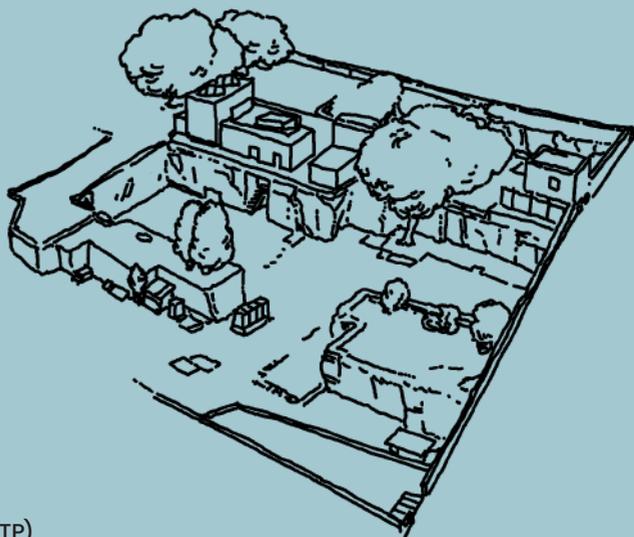


## Periferica

A cultural centre inside a quarry  
from 2013



Via dell'acquedotto, 15  
91026 Mazara del Vallo (TP)  
Italy

🌐 [perifericaproject.org](http://perifericaproject.org)  
 📘 PerifericaFestival  
 📷 [periferica\\_project](#)

Periferica is an urban regeneration project inside an old abandoned tuff quarry in the suburbs of Mazara del Vallo, which has initiated a process of investigation, planning and participatory construction by uniting universities, associations and companies, to strengthen the link between community and territory.

Periferica was born in 2013 with an international festival on regeneration and creativity organized mainly for university students who, through multidisciplinary workshops, conceived and developed micro-architecture projects, urban settings and multimedia projects centered around the development of the space.

The heart of the project is represented by the tuff quarry, which hosts events and initiatives as well as a museum about the quarry, and by an adjacent building that has become a coworking space, guesthouse and Periferica's operational base. Managed by a young multidisciplinary team in a challenging context, today Periferica is a 3,000-square-meter cultural park and community hub where professionals, organizations and communities meet to share innovation, culture, art and social relations.



## WHERE

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Periferica is located in the historic Macello district, about 1 km from the center of Mazara del Vallo (Sicily), in a disused area of over 3,000 square meters that includes an old tuff quarry and a former nursery school from the 1980s. The whole area is divided into three spaces: on the upper floor there is a guesthouse, a coworking space, a social kitchen and a playground for events while the basement, under the quarry, hosts the Evocava Museum and an urban park.

## CONTEXT

Mazara del Vallo is a city of about 50,000 inhabitants overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. Its historic center with narrow, winding streets is one of the few remaining architectural examples of the Arab presence in Sicily and Italy. On a productive level, the city of Mazara has always been identified by the fishing industry there, but since the end of the eighteenth century, the excavation business became increasingly important. The calcarenite (tuff) quarries occupy about 100 thousand square meters, developing an articulated system of parks, tunnels, caves and gardens. The oldest quarries date back to the same foundation of the city and are woven into the peripheral urban fabric, about 1 km from the city center. The absence of incentives, the fragmentation of ownership, and the lack of planning leave these places unused and at risk for real estate speculation.

## LOCATION

Suburban

## TYPE OF SPACE

Building  
Open space (green area and mine)

## ORIGINAL FUNCTION

Industrial (quarry)

## YEAR OF CONSTRUCTION

n.a.

## MAIN HISTORICAL FACTS

**1884:** the quarry closed down.

**2013:** the first urban regeneration festival marks the birth of the Periferica project.

**2014:** victory of the “Che-Fare” call for ideas.

**2014:** victory of the first prize for the best urban regeneration project in the RIUSO national call for ideas, promoted by the National Council of Architects.

**2015:** victory of the call for ideas Boom-Polmoni Urbani.

**2016:** opening of Periferica, the first cultural center in Mazara del Vallo.

**2018:** discovery of the underground quarry and victory of the Culturability call for ideas with the project of the Evocava museum.

