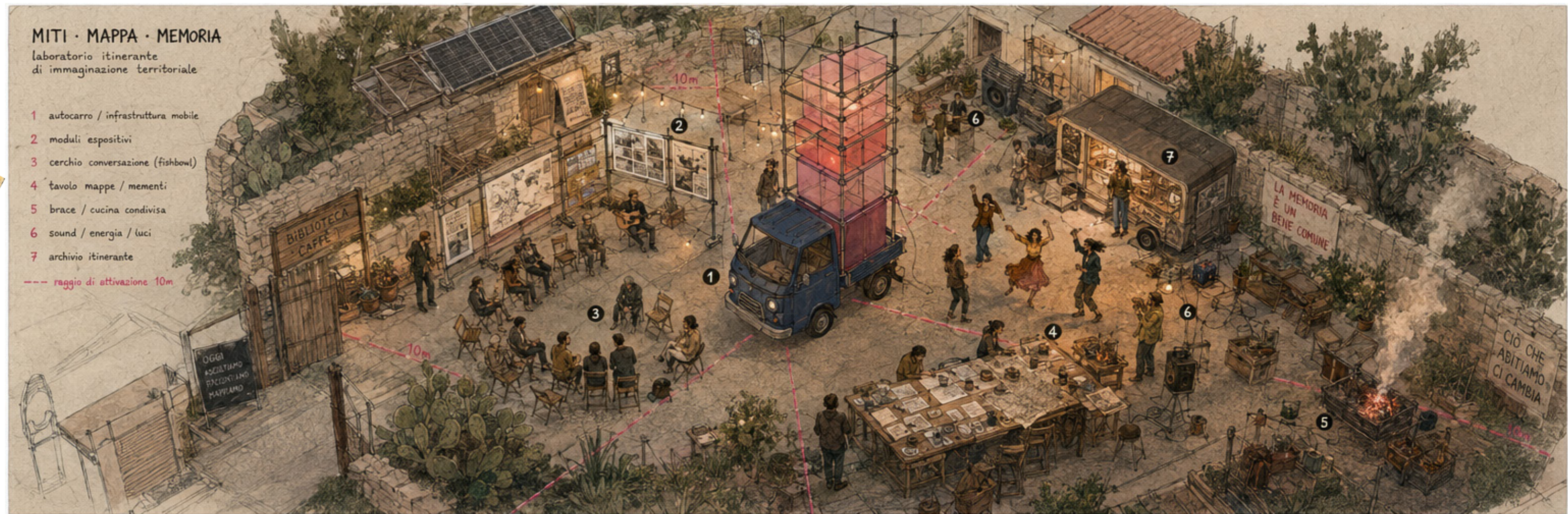
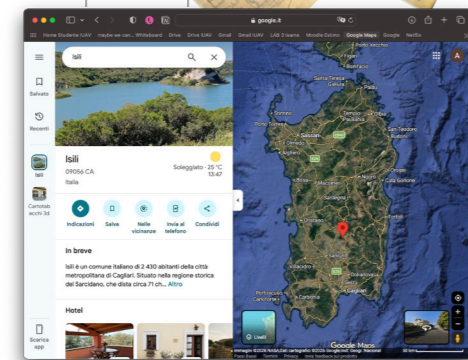
+ various materials for
exhibitions, working tables,
public engagement, are
available online or simply
constructable.

+ the next step is designing
the atmosphere, or the
situation, or the arena.



+ example. a few weeks after fieldwork, i had been chatting with marcella and she called me revealing the results and materials of some interviews related to toponomy, collective memory and epistemic justice. these renders imagine the possibility of staying with this emergence, and open up the conversation.

we settle in Isili, at the literary cafe Nuova Godot. after some planning, we set up a festival to bring together people, memories and places. what has been almost forgotten? what can be brought to light? ...



