

The Middle-Land of the Unrepresented Inequalities: Evidence from the Spatial Distribution of the Foreign Population in Palermo (Italy)

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Urban growth, restructuring since the late twentieth century have produced new forms of socio-spatial inequality in Southern European cities. Traditional urban policies have mainly addressed historic centres or peripheral neighbourhoods, while intermediate areas of the consolidated city have often remained overlooked. This study explores the concept of Middle Land as an analytical framework for understanding these emerging urban marginalities, focusing on the relationship between spatial transformation, migrant settlement patterns, and inclusive citizenship.

Using Palermo, Italy, as a case study, the research combines theoretical reflection with empirical analysis. It draws on literature concerning urban inequalities, migration, socio-spatial inclusion, and citizenship, while testing innovative ways to map vulnerability beyond conventional socio-economic indicators. Attention is given to migrant distribution, access to services, citizenship practices, transnational knowledge flows, local forms of social resilience.

Findings show that inequalities increasingly affect intermediate urban areas marked by multidimensional vulnerability and significant migrant presence. These spaces experience uneven access to services, opportunities, rights, challenging the adequacy of the traditional centre-periphery model. At the same time, migrant communities contribute to urban transformation through social networks, resilience practices, transnational exchanges.

The Middle Land framework helps reinterpret urban inequality as a dynamic process shaped by mobility, citizenship, diversity, and territorial change.

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