

BIG SHIPS ON THE HORIZON AND GROWING FRAGMENTATION AT HOME GENOA' S TRANSFORMATION OF THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

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With 3 figures, 1 table and 4 photos

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Summary: In 1986 Genoa was a city in decline. The ailing port and heavy industry on the western outskirts defined the city. There was little tourism. By 2006 Genoa could present itself as a fresh and modern European city, the vertical city structure had been enhanced, the old port transformed into a tourist magnet. The elements of this reconstituted urbanity resemble a facsimile of modern Europe as portrayed in the urban developers' trade journals. Outside impulses prompted Genoa onto this path of development, as well as the endogenous potentials that led to the accumulation of already existing resources. It will be shown that the strategies adopted for urban development in Genoa relied to a great extent on new forms of urban governance and that there was a strong notion of tradition and a clear path dependency in the way the urban landscape was reinvented. The adopted instruments of strategic planning neglected the problem areas of internal social fragmentation and immigration, two aspects which have become more important accompanying the process of urban renewal. The restructuring of the port turns out to be of central importance in understanding Genoa's urban transformation. It is the lifeline which links Genoa to the containerized global circuits and frames the urban renewal.

Zusammenfassung: 1986 war Genua eine Stadt im Verfall. Der marode Hafen am Fuße der Altstadt und die Schwerindustrie am westlichen Stadtrand prägten die Stadt, es gab praktisch keinen Tourismus. Zwanzig Jahre später präsentiert sich Genua als aufgeputzte moderne Stadt, war Europäische Kulturhauptstadt, die vertikale Stadtstruktur aufgewertet, der alte Hafen Ausgangspunkt für waterfront development; die „Via Garibaldi“ ist zum UNESCO-Weltkulturerbe erklärt worden. Die in Genua hergestellte neue Urbanität ist einzigartig und gleicht dennoch derjenigen in anderen europäischen Städten – erstaunlich ist jedoch die Geschwindigkeit und die Intensität der durchlebten städtischen Transformation – angesichts einer bis dahin weitgehend unregulierten Planungspraxis. Ermöglicht wurde die rasche städtische Transformation durch den Rückgriff auf das großartige historische Erbe der Stadt. Der Aufsatz befasst sich mit drei Fragen: Wer trieb den Prozess der Transformation voran und welche Strategien, Elemente und Instrumente der Stadtplanung fanden Anwendung? Welche Entwicklungen beeinflussten den Stadtbau? Welches sind die sozialen und räumlichen Konsequenzen, die den Transformationsprozess begleiteten? Es zeigt sich, dass die Stadt Genua diese Transformation nur durch Anstöße von außen sowie durch veränderte Formen der Planungspraxis erreichen konnte. Trotz der Einbeziehung partizipatorischer Elemente in den Planungsprozess führte die Transformation zur Verfestigung bereits angelegter räumlicher und sozialer Fragmentierungen. Begleitet wird diese städtische Transformation durch die Neustrukturierung des Hafens im Westen der Stadt, die zukünftig stärkere Einbindung Genuas in die Fernhandelsrouten der Containerschifffahrt mit Fernost bedeutet.

Keywords: Urban renewal, urban governance, strategic planning, fragmentation, immigration, Genoa

Introduction

In the past 20 years cities in Europe found themselves confronted with issues of urban renewal and revitalisation. This article examines the Italian city of Genoa as an excellent example of a rapid and complex urban renewal process.

At first glance, the process of urban renewal in Genoa resembles that of many formerly industrialized cities in Europe. It reveals typical elements of urban restructuring and the introduction of new forms of governance. The adoption of concepts such

as waterfront development, brownfield revitalization and the realization of an iconographic and postmodern style of architecture is not new. A superficial analysis would be tempted to reduce Genoa's urban renewal solely to beautification and the revitalization of its historic centre.

But behind this process of beautification, a fundamental change has occurred. Physical urban renewal went hand in hand with the incorporation of new forms of urban governance into local policies. The introduction of decentralized planning instruments posed a great challenge to Genoa because of

its traditional weak planning culture. Particular to Genoa has been the speed of this transformation and the way in which urban planning was made possible. The coalition of planners and city administration succeeded in triggering and enhancing the transformation through public relations events and in copying the strategies of other cities.

At second glance a much more far reaching development reveals itself. Behind the brilliant and architecturally impressive face-lift of the city centre, an economic transformation of global dimensions is taking place. Following years of social crisis and economic decline, the port, which throughout its history has been Genoa's point of reference and antagonist of urban development, is undergoing privatisation. A relaunch aimed at linking up with cargo routes to the Far East is underway. The former port area is once again part of the historic city centre while the new containerized port was shifted towards the Western coastline. In combination with the construction of a new offshore airport Genoa plans to integrate more closely into the global circuits of container logistics.

The social dimensions of this transformation process have until now been for the most part neglected. Existing literature has rarely touched upon these changes. Increasing social and spatial peripheralization, as well as the economic and social marginalization of various population groups and occupational biographies, is taking place. Most of the dozens of experts interviewed pointed out that the social dimension of the urban renewal had been explicitly shaded out of the planning and restructuring process. Spatial segregation has always been a characteristic of Genoa's urban pattern. What is new is the process of fragmentation, put forward by continuing degradation and indeed the shifting of such concerns to a later phase in the planning process. Fragmentation alludes to a more general process of social and spatial uneven development.

This article elaborates on three central questions aiming at understanding the process of urban transformation in Genoa:

How and by whom has urban renewal been carried out and what were the main elements, strategies, and instruments in the planning process? How was the urban renewal produced and realized?

What were the driving forces behind Genoa's urban transformation?

What have been the social and spatial consequences accompanying the urban renewal process?

The first section sheds light on the importance of urban renewal strategies in Italy and gives an overview on existing programs. Section two traces

Genoa's urban history which has been deeply intertwined with its urban renewal process. The focus is especially on the city administration's ambivalent relation to the port. The third section analyses the dynamics of the transformation process and concentrates on changes in the planning culture. Section four looks at the related process of growing social and spatial fragmentation in Genoa. The conclusion highlights why Genoa is an outstanding example of urban renewal and transformation and what the future challenges might be.

1 Elements and strategies of urban renewal: the importance of new concepts in the Italian urban system

In the 1990s Italian cities were coping to find ways of developing a new and more effective planning culture following a period of deep crisis (cf. SARTORIO 2005, 31). Spatial planning policies at the national level as promoted and implemented by bodies of the central government had been lacking, often resulting in administrative deficits and land speculation. Urban policies were usually dependent on bodies at the communal level through the instrument of *piani regolatori*, *regulatory plans*. If these existed at all, they often had little impact (PETZ 2007, 225 f.). Characteristic was the concentration on single projects and the dysfunction of political and administrative boundaries (SARTORIO 2005, 36).

