From Repression to Recomposition: Micromobilisation and Care After Genoa 2001

Utrecht University

Andrea Campodonico (1512617)

PPE College

Utrecht University

To my Mum

Abstract

This thesis explores how social movements respond to and recover from episodes of state repression, examining the interplay between violence, memory, and political continuity. It focuses on the 2001 G8 summit in Genoa, a turning point in the Italian alter-globalisation movement. While some view Genoa as the end of that cycle of contention, others see it as a moment of transformation and renewed solidarity. Combining oral history with political science theories on repression, the research at hand investigates how activists experienced and processed the violence they faced across immediate, medium, and long-term temporalities. Drawing on nine in-depth interviews with Italian activists, the research reveals that repression produced divergent outcomes - ranging from demobilisation to deeper engagement - largely shaped by the presence or absence of collective care practices and internal support networks. It highlights how affective, relational, and narrative dynamics influence activists' ability to recompose politically after trauma. The thesis contributes to ongoing debates on repression, protest resilience, and collective memory, showing that the effects of state violence are non-linear and historically layered. In a time marked by ongoing repression, disinformation, and fractured activism, the legacy of Genoa offers critical insights into the conditions that enable movements to resist, adapt, and endure.

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1. Introduction

Situating the Genoa 2001 Protests: Context, Questions, and Aims

In July 2001, the city of Genoa hosted the annual G8 summit. As a response, the Genoa Social Forum (GSF) organised a week of workshops, conferences, and manifestations to contest the summit. The GSF was inscribed in a wider context of Social Forums and counter-summits that were very popular between the 1990s and the first years of the 2000s. These gatherings connected activists worldwide.[1] With its transnational character, the alter-globalisation movement[2] was a network uniting multiple realities, despite diverging demands and practices, and going beyond purely sectorial differences. It advocated for a sustainable development attentive to power imbalances, financial imperialism, and the neoliberal order. As Kolarova (2009) notes, despite the presence of civil rights claims, the movement was primarily driven by demands for class and ethnic equality.[3]

Soon the counter-summit in Genoa[4] came to symbolise chaos and destruction (Juris, 2005; Portelli, 2021). The last two days of the event (20th and 21st of July) - dedicated to the protest - were met with incredibly high levels of police violence. Activists' safe spaces, like the Sciorba camping, were attacked and destroyed, the media centre - located in the Diaz-Pertini school complex - raided at night, and a demonstrator, Carlo Giuliani, shot dead. Furthermore, widespread testimonies of violence, torture, and harassment emerged in the following months.[5] All of this was paired with a strong state-led press campaign aimed at dehumanising and criminalising the movement to manipulate public opinion.

The cultural production around Genoa exploded in the following years. Books, comics, documentaries, and movies reconstructed the three days of protest meticulously documenting the violence.[6] The academic literature has analysed the structure of the Genoa Social Forum (Andretta et al., 2002), its media counter-narratives (Cavallotti, 2024; Juris, 2005), the symbolism of movement tactics (Albertani, 2001), and the spatial dynamics of contention (Della Porta & Reiter, 2016). Other studies have documented the divided memory of Genoa; some works framing it as the "death" of a generation's political hopes (Agliani, 2023), and others proposing alternative interpretations reclaiming agency and continuity (Proglio, 2021). Genoa has been framed as a "transformative" (Vicari, 2015) and "iconic" (Bracaglia & Denegri, 2020) event; yet, two decades on, the long-term effects of the repression remain underexplored. This thesis addresses a central gap in the literature: how did violent state repression affect the internal dynamics, mobilisation capacity, and political

[1] Gubitosa (2003, pp. 545–547) provides a comprehensive list of all the foreign organisations that participated in the GSF. To give a brief overview, the countries of origin were: Greece (22), Spain (18), France (14), Brazil (9), Switzerland (9), Germany (8), Netherlands (8), Belgium (7), UK (7), USA (6), Ireland (5), Canada (4) Sweden (4), Australia (3), Colombia (3), Cyprus (3), Portugal (3), Argentina (2), Denmark (2), Ecuador (2), Finland (2), India (2), Israel (2), Malta (2), Pakistan (2), Peru (2), Uruguay (2), Austria (1), Cameroon (1), Chile (1), Costa Rica (1), Ghana (1), Indonesia (1), Kenya (1), Mozambique (1), North Macedonia (1), Norway (1), Philippines (1), Poland (1), Russia (1), Taiwan (1), and Zambia (1).

[2] Henceforth mentioned as "the movement".

[3] While it is not the focus of this thesis, it is worth mentioning that there is a whole feminist critique dealing with the alter-globalisation movement discussing feminist presence in the forums and counter-summits, as well as its perception and inclusion by other fringes of the movement, namely the ones mostly concerned with class and economic inequalities. For more in-depth arguments see Eschle (2005), Macdonald (2005), and Mohanty (2003).

[4] Henceforth "Genoa", "the G8", or "the counter-summit" are used as a metonym for the protests and repression.

