

Genoa in the Second Part of XX Century: An Analysis through Contemporary Migrations

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Abstract: Genoa knew, as well as other town in Italy, a fast development during the Italian economic boom (1958-1963), marked by a great urbanization of the city. This phenomenon took the construction of new neighborhoods, the demolition of others in the early 70s, the fast improvement of the port in the 80s and changes in economic, political and territorial order.

It is also the era of great songwriters as Gino Paoli, Luigi Tenco and Fabrizio de Andrè who, with their music, described a Genoa with a particular attention to its neighborhoods and its people, places sometimes considered marginal and where often resided “the last ones”, like in the case of De Andrè.

Genoa changed its face for Expo 92, event that allowed the entire renovation of Old Port area, thanks to the architect Renzo Piano. The city also saw a migration from abroad, mainly from Africa and Latin America. Actually foreigners in Genoa are about a tenth of the population and this paper wants to show, through an analysis of available official data, as they changed the traditional structures of the neighborhoods, their distribution in the urban areas, bringing colors, smells and flavors and also developing successful business activities.

Key words: Genoa, urbanization, De Andrè, architecture, migrations

1. Introduction

*“In the districts where the sun of the good Lord
gives not its rays,
it already has too many commitments
warming the people of other neighbourhoods.”*

(Fabrizio De Andrè, The Old City)

This paper, using the available data provided by historians, geographers, public and private organizations, wants to frame the evolution of Genoa from the post-war period to the present, focusing on city planning, geographical, ethnic and social changes. In fact, the social context is important as well the interest for the “Old City” and contemporary migrations.

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The analysis starts from Italian economic boom, as a fulcrum for the development and urbanization of the “Superba”, with the construction of new neighbourhoods, also showing the negative side of the period, in other words the concreting or “rapallizzazione” of entire areas which caused issues related to citizen safety, because many buildings were too close to Genoese rivers as Bisagno, Polcevera and related tributaries.

The building urge of the moment led to disastrous decisions such as the destruction of one of the historic districts of the city, “Via Madre di Dio”, as well as the abandonment of the “Old City” as a place lived by marginalised.

Fabrizio de Andrè, a leading figure of the Genoese School, told about the last ones, in a unique manner, where it mix respect, passion, life, poetry in describing the adventures of the inhabitants of the “Old City” with their passions, sometimes uncontrolled, the strengths and weaknesses.

Then the focus moves to the renovation and the Port, a springboard for the revival of the Jetty Area, mostly transformed thanks to the plans of the great Genoese architect Renzo Piano, who was in charge of the design for the Expo 1992, where it was launched the Aquarium of Genoa, the best known and most visited tourist site in the city.

From the late 90s onwards, the Ligurian capital became more and more crossroads for migrants of different ethnic groups and, before “the Old City”, then some municipalities as the West Centre and East Centre, took on the characteristics of a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional reality.

Currently foreigners in Genoa, messengers of new colours, visible from the shop signs that paint some streets, are about a tenth of the residents and the percentage increases when we speak about the enrolment in city schools.

This number obligates to reflections on municipal, regional, state and European host politics in fact, in the absence of integration programs and reforms, they risk becoming the new poor, new marginalized mentioned by De Andrè in his songs.

Likewise necessary is a basic teacher’s education about other cultures, basis to build dialogue at school, starting point of a real integration of migrants in the society.

2. Genoa during Italian Economic Miracle

The Italian economic boom, generally, was an historical period that went from 1958 to 1963, according to the definition accepted by contemporary historians. As underlined by the Italian academic Guido Crainz in his work “Storia del miracolo italiano” (History of Italian miracle), understand all the profound transformations that invested in those years the society of our country it is a daunting and complex assignment.

In fact, there was a profound break with the past: the great industrial development, thanks mainly to the growth that met the North Italy with Fiat in Turin, the

emergence of the Port of Genoa as Italian and international reality, passing through the changes, even at psychological level, whose protagonists were the people like in the way of thinking, dreaming, living the present and planning the future [1].

Consumption grew enormously in those years and Italy began to talk about the society of mass consumption; the lifestyle, the services and merchandises usable by the community became standardized, promoting by television, which arrived at millions of houses until to influence the lifestyles with new products, targeted programs for modelling the identity of a country in constant and sudden transformation.

The most interested areas were Turin, Milan and Genoa, who formed the so-called “industrial triangle” and brought the arrival of many unemployed coming from the south in Liguria, Piedmont and Lombardy, looking for a job in the factories and in the port of Genoa. In fact, these regions saw almost redouble the population, in agreement with the overall rate of employment, in the end of 50s and early 60s.