Between 1993 and 2000 Italy launched various medium and long-term reform programs that tended to strengthen decentralization in urban planning (GOVERNA and SALONE 2005, 269). Other important changes were introduced. A new law made the mayor directly responsible to his or her constituency (Law No. 81, introduced in march 1993), thus weakening party structures and giving the mayor's program (*programma del sindaco*) more impact on local policies. This resulted in an orientation of the time frame adopted by local authorities from a 10 to 15 year perspective to a period of about four years, paralleling the election period. Secondly, the National Planning Institute (INU) initiated a broad public debate on planning issues and activated a parliamentary commission. Thirdly, the regulations governing public bids changed. After the *Tangentopoli*-scandal in the early 1990s public contracts were no longer closed to international competition (cf. SARTORIO 2005, 31 f.).

Two further innovations in the late 1990s paved the way for an alternative to the then current Italian planning culture. Regional planning instruments

began to be favoured explicitly over those on the national and the communal level, creating new territorial concepts such as “city regions”. In 1998 a new law focusing on measures for the revitalization of cities, *Piani di riqualificazione Urbana*, PRU¹⁾, enhanced the possibilities of cooperation between government and the private sphere (= *Public-private partnership*). Through this law the private sphere became more strongly involved in communal planning activities (PETZ 2007, 228). In addition, the EU began at this time to expand and then implement its own planning instruments, for example the URBAN program. The orientation of national policy on EU-policy implied that the key principles of the EU approach, the concepts of polycentricity and participation, would be integrated into the Italian planning process. This actors-oriented-perspective in planning stemmed from a more general shift in planners' attitudes towards society and networks, a shift initially developed and implemented in northern Europe and Anglo-Saxon countries (GOVERNA and SALONE 2005, 268 f.).

New forms of governance can generally be applied in different areas of urban development, from the processes of renewal in disadvantaged neighbourhoods to the revitalisation of shopping zones, to the revival of brownfields and waterfronts. They often focus on flagship projects and above all on the enlistment of “soft” location factors for shrinking urban areas, such as “culture” and “tourism” (see HOHN and NEUER 2006, 291 f.). European urban planners tend to copy successful strategies of post-industrial development experienced elsewhere, as in Glasgow and Barcelona.²⁾ The emerging planning culture in Italy was set to integrate these new concepts. “Urban governance” is used here to describe the complex setting of formal and informal strategies, measures, coordination, and control in the urban planning process (see HOHN et al. 2006, 5 ff.).

Most literature on urban governance underlines the fact that there is no longer one dominating instance in the process of change. Instead of

that a loose coalition of various collective interest groups make use of windows of opportunities and integrate the social capital of a variety of actors (MAYNTZ 2004; FÜRST 2007; GRABHER et al. 2005, among others). Critical literature interprets the incorporation of new forms of urban governance such as outsourcing formerly state driven strategies as a strengthening of inequalities and competition between cities and within the various social groups in cities. The question of social integration is also viewed as entering increasingly into the focus of governance (cf. MAYER 2005, 593; HEALEY 2006; HÄUSSERMANN et al. 2006; STANNARD 2006). It is reasonable to conclude that increased knowledge of social change is necessary for a more critical analysis of urban planning.

Some authors view the orientation towards non-state-driven urban development schemes in the context of urban renewal as being in line with the more general tendencies in neoliberal thought. Accordingly, preference is given to market based institutional shifts and policy realignments across the global economy which describe the organizational, political and ideological reorganization on all spatial scales (BRENNER and THEODORE 2005, 101 f.; HOHN et al. 2006). The transformation from an incoherent planning structure to one resulting from a more strategic orientation is part of a common post-Fordist urban development scheme of neoliberal coinage, financed predominantly through public-private partnership.

As in other European cities, strategic planning and *piani strategici* are a fundamental instrument of urban renewal in Italy. Its central element is based on a perspective which attempts to connect the social, economic, and physical dimensions into a single pragmatic vision (BOBBIO and GASTALDI 2003) calling for competition and internationalization, as was the case in Genoa. It favours, though sometimes on a more rhetorical level, citizen participation centred around the local city council, which often has little if any legal clout. The boundaries between strategic planning and more traditional planning instruments, such as land use, are blurred in most Italian cities (SARTORIO 2005, 32 f.). A characteristic of the new urban governance is the increase in planning instruments and the novel use of more traditional instruments, from “traditional” to “integrated” ways of urban intervention (GOVERNA and SALONE 2005, 272). The city of Genoa experienced a variety of planning instruments and strategies (see table 1).

¹⁾ Complex urban programs include: urban recover program PRU (*Programmi di recupero Urbano*), Decreto no. 398/5.10.1993; programs of urban renewal: PRIU (*programmi di riqualificazione Urbana*), Decreto 21.10.1994; Neighbourhood contracts: *Contratti di quartiere*; 22.10.1997; Urban renewal and sustainable Territory Development programs (PRUSST: *Programmi di recupero Urbano e di sviluppo Sostenibile del Territorio*; decreto ministeriale 8.10.1998 and 28.5.1999) (cf. GOVERNA and SALONE 2005, 272 ff.).

²⁾ In Glasgow the campaign was titled: “*Glasgow's miles better*”; in Barcelona “*Barcelona, mes que mai*”.

Table 1: Genoa's inclusion in national and supranational programs 1993–2006

Regional Planning Level	Content of Programs
PRU Programmi di Recupero urbano (Urban Recovery Program) Decree no. 398 dd. 5 October 1993; Art. 11 law dd. 4 December 1993 (National)	Refurbishing and renewal of subsidized housing.
PRIU Programmi di qualificazione urbana (Urban Renewal Programs) Decree dd. 21 December 1994	Upgrading of buildings and urban planning.
PRUST Programma di Recupero urbano e di sviluppo sostenibile del territorio (Urban Renewal and Sustainable Territory Development Program) Decree no. 1169 dd. 8 October 1998 and Ministerial Decree no. 170 dd. 28 May 1999 (National)	Follow-up program to PRU, upgrading and expansion of infrastructure, funding for revitalizing and expanding the economy / production and jobs, upgrading of urban problem areas and the environment; industrial, commercial and technical businesses, tourism, revitalization of disused industrial areas.
Contratti del Quartiere” (Quarter contracts) Ministry for Public Affairs, Decree dd. 22 October 1997 (National)	Peripheral urban areas from the 60s and 70s are aided. Funding 65% national and 35% regional.
POR Programma Operativo Regionale Regional program, funded by the ESF	EU-Objective 1-subsidies (FESR, FEOAG, FSE and SFOP) are distributed according to regional strengths and weaknesses.
DOCUP Documento unico di programmazione Regional program, funded by the ESF	Promotes regional economic development through proportionate, regional, national and European (FESR) funds.
Contratti d’Area (Area contracts)	Revitalisation of disused industrial areas; tourism marketing; conservation of non-productive fields of work.
Patti territoriali (Territorial Pacts)	Stimulation of local development; interventions for transport.
PIT (Integrated Territorial Programs)	Initiation of local development; coordination of other activities; links to ESF funds.
EU URBAN II Program	114,8 m EURO subsidies available, 86 applications from the Ministry of Infrastructure (Ministero delle Infrastrutture) 60 in southern Italy, 55 from Objective 1 regions, 26 others I.
In addition to URBAN II: <i>Urbanitalia</i> to subsidise 20 more participants of the application list	

Source: ISTAT 1999–2001, quoted in GODERBAUER 2005, 74 ff. as well as GOVERNA and SALONE 2005, 272 and 275.

