

Marthe Vanden Haute

unframing the territory of an arancini vendor





Arancini (pronounced: ah-rah-n-CHEE-nee) are a traditional Sicilian culinary specialty, typically defined as deep-fried rice balls that are stuffed, breaded, and golden in color—resembling small oranges, from which their name derives (“arancia” meaning orange in Italian).



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*An anthropographic inquiry into the spatial potential
of the Ballarò Market, Palermo, Italy*

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anthropography *

[an-thruh-pog-ruh-fee]
noun, plural **an•thro•pog•ra•phies**

A form of anthropological engagement that combines the spatial and cultural mapping of everyday life, focusing on the rhythms, gestures and informal practices within a specific context.

e.g.: “The anthropographic perspective on Ballarò captures how informal trade, migration and daily practices shape a constantly evolving urban space beyond formal planning.”

**Interpretation of Tim Ingold’s use of “anthropography” in Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture (Routledge, 2013).*

An incipient prologue



In a world where daily life is in constant change, where familiar places disappear and social dynamics evolve rapidly, documentation becomes more than recording facts; it transforms into an engaged observation, revealing incipient patterns that shape how we inhabit and experience spaces. Within these interactions lies a deeper inquiry: *How can the role of the architect, through documenting spatial potential in a complex context, contribute to a transformative practice?*

This thesis explores the historical Ballarò market in Palermo and illustrates how transformative scenarios can emerge from documenting its everyday rhythms. Through *narrating*, *(re)framing*, and *negotiating* what is already present, architecture becomes a tool to engage with daily practices without imposing fixed outcomes.

By creating an accessible language that brings latent possibilities into view, a layered reading unfolds—one that reflects adaptation, shared use, and the tensions of coexistence. In this context, documentation transforms into an architectural gesture that visualizes the invisible, acknowledges informality, and gives shape to what often remains unnoticed.

Narrating

The role of Anthropology
A Graphic Novel
The Ballarò Market

Unframing

The Street
The Facade
The Terrace

Negotiating

Piazza del Carmine
De Brugse Poort

Reframing

The Kitchen
The Water Basin
The Material Depot

Grounding

Narrating

The role of anthropology

A graphic novel

The Ballarò Market

“The southern entrance of the market on Corso Tukory* felt like a threshold: the many cars roaring down the Corso would disappear, substituted by the polyphony of marketers’ voices and customers’ chattering. The wide tarmacked street, flanked by three or four stories high buildings was filled with smells, noises, colours, leaving me punctually amazed.”

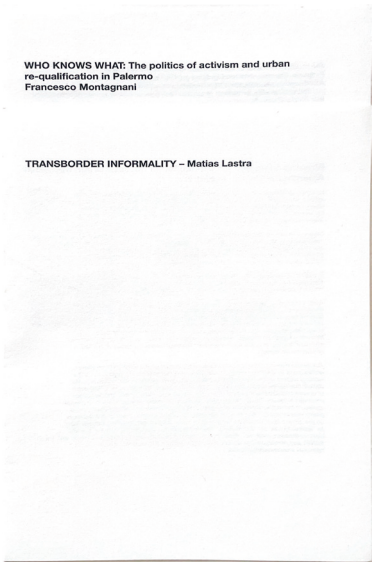
The politics of activism and urban re-qualification in Palermo
F. Montagnani.

**Via Corso Tukory forms the southern border of Ballarò market.*

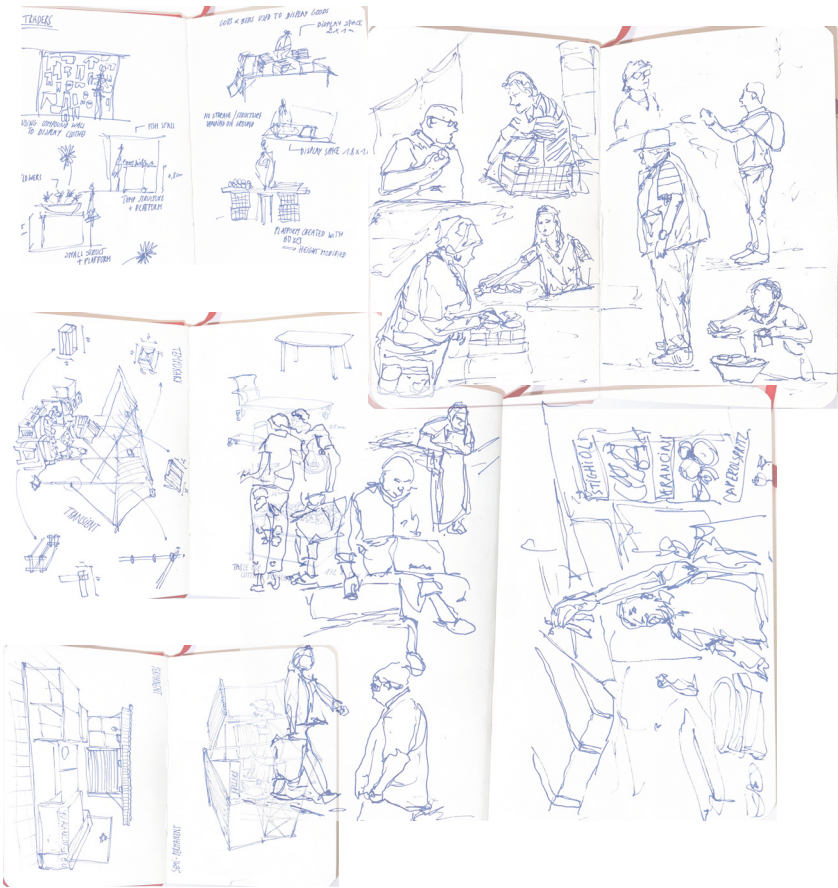
The role of anthropology

The cross-pollination between anthropology and architecture offers an in-depth analysis of the complex dynamics within urban spaces. Tim Ingold introduced the term “*anthropography*,” an approach in which human experience and perception are central to understanding and documenting spatial structures. This method goes beyond merely describing physical surroundings and instead focuses on how people truly experience, shape and claim them as their own.

Building upon this framework, this dissertation explores the Ballarò market in Palermo, drawing on the works of Francesco Montagnani and Matias Lastra. Their insights reveal the complex social, political, economic and spatial forces that shape the market, highlighting its vital role as a cultural pillar in an evolving urban landscape.



- architecture** /ar-chi-tec-ture/ noun
The art and science of designing and constructing buildings and other physical structures, especially with regard to aesthetic, functional and structural considerations.
- anthropology** /an-thro-pol-o-gy/ noun
The scientific study of human societies, cultures and their development, including aspects of social behavior, linguistics and archaeology.
- ethnography** /eth-nog-ra-phy/ noun
A qualitative research method in anthropology that involves the systematic study and detailed description of peoples, cultures and their customs, often through participant observation and fieldwork.



Visual translation of behavioral and spatial observations, drawn from the anthropological writings of Montagnani and Lastra.

Het was iets na negen uur. Ik verliet mijn kamer op de vierde verdieping aan de Via Maqueda, te bereiken met een rammelende metalen lift. Ik nam de trap. De bladderende houten toegangsdeur bood toegang tot een klein pleintje, in het midden een art nouveau-kiosk. In de straat hielden soldaten in camouflagepak wijdbeens de wacht voor de ingang van een gebouw dat er niet erg belangwekkend uitzag. Ik richtte me tot het gebouw dat ik zojuist had verlaten. Van sommige ramen op de eerste verdieping waren de luiken gesloten, bij andere zat geen glas meer in de sponningen. Ik opende mijn tas en grabelde naar mijn felrode notieboekje waarin ik de komende week mijn bevindingen nauwkeurig en gedetailleerd in zou neerpennen. De eerste pagina hunkerde naar actie van mijn blauwe pen. Een titel, een schets, iets. Met mijn schrift in de hand sjokte ik richting het centrum, zonder plan, zonder pen. `

*Inspired by Koen Deprez's "Het Ondenkbare Huis",
I sought to bring the Ballarò market to life through a
narrative approach, using storytelling to intertwine per-
sonal experience with spatial and social observations.*

Het wasgoed was als vlaggen boven de stegen uitgehangen, deinend en wapperend in het zonlicht. Toen ik vanuit een smal, bochtig straatje de Ballarò-markt binnenliep, was het alsof ik vanuit de coulissen tussen de spotlights van een theater terechtkwam. De zon stond verticaal boven het plein, en de kraamhouders hadden bruine, rode en groene canvas doeken gespannen bij wijze van zonneschermen. De hemel verdween achter een uitgestrekt dak van gekleurde lappen stof, dat de markt omsloot als het doek van een circustent. De zon brandde op het zonnescherm en vulde de ruimte met warm, diffuus licht, terwijl het de geuren van de torenhoge stapels eetwaar met zich meedroeg.

De kraampjes leken op te rijzen uit de straatstenen, plastic stoelen als tijdelijke ontmoetingsplekken, bestelwagens met open achterklep fungeren die niet alleen opslagruimte, maar ook toonbank en werkplek. In het centrum van dit broeierige, bijna benauwende zaal-straattheater viel mijn oog op het viskraam. Op een uit groentenkratten-gefrabiceerde tafel lagen de zwarte ogen, de zilverkleurige vinnen en de gebogen staart van een zwaardvis, waarvan het lijf grotendeels was weggesneden. Ernaast lagen stukken bloedrode tonijn. Een oude man zonder tanden glimlachte naar me en riep iets onverstaanbaars. Ik wuifde en vervolgde mijn pas.

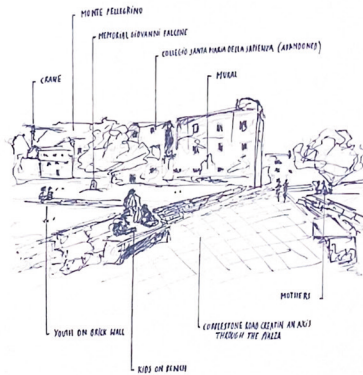
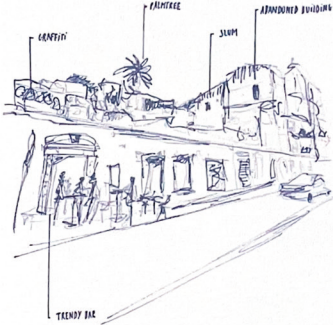
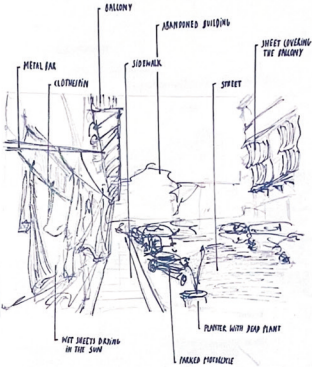
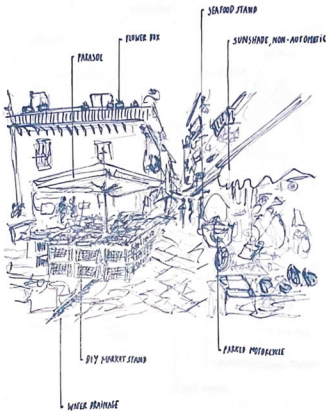
Misschien was het nog te vroeg voor sinaasappels, maar citroenen waren er wel. Er was brood, er waren kazen, zakken kikkererwten, linzen, witte bonen en noten, rijen flessen olie en blikken tomaten; grote, openstaande blikken zoute ansjovis en tonijn in olie, er waren wijnwinkels en koffiebars. Het was er druk, ik moest aanschuiven om van het ene naar het andere kraam te geraken.

De mensen rondom mij liepen rond met een bedaarde vastberadenheid, ze leken allen te weten waar ze heen wilden. Af en toe bleven ze even stilstaan, onderhandelend, lachend, ruziënd, en werden dan weer meegevoerd door de stroom. Een toerist, zijn schouders tegen de mijne, stopte even om een foto te trekken, tot groot ongenoegen van de marktkramers en de lokale Palermitanen, hun stem verheffend; verwijtend, niet protesterend.

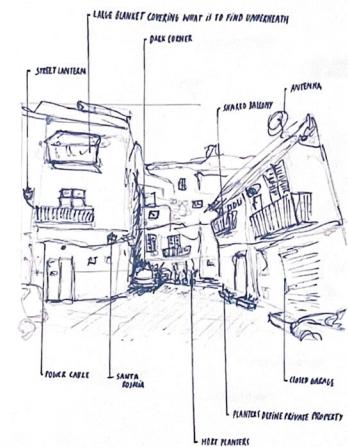
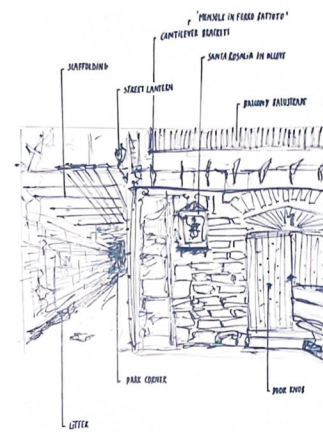
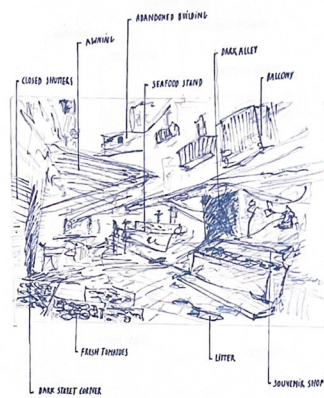
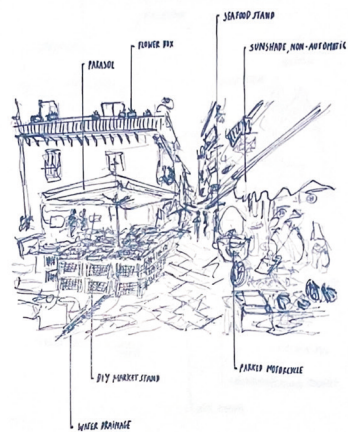
Ik sloeg af bij de eerstvolgende steeg en slaagde erin me uit de drukkende menigte te verwijderen. De steeg leidde me tot een panelleria die bestond uit een klein, kaal hok zonder etalage, met een tafel waarop de rechthoekjes kikkererwtendeeg werden gesneden, en een bak hete olie waarin ze werden gebakken. Een bromfiets reed me voorbij, luid claxonnerend, aan zijn stuur twee plastic zakken gevuld met paarse en zwarte aubergines, indische vijgen en langwerpige gele honingmeloenen. Ik sloeg een volgende steeg in, de geur van versgebakken sfincione achterlatend.

De drukte ijde weg en het werd stil, er was nog nauwelijks een marktkraam te bespeuren. Ik bevond me amper enkele meters van de markt, maar het kleurrijke decor werd vervangen door afbrokkelende gevels van drie- of vier verdiepingen, van elkaar gescheiden door elektriciteitskabels en afvoerbuizen. Een trap hield halverwege op. Schaduwdoeken gespannen tussen de uitpuilende balkons verborgen dichtgetimmerde houten lamellen en lukraak geplaatste koelsystemen. Ik werd verrast door deze plotselinge overgang, waarbij de markt zich had getransformeerd tot een nieuwe ruimte -als een levend organisme- die voortdurend onderhandeld wordt tussen de bewoners en marktkramers die haar bevolken.

Palermo: a graphic novel



Spatial readings of Palermo's urban fabric through on-site sketching and written observations. (p10-13)



The city of Palermo unfolds like a palimpsest, where layers of history and contemporary life coexist. This creates a delicate balance between monumental architecture and makeshift constructions, an interplay constantly reshaped by migration and tourism. Although urban renewal projects aim to modernize, they often result in gentrification and the transformation of authentic spaces into tourist-oriented zones, disrupting local communities. Palermo thus shows how spontaneous, unplanned urban developments are just as influential as official planning, creating a vibrant place where formal and informal practices are in a constant dialogue.



Palermo as a patchwork of different textures and materials.
collage on paper
297 x 420 mm



Map of Communities, Palermo Atlas.

This dialogue between order and disorder is nowhere more palpable than in the Ballarò market. Here, the essence of urban transformation unfolds in its rawest form. Rather than following a fixed structure, the market moves to the fluid rhythm of trade, migration and everyday social exchange. Stalls shift, merchants adapt, and public space is constantly redefined. Ballarò becomes a laboratory for the urban challenges of waste management, mobility and social inequality. Policy interventions often falter, unable to grasp the market's organic character and instead try to enforce formal rules onto a space that thrives on informality. In this sense, the Ballarò market can be seen as a living reflection of a broader urban paradox: *how does order emerge from chaos, and how can a city thrive when the unplanned exceeds the formal?*

The Ballarò Market



Unframing

The street

The facade

The terrace



Unframing the territory of an arancini vendor.
colored pencil on paper
420 x 297 mm

His refrigerated counter, at least six metres long sits on the sidewalk, close to the building behind him, an open ground floor room hosting his refrigerators and all the machinery a butcher needs to prepare ready-to-cook delicacies. His counter always looked lavish: skewers, cutlets, sausages—all lined up side by side—beef, pork, chicken, and turkey in a seemingly endless parade of succulence. Medium size carcasses hang from the ceiling, pierced by shiny hooks. The narrow and crowded street left me no choice but to smell, almost taste, the products hanging at eye/nose level.

M: [mockingly] Come on, Franco, when are you going to make a proper shop, put the counter inside, set up some doors and become a proper butcher?

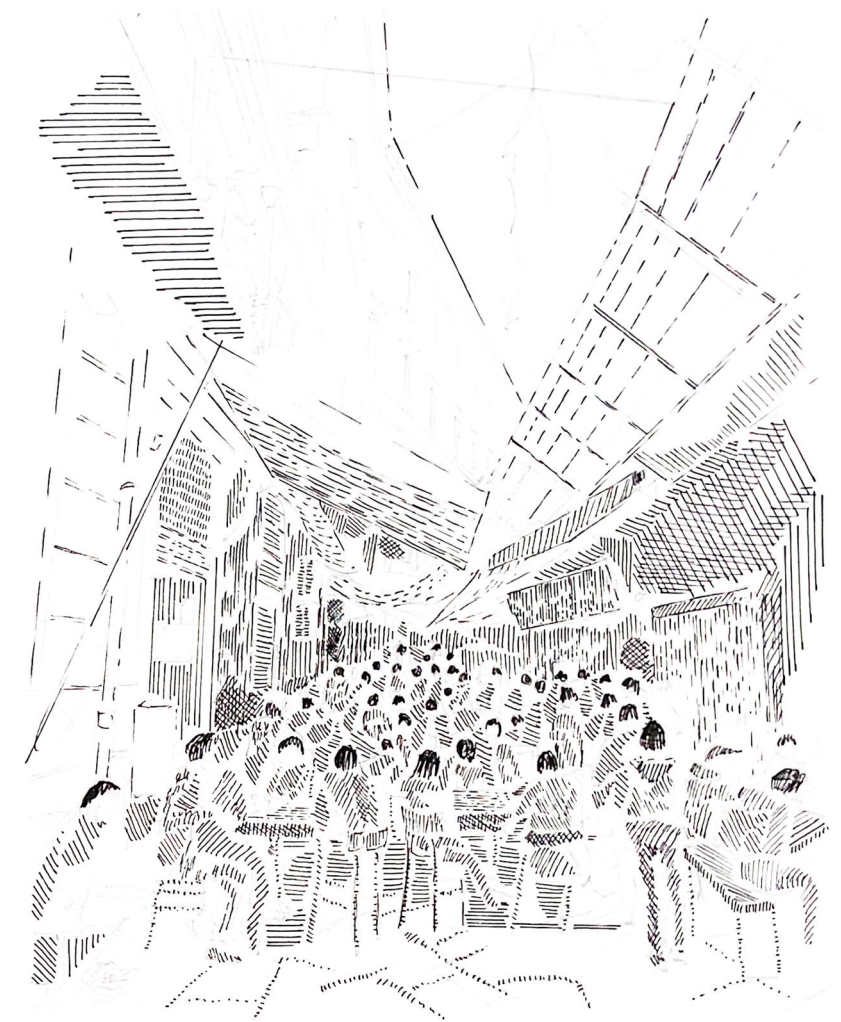
Franco: Aaahhh I can see in Pisa you have no proper butcher then! The counter in Ballarò stays outside, on the sidewalk! You can see me work, there is no “behind the scenes”! You can look at me, you can smell my meats, you can see them, you could even touch if I had a say on it! Here, taste a bit of my sausage, the best in Ballarò!

M: You [butchers] all say that Franco...

F: Yes, but I am no liar...Do you want a bit more for lunch?

M: Of course I do! It's the best sausage in Ballarò...

Dialogue between Francesco Montagnani and an informal market vendor, from "The Politics of Activism and Urban Re-qualification in Palermo".



