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## URBAN REGENERATION PROCESS - THE CASE OF GENOA, AN EXAMPLE OF INTEGRATED URBAN DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

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**45<sup>th</sup> Congress of the European Regional Science Association**  
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**Abstract**

**URBAN REGENERATION PROCESS: THE CASE OF GENOA, AN  
EXAMPLE OF INTEGRATED URBAN DEVELOPMENT APPROACH**

This paper analyzes the process of Urban Regeneration in Europe and examines the factors influencing this process as well as its implementation.

Foundamental changes in the economy, technology, demography and politics are reshaping the environment for cities in Europe. These changes have induced a logic of competition in a dynamic and complex context. In the attempt to become and remain an attractive place for inhabitants, city users, businessmen and visitors, cities invent their own strategies, discovering that the policies of local governments need to be more market-oriented with an eye to the city's weaknesses and strenghts. Many historic cities in recent decades experienced redevelopment for new "postindustrial uses" often related to culture, tourism, technology. Such uses may offer the potential for creating more sustainable and liveable cities. Especially in old industrial areas, new politics, strategies and funds have been used for re-utilization of old industrial sites. Clear examples for this is Italian case studies like Genoa. In Genoa a programme for restructuring the old harbour areas, the waterfront and the historic centre has been set up. Genoa approaches functional specialisation as a more general element in its strategy for increasing economic competitiveness.

The development of transport systems, services, infrastructures, promises considerable renovation of the urban functions with a significant growth in the economy linked to cultural activities and tourism. Regeneration programmes for de-industrialised areas have promoted the location and relocation of business investments as well as actions to improve a productive diversification. At present Genoa after a deep crisis, has regained a new identity and its role in the Italian economic and social system. This paper integrates three issues. First it describes some of the main features of pattern of urban development and the increase of competition, setting the scene for a more strategic action. Second analyzes the case study Genoa, an example of integrated urban development approach. Third attention is drawn on the way in which cities “create” their own image management, using actions that shown and reveal hidden resources.

**Key-words:** urban regeneration- city- policies- culture.

## **URBAN REGENERATION PROCESS: THE CASE OF GENOA, AN EXAMPLE OF INTEGRATED URBAN DEVELOPMENT APPROACH**

### **1. Introduction**

Regeneration is an organic metaphor, perhaps the last with which a city was represented during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.(Olmo, 2204)<sup>1</sup>

Nowadays, it is a common expression almost a must in local policy vocabulary.

Regeneration is concerned with improving the economic, social and environmental vitality of the city. It describes a wide range of activities, bringing new life to previously run down areas, refurbishing buildings, infrastructure and the built environment, and redeveloping buildings that have reached the end of their useful life. To take a look of the processes of regeneration in Europe, is to point out that many cities have adopted or are adopting common policies in answer to a series of social, economic and territorial phenomena. Regeneration policies are born from deep transformations in the socio-economic context, even if the way in which this transformation has to be interpreted is not unanimous. Fundamental changes in the economy, technology, demography and politics are reshaping the environment for cities in Europe. These changes have induced a

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<sup>1</sup> Olmo C, *The dilemmas of regeneration*, in “+Cities”, Alinea Editrice, Genova 2004.

logic of competition in a dynamic and complex context characterised by de-industrialisation, new forms of inhabiting, new centralisation of consumption, new ways of using the territory and growth of international competition among cities.

In the attempt to become and remain an attractive place for inhabitants, city users, businessmen and visitors, cities invent their own strategies, discovering that the policies of local governments need to be more market-oriented with an eye to the city's weaknesses and strengths. Many historic cities in recent decades experienced redevelopment for new "postindustrial uses" often related to culture, tourism, technology. Such uses may offer the potential for creating more sustainable and liveable cities. Declining public resources means a new approach is needed to target resources to specific areas.

However, a key concern is regeneration in its broadest sense – fostering the well being of the whole city and its people. Urban regeneration has been tested and implemented in the most advanced countries. Many cities have already launched such operations (Barcelona, Bilbao, Genoa). The analysis and assessment of these endeavours highlight the ways and means favourable to the generalised implementation of urban regeneration in Europe, while respecting historical and institutional features, as well as the uniqueness of each case and locality.

Among several examples of cities that face considerable challenges in their regeneration efforts. I will consider the Italian case of Genova, the largest port on the Mediterranean and one of the most important Italian cities. Genoa is also an important centre for shipbuilding, mechanical engineering, and iron and steel industries. Over the past few years, a radical transformation process due to the industrial crisis in the area has taken place in the town. Important roles are now beginning to be played by the new economy together with tourism and leisure activities. The main challenge has been to fight decay in all its forms - physical, social, and economic - reversing a tendency and promoting actions that have had some positive effects. The actions promoted are related to the fact that the historic area has a large number of churches and beautiful buildings together with many other remains of great historic and architectural value. At the same time, the historic city centre is right next to the port. It has been taken into account that the old town has imbued into peoples' habits, as well into commercial activities a special quality that must not be cancelled out by revitalization. The aim was "stop decay" and "promote positive actions". Those have been and are the most feasible

objectives. The programme is then to preserve the old town the way it is: all it is needed is to reduce physical, social, and economic decay and at the same time increase social mix together with maximising its assets. The programme is of an integrated nature, comprising actions and projects that at the same time affect physical, social and economic conditions.