[5] For a comprehensive archive of the testimonies see Gubitosa (2003) and 26per1 (2011) .

[6] The term "meticulous" is here used to describe the obsessive focus that was (and still is) given to the violences of the police. This is not to say that the repression should not have been put to the centre, but that this shift in discourse – as described later in the thesis and also lamented by some respondents – overshadowed the demands and claims of the protesters (Proglio, 2021). As discussed in the subsection 5.3 ("What Remained: Revisionism and Resistance"), this intense focus on violence, at the expense of following the movement's subsequent developments, led to widespread historical revisionism.

trajectories of grassroots organisations involved in the Genoa counter-summit? Focusing on Italian social centres and grassroot organisations, this thesis puts the aftermath of Genoa in relation to the literature on repression's effects, whose scope is mostly limited to relatively compact and national movements. This thesis asks how repression affected a transnational network such as the alter-globalisation movement. Moreover, it researches violence's impact on discourses, strategies, debates, and internal dynamics in the aftermath of Genoa.

This thesis adopts an interdisciplinary approach combining oral history and political science, expanding the analytical scope of the existing literature on repression. While political scientists have developed seemingly solid theoretical frameworks on how state violence affects mobilisation – often privileging quantifiable outcomes – these models often produce narrow and overly determinist interpretations. In contrast, this thesis adopts a pluralistic approach drawing on multiple theories to analyse the aftermath of Genoa 2001. The results suggest that repression does not produce uniform nor linear effects; rather, its impact unfolds unevenly across individuals, groups, and time. To capture such complexity, this project grounds discussions of repression in temporality, emphasising how short-, medium-, and long-term responses are shaped by emotional, organisational and discursive shifts. By integrating oral history with political science, this thesis offers a more layered understanding of how repression reshapes mobilisation, as a process deeply embedded in time, memory, and care practices.

Bridging key theoretical frameworks on repression (Francisco, 2004; Francisco, 1996; Hess & Martin, 2006; Lichbach, 1987; Opp & Roehl, 1990; Rasler, 1996) with insights from nine in-depth oral history interviews conducted with activists involved in the counter-summit, this thesis argues that the repression of Genoa 2001 generated differentiated responses across networks and individuals, largely mediated by micromobilisation processes - local, relational, and emotional practices allowing collective action to regenerate after trauma (Opp & Roehl, 1990). The findings point to three interlocking dynamics. First, (a) repression's effects unfolded unevenly over time: immediate reactions of fear and shock gave way to medium-term experimentation with new organising forms, and long-term shifts toward localised, issue-based activism. Second, (b) organisations that cultivated care infrastructures, such as collective debriefings or mutual protection strategies, were more likely to maintain engagement, while their absence often led to disillusionment or withdrawal. Finally, (c) this thesis challenges revisionist accounts that frame Genoa as the symbolic death of the alter-globalisation movement, revealing instead how memory became a contested space where repression was reinterpreted as either a disruption or foundation for renewed engagement.

Rather than evaluating whether the movement "died" or "survived," this research offers a nuanced account recognising Genoa 2001 as both a rupture and a site of reconfiguration.[7] Through its interdisciplinary approach, the thesis not only contributes to the historiography of Italian protest movements but also advances debates on how repression shapes collective action. In an era marked by renewed transnational protest, with Fridays for Future, Non Una di Meno, and Palestine solidarity movements mobilising transnationally understanding the legacy of Genoa is crucial for grasping

[7] For an epistemology of complexity, as well as its potential in social sciences, see Turner & Baker (2019).

how collective memory, care practices, and grassroots resilience shape the development of democratic participation and resistance.

This thesis is structured as follows. The first section (2) reviews the key theoretical frameworks dealing with the effects of repression, assessing the current state of the field, and making the case for the chosen methodology – oral history. The second part (3) presents the case study on Genoa by engaging with the existing literature on the counter-summit, outlining its main contributions and limitations. Next (4), the methodology is presented and the sampling explained. Finally, the last section (5) brings together the insights and recurring themes that emerged from the interviews, highlighting the centrality of micromobilisation and care in shaping the post-Genoa trajectories of activism.

2. Repression, Resistance, and Remembering

Theoretical and Methodological Tools: Tracing Policing through Orality

Understanding how repression shapes social movements is key to grasping dynamics of contention. The scholarly literature on this topic is both varied and often inconclusive, offering a range of theoretical interpretations and an equally broad array of empirical studies (Moore, 1998; Opp & Roehl, 1990). The main relevant theories fall into three groups: outcome-oriented theories arguing that violent policing fuels mobilisation, outcome-oriented theories suggesting that it suppresses it, and mechanism-oriented theories exploring particular factors that may – depending on the case – trigger or silence events of contestation. The next paragraphs review them briefly.