2 Consequences of the geographic location: *La Superba!*

The geographic position of Genoa has always exerted a strong influence on the structure and dynamics of its urban development. Wedged between the sea and the mountains it lacked usable terrain. The absence of raw materials, a limited local market, and a weak military impelled Genoa to turn to the outside world (BRAUDEL 1979 quoted in PICHIERRI 1989; BRAUDEL 1999). The Genoa of the Middle Ages consisted of a large number of family centred suburbs with a polycentric urban landscape absent of large public squares.³⁾

The symbiotic relationship between city and port up to the 14th century determined its reciprocal functional dependence (cf. FERA and MINELLA 1999).

As a result of the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the sea power Genoa was forced to give up its lucrative colonies. It rose to the occasion and became one of Europe's most important financial centres (BRAUDEL 1999, 104 ff.). This new era hosted a modern urban ensemble dedicated to reflect Genoa's wealth and new found importance. Today this ensemble represents a unique example of urban renaissance culture. In the 19th century Genoa became one of the first Italian cities to industrialize. With Milan and Turin it became one of Italy's industrial core centres which for the next 100 years were critical to the modernisation of the country.

Genoa's roots lay in a fundamentally materialistic past, a history that was determined by heavy industry, a *city of steel* ("*città d'acciaio*"). At the end of the 19th century Sampierdarena, an industrialized area west of the historic centre, became Italy's "Manchester"⁴⁾ (cf. GAZZOLA 2006). The urban surroundings were organized functionally according to the needs of the dominant industries, particularly the Ansaldo company. The city expanded beyond the historical centre, most prominently along the hillsides. The important streets became impressive Boulevards (e.g. *Via Venti Settembre*). The expansion of Genoa's vertical urban structure traces its beginnings to this period (cf. ARVATI 2002).⁵⁾

³⁾ The town was above all one huge warehouse. The scarceness of storage space in the port meant that much of the merchandise had to be stored in the *Casettori*, the home of the merchant.

⁴⁾ The travel literature of the 17th and 18th centuries glorifies the beauty of this area, which was to be sacrificed for the sake of modernity.

⁵⁾ In the half-century between 1850 and the beginning

Reopened in 1888, the port focused on accommodating sailing ships, a short sighted decision as time would tell. After a few short years it was no longer capable of catering to the needs of modern steamship technology. The state would assume an increasingly important role as protector and promoter of Genoese industry, acting as contractor as well as a source of subsidies. The founding of an autonomous port consortium in 1902 marked the formal break between the city and its port, which now constituted an autonomous administrative complex independent from the city. The growth of industry resulted in rapid population growth and around the turn of the century the first working class estates appeared west of Genoa in *Ponente*. By about 1870 Genoa had become a city divided economically, socially, culturally and politically (cf. ARVATI 1988; BAGNASCO 1988). The inner city comprised the middle class commercial centre of *Polcevera* and *Ponente* became the working-class area. Pockets of poverty had already become a structural part of Genoa's social stratification (cf. Arcidiocesi 2005). Big ships on the horizon paralleled growing social and spatial polarization in the city.

The administrative merger brought about by civic reform in 1926 and the rise of fascism created a new hierarchy of urban space, the top of which became the city centre.

The post war years in Genoa were characterized by a complete absence of any real city planning procedures which led to unchecked and indiscriminate urban growth. Buildings were erected all too often without regard to developmental or infrastructural considerations (cf. GAZZOLA 2006). From the early 1960s until the oil crisis in the early 1970s population grew rapidly due to migration from the *Mezzogiorno* and the hinterland. The increase in family size and the emergence of new life styles led in the 1960s to a strong rise in the demand for housing, especially in the lower price segment. In the early 1980s parts

of the 20th century urban development followed five strategic directions: first, where possible and where there was access to the valley the mountain areas were built up; second, the *Circonvallazione a monte* was constructed, a road which surrounds the whole of Genoa, built on the hills and providing room for residential building. Third, there was a concentration of building of the previously peripheral area west of the centre of the city. Fourth, development progressed inland, along the Bisagno plain. This was mainly the consequence of an administrative act: in 1874 six local authorities in the East of Genoa were incorporated (Foce, S. Francesco d'Albaro, S. Martino, S. Fruttuoso, Marassi und Staglieno). Fifth, in 1912 the Albaro hillside was incorporated.

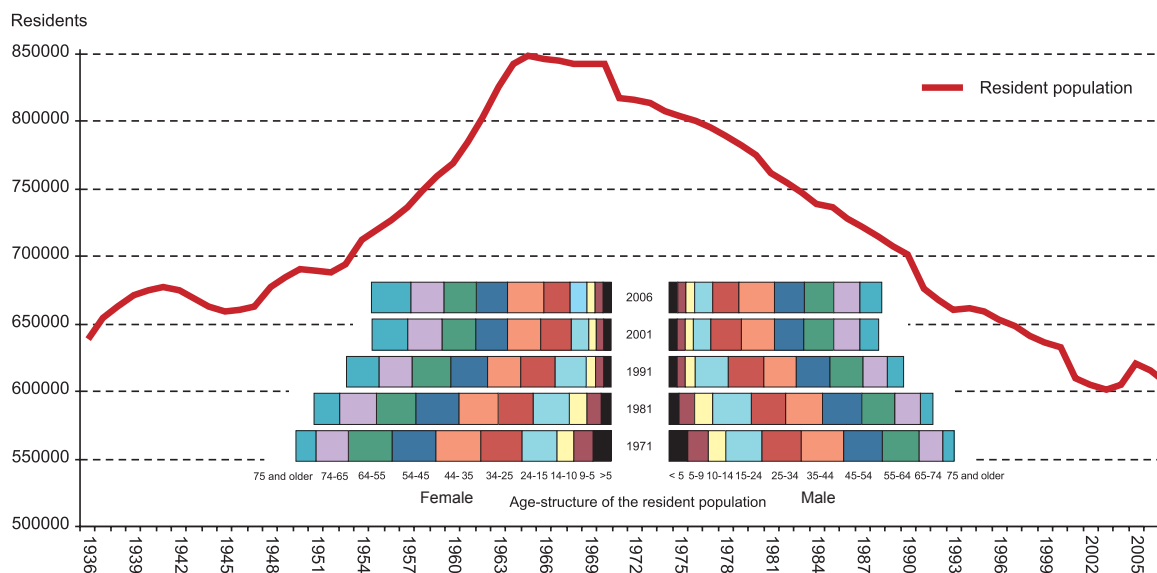


Fig. 1: Resident population and age structure – 1936 to 2005. Source: Comune di Genova, notiziario statistico, various years

of the *centro storico* were demolished, exacerbating an already deteriorating situation and creating the need for even more new housing opportunities.⁶⁾

In the 1980s Genoa found itself in the depths of a crisis. Since the early 1970s the number of births had been falling constantly. Fewer marriages, higher mortality rates, an aging population and negative population growth presented a sombre picture (see Fig. 1). Genoa's economic structure had weakened. Between 1978 and 1983, the volume of goods passing through the Port of Genoa decreased progressively, falling well behind that of other European ports like Hamburg, Bremen or Rotterdam (PICHIERRI 1989, 31). In particular, the lack of space prompted the slow development of containerized trade. The turnaround and loading times in the nearby Port of La Spezia were shorter. In the mid 1980s Genoa's economic structure was sharply polarized between large and small enterprises, with little interaction between the two. This economic crisis affected tourism, which by 1960 nearly ceased to exist. As in other European cities, the end of the Fordist era was symbolized in a general strike in Genoa in 1983. As if a reaction to the underlying economic crisis, the cultural life of Genoa came to a standstill.