The wellbeing in the country can be measured nowadays through the analysis of several factors such as the growing up of automotive industry, iron and steel industry and distribution of electrical appliances, real revolution compared the past.

Do not forget the great expansion of supermarkets, especially in big cities: the introduction in Italy will bring many benefits to the population, but at the same time will cause the crisis of little shops that have difficulties to handle the competition with large distribution chains.

Like the historian Paul Ginsborg wrote, between 1958 and 1963 the rate of growth of Italian P.I.L. increased to 6.3%, such a high level that it was never reached in the history of Italy [2].

The causes of the economic miracle are more than one: from the financial market, thanks to cheap price and high yield of government bonds that led to a great purchase, the establishment of MEC (European

Common Market) in 1957 which provided the free movement of merchandise, people and capital in the Countries, the important role of the Italian state which expanded the construction of the motorway network. Italy also developed a stable policy with ENI and IRI, the two major companies of the energy market.

It is important to underline the technological growth of some strategic sectors such as iron and steel, chemical and engineering industry.

But the main factor for the development of our country was the high availability of cheap labour, thanks to the internal migration that caused a depopulation of the countryside and a movement of many people from the south of Peninsula towards the “industrial triangle”.

The state didn't control the phenomenon and this fact led to the born of several critical elements and imbalances in the country, as the sharpening of differences between north and south, the growing abandonment of agriculture in favour of the expansion of factories and industries, the persistence of a ruling class, especially in the public sector, as wrote Crainz, driven by conservative tendencies, also fed from the historical period crossed by the Cold War [1].

Genoa was the protagonist, together to Milan and Turin, of this historical period, characterized by a strong intellectual fervour in the entire Italian territory, as well as by a sudden acceleration of industrial production and an improvement in production and consumption.

3. Genoa before and after Economic Miracle

As the geographer Pietro Barozzi wrote “the Genoese urban structure descends largely from choices not always knowledgeable and often imposed by the characteristics of the place, which produced and accentuated significant functional imbalances. We can find the recent origin in 1926, when 19 surrounding municipalities became part of the city, without to be prepared with suitable instruments to dictate large development lines, for which the formation of the

‘great Genoa’ was rightly defined an urban choice.” [3]

The 1926 was a very important year for the construction of the city as we know it today, in fact, they were annexed at the territory of Genoa municipalities before independent as Nervi, Sestri, Voltri, Borzoli, Quarto, Quinto, Bolzaneto, Sestri Ponente, Sampierdarena and others.

Curiously, talking with elderly, especially in Nervi and Sestri, the people often feel themselves like “Nerviesi” and “sestresi” and not Genoese, as to emphasize once more the ancient wrongs they have suffered caused by the fascist regime.

During the Second World War the city was badly hit by the bombing that destroyed many buildings and properties; after the war a priority objective of the institutions was a reconstruction as quickly as possible. So the Municipality made many interventions in the “Old City”, sometimes not in line with the preservation and protection of the environment and citizens’ intentions.

The main areas of work were two: Portoria, which involved the destruction of the ancient Doria Door (Porta Doria) and the demolition of the old hospital called “Pammatone”, where now there is the Tribunal, and Mother of God Street (Via Madre di Dio), as well as the surrounding area until the border with the district of Jetty (Sestriere del Molo).

The district of Portoria was replaced today by Piccapietra but the municipal order that made more stir was that relating to Mother of God (Via Madre di Dio), concluded in the early 70s. In fact, the demolition of the area was not a direct consequence of the bombing, but it was the implementation of a regulatory plan of 1957, which modified one of 1932¹.

The residents were not consulted but placed in other districts of the city. Other ideas that considered a reorganization of the area were not taken into account; those projects provided for a maintaining the beauty of the historical sites, such as the native home of the

¹ We can find information about the regulatory plan of the Municipality at the website: <http://www.polis.unige.it/rco/rapu/pagine/schede/scheda%2034.htm>.

violinist Niccolò Paganini, who lived in Passo Gattamora [3].

Instead of the historic area they built a few buildings like the “Directional Centre” or “the Ligurian Centre”, which became headquarters of public and private institutions.

In addition, it was created a green area called “Gardens Baltimore” or “Plastic Gardens”, demonstrating the lack of affection that the Genoese have for the place. The green area became in the evening a place for criminals and addicted, cancelling so the spirit of renovation of the Municipality.



Fig. 1 Mother of Good Street (Via Madre di Dio), 1880 (Photo by G. Sciutto — Photographic Archive of Municipality of Genoa).