In this paper, I first examine the definition of the concept “urban regeneration” and I try to analyze the urban transformations in Europe and the factors influencing this process as well as its implementation. Then I take into consideration the case of Genoa, an example of a city in which an efficient urban policy, and a strategic-oriented approach such as is now being adopted by a growing number of cities, can revitalize an urban context and convert its decline into new growth.

### **1.2 Definition of Urban Regeneration**

The concept of urban regeneration may be interpreted in a number of ways, depending on the level of development of the country. It can be defined as a “comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change” (Lichfield, 1992). Contemporary definitions move beyond older ideas about “urban policy” from Stohr and (1989) & Lichfield (1992):

- Urban Reconstruction (1950): concentrated on physical changes with reconstruction and extension of older areas of towns/cities based on ‘masterplan’.
- Urban Revitalisation (1960s): the themes referred to structural change but began to have some social objectives.
- Urban Renewal (1970s) focused on in situ renewal and neighbourhood schemes; still development at the periphery;
- Urban Redevelopment (1980s): many major projects including flagship schemes with in situ social objectives;
- Urban Regeneration (1990s): comprehensive form of policy and practice with more emphasis on integrated actions.

The latest term in the group of “Re-generation has the ambition of an in-depth study of the physical and non-physical impact of actions on the urban fabric as well as their relative uses and players, in this sense the regeneration term updates and completes the meaning of preceding ones such as rehabilitation, leaving the

task of describing building actions to terms like recovery, requalification and reuse. (Portas, 2004).<sup>2</sup>

In the most developed economies, the goal is to promote a “return to the city”, revitalise the city centre, restore activity in a fiercely competitive international context, and implement initiatives to improve the quality of the environment operating in a wide sense towards a smart growth.

In emerging economies, qualitative initiatives have to be kept in mind, but must imperatively be aligned with quantitative requirements as well.

Generally speaking, there may be three reasons why urban regeneration is taking place:

- 1) Imposed regeneration after a long period of abandonment of derelict land; (e.g. London Docklands), or severe dilapidation of living conditions in a district.
- 2) Opportunistic regeneration where public and private investors are on the lookout for available land for a big project (e.g. Barcelona, Athens).
- 3) Preventive or prospective urban regeneration in areas where the social and economic fabrics have deteriorated (e.g. Istanbul, Aleppo, Alexandria).

It is important to underline the strategic dimensions of urban regeneration. Over time, urban regeneration has evolved from a simple form of renovation or rehabilitation of obsolete infrastructure and built-up land, to targeting the restructuring of the urban fabric, the renewal of the urban economy, or the city image, while seeking more social interaction and equity, the participation of local populations and their social and professional integration into a multi-functional context. Designated by different structures, according to the countries involved, urban regeneration is today an integral part of national urban policies. It has become a new activity in the city, while urban territories are the testing and implementation grounds of the strategies that are now required. This is why it is gradually implementing the principles of sustainable development, which theoretically implies the slow-down of urban sprawl, combat against pollution, hazardous to public health, as well as natural and technological risk prevention.

The aim of urban regeneration is to take into consideration the complexity of urban dynamics. For this reason we can speak about a multiple dimension of this process that comprises several fundamental principles:

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<sup>2</sup> Portas, N., *Regeneration and Urban Project*, in “+Cities”, Alinea Editrice, Genova 2004

-It is location-specific, as it deals with the difficulties specific to all urban components. But it aims at reducing disparities, within the global vision of a more homogeneous social environment.

-It covers different timeframes, as it answers to the social needs at present, and then those of long-term sustainability, aimed at predicting the future change.

- It also includes the lessons of the past, since in most European cities today, consensus is largely in favour of the conservation of urban heritage following a period of destruction to cater to modernisation, in the 1960s-1970s.

It is multidimensional, as it is applied by many different public and private stakeholders. Urban regeneration must serve to overcome contradictions, through negotiation, and prioritisation of the objectives. Priorities depend on the alignment between national policies and local strategies.

Urban regeneration strategies are implemented in one sector and induce positive effects elsewhere. The main objectives of urban regeneration may be:

- a) economic: to attract investors, create employment, renew the urban economy;
- b) social: to enlarge the supply of urban housing and develop local infrastructure;
- c) environmental: to improve living conditions, combat pollution (Agenda 21), while taking into account the values and preferences of society and each social group;
- d) cultural: to enhance architectural heritage (historic core) and urban tourism, or to attract research and academic institutions .

### **1.3 Changing the context**

The late twentieth century has seen a dramatic transformation in the structure of western capitalist economies. Economic restructuring, technical innovation, and shifts between sectors has brought about deep changes in employment and working conditions: relatively stable jobs in the manufacturing sector has declined and flexible form of employment in the service sector has increased. Employment-led migration from non-European areas to Europeans' core have now largely taken place. Several metropolitan areas in different countries have started to experience a reversal in their historical tendencies towards continuous physical expansion, due to the fact that their demographic density is not increasing. In addition to these factors, which are primarily the consequence of decisions about employment locations, others are no less important in generating