⁶⁾ In Liguria, as well as in other regions of Italy, new legislation permitted the development of residential housing in specifically dedicated peripheries (so-called "*Edilizia agevolata*", formerly the "*case popolari*"). These dormitory suburbs arose in the outskirts of the newly incorporated local districts: in Voltri, Prà, Pegli, Sestri, Borzoli, Begato, Granarolo, S. Eusebio, Quarto, Voltri 2, Pegli 3.

At the height of this urban agony new alliances were being forged. In 1986 a joint plan was put forward by the Genoa city administration, the port consortium, and the urban planning department of the region of Liguria, the *Piano Urbanistico*. Its ambitious aim was to make Genoa once again attractive to Mediterranean sea traffic and to halt the town's decline. Two priorities emerged early on. Firstly, refurbishment of the area where the heavy industries had once stood and which since the War had been subjected to an inadequate and substandard development scheme, and secondly, the rescue of the helplessly neglected *centro storico* with its irreplaceable cultural heritage. From the outset the intended process of urban transformation was linked to three conditions. The Italian government would recognize the port as being a nationally relevant issue and would support its development through investment in and development of its infrastructure. Secondly, that private investors could be found and thirdly, that the port workers be prepared to accept both the opportunities as well as the risks of the undertaking themselves. For many, the risks were too great and they took advantage of early retirement schemes. As so often in Genoa's history, the port became the driving force in urban restructuring.

Restructuring of the port

July 1969 saw Genoa open one of Europe's first two container terminals, and the very first in Italy. The introduction of containers rendered ware-

houses superfluous and as a result made many dock workers redundant. After years of deadlock, the port was literally in danger of dying. The closure of the port became a viable option. As in Liverpool, it was eventually decided for the port to become successively independent of the government funding it had previously relied upon and to move towards privatization. The Genoese government handed over the management of the port to private shipping companies with 100% of the risk passing to the investors. In May 1991 the port consortium together with an alliance of Genoese manufacturers committed themselves to investing 200 billion lira in the port and to guarantee a doubling of the transshipment volume. In addition they promised to provide employment for 1,000 workers. In return the entrepreneurs were granted a free hand at the terminals. In 1986 the state provided 160 billion lira for the port extension in Voltri, monies that had previously been allocated for the unloading area.

The relaunch of the port at Voltri was intended to accredit Genoa as a new player in the global shipping industry. This key industry “port” according to the port consortium and the chamber of commerce, would open all doors, making it possible for Liguria to enter a globalized future through the expansion of traffic routes to the Far East. According to QUAINI (2006, 233 ff.), these ideas are reminiscent of the apocalypse, as the coming years will witness uncountable super tankers and super freighters (with up to 8,000 containers per ship) ploughing through the Mediterranean. For Genoa alone the port consortium projected 4 million containers being transhipped annually by 2010, about half as many as Rotterdam handles today.⁷⁾ The geographical predicament of Genoa had returned in a new guise. Genoa has a large port with sufficient depth, but without enough space for handling containers in such numbers. The only viable option for expansion lies at sea. In addition, to connect the port with the hinterland would require the construction of a high-speed rail network to connect Genoa with Milan, an hour away, and which would also provide access to Switzerland and continental Europe. More efficient logistics and a new airport completed this future vision. Precisely this was proposed in the *Affresco* of Renzo Piano which was approved in March 2006: the airport is extended out to sea, allowing cranes

⁷⁾ The scale of port development: container transshipment in 1990 310,217 teu. 1996: 825,752 teu; 2005: 1,624,964. Similar increases in passenger handling with ferry ships and cruise liners: 2,467,964 1996; 2005: 3,037,979).

for the port and runways for the airport to work at the same time (see Fig. 2). The port will become the hub, gradually meeting the needs of the European Corridors for goods and persons while delegating the hinterland at Alessandria the job of logistic platform (cf. Consiglio italiano per le Scienze Sociali 2007, 119 ff.).⁸⁾ Recent data on the distribution of employees between different economic sectors would tend to support this developmental scenario. Data shows that in the province of Genoa the share of employment has decreased to 0.9% in 2006 (1996: 1.9%) in the primary sector and in the secondary sector to 20.3% (1996: 25%). The service sector is now with a share of 79.1% the most important sector (1996: 73.1%) (Comune di Genova 2008). Again: Big ships on the horizon.

3 The production of urban renewal (strategies, instruments and elements)

Towards strategic planning

The city council's strategic plan of the 1980s, *Piano Urbanistico*, was complemented by a number of “new strategies” including city marketing and town management which within the framework of port regeneration had been proven elsewhere (cf. GAZZOLA 2006). These strategies were in accord with the general tendency to make use of the historic centre as a starting point for urban regeneration. The weak communal structure had to respond to modern and *powerful* external challenges, such as commissioning expert opinions by prominent consultancy firms. In 1991 two of these firms, Roland Berger and McKinsey, proposed a polyfunctional and integrated development plan which would concentrate on the port, the service sector, light industry and tourism

⁸⁾ The Northwest of Italy is part of the “European Pentagon”, also known as the “blue banana”, which reaches from Paris up to Hamburg, Germany, Switzerland and Northern Italy. High per capita income and high consumer and production rates characterize this region. This area is considered also the most important one for containerized logistics. This area can be reached geographically only via the coastal route between Livorno and Marseille. All infrastructure programs thusly aim at linking up to this core region by connecting the seaside. Two corridors emerge as overly important: the axis Rotterdam – Genova – Palermo and Genova – Alessandria – Novara – Sempione, making connection with the Lyon – Budapest – Kiev corridor (cf. Consiglio italiano per le Scienze Sociali 2007, 120 ff.).

