Abstract:

This paper investigates the relationship of space, nation and identity, with a particular emphasis on understanding the role of the processes of legibility and symbolism in the construction of national and ethnic space. In order to understand these relationships, this study examines the press coverage of a flag fight in an immigrant neighborhood of Berlin during the 2010 FIFA World Cup. In the heavily covered struggle, German anti-fascists repeatedly damaged and stole a 100-meter German flag belonging to a family of Lebanese extraction. The flag fight and the media’s coverage of it demonstrated competing and overlapping definitions of citizenship, with the media and the flag owners promoting a civic form of nationalism. The case illuminates a national project to redefine German national identity and expand it beyond the boundaries of ethnic nationalism. At the same time, it reveals persistent anxieties about migrant spaces and their place in the nation.