demand for the provision of public and private urban services. For example, long-run suburbanisation, the ageing of European population, and resulting changing age structures within the cities, the feminisation of the workforce, the outmoding of traditional skills, changes in households structures, increased leisure time and purchasing power and growing concern over the urban environment have complex impacts on cities. They continue to throw up challenges for the provision of services in fields as diverse as housing, transport, social welfare, education, training and environment. The way in which public and private sector providers respond to these challenges will, in turn, trigger further changes in the way in which the physical capital of cities, land buildings and infrastructures are used. Cities are, also, constrained by wider forces, the performance of the international and European economy, the investment decisions of multi-national corporations, the policies adopted by national governments and the European Commission and pressures of migration from outside the European Community. During the 1980's and 1990's cities have emerged on the European agenda as important economic and political actors in emerging European wide economic system as they assumed greater powers and more interventionist roles in responding to change. This was due to many factors: the impact of economic restructuring; political and administrative decentralisation; the failures of traditional regional policy; the renaissance of interest in urban living; and the awareness of increasing economic competition between cities. The creation of the Single European Market made city leaderships conscious of the need to increase national economic competitiveness. This contributed to the growth of many kinds of networks between European cities. The result was to identify the cities with the greatest potential as the dynamos of the national economy and to adopt strategies which would favour their growth. In the last decade many cities and their regions are developing economic programs to rebuild their economic, social and spatial structure and to attract economic activities, inhabitants and visitors. As they are prime locations for high grade activities and logistic nodes in international networks they are considered as the core areas for future economic development. In order to strengthen their competitive position in regard to other urban areas, urban regions need to have an attractive supply of locational factors, relevant to functions with growth perspectives. They compete for mobile investment, population, tourism, public funds and hallmark events such as Olympic Games.



They compete by, for example, assembling a skilled and educated labour force, efficient modern infrastructure, a responsive system of local governance, a flexible land and property market, high environmental standards and a high quality of life.(Lever and Turok, 1999)<sup>3</sup>.A necessary precondition for each city to become competitive is urban management, an efficient and market-oriented approach aiming at improving the supply of locational factors. Urban management can increase the challenges to gain and to hold competitiveness.

The rapid changes in the contexts, the proliferation of urban regions stimulates the development of polycentric urban regions with a widening spatial scope. The rapid development of information, communication and transport technology reinforces this trend. The cities as part of the Urban System need to be competitive and complementary and put high demand on urban policy. They need to find their own strategies and develop a tailor-made approach that suits their purpose. Key elements in this approach are an integrated vision of urban regeneration, the ability to develop strategic network, leadership, attention to the context, to its culture. Moreover another important implication is that cities need to invest more in their human resources. Knowledge and information become very important factors of success or failure for the renewal of the cities.

#### **1.4 Modifying the city**

How are cities modifying? How do they promote an urban regeneration process? Some European experiences analyzed for their spatial networks, for their principal projects and for the emerging elements of the process(time, phases, subjects involved), for urban strategies and cultural and environmental policies gives a sufficiently wide picture of case studies able to describe the complexity of urban regeneration. European cities seem to maintain a strong tie with their own cultural traditions, demonstrating the ability to connect innovation in the present and in the future in a process of “long duration”, to elements that remain constant in local politics, in physical outcomes or in the behaviours of the community.

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<sup>3</sup> Lever, W.F. and Turok, I, *Competitive Cities* in “Urban Studies”, vol.36, Nos 5-6, 791-793, 1999

Regeneration takes place in specific scenes: city centres, often rich of historical and artistic heritage to be revalued, as far as social, material, economical aspects are concerned; old industrial areas, harbour areas, waterfronts, that in many cases proposed new masterplan integrated with the existing city, with new functions and activities, also creating new centres that can modify the hierarchies inside the city.<sup>4</sup>The recent experience in various different countries of the urban projects that are aimed at regeneration have shown the organisational role of public space, intended as physical and active project. In accord with the feedback that accompanies the regeneration operations, the (re)construction of public space has also become a barrier to changes in the historical function of support and the symbolic place of social interaction.

It seems to be right to insist on legibility of urban organisation as key element of the process. The extensive and emerging urbanisation has never been organised through public layout, unlike the historical city.

In most cases the urban projects are mainly concentrated in the central zone of the city and consist of cases of simple “make up”, redesign or the completion of already existing public spaces. In many peripheries regeneration requires the opportunity of diversification of activities in the territories that often have only one function. Due to the complexities of its interventions, times, sectors, the regeneration programmes do not act anymore on contained islands but they now often intervene with larger areas where the quantitative dimension of different problems is decisive due to the insufficiency of financial means and the capacity of the groups or of the Communes. Sometimes regeneration comes from new infrastructures: the increasing of pedestrian areas often requires reorganization of the public transport; there are new occasions to design public spaces to connect areas in transformation to create new identities to these spaces. In other experiences that take place in residential quarters, sometimes public, regeneration faces directly aspects of physical degradation together with those of social and economic degradation. In these experiences, processes of participation create friendly neighbourhood, and contribute to create a positive perception of identity and image in people living there.

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<sup>4</sup> Alcozer F., A journey among cities, in “+ Città, Alinea Editrice, Genova 2004

In good examples of urban regeneration an important element is the physical scene, that represents the persistence and the continuity between present and future. Through social and economical local elements regeneration succeeds in acquiring a permanent character and in contributing to the reconstruction of the city identity. Urban project is the condition necessary but not sufficient, to demonstrate: beyond to the physical elements there must be the facts, the decisions, the behaviour, the communication between the various subjects to improve and to implement regeneration policies. Public participation and partnerships are key elements in contemporary urban planning and management. Therefore, a process of urban regeneration should be based on mobilising local communities and their key actors to share and contribute to a collective effort of improving urban areas. In many of the European cities this would start evidently from the co-operation of different actors and stakeholders, such as public sector agencies, local authorities, regional and national agencies responsible for physical planning and urban management, as well as the residents and local community.