2.1 Repression as a Catalyst: outcome-focused perspectives on mobilisation

Among those theories that assume repression to inflame protest are deprivation, critical event and backlash theories. Deprivation theory has that repression stimulates a sense of loss triggering anger and radicalisation (Opp & Roehl, 1990). In the context of Genoa, it would mean that the widespread repression of the 20th of July – and the killing of Carlo Giuliani - inflamed the events of the following day. While useful, this theory overlooks the transnational nature of the movement, which dispersed events and sites of protest across borders. Unlike national movements which can sustain multi-day actions with fewer resource constraints, transnational protests face higher time-space opportunity costs (Sewell, 2001; Tilly, 2000). This detail makes a response solely based on a sense of deprivation and rage unlikely to hold on the long run.

On a similar note, backlash theory suggests that greater coercion leads to increased radicalisation among protesters (Francisco, 1996). However, this theory falls short in describing the mechanisms driving protest after repression, as it does not address psychological, ideological, tactical, or organisational motives for continuation. A useful addition comes from Hess & Martin (2006), who argue that backlash after "transformative events" depends on two conditions: (a) repression needs to be perceived as unjust, and (b) information of the repression must reach receptive authorities. The first point can be seen in how contestation continued for months and years, fuelled by struggles for memory and justice (Bracaglia & Denegri, 2020). However, the second condition seems weak, as some fringes of the moderate left – the potential "receptive authorities" – withdrew from demonstrations after the killing of Carlo Giuliani. Overall, backlash theory does not appear apt at describing Genoa's aftermath.

Finally, critical event theory posits that major events trigger mobilisation (Rasler, 1996). Discussing Genoa, Vicari (2015) and Bracaglia & Denegri (2020) framed the counter-summit as a "transformative" (Hess & Martin, 2006) and "iconic" (Leavy, 2008) event, respectively. However, their use of these concepts focuses more on the memory practices that emerged in the aftermath than on the immediate organisation of dissent. While there is a clear link between harsh repression and how its memory is used or weaponised by the movement in later protests - especially in Bracaglia & Denegri (2020)'s work - their idea of critical event is disconnected from social reorganisation. Moreover, for such a theory to be fully effective, it requires clearer criteria defining what qualifies and event as "triggering".

2.2 Repression as a Deterrent: outcome-focused perspectives on demobilisation

Moving forward, among those theories that assume repression to be an efficient deterrent of protest are collective action, and resource mobilisation theories. Collective action theory stems from rational choice theory and frames repression as a negative incentive, suggesting its efficiency in stopping waves of protest (Opp & Roehl, 1990). Questioning its validity, Francisco (2004) asks why protests and contestations persist after "harsh events". In his initial understanding a massacre represents an extremely powerful negative incentive supposedly suppressing backlash. Quantitatively analysing a series of carnages in authoritarian regimes from the end of WWII, he concludes that collective action theory needs to be expanded to include the deeper mechanisms underlying backfire: leadership, resources, and the (perceived) possibility of change. When these are strong, Francisco (2004) argues, then backfire can be predicted to be rational. Despite these extensions, collective action theory struggles to explain what happened in Genoa. The leadership of the Genoa Social Forum and its disobedient fringes quickly fell apart, resources dwindled as activists left their organisations and hopes for (immediate) change faded - yet social mobilisation continued.[8]

In a similar vein, resource mobilisation theory builds on the assumption that repression weakens protest. It explains that repression – paired with other methods of "selective incapacitation" (Gillham & Noakes, 2007) – decreases the mobilisation power of movements (Opp & Roehl, 1990). This theory too does not seem fit for the case at hand since the movement was transnational and funded from multiple angles that were not under the exclusive sovereignty of the Italian state. Once again, the theory on policing's effects appears unsuitable for a movement which does not fit the ideological, physical, and geographical constraints of the nation-state.

2.3 Repression as Contingent: mechanism-focused perspectives on contention

The remaining theories avoid a straightforward positive or negative conclusion, focusing instead on identifying important parameters or changing dynamics. These are: value expectancy, bandwagon, adaptation, and micromobilisation theories.

Aligned with one of the rational factors mentioned by Francisco (2004), value expectancy theory assumes that expectations of success make people more likely to mobilise (Rasler, 1996). Applied to Genoa, this theory suggests examining how policing affected protester's hopes, exploring possible patterns of disillusionment or idealism. A common narrative about Genoa argues that violence silenced the demands of a generation (Agliani, 2023; Di Placido, 2024; Lauria, 2017; Mancassola, 2021; Mari, 2021), but such claim has been refuted by Proglio (2021) in his oral history of Turin-based protesters.

[8] This will become evident in the last section, as the interviewees will describe the protests in the occasion of Carlo's funerals, the various European Social Forums they attended, the anti-war efforts (2002-2003) and the Stop-Biocide movement in Campania (roughly 2008-2011). Not only, but recent Italian history is filled with moments of contestation both related and whatnot to Genoa like: the anti-austerity protests during the economic crisis (Della Porta & Zamponi, 2013), the No-Tav Movement in Piedmont (Archivio dei Movimenti Sociali, 2021), the yearly manifestation of remembrance in piazza Alimonda – the square where Giuliani was shot (Bracaglia & Denegri, 2020), the teachers' union and strikes, the surge of the Non Una di Meno feminist movement, as well as the recent mobilisation for Palestinian solidarity.