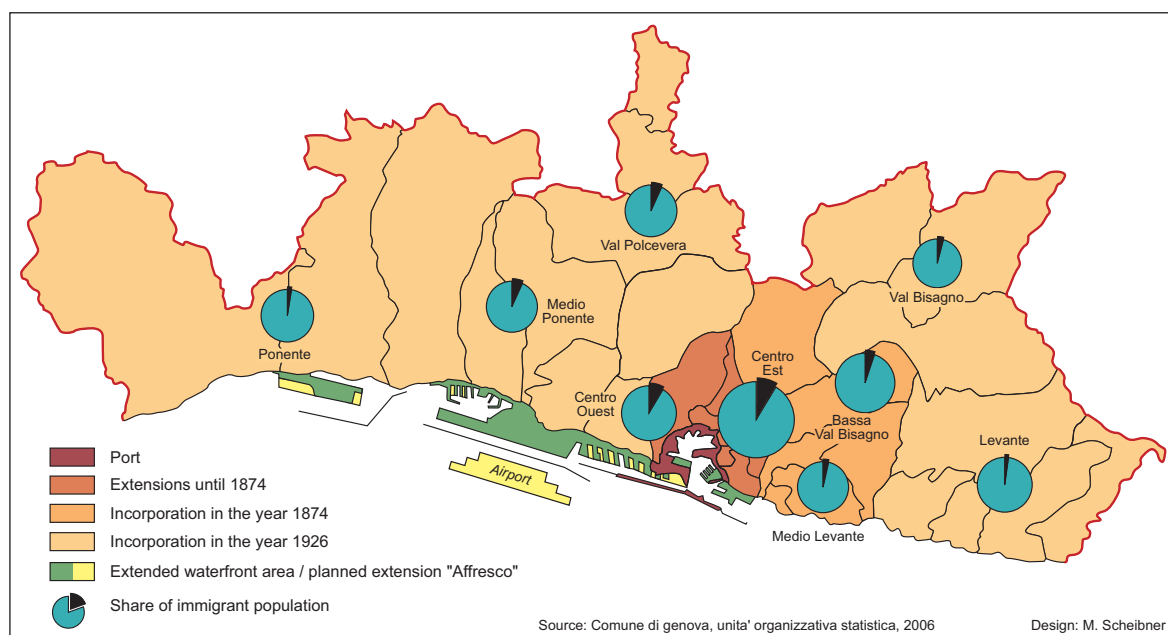


Fig. 2: City structure, immigration and (planned) port extensions

in public-private partnership.⁹⁾ The plan would focus on the town's strengths: its port infrastructure, basic industries, the university, centres of medical excellence, and its historical cultural heritage. The ground was paved for the introduction of new modes of urban governance and for new public and private actors.

It was around this time that the Genoese architect RENZO PIANO became the most prominent individual to be involved in Genoa's urban transformation. He advocated a conservative interpretation of the city's development potential and for "the return of the sea to the town" (GAZZOLA 2003, 115; PIANO 2004). PIANO proposed a revitalization plan for a section of the port to the *Bureau International du Exposition* (BIE) which entailed restoration of the historical substance. Thanks to further key players like the Senator Emilio Taviani, the town decided to hold the *Colombiane*, a celebration honouring the 500th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America. Genoa was granted permission to hold its celebrations within the framework of a world exhibition.¹⁰⁾ This was to become the first of three big

events setting the framework for urban planning (Photo 1).

Event No. 1: The Colombiane 1992

The aim of the Genoa 92' Colombiane exhibition was the reintegration of 5 hectares of the old port with the historic centre.¹¹⁾ The renewal model chosen concentrated on the strengthening of the museum landscape, the emphasis of culture and cultural events and the rediscovery of the historical heritage (BODENSCHATZ 2005). Hosting the Colombiane went hand in hand with a number of smaller social projects which were focused primarily on the inhabitants of the *centro storico*. For the first time a public-private partnership became the main form of investment. The 'Porto

cial law (L.373/88) was passed to ensure the necessary public finances and legal support would be forthcoming; one year later another law (L.205-89) consolidated this field of action.

¹¹⁾ The exhibition included a 5-storey aquarium (the largest in Europe), hotels and restaurants, a congress centre with 1,500 seats, a shopping mall, a panorama lift ("Bigo" see Photo 1), a port promenade, public squares and a memorial, as well as a multi-storey car park with 1,100 parking lots. Exhibitors from 50 countries were able to show off their sea-related technology, art and culture in the refurbished buildings, for example in the cotton warehouses (built 1895–1901); in Porta del Molo (built 1553); in the port sheds (built 1653). Part of the urban restructuring was the construction of a subway system – one main track was opened during the *Colombiane*.

⁹⁾ The consultancies recommended to establish a strategic commission ("commissione per lo sviluppo dell'area metropolitana") that should include the mayor, the presidents of the university and of the chamber of commerce, the federation of industries, port authorities, trade unions and some prominent personalities.

¹⁰⁾ For the occasion of the Columbus celebrations a spe-



Photo 1: Iconography of the post-Fordist architecture, waterfront development

Storico SPA, with 51% owned by the port authority and 49% by 'Newport SPA', contributed significantly towards new port development (cf. JAUHAINEN 1995, 17 f.) The event was however doomed to financial disaster¹²⁾ (BODENSCHATZ 2005, 49 f.). Despite this, experts continued to praise the underlying long-term potential of development. Triggered by the cumulative process of renewal measures, the first tangible results began to appear and among the population there gradually arose a form of democratic awareness of change. In the 1980s most people still had regarded the idea of the "tourist city" as a bit of a joke. One of the experts on Genoa's urban development remembers: "For many years nobody thought that change would be possible. There was no consciousness of the possibilities this city has. I mean, the tourist potential. There existed these terrific resources, but nobody understood how they could be made valuable. And that the active fostering of these historic resources would lead to a 'Re-edition' of the city. It was a slow process of understanding that Genoa could enjoy this type of future."

The planning process slowed considerably in the following six years. In 1998 with the new *giunta*, the local government, in power, the process of urban renewal entered into a new phase. Elements of strategic planning were introduced into the planning process.

¹²⁾ The visitor numbers were deliberately falsified; fraud, bribery and corruption widespread during the building phase had become commonplace once the exhibition opened. The estimated losses amounting to some 600 billion lira (US\$ 355 million) were born mainly by the central government, the private sector getting off quite lightly.

Introducing strategic planning

It became the explicit wish of the urban elite to find a way towards a desirable and sustainable transformation of the urban landscape. At the first "strategic conference", *conferenza strategica*, in 1999, 250 participants came together to discuss the "*Piano della città*".¹³⁾ A steering committee was set up.¹⁴⁾ Work had already begun on restructuring the city administration to a more open system and by introducing more citizen oriented structures. Another aim was to arrive at territorial divisions, which at the same time would function as "constituencies" (*municipi eletti* = elected). Through the replacement of centralized structures, it was intended to release administrators from operative tasks making more time available for planning activities and to accompany the city's transformation. The urban development plan set out to overcome fragmented intervention policies¹⁵⁾ and to involve people from outside Genoa (GASTALDI 2004b, 68 f.). The "strategic plan", *piano strategico*, determined a framework, the form and content of which would be used for the subsequent planning effort. This was an innovation.

Event No. 2: The G8 Summit in 2001

In preparation for the G8 Summit in 2001, large sums of additional money flowed into the city. The campaign "*Genova si fa bella*", Genoa makes itself beautiful, was created.¹⁶⁾ Like the Colombine before it, the summit ended in a disaster which badly damaged the town's reputation.¹⁷⁾

¹³⁾ The conference title alluded to its tradition as a port city: "*Genova: Le vie del Mediterraneo e dell'Europa*".

¹⁴⁾ Comprising representatives from regional government, the province, the municipal council, the chamber of commerce and the port authority.

¹⁵⁾ Various planning instruments are involved: PUC (Piano Urbanistico Comunale); Piano Portuale; sector planning; complex programs, Piano operativo del *centro storico*.