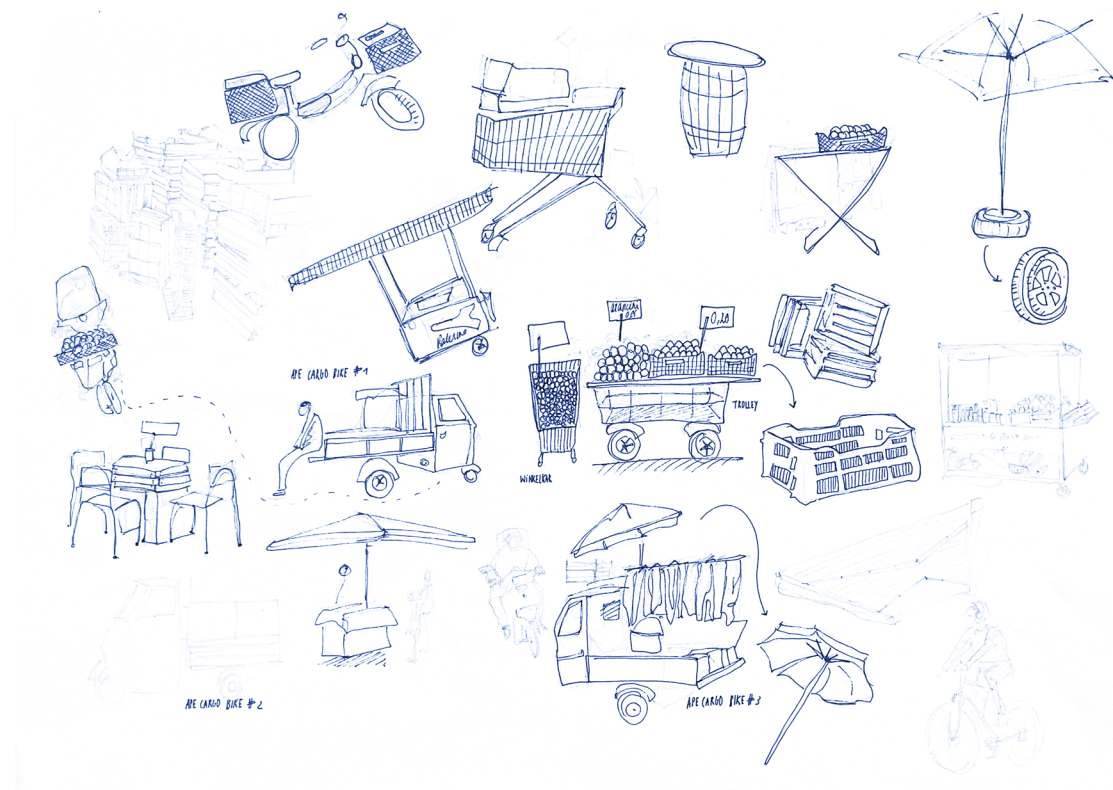
*A Ballarò street scene.
pen on paper
148 x 210 mm*



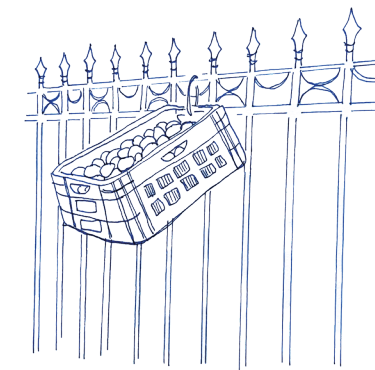
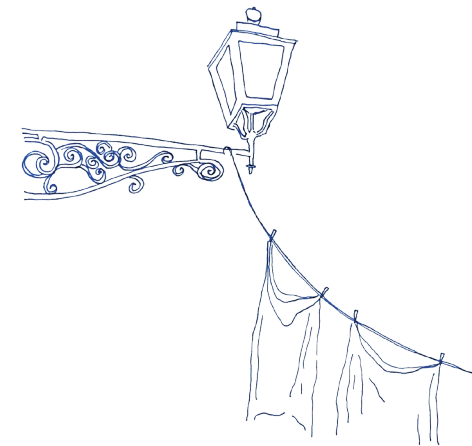
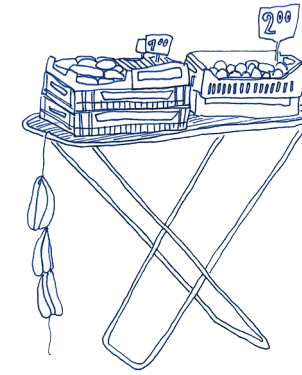
Fig 1. The dense fabric of Ballarò: sunshades stretch across the street, forming a patchwork roof that shelters the market life below.

The market is not a static entity, but a constantly fluctuating landscape of material adaptations and self-made configurations. Montagnani describes the market as a space of improvisation, in which market vendors innovatively use the limited space they have. Tables evolve into storefronts, shopping carts operate as mobile storage units and car tires serve to anchor improvised canopies. Vehicles shift roles, used for transport by day and repurposed as storage by night. Everyday materials become tools for marking and claiming personal vending spots, defining their place within the market street life.

These *material infrastructures* reflect the undeniable role of the informal economy within the formal design of urban space. Its constant reconfiguration follows a rhythm without strict frameworks, guided more by unofficial activities than by official regulations. The friction between spontaneous spatial planning and under-developed urban infrastructure reveals a city where formal and informal processes are deeply intertwined.

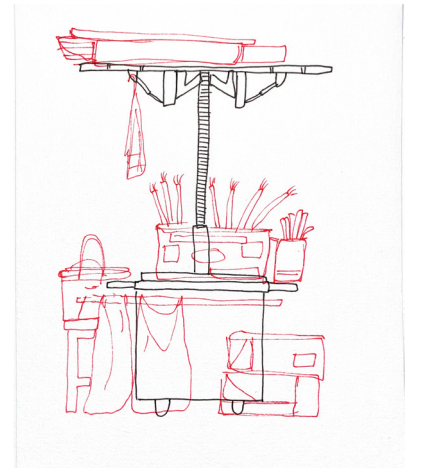
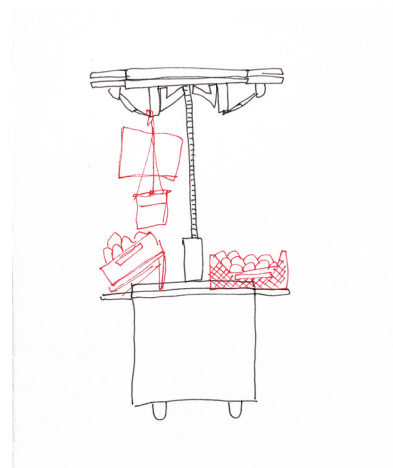
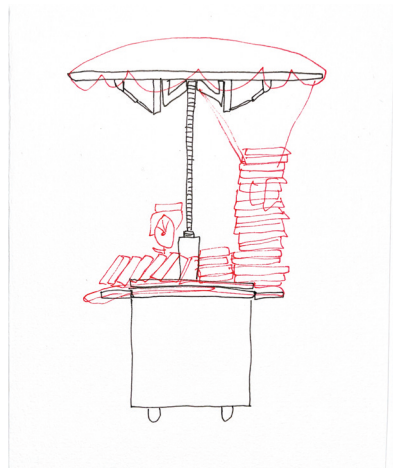
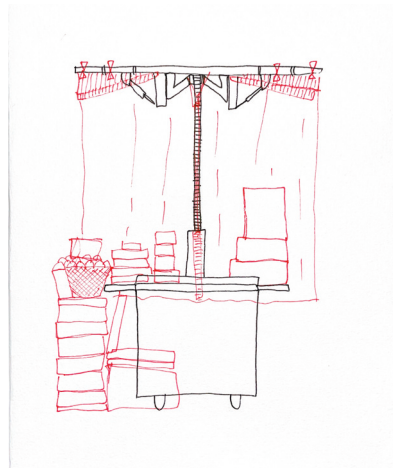


Material infrastructures.
pen on paper
297 x 420 mm



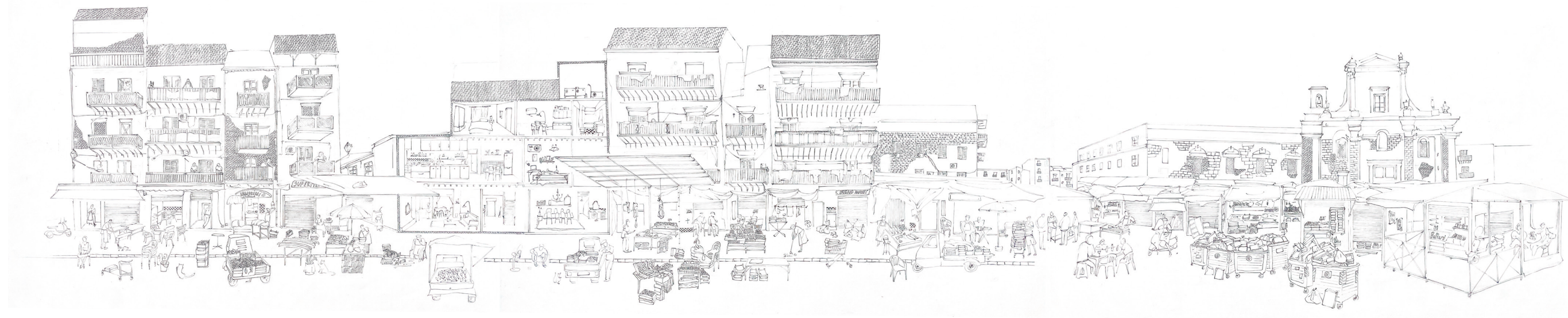
An illustration of the inventive use of limited space on the market streets, reconfiguring everyday materials into practical tools adapted to the specific needs of residents and market vendors.

pen on paper
105 x 148 mm

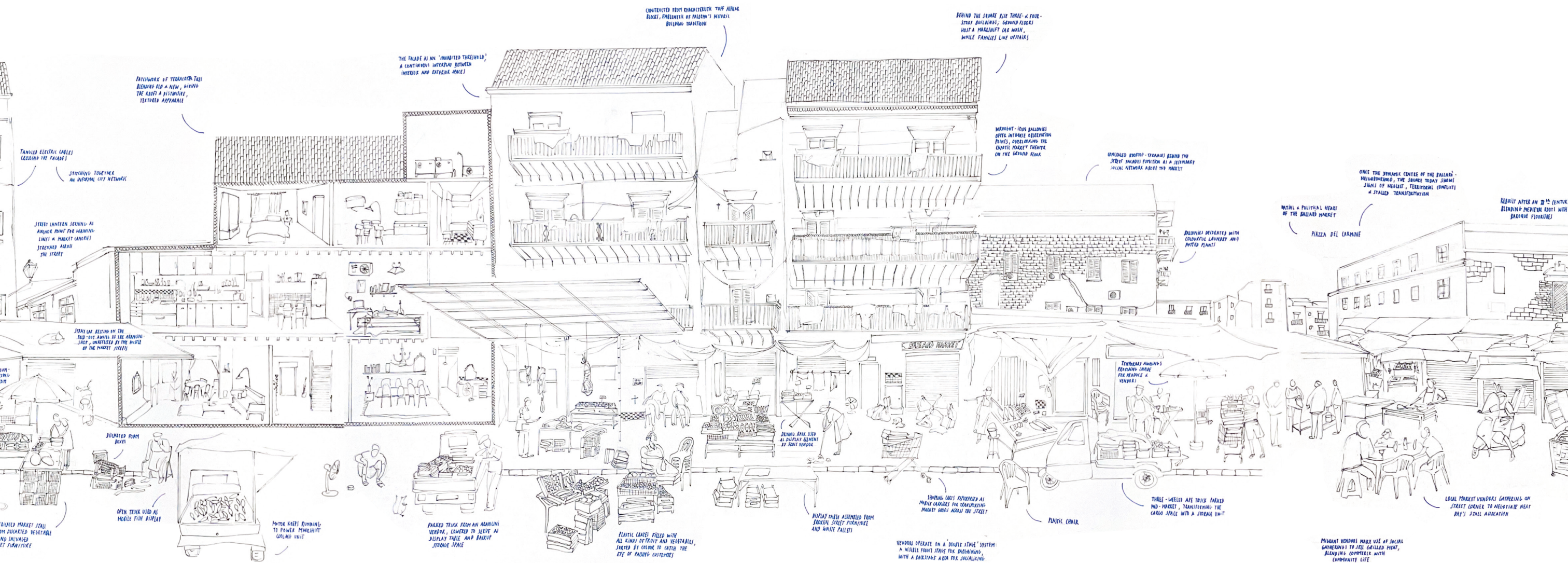


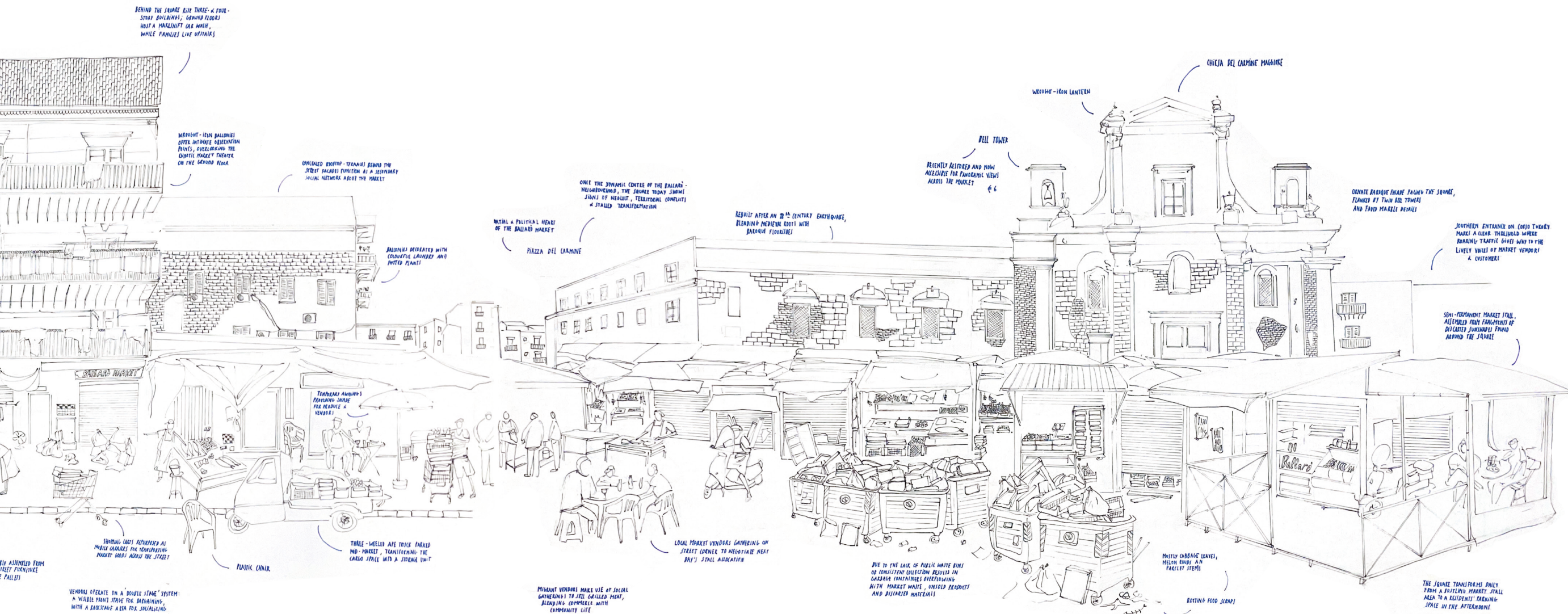
A representation of the many transformations within a seemingly simple market structure, illustrating how these small-scale configurations can influence the broader functioning of the market.

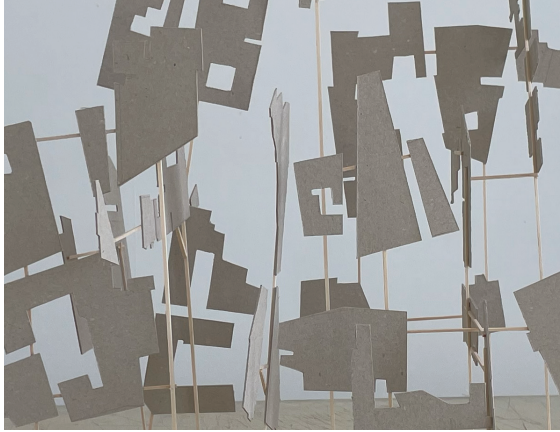
*pen on paper
105 x 148 mm*



Ethnographic drawing of a Ballarò street, Palermo.
 pen on paper
 420 x 1780 mm







*Spatial analysis of the built and unbuilt spaces of the Ballarò market.
Inspired by Gosia Malgorzata.*

Unframing

The street

The facade

The terrace

The facade as an inhabited threshold

The connection between indoor and outdoor activities is reshaped through the complex (and sometimes competing) relationship between private vendors and street food stalls. Similarly, private homes and shared public spaces are used in flexible (and often interchangeable) ways. Locals treat market areas as natural extensions of their homes, while public spaces are continually transformed by spontaneous social interactions. This reflects a broader urban pattern where the ongoing negotiation between private and public life actively shapes the city, unframing the architectural facade as a clear boundary between interior and exterior.

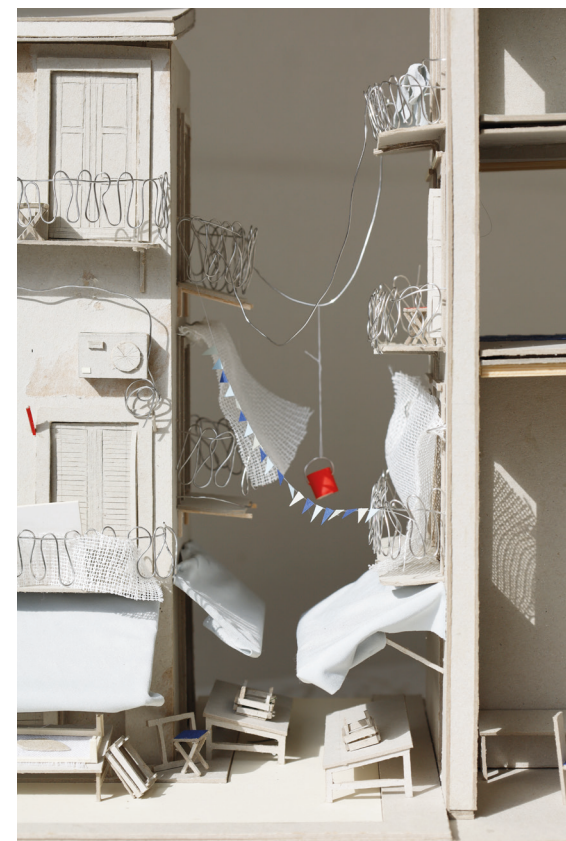
In Ballarò, facades and balconies act as *inhabited thresholds*, mediating inside and outside. Residents treat facades as extensions of their homes, while balconies offer vantage points to observe the market without full exposure to the street's chaos.

Studying informal practices, such as the flexible use of space for trade, reveals the importance of adaptability, especially in a context of economic uncertainty and rapid urban growth. Unframing this complex relationship between informal economies and formal urban planning creates an invitation to reconsider traditional boundaries and the ways we engage with the city.



*Fragment of the Ballarò market street,
unframing the façade as a threshold
between interior and public space.
(p40-43)*

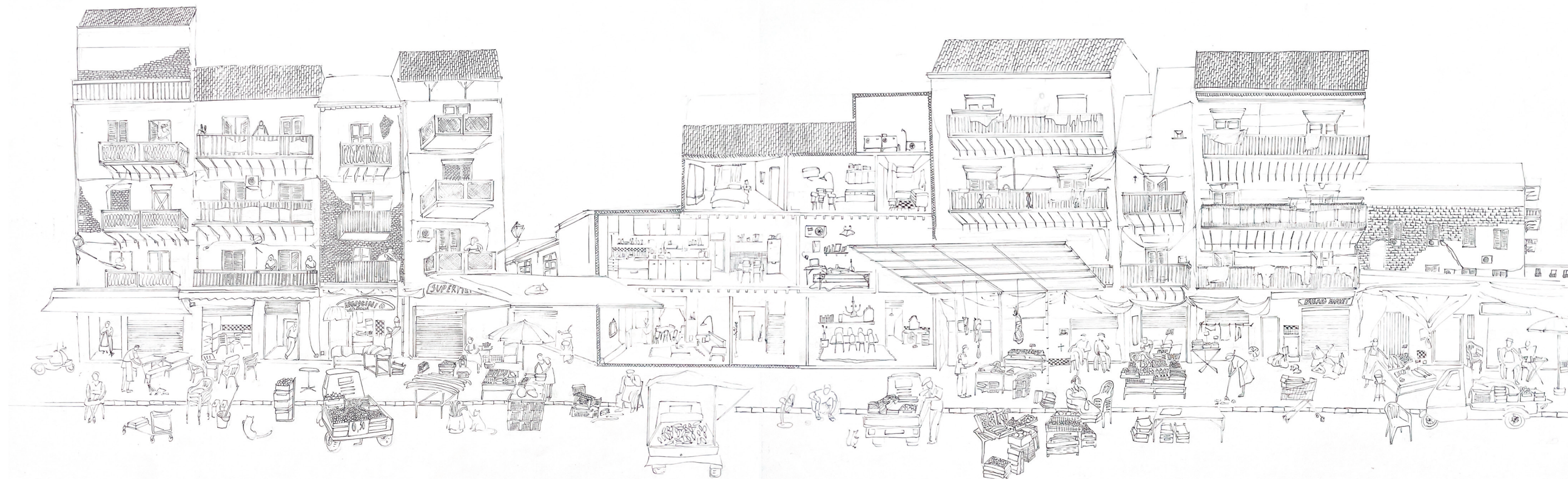
model made of cardboard 1/33



The inhabited facade transforms into a space where the boundary between inside and outside is experienced not just by the physical movement of *passing through*, but by dwelling, by being present and living within.