It is widely recognised, however, that a broader range of actors is essential in such complex undertakings, such as entrepreneurs, professional and business associations, Non Governmental Organisations, etc. Such partnerships, in the context of an urban regeneration process, could: provide a clear picture of a city's characteristics, problems, prospects and needs; form a shared vision for the city; identify common needs and priorities for urban regeneration; promote commitment to the implementation of the project; generate necessary funding for project implementation and follow up.

The importance of establishing partnerships is widely recognised, especially public-private ones, as a means of securing realistic sources of urban regeneration funding, but also providing new ideas, more efficiency and entrepreneurial spirit. This kind of partnership does not include the private sector alone, but also the individuals, professionals and civil society organisations. Partnership with the private sector is sought especially since, in most cases, the public sector does not dispose of the necessary financial resources. Partnership with the private sector is also important to the extent that the private sector might be more efficient in certain types of activities or where it might have significant comparative advantages.

### **1.5 Stimuli for Urban Regeneration**

Initiatives in favour of urban regeneration may be strictly local, most often, such initiatives are the result of national, regional, urban or land development policies. As opposed to the direct involvement of the State in major urban extension works or in the creation of new towns, urban regeneration is a slowly maturing process, a synthesis of local demands, endogenous deficiencies, local authority projects and support from the central government. Changes in national political regimes can endow municipal authorities with greater autonomy, as in Barcelona where, since 1979, the municipality has played a prominent role in urban regeneration initiatives. These initiatives can be combined with a major international media event to motivate local and national authorities as well as their support structures, as demonstrated in Seville, Genoa, Barcelona, and now Athens, for the Olympic Games of 2004. The involvement of private investors remains limited and is essentially focused on urban interventions on new land. However, such interventions can have an impact on the potential regeneration of derelict urban zones. The information on urban regeneration may give the impression that these policies are only applied in large cities, through the strong support of the State. However, urban regeneration projects are also implemented in small or mediumsized towns. In some countries, local elected officials and economic stakeholders (Chambers of Commerce) may be involved, as well as external investors. Often it is a combination of factors which stimulates societies to take up the opportunity for urban regeneration. Furthermore, an urban regeneration process can start in a planned manner, that is under conditions of anticipating changes and acting early (planning context), or as a response to an anticipated event (like in the case of the Olympic Games), or the creation of new major infrastructure or centre of activity (new airport or port or a University or a Business complex), or in political visioning, or even a response to a natural (or other) disaster, etc. So, in theory, but also in practice, an urban regeneration process can start under any conditions. Some key elements are present to trigger the process, that is, a combination of factors which will eventually create favourable conditions for translating intentions into an operational and eventually successful program of intervention. Among these factors, the most important are:

-A long-term perspective. There is no doubt that urban change takes a long time, and in that sense a strategic view is important to guide the urban regeneration process.

-Political will and commitment. It is evident that political support is necessary to muster the key actors and the community towards a complex intervention such as urban regeneration. Any long-term intervention is bound to meet economic/financial, political or other kinds of fluctuations due to changes in the external or internal policy context.

-Multi-actor/stakeholder participation. The scale and complexity of urban regeneration often exceeds the capacities of local, regional or national authorities to generate change, although in some occasions this cannot be excluded as an option. In most cases mobilising a multiplicity of actors is important. It is evident that each actor is expected to pursue a limited number of actions, suitable to its role and capacity, but within a broad common framework.

-Organisational framework. This is an important element in structuring participation and can be conceived in terms of rules and procedures regarding decisions and priority setting.

-Financing. An obvious necessity given the scale and complexity of the intervention. It is often the single factor which is responsible for stalling such complex interventions.

-Maintaining the process. This is a central element in urban regeneration since it provides the basic axis for an urban regeneration activity. In this sense it provides a structuring axis for all of the above factors. The key element in maintaining the process is a system of monitoring and evaluation.

Furthermore, it is necessary to launch the process. This should get started through an in-depth reconnaissance of the existing situation, an exploration of trends, and mapping of the existing problems and opportunities. As a cyclical process, urban regeneration requires a gradual development along the following steps without implying strict linearity, from one to the next. For example, since participation is important, it is necessary to identify early the key actors to be mobilised. This is an outcome of an analysis of the existing institutional context, but also of identifying opportunities for action. So there is a continuous process of gradual formulation of the intervention.

## **1.6 Urban regeneration policies**

Since the eighties European cities have shown a great vitality and an extraordinary capacity for “urban regeneration”. After a long period of deindustrialization, economic recession, unemployment, growing poverty and consequent social emargination, nowadays a lot of cities have managed to find new opportunities for productive diversification, becoming a great playground of experimentation in the field of urban regeneration policies (increase in competitiveness, economic repositioning, new enterprises and benefits, new functions, greater urban and environmental quality, different opportunities for employment and services). To give birth to this process they adopted a development strategy that demanded they be respectful of existing environmental, social and economic elements. On a European level the issue of urban regeneration has founded its more important trait on the “integrated approach”: horizontally, encompassing several aspects (environment, employment, training, transport) within a single program, and vertically, so that different institutions (European Community, national government, regions, municipalities) take part in the programming stage as well as in the management.

There are fundamental similarities in the focus of urban development policies within European cities. At first glance, a great variety can be attributed to revitalising derelict urban areas, improving the quality of public space, reducing the barrier effect of infrastructure, enhancing spatial cohesion, providing new functions for historic constructions and improving accessibility. But all of these planning activities concern the transformation of existing situations.

