Nicola De Martini Ugolotti
University of Bath - Associazione Frantz Fanon

“THEY ARE JUST TRYING TO CONTAIN US”. Parkour, Counter-Conducts and the Government of Difference in Turin’s Regenerated Urban Spaces

The following paper aims to contribute to an interdisciplinary debate between leisure, urban geography and migration studies by exploring how a group of young men of migrant origins practicing parkour engaged emerging forms of social and spatial restructuring characterizing the rebranding of cities like Turin, Italy. Taking cue from Lefebvre’s argument that “space originates from the body” (1991, p. 242) this paper does not aim to address the practices of (post)migrant youth descent in cities, as merely containers of human practice, but focuses on the relationship between young men of migrant descent and the city of Turin, thus exploring how participants practices negotiated, and were made part of the process of repositioning and restructuring of their city of settlement. The ethnographic exploration of participants’ engagement with parkour in Turin’s public spaces will enable to articulate local processes of urban redevelopment with emerging global patterns of transnational gentrification (Sigler and Wachsman, 2015) and surveillance orientations (Manley and Silk, 2014; Bauman and Lyon, 2013) taking place in (First World) regenerating urban areas. Addressing the relationship between processes of urban renewal, subjectivity and emerging unequal definitions of citizenship this paper will finally explore participants’ ambivalent practice of parkour as a counter-conduct (Foucault, 2008 [1978]). Through this conceptual lens this paper will address the fault lines of the city’s progressive government of difference, and account for participants’ negotiation of (contingent) citizenship through their situational physical and spatial re-appropriation of urban spaces.