**2019:** victory of the Creative Living Lab call for ideas.

**2020:** opening of Aula Periferica.

## SURFACE AREA

3,000 sqm

## OWNERSHIP

Private

## CONCESSION

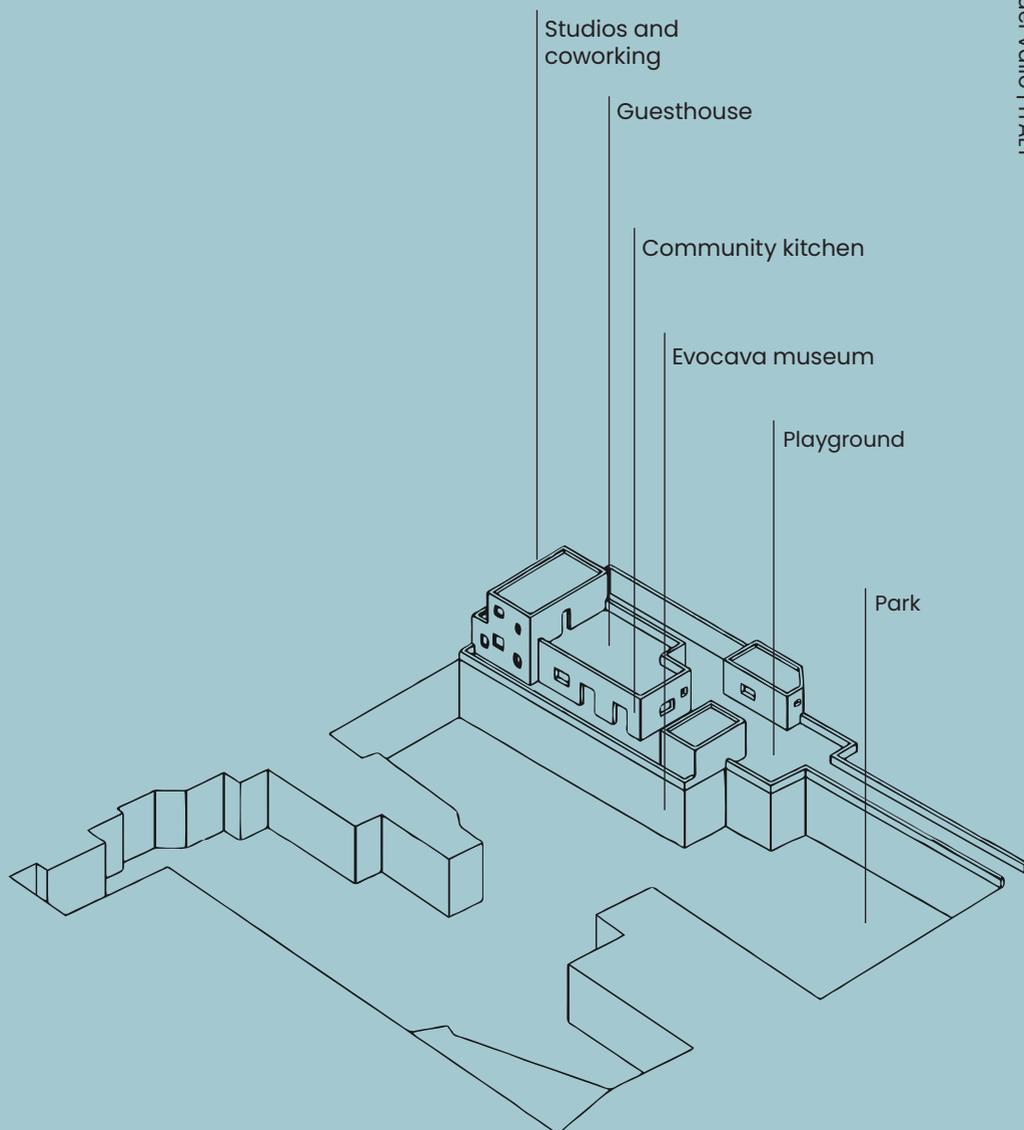
Owned by the managing organization

## CONDITION BEFORE ACTIVATION

Abandoned

**COMPOSITION OF THE SPACE:**

- Playground / multifunctional open area
- Guesthouse
- Studios and coworking space
- Community kitchen
- Evocava museum
- Park



