
GENOA, ITALY: NEGOTIATING FRAGMENTS



"The galleys laden with chests of reals or ingots in fabulous quantities in the 1570's. . . made Genoa the arbiter of the fortune of the whole of Europe."

Fernand Braudel, Civilization and Capitalism.15th-18th Century.

"We could see Genoa . . . and watching it as it gradually developed its splendid amphitheatre above garden above garden, palace above palace, height upon height, was ample occupation for us, till we ran into its stately harbour."

Charles Dickens, Pictures From Italy

TRANSITION

Genoa has reinvented itself many times. It is again in transformation. In the past, perhaps an apogee was reached in the 16th century. The historian of the Mediterranean, Fernand Braudel describes how, at that moment, together with Venice, Florence, and Milano, Genoa was dominant and unique (see "the Age of the Genoese" in Braudel's The Perspective of the World). Throughout its history Genoa has been particularly strategic given its extraordinary port which enjoys centrality within in the land mass of Western Europe. Today though diminished from its former importance, it still harbors the sixth largest container port in Western Europe.

In the 16th century, through moving of money and goods, the fortunes of the Genovese far exceeded its compact territory. Genoa re-emerged in the late 19th century as an industrial

powerhouse including manufacture of heavy equipment related to new land transportation modalities. Genoa is now in another transition and period of uncertainty, perhaps best symbolized by the transformation of its Old Port, once a global destination for shipping which is now a cultural destination dominated by Renzo Piano's Old Harbor project (2002-04). Perhaps most symptomatic of the city's uncertainties is the population decline, from 816,872 in 1971 to 588,668 in 2015. Yet given its extraordinary history, and given its extraordinary physical setting; it is the assumption of this studio that the apparent negatives of this present moment can in fact become positives; and the city will compete in the European and global context in new ways; reinventing itself as indeed it has done in the past. In some sense it remains today as Charles Dickens described it in the 19th century as "A bewildering phantasmagoria, with all the consistencies of a dream and all the pleasure of an extravagant reality!" (see Charles Dickens, Pictures from Italy, 1846).

GEOGRAPHY

Genoa enjoys an extraordinary geography, with its integral rivieras stretching along 19 miles to the east and west, and compact adjacent settlement constrained by immediacy of the Apennine Mountains. It is the region of the Ligurian Riviera and the *Cinque Terre* just to the southeast. It is one of the most extraordinary landscapes of Europe for its integration of natural environment and urbanism, and an intense relationship to its sea is unique. In Genoa most neighborhoods lie within a short walk to beaches and nowhere more distant than a brief public transit ride. Genoa is the quintessential "compact city" in that throughout its history there has been no alternative but to build high, given its topographic constraints to sprawl. Within the city these constraints are further enforced by the difficult ravines and rivers that have not supported urbanization, dividing fragments or "islands" of density. This geography has developed unique settlement patterns over time, with fragmentation of neighborhoods due to natural partitioning. Today this geography is increasingly dominated by changes in global ecological factors including climate. The unique and intricate ancient infrastructure that developed the city is now experiencing new demands; for example, the changes in precipitation patterns that are overwhelming the river and rivulet systems that function to drain the mountains and serve the neighborhoods.

THE QUARTO SITE

This studio will address restructuring one such neighborhood; the area of the Quarto, which is east of the historic center. The area is well-connected with regional rail and metropolitan transit. The entire Quarto ensemble is of vital interest in that it represents one of the largest future redevelopment potentials in Genoa. It comprises four distinct fragments: beachfront; an adjacent waterfront neighborhood; an upper neighborhood dominated by a historic hospital complex; and the Sturla River which bisects everything. The large ravine of the Sturla River engages issues that are typical of the Genoa landscape. It is prone to flooding and has been canalized including high walls, which impede spatial and functional community linkages. At its mouth is the popular neighborhood beach created by the alluvial deposits from the river. The upper Quarto plateau is isolated from the beach front by topography and river channel. It is dominated by the historic "Old Psychiatric Institute" inaugurated in 1895. Its extraordinary nine-square plan designed by the architect Vincenzo Canette housed 1300 beds. It was expanded with the adjacent "New Psychiatric Institute" in 1933, doubling capacity. In 1978, laws governing psychiatric treatment were revised, leading to the semi-abandonment of the complex today. Another important fragment within Quarto is the Paul Klee High School for the Arts, also in question as to its future use. Yet another large fragment is the Gaslini Institute, one of the premier pediatric hospitals in Italy. It is a robust institution with a large public presence, but due to its isolation contributes little to the life of the Quarto community. Nearby is the Don Bosco Institute that does provide a number of community services inclusive of recent immigrants.