181
affective technologies toolbox
[liberating spaces for radical design]

what follows is a series of activities, methods, exercises for conducting meaningful conversations about the spaces around us

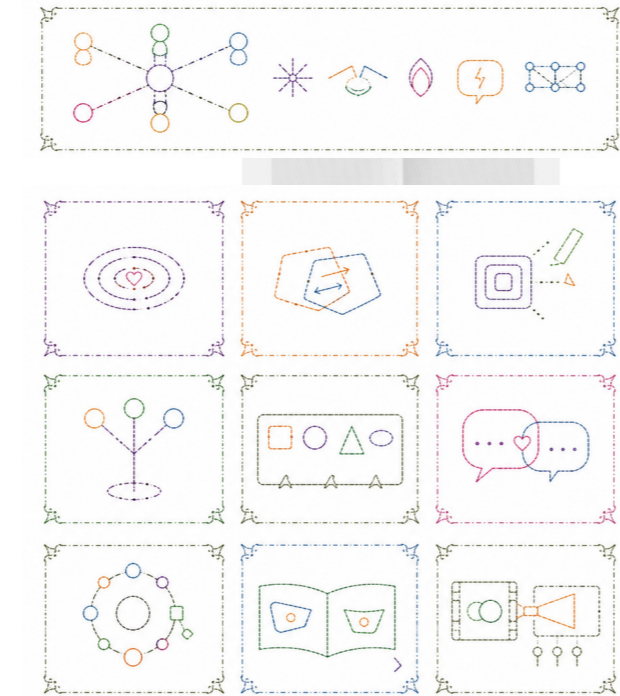
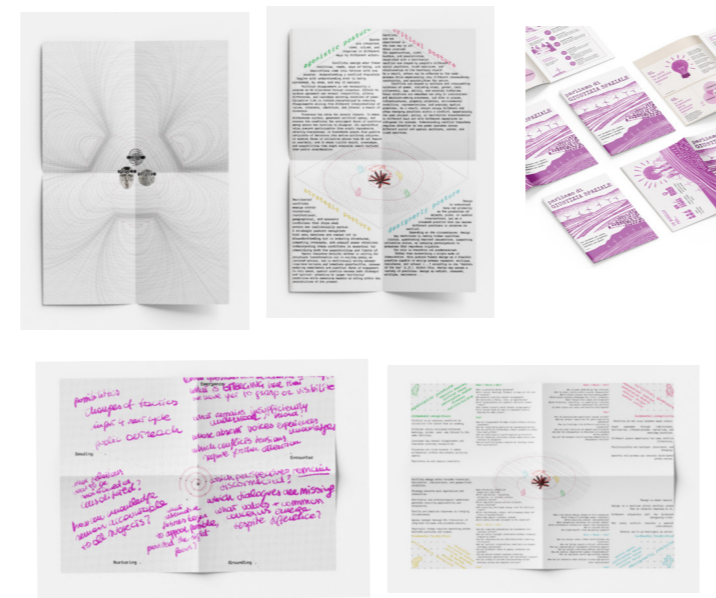
in addition to the materials presented so far, and all other 'material agents' that may be involved, what can truly be useful in this process of RSI is a set of temporary social institutions (in the technical sense: norms, customs, arrangements) that may facilitate any collective, pedagogic, designerly process.

compiled here are a few archetypes, but the true nature of this explorative atlas is fleeting and relational. for example, what is described as 'travelling atlas' has already happened at least twice: my fieldwork, and another instance: our situated cartography idea explained before. I could only help expand this - we're already talking about it.

* (Radical Spatial Futures)