Perched above the narrow alleys of Palermo, balconies emerge as liminal spaces: silent stages suspended between the private interior and the vibrant public realm of the street. Shielded by sunshades and billowing laundry, residents observe the daily theatre unfolding on the Ballarò market, participating in bustling city life while keeping a safe distance from the overwhelming chaos of the street. Therefore, the balcony performs as a communicative interface where domestic life, social observation and informal exchange converge.



Ethnographic drawing of a Ballarò street, capturing the facade as a living threshold between private homes and the vibrant street market.

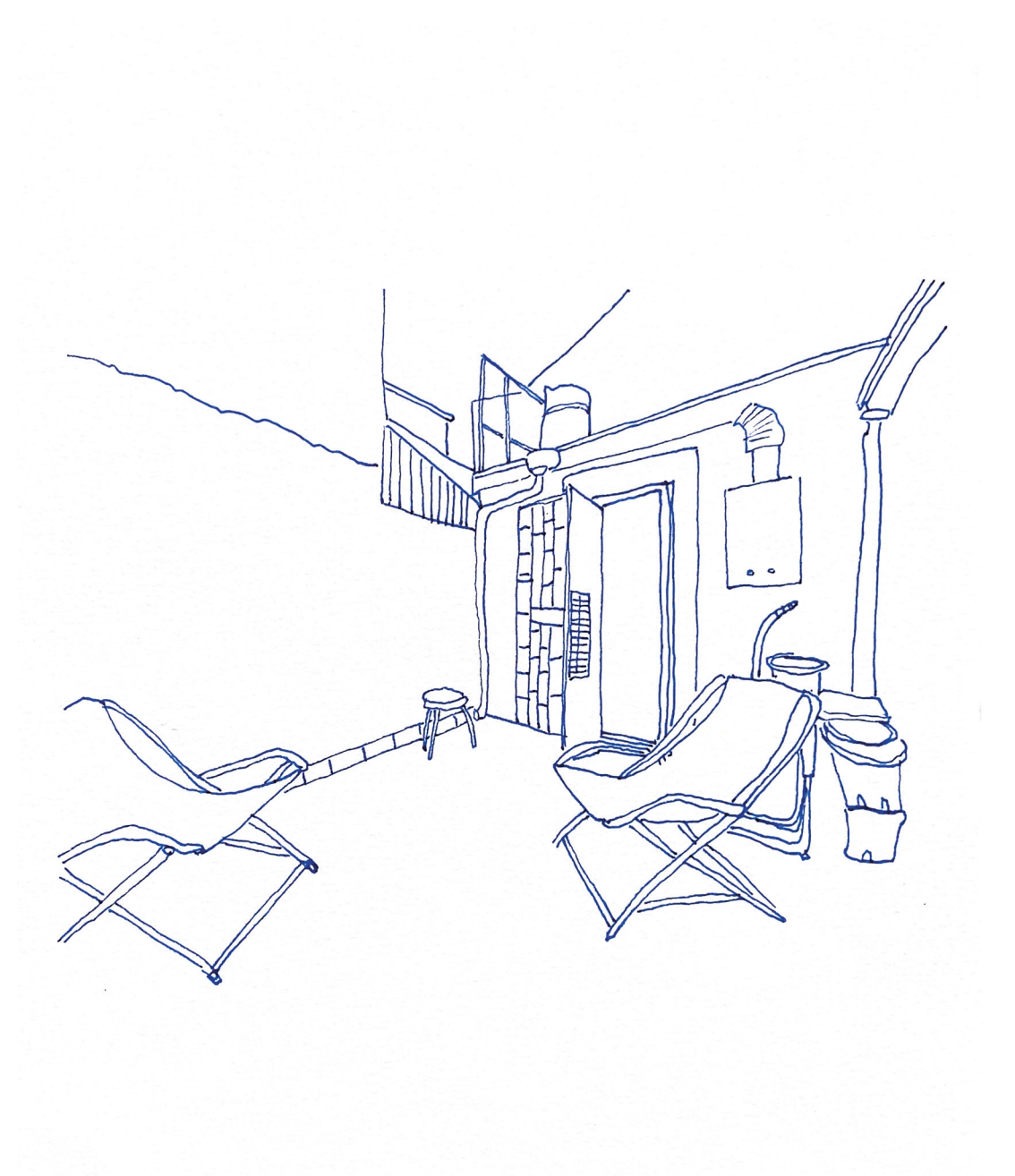
*pen on paper
420 x 1780 mm*

Unframing

The street

The facade

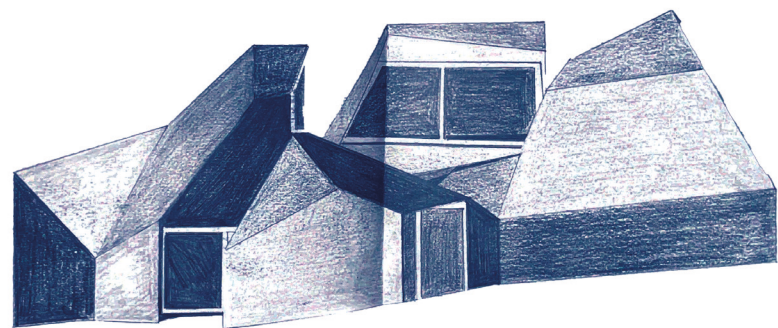
The terrace



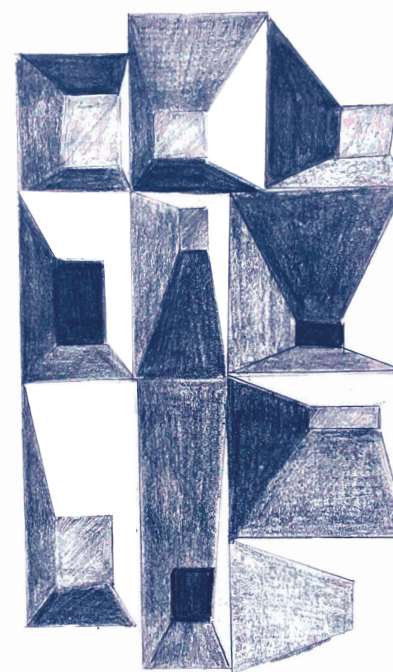
Concealed beyond the bustling streets of Ballarò unfolds a second, almost hidden layer of the city: the rooftop terrace. While the streets below thrive with trade and social life, these elevated spaces go largely unnoticed by tourists and pedestrians. Yet, they are an integral part of urban life, offering residents a personal escape and place to come together. A scene where informal communities take shape and new social connections emerge. In a time of increasing spatial scarcity and congestion, these rooftops provide an overlooked yet essential layer of social and cultural connectivity within the city's fabric.

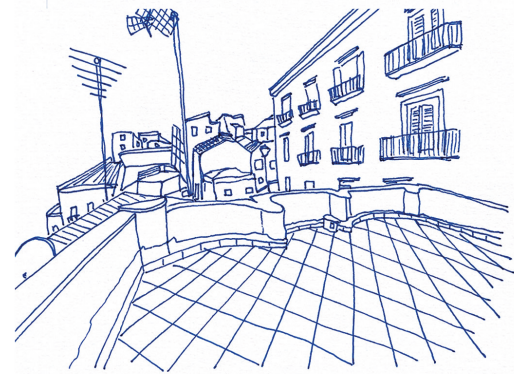
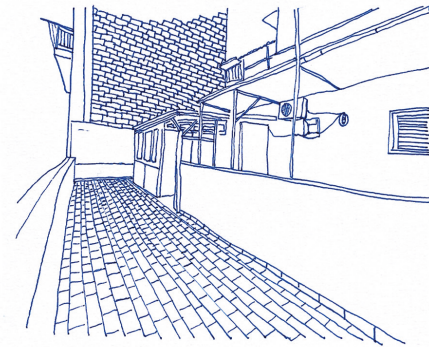
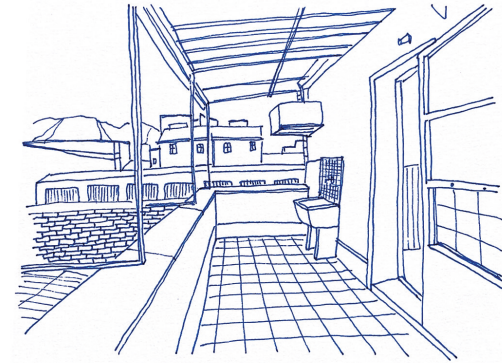
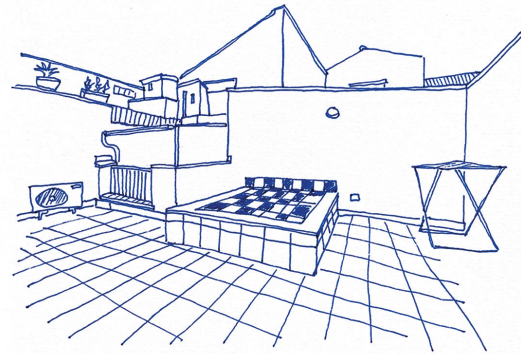
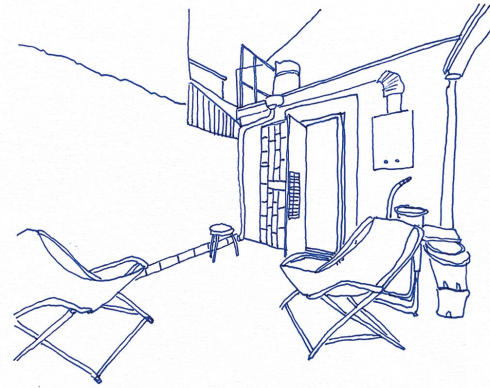


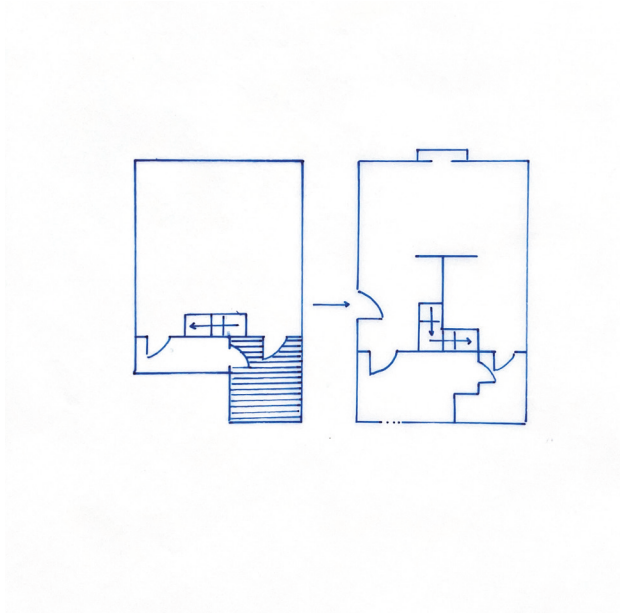
*An overlooked urban layer.
pen on paper
148 x 210 mm*



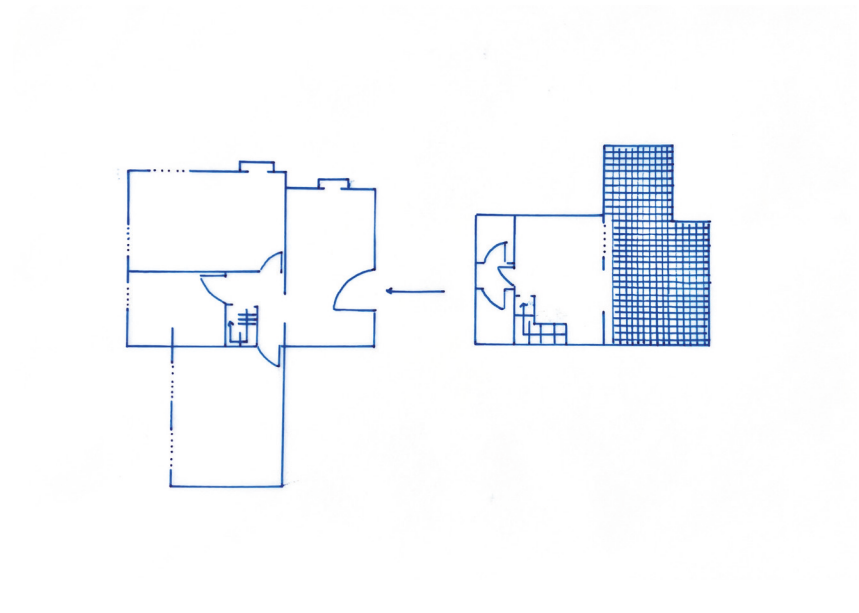
Spatial analysis of rooftop terraces. (p52-59)
colored pencil on paper
148 x 210 mm



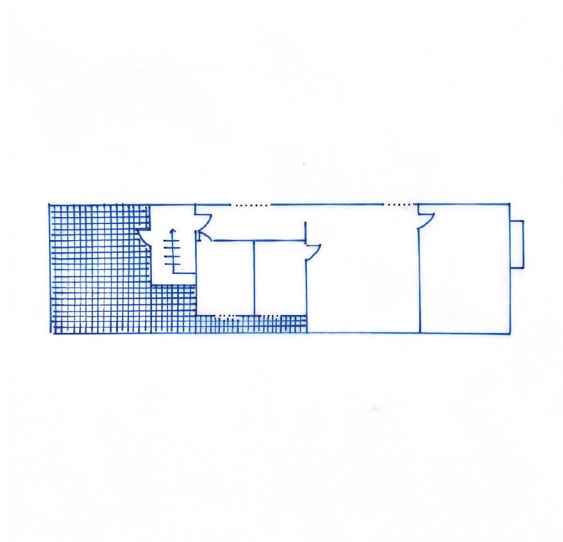




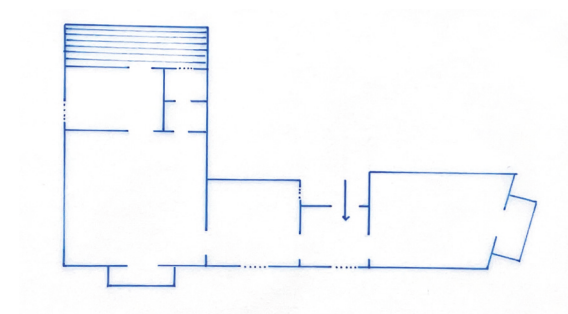
N.38°6'58,7" O. 13°21'8,3"



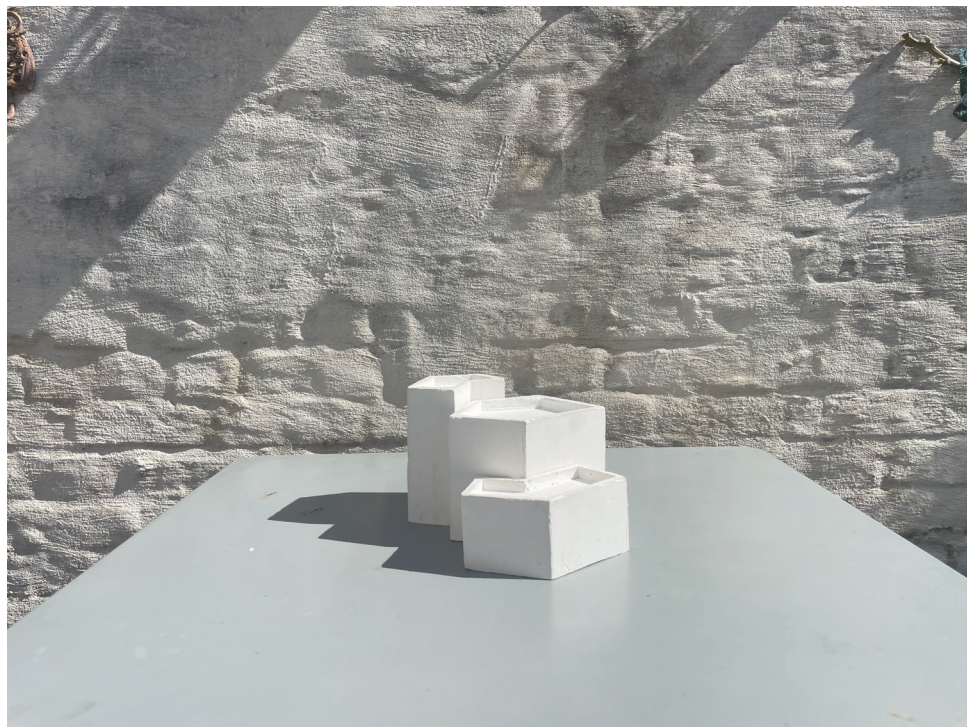
N.38°7'0,1" O. 13°21'16,6"



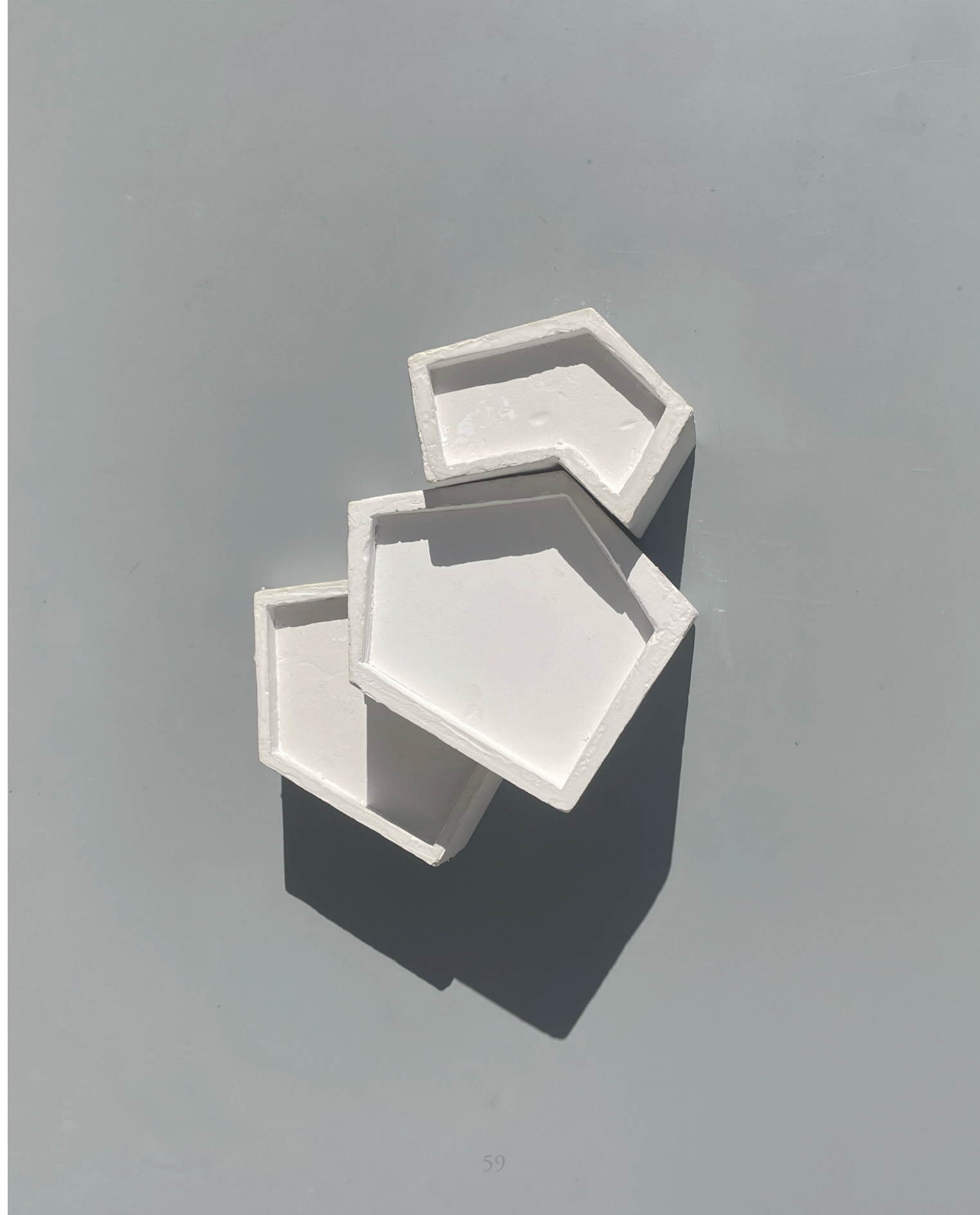
N.38°6'59,2" O. 13°21'43,3"



N.38°7'55,3" O. 13°29'8,2"



*The rooftop as a defined void.
model made out of cast plaster*



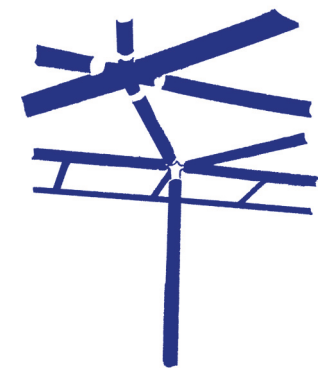
Negotiating

Piazza del Carmine

De Brugse Poort

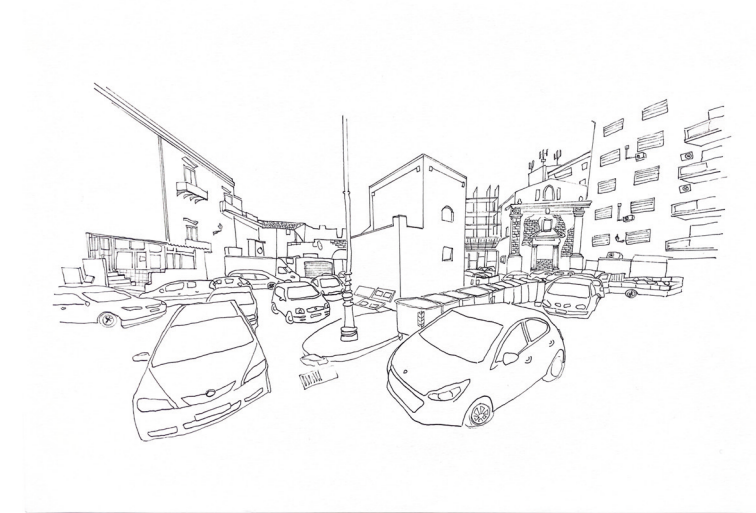
By exploring the layered spatial dynamics of Ballarò through street-level improvisations, inhabited façades and rooftop intimacies, my focus shifts to the spatial and political heart of the market: Piazza del Carmine. Once the dynamic center of the Ballarò neighbourhood, the square today shows signs of neglect, territorial conflicts and stalled transformation. At its center stands a large hexagonal market structure: a physical and symbolic reminder of ongoing tensions between top-down planning and grassroots resistance.