¹⁶⁾ In the area of the old port the focus was laid on museums, culture and history (restructuring of the *Magazzini del Colone*) and great effort was concentrated on renewing the pavement, planting palm trees, focusing entirely on the iconography of the city landscape. In the old part of the city the fresh funds were used to expand the public transport structure. Pedestrian zones were introduced, placed bollards along many of the roads to reduce the traffic and upgraded the central Piazza *Ferrari* with water fountains (see Photo 2) and a new branch of the underground railway.

¹⁷⁾ Demonstrations during the G8 Summit ended with

In Genoa at this time decisive changes were occurring at the institutional level. Three main aspects were determining these developments:

- the ongoing process of institutional and state decentralization,
- the subsequent decrease in financial transfers to local and regional bodies who were at the same time becoming more subject to EU regulations and oversight,
- the direct election of the mayor and his future role (cf. Comune di Genova 2007a).

The mayor Giuseppe Pericu did indeed become the central figure in this process of ongoing development.¹⁸⁾ In the area of urban revitalisation he guided the development along the lines of other European cities like Barcelona and Glasgow. These cities had introduced innovative governance strategies, setting up city development committees and seeking stronger citizen participation. Giuseppe Pericu also entered into an alliance in 2004 with the mayor of Barcelona to host the *Forum Universale della Cultura* and with the mayor of Athens as a host of the Olympic Games. In these cities, too, development and refurbishment strategies were concentrated on public areas. They also perceived the need for a participative approach because of heterogeneous property structures. This upgrading of public spaces, most specifically streets, street lighting and pedestrian zones, served as the locomotive for private investment in buildings. The system of public transportation got a boost when a new subway line was built, reducing traffic and making the city more liveable. What had been successful in Barcelona was now to work for Genoa (Photo 2).

Pushing further strategic planning

In 2002, the reelection of the presiding administration enabled a first assessment of the *Conferenza strategica*.¹⁹⁾ According to the assessor for urban plan-

over 600 injured and 253 arrests; the 23-year-old globalization protester Carlo Giuliani was shot dead by the police.

¹⁸⁾ Pericu was first elected in 1997 for five years and returned for another term in 2002. He was exceptionally well versed in Italy's institutional structure due to his former profession as a professor of administrative law (cf. GABRIELLI and BOBBIO 2005, 57). Pericu remembers: "I met occasionally with Renzo Piano back then, but it was mostly Pascal Maragall, the famous mayor of Barcelona, to whom I went for advice [...]. He convinced me to make use of strategic planning" (PERICU and LEISS 2007, 34 f.).

¹⁹⁾ The newly drafted *Piano Città* consisted of three vol-



Photo 2: Restauration of the facades – Piazza De Ferrari

ning at the time, Bruno Gabrielli, the resistance to the plans laid down here was only slight. There may have been some criticism of individual steps in the transformation process, but complete rejection of the strategic plan remained the exception. Social concerns played only a minor role at the time and interventionist policies were delegated to a later phase of planning. Various attempts were made to involve as many people as possible in the preparation of the planning process. The assessor stressed that participation had been especially strong among the elite: "Many people participated in that process. We had 40 public hearings and it was a very intensive process of reflection. Even if there was a lot of participation, it still remained a concern of the elite. From the side of the civil society there were about 4,000 to 5,000 citizens involved. It was similar to what had been experienced in Barcelona and we used that city as a point of reference."

An incentive for stronger cooperation among the loose coalition of participants²⁰⁾ was the candidacy for the title of European Cultural Capital 2004, which had been in the planning since 1996/7. In conjunction with the URBAN II program, becoming the European Cultural Capital was crucial for the further transformation of the city. The six most prominent Genoese planners now came to understand that the

umes (Achieved objectives (*Bilancio 1991–2001 e prospettive della città*)/Individual actions and description of successful actions on filing cards (*Quadro degli obiettivi e delle principali azioni*)/Precise details of the actions and their assessment (*Libro dei fatti*).

²⁰⁾ Among them bodies of the central state, the port authority, the university, private initiatives, also the entrepreneurs organized themselves institutionally in CIVs (*Centri Commerciali Integrati in Via*) making use of public funding.

success of urban development projects was strongly dependent on their internationalization in terms of networking and invitations for tenders. The regeneration effort could no longer be financed by the city alone, but had to be subsidized through access to mega-events such as jubilee celebrations, sporting events and international summits.

The city council became very successful in securing both national and international capital. The vertical urban structure which was in such great need of fundamental restructuring was addressed and cooperation between the various players in the planning process successfully mastered (GASTALDI 2004a, b, 70; GABRIELLI and BOBBIO 2005, 57). Genoa was the only European city to take part in both URBAN programs and in addition took part in various national and regional programs (cf. MEYER and SCHNEIDER 2005, 74 ff.; GOVERNA and SALONE 2005, 272, 275).

Using exhibitions and events to help revitalize tourism and emphasize cultural identity, Genoa focused on and fulfilled the requirements of the "European Capitals of Culture".

Event No. 3: Capital of Culture 2004 and participation in the URBAN program

Genoa obtained URBAN funds for its urban restructuring.²¹⁾ These funds were earmarked for the

²¹⁾ The lion's share of the 30 million EUROS from URBAN II came from public sources, about 9.5% originated from private investors. This applies only to the areas of upgrading the urban environment, culture, and tourism. Approximately 37% of the total 30 m EURO were borne by the ESF. The rest was financed by the Italian government through state money, in particular by the central government in Rome. The Comune of Genoa invested around 6.7%. The two largest shares went to upgrading the physical environment and into startup support for businesses and associations. Social projects also received a share.

Urban redevelopment and improvement of the urban environment. Improvement of the physical environment, refurbishment of buildings and open spaces, services for immigrants and social programs (total cost: 11.3 m EURO, of which EU contribution: 4.8 m EURO; state money: 4.5 m EURO; private sector: 1.9 m EURO).

Socioeconomic revitalization. Occupational training, various measures for the support of business and development of a "new economy" (total cost: 11.3 m EURO, of which EU contribution: 4.2 m EURO; state money 6.2 m EURO; private sector: 1.5 m EURO).

Environment. Improvement in public transportation, waste management in form of waste separation and separate waste collection measures (total cost: 5.9 m EURO, of which EU contribution: 1.2 m EURO; state money: 4.7 m EURO;



Photo 3: Restauration of the historical centre

centro storico, the historical old town, a particularly degenerated area of 198 hectares badly in need of repair. This medieval "jewel" of the city stretching along the Ligurian coastline was one of the most dilapidated areas of Genoa, but at the same time the potentially largest tourist magnet. The growth phase after World War II with its wave of immigration from southern Italy gave way to an increasing marginalization of the social structure in the 1980s. The structural fabric in the *centro storico* was very poor with 80% of housing units built prior to 1919. Sanitary facilities and sewage installations, street lighting and waste collection had been in a miserable state for years. One in nine apartments had neither bathing facilities nor heating (see on the social conditions of the elderly: GAZZOLA 2001/2007). Drug dealing and prostitution with their associated criminal entourage were rampant (cf. COSTANZI and GAZZOLA 2001) (Photo 3).

