

Genoa, Italy

Context

The typical cause of population loss for Italian cities is therefore suburbanization, which appeared quite lately as a process in Italian cities. Among the largest Italian cities Genoa is an interesting case adding ageing to suburbanization as main cause for population decrease.

Economy

Genoa is the most important Italian port and one of the most important in Europe. Since Medieval ages his growth and wealth were connected to Trade. In the nineteenth century it started to be also an industrial center specialized in metallurgic industry (useful to the industrial development of the other industrial northern cities Turin and Milan) and shipbuilding. Globalization and deindustrialization changed the scenarios even before the seventies. Part of heavy industry was in fact de-localized abroad and to southern regions (because of the special incentives of “Cassa per il Mezzogiorno”). While deindustrialization was going on and globalization hit seriously the port economy, Genoa started to show a particular demographic profile, which anticipated the Italian demographic decline, in consequence of the fact that its population was not growing anymore for the migration rates coming from southern Italy.

After the decline of the 80's the port economy started to show encouraging signs of recovery and now is again one of the most important Mediterranean knots of sea trades flows coming from Asia. In addition after some urban intervention on the water front tourism started to take a significant part in the urban economy.

Population

Genoa had a particular demographic pattern since the XIX° century, made by low (or negative) natural rates of demographic increase, downsizing of the average number of household member and a constant pace of ageing. This pattern is constituted by negative natural rate caused by low fertility and an high age of women at marriage, high expectations of life and a consequent high incidence of elderly people in the whole population. The downsizing of the average household dimension is caused both by the ageing (which leaves a lot of family members alone after the death of their relatives) and by a particularly pronounced (for the Italian context) familiar instability and marriage brokage.

Census Year	1971	1981	1991	2001	2008*
population	816.872	762.895	678.771	610.307	610.887
Population MA	1.087.973	1.045.109	950.849	878.082	883.778
Average members of households	2,69	2,42	2,43	2,20	n.a.
% of singles	20,46	28,65	26,45	32,23	n.a.
% of 75+	5,22	6,77	9,63	12,13	13,7

Source: population census (*) municipal register

Consequences

As a consequence of the shrinkage going on since the 70's Genoa lost almost one third of its population. In the city centre a huge share of dwelling are inhabited by elderly people living alone, causing a large under-usage of housing stock. Because of ageing, also caring-need for not autonomous elderly people increased greatly. Larger need of care is paradoxically the cause of the stabilization of demographic decrease. Since the 90's a migrant flows of Latino women (especially from Ecuador) was employed by Italian families in care-jobs. These women compared to previous waves of international migrations (composed mostly of north-African single men) established their families in Italy contributing to a counter- trend in fertility rate and incidence of younger cohorts.

Planning and responses

The main task of urban planning during the 90's was to turn the water front, with all the abandoned spaces once dedicated to port activities, into amenities attractive from a touristic point of view. Large part of the old inner-city neighborhoods were renovated too. Most of these gentrification waves were enacted by funds connected to Big Events (the celebration of America's discovery in '92, G-8 meeting and the year as European Capital of the Culture).