

Historic and Contemporary Segregation

The city of Torino, Italy, has a long and fascinating history that spans millennia, with events of the last centuries affecting contemporary segregation of native and immigrant citizens. In 1861, Torino became the capital of the new kingdom of Italy after serving as a key city in Risorgimento, a movement for the unification and independence of Italy. The city would not serve as the Italian capital for long and instead transitioned into a major economic and industrial capital. This transition into a major economic center was propelled by Fiat and its first factory built in 1899 (Piedmont, n.d.). As a major economic hub, migrants from Italy flowed to work in the Fiat factories and other industries. However, the city and Fiat factories would be heavily damaged during World War II as Fiat was ordered to produce military technology for the army (World Travel Guide, n.d.).

Torino



Photo of the architecture In Torino by Antonio Filigno from pexels.com.

Following the War, Torino was one of the quickest cities to recover, driving the rest of the country's economic recovery through its automobile industry (World Travel Guide, n.d.). In this recovery the city gained a significant number of migrants from southern Italy (Piedmont, n.d.). Within this migration, migrants who settled in Torino were more likely to identify themselves as immigrants, opposed to any national or ethnic group. This sentiment has continued to the early 21st century as migrants continue to identify with each other based on common experiences with many immigrants describing to feel as outside of local networks and perceived as unwanted "strangers" (Merrill, 2007). Through migrants' significant role in the workforce, they have utilized unions in advocating for change. These trade unions have been successful in addressing problems as its benefits are seen to occur to all workers. However, they have been relatively insensitive to the problems targeting migrant populations specifically. Because of this, working conditions have dramatically improved for migrants while the social world that migrants experience performs and reproduces discrimination (Merill & Carter, 2002).



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Photo from the 2006 Winter Olympics opening ceremony in Torino
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Contemporary Torino, following the crisis of the industrial economy, has made significant changes to reinvent itself past a one-company-town. These changes centered on a pro growth approach that heavily supported the development of leisure, entertainment, and tourist consumption. This rebranding has featured mega events such as the 2006 winter Olympic games as well as a significant development of night-life entertainment. In this support of night-life entertainment the city has developed neighborhoods with uneven distribution across the city, leading to areas that are exclusionary by only targeting a specific portion of the population. One neighborhood that this is evident in is San Salvario with its transformation from a history of mixed religion and class to its current state as a “trendy” district (Bolzoni, 2016). This transformation has affected spatial patterns as migrants have moved further from the clubs while university students have joined the area, fueling gentrification. Despite this, San Salvario still exists as a diverse and mixed neighborhood visible during the day, though at night segregation manifests through consumption as a form of social segregation (Bolzoni, 2016).

Segregation Policies and Programs

The government of Torino has been active in recent years in fighting segregation and racism. In March of 2020, Torino launched a public call to collect contributions and interest in involvement in a plan to fight segregation and discrimination. Through the public call the plan towards racial equity would be co-planned by 58 civic subjects including “a trade union, second-level networks, neighborhood centers, youth centers, religious and cultural associations, migrant communities, informal groups and cultural institutions”. This co-developed plan was approved by the city a year later as the “Pact of Common Good”. The plan serves a document containing a multitude of actions, projects, and commitments that guarantee a strategic approach with direct involvement of diverse communities and people. The actions apart of the plan fall into unique categories: events and initiatives, spaces, empowerment, access to service, education, and culture. With such recent creation and implantation, the success of this plan largely remains to be seen (Council of Europe, 2021). However, recent trends within the decade with increased immigration have heightened social tensions in the city (Cingolani, 2016).

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