To make these frictions tangible, I created a layered documentation capturing its spatial practices and everyday dynamics, to better understand the complex entanglements shaping the square.



The hexagonal market structure currently dominating Piazza del Carmine originated from a grassroots initiative during a period of economic decline. The proposal sought to formalize long-standing informal activities, providing the needed infrastructure to a historically neglected space: a piazza that for years functioned as an unregulated parking area and informal dumping ground.

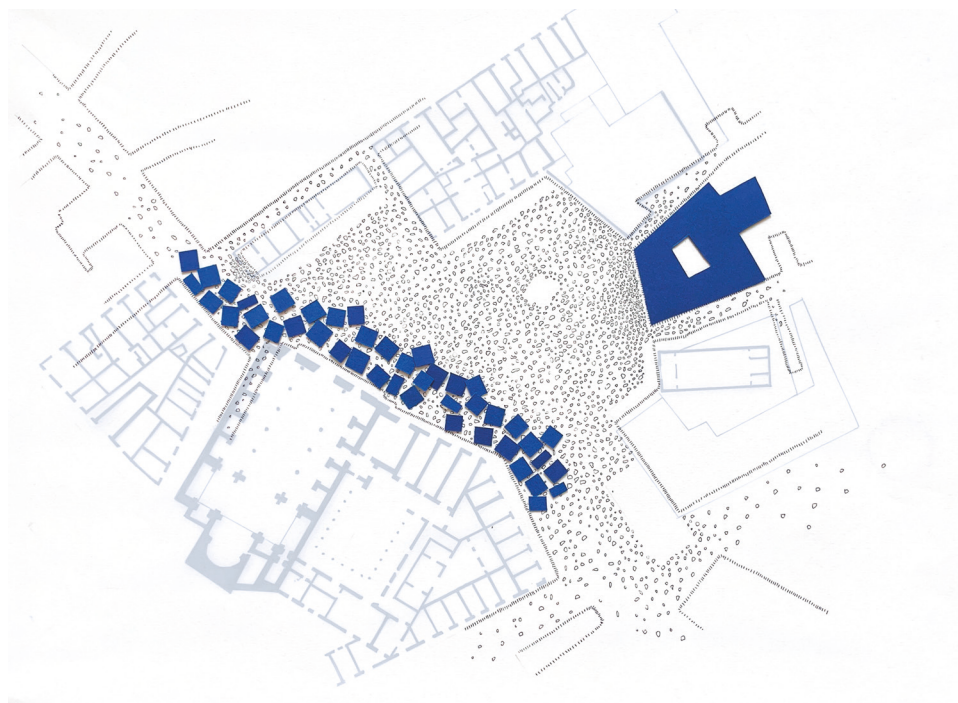
Despite its participatory intent, the market was never actually activated and has since remained empty for years. New municipal criteria that no vendor can meet have left the structure abandoned, fenced off, and increasingly misused. The site has once again become a focal point of neglect, serving as an informal dumping ground and hotspot for illicit activities. As a result, the daily market rhythms completely bypass the structure, highlighting a deep disconnect between official urban policies and the lived realities of the community.



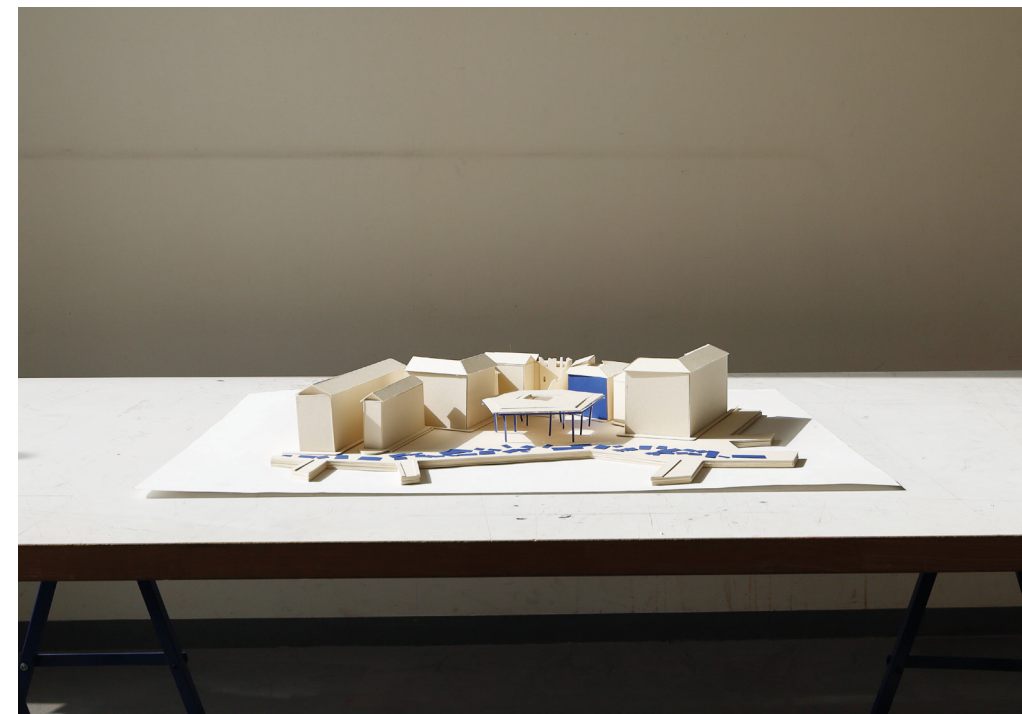
Piazza Carmine's former use as an informal parking area.
pen on paper
297 x 210 mm



Fig 2. Covered market structure on Piazza del Carmine, Ballarò.



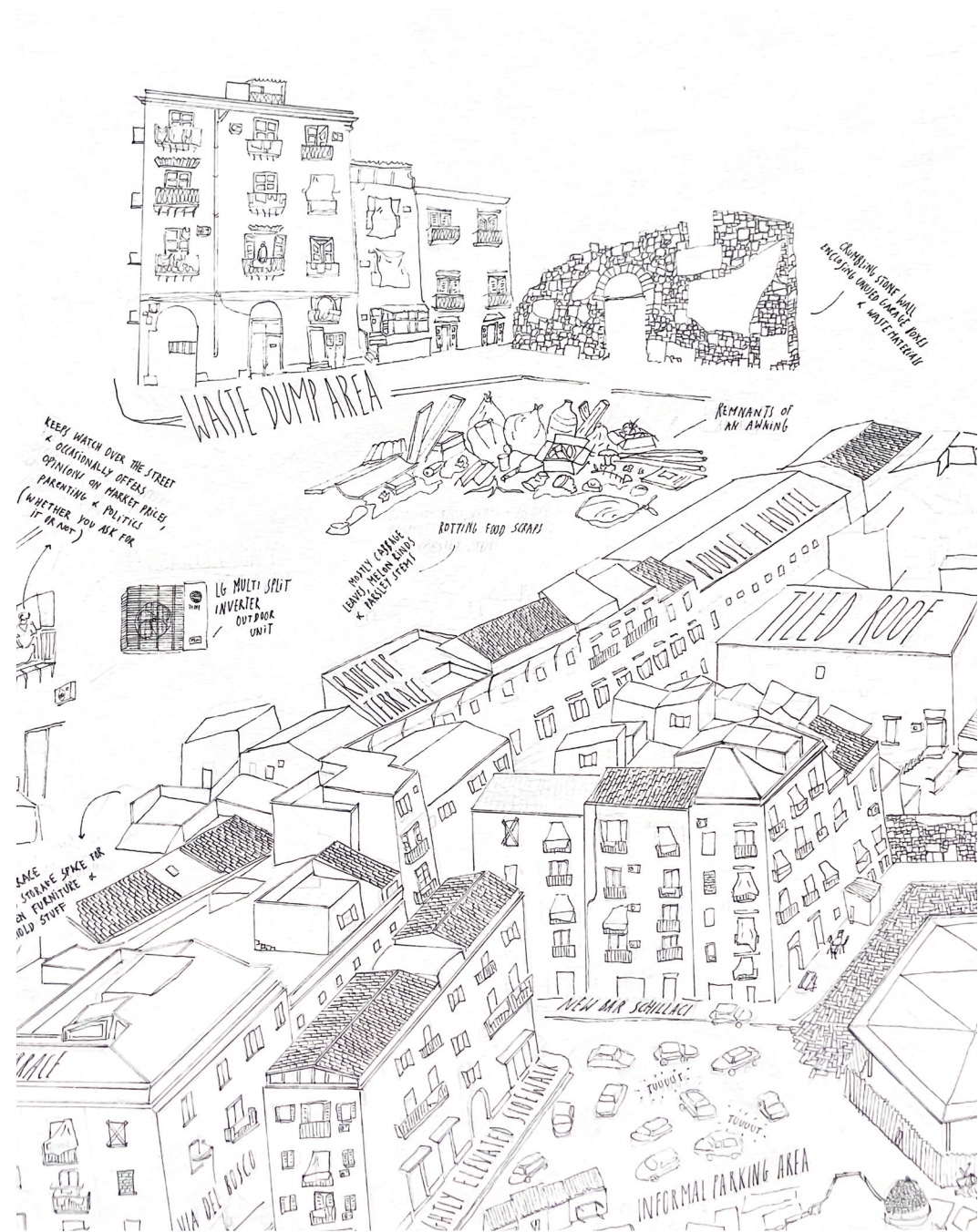
*Piazza del Carmine.
collage, pen on paper
297 x 420 mm*



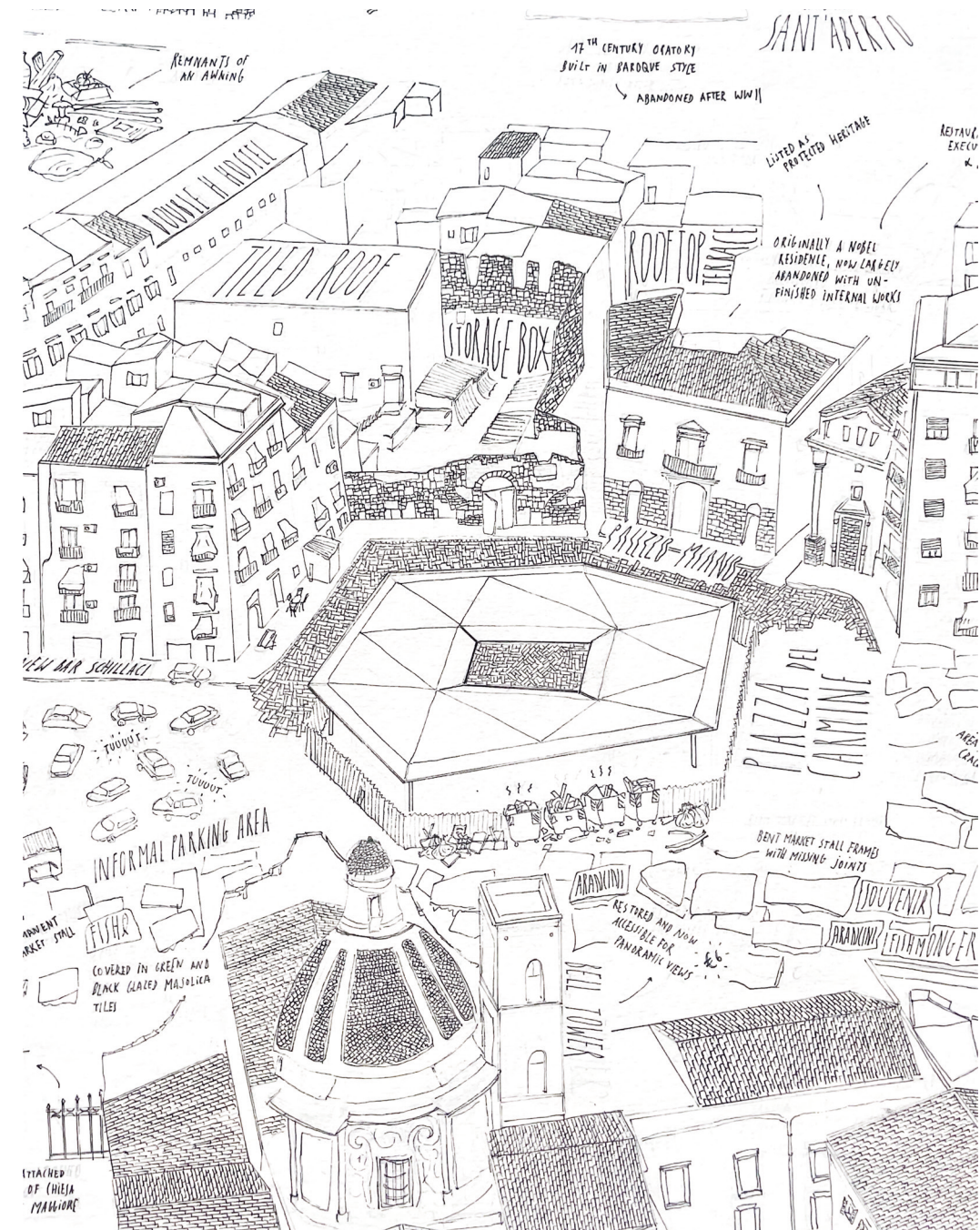
*Piazza del Carmine and its
covered market structure.
model made of chipboard 1/200*



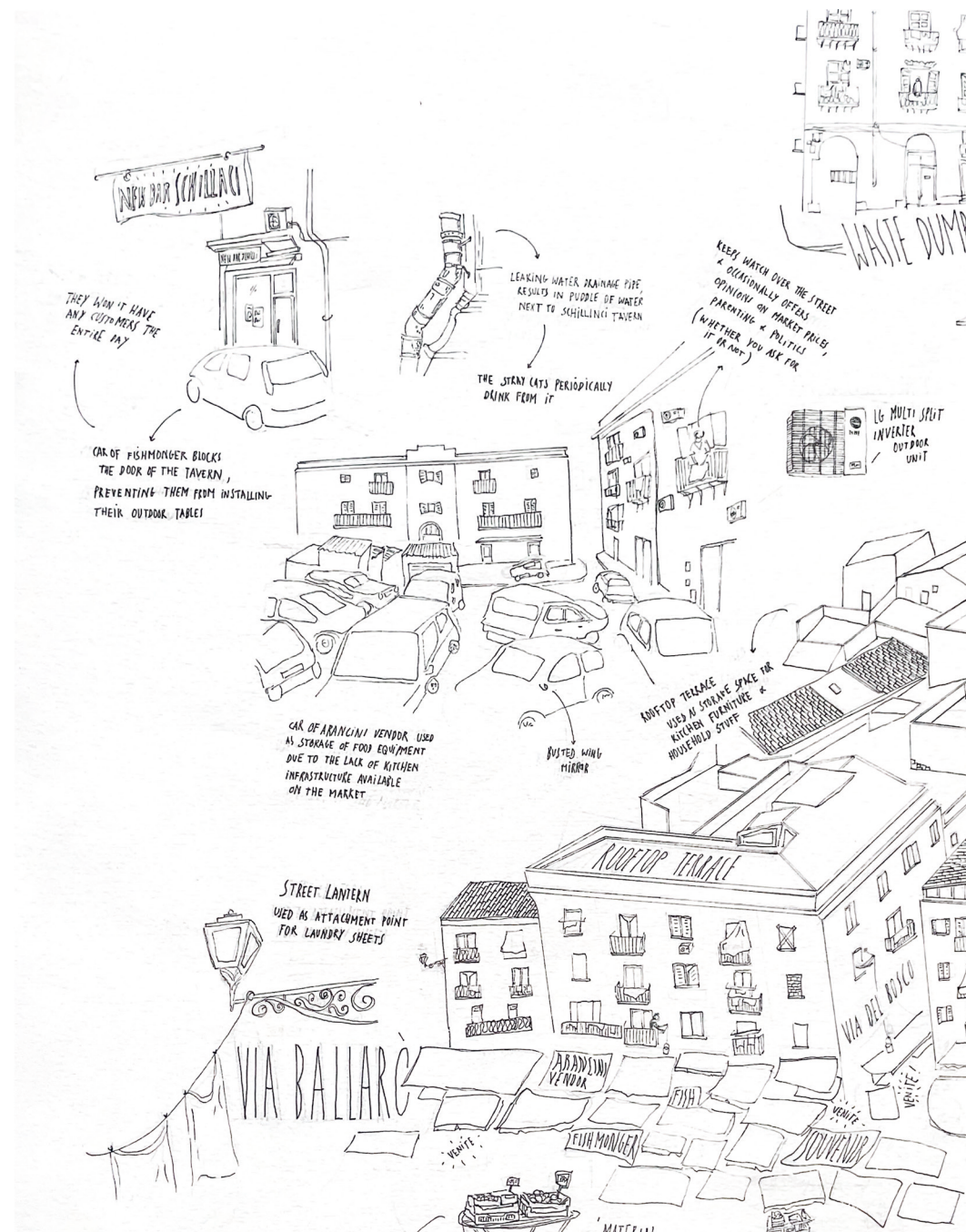
*Fragment of the covered market structure.
model 1/33*



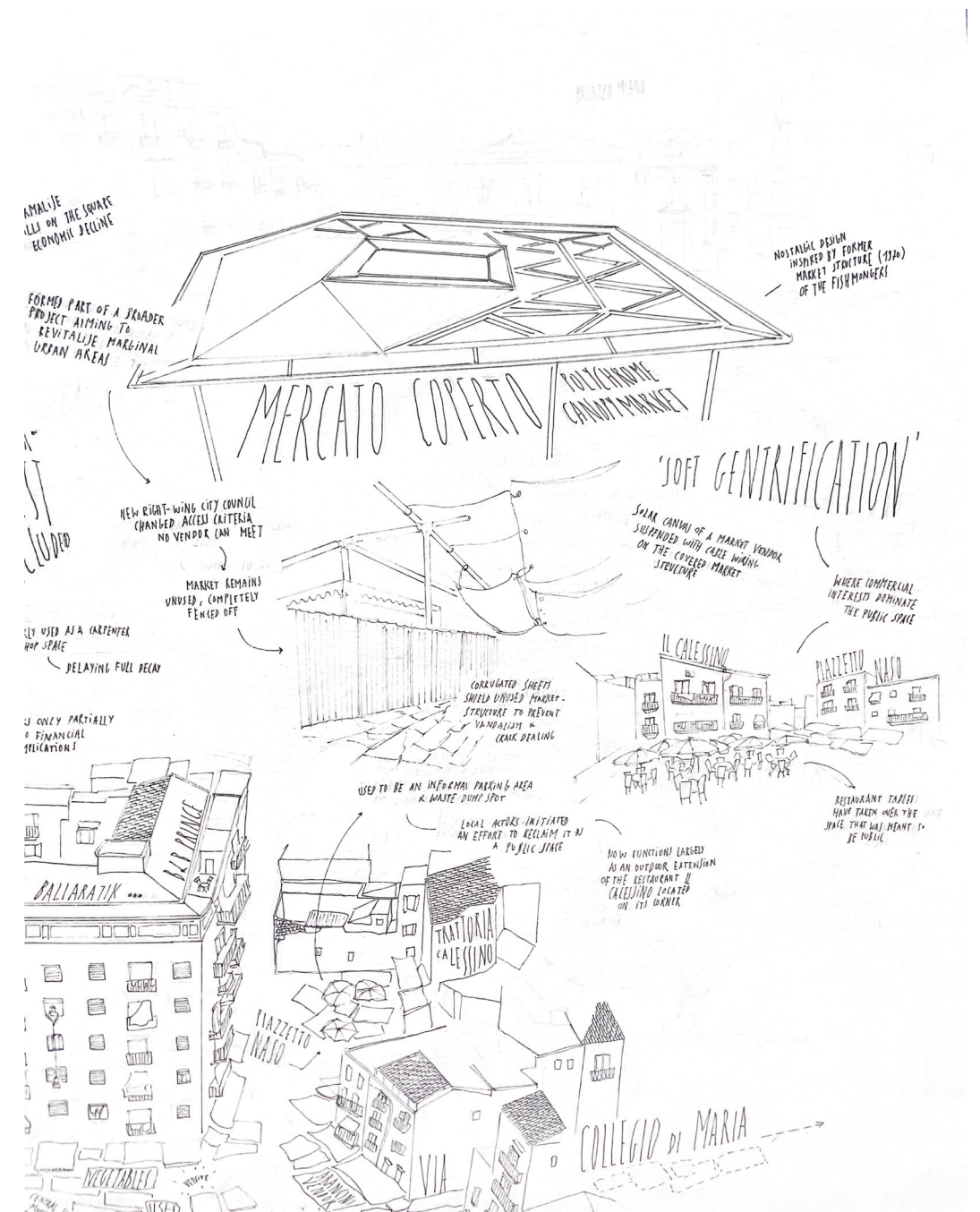
Piazza del Carmine, atlas.
zoom 1



Piazza del Carmine, atlas.
zoom 2



Piazza del Carmine, atlas.
zoom 3



Piazza del Carmine, atlas.
zoom 4

Negotiating

Piazza del Carmine

De Brugse Poort



Emilius Seghersplein, Brugse Poort.