The strategies are different according to the economic and social problems cities face as well as the resources that are available to city leaders, for example: the strength of its public and private economic sectors; its human resources; its social class relations; its environmental and locational advantages; its cultural assets; leaders’ ability to influence policy makers at higher levels of government.

The strategies cities adopt are often complementary.

In many cities like Hamburg, Dortmund, Rotterdam, Glasgow, the strategic focus was upon diversification and restructuring of traditional sectors like steel, coal or ship building. Cities without problems of that traditional inheritance like

Montpellier, Bari or Valencia focussed upon the development of high technology. In some cities, like Seville and Barcelona and Genoa the focus was and is nowadays, upon prestige redevelopment projects like waterfront redevelopment or major events to give a strategic role to economic and urban modernisation. Many cities like Bilbao and Frankfurt developed new economic niches for themselves, in culture or tourism and leisure.

This common denominator is reflected in the spatial policy objectives aimed at revitalising and improving the city itself, at fighting sub urbanisation, urban sprawl and unnecessary land take. In these processes one cannot forget the role, competence and stimuli played by the European union, nor the influence these have on the determination of a new approach, institutional changes, innovative practices and experimentation.

The last generation of regeneration policies that can be observed in the “great urban projects” of the 80s and 90s and in EU programs such as *Urban* follow the logic of initiative by area or parts but of ever larger dimensions and with more programmatic objectives. Nowadays almost 80% of the European Community's citizens today live in cities. As centres of cultural, political, social and economic exchange and development, towns and cities play a crucial role in Europe. Accordingly, urban issues are at the heart of the Community's policies. This can be clearly seen in the Commission's lines on the programming of mainstream Structural Fund assistance. The Urban Community Initiative first launched in 1994, encourages urban areas and neighbourhoods in crisis to design innovative, integrated urban development measures. The fruits of these measures are now beginning to be seen in the areas concerned: the quality of life is improving and local stakeholders agree on the importance of the integrated Urban approach. The Urban II Community initiative offers added value to mainstream programmes. It is important to stress the innovative nature of the operations involved, which start life as demonstrative, flagship actions before gradually being incorporated into the mainstream programmes. The Urban Programs are particularly suited to respond to the demand of improvement in environmental quality and, in general, in quality of life. These policies try to achieve the positive effects that such projects may have in terms of improvement of physical conditions, that is to say on infrastructure of mobility, on the urban environment, on cohesion and competitiveness, on cultural dynamics and employment, on mobility of persons

and goods, and more generally on those intangible vectors that do not come through as the main and direct goals of the projects, but rather as catalysts.(Portas,2004)<sup>5</sup>.Another relevant aspect of urban regeneration is the role played by cultural strategies. In the Nineties European cities reached a progressive awareness of the role of culture and tourism in the process of regeneration. Some initiative have played an accelerating role in the transition towards form of post-industrial economy. In many European cities the structure of the economies and their employment base has shifted away from manufacturing to a more strongly service and culturally based economy.

Zukin (1995 ) suggested in *The Cultures of Cities* that “With the disappearance of local manufacturing industries and periodic crises in government and finance, culture is more and more the business of cities: the basis of their tourist attractions and their unique competitive edge” We are seeing a shift to an economy where stress is more on the production and consumption of experiences than on physical products. As such the symbolic economy has become more important.

Having to define their development models, many cities tried to enhance tourist and cultural aspects. Given these trends it is not surprising that cultural industries and “cultural strategies “ have become important elements in urban policies.Genoa is an example of this thesis.

As Harvey pointed out “Gentrification, cultural innovation, and physical upgrading of the urban environment, consumer attractions ( sport stadia, convention and shopping centres), entertainment (the organisation of events), have become much more prominent strategies for urban regeneration: Above all, the city has to appear as an innovative, exciting, creative, and save place to live, to work or to visit, to play and consume in.” The cultural image of cities is important in increasing tourist numbers, in promoting the cities, in urban regeneration as an element of interurban competition” .

It is up to the protagonists of urban transformation to make clear which kind of urban regeneration they have in mind, discussing their own choice and to try to build consensus around certain goals. The dilemma of regeneration policies is that they can help to (re)construct a city of rights or (re)propose a scenario of a city of exclusion, justifying the pessimism of those who, like Neil Smith, see in urban

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<sup>5</sup> Portas N, *Regeneration and Urban Project*, in “+ Città”, Alinea Editrice, Genova 2004.



regeneration an attempt to anaesthetise our critical analysis and a significant ideological victory for the neo-liberal visions of the city”.

They may be sectional policies, linked to an economical business vision of the urban area or they may be able to create dialogue and at the same time tension between economies and social processes. These policies are not independent from the way in which today’s cities are told: are we really able to see cities as places of differences, of cultures, of rights or of applying such a styles of analysis to not render all cities alike, and all problems the same? Nowadays in the field of urban studies knowledge is as important as action.

### **1.7 City of Europe : reflections**

Europe has a density of cities that has no paragon in other parts of the world. It appears like an immense single city that is expanding along the Mediterranean and Atlantic coast, populated by a large urban multinational conglomerates and interrupted by large natural areas. Today the cities of Europe appears still like places rich with stories, memories and symbols. The aggregated vision of European’s main areas of historic urbanisation point to an urban society that has greatly expanded its daily and cyclic movements over the territory. Moreover together with this phenomenon of expansion, there is an apparently opposite process: the refraction of human presence in certain parts of its body. In the last 30 years urban voids and “dismissed areas” have emptied the great industrial areas and urban services of the nineteenth century city and of the compact city of the 1990s. The two movements of eextension and withdrawal of the urban condition in Europe, sem to have configurated an urban society that has conquered a new geographic dimension . In this it seems difficult to find a distribution scheme based on social classes, since these new territories are not structured homogeneously. In these nebulous peripheries are composed of lives already the 60% of the population of Europe. They are not yet citie and no more countryside. These “peripheries full of centrak places” pulsate with life and generate huge environmental due to a continue traffic of people and cars.