THE CHALLENGE

The study teams are asked to identify public policy and spatial design strategies at the overall Quarto community scale, while focusing on some specific areas at the building scale. Considerations will include economic and environmental sustainability within the history and spatial morphology of the city. Of particular importance will be considerations related to landscape connectivity. The new city administration considers that in spite of the potentials in Quarto, the substantial investment in its marginalized and abandoned sites will not be forthcoming without implementing spatial and programmatic linkages that can form a more unified critical mass within the fragmentary pattern. Our research will entail examining options for spatial connection; and for programmatic options that interconnect new uses with existing components. In this work we will be intimately engaged with the social challenge given by the newly elected Genoa Mayor Maria Bucci: *"We want Genoa again to become a big city - the capital of Mediterranean. We'll never be able to if we don't put ourselves in the perspective to have a functioning social system able to guarantee a high quality of life"*

STUDIO ORGANIZATION

This studio seeks to combine both architecture and urban planning students in a joint project to their mutual interest while providing a unique resource for making crucial planning decisions in a city that is important to the future of European urbanism. While many tasks will be shared, it can be anticipated that the urban planning students will specialize in the aspects of the project brief more related to political economy; architecture students will specialize in the more spatial aspects of the project brief. The Columbia team will work in collaboration with their peers at the Department of Architectural Science at the University of Genoa. The client is the Office of the Mayor. Below is a summary of major issues to be addressed as outlined by the client.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

The course will accommodate both the Urban Planning Studio and the Architecture Studio formats. Presentations on various research and design progress will be held every Thursday as per the below schedule. Joint project development will be emphasized inclusive of both planners and architects, roughly following challenges related to political economy and spatial structure. Participants should be keen on the topic, be willing to work hard, and be enthusiastic collaborators. With inclusion of both planners and architects we should have a well-rounded skill set. By Mid-Semester analytics will be completed to the extent that schematic spatial proposals can be advanced for presentation in Genoa. As well, exchanges with a Genoa University team throughout the semester will further issues and options, with the work of both the Columbia and Genoa teams in sync.

COLLABORATORS

This studio is made in collaboration with the University of Genoa (Università degli Studi di Genoa) and the Municipality of Genoa (Comune di Genoa). A preliminary studio focused on the Quarto for Italian students in Genoa will commence in October 2017. This first semester by the Genoa team will mainly focus on site analysis and identification of policy and design strategies. The Columbia studio will start in January 2018. A joint workshop will be organized from March 12 - 16 in Genoa, joined by the students and faculty from both universities, and with a joint report be published at the end of the academic year.*

Principal faculty collaboration at the University of Genoa will be with:

Professor Katia Perini, Architectural Engineer, Department of Architectural Science, University of Genoa

Professor Adriano Magliocco, Architect and Urban Planner, Department of Architectural Science, University of Genoa

Professor Paola Sabbion, Landscape Architect, Department of Architectural Science, University of Genoa.

Principal coordination with Genoa municipal authorities will be with:

Marco Bucci, Mayor, City of Genoa
Simonetta Cenci, Urban Designer, Director of Urban Planning, City of Genoa

*Additional Report Development may ensue in Summer 2017, with support from the City of Genoa.

USEFUL FIRST READINGS

Fernand Braudel, Civilization and Capitalism. 15th-18th Century. The Perspective of the World.
London: Collins, 1981. "The Age of the Genovese."
The 16th century city placed in its global context.

Charles Dickens, American Notes & Pictures from Italy. London: Chapman & Hall, 1907. "Genoa,"
pp 277-309.
Description of 19th century social and spatial diversity of the city.

Genoa Urban Lab, Quederno nos. 1 and 2. December 2008, June 2011.
A report on present-day strategic planning options for the City of Genoa.

RE GOA Workshop. RECYCLE GENOA. Fondazione Mies van der Rohe, Mediterranean Cities
Program. 2012. PDF.
Summation of studies on next generation development in the City of Genoa.

V. Pizzigone, V.Scelsi (eds.), Psychiatric Hospitals. Genoa: Araldica Edizioni, 2015.
<http://www.valterscelsi.it/images/SSG_15124_affiancate_250.pdf> *A summary of research on the
Quarto Psychiatric Institute complex including history and attempts at reuse.*

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 Architecture STUDIO LOTTERY Wednesday, January 17
FIRST STUDIO MEETING Thursday, January 18
Week 2 RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT Thursday, January 25
Week 3 RESEARCH PRESENTATION (history and morphology) Thursday, February 1
Week 4 DESIGN PROBE PIN-UP (linkages) Thursday, February 8
Week 5 DESIGN RESEARCH PRESENTATION Thursday, February 17
Week 6 SITE PROPOSITIONS Thursday, February 22
Week 7 MIDTERM REVIEW Thursday, March 1
Week 8 Genoa SITE VISIT Monday, March 5 - Friday, March 9
Joint Workshop with Genoa Students and presentation to Mayor and City Council
MIDTERM WEEK March 12-16
Week 9 SITE VISIT RECAP Thursday, March 22
Week 10 POST-VISIT PROJECT DEVELOPMENT Thursday, March 29
Week 11 POST-VISIT PIN-UP Thursday, April 5
Week 12 POST-VISIT PROJECT DEVELOPMENT Thursday, April 12
Week 13 PRE-FINAL PIN-UP Thursday, April 19
Week 15 FINAL REVIEW Wednesday, April 25
Week 14 DRAFT REPORT REVIEW Thursday, April 30