An individual-centred approach is echoed, albeit differently, in bandwagon theory, which sees protest as a chain reaction triggered by early participants. It frames the willingness to pursue a goal as the driver and fuel of mobilisation (Rasler, 1996). Applied strictly, this theory calls for examining how the movement seceded or failed to maintain and manage the "human resources" necessary to regenerate protest cycles. As shown in the final section, most of the interviewees acknowledge drops in protester numbers after Genoa, yet mobilisation continued, suggesting that multiple factors are contemporarily at play in the aftermath of repression.

On a different note, adaptation theory (Francisco, 1996) has that state's coercion makes protesters change their "repertoires of contention" i.e., their tactics of contestation (Tilly, 1978, 1995, 2008). In this vein, Lichbach (1987) argues that repression substitutes one form of protest for another: non-violent protests met with violence tend to spark violent protests, while violent protests met with violence often lead to nonviolence. This substitution is driven by perceptions of justice: when non-violent protests face state coercion, repression is seen as unjust, fuelling further radicalisation; but when violent protests are met with repression, the state's actions are often viewed as legitimate, discouraging further protest. Building on this hypothesis, Moore (1998) strengthens the explanatory power of substitution theory through a quantitative study testing the ideas of Lichbach (1987), Gupta et al.'s (1993),[9] and Rasler's (1996).

Finally, studying West-Germany's anti-nuclear movements, Opp & Roehl (1990) set up a model to understand the conditions under which violent repression halts or radicalises protest, and take up the notion of micromobilisation processes to frame the effects of policing. Micromobilisation refers to the processes that mediate between macro-factors and individual motivations for political action, helping to offset the negative costs of repression.[10] They argue that micromobilisation increases when both victims and their surrounding social environment perceive the violence as illegitimate, a point also emphasised by Hess & Martin (2006) in their discussion of transformative events driven by widespread perceptions of injustice. Opp & Roehl (1990) test deprivation, collective action, and resource mobilisation theories by examining social, moral, and public good incentives, concluding that micromobilisation processes enable protest to continue despite repression.

Echoing their conclusion, Rasler (1996) examines the 1979 Iranian Revolution and finds that violent repression has a negative short-term effect but a positive long-term one. She argues that the lapse between these two phases provides the time needed for micromobilisation processes to unfold, allowing for reorganisation and the pursuit of protest. this approach is relevant to the present study, as it offers both a temporal framework (short and long term) and a focused analytical lens (micromobilisation). In the context of Genoa, it means approaching repression's effects through a lens accounting for distinct but continuous temporalities.

What can be concluded by this overview of the literature is that: (a) most studies employ quantitative analyses, (b) a focus on non-physical violence is lacking, and (c)

[9] They argue that repression has a negative effect in autocracies, while a positive one in democracies.

[10] These processes can take various shapes and forms; from the direct help of the Genoese sheltering protesters in their houses and shops, to the practices set in places by social centres and organisations to collectively make sense of the experience of violence.

outcome-oriented theories tend to treat social movements as uniform entities, overlooking how specific feature (size, modes of communication, location, or demands) might shape their vulnerability or resilience to repression.

2.4 Filling the Gaps: the contribution of oral history

The lack of qualitative analysis in the field "overlooks a more nuanced interpretation of the way in which social actors engage in specific interpretative processes" (Vicari, 2015, p.601). How was the violence experienced and elaborated within the ranks of the organisations that made up the alter-globalisation movement? What did this mean for the forms and content that these organisations mobilised? Oral history best serves this approach as it helps gathering internal insights on the dynamics and discussions that took place after the summit, and how the violence impacted the personal trajectory of the interviewees. Moreover, much of the political science literature tends to treat theories as mutually exclusive models, each applied in isolation to test specific hypotheses. This fragmentation often results in overly deterministic interpretations, where repression is assumed to produce predictable and one-directional effects. By contrast, this thesis frames the consequences of repression as plural and non-linear, deeply shaped by context and time. Oral history allows tracing such fragmentations, revealing how activists reinterpreted, resisted, and internalised state violence.

Moreover, as the next section shows, the mainstream was instrumental in creating a war-like context (Della Porta & Reiter, 2016), and purposefully twisting the images of protesters in the public sphere (Boyle, 2011). The weight of such element makes it relevant to question its impact too. How did protesters respond? How did they deal with the images portrayed by the state? How did this element influence their tactics and initiatives? How did the narrative of criminalisation affect perceived injustice and eventual micromobilisation practices? What remains today of that narrative in the lives of the protesters? Building on the lack of attention to non-physical forms of violence in traditional literature, this project thus aims to reason on the media as a tool of policing through the description of its reception and contestation.