Urban regeneration has to face wiyh these new dimension of European life adequately. The city’s dilatation has also rendered the question of the quality of life stronger. Improving urban life in Europe means defending without any hesitation the presence of green space, to improve the environment and to

recuperate a good relationship with nature. But improving urban life means also increasing the public infrastructure to connect historical centre and peripheral city and enhancing the tendency in Europe to construct multi-centre cities where services are distributed throughout the region. Improving life means defending historical centres but not in the sense of impeding them from any adjustment or new style of life since they would just be abandoned to commercial and nostalgic use, inhabited only by city users and tourists, as is happening, for example in Florence or in Venice. In other words defending the European historical centres means their capacity to absorb and to adapt to different cultures and populations, means preserving the heterogeneous activities and uses that have always characterised them. The cities of Europe are today a rich and multi-central world, composed of thousands of individual cities, each one is a unique and varied world of memories and landscapes. (Boeri, 2004)<sup>6</sup> Perceiving this complexity requires sensibility and adequate theoretical instruments. This purpose requires the knowledge and the capability of the combination of a series of factors and no discipline from all of those at our disposal is sufficient on its own for this purpose. There is a difference between social changes that modify the way of life of millions of people and the landscapes they produce. These two phenomena should not be confused. The evident differences in velocity that characterised their respective developments and the contrasting tendency of depositing tracks that distinguish them. If it is true that the great social changes tend to leave very little memory of themselves in a context of rapid transformation, it doesn't occur the same with architectural and urban forms where there are very little transitory and where the forms like languages connect with own past even when they seem to change with time. It seems important to observe that any process of regeneration must sooner or later deal with the nature, the past, the characteristics of the city. Knowing this imprinting and knowing how it influences the progress of the urban matter is important. This admits frequent turnovers but identifies a constant sense of change and containment that it attributes to every place, giving them identity and recognisability. If the misery and the desperation make the poorest areas of every city in the world the same, and the commercial centres can produce the same effects, it is also true that, despite everything, the cities continue to produce

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<sup>6</sup> Boeri, S, City of Europe: Food for Thought, in “ + Città, Alinea Editrice, Genova 2004.

peculiarities that makes them different. It is therefore fundamental for a regeneration process the capacity to engage itself, consciously or not, in the history of the city, rebuilding the strands of its existence. Regeneration doesn't mean for a city only expanding or renewing, but rather reuniting itself with own destiny, which even rooted in the past, can always be modified starting from present condition. (Furlong, 2004)<sup>7</sup>. In some Italian cities, like Genova, Salerno, Brescia, the more recent transformations relying on good previous planning, have engaged themselves in interesting experiment of revitalisation. In these cases the interventions were applied to the historical centre, the abandoned industrial areas, working class neighbourhoods and green areas. The city is entirely become an object of recuperation using high level of maintenance and a new planning character, searching to attract external participation and to sustain the urban project. These and other cases confirm the hypothesis that basic elements for a process of revitalisation to have a short term success is its level of interaction with the process of growth, with the modes of living, and the culture that every city expresses. This doesn't mean adopting forms of imitations or conformity but asking for a right collocation of every intervention within wider projects, able to overcome the limits of the past decades of urban planning, at least, in Italy.

## **2. The case of Genoa**

### **2.1 The context**

The city of Genoa, is situated in the North- Italian region of Liguria. Genoa is the capital of the region that lies on a natural bay. Genoa is built on a narrow strip of land 9 km across and 22 km long, between the sea and the mountains. The city can be divided into three parts: the centre, the western part, and the eastern part. In the centre, a concentration of cultural and historical heritage, are established the principal services activities and public offices. The western part is the location of industrial activities and the eastern part has predominantly a residential function. The city position between the sea and the mountains, limited the expansion in the growth phase of urban development.

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<sup>7</sup> Furlong A, *The Life of Cities*, in “ + Città, Alinea Editrice, Genova 2004.

Genoa is a populous port town of 605,000 residents in Genoa, with a population density of 2,515 inhabitants per kmsq over the municipality territory. In 2000, there were 16,857 registered non-nationals living in Genoa. They came from Latin America, North Africa and Eastern Europe. The city has suffered a continuous loss of residents. Not only has the population in the city and in the urban region diminished in size, its composition has also changed. As a matter of fact, the population has aged considerably in recent years. The decline of population followed the crisis in the Genoese economy. The number of job opportunities, the traditional industry, the petrochemical industry, the mechanical industry and the harbour, declined steeply in 1970s and 1980s. Many companies emigrated. The port of Genoa suffered like so many others in the Mediterranean Sea, from the structural changes in world trade flows. The costs of freight dispatch extremely high and the mechanisation in the port, due among other things to the use of containers, has cost the Genoese port thousand of jobs. In 1999, with the City of Genoa Strategic Conference, the town council started a process which, through the 'Plan of the Town', will hopefully lead to the transformation of the city into one where the creation of new jobs goes together with better environmental and social conditions. With regard to the historic city centre the transformation is expected to produce a shift from a perceived restrained role for the entire town to a new one of great opportunities for everybody. One of the objectives for the historic city centre is, in fact, to gradually remove all kinds of decay and to increase its livability, so that the old town can represent the cultural image of the city and become the hub of its touristrelaunch. The Operating Plan for Genoa's Historic City Centre represents one of the steps in this transformation process. The plan in itself is a good guide to the different policies already started by the city government in order to revitalize the historic city centre. In this sense, the plan is very different from the usual plans: in fact, this plan, far from representing hopes or wishes, represents certainties. The common idea behind the many policies aiming at the revitalization of the centre is that the old town will not have to be very different from the present one. The area needs, in fact, rehabilitative policies which retain its special identity: its general atmosphere, its way of life, at the same time preserving the historic values, with less physical, social and economical decay, together with more safety and cleanliness. In the last decades, the old city has