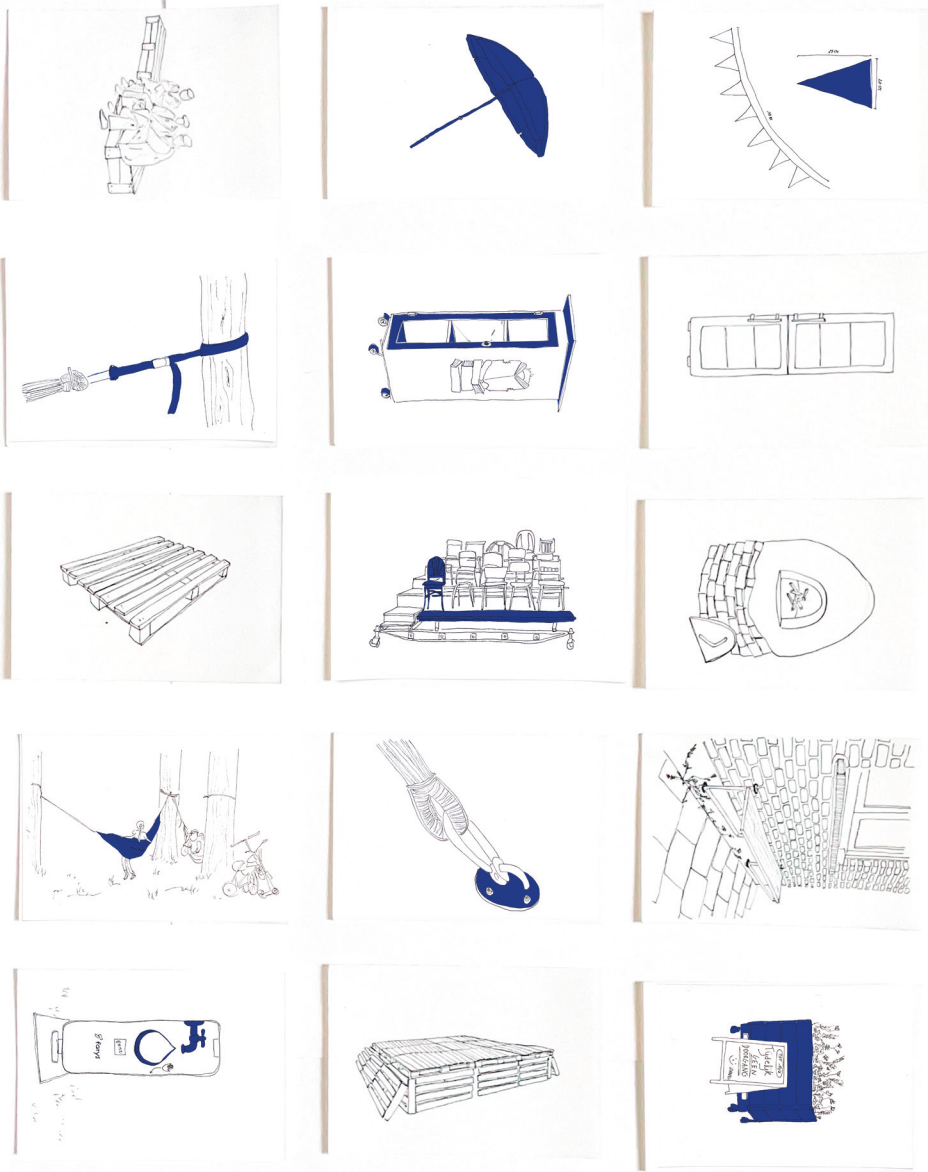
pen on paper

297 x 420 mm

Urban Recipes

As a parallel spatial inquiry, I turned to my own environment: the Brugse Poort in Ghent, a neighbourhood shaped by similar tensions around migration, social friction and contested space. Through on-site analysis of how residents and local groups address these dynamics, I identified a set of collective spatial tools: shared ovens, mobile counters, public rinsing points and informal repair stations. Rather than offering fixed solutions, they support daily routines, negotiation and make space for collective agency.

In contrast to top-down redevelopment strategies, these grassroots interventions exemplify how shared urban areas can be reshaped through daily practices, enabling more adaptive, responsive and contextually grounded forms of interaction. Rather than serving as a fixed model for direct replication in Palermo, this manual of *micro-infrastructures* offers a transferable typology of shared use—tools that may inform a more situated and inclusive approach to transforming market spaces.



Manual of micro-infrastructures.
pen on paper
105 x 148 mm (15)

Reframing

The kitchen

The water basin

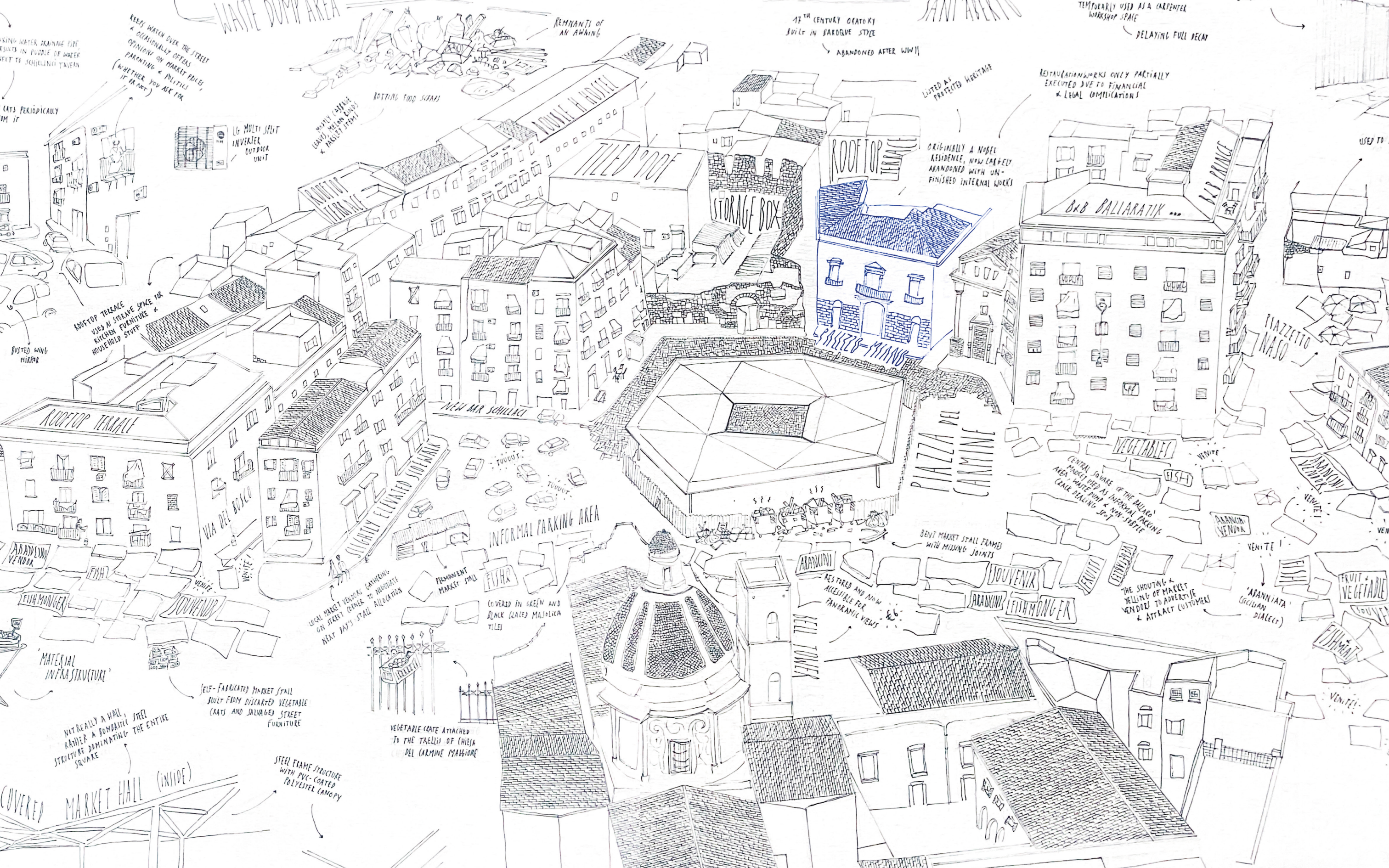
The material depot

Building on earlier insights into Ballarò's informal dynamics, I developed three transformative interventions—the kitchen, the water basin and the material depot—not as fixed solutions, but as possible strategies meant to support and strengthen the existing rhythms within a context marked by neglect.

To understand food practices in Ballarò, it is crucial to recognize the neighborhood's informal rhythms and the daily resilience of its residents. In a market where the flavors, scents and recipes of more than 36 different nationalities come together, food functions as the strongest cultural bond, where the kitchen provides a language that everyone understands.

In recent decades, food practices in Ballarò have grown more complex due to economic hardship, tourism and migration, leading to miscommunication and competition among vendors, as well as a notable lack of accessible kitchen facilities within the market. This highlights the urgent need for shared, well-equipped spaces to support everyday culinary activities.

Through careful documentation, I identified Palazzo Miano, a vacant building centrally located on Piazza del Carmine. In exploring possible scenarios to respond to Ballarò's complex dynamics, this site emerged as an interesting opportunity, raising the following question: *In what ways could Palazzo Miano enhance and reinforce the neighborhood's local food networks?*



WASTE DUMP AREA

REMNANTS OF AN AWNING

17TH CENTURY ORATORY
BUILT IN BAROQUE STYLE

ABANDONED AFTER WWII

TEMPORARILY USED AS A CARPENTER
WORKSHOP SPACE
DELAYING FULL DECAY

LISTED AS
PROTECTED HERITAGE

RESTORATION WORKS ONLY PARTIALLY
EXECUTED DUE TO FINANCIAL
& LEGAL COMPLICATIONS

ORIGINALLY A NOBEL
RESIDENCE, NOW LARGELY
ABANDONED WITH UN-
FINISHED INTERNAL WORKS

USED TO

WORKING WATER DRAINAGE PIPE
RESULTS IN PUDDLE OF WATER
NEXT TO SCHILLING TAVERN

CATS PERIODICALLY
DOM IT

KEEPS WATCH OVER THE STREET
& OCCASIONALLY OFFERS
OPINIONS ON MARKET PRICES
(WHETHER YOU ASK FOR
IT OR NOT)

LG MULTI SPLIT
INVERTER
OUTDOOR UNIT

WASTY CATHODE
LEADS MEAN RAINS
& HALET JERAM

ROTTING FOOD STAINS

KNIFE FOR TEASER
USES A STORAGE SPACE FOR
KITCHEN FURNITURE &
HOUSEHOLD STUFF

BUSTED WIND
MIRROR

ROOFTOP TERRACE

VIA DEL BOSCO

SLIGHTLY ELEVATED SIDEWALK

NEW MAR SCHILLACI

STORAGE BOX

ROOFTOP
TERRACE

PIAZZA DEL
CARMINE

B&B BALLARATIK

ALP PRINCE

PIAZZETTO
NASO

VEGETABLES

FISH

CENTRAL SQUARE OF THE DULARO
MARKET USED AS INFORMAL PARKING
AREA, WHITE PUNK & NON-SUBTLE
CRACK DEALING SPOT

BENT MARKET STALL FRAMES
WITH MISSING JOINTS

ARANNI

RESTORED AND NOW
ACCESSIBLE FOR
PANORAMIC VIEWS

BELL TOWER

JOUVENIR

ARANNI

FISH MONGER

THE SHOUTING &
YELLING OF MARKET
VENDORS TO ADVERTISE
& ATTRACT CUSTOMERS

'ARANNI IATA'
(SLOVIAN DIALECT)

FRUIT &
VEGETABLE

SOUVENIR

FISH MARKET

VENITE!

LOCAL MARKET VENDORS
ON STREET COME TO NEGOTIATE
NEAR DAILY STALL ALLOCATION

PERMANENT
MARKET STALL

COVERED IN GREEN AND
BLACK GLAZED MAJOLICA
TILES

VEGETABLE CRATE ATTACHED
TO THE TAILLIS OF (HIEJA
DEL CARMINE MAGGIORE

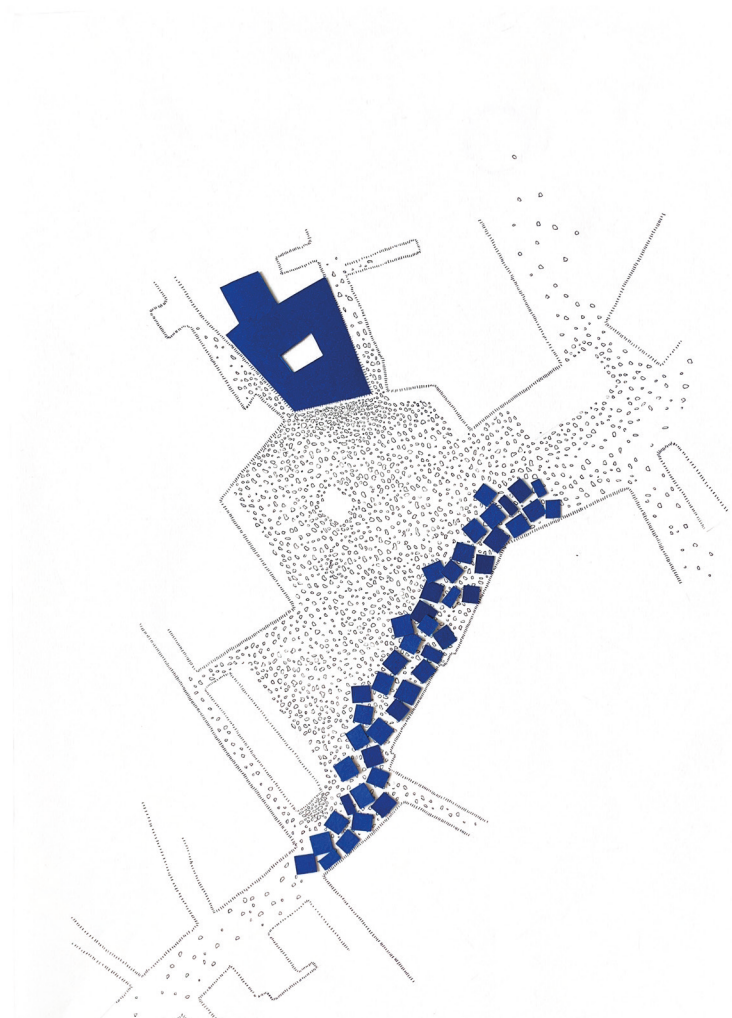
(SELF-FABRICATED) MARKET STALL
BUILT FROM DISCARDED VEGETABLE
(RATS AND SALVAGE) STREET
FURNITURE

'MATERIAL
INFRASTRUCTURE'

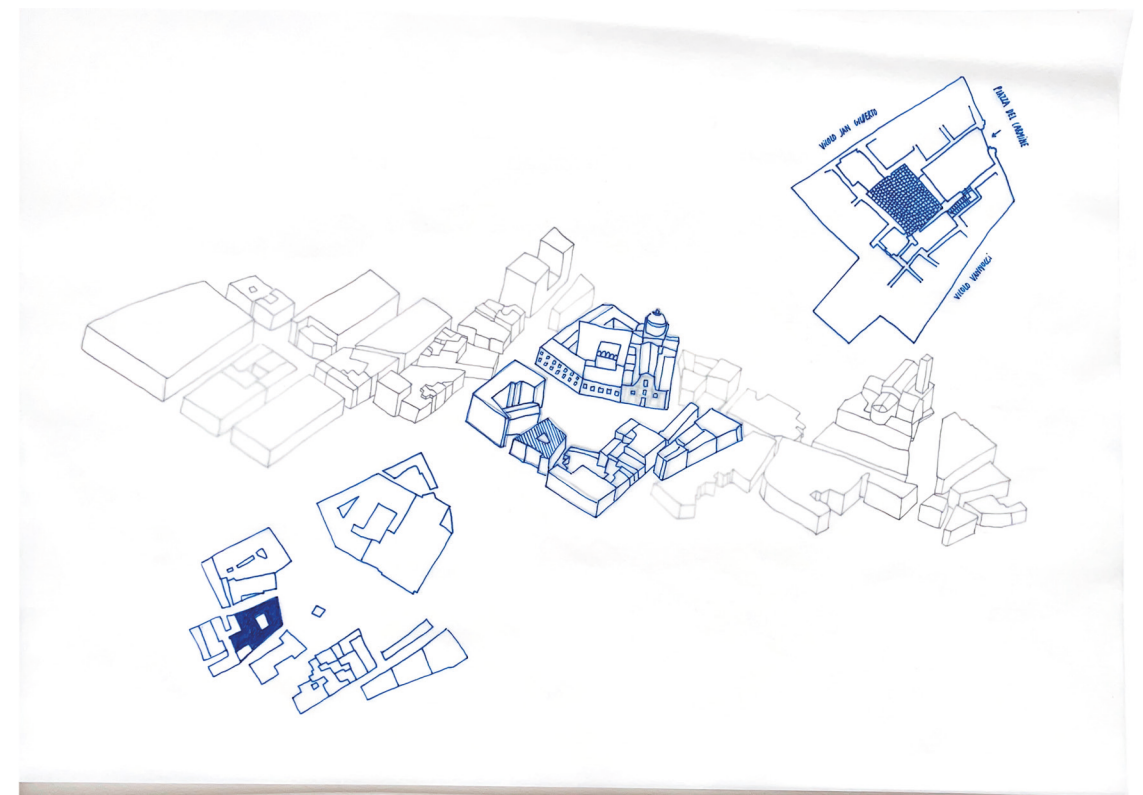
NOT REALLY A WALL,
RAATHER A BOMBASTIC STEEL
STRUCTURE DOMINATING THE ENTIRE
SQUARE

COVERED MARKET HALL (INSIDE)

STEEL FRAME STRUCTURE
WITH PVC-COATED
POLYESTER CANOPY



Palazzo Miano, Piazza del Carmine.
collage, pen on paper
 297 x 420 mm



Palazzo Miano, Piazza del Carmine.
pen on calque paper
 297 x 420 mm

Food for Thought

By examining the daily routine of an arancini vendor (as illustrated on p86-87) we gain a clear understanding of how food production in Ballarò relies on dispersed locations and informal networks. This iconic street food, deeply tied to Palermo’s culinary traditions, is usually made through a fragmented process: vendors collect fresh ingredients like peas, oil, cheese and rice directly from the market, then take them home (or informal spaces elsewhere in the city) to prepare the arancini, before returning to sell them at the market. This spatial fragmentation not only reveals the scarcity of accessible cooking facilities but also reflects a broader reality where vendors must continuously find ways to meet their basic needs as a result of limited access to resources and services.