Finally, the last point (c) seems particularly relevant given the peculiarity of the movement, which did not resemble a typical national network of actors but rather a transnational aggregate of differently aligned organisations and individuals. As discussed above, this character challenges the applicability of existing outcome-oriented theories of repression, which largely centre on national contexts, cohesive movements,[11] and relatively short timeframes (e.g., Francisco's (2004) focus on the 3 days after the massacre). How does deprivation relate to a transnational movement? How can the impacts of repression in one event of contestation be related to the general development of a much larger network? And how did the existence of such a network shape perceptions, fears, hopes, and tactics in light of state violence? Taking this into account, this study adopts a mechanism-based approach, examining underlying patterns across similar and contrasting cases to develop a more nuanced understanding of repression's effects.

[11] While the compactness of movements can be argued to be relative, national, short-time, and geographical (as in proximity between places of contention) indicators do not play in favour of the alter-globalisation movement, especially when compared to West-Germany's anti-nuclear movements (Opp & Roehl, 1990), Northern Ireland's separatists (Francisco, 2004; White, 1999), and country-based leftist movements (Zwerman et al., 2000).

Building on these premises, this thesis applies oral history to the case of Genoa to explore how repression shaped both the collective and personal trajectories of those who took part in the demonstrations. There are two main reasons for this choice, relating respectively to the nature of oral history, and to the specific content of the study. Both are interconnected but distinct and will be presented below.

Oral history aims to capture the thoughts, emotions, symbols, and interpretations of those individuals that experienced the event(s) under study. By analysing the content, context and form(s) of the interviews, it becomes possible to trace how protesters internalised the violences they encountered. Focusing on their choice of words, expressions, and tones allows for insight into the place Genoa occupies in their livelihoods and memories. How did they interpret violence? What were the codes of meaning that organisations and militants gave to repression? How did these interpretations influence the development of the movement?

Not only the content but also the timing and pace of narrativity[12], as well as silences, can serve as powerful markers of emotional and memorial impact (Abrams, 2016). Additionally, elements such as formal or informal registers, the use of irony, standardised expressions, or even curse words carry meaning, reflecting protesters' stance toward the police, the state, and society at large.

Moreover, eventual references and connections to current or past events can help understand how the violence of Genoa shaped and directed the memory of the events. As explained by Niwot (2011) Genoa has been interpreted differently in relation to wider Italian history, but how was it related to what came after? How was the memory of Genoa and the violence it brought processed and used in the years after?

Oral history best serves this as it can actively and efficiently access memory, a field that has only recently gained traction within social movement studies (DeGloma & Jacobs, 2023). The relationship between social movements and memory is multifaceted: movements can shape collective memory, challenge dominant mnemonic narratives, and act to preserve alternative accounts (Berger et al., 2021). Memory thus functions simultaneously as an instrument, a driver and a goal of social movements. At the same time, memory is "the subject and the source of oral history" (Thomson, 2011, p. 80). The subjective nature of oral history constitutes its strength, allowing access to the intimate interplay between past and present, and the "infection" of memory by subsequent experiences (Abrams, 2016, p. 23). By exposing the fallibility of memory, oral history allows researchers to trace the discrepancies between lived and remembered experiences, uncovering how narratives are reshaped over time by emotion, identity, and socio-political context.

When it comes to Genoa, such an approach allows to uncover the ways in which the death of Giuliani, the violences in the streets, and the tortures enacted by the state were remembered as well as what factors influenced specific mnemonic patterns. How did the memory of Genoa become meaningful in the subsequent performances of contestation? How was memory mobilised in the aftermath of Genoa? Through what means and narratives?

While inherently limited to living historical agents, oral history offers access to perspectives, experiences, and narratives that might otherwise remain uncovered. Despite its constraints,[13] it serves as a valuable tool for reaching communities

[12] As in the ratio between the duration of events and the time spent recalling them.

[13] Oral history's reliance on memory makes it vulnerable to distortions, omissions, and retrospective reinterpretations. Interviewees may unconsciously reshape their recollections to align with personal, political, or collective identities, and the

historically dwelling on the disadvantaged side of power dynamics (Williams & Riley, 2018). This is particularly relevant for the activists involved in the Genoa protests, who were subjected to a sustained media campaign that delegitimised the movement. Before, during, and after the demonstrations, dominant media narratives often distorted public perception of both the protesters and their demands, fostering a sense of alienation and misrepresentation that oral history can help redress. As this thesis aims to analyse the cosmos of social organisation in Genoa after the repression, only but an approach targeting those that suffered and reacted to that violence can bring about adequate results.

