

## Summary

This thesis is the outcome of an ethnography carried out in the city of Rome from July 2021 to July 2022, whose aim was to comprehend the unfolding of migrants' life in the street in the surroundings of the Tiburtina railway station. This site has been characterized by the presence of 'makeshift spaces of inhabitation' in the last two decades, but the 2015 increase in the movement of people on the move, and the consequent hardening of bordering practices, have rendered 'migrant subjects' and their presence more visible and contested. Rome is a crucial point along migrants' trajectories toward northern Europe and, despite not being a border city, the effects of the continually evolving 'border regime' are evident both in the local production of space and in the destructive effects on people's life, who are confined in a life in the street. That is why the emerging forms of urban life around the station are understood as the product of multi-scalar interrelations across time and space, where the multilayered governance of migration and space intersects with migrants' *politics of inhabitation*, with migrants claiming their autonomy of movement and dignified living.

Situating within the framework of critical border studies, this study acknowledges how the line between border and territorial patrol appears increasingly blurred, and cities further perpetuate the forms of control and oppression migrants are subjected to. However, as the social order enhanced by the border regime is constantly challenged by migrants, they negotiate their room of manoeuvre along the everyday encounters they make in the street. State itself results as an actor performing this negotiation, and the rule of law is suspended or bent as it operates within the gray areas embraced by migrants' makeshift spatialities. Indeed, despite its attempts to gain control over the movement of people, the state strategically exploits and facilitate this *unruly* movement for its own interests, using abandonment also as an active strategy. On their account, migrants' stay afloat across the multiplication of borders in urban environments, where their encounters forge new territorial relations that subvert the (b)order order.

This thesis is structured as follows. After the introduction of the socio-political context of the research, the theoretical chapter engages with the debate in border and migration scholarships. The focus is on urban environments, reflecting on the ways the regime of immobility is challenged by migrants through their presence and encounters. The methodological chapter acknowledges the ‘border as a method’ and unpacks relations of power and ethics along the delivery of the ethnography in Rome. Before delving into the three main empirical chapters, a chapter introduces and explains the evolution of border policies in Italy, with attention to the broader European geopolitical context. The first empirical chapter enrolls in a diachronic reading of Tiburtina, showing how state strategies of control have changed accordingly to the emerging migrants’ encampments. The second empirical chapter uses the biographies of three people living in the streets of Tiburtina to show how individual agencies forge their own space of inhabitation at the street level by engaging in multiple spatial negotiations. The last empirical chapter frames the urban encounter as a lens to understand migrants’ spatialities, where the concepts of trust, mutuality and safety become the scripts that comprehend these forms of urban life.

**Keywords:** #migration #borderstudies #streetlife #ethnography #inhabitation #Rome