Credits: Periferica





## WHEN

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### TIME OF DAY USED

Morning .....	7am - 1pm	5%
Afternoon ...	1pm - 7pm	35%
Evening .....	7pm - 1am	50%
Night .....	1am - 7am	10%

Workdays: 40%  
Weekends: 60%

Winter: 10%  
Spring: 30%  
Summer: 40%  
Autumn: 20%

### OPENING HOURS

Monday - Friday: 10am - 4pm  
Open one Sunday a month  
Open during specific events and initiatives

### AVERAGE USERS PER DAY

15 - 20

## WHAT

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The main activities organized in the space are the driving force of its reactivation: over time, the international urban regeneration festival, the micro-architecture calls for ideas, and the artistic residencies made it possible to design and renovate the space.

Periferica also organizes cultural events, such as film and theater festivals, music events, and activities connected to the museum. The multifunctional space hosts a guesthouse, a coworking space and a community kitchen.

### SURFACE IN USE

3,000 sqm

### THEMATIC AREAS

Coworking and workspace  
Culture and arts  
Design, crafts and production  
Education and training

## CULTURAL PRODUCTION

Architecture, art, and design workshops  
Museum  
Public art  
Urban regeneration and design festivals

## USER DEMOGRAPHIC

Artists and creatives  
Associations and collectives  
Children  
Families  
Local community  
Senior citizens  
Young people

## COLLABORATIONS

Artists and creatives  
Associations and collectives  
Citizens and local community  
Companies  
Other commons  
Professionals and freelancers

## NETWORK

**Local:** schools and third sector organizations

**Regional:** University of Palermo, Farm Cultural Park, ADI Sicilia

**National:** Lo Stato dei Luoghi, Cultural Welfare Center

## WHO

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Periferica was created as an association, and after two years it became an under-30 cooperative, thanks to the funds awarded by the Boom Polmoni Urbani call for ideas. Over time, Periferica has built a solid network of local and national professionals who have become friends of the project and are involved in the operational and design aspects of the projects in development. During the events, in particular the Festival Periferica, there is a dedicated team that also welcomes volunteers.

## MANAGING ORGANIZATION(S)

1. Associazione Corda (association, 2013)
2. Officina Periferica Soc. Coop. (cooperative, 2016)

## PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE MANAGEMENT

Association: 10 members

Cooperative: 3 members

15 volunteers during festivals

## HOW

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Horizontal

## ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

50% Commercial activities

10% Public grants

35% Rental income

15% Sponsorships

## TYPE OF ACTIVITIES

35% Free

65% Paid

## Focus on the cultural production

### Dieci Metri Quadri. Micro-architecture call for entries

A call for entries to gather the best ideas in the field of architecture and design for temporary, innovative and functional settings for the regeneration of the quarry.

Professionals and students from all over the world are invited to submit micro-architecture projects, designing temporary "modular structures" measuring 10 square meters in area and 3.5 meters in height, adaptable, self-contained and modular.

For each edition of the call there is a theme to be developed: in the first edition "temporary shelters" were designed to expand the hospitality capabilities and accommodate students, young professionals, and cultural workers during the events; in the second edition "temporary kitchens" were designed to provide Periferica with a catering point.

In addition to a monetary prize, the winners of the competition had the opportunity to test out and physically construct their project during the Periferica festival.



## How did your story begin?

Periferica was created in 2013 thanks to a combination of events: Carlo was an architecture student in Ferrara and had just completed a workshop in Istanbul in which he redesigned an urban void. At the same time, the tuff quarry owned by his family was vacated by the construction company that had its headquarters and warehouse inside the area. The land of the quarry, being suitable for building, was at first put up

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for sale by the family, but then Carlo convinced them, not without difficulty, to give him an opportunity to do something with it. So the first Periferica festival was organized in 2013, quite spontaneously, immediately gathering a lot of participants. The following summer, the festival was organized again and in the meantime we won the CNAPPC (National Council of Architects, Planners, Land-

scapers and Conservators) award for sustainable regeneration. Thanks to the Polmoni Urbani program, in collaboration with Farm Cultural Park (which connects Periferica with two other Sicilian cultural initiatives, Trame di Quartiere and Eclettica), we obtained new funding and so we went on with the project.

