

URBAN AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

MUR DM 118 - Life in a university city: struggles, conflicts, opportunities.

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Supervisor	SANTANGELO MARCO - marco.santangelo@polito.it
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Context of the research activity	<p>The research aims at better understanding size and characteristics of the student population in a self-defined university city (Torino, Italy), with specific attention to non-local students, their mobile geographies (within and outside of the university city), their interaction with residents, local institutions, businesses, associations, and related territorial transformations. The research centers around the right to study and the quanti-qualitative analysis of phenomena of socio-spatial exclusion and conflict.</p> <p>Progetto finanziato nell'ambito del PNRR – DM 118/2023 - CUP E14D23001910006</p>
Objectives	<p>Relationship among university student population settling dynamics, urban transformation and residential dynamics of the local population have been at the center of the attention for quite a while, in North America and North European contexts first and then all over the world (Cenere et al., 2023; Zasina et al., 2023). Universities increasing importance in urban dynamics has gone hand by hand with the growth of student populations, whose presence has important material and symbolic effects on cities (Collins, 2010). The impact of increasing students' concentration can have negative effects on residents in terms of restructuring of the housing market and the retail sector, a phenomenon that goes under the label of 'studentification' (Smith, 2005). Such transformations exert an exclusionary pressure on the former residents (Sage et al., 2012), eventually leading to conflicts with them as well as with other "city users" (e.g., tourists). The same phenomena, however, opens opportunities for new actors and visions of development to enter the city and promote changes which may tackle exclusion and conflict. In this scenario, the availability of information and data on the student population is of crucial importance, even more so when universities' growth and internationalization strategies succeed in attracting larger numbers of non-local and foreign students. Universities' offices, research centers (public and private), as well as local institutions collect data and information, but these are seldom shared and/or considered to understand and readdress public and private development strategies, as well as to understand how students live in the city and if their relocation is producing gentrification</p>

processes and/or harming their right to study, live and prosper in the city. To bridge the gap between policies and development strategies of public and private actors and opportunities and choices available to the student population, it is thus necessary to provide information and data to advance in the knowledge of individual paths to housing and life in the city, for non-local and international students in specific. To this extent, this analysis must consider the role of digital mediation (online platforms) as well as that of information that is shared in specific locations in the city. Attention to individual paths can help in considering an intersectional perspective on discrimination and on possible interactions to fight it, mixing quantitative data with semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

Objectives of the research are:

- To contribute to build a database of the student population, focusing on non-local and international students and paying attention to their characteristics and their localization choices, strategies, and histories.
- To investigate key topics of the right to study, related to students' needs, access to housing and services, housing demand and offer dynamics and market, discrimination phenomena, social and civic mobilization initiatives.
- To collaborate with the research unit that is working of the research topic, also in dissemination and publishing activities.

Skills and competencies for the development of the activity

The PhD student should be ready, or willing to learn, a mixed-method approach that combines quantitative methodologies (data and digital analysis and elaboration, geographic information systems and mapping) with qualitative ones (use and analysis of surveys and interviews, focus group facilitation techniques). The main fieldwork will be the city of Turin, so it is important that the candidate does speak well Italian and English.