

L.G.B.T.Q. – Landscapes of Gentrification Building up in Turin: the Quadrilatero.

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The present paper will discuss the results of a research project that investigated the relationship between the gentrification of the Quadrilatero Romano, an area in the heart of Turin (Italy), and the LGBTQ population, from the seventies until today. Historically characterised by significant levels of social and structural decay, during the last decades the Quadrilatero has undergone a profound regeneration, which has been consolidated by a vibrant nightlife (Semi, 2004). Since the mid-seventies the area has uninterruptedly hosted the headquarters of homo- and transsexual activist groups, while constantly presenting a significant LGBTQ residential concentration, especially of gay men. By engaging with the scholarly debate on LGBTQ urban geographies, the paper aims at applying some of its conceptual tools and theoretical frameworks, like the notion of *gay ghetto* (Levine, 1979) and the literature on the so-called *gay gentrification* (Castells, 1983; Lauria and Knopp, 1985; Knopp, 1990), onto an Italian case study, which is likely to present specific features and differences from the Anglo-Saxon cultural area where the debate first originated and developed. The analysis is based on nineteen semi-structured interviews with LGBTQ activists and residents in the neighbourhood, and on a historical investigation, drawing mainly from data collected from various editions of LGBTQ tourist guides, such as *Spartacus* and the national *Italia Gay*. The argument is composed of two sections, which tackle the LGBTQ resignification of the area and the residential patterns of the interviewees, respectively; the two sections are articulated in a historical perspective that identifies three main periods: 1975-1985; 1985-late nineties; late nineties-current. The first section focuses on how the LGBTQ resignification of the Quadrilatero has developed and changed over the last forty years. Attention is especially drawn to the differences between the queer dynamics of the seventies and the eighties, remarkably related to outside cruising in what was perceived to be a ghetto-like area, and the current situation, where the nightlife abides by a strong gay-friendly imperative, while at the same time there is no venue that specifically caters to the LGBTQ population. The second section of the argument is dedicated to the residential patterns of the interviewees and it investigates the extent to and the ways in which they have become involved in the gentrification process. The analysis highlights how, as gentrification unfolded, the LGBTQ residential turnover produced a significant socio-economic upgrade, while causing the displacement of the interviewees that had moved into the neighbourhood in earlier stages. The results of the analysis show how, even though the Quadrilatero Romano has often presented the coexistence of factors that could have set in motion processes of gay gentrification, there exists neither a relationship of causality, nor any other significant form of interconnection between the regeneration of the area and its LGBTQ population. Conclusions reflect on why a process of gay gentrification did not come about, by interpreting this urban experience in light of the interviewees' perceptions of their own non-conformist sexualities, which very much reflect the specificities of the Italian context, where a communitarian identity discourse around sexual otherness has, thus far, never fully developed (Bertone, 2009). In light of these observations, the paper intends to challenge the Anglo-Saxon cultural predominance within the debate on LGBTQ

urban geographies, and ultimately emphasises the need to put forward new theoretical frameworks, more fitting to interpret the urban experiences and manifestations of sexual otherness in different parts of the world.

Keywords: **Turin, Quadrilatero Romano, gentrification, LGBTQ, sexual otherness.**

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Paper presented at the RC21 International Conference on "The transgressive city: Comparative perspectives on governance and the possibilities of everyday life in the emerging global city" Mexico City, 21-23 July 2016. <http://rc21-mexico16.colmex.mx/index.php>