Moreover, the narrative seeing the movement being completely silenced after Genoa lays a thick veil of victimisation on the individuals and organisations that participated, taking away their agency to react and re-tell their stories. While it may be partially true that Genoa created a “psycho-politic” trauma in the Italian fabric, protests and militancy continued as people kept manifesting and demanding social justice. Similarly to Sherbakova (1998) - who captured how soviet propaganda impacted subjectivities, moving beyond the victim/perpetrator binary - this project aims to give complexity to those activists and demonstrators that were repressed by the police and silenced by the media. How do the experiences of activists relate to these common narratives on the G8? How are they perceived? How do activists relate their current life paths to what took place in Genoa?

presence of the interviewer can further influence how stories are told. Additionally, the complex relationship between past and present, the difference between the event that is lived and that is remembered, and the infection of memory can potentially pose problems to historical reconstruction. However, these very features constitute analytical strengths, as oral history does not aim to be a mirror of the past, but a lens onto how that past is lived, reimagined, and mobilised in the present. Its subjectivity allows researchers to trace the emotional, symbolic, and interpretive processes through which individuals make sense of violence and repression over time.

3. The Genoa G8 in Scholarly Debate

Literature Review on the 2001 Protests and Their Aftermath

The events of Genoa 2001 generated an extraordinary quantity of resources, to the extent that it has been described as the most documented episode in recent Italian history (Bracaglia & Denegri, 2020). Direct testimonies were published right after (Chiesa, 2001; De Gregorio, 2001), and the following years saw a steep increase of resources and productions, especially in proximity of the 10th and 20th anniversary. Non-academic literature has been prolific and characterised by volumes, movies (D. Vicari, 2012), documentaries (Angeli et al., 2001; Bachschimdt, 2011; Comencini, 2002; Ferrario, 2002; Savorelli, 2001; Verde, 2001; Wetzl & Tanzi, 2002), podcasts (Bencivenga et al. 2022; Camilli, 2021), and comic books (Bardi & Gamberini, 2013; Biani & Gubitosa, 2021; Supporto Legale, 2021). Not only that but the memory of Genoa has been – and continues to be – extensively constructed through websites, songs, murals, and visual art (Bracaglia & Denegri, 2020). Volumes and monographs focused on the alter-global movement (Andretta et al., 2002; Maffione, 2021), the irruption in the Diaz school (Barabino, 2021; Bardi & Gamberini, 2013; Mammaro, 2009; Mantovani, 2011), the tortures in Bolzaneto police station (Calandri, 2008; Settembre, 2014), and the general reconstruction of the events (Agnoletto & Guadagnucci, 2011; Caruso, 2021; Chioetto, 2002; De Gregorio, 2001; Gubitosa, 2003; Miotto, 2021; Vaccari, 2021). On the other hand, the academic literature is situated in a variety of fields, namely contentious politics (Della Porta & Reiter, 2003, 2016; Della Porta & Zamponi, 2013), media (Cavallotti, 2024; Juris, 2005), memory (Bracaglia & Denegri, 2020; Galliani, 2024; Serafino, 2022), gender (Kolarova, 2004; Lanfranco, 2021), and social movement studies (Andretta et al., 2002).

3.1 The Movement

Situating the events of Genoa within the wider context of the alter-globalisation movement, Andretta et al. (2002) offer a relatively comprehensive analysis of the Genoa Social Forum (GSF) and its affiliated networks. Conceived as a transnational platform with a "super light structure" (p. 35), the GSF aimed to connect a diverse spectrum of organisations varying in orientation and tactical approach. Through the adoption of a "labour pact", over 800 associations joined the Forum, agreeing to a shared commitment nonviolence and to forms of protest that were prearranged and negotiated with authorities.[14]

Among these, the Lilliput Network (Rete Lilliput) - an "enthusiastic but fragmented" (Veltri, 2003, p. 3) network of associations and individuals established in 1999 and organised around local knots (Nodi) - brought together pacifist organisations (among which left-catholic groups). It focused on education, non-violence, and the promotion of alternative lifestyles (Andretta et al., 2002). Positioned further along the nonviolent-violent continuum, ATTAC (Associazione per la Tassazione delle Transazioni Finanziarie e per l'Azione Cittadina) - founded in 1998 in France and in Italy in 2001 - focused on nonviolent yet symbolic and spectacular actions. Finally, the White Overalls (Tute Bianche) dwelt in the border between violence and nonviolence, issuing a symbolic "declaration of war" against the red zone and engaging in protected disobedience by equipping themselves with cardboard and rubber gear, ironically

[14] For an overview of the Italian and International networks who signed the "labour pact" check Gubitosa's (2003) Appendix.

mimicking a fictitious army (Andretta et al., 2002). Their experience stemmed from Ya Basta!, a network of northern Italian social centres founded in 1996 and inspired by the Zapatistas in Mexico (Albertani, 2001). The network organised various occupied and self-managed social centres (CSOA), heterogeneous in both nature and tactics (Andretta et al., 2002). This overall diversity in practices was reflected in the organisation of the counter-summit, which featured two large and cohesive demonstrations on the 19th and 21st of July, and thematic assemblies held in designated squares on the 20th (Andretta et al., 2002). A variety of loose networks remained external to the GSF, bringing together anarchists, and other individuals or groups who disagreed with the GSF's policies and organisation, allegedly described as overly vertical (Andretta et al., 2002).