182
relational
agency toolkit

material agents,
frameworks,
liberating spaces



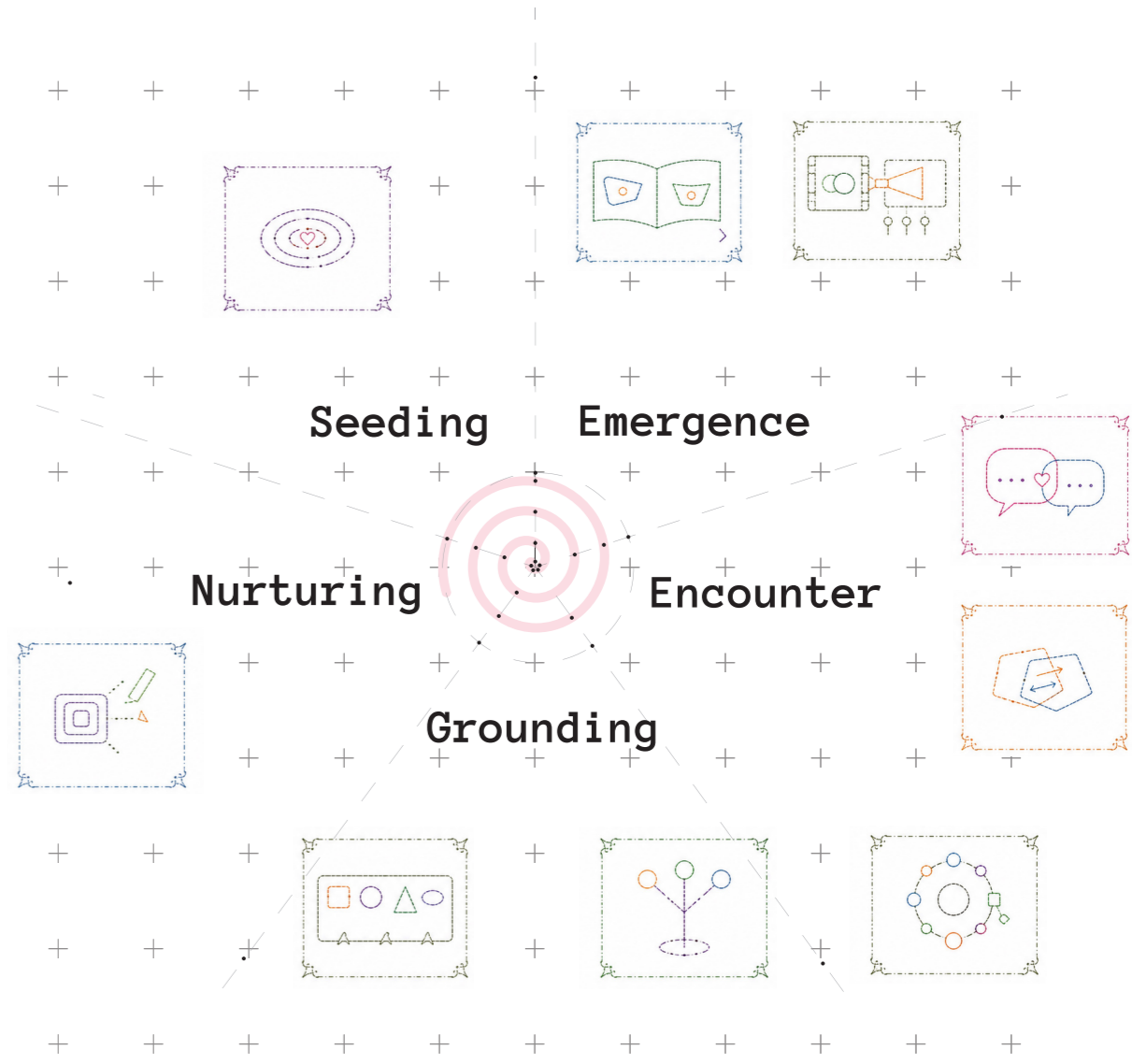
182
liberating
spaces

ways of cultivating
spatial justice
and radical spatial imagination

-  **conflict mapping**
contradictory desires
territorial dissensus
-  **mural workshop**
collective representation
negotiated symbolism
-  **travelling atlas**
radical mapping
mobile archive
-  **subjective atlas**
emotional geographies
situated cartographies
-  **scenario making**
value clustering
plural futures
-  **fishbowl**
listening * facilitation
constructive coalitions
-  **relational drawing**
affective geographies
intersectional mapping
-  **comizi d'amore**
care-based conversations
relational trust-building
-  **travelling documentary**
audiovisual storytelling
collective discussion

183
RSI
workflow

specific,
fleeting moments of
collective imagination



towards the otherwise
[programs for territorial imagination]

what follows is a series of exploratory programmes developed from the people, places, struggles, and practices encountered throughout this research. Each programme uses the tools and frameworks presented so far to create situations for collective inquiry, learning, imagination, and action around specific territorial questions.

They are not intended as finished projects or universal models, but as evolving proposals through which relationships, knowledges, and alternative futures can be explored together.



energy justice festival
mobile infrastructure for radical spatial imagination



myths maps memory
language justice through oral cartographies



migrantTruck
migrant spatial justice festival



altermoderno: the future within the past
ancestral spatialities and situated archaeologies



meandering feminist
spaces of care, dialogue, and collective imagination



energy justice festival
mobile infrastructure for radical spatial imagination

energy justice festival

mobile infrastructure for radical spatial imagination

The Energy Justice Infrastructure is a distributed participatory action research programme focused on understanding, documenting, communicating, and collectively responding to the spatial dimensions of Sardinia's contemporary energy transition. Rather than operating within a single site, institution, or timeframe, the programme develops through an expanding network of places, actors, materials, and initiatives connected through recurring cycles of Radical Spatial Imagination.

