



Rebel Walls: graffiti writing and the right to housing in the City of Naples, Italy

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Abstract

The urban landscape of Naples, in both its material and immaterial dimensions, has always been characterised by a dense and complex iconographic fabric. Sacred and profane images, murals, votive icons, posters, signs, and inscriptions compose a chaotic, stratified, and ever-evolving visual scenario. Within this setting, graffiti writing has emerged as one of the most widespread and recognisable expressions of contemporary Naples, actively contributing to the construction of the city's urban imaginary. Due to the absence of strict regulatory control and the significant presence of young people and students, graffiti writing is a widespread practice in the city that transforms walls into integral parts of urban communication.

Among the most pressing themes, the right to housing is a central issue. The expansion of tourism has led to a progressive residential 'exodus' from the historic centre, forcing lower-income residents out and reshaping the city's social and economic balance. This phenomenon, common to many metropolitan cities, threatens to accelerate the process of gentrification in Naples, altering its cultural and traditional characteristics. In this context, graffiti writing becomes a visual form of protest, making visible conflicts that are often ignored, and transforming the urban wall into a space of resistance and sociocultural affirmation.

By examining how this practice contributes to the creation of a bottom-up urban discourse, the article aims to demonstrate how graffiti writing operates as an expressive and critical tool in the struggle for housing rights in today's Naples. The purpose is to analyse how these visual expressions represent alternative forms of communication as tools for struggle for the identity affirmation, in an urban context subject to strong transformational pressures.

Keywords: graffiti writing; urban images; overtourism; gentrification; house emergence; Naples.