registered a general decay with strong effects on commercial activities. There is difficulty in accessing the centre of the town due to the narrowness of the streets and the high urban density provides little scope for the development of any larger activities. Currently two thirds of the businesses located in Genoa are small to medium sized enterprises. During the 20th century, the historical centre gradually became isolated from the newer parts of the city and an elevated highway was built which forms a noisy and visual barrier between the old city and the sea. Growing traffic, insufficient street lighting and garbage dumped in the streets all add to the problems of the historical centre.

## **2.2 A new dimension for the city**

Since the early 1980s the image of Genoa as a place of industrial and tertiary activity has been under heavy pressure. Given the recession in the harbour and in the traditional economic activities the different actors conscious of the need to break the negative spiral took the decision to stimulate the shift to tertiary activities. Tourism was in this context considered as a possible spearhead.

Today Genoa appears as an example of urban and socio-economic regeneration. A city with a glorious past as a maritime republic, home of great explorers, centre of the state-controlled industry for a long time. After a long economic crisis has managed to renew itself, adapt to the present and plan for the future. Today the city has a different image, still based on the traditional pillars of its economy such as the commerce, the port and the industry, but with an expanding advanced technology sector and a burgeoning tourist trade. The city has also changed in social terms. It is becoming an evermore multicultural and multiethnic city, open to Europe and the rest of the world. Due to its geographic position Genoa represents, in fact, a bridge between North-Europe and the Mediterranean. Genoa as a revitalised city is full of potential and opportunity. The city has also established itself as a first class logistical base for both land and sea traffic and as an attractive area for investors, due to the excellent connections with other international ports and continental Europe. A new culture has pervaded and transformed the city, opening it up and making it interesting to visit and to discover. Genoa has gained today a new dimension. The cultural events like Genoa Capital of Culture aims to leave a legacy which will last beyond the 2004.

## **2.3 Urban Strategy**

The process of urban regeneration which has taken place in Genoa has seen the renewal of a number of areas through projects which seek to revitalise places both economically and socially by helping small businesses and craft industries. The progressive socioeconomic transformation has been facilitated by funding from local, national and European institutions designed to stimulate business development and employment growth. This has provided the opportunities to encourage and support new businesses, particularly in the heart of the old centre of Genova, centro storico. The programme is of a multidimensional and integrated nature, comprising actions and projects that at the same time affect physical, social and economic conditions. The actions are of various types: Actions aiming at providing the historic city centre with new services (green spaces and sport areas, schools, asylums, university centres together with social services); Actions on areas and buildings: in the first place, street paving and renewal of technological networks; The main actions are meant to conclude the waterfront redevelopment process that should start a new relationship with the old town, entirely modifying the city and its functional system. Another series of actions is related to accessibility, the crucial topic for the revitalization of the historic city centre: the pedestrianization of many parts of the old town is supported by a system of new parking areas as well as by good public transport. The major actions in the social field are the Safety Plan, and the plans for more residential help and for reception centres. The strategy is driven by the interaction between the various parts of the integrated plan, but above all by the propulsive effect that every action can have on the whole context. According to the administrators this plan stands out because of its pragmatic and innovative method. Of the many plans experienced so far, the Operating Plan for Genoa's Historic City Centre represents the most effective one for safeguarding the area. In such a situation, the main problem is that it is necessary to act on two fronts. One is that of the various micro-actions to try, above all, to exploit all the possibilities of improvement. The other is to develop some major projects that can breathe new life into the system. Obviously, all the actions cannot be realized as public interventions. Rather, the public actors have to develop strategic actions, in order to accelerate the process of detailed revitalization that only residents and private owners can fulfill properly. The strategic actions - from pedestrianization to implementation of new parking areas and public transport, from the major

projects for waterfront redevelopment to the implementation of efficient services - will therefore be contained in the municipal programmes. The most important interventions that has taken place in Genoa is the renovation of Porto Antico that has reconnected city and sea and the revitalisation of the Centro Storico.

### **The Porto Antico**

The removal of custom barriers, the renovation and pedestrianisation of the Porto Antico and the refurbishment of a series of ancient buildings has reconnected the centro Storico with the traditional lifeblood of the city. the Mediterranean sea.

Thanks to a series of projects in which the famous architect Renzo Piano was a key figure, the Porto Antico, has become one of the main attractions for both tourist and locals with restaurants, bars, cinemas and public gardens transforming the area in an important public space. A wide range of interventions as the construction of the Magazzini del Cotone and the restructuring of the Mille have changed the image of the city's waterfront. The programme of reconnecting the city with its waterfront area will be completed in 2010 with the conclusion of Ponte Parodi project. Meanwhile, as a result of all these interventions, the historic heart of the city has begun to beat again.