## Is there a practice or value that represents you and you think may be an inspiration to others?

Periferica was born as a festival of regeneration, art and urban creativity with workshops, laboratories and cultural events realized together with associations, universities and companies of the territory. Since 2013, hundreds of students, teachers and professionals have come to Mazara del Vallo from all over the world for the various editions of the festival, participating in workshops and designing together the transformation of a disused area, the quarry, into a useful space with and for the local community, through a transdisciplinary design approach ranging from architecture to multimedia. It's nice to see how, throughout the 10 days of the Festival, Periferica became a temporary micro-village, where participants, tutors, volunteers and the public shared working spaces, convivial moments and fun by participating in educational activities, excursions, talks and cultural events. Workshop participants could even choose to sleep in the campsite set up inside the quarry, in the self-built structures, or in houses that were rented in the neighborhood. Through workshops and collateral initiatives, Periferica successfully accomplished mixing the global community of “insiders” with the local one, creating a unique experience capable of generating an incredible impact in just ten days.

## What is the secret ingredient that makes your story unique?

Certainly recognizing the tuff quarries as a key to revitalizing the neighborhood in which Periferica is located. Starting from this intuition we have mapped 80% of the quarries in Mazara and discovered that they are located in parks, tunnels, caves, and gardens not far from the city center. The quarries differ in morphology, age and extraction techniques and are interesting from a geological, historical

and cultural point of view, but their use and valorization is blocked by the absence of incentives and shared ownership, as well as by poor planning. With Periferica we have developed several project proposals in different fields: from design to micro-architecture, from urban planning to information systems. What we want to bring out is how a radical change of perspective is necessary. Quarries are not only valuable in themselves, but they are and can be a driving factor for the sustainable development of the territory through history, culture, art, innovation, food, tradition, nature and craftsmanship. In 2018 we were literally overwhelmed by the discovery, inside Periferica, of a 2,800 square meter underground quarry, which we named Eco. Initially we wanted to create a museum to tell the story of the quarry, but then we realized that the quarry was already a museum that could tell its own story. So we started to design the paths to make it usable, and we organized “Alla scoperta della Mazara sotterranea” (“Discovering the Underground Mazara”), a series of events that raised the curiosity of the inhabitants who reported and invited us to visit their quarries. The quarries there hold the history of Mazara and the lives of the quarrymen, a little-known but important history. My grandfather was a quarryman from the age of six until he was 21; he would walk 12 km to get into the quarry and stay 15 days underground. Thanks to my grandfather, I got to know all about the rituals of life in the quarry: what they ate, how they slept, how they prayed, their relationship with the women. Precious stories that no one else knows. My grandfather himself had never told me this part of his life because he was ashamed, but then, after telling his story, he felt passionate and proud. The Evocava museum is therefore the natural development of a path of valorization that involves both professionals and inhabitants: an open-source museum that evokes, through installations and multimedia works, the underground Mazara through visiting routes and tourism/culture-oriented itineraries.

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*Interview with: Paola Galuffo, Carlo Roccafortita*

## Did you know?

### Farm Cultural Park

One of the projects that inspired Periferica is Farm Cultural Park, an independent cultural center founded in 2010 by Andrea Bartoli and Florinda Saieva in Favara (Agrigento). Farm Cultural Park has transformed an abandoned historical center into a cultural and tourist attraction, overturning the identity of a town that has always been associated with the Mafia, fugitives, illegal activities and malfeasance, and turning it into a place of art, culture and experimentation to design and imagine the future. Over time, Farm has in fact acquired some of the houses in the historic center of Favara, transforming them into exhibition spaces for contemporary art, meeting spaces, bars, bookstores and more. The area, once abandoned and degraded, has been transformed into a cultural and artistic center capable of attracting visitors from all over the world, with more than one hundred thousand tourists every year. Today, Farm Cultural Park has been defined as one of the most influential independent cultural centers in the contemporary cultural world and one of the most dynamic urban regeneration projects.