The improvement and reorganization of the city's museums and the town's general architectural heritage played an important role in the application for the title of European Cultural Capital. Funds from URBAN II made possible the restoration and refurbishment of the *Palazzini dei Rolli*, former palaces of the aristocratic families, and helped support the organization of a coordinated museum network (see Fig. 3).²²⁾ In addition, more than 800 exhibitions and other cultural events took place. In an interim report

private sector: 0 m EURO).

Technological assistance coordination (total cost: 1.5 m EURO, of which EU contribution: 0.75 m EURO; state money 0.75 m EURO; private sector: 0 m EURO). (Comune di Genova, 2004, 114 f.)

²²⁾ Further included was the restoration of historical villas in Ponente (Voltri) and Nervi (Levante) as well as conversion of the antique *palazzini* for use by the university faculties.

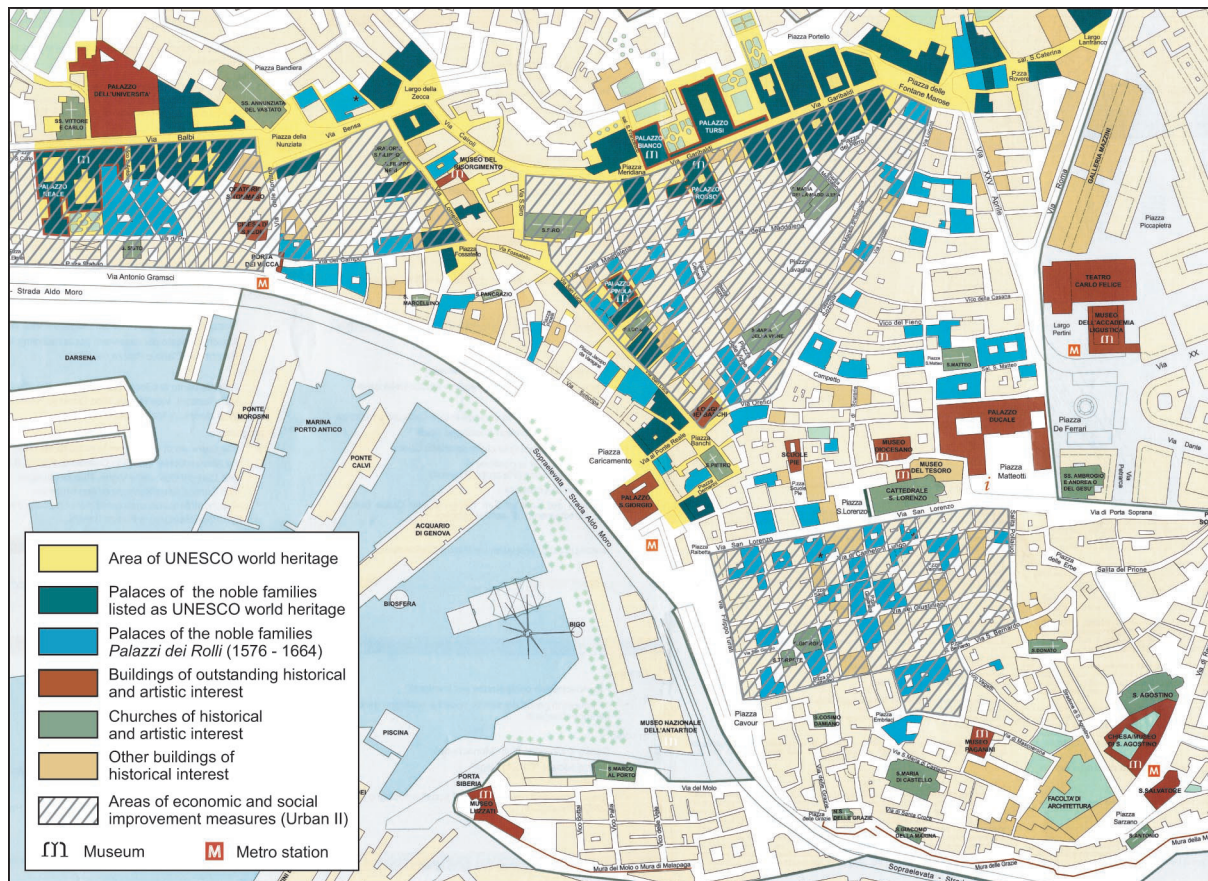


Fig. 3: Urban II in the centre, Palazzi dei Rolli. Source: Comune di Genova 2004b, c

it was suggested to include forums and round tables (*tavoli di partecipazione*) in future planning and to introduce a social plan to enhance well-being in the town. Via the architect RENZO PIANO's "Affresco" the *Waterfront* project was to strengthen the link between the port area and the city. An aesthetization of the existing substance now became a focus of planning efforts. As projected, tourism increased, especially among the group who qualify as "*turisti colti*", monied and culturally interested tourists.²³⁾ The number of museum visitors increased from 163,000 in 1999 to 410,000 in 2004 (BORZANI 2005).

Genoa's transformation affected a change in the city's economic alignment. A consensus across all so-

cial boundaries held that the future of Genoa lies in the specialization of port activities, in the expansion of the IT sector, in new electronic and service industries, and in upmarket tourism. The old industrial area in the immediate vicinity of the *centro storico* is in the process of being dismantled (GAZZOLA 2006).

4 The social and spatial dimension of urban transformation: towards fragmentation

Throughout the process of urban renewal the city administration stressed the participatory aspects of urban development as laid out in URBAN II. In most cases however, citizen participation ceased when the individual projects came to an end (Comune di Genova/DISA 2006). One of the deliberate strengths of the urban transformation process was the understanding that revalorization of the historical centre would be of highest priority and that it should be made attractive again to well off citizens. Other aspects of urban development had been neglected or delegated to a later phase of urban transformation.

²³⁾ Data on tourism can be interpreted by looking at hotel arrivals and daily occupancy. Arrivals increased in the period 1997 to 2007 from approximately 435,000 to 594,000 persons. There was also an increase in the percentage of foreigners among these tourists, from 34.1% in 1997 to 37.4% in 2007. Also registered daily occupancies increased in this ten year period. In 1997, about one million daily stays were counted, 35% by foreigner visitors. In 2007, it was nearly 1,200,000, foreign visitors accounting for 38.4% (Comune di Genova 2008).

Expenditures for social needs remained unchanged during the years of transformation (PERICU and LEISS 2007, 40). A substantial part of public property was transferred to two bodies controlled by the city administration, SPIM and TONO. This measure had three goals: longstanding inhabitants could purchase their formerly state owned flats, secondly, the identification and re-use of public properties not in use, and thirdly, the sale of public properties in order to generate capital for the increasingly meagre communal budget. 61% of the public property, 2,237 housing units and 378 real estate units were sold, adding 252 m EURO to the communal budget (PERICU and LEISS 2007, 85 ff.).

Not surprisingly social and spatial fragmentation following well known patterns is appearing. Experts have diagnosed a clear trend towards gentrification, which discriminates against the elderly, families, immigrants, and lower income groups in general. Young professionals, academics, and students rent the upper storeys of the *Palazzi* in the old town. Many apartments are still so dilapidated that they can no longer be inhabited and are left to decay. Often apartments are overcrowded, the inhabitants mainly young single men, often poor elderly or immigrants who live in the "Vicoli" and "Carruggi", dark and run down alleys.