### **The Centro Storico**

With the transfer of the Architecture Faculty to Stradone Sant'Agostino, first the students, then the residents and tourists began to explore the old centre and its "carruggi", the traditional dark and narrow streets, full of contradictions, that hide a series of wonderful treasures and represent Genoa at its most authentic. While some parts of the old city remain in poor states of repair, the new public lighting system and the repaving of the streets have helped the citizens of Genoa to rediscover the medieval area of their city. This revival is primarily due to the city itself which has retaken possession of an overlooked area and partly it is the result of the allocation of European funds. In particular the Urban program has represented a fundamental instrument for Genoa's regeneration. In this area the project targets situations of urban blight in areas faced with problems such as high levels of unemployment, poor housing and environmental conditions, insufficient facilities and public services, criminality and juvenile delinquency. Genoa is the only one of the Italian cities which have also received financial support from Urban 1 and Urban 2. Urban 2 in Genoa focuses on improving

economic conditions and public safety along with assisting the weaker sections of society, for example providing services for the elderly, the immigrant communities and the youth. Support for the weaker sections of society will involve projects designed to facilitate social interaction and improve service provision. In particular, preference will be given to projects which seek to combat the marginalisation of the elderly, immigrant communities and the youth.

#### **2.4 The role of culture and events as an engine for regeneration.**

Cities and towns all over the world often talk about the role of culture and the systems and practices by which they try to manage it. Hundreds of people have stood on platforms such as this to tell their stories about Barcelona, Bilbao or Berlin, about Genoa or Glasgow, about Copenhagen, Chicago or Cologne.

What is culture for in these cities?

It is important to define the link between culture and economic development, between culture social problems, between culture and environmental improvement, between culture and tourism. These connections are important. Culture is enormously important to a city's economic and social development. But this is not the first question. The essence of culture is not only about commodity production or mass consumption or the re-organisation of culture as an industry. Cultural policy is the product of joined-up thinking. Culture is usually disconnected from other public policies. There is nowhere more important than in cities, it is important to manage cities as total systems, from transportation to education, from health to jobs. Genoa as many other cities, has invested in culture and in its transformational power. Big events can represent an opportunity for the city to effect changes and improvements in a shorter period of time that would usually be possible. This is the case over the last twenty years in Genoa. Major events like the Columbus celebrations in 1992, the G8 in 2001 and recently the city's year as European Capital of Culture have helped open up a city traditionally reluctant towards process of change and has changed Genoa's cultural position within a dynamic Europe. The designation of Genoa as European Capital of Culture confirms the city's cultural rebirth. The city represents a true artistic and cultural treasure with its prestigious historical and modern collections housed in 30 museums around the city, theatres, churches, cultural associations. International recognition of cultural, historical and artistic heritage of



the city has gone hand in hand with the commitment of all the economic, political and social group of the city to make Genoa a fully-fledged tourist destination.

### **Conclusions**

The worldwide economic crisis, the desertion of old industrial areas suggested a new policy that gradually turned into pragmatic programs, based on the idea that improving the quality of urban areas actually means achieving two goals: citizen's approval, encouragement of new economic enterprises. (Gabrielli, 2004)<sup>8</sup> Urban regeneration takes therefore complex characteristic: in Genoa's case it involves both the restoration of the historical centre and the whole port area. What changes with these interventions is the image of the existing city.

Today Genoa appears as a city that has completely transformed its image. It has abandoned its reliance on state-run heavy industry by switching its economic focus to the tertiary sector and by redeveloping and improving the port. Genova has changed without losing any of its vibrancy as a city however and has become economically competitive internationally through its industries and the port. Genoa is a dynamic city, not just because of its quality of life, but due to its wealth of official cultural activities to rival other European cities.

The process that has taken place in European cities in the last twenty years has changed their features, defining a deep innovation in the approach to urban transformation. account. The main goals of Genoa's urban regeneration project have been :

- .-promote rehabilitation of complex urban structures;
- .-improve the environment, as well as the quality of life of inhabitants and city -
- preserve the valuable and unique buildings of the selected areas;
- .-restructure economic activities located in the urban areas.

The most important lesson from Genoa's case study is that the process of urban regeneration is the result of an integrated approach, in that urban interventions, cultural policies, connection between tradition and innovation play a fundamental role. The transformation of the city has been mainly for the organisation of the Colomiane of 1992, then of G8 and in 2004 for the role of European Capital of Culture. However, it has been possible thanks to the combination of several factors. The renovation process in Genoa is the result of a

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<sup>8</sup> Gabrielli, B. (2000), L'idea del futuro di Genova, InfoRUM n. 7, pp. 4-5.

democratic process. All the renovation operations have been realised with a strong public economic contribution and leadership which incorporated all the existing administrations in the territory (at national, regional and local levels). The participation of the private sector was very important as well, especially in the use change and historic core recuperation operations. The success of most urban renewal initiatives will depend on understanding and meeting the needs of the community. It is therefore important to increase the participation of local residents, workers, interest groups and businesses in the regeneration process.

The renovation process has obtained the consensus of the citizens on the strategy and the execution of the projects. This consensus has permitted to maintain the revitalising impulse of the city, to incorporate the different sensibilities of the citizens on the final results. In conclusion, social consensus and the institutional settings are important, as well as strategy and leadership.

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