The programme begins from existing relationships, active struggles, and ongoing initiatives located in territories where trusted contacts and collaborative opportunities already exist, including Gallura, Barbagia, Sarcidano, Sassari, and other areas that may emerge through the process. New locations are not selected through comprehensive territorial coverage, but through the gradual expansion of alliances, invitations, concerns, and opportunities identified during the work itself.

Activities occur across multiple scales. At the local scale, the programme supports communities, committees, associations, and initiatives through documentation, mapping, communication, visualisation, public engagement, and collaborative research. At the territorial scale, materials generated in different places are compared and analysed to identify recurring patterns, concerns, and challenges. At the regional scale, accumulated knowledge contributes to broader discussions concerning energy justice, governance, planning, participation, and territorial futures.

The emergence component focuses on collecting and organising dispersed forms of knowledge. Interviews, oral histories, testimonies, legal documents, environmental reports, planning documents, technical studies, activist archives, field observations, media material, and community experiences are progressively assembled into a shared territorial archive. Particular attention is devoted to identifying recurring forms of injustice, territorial values, areas of conflict, existing alternatives, practices of stewardship, and emerging questions requiring further investigation. This material is translated into accessible formats through maps, timelines, diagrams, atlases, photographs, videos, exhibitions, and public communication materials.

Encounter takes place through public discussions, assemblies, documentary screenings, travelling exhibitions, collective mapping sessions, territorial walks, workshops, interviews, and informal gatherings. These activities create opportunities for residents, activists, researchers, municipalities, planners, technical experts, cultural practitioners, and other actors to engage with one another. Particular attention is given to facilitating dialogue between groups that rarely encounter each other directly, as well as creating opportunities for communities to compare experiences across different territories.

Grounding involves transforming collected materials into spatial understanding and exploratory propositions. Conflict maps, justice benchmarks, actor networks, territorial biographies, spatial analyses, and participatory atlases are used to reveal how environmental, social, cultural, political, and economic processes intersect spatially and where opportunities have emerged. These materials also provide the basis for scenario-building exercises, design explorations, territorial strategies, and discussions regarding possible alternatives. Rather than waiting for complete certainty, design work begins as soon as recurring patterns, values, tensions, and opportunities become identifiable.

Nurturing focuses on maintaining both relationships and infrastructures. Existing grassroots initiatives may receive support through communication materials, visualisations, exhibitions, educational activities, documentation, mapping, or other forms of collaboration aligned with their immediate needs. Simultaneously, the programme maintains and expands a growing archive of interviews, maps, photographs, videos, reports, drawings, observations, and territorial analyses. These materials remain accessible through a communication platform composed of travelling exhibitions, publications, websites, digital archives, social media channels, videos, presentations, and educational resources.

Seeding translates accumulated knowledge into new opportunities for action. Lessons learned, unresolved questions, emerging priorities, and identified opportunities are periodically synthesised and shared. New collaborations may be established with municipalities, schools, universities, unions, associations, political actors, researchers, and community organisations. Spatial insights may be translated into planning principles, policy recommendations, governance proposals, educational initiatives, communication campaigns, advocacy materials, or further participatory processes. Each cycle also helps identify new territories, actors, conflicts, and possibilities for future work.

The programme therefore operates simultaneously as a research infrastructure, a communication infrastructure, a coalition-building infrastructure, and a spatial planning infrastructure. Its objective is not to produce a definitive territorial plan, but to expand collective capacities to understand territorial transformations, articulate alternative futures, support ongoing struggles, and develop more just forms of spatial decision-making.



myths maps memory

language justice through oral cartographies

A distributed participatory research and cultural stewardship programme focused on documenting, interpreting, and reactivating the territorial knowledge embedded within Sardinian language, place names, oral histories, and everyday forms of memory. Rather than treating language as an isolated cultural artifact, the programme approaches it as a living archive through which relationships between people, landscapes, histories, and identities can be understood.

The programme begins from existing initiatives concerned with language revitalization, local history, education, and cultural transmission, particularly in places where relationships and collaborative opportunities already exist. Initial activities may emerge from projects such as the collection of local toponyms, oral history initiatives, language promotion programmes, schools, libraries, cultural associations, and informal networks of elders and community members. New locations emerge through the gradual discovery of stories, connections, and territorial questions that extend beyond the original site.

