Urban Policy in Italy

*The Genoa Case*

Paola Briata
Milano, 14.05.2012
Genoa until the 1970/80s

Strategically located on the sea, Genoa has been one of the vertices of the so-called "industrial triangle" of North Italy.

Traditionally a port and an industrial center, after the 1970/80s crisis and the harbor reorganization, the city’s great effort to manage a transition towards a diversified economic reality based also on tourism, culture and leisure has been widely recognized.
Problems before the 1990s

Historical Center

The historical center has always been the “port of entry” in the city for the newcomers, and has always been characterized by **marginality, social exclusion, crime and illegal activities**

It has been until the 1990s the “dark side” of the city: a “no go” area for the middle and upper classes that tended to settle in the hills zones outside the old town

The **small alleys** that characterize this historical centre (carugi), the **buildings’ state of decay and the public space’s declining** fostered the perception of a **dangerous place**

From the ’80 the **arrival of immigrants** from less developed countries contributed to enhance the negative perception of the old town
### Genoa’s Historical Center

| Surface: 198 hectares | Inhabitants: 23,000 | (Regular) immigrants: 22.1% |

[Google Maps Satellite Image](https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1lZ8iSv3zQ3pYKQZkX8qMxkYzOOG)
A Very Complex Environment and its Different Sides:
The Example of Genoa’s Ghetto
Problems Before the 1990s
Waterfront

Previously occupied by the docks, until the 1990s the city had “lost” its relationship with the sea

The docks were a “wall” between the city and the sea
A New Development Strategy

Hemmed in between steep mountains and the sea, Genoa didn’t have so many territorial resources to develop its new economic strategy based also on tourism, culture and leisure.
The Old Town and the Sea

This strategy implied an investment on the regeneration of an **highly stigmatized historical center** and on its **reconnection with the sea**.
1992 (Colombiadi) key date

The early 1990s saw the large-scale deployment of resources to activate processes of **urban regeneration** for the **old town** and the **waterfront:**
- redefining their **image and identity**
- **improving the urban facilities** and spaces for leisure
- **promoting the visitor economy** (tourism oriented redevelopment of the historical center and waterfront)
The “great events” have played a core role in the recovery process mobilizing large-scale resources

✓ 1992 – Colombiadi [old harbor renewal]
Renzo Piano’s project for Genoa’s old harbor that implied the restoration of a number of existing buildings, as well as new buildings such as the aquarium, the harbor offices, the “bigo” tensile structure

✓ 2001 – G8 summit conference [old town renewal]
Large-scale actions of “urban maintenance” involving streets, historical buildings’ façades and public spaces

✓ 2004 – Genoa, European Capital of Culture [new identity]
Actions of urban maintenance and redevelopment of public spaces and façades of the historical buildings, strengthening of the museums functions, environmental redevelopment projects for the central area and waterfront, organization of cultural events, promotion of the city’s image
The old harbor regeneration process started in 1987.
The Old Town Regeneration Process

Before 1992 (during the 1980s) a number of interventions played a core role in the old town recovery process:

- The restoring of Piazza de Ferrari, Palazzo Ducale (converted in a cultural and exposition centre) and of the Opera house (teatro Carlo Felice). These places are not in the historical centre, but they are a sort of clasp between the old and the new town

- The Faculty of Architecture moving in the old town in a new building realized on a former monastery bombed site
Interventions During the 1980s
Intervention During the 1980s
Other Plans and Projects

From 1994 – Urban Rehabilitation Programs (PRU – Programma di Riqualificazione Urbana)

Public space and built environment rehabilitation and improvement in the Carmine, Porta Soprana and Darsena areas

Investment: PRU Porta Soprana 23 millions €

From 1997 – Neighbourhood Contracts (Contratti di quartiere) for the Giustiniani-Porta Soprana area and for the Ghetto area

Integrated urban regeneration projects

Investment: CdQ1 – 10,5 millions €
CdQ 2 – 7,5 million €
Other Plans and Projects

From 1998 – Genoa PRUSST

Involving a number of regeneration projects for the historical center (the most important being the municipal dock and the Parodi bridge to perform new urban functions)

Investment: 27 million €

From 1998 – Integrated street centers (Centri integrati di via)

Objective 2 Funds aimed at improving and strengthening the commercial environment through the public space improvement

Investment: 600 thousand €
**Other Plans and Projects**

**From 2000 - EU Initiative Urban II**
Actions of physical redevelopment, economic and social revitalisation in the historical center

*Historical docks buildings restoration and promotion for tourism and cultural purposes*

*Public space and built environment improvement*  
Investment: 30 million €

**From 1987 – Organic Programs of Intervention (Programmi organici di intervento)**

*Public and private actions for housing renewal. The public funds are spent to improve the public space environment*

*Investment: POI Erbe – 13 millions €  
POI Giustiniani – 12 millions €  
POI Porta Soprana – 11 millions €*
“State of the Art” 2004
Genoa in the Unesco World’s Heritage List

In 2006 the “Strade Nuove” and the system of the “Palazzi dei Rolli” were included in the Unesco World Heritage List, confirming and strengthening the new touristic vocation of the city.

The Palazzi dei Rolli are private residences belonging to the city’s aristocratic families that in 1536 started to host the distinguished guests of the Republic of Genoa.

The system is mainly constituted by two streets (Strade Nuove – Via Garibaldi and Via Balbi) built by the city’s wealthiest families in the XVI and XVII century.

Strade Nuove lay in a pivotal position between the medieval streets to the south and the modern traffic system to the north.
Genoa Historical Center Today

- Still problematic areas
- Partially regenerated areas
- Areas more affected by regeneration
Intervention on Public Space

The recovery strategy has been successful as the city has been reconnected with the sea and the historical center, mainly in the part that lay east of Via San Lorenzo, thanks also to the Faculty of Architecture’s and urban functions’ presence, has become a place to visit and stay for city users and tourists.

In this way, the urban space is less dominated by the immigrants’ and social excluded people’s presence: visitors and city users feel “safe.”
**Connections between the Public Space and Housing Renewal**

The public space’s renewal and the primary services improvement had a core role to create a condition of reliance between the public administration and the private owners whom started to invest on their buildings’ restoration.

Among these, primary public works regarding water, drains, electricity and gas supply networks were carried out; the stone streets surfaces, the lighting system and the alleys’ cleaning were improved.
Incentives addressed to the private owners for housing renewal were provided by different initiatives for the old town. These policies aimed at *rising the real estate values* (Alderman Gabrielli), but were also a *form of social control* as the state of decay of the old town had generated an informal real estate market characterized by cases of overcrowding and economic or other types of exploitation between Italians and foreigners but also between co-nationals.
A Spontaneous Social Mix?

A policy aimed at rising the real estate values leads to the poorest and weakest groups’ displacement.

As also the most “socially oriented” programs (for example the Neighbourhood Contracts) have not provided strong initiatives to cope with these phenomena, the old town social mix is preserved only thanks to a spontaneous process as wealthy people don’t buy dwellings located in the first floors of the old buildings because the lighting is not good.
The “Other Side” of the Old Town Regeneration
The Neighbourhood Contract for the Ghetto Area
The Neighbourhood Contract’s Target area
http://genova.repubblica.it/cronaca/2011/07/08/foto/per_la_pulizia_del_ghetto_residenti_trans_e_suore-18868796/1/
Images of Genoa’s Historical Center
November 2010
CENTRO AVANZATO DI ASCOLTO DELLA MADDALENA
Siam Alimentari
Specialità Esotiche
NESSUNA FRONTIERA
Thank you