Fig. 2 The “Directional Centre” or “the Ligurian Centre” built instead of Via Madre di Dio. [4]

It's in these years that Genoa has further changed colour, where the brick was the lord, also because of the economic miracle and a great increase of population which led to an urban explosion, that the *Mass Media* judged irrational and disorderly.

Barozzi reported the data from 1936 to 1965 showing population in Genoa grew from 634.646 inhabitants to 848.000 [3]. Data is interesting at the light of the fact that currently the residents are 580.000, then even fewer than in the 90s. The first areas that were interested by a copious “rapallizzazione” were the hills of San Fruttuoso, Sampierdarena, Rivarolo and Marassi, where buildings were built wildly considering just of the space to allow free movement of vehicles, including along the rivers Bisagno and the tributaries. Unfortunately, this way of building without taking into account the environment and the rivers played a key role in facilitating the floods of 1970, 2011 and 2013.

Even social housing was involved in this process: always in the 60s were built palaces on Quezzi heights, known as “Il Biscione”, the shape remind a large snake, where many people went to live. The new urbanization weighed on the city streets and the suburb became a tangle of buildings and medium and large industries that impede themselves each other in an effort to expand due to the proximity of the roads.

In the periphery born other settlements just as disorganized, for example the Begato district, born with the purpose of connecting the agricultural area with the town, instead obtained the effect of catalysing many members of the Genoese criminality because of the distance from centre; it is accessible in long hilly roads become over time a sort of open dump and like other housing complexes such as “Quarto Alto” does nothing more than defacing an already damaged natural environment.

In the topography of Genoa's historic centre designates the city area included within the “Walls of Barbarossa”, but it is also the name given to the area of the Sestriere di Prè, the Jetty (Il Molo) and the Magdalene (Maddalena); so the area interested by the

“Old City” it is actually much broader than that traditionally attributed.

Gazzola underlined in “Genova: urban dynamics and deviance” that in the post-war period, the Historical Centre, as well as damaged by bombing, became the place that hosted several traffics and immigrants, marginalized, unemployed, delinquents [5] “thieves, the killers and that strange guy”² of Fabrizio De Andrè, as we shall see in the next paragraph.

4. Genoa and Music: The Genoese School

The Genoese school was a musical, cultural and artistic movement of profound break with the past developed in Genoa since the 60s around artists like Luigi Tenco, Fabrizio De Andrè, Bruno Lauzi, Umberto Bindi and Gino Paoli. The break was not only for the style, but also and especially with regard to topics covered: feelings, passions, sometimes told explicitly, political ideology, connected to socialism, anarchism and antimilitarism as a reaction to Vietnam War (1961-1975).

But the biggest influence was beyond any doubt, especially in the case of Fabrizio De Andrè, Bob Dylan's folk music, French existentialism and American poets and writers of *Beat Generation* like Jack Kerouac.

The themes of the songs are various, but thanks to Faber,³ the focus moved to the margins of society, such as homeless, addicted, prostitutes and gypsy and the neighbourhoods where they lived, the so-called “old city”.

Genoa is the background to the works of the intellectual group but if, in Bindi, Tenco and Paul, the city is almost never mentioned directly for leaving space to love, sometimes tormented, in De Andrè and Lauzi the Ligurian capital is recalled in the texts even with the use of the local dialect, the Genoese.

It's a Genoa post economic miracle, full of industries and flourishing in the port, involved in student demonstrations in 1968 in the hope of changing the world, as well as in other European and USA cities. De Andrè portrayed the historical centre in all of its aspects, its virtues and vices, its passions and flaws, always with a delicacy and respect in recounting the adventures of the various “characters”, erected to gods in a Pantheon of misérables. For example, in the last part of the famous “The Old City” (1965), talking about some characters that lived in the historic centre, Faber reminds us:

*“...If you'll think about it, if you'll judge it
as a good citizen
you'd condemn them to 5000 years of prison adding the costs
but if you'll understand, if you'll investigate even deeper
if they are not lilies, they are still sons
victims of this world.”*

There are in the song some important aspects: the political theme, the rebellion against the conformist and Catholic moral, a legacy of Fascism, the desire to understand, not to judge by appearances, despite everything, these people. Indeed “*nothing is born from diamonds but flowers grow on manure*”, famous verse in the last part of “Field's Street” (Via del Campo), 1967, it is a real gesture of affection and love towards those who were considered “outcasts” and, in this case, “prostitutes”, almost as if the purity and true love could only be found in what is considered the most impure by bourgeois morality. The historic Centre of the city, after the massive damage suffered during the Second World War, went through a period of sharp decline, as demonstrated by the Genoese singer-songwriter songs. One of the areas most affected by the bombing was, as described in the preceding paragraph, the nearby location for Sarzano Square (Piazza Sarzano); so Mother of God and other alleys were destroyed in the early 70s to leave place for new buildings and gardens. A song by Fabrizio De Andrè and the famous Roman singer-songwriter Francesco de Gregori, *The Way of Poverty* (Via della Povertà/Desolation Row), released

² Verse of *La città vecchia* (*The Old City*) by Fabrizio De Andrè.