Activities operate simultaneously across multiple scales. At the local scale, the programme focuses on collecting place names, stories, memories, expressions, and territorial narratives that remain embedded within everyday language. At the territorial scale, these materials are compared and connected, revealing recurring patterns, forgotten histories, ecological knowledge, migration trajectories, cultural practices, and alternative readings of the landscape. At the regional scale, the resulting archive contributes to broader discussions concerning identity, language, memory, cultural continuity, and territorial belonging.

Emergence focuses on surfacing forms of knowledge that often remain absent from official maps and institutional archives. Interviews, oral histories, storytelling sessions, participatory mapping, archival research, linguistic documentation, family memories, photographs, and field observations are progressively assembled into a collective repository of territorial memory. Particular attention is devoted to understanding what local names reveal about relationships with landscapes, historical events, ecological conditions, forms of labour, cultural practices, and collective experiences.

Encounter takes place through storytelling gatherings, collective mapping sessions, educational workshops, travelling exhibitions, school activities, public discussions, and intergenerational exchanges. These activities create opportunities for elders, students, teachers, researchers, cultural practitioners, language activists, and local residents to share knowledge and compare experiences. The programme seeks not only to document memory, but also to create situations in which memory can continue to circulate, evolve, and generate new meanings.

Grounding involves translating collected narratives into spatial and cultural representations. Toponymic atlases, territorial biographies, oral history maps, landscape narratives, educational materials, and visual archives become tools for understanding how language and territory shape one another. These materials can also support new forms of place-based pedagogy, heritage interpretation, cultural programming, and territorial storytelling. Through this process, language becomes a way of reading territory and identifying values, relationships, and forms of knowledge that deserve recognition and care.

Nurturing focuses on maintaining the relationships and infrastructures necessary for the continued transmission of territorial memory. Educational programmes, community archives, language initiatives, travelling exhibitions, publications, digital repositories, and collaborations with schools and cultural organisations help ensure that collected materials remain accessible and useful. Particular attention is devoted to creating opportunities for younger generations to engage directly with situated forms of knowledge and cultural production.

Seeding translates accumulated knowledge into new cultural, educational, and territorial initiatives. The programme may support language teaching, community mapping projects, cultural events, local archives, artistic collaborations, place-based educational resources, and future cycles of participatory research. At the same time, the materials generated contribute to wider discussions concerning language policy, cultural stewardship, identity, and the role of memory in shaping territorial futures.

The programme therefore operates simultaneously as a memory infrastructure, a cultural infrastructure, an educational infrastructure, and a territorial knowledge infrastructure. Its objective is not simply to preserve language, but to strengthen the relationships between memory, territory, identity, and collective future-making.



migranTruck
migrant spatial justice festival

A participatory research, storytelling, and creative programme focused on understanding how migration, mobility, displacement, diaspora, and belonging shape contemporary Sardinia. Rather than treating migration as a marginal or exceptional phenomenon, the programme approaches it as a fundamental dimension of the island's past, present, and future.

The programme begins in collaboration with MigranTour Cagliari, an incredible initiative that turns counternarratives into cultural stewardship. Existing relationships with migrant communities, diasporic Sardinian networks, cultural associations, schools, activists, researchers, artists, and community organisations. Initial activities may emerge through collaborations with people who have arrived in Sardinia, people who have left it, and people whose identities are shaped by experiences of movement between multiple territories.

Activities operate simultaneously across multiple scales. At the local scale, the programme documents personal trajectories, everyday experiences, memories, aspirations, and relationships to place. At the territorial scale, these stories are connected through collective mapping, revealing how mobility shapes different parts of the island in distinct ways. At the regional scale, the resulting materials contribute to broader discussions concerning identity, belonging, citizenship, depopulation, cultural diversity, labour, and territorial futures.

Emergence focuses on surfacing stories and spatial experiences that often remain invisible within dominant representations of Sardinia. Interviews, oral histories, participatory mapping, visual documentation, storytelling workshops, community archives, and collaborative media projects help document how migration is lived, remembered, and imagined. Particular attention is devoted to the multiple forms of mobility that coexist on the island, including emigration, immigration, return migration, seasonal mobility, diaspora networks, and transnational connections.

