

3.7 Flood 2014, monumental cemetery of Staglieno, Genova

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1. Introduction, the event

From the beginning of the twentieth century the Bisagno' area has been affected by several architectural abuses. The result has been a series of cyclical floods with a frequency that has increased with every passing decade. The Staglieno Cemetery, located on a hillside in the Bisagno valley and extending over an area of 330,000 m² coincides largely with the area of the floodings of the river Bisagno and others streams, these latter completely buried and forced inside the buildings of the cemetery. On the night of the 9th to the 10th October 2014, and in the following days, there occurred a terrible flood, as a result of heavy rainfall, 395 mm in 24 hours, in different areas of the city and province. In the municipality of Genoa, the river Bisagno, Sturla, Fereggiano, and Torbella have overflowed. In the province of Genoa: Scrivia, the Stura, the Entella and rio Carpi (Fig. 1).

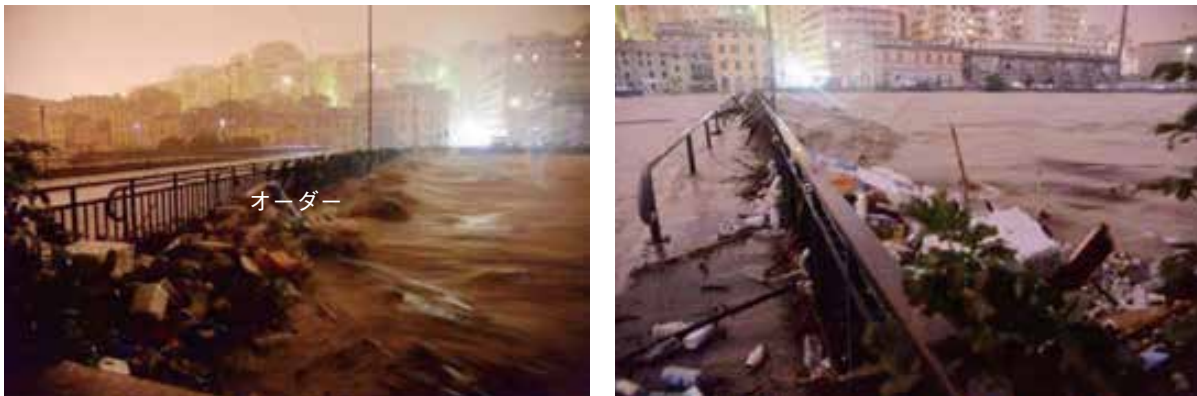


Fig. 1 The River Bisagno, the night of the 9th October

The damages calculated according to estimates, for now, amount to 250 million Euros in the province. In the estimation, only 25 million for the only city of Genoa. A meteorological event of wide proportions, aggravated by the strong self regenerating storm. The clash of the two streams, one of hot air and the other of cold air is the cause of the V-shape thunderstorm, so called for its V-shape and also called self-healing. After studying the measurements of the winds, it was possible to understand as the encounter between northern cold currents, called Tramontana wind, and those southern hot humid currents, called Scirocco wind, from the Tyrrhenian Sea, cause a steady micro-wind fronte. The Consequence was continuous rainfall that fell on the same area again and again.

2. The rescue intervention

After the last flood, the non- profit association Chief Onlus has been charged by the Municipality of Genoa and by the Superintendence for the Architectural and Artistic Heritage of Liguria to rescue and to give first aid to the flooded monumental part of the cemetery. On the 18th of october the writer, with the aim of identifying the extent of the affected area and the best way to proceed, made a survey with the Municipality and the Superintendence. The water flooded even the highest galleries and everything was covered in mud. It was urgent and necessary to proceed as soon as possible in the removal of debris and mud and the cleaning of marble flooring. There were many problems with very little time. In many aeras the water pipes exploded and in other parts of the plumbing the pressure was very low. Electricity was not available. The marble floor of the galleries was damaged,

many tombstones of burials had moved from their areas. The underground rivers burst on the surface, caused the explosion of other recent burials. In addition to everything, we had to manage the problems related to public health and contamination. We also had to face with the psychological aspects for both families and operators who would have to intervene to rescue cultural heritage. We therefore decided that on the 19th and 20th of October we would contacted specialized operators for the recovery of bones. Meanwhile Chief Onlus would call a sufficient number of professional restorers of Cultural Heritage, residents in Liguria. The clause of residence in the region has become indispensable because the State of Emergency had not been declared and we could not offer our volunteers accommodation. Through our network of contacts gained after years of operations in the areas of emergency in our country, we were able to reach in only two days 60 professionals volunteers with availability of one / two days. Reflecting on the physical nature heaviness of the work, because it would be too heavy to handle marble slabs and taking into account that the percentage of the volunteers were mostly female, the author decided to involve the Compagnia Unica of the port of Genoa in our activities. In the opinion of the author to involve more 'associations of the territory and historical corporations would make the community participate more (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2 The River Bisagno, the night of the 9th October

The history of the Compagnia Unica' birth linked to two factors: on the one hand, the needs of the port and the goods, which required a workforce available and flexible and at the same time reliable, professionally prepared and organized to cope with a very diverse and often unpredictable job; on the other hand, the bargaining power of workers hired for autonomy, critical skills and great organizational strength, created hardships for the same workers that were in other respects indispensable. The Compagnia Unica decided to give 20 workers volunteers, under the responsibility of the Chief Onlus. The team of Chief Onlus has also managed to obtain the equipment needed to do the job. A lot of the material was donated thanks to a campaign on social networks and newspapers. On Monday 21st the volunteers began work, and the rescue operations in three areas: the gallery , the porch below the east section, and a portion of the front gallery (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3 Volunteers at work

The intervention of Chief was not for restoration work. Its task was to create the conditions of the site immediately prior to the flood. 80 Volunteers worked five days in almost 300 linear meters, and a total of 1500 square meters were cleaned. During the work and after, the media was contacted and informed about what was going on inside the monumental cemetery of Staglieno and the response was great even on social media like twitter and facebook and there was a large consensus also at institutional level (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4 Before and after the rescue intervention.

3. Conclusions

It remains clear that the intervention of Chief Onlus has only served to buffer the effects of the flood and that this will not prevent another disaster. The purpose of Chief Onlus currently is to push public opinion and the Municipality to implement all the necessary actions to secure the monumental cemetery of Stagliano and the Bisagno' area. This experience has prepared us for the future and could be an example of resilience. First, we have created within the city of Genoa and across the region, a strong coherent unit of volunteers and associations, a very strong network that will be able, under the supervision of Chief, to intervene in case of disaster, with more determination and effectiveness. Secondly, we have created a relationship of mutual trust with the Compagnia Unica of the port. They have given to Chief a dedicated space in the port area where it's possible to keep the materials and equipment needed to intervene in a time of crisis. The port area is safe and accessible 24h a day.