³ Nickname given to Fabrizio De Andrè by the actor and friend Paolo Villaggio.

in 1974, even if it is the Italian translation of *Desolation Row* by Bob Dylan, takes us back with thought to the Mother of God, inhabited by the poor, immigrants and the homeless, always treated with great respect by the artists, but eternally condemned to poverty, places where even simple letters cannot be send.

In fact, we read:

*“..All these people that you mention
Yes, I know them, they're quite lame
I had to rearrange their faces
And give them all another name
Right now I don't feel so good
I don't want your letters no more
Not unless you mail them
From Desolation Row”*

Bruno Lauzi understood several aspects of the Ligurian capital with its “Genoa for us” (1975), where the focus is not the city but the nature of the citizens, the “churlish people”. The song was not written for the Genoese, the “us” of the song are not those who live in the city but, for various reasons they are captured and fascinated until to remain in Genoa forever.

In fact, we read in the first verse:

*“With that iffy face
that iffy expression
we have before leaving for Genoa
and every time we wonder
whether that place we are going to
will swallow us and we'll never come back.”*

But the thing that the interpreters of the Genoese school have in common is the love for the sea and the importance of living close to it; the sea is mentioned in the songs of all the authors, De Andrè, Lauzi, passing from Tenco and Sapore di sale, great hit by Gino Paoli.

The artists and songwriters witnessed of the great changes of Ligurian society like student movements of 68th, the transformation and urbanization of Genoa, the abandonment and rebirth of the historical centre since 1976, but also tragic events such as the suicide of Luigi Tenco during the San Remo Music Festival in 1967.

5. Genoa and the Old Port

The port has always been inextricably connected to the history of Genoa, from its founding to the glory that brought Andrea D’Oria in the sixteenth century, with its large fleet known throughout the world. All activities of the Genoese: trade, banking, shipping, finance, shipbuilding industry have always rotated around the harbour. The link with the city diminished in the twentieth century when it ended free access to the Port and there was a major economic and employment growth that made it one of the fundamental international harbours of Europe and the world. For the citizens of Genoa the harbour area is not exclusively related to the departure and arrival of ships; especially the oldest part became a tourist destination and a place of meeting. The site, called the Old Port, knew a great renovation in the 90s, particularly in 1992, when Genoa hosted the International Expo. The event was also called *Colombiadi*, because they remembered the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. The protagonist of the change was the famous Genoese architect Renzo Piano who designed and built some areas still used nowadays as the Cotton Warehouses, currently used as a cinema, conference centre, restaurants, the City Library “De Amicis”, the “Bigo” (an elevator for seeing the entire Port from above), the Aquarium which was inaugurated during the Expo. The aquarium, managed by Costa Edutainment SpA, is the most visited attraction in the city by Italians and foreigners, with estimated entrances of more than a million of persons from all of the world [6].

The Old City area, which overlooks the Old Port, from 1992 onwards also was the subject of a major redevelopment with the designation of Genoa like European Capital of Culture in 2004, and especially the consecration of Rolli’s Palaces⁴ in 2006 among the cultural heritage of Humanity Unesco that brought

⁴ “Palazzi dei Rolli” were an official list of noble palaces instituted in the XVI century by the Republic of Genoa for hosting important persons in Genoa. We can find more informations at: <http://www.irolli.it/>.

international attention to the “old city”, given the presence in the area of aristocratic residences.

6. Genoa and Contemporary Migrations

From the first part of the 90s the Ligurian capital had a strong migration, mainly from Albania and Morocco and after from Eastern Europe, Romania, in the 2000s. Later in the city came many foreigners coming from the south America and especially Ecuador, so much so that today still constitute the most numerous and active community in the Genoese context.⁵ According to the latest ISTAT data updated in September 2016, in Genoa there are 54.779 foreign on 583.973 inhabitants. Basically, about one on 10 is not Italian; these data necessarily imply a greater interest of authority and politics about integration of an important reality in the Genoese urban context.⁶

This change has had and continues to have consequences also on urban planning: the change in Sestriere of Prè, located in the District East Centre, from the neighbourhood of marginalized narrated by De André's has become a neighbourhood inhabited mainly by immigrants, perhaps equally marginalized, but they brought new languages, values, cultures and colours, drawings, signs visible in many shops and ethnic restaurants. The migrations and economic crises divided in two Genoa, where foreigners have settled substantially in several neighbourhoods, leaving others for economic reasons related to the cost of living.