Encounter takes place through storytelling events, exhibitions, collective mapping sessions, public discussions, artistic collaborations, intercultural gatherings, educational programmes, and travelling installations. These activities create opportunities for different communities to share experiences and reflect on common themes of movement, belonging, exclusion, memory, and identity. The objective is not to produce a single narrative of Sardinia, but to create space for multiple Sardinias to become visible and coexist.

Grounding involves translating stories of mobility into spatial representations and territorial understanding. Migrant atlases, narrative maps, mobility biographies, community archives, visual essays, and territorial analyses help reveal how migration intersects with housing, labour, language, education, public space, demographic change, and cultural life. Through these materials, migration becomes legible not as an external issue but as a territorial process that actively shapes landscapes, communities, and futures.

Nurturing focuses on maintaining the relationships, archives, and platforms necessary for continued dialogue and exchange. Particular attention is devoted to ensuring that collected stories remain accessible to participating communities through exhibitions, publications, digital archives, educational resources, and cultural events. The programme also seeks to strengthen connections between communities that may otherwise remain isolated from one another.

Seeding translates accumulated knowledge into new forms of cultural production, public pedagogy, advocacy, research, and territorial imagination. The programme may support artistic projects, educational initiatives, exhibitions, publications, policy discussions, and future cycles of participatory inquiry. At the same time, it seeks to challenge static understandings of identity by highlighting Sardinia as a place shaped through movement, encounter, and ongoing processes of cultural transformation.

The programme therefore operates simultaneously as a storytelling infrastructure, a mapping infrastructure, a cultural infrastructure, and a belonging infrastructure. Its objective is not simply to document migration, but to contribute to more plural, relational, and inclusive understandings of Sardinian territory and identity.



altermoderno: the future within the past

ancestral spatialities and situated archaeologies

A participatory research and design programme focused on understanding how relationships between people, landscapes, non-human life, memory, and material heritage continue to shape territorial futures. Rather than approaching archaeology exclusively as the study of monuments and artefacts, the programme treats archaeological landscapes as living socio-ecological environments through which questions of stewardship, identity, learning, and spatial imagination can be explored.

The programme begins from existing relationships with archaeological sites, experimental archaeology initiatives, cultural associations, local guides, researchers, municipalities, educational programmes, and communities that maintain strong attachments to particular places. Initial activities may develop around sites such as Santa Vittoria di Serri, NUURTime, and other archaeological landscapes where ongoing forms of care, experimentation, and public engagement already exist.

Activities operate simultaneously across multiple scales. At the local scale, the programme investigates how people relate to archaeological landscapes through everyday practices, memories, stories, ecological relationships, and forms of stewardship. At the territorial scale, different sites are connected through comparative research, travelling programmes, collective mapping, and exchanges between communities. At the regional scale, the resulting knowledge contributes to broader discussions concerning heritage, conservation, landscape governance, environmental relationships, and alternative understandings of development.

Emergence focuses on revealing the multiple relationships that already exist around archaeological places. Oral histories, site visits, ecological observations, archival research, landscape walks, interviews, experimental archaeology practices, and community narratives help document how these places are inhabited, remembered, interpreted, and cared for. Particular attention is devoted to forms of knowledge that remain invisible within conventional heritage frameworks, including everyday attachments, ecological relationships, non-human presences, local memories, and embodied experiences of place.

Encounter takes place through workshops, collective walks, design-build activities, experimental archaeology sessions, storytelling events, educational programmes, artistic interventions, and public discussions. Archaeologists, residents, students, designers, historians, shepherds, educators, cultural practitioners, and visitors are invited to engage with one another through shared experiences of place. The objective is not simply to communicate archaeological knowledge, but to create opportunities for collective interpretation and imagination.

Grounding translates these encounters into situated understandings of landscape and heritage. Participatory atlases, landscape narratives, ecological mappings, stewardship strategies, territorial biographies, speculative drawings, and design explorations are used to investigate how archaeological landscapes might contribute to contemporary territorial life. Rather than separating conservation from imagination, the programme explores how historical, ecological, and cultural relationships can inform future forms of spatial practice.

Nurturing focuses on sustaining the relationships, infrastructures, and forms of care that allow archaeological landscapes to remain meaningful over time. This may include collaborations with schools, cultural organisations, guides, local associations, municipalities, and stewardship initiatives. Documentation, exhibitions, publications, archives, and educational resources help maintain continuity between different cycles of activity and different generations of participants.

