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Emanuela Guano. *Creative Urbanity: An Italian Middle Class in the Shade of Revitalization..*
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Processes of aestheticization and the plight of the poor figure prominently in most ethnographies exploring urban revitalization. Yet the question of how urban aestheticization is enacted "from below" by middle-class individuals producing and marketing material and symbolic goods remains largely unanswered. In her timely and compelling book, ***Creative Urbanity***, Emanuela Guano addresses this topical issue by drawing upon an impressive body of data about the port city of Genoa in northwestern Italy. The book opens by tracing two different forms of revitalization: one that is driven by corporate interests, and another that is shaped by the educated middle classes who were born and raised in the city. At the core of the book is a critique of Richard Florida's argument that cities experience growth when they succeed in attracting educated and creative people (the "creative class").[1] What makes Genoa a powerful place for a reassessment of this theory, according to Guano, is the fact that a "creative class" was already there. However, this class had to rely upon its cultural capital and invent self-employment opportunities in the face of the economic crisis.

Guano's thorough knowledge of Genoa's history and of the character of its people illustrates the making of a "creative class." In the aftermath of World War II, the city experienced fast growth of industrial production. Industrialization was accompanied by two parallel processes: on the one hand, the degradation of the city's historical center; on the other hand, rising levels of education and the subsequent emergence of a culture of taste, namely, a fondness for quality consumer goods. By contrast, in the 1970s, Genoa witnessed a sudden decline of its port and heavy industry, and the social costs of this decline were very high. As its population began to shrink and its industrial areas were abandoned, the city had to reinvent itself. Meanwhile, between the late 1980s and the early 2000s, Genoese people became exposed to the (largely neoliberal) rhetoric of meritocracy and emphasis upon self-reliance and hard work as conditions for success. In the context of these developments, the rediscovery of Genoa's history and the planned revitalization of the historical center prompted many educated people who could not find a job (or had lost one) to reinvent themselves by capitalizing on their education and "creativity."

How was Genoa revitalized? How did the educated middle classes reinvent themselves in response to economic changes? Genoa contrasts with other situations recorded in Europe and elsewhere: unlike many North American cities, most Italian cities with their piazzas have remained the contexts for socialization and intellectual ex-

change, and Genoa is no exception. Moreover, Genoa's revitalization did not spring from a nostalgia for bygone eras, nor did it involve removing the traces of an "unwanted" past. In chapter 1, Guano states that in spite of the opportunities prospected by the planned revitalization, investment in the city was very uneven: the redevelopment of Genoa's waterfront, for example, contributed to the gentrification of the historical center; by contrast, the postindustrial, working-class neighborhood of Sampierdarena became home to the city's first shopping mall. Yet the shopping mall did not help revitalize the area but resulted instead in the desertification of its streets, and later on drug dealing and prostitution contributed to its degradation. Likewise, attempts to promote the city through the organization of great events were largely unsuccessful: the Expo (Exposition) held in 1992 to celebrate Cristopher Columbus's first voyage to America failed to turn Genoa into an international tourist destination, and the revenues it generated were limited. The organization of the Group of Eight summit of 2001 was also expected to bring about the beautification of the city center and the improvement of infrastructures; however, instead of promoting the city, it resulted in its devastation. It was meant to be a global spectacle to be watched on TV, but the summit became a display of state repression of dissent, and according to Guano its memory is still considered "an open spur of a wound" (p. 82). As a final example, the choice of Genoa as European Capital of Culture in 2004 was expected to give a boost to its economy. However, despite the sudden growth of tourist flows, tourist presences and revenues dropped considerably the following year, and the financial crisis of 2008 further depressed the area's economy.

The most interesting part of the book is the second half, which examines revitalization as a process unfolding independent of corporate initiatives. In chapter 3, Guano makes a distinction between Genoa's revitalization and other parts of the world in which similar processes resulted in displacement of people and degradation of historical centers. In Genoa, revitalization started between the late 1980s and the early 1990s, years after the onset of industrial decline. It was fostered by the support of the state and of the municipal council, and drew on smaller (as opposed to corporate) sources of capital. Moreover, the possibility of receiving subsidized loans prompted many residents to contemplate the possibility of opening a small shop as a last resort against unemployment. Yet Guano stresses the fact that many of those who contributed to the historical center's revitalization were educated middle-class individuals who capitalized on their education or on self-taught hobbies and turned these skills into businesses that are less labor-intensive than, for example, the work of artisans.

In chapter 4, Guano turns to middle-class women's role in this process, most notably in the development of the antique business. Women's commitment to this endeavor largely stems from the fact that, starting in the 1980s, the Italian government's decreasing interest in safeguarding the public education system, companies' downsizing, and public-sector restructuring pushed many educated women to think about alternatives to teaching and menial clerical jobs. Guano's portraits of antique dealers, though confined to one chapter, bring out the persistent hard work and "creativity" that is required to enhance Genoa's aura as a cultural tourist destination. Yet although antique fairs became very successful in the context of urban revitalization in the 1990s, they were hit hard by the financial crisis of 2008, and their future (and that of antique dealers) remains uncertain.

The ways in which the middle classes attempt to make the most of their cultural capital is also explored in chapter 5, in which Guano analyzes the contribution of walking-tour guides to the city's remaking. Mostly university graduates, they were restrained by Genoa's marginal position on tourist maps; however, they found that their knowledge of Genoa's hidden splendors could be

put to good use when the city attempted to reinvent itself through culture. What makes this trade particularly intriguing, Guano observes, is the fact that guides stand at the boundary between academic knowledge and cultural consumption: many of them spend a lot of time in libraries and attend symposia and public lectures to broaden their knowledge of local history and culture. Yet despite their education, their status is precarious, and they need to supplement their income with various limited-contract jobs.

While walking-tour guides participate in the rediscovery of Genoa's historical center, multicultural festivals set out to celebrate expressive culture. In chapter 6, Guano shows that Genoa's multicultural festival (the "Suq") accomplishes more than a simple celebration of consumption through its promotion of ethnic foods. It also plays a significant role as a context for political debate. In this sense, by combining serious political debates with entertainment and consumption, the talented Genoese and immigrants running the multicultural festival set out to question widely shared ideas of cultural roots in the face of ethnic chauvinism and to support the small business owners and ethnic artisans who are threatened by the expanding corporate commerce.

Guano ultimately concludes that a more nuanced approach is required to understand the complexities of urban revitalization processes, which do not necessarily replicate those fostered by a "creative class" recorded in North Atlantic cities. By contrast, Genoa's talented residents who contribute to the city's remaking are relatively immobile and vulnerable. One may object that although this precarious, educated middle class seeks to produce material and symbolic quality goods in the face of rapidly expanding corporate commerce, it does not necessarily produce values that are defined in opposition to monetary values. Nonetheless, there is much to enjoy in this excellent monograph, which can be strongly recommended for undergraduate and graduate courses and deserves a broad readership in anthropology, urban studies, and cognate disciplines.

Note

[1]. Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class, Revisited: Twentieth Anniversary Edition* (New York: Basic Books, 2012).

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