The report of the City of Genoa, “Genoa, Foreigners in 2015”, shows some interesting data: the South Americans are the most numerous and constitute 35% of the total, followed by non-European citizens (17.8%) and Europeans (14.7%). In the end we find Asians (13.2%), the North Africans (10.1%) and finally the people from other American and African countries [7].

Specifically, the most represented is Ecuadorian community with approximately 15.000 members, behind them there are Albanians, 6.093, and

Romanians (5117). The numbers of Moroccans Decreased to 4.187, because of many returns at home caused by the favourable economic situation in Morocco, followed by Peruvians, Chinese (difficult to quantify for the closure of the community), Ukrainians, increased, especially women for the growing demand of elderly's care in Genoa, given that 28% of residents are over sixty age. The most marked African presence is Senegalese (1.780), followed by Nigerian and Tunisian. The Asian community is also represented by Sinhalese (about 1.150), Bangladeshis, Indians and Filipinos.

Talking about the distribution on the territory, the West Centre district, the area of Sanpierrez, has the highest number of foreign residents, nearly 11.000, followed by the East Centre district, the Port area and the Old Town, 10.346. Together the two districts hosted 40% of foreigners residents in Genoa, followed by Val Polcevera district, 15.3%, Middle West district, 11.1%, Val Bisagno district, 7.6%. At the end there are the Middle East district, with 5.4% and the East and West districts [7].

7. The Foreigners in the Genoese's Schools

Analysing the data provided by Arsel Liguria, Regional Agency for Educational Services and the Work, related to school year 2014/2015 there was a general increase of foreign students than in previous years. Overall, considering state and private schools of all levels, non-Italian students are 18.743 on 161.233 units. Statistically, the percentage reached 11.6% with a clear majority in the province of Genoa with 54.4%, followed by Savona, Imperia and, finally, Spezia [8].

The data confirm the history of migration and distribution of the new arrivals in the Genoa area. The major concern primary school enrolments, 7.488 on a total of 61.658 children. These data make us reflect on some factors: first, the desire to settle in the region from parents and to build a life in Liguria and try a integration with the territory; *in secundis* should lead

⁵ Data are confirmed by the report of the City of Genoa, "Genoa, Foreigners in 2015" at: http://statistica.comune.genova.it/publicazioni/download/stranieri_ge/Stranieri%20a%20Genova%202015/Stranieri%20a%20Genova%202015.pdf.

⁶ Data published at: <http://statistica.comune.genova.it>.

the state to some considerations concerning the education of teachers, especially in primary school.

New smells, tastes, colours, bring with them new hope and the role of the teacher will have more importance in a context always more multi-ethnic. Educating at intercultural values and cultural relativism also means this: face the challenges that puts the future in an open, aware and respectful way of the “other”, in an inclusive perspective and always reminding us that the Italians were and still are a nation of migrants. In this sense, a teacher educated in accordance with these principles can make the difference because a child including today will be a man (or woman) more integrated in the future society. The teacher will also have the task of recognizing “the other” not for exclude it, but for include it, enhance it in a society always in constant transformation.

8. Results

The urban planning of Genoa has changed, often in the name of brick, from the 50s to the present day. It has been 60s, economic growth, and the will, often inconsiderate, of modernization at all costs. Unfortunately, the city lost a lot, and the historical neighbourhood of Mother of God Street (Via Madre di Dio) which hosted Paganini's home, even the Door of Doria (Porta dei Doria) close today's Piazza Corvetto was destroyed because of wicked politics.

The “Old City”, celebrated by songwriters like Fabrizio De Andrè or musical groups belonging to the Ligurian folklore as “I Trilli”, has been for years place of decay, but with time the marginalized who lived in the “carruggi” were transformed into new outcasts,

migrants who cannot find integration paths in our country. The analyzed researches show how foreigners in Genoa are still rising and that they have helped to bring new colors in our streets and new flavors in our kitchen if we consider, for example, diffusion of a dish of the North African tradition as the “couscous” in many Italian regions.

The recognition of different value has to start, beyond by civil society and politics, above all by the school and the main message of this paper is that teachers of the future will have to consider a training course in the sign of interculturalism and relativism, in order to carry out their job, their mission of teachers and educators of future generations.

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