Seeding translates accumulated knowledge into new forms of territorial engagement. Educational programmes, stewardship initiatives, landscape projects, design experiments, cultural events, research collaborations, and future cycles of situated archaeological inquiry emerge from the process. Particular attention is devoted to identifying how archaeological landscapes can contribute not only to heritage conservation, but also to contemporary discussions concerning identity, ecological responsibility, spatial imagination, and territorial futures.

The programme therefore operates simultaneously as a heritage infrastructure, a learning infrastructure, a landscape infrastructure, and an imagination infrastructure. Its objective is not only to understand the past, but to explore how relationships with deep time can contribute to more grounded, situated, and caring forms of spatial practice.



meandering feminist

spaces of care, dialogue, and collective imagination

A participatory research and design initiative focused on understanding how feminist groups create spaces for reflection, encounter, political learning, mutual support, and community life. Inspired by encounters with collectives such as Avvolotadoras, the programme approaches feminism not only as a political position, but also as a set of spatial, relational, and pedagogical practices through which people collectively make sense of their lives, histories, identities, and territories.

Rather than beginning from predefined models of participation, the programme investigates the inventive methods through which feminist groups create situations of dialogue and collective meaning-making. Particular attention is devoted to activities that may appear ordinary but which perform important social and political functions: shared meals, storytelling sessions, memory-object workshops, public discussions, collective reading, intergenerational encounters, cultural events, travelling initiatives, and informal gatherings. These activities create opportunities for people to narrate experiences, question assumptions, confront inherited norms, and encounter perspectives different from their own.

Activities operate across multiple scales, from intimate conversations and neighbourhood initiatives to regional networks of associations and activists. At the local scale, the programme documents existing practices of community-building, feminist pedagogy, cultural production, mutual support, and public engagement. At the territorial scale, different experiences are connected and compared, revealing common challenges, strategies, and forms of social inventiveness. At the regional scale, the resulting archive contributes to broader discussions concerning gender, participation, social infrastructures, inclusion, cultural production, and spatial justice.

Emergence focuses on identifying and documenting existing practices through interviews, participant observation, collective reflection, storytelling sessions, memory objects, community archives, participatory mapping, and direct involvement in activities organised by participating groups. Rather than observing from a distance, the programme seeks to learn through participation. Helping prepare an event, documenting a workshop, making culurgiones together, participating in a discussion circle, or contributing to a community initiative become opportunities for understanding how collective spaces are actually produced and maintained.

Encounter takes place through workshops, collective meals, storytelling events, reading groups, screenings, public discussions, travelling activities, and experimental formats developed together with participating groups. Particular attention is devoted to understanding how feminist collectives create spaces in which people feel able to speak, listen, disagree, reflect, and learn from one another. Questions of accessibility, intergenerational dialogue, inclusion, and the participation of people who might not normally engage in public initiatives remain central concerns throughout the process.

Grounding involves translating these experiences into spatial and organisational knowledge. Care maps, community atlases, documentation of practices, participatory videos, event toolkits, spatial analyses, and design explorations help identify how conversations, relationships, and collective learning are supported or constrained by physical environments, cultural infrastructures, institutions, and everyday spatial arrangements. The programme is particularly interested in understanding what planning and design can learn from feminist practices of community-making, and how these practices might inspire new approaches to participation, public space, and territorial engagement.

Nurturing focuses on strengthening existing initiatives through communication support, travelling activities, documentation, educational resources, collaborative projects, and practical assistance where useful. The mobile infrastructure of the track becomes particularly relevant here, making it possible to support events, screenings, workshops, exhibitions, outreach activities, and gatherings across multiple towns and communities.

Seeding translates accumulated knowledge into new experiments, collaborations, educational initiatives, public conversations, community programmes, and design propositions. Particular attention is devoted to identifying how feminist practices of dialogue, care, memory, and collective reflection can inform broader discussions concerning planning, participation, spatial justice, and territorial futures. Rather than treating feminist initiatives as subjects of study, the programme approaches them as sources of knowledge capable of generating alternative ways of imagining and organising collective life.

The programme therefore operates simultaneously as a feminist learning infrastructure, a community infrastructure, a cultural infrastructure, and a design infrastructure. Its objective is not only to document existing practices, but to learn from them, support them, and help multiply the spaces through which collective reflection, solidarity, and political imagination can flourish.



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Design with
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