Moreover, the movement's dynamics were marked by horizontal ties, open information, decentralised and coordinated collaboration, direct democratic decision-making, and self-directed networking (Juris, 2005). This horizontal coordination among autonomous affinity groups was reflected in the diversification of protest tactics, which mirrored the underlying networking logic. Such tactics included white [disobedience], pink [frivolity], and black block [militancy] actions (Juris, 2005). Linking organisational structure to tactical diversity, Juris (2005) identifies efficiency where Buttel (2003) sees fragmentation. In contrast, Buttel (2003) highlights ideological, discursive, and tactical differences as challenges to cohesion hindering the movement's longevity.

Tracing the aftermath of the movement proves complex given its fluid and sporadic nature. Its heterogenous and horizontal structure makes it nearly impossible to determine who was in it and at what time.[15] Consequently, the literature on this topic is scarce and opinions vary from those claiming that Genoa killed the movement (Agliani, 2023; Di Placido, 2024; Lauria, 2017; Mancassola, 2021; Mari, 2021; Rolandi, 2023), that 9/11 did so (Billi, 2021), and even those arguing that it actually never died (Della Porta & Sparagna, 2021). While its geographical disparities require narrowing the scope of inquiry for any meaningful analysis, it is evident that 9/11 pushed the alter-globalisation movement to flow into the anti-war movement. Beyond this observation, focusing specifically on the paths and experiences of Italian activists and organisations is particularly relevant. Italy's centrality in the protest and policing provide a crucial context. Examining the Italian context, allows for a deeper understanding of how state violence shaped political subjectivities, organisational transformations, and the reconfiguration of collective action in the aftermath of Genoa.

3.2 The Media

Linking the structure of the movement to is media presence, Cavallotti (2024) analyses IndyMedia's role – the independent media collective created in 1999 during the "battle of Seattle"[16] – and argues that it aimed at the creation of a "collective intelligence". Such a portal worked through open-access information loaded by media activists and - really - anyone who wanted to collaborate. Such interconnectedness trough fragmentation was thus reflected in the way media activists accessed and

[15] While there are some organisations that were openly part of it – like the Lilliput Network, other groups' participation, both ideologically and practically, is harder to trace as opinions differed widely. Not only, but the movement being acephalous and structurally fluid, it would be analytically wrong, and also impossible, to delimit participation and inclusion.

[16] The "battle of Seattle" is the metaphor used in the literature – both academic and not – to describe the counter-summit responsible for shutting down the 1999 WTO meeting in Seattle. Already in that event important clashes took place, which saw protests and repression being inflamed.

published content on IndyMedia. During the counter-summit they would assemble daily and design places and tasks to keep the flow of information steady. Videos, pictures, audios, and comments were uploaded on the platform and translated by other activists operating from the designated media centre at the Pertini-Diaz schools. Cavallotti (2024) also underscores the significance of the independent media landscape of those days, when activists sought to challenge mainstream coverage that portrayed them as savages and criminals. This media activism was so crucial that outlets like IndyMedia and their "safe space" (Tilly, 2000) became explicit targets of the state violence.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, Juris (2005) examines the power and mechanisms of mainstream media in the context of Genoa 2001. He argues that while some movements stage moments of symbolic violence to forge radical identities and attract attention, mainstream media possesses the capacity to diminish the impact of such actions, by framing them though narratives of criminalisation and portraying demonstrators as disorganised, unlawful groups threatening democracy (Boyle, 2011). In doing so, the mainstream media created a moral divide between the "good" and "bad" demonstrator, effectively destabilising the movement (Albertani, 2001; Proglio, 2021). Even before the protests began, media repression was active, contributing to the atmosphere of tension which set the stage for the ensuing violence (Boyle, 2011; Della Porta & Reiter, 2016).

3.3 The Memory

Looking at the realm of creative media, Niwot (2011) analyses the documentaries of Genoa as mnemonic tools tasked with shaping the memory of those days - a memory that has been defined both as "collective" (Bracaglia & Denegri, 2020), and "divided" (Niwot, 2011; Proglio, 2021). Bracaglia & Denegri (2020) dedicate a monograph to the bottom-up creation of Genoa's memory, describing it as a "collective cog" (ingranaggio collettivo), a system of remembering engineered and maintained by multiple actors and medias. Defining Genoa 2001 as an iconic event (Leavy, 2008), they assess its mediatic impact within mass culture, considering both political actors and the diverse content it generated. They conclude that the medias shaping Genoa's memory are polyphonic, constructing a "plurimedial constellation" (Erll, 2011, p. 138) and encompassing different texts and voices, thus giving life to the multimedia processes necessary to mediate collective memory (Rigney, 2020, p. 713). Moreover, they link memory to justice, highlighting the social committees formed in the aftermath - namely the Comitato Piazza Giuliani, seeking fair trials for those responsible for Giuliani's death, and the Comitato Verità e Giustizia, supporting the demonstrators facing legal repercussions, and by extension advocating for all the victims of state.[17]

Similarly to how the information during the protests flowed through the so-called new media (Cavallotti, 2024), the memory of Genoa itself is heavily mediated by such, as shown by Vicari (2015).[18] Analysing hyperlinks between social collectives and other

[17] For example the Comitato Verità e Giustizia set up a website page called "invisible networks" (reti invisibili) in order to collect the stories and the memory of all those victims of state's repression and police brutality, thus expanding the memory of Genoa and extending its temporality to cover both the decades before and the years after it. Despite the website being shut down at the moment, it collected an impressive amount of information and used the events of Genoa as a catalyst for a broader campaign justice and democracy.