By introducing a community kitchen in the vacant and deteriorated Palazzo Miano, this intervention directly addresses the everyday patterns of movement and improvisation. Instead of imposing new programs on the market, the kitchen builds on existing practices of circulation, exchange and shared resourcefulness. It offers a dedicated public space for storing, preparing and sharing ingredients and recipes. Providing this kitchen directly within the market could not only reduce logistical challenges for vendors, but also address issues of food waste, allowing surplus market foods to be transformed into meals for residents in vulnerable situations.

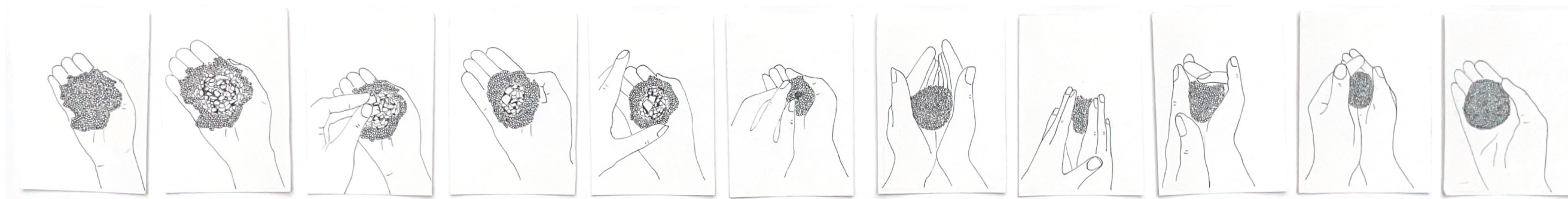


Custom poster inviting local residents and vendors to activate the community kitchen through shared infrastructure, food contributions and local collaboration.
200 x 250 mm

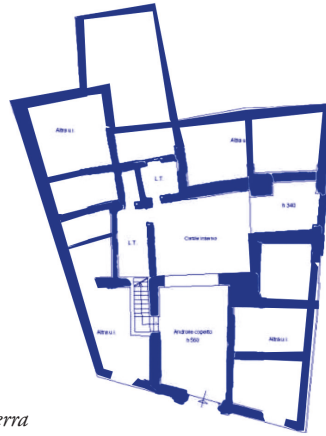
From kitchen to counter

The process behind arancini vending.
pen on calque paper
594 x 420 mm





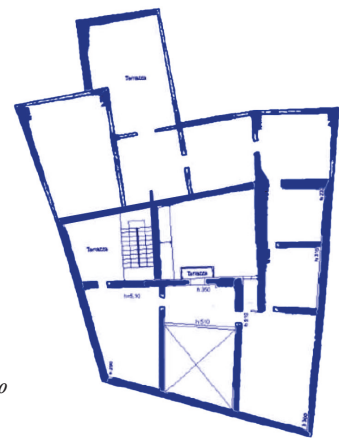
The preparation process of arancini.
 pen on paper
 105 x 148 mm (11)



piano terra

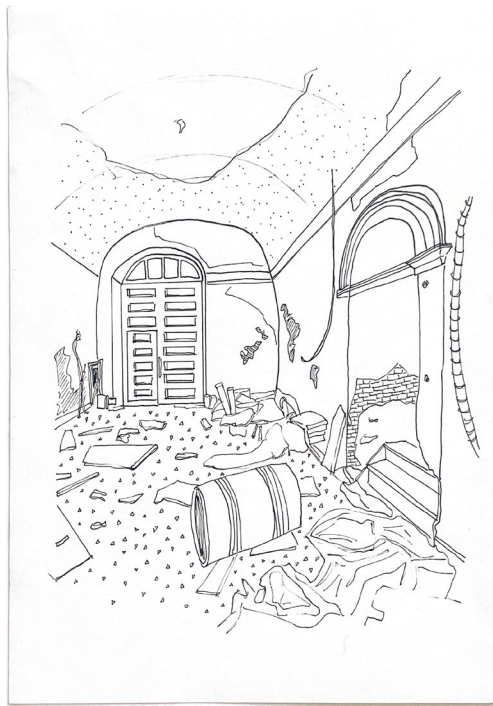


piano primo



piano secondo

Rather than erasing its layered history, the palazzo's layout is adapted to embrace informal uses, creating a spatial framework that supports everyday acts of solidarity. The classical hierarchical structure of the Italian palazzo is maintained: the ground floor is organized into enclosed spaces that provide kitchen infrastructure and storage to meet the practical needs of market vendors. In contrast, the *piano nobile* offers an open layout that highlights the building's historical grandeur and invites communal activities such as shared meals, workshops and neighborhood initiatives. This reinterpretation revitalizes a historic typology for contemporary use while fostering social interaction and economic resilience.



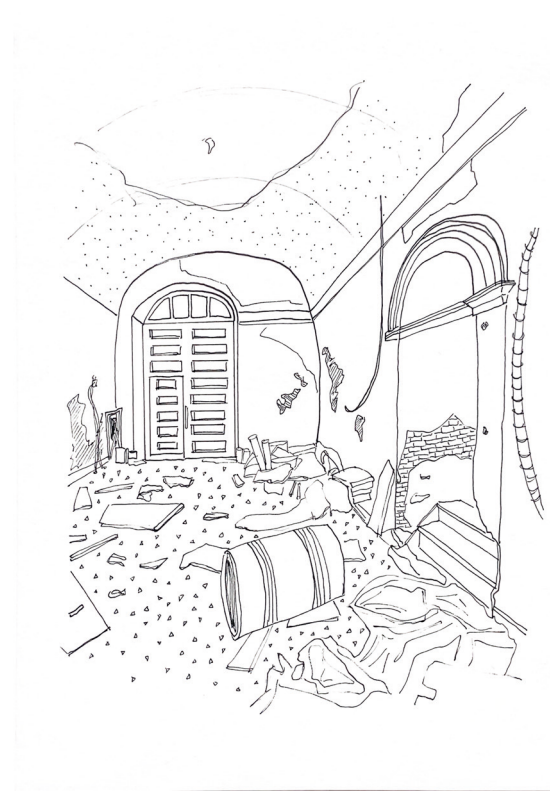
Decaying interior Palazzo Miano (entrance).
 pen on paper
 148 x 210 mm

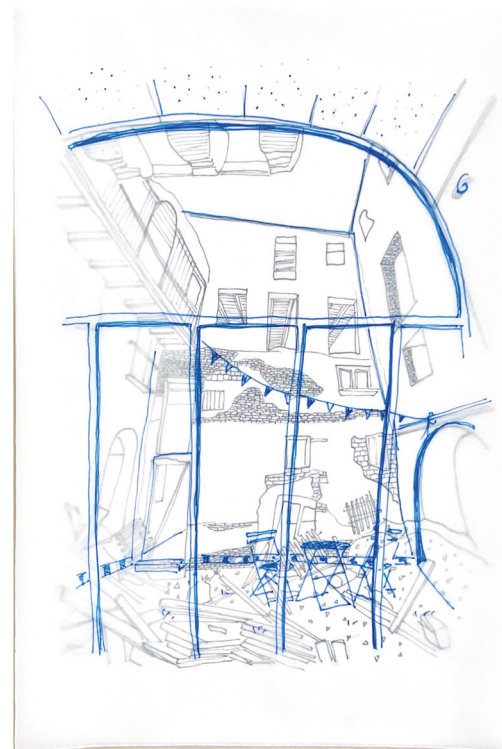
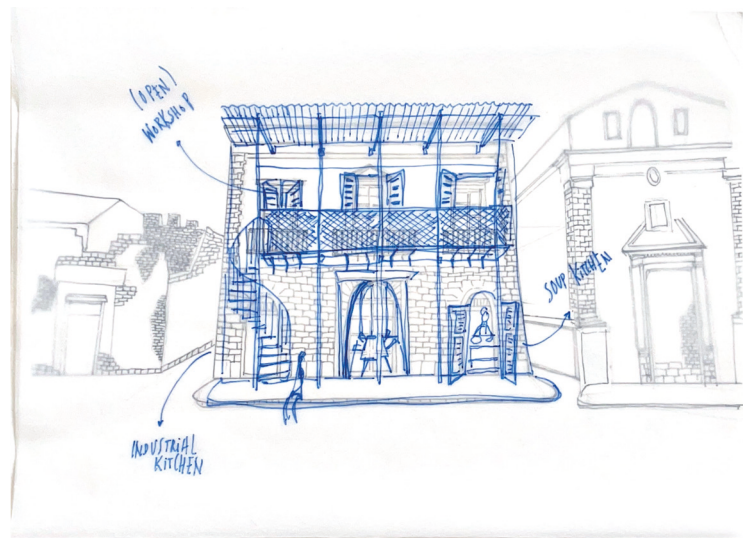


Decaying interior Palazzo Miano (piano secondo).
 pen on paper
 148 x 210 mm



Exploring the spatial potential of Palazzo Miano. (p94-97)
 blue pen on calque paper
 148 x 210 mm







*Palazzo Miano. (p98-101)
model made of chipboard 1/50*





Reframing

The kitchen

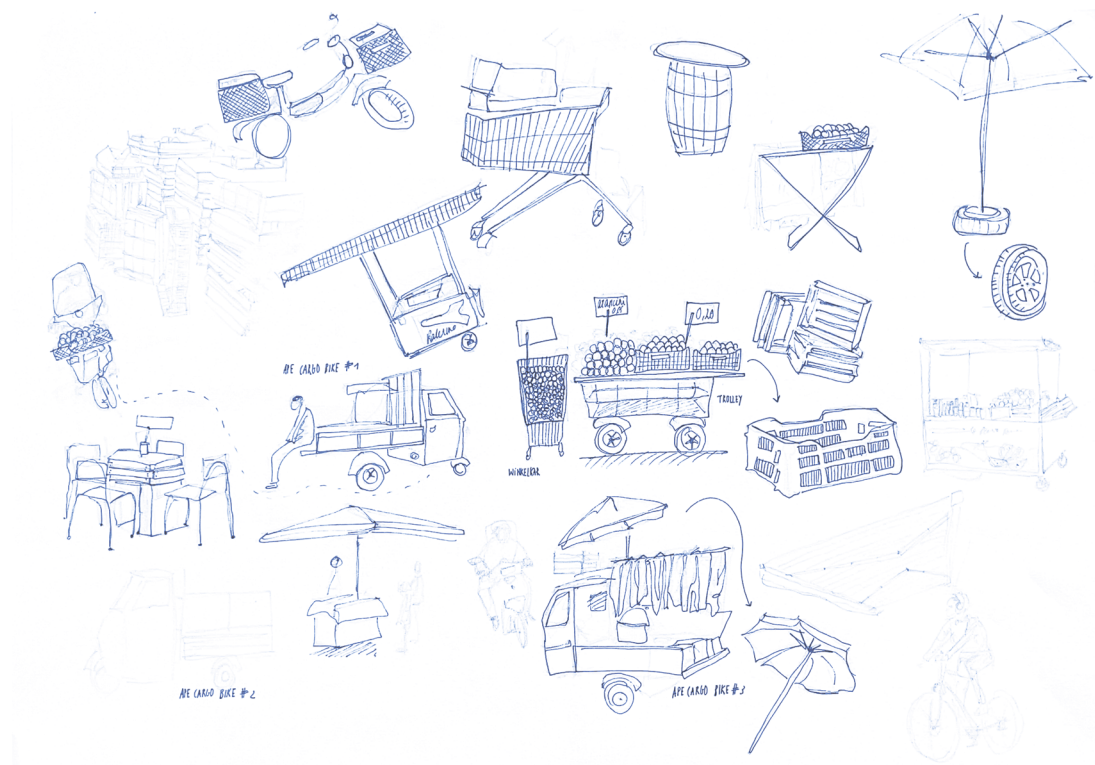
The water basin

The material depot

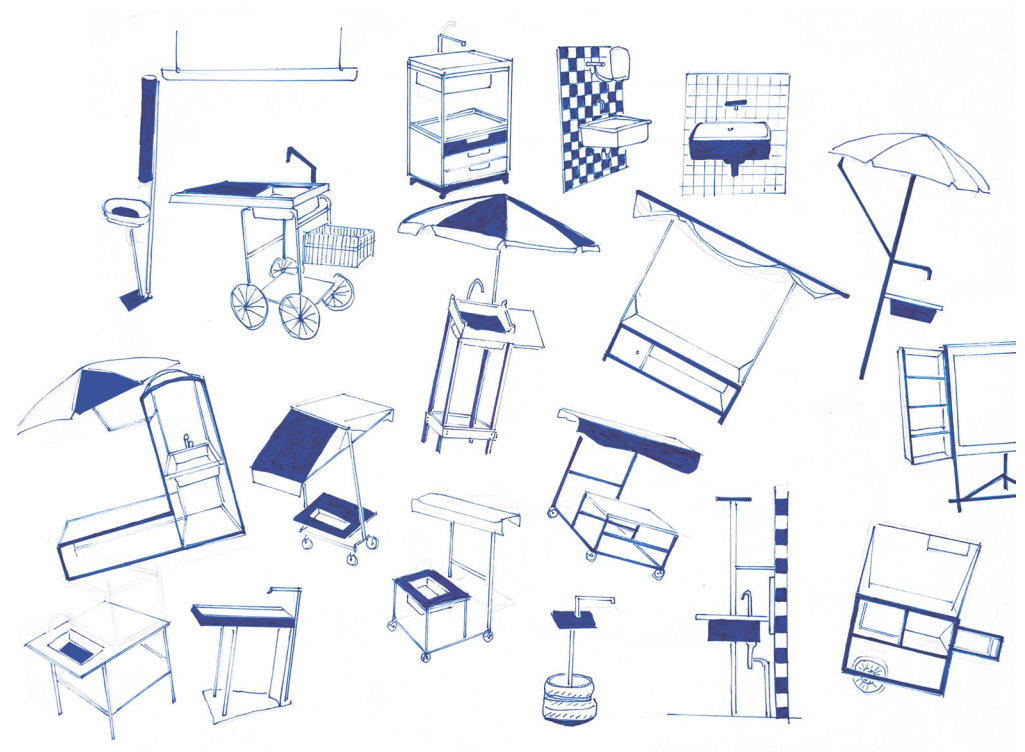
By introducing water basins, inspired by vendors' improvised material infrastructures, this proposal addresses the market's ongoing hygiene and water access challenges amid its vibrant atmosphere. Built from materials found on-site, these basins could offer cooling, hand washing stations, and informal gathering places. They fit naturally into the market's lively rhythm, supporting both practical needs and spontaneous social interaction. By building on existing habits and material cultures, this approach aims to enhance everyday life in the market while preserving its informal and adaptable character.



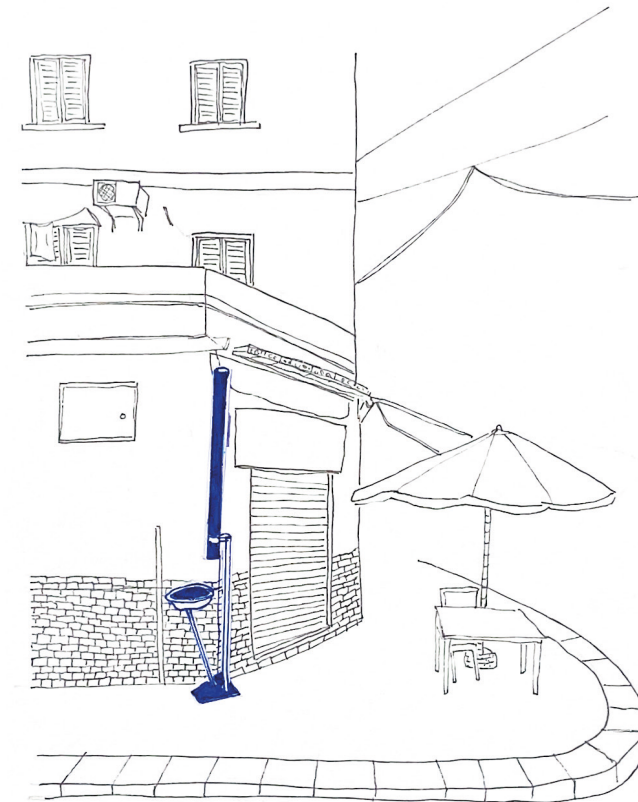
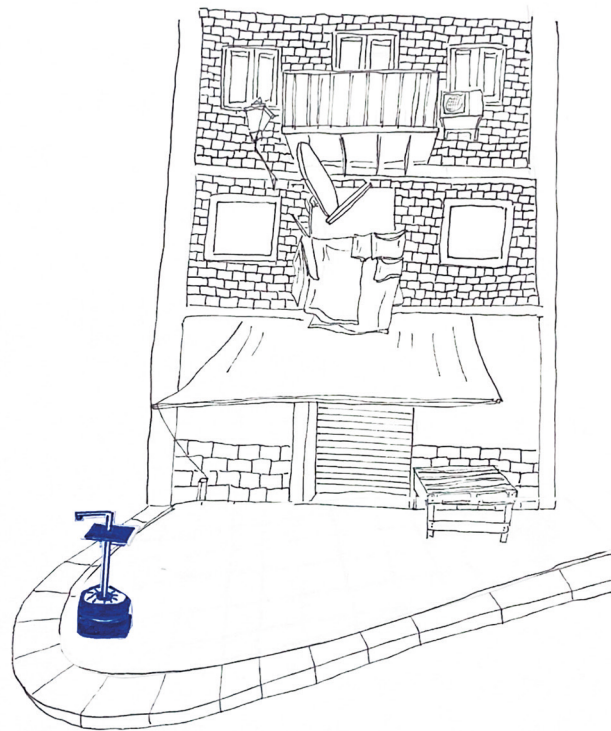
*The water basin as a material
and social infrastructure.*



Material infrastructures.
pen on paper
297 x 420 mm

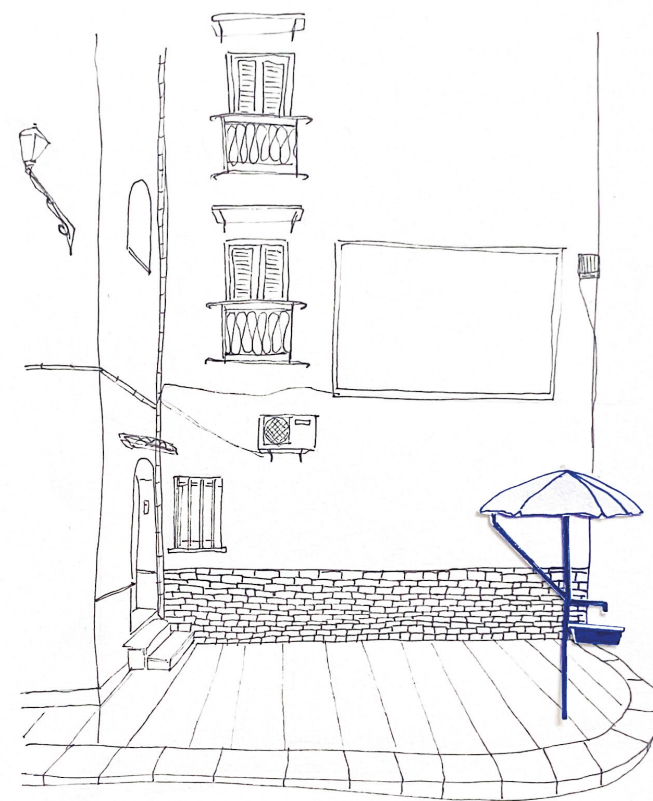
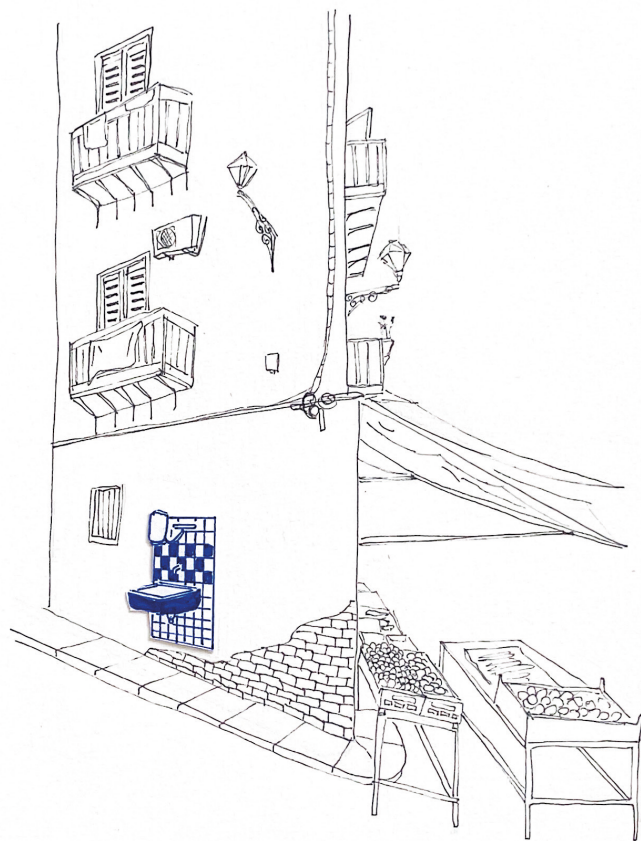