The high influx of immigrants from developing countries, particularly from Central America, constitutes a major feature of development in Genoa. In the five years between 2000 and 2005 the number of immigrants from mainly non-EU-countries has grown from approximately 17,000 to 32,000. About 15% of all migrants registered in Genoa live in the *centro storico*, but are moving increasingly to cheaper accommodations in Sampierdarena. An increasing proportion of immigrants is seeking employment (Comune di Genova/DISA 2006, 53). Their best chance of finding work still lies in household employment, as care workers or cleaning personnel, often informally, without the required papers. This explains why the largest proportion of immigrants is female and lives with its employer, often in the old city (AMBROSINI et al. 2006).

Unlike the 1980s, housing demand is no longer created by a lack of housing, but by the inability of the lower income strata to afford this housing. It is nearly impossible to find apartments in the middle to lower rental range in the centre (cf. Comune di Genova/DISA 2006, 42). In the few years from 1999 until today property values have increased by 60% followed by an increase in rent yields of 5-6% p.a., which is equivalent to a doubling of rental prices. In

1992 the average rent was 400,000 lira (approx. 200 EURO), today it is 500 EURO.²⁴⁾

Many social groups are feeling the effects of these rent increases made worse by the hardships caused by the higher cost of living. This social and spatial change in status affects those people "uncoupled" from the labour market, those who have dropped out of the productive working process. These include unskilled workers, salaried employees, managers over 40, unskilled and socially disadvantaged youths, highly qualified young people and graduates who lack the practical skills required by the labour market and women (Comune di Genova/DISA 2006, 52). Unemployment data for the province of Genoa (Comune di Genova 2008) indicates a considerable reduction of unemployment from 12.1% in 1997 to 5.1% in 2006,²⁵⁾ while the Episcopale church of Liguria testifies to the increase of people in precarious working conditions and experiencing housing problems (Conferenza Episcopale Ligure 2006). Additional official statistical data on the social situation is not available.

The construction of subsidized apartments has been neglected. In addition to structural degeneration, the lack of suitable communal spaces, and the general worsening of living quality, are the larger problems of marginalisation and social decline. Basic infrastructure is lacking. Buildings are in poor condition. Increasing stigmatisation of these peripheralized neighbourhoods with their subsidized housing (approx. 36,000 units) is occurring. Low cost government financed housing in the periphery, such as in parts of Begato with about 2,200 families, has suffered to a large degree from urban decay and is defined by the media as the *bidonvilles* of Genoa. Begato, so a social worker says, "is a place, where nobody has to go and from where nobody gets out" (Photo 4). The weakest strata of society lives there: those living in extreme poverty, a marginalized population many of whom are the recipients of social transfer schemes who work in alarming conditions, and those who are

²⁴⁾ Since the 1980s housing policy has been absent on a national and regional level. The situation for poorer groups became worse under the Berlusconi administration when it removed rental limits and thus opened the floor to further speculation.

²⁵⁾ Unemployment statistics indicate that especially youth unemployment has decreased considerably. It decreased from 45.5% in 1997 to 17.2% in 2006. Also unemployment among women decreased drastically from 17.2% in 1997 to 6.7% in 2006 (Comune di Genova 2008). This data gives no information on the type of employment, on the income-structure and length of contracts.

assigned by the authorities to live there (ANGELINI and FOGLINO 2007, 20 f.). If not enough, these areas have also had to deal with the increasing influx from yet poorer neighbourhoods – as the experts explain. In Sampierdarena and Cornigliano, areas where



Photo 4: “La diga” – growing fragmentation in the periphery

deindustrialization took place and where much of the socially marginalized population lives, were polluted by industry and are finally being cleaned up. Segregation and fragmentation becomes again a visible pattern of the urban fabric.

Conclusions

In Genoa, as in other post-Fordist urban areas, the overriding incentive for urban regeneration was triggered by an economic crisis. It would be possible to reduce the production of new urbanity witnessed here as merely one variation of urban renewal. However, the overview of Genoa’s process of revitalisation is testimony to a deeply rooted and far more complex process of urban transformation. While being anchored regionally and locally it has been influenced by global economics. Although common factors such as the emphasis on flagship projects and the utilization of so called “soft” location factors have also played a role, Genoa’s present day developments have more in common with new forms of social and spatial organization of a neo-liberal coinage. Perhaps only the new strategies of urban governance mentioned here were capable of mastering this profound transformation of the urban landscape. Once overcome the urban agony in the post-Fordist period, massive external funding, significantly through the EU, kickstarted an urban developmental process to the benefit of those residing in the areas targeted by the subsidies, especially

the *centro storico*. In some cases through superficial changes (such as the renovation of the facades), but more often through real improvement in infrastructure (subway, pedestrian areas). These parts have been transformed into a breathtaking and unique cityscape which radiates the cultural heritage of its glorious past. The appreciation of Genoa’s magnificent past was a *conditio sine quo non* for the transformation process on the whole. The fact, that the *centro storico* has been overlooked for many years, makes it now extremely attractive for future touristic development.

The presented analysis identifies elements of strategic planning that are marked by extremely flexible forms of communication and decision making. Public-private partnership as one dominant form of investment led to a dispersion of responsibilities and transparency in planning. Further the sale of communal properties was used to prop up the decreasing communal budget. Consensus decided that civic participation should be enhanced and that social problem solving be delegated to a later phase of the urban planning process. Financial resources from URBAN II helped to reintegrate the totally degraded centre with the surrounding areas.

The inherent conflict prone relationship between port and the city government in which the city begrudgingly acknowledges the role of the port in achieving economic prosperity and the port continues to exploit parts of the city and the sea, will continue to create tension. Genoa cannot avoid to address the immense global consequences and challenges resulting from the expansion of its excellent port and its integration into the container shipping routes to the Far East and as a layover station on the ocean highway. The “Affresco” of RENZO PIANO agreed upon in May 2007, bestows an exceptional architecture and aesthetic to this transformation process while not ignoring environmental concerns. The aesthetization of urban planning is one characteristic of the new urbanity of the city.

While the inner city has benefited from the success of urban planning, single neighbourhoods in the periphery such as *Begato* have mutated into non-places (*non-luoghi*) and have become isolated from the rest of the city. Also the *centro storico* is not immune to problems of such growing fragmentation. Gentrification is taking place in areas benefiting from urban developments, while a growing immigrant population and other marginalized groups live in less advantaged and shabby places in the old town. As rents rise social differentiation is reinforced. No active housing policies were put forward leaving the

regulation of the housing market to the private sector. The question can be asked if urban transformation will soon become urban social integration. This ambivalence is not new for Genoa, but it seems to become even more significant after the process of urban renewal. The delegation of the social dimension of urban renewal to a later phase of the planning process and the use of public resources for introduction of urban renewal turns out to be another characteristic of the new urbanity of the city.

Genoa continues to follow a well-known development pattern: Big ships on the horizon – social and spatial fragmentation at home.

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