[18] It should be noted that at the time of the events the internet – and its possibilities – were being discovered and tested in their mass-mediatic nature for the first time, with forums and networks like IndyMedia. Not only, but also personal phones had recently

organisations' webpages in the five years following Genoa, Vicari links the study of transformative events (Hess & Martin, 2006) to that of collective actions frames (Benford & Snow, 2000; Noakes & Johnston, 2005). She argues that the memory of Genoa stimulated movements to reframe their demands around instances of civil rights and democratic values, e.g., the debates on the introduction of the crime of torture in the Italian penal code (Bracaglia & Denegri, 2020). By defining movements as mnemonic agents, Vicari (2015) shows how organisations challenged and rearticulated the dominant narrative of Genoa, highlighting a discursive collusion that had begun way before the protests had even ended.

The discrepancy between mainstream and independent narratives persisted in the aftermath and, as Niwot (2011) underscores, constitutes the key element of dividedness in Genoa's memory. This division can be described as nested, as it extends beyond a binary confrontation between antagonist actors, creating the multilayered structure necessary for memory's mediation (Rigney, 2020). Niwot (2011) herself identifies additional layers of divided memory, noting how older generations of (documentary) filmmakers tend to interpret Genoa through the lens of Italian's antifascist resistance and repressive policing traditions, while younger directors relate the events to the more recent memory of the "strategy of tension" of the 1960s and 1970s.[19] Furthermore, one of the most recurring interpretations of the repression holds that an entire generation was silenced (Agliani, 2023; Di Placido, 2024; Lauria, 2017; Mancassola, 2021; Mari, 2021; Rolandi, 2023).[20] According to this narrative, the violence deployed by the state shattered the movement's hopes and demands, silencing it.

In direct contrast to this interpretation, Proglio (2021) writes the first and only oral history of the 2001 G8. By reconstructing the events of those days alongside the hopes, dreams and memories of the participants, he seeks to move demonstrators beyond the category of victims. While he also engages with the notion of "divided memory", he links it to the efforts of some of the victims to keep their experiences alive to find justice. Arguing that oral historical research cannot ignore the substrate upon which memory is created, Proglio situates his investigation in Turin, using the shared provenance of demonstrators as a common cultural context for analysing memory. However, in striving to establish a shared point of departure for memory-making, Proglio forgoes the opportunity to explore factors that may have shaped how individuals experienced and processed violence differently. While such an approach may not align with the goals of his inquiry, it appears particularly relevant to the type of research this thesis seeks to undertake, as outlined in the previous section.

All in all, the memory of Genoa emerges as a multi-layered phenomenon within contemporary Italian society, holding the capacity to generate multiple meanings and forge connections across past and present. At the same time, it functions both as a

been commercialised to the masses, and the ability for common citizens to take pictures and videos (without a camera or a recorder) were a relatively new experience.

[19] This division is even more visible when considering the links made between the "Panther" student movement of the '89-'90s (Billi, 2021), as well as the different references that came up in the interviews, namely the Chilean coup (Marco, personal communication, 30 April 2025), and fascist violence (Claudia, personal communication, 2 May 2025).

[20] While I was able only to gather a few (recent) articles embracing this narrative, this reading of the repression in Genoa and its aftermath is widespread and can often be found on social media as well when the topic is discussed/mentioned, especially in proximity of the anniversary.

site of political contestation - roughly aligning with the left/right divide – and as a tool shaped and mobilised by various social actors.[21]

3.4 The Policing

Finally, studies of contentious politics, i.e., the branch of political science dealing with the contestation of space between protesters and police forces, have focused on the dynamics of contention and the pitfalls that took place during the summit. Similarly to Zajko & Béland (2008), in their volume on the policing of transnational protest, Della Porta et al. (2016) research the reasons that led to the infamous outcomes of those days. They inscribe such events in a general shift away (among Western states) from "negotiated management". Such model of crowd control, they explain, appeared in the 1980s as a way to regulate public order while ensuring freedom of expression. It implied negotiations and communications prior to and during the protests, with agreed upon concessions – also of (light) unlawful nature – to contain expectations, damage, and ultimately security.

In their chapter dedicated to Genoa, Della Porta & Reiter (2016) describe the climate of tension that was created around the summit in the weeks prior to its realisation, and draw on the argument put forward by Noakes et al. (2005) that police expectations of the disorder influence the spatial dynamics of contention.[22] The halt to the Schengen agreements, the shutdown of the railway, airport and motorway, and the enclosure of the city in 3 zones with different