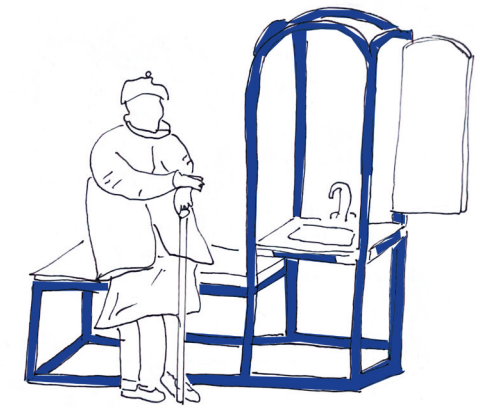
Water infrastructures.
pen on paper
210 x 297 mm

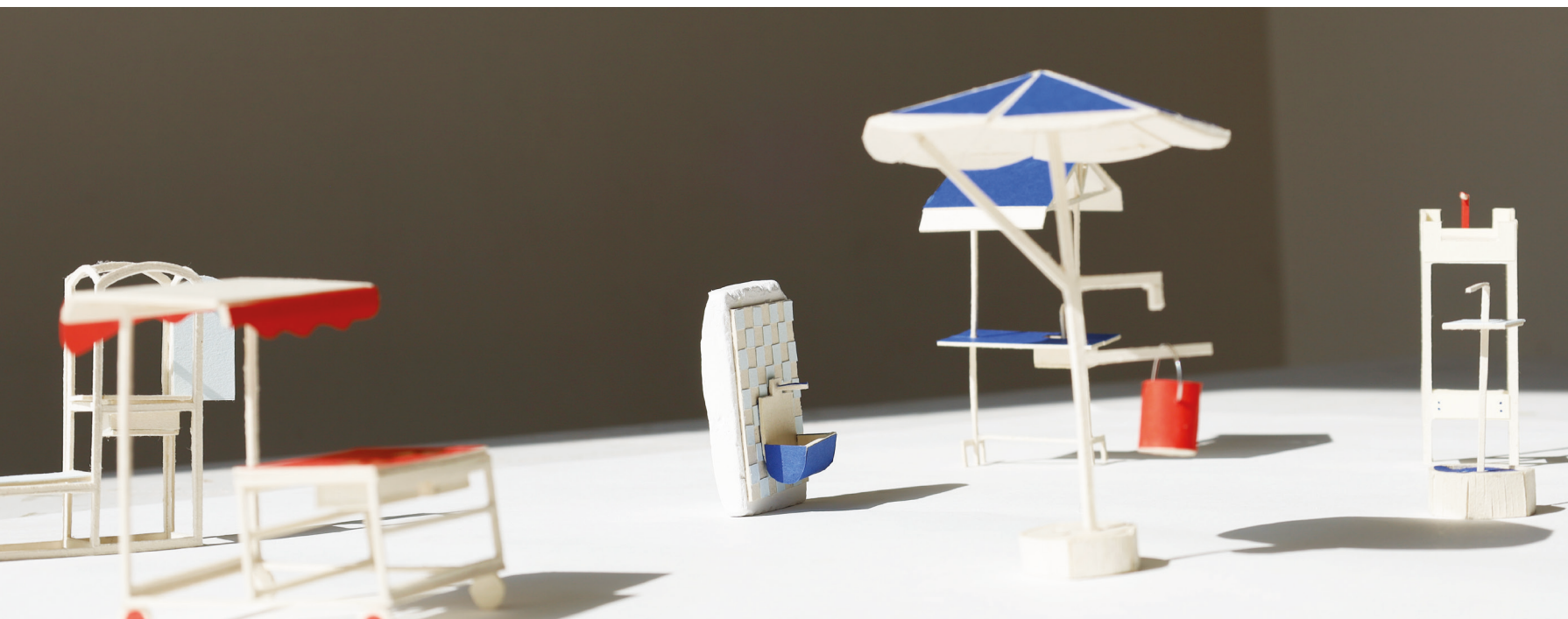


*Water basins embedded in the market fabric,
offering refreshment, hygiene and informal
places to gather. (p106-111)*

*collage, pen on paper
148 x 210 mm*







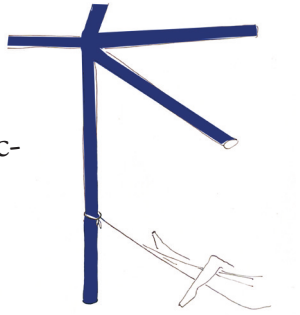
Reframing

The kitchen

The water basin

The material depot

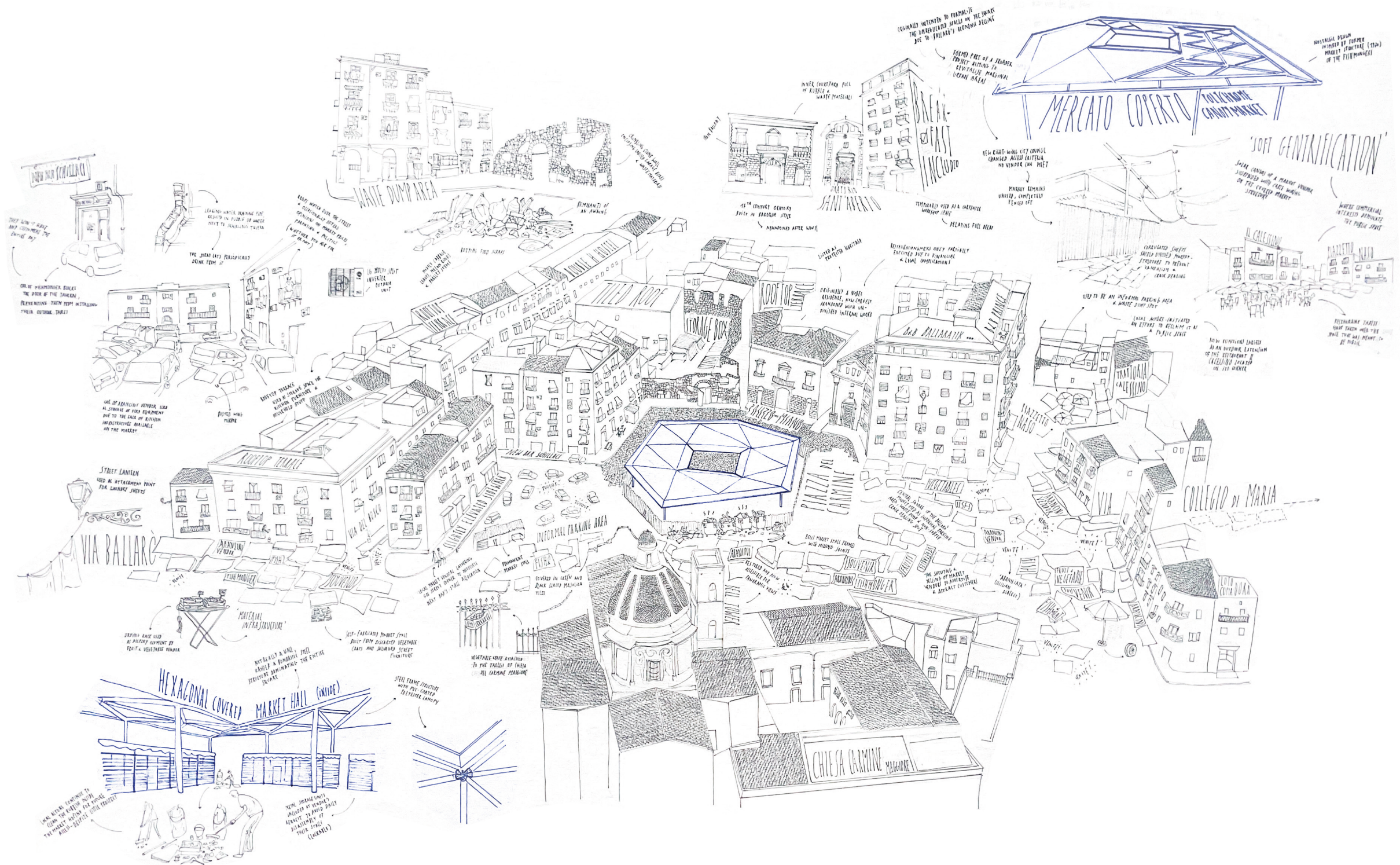
This final scenario focuses on the covered market structure at Piazza del Carmine: a place often dismissed as a failed urban renewal project and largely overlooked in the neighborhood's ongoing efforts toward shared use and collective care. Rather than approaching the structure as a problem, this proposal starts from its hidden potential.

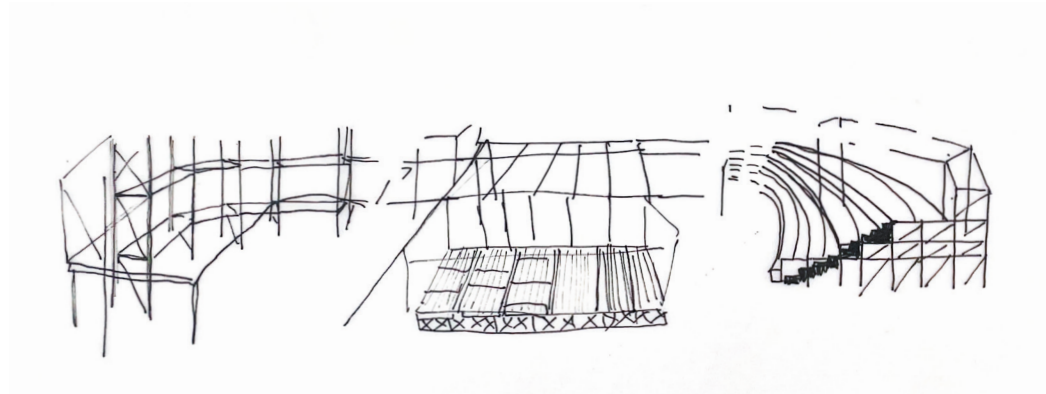


Through interviews and observation, I discovered the vital role of performance and public expression in Ballarò's social life. As Professor Crobe* explained, artistic and cultural practices help people and communities find new roots, especially in places marked by displacement and uncertainty. At the same time, conversations with local actors like Francesco Montagnani (whose anthropological work formed the basis of my documentation) revealed a pressing practical issue: market vendors face a severe lack of accessible storage, forcing them to dismantle their stalls daily and store their materials off-site.

This proposal responds to both needs by reimagining the covered market as a shared stage and storage space. A lightweight, open framework could provide seating, storage and a platform for performance. As a result, the neglected, underused market structure could transform into a thriving community space, addressing the daily struggles of vendors and fostering community interaction

**Information based on a personal interview with Professor Crobe, Head of the Department of Architecture and Spatial Planning, University of Palermo.*

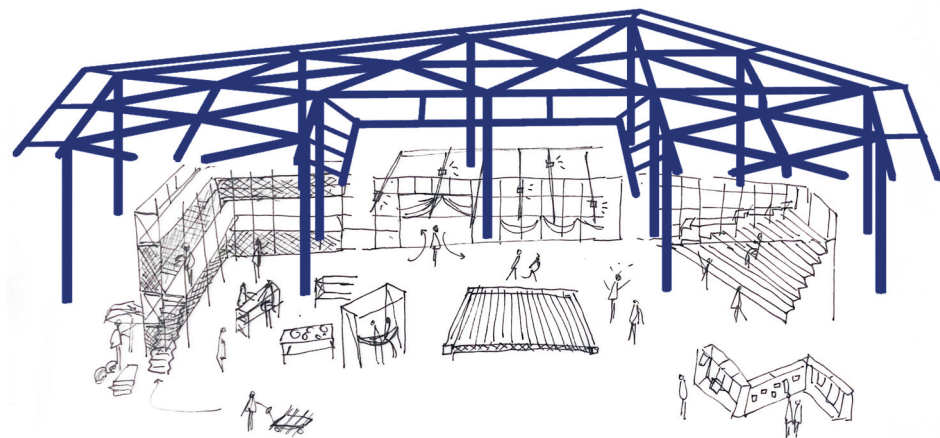




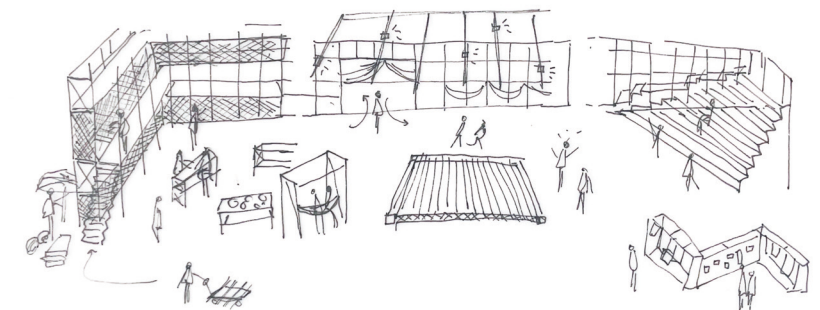
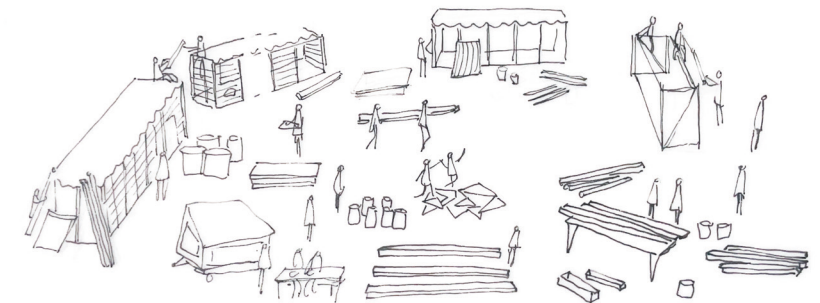
*Performing the market:
a temporary structure shaping stage and storage.*

“By resignifying the concept of homing, used in ethology to describe the ability of migrant birds to remember and return to a familiar place, art and culture can contribute to opening up a space for intercultural dialogue and interaction between migrants and local inhabitants and to enact processes of homing able to increase the sense of belonging within the city [...]. We particularly find this attitude in community-based creative spatial practices, an approach that uses arts and performance as a tool of expression to understand the urban environment and to engage people in placemaking co-creation processes through «le partage du sensible», the sharing of what can be perceived by the senses (Rancière 2000).”

*Re-homing Processes Through Art and Culture.
Stefania Crobe, Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Palermo.*

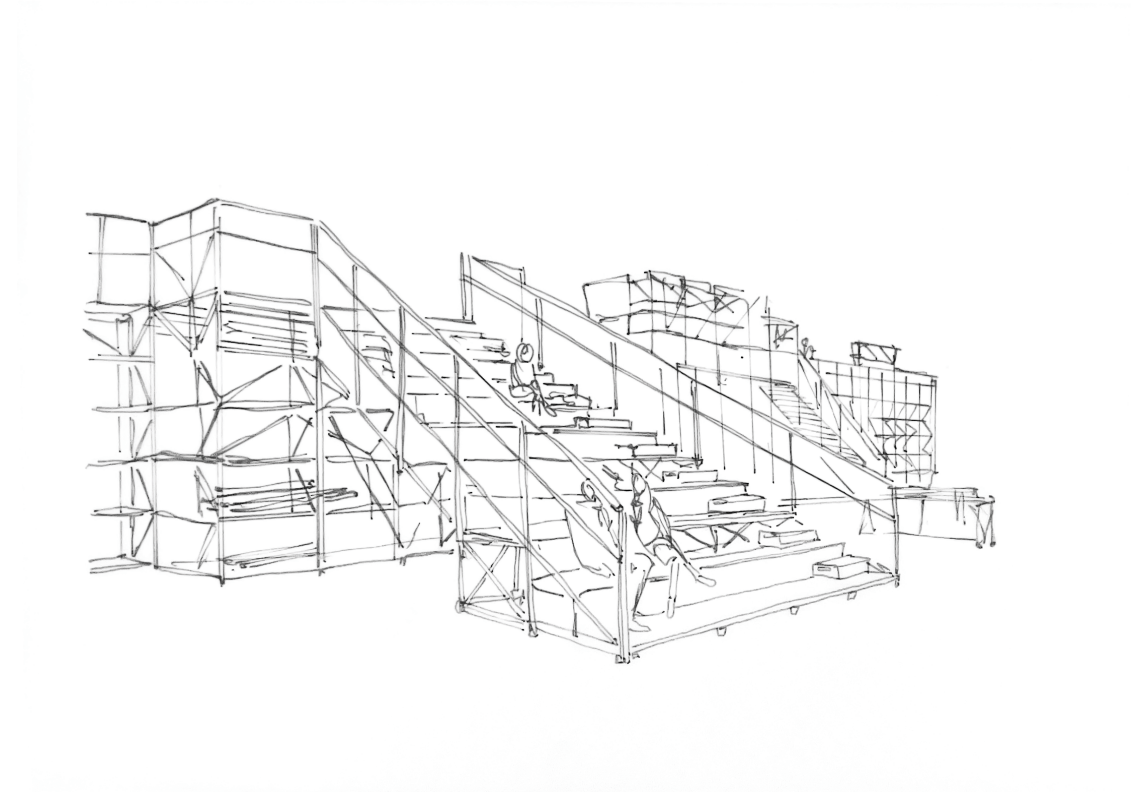


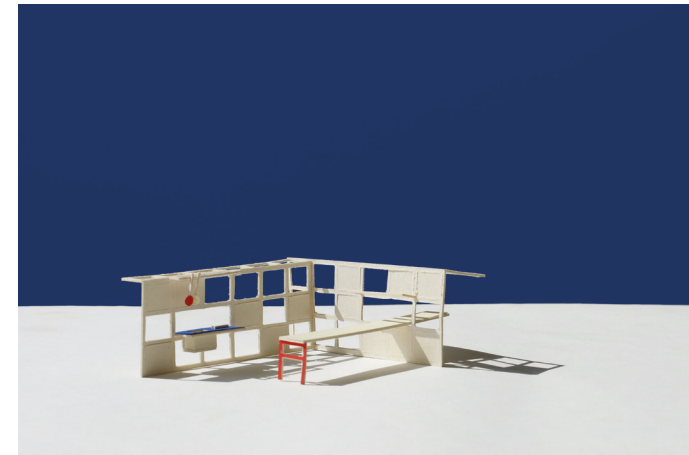
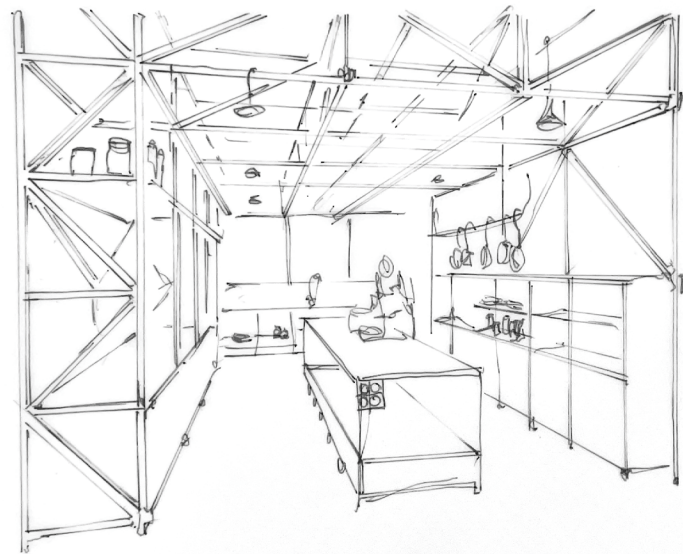
*Performing the market:
adaptive framework strengthening community connections.*



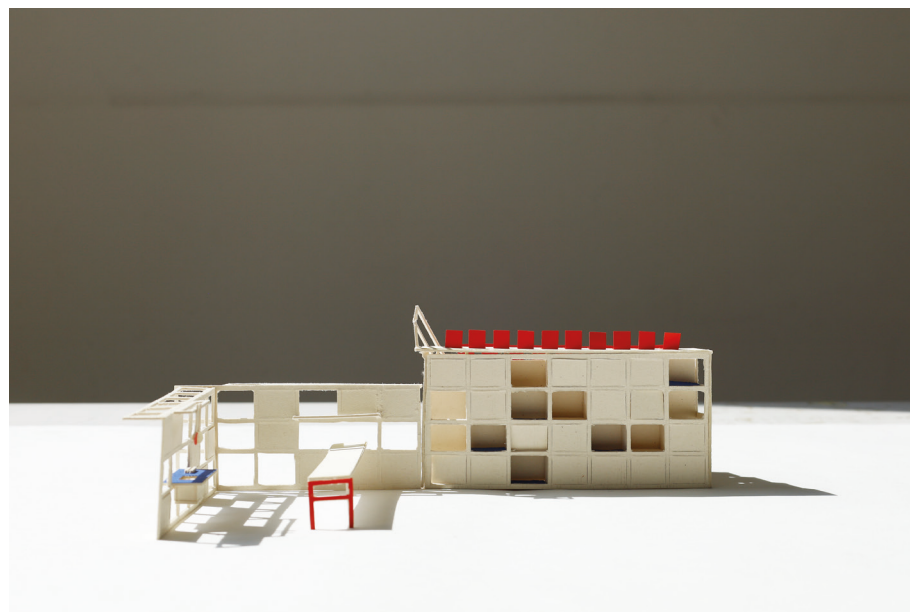


*What if?
Storage and seating were combined
into a single architectural element.*

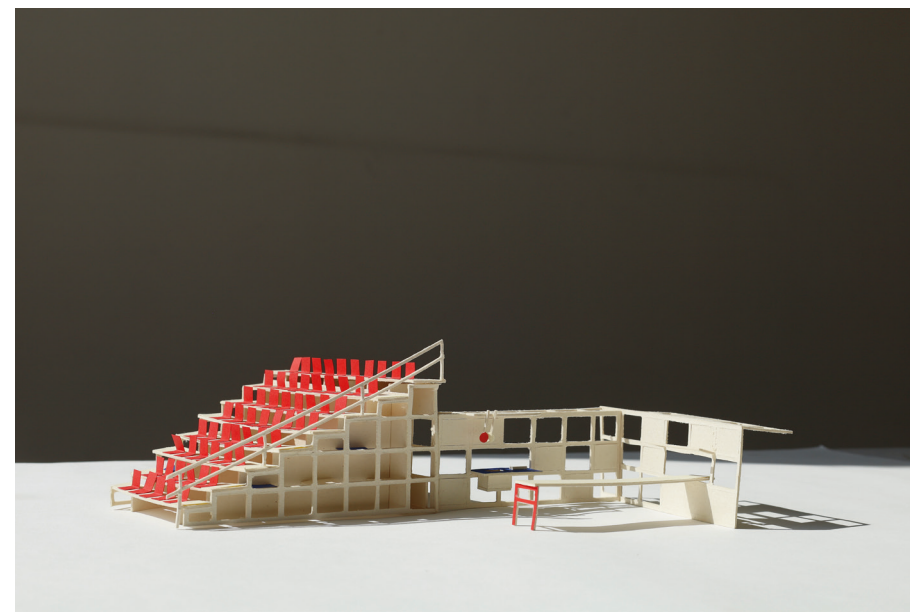




*What if?
A kitchen element was integrated
within the market structure.*



Reimagining the market as a space for cooking, performance and shared storage.



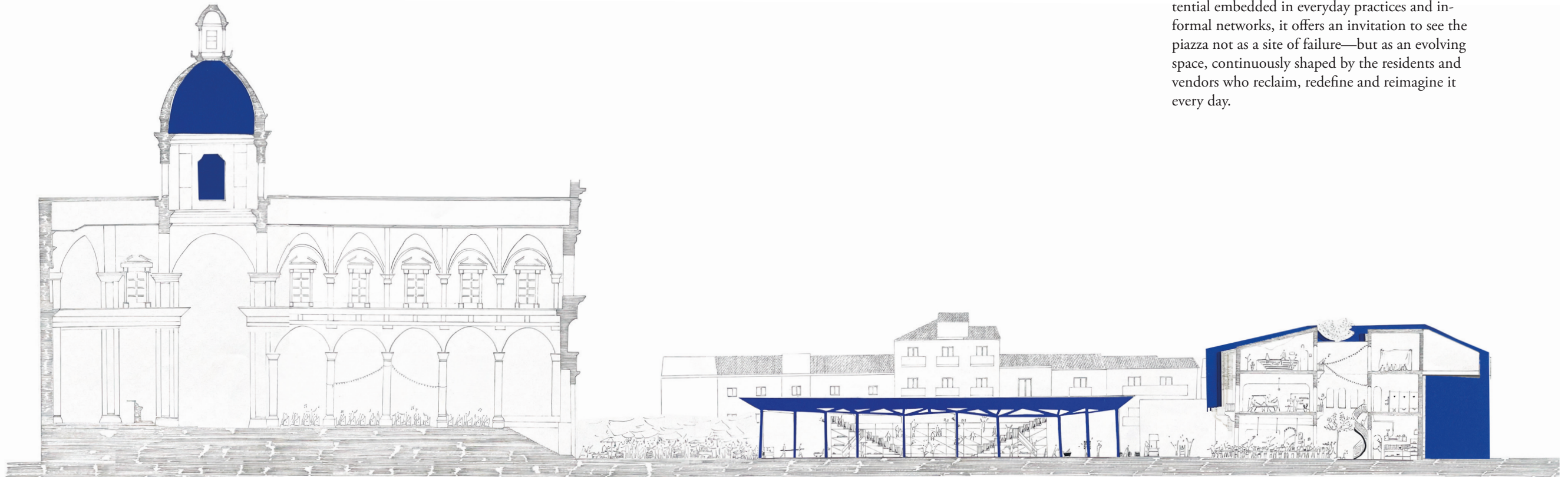
We reflect on this research through the act of *grounding* within the spatial and social complexities of Piazza del Carmine: a place shaped as much by informal routines as by failed formal interventions. Through *narrating*, *unframing*, *negotiating* and *reframing*, the goal was never to propose a definitive master plan, but to offer a careful architectural reading.

Each proposed scenario—whether a kitchen, a shared depot, or a stage—does not claim resolution but opens a lens to the site’s latent potential. These are not singular interventions, but reflections of existing rhythms, material improvisations and social negotiations already at work in the piazza. The act of documenting becomes an architectural gesture in itself: an unfolding practice that acknowledges the informal, visualizes the invisible, and gives form to what often remains incipient.

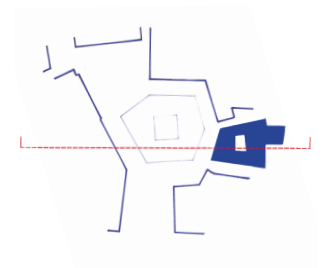
In that sense, this work proposes an invitation to look at architecture differently. Rather than erasing or replacing, architecture becomes a medium of care: one that listens, adapts, and reveals its potential, leaving room for appropriation and for what could still emerge.

This cross-section brings together the key scenarios explored throughout this research—from informal street rhythms and a shared kitchen to communal storage and performance spaces—highlighting how these layers interact and overlap.

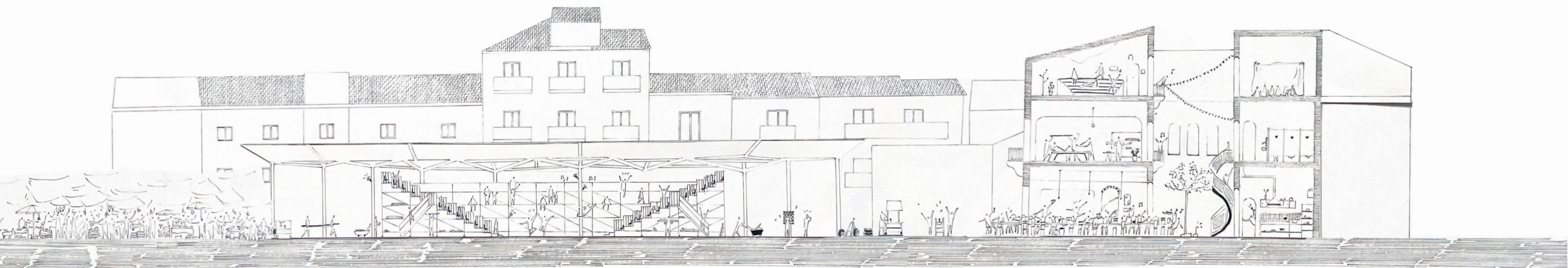
The drawing challenges us to look beyond the common perception of the piazza as a neglected or problematic space. By revealing the latent potential embedded in everyday practices and informal networks, it offers an invitation to see the piazza not as a site of failure—but as an evolving space, continuously shaped by the residents and vendors who reclaim, redefine and reimagine it every day.

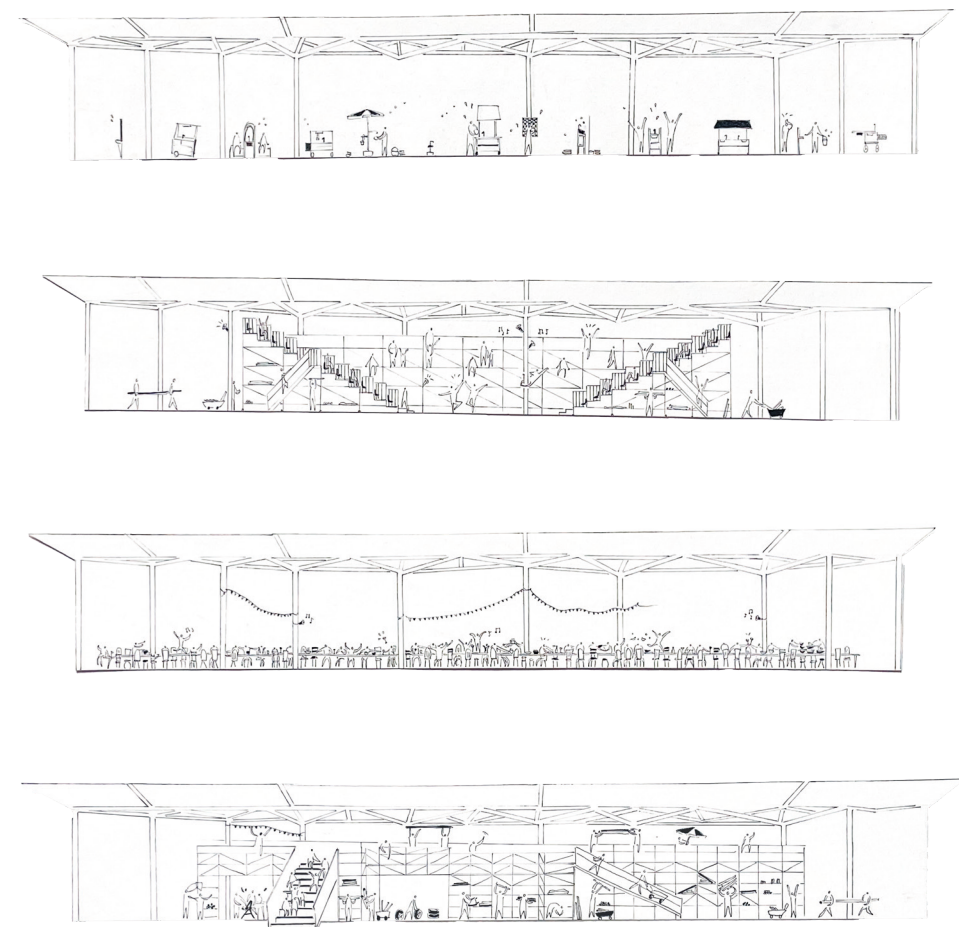
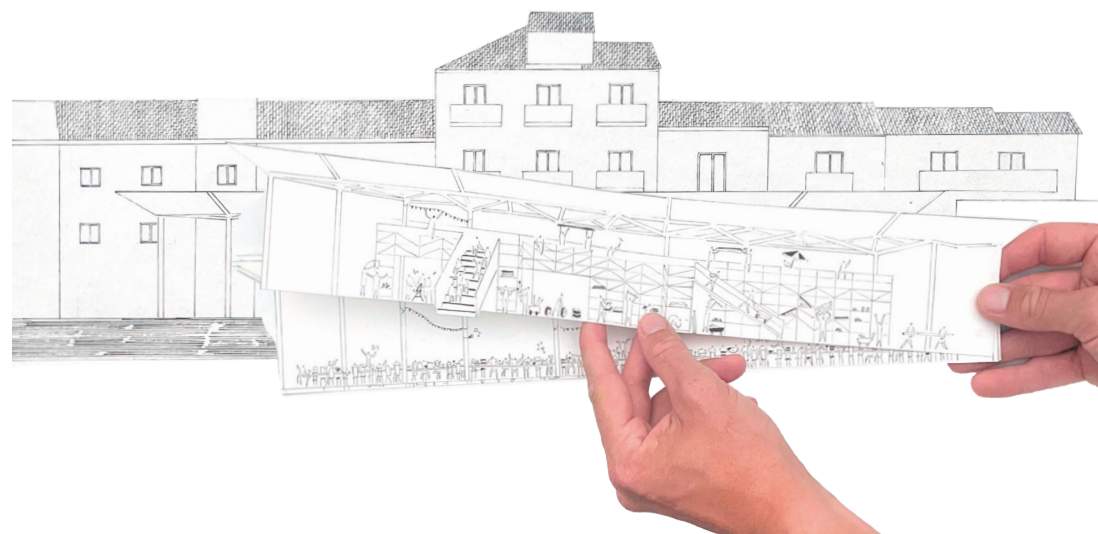


Section exploring potential scenarios within Piazza del Carmine's spatial fabric. (p130-140)
pen on paper
2376 x 600mm

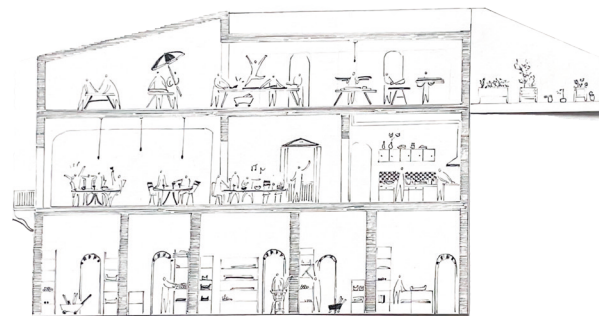
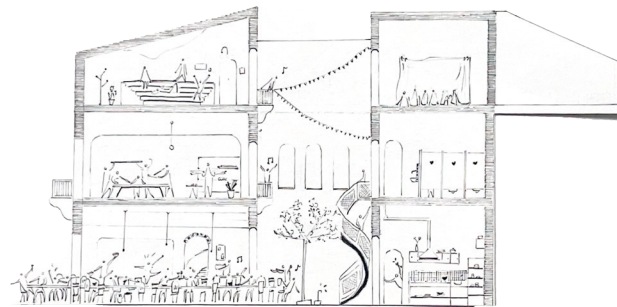
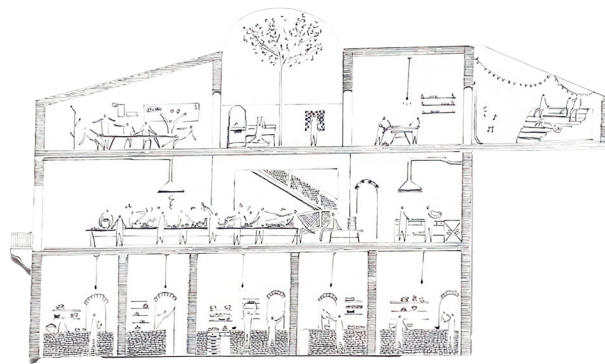




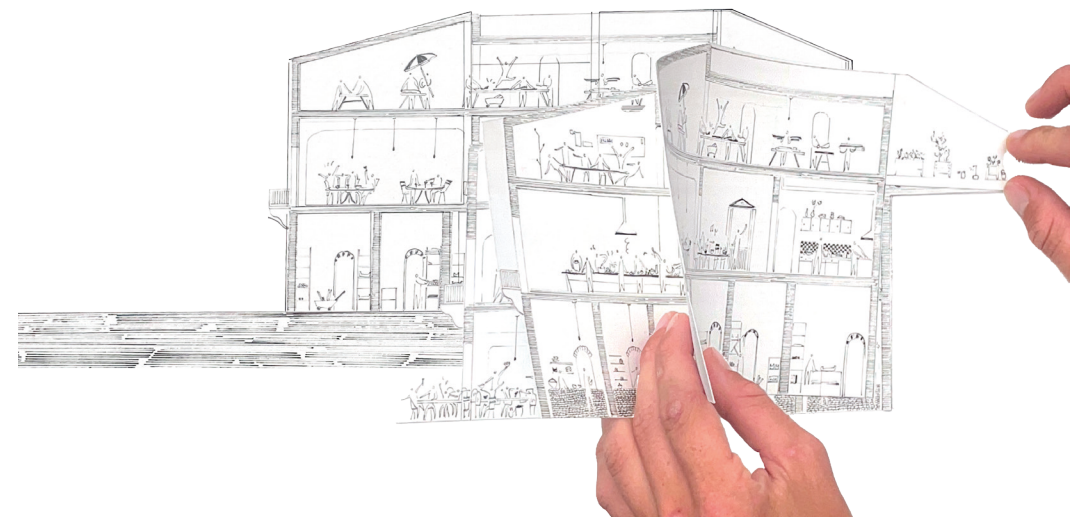


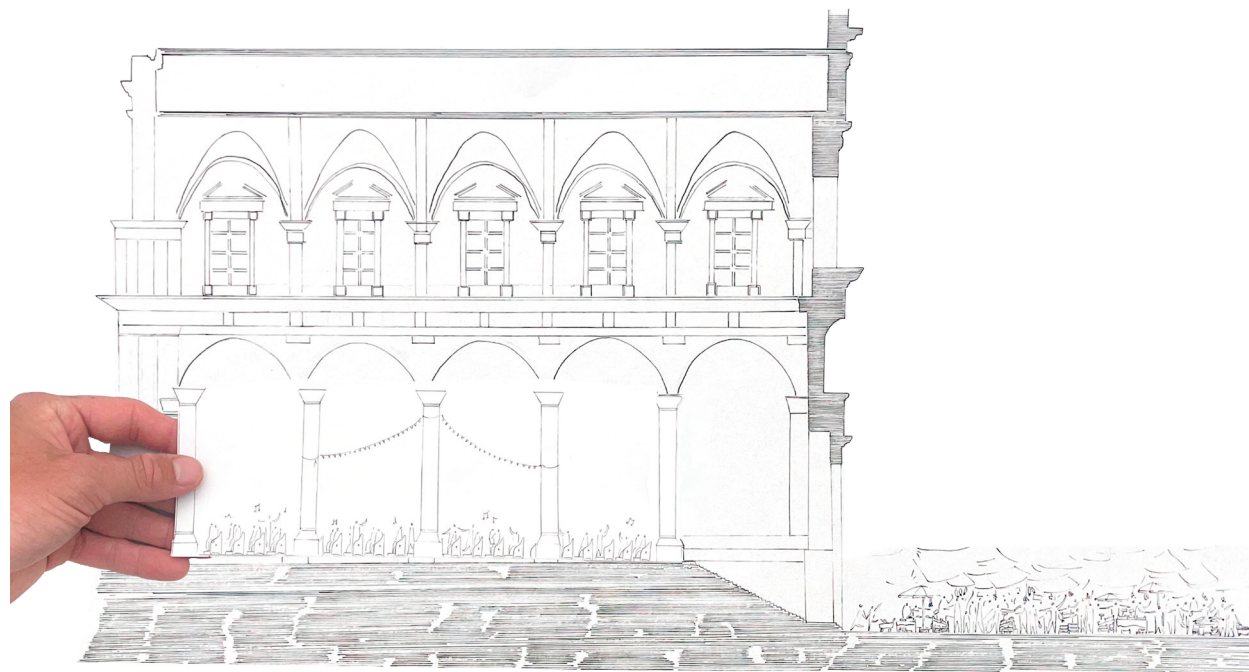


1. Water basins scattered beneath the market structure offer moments of refreshment and social interaction.
2. A shared structure combining storage with space for performance and expression.
3. A communal kitchen that brings people together through cooking and food exchange.
4. A workspace for maintaining and organizing the market's material infrastructures.



Palazzo Miano as a dynamic interplay of communal cooking and shared storage, combining spaces for encounter and local trade.





"The built environment is not merely a backdrop to human action, but an active participant in the ongoing creation of social life."

Ray Lucas, Anthropology for Architects (2020)

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Liefs,
Marthe





*The market was narrated,
rhythms unframed,
practices negotiated,*

*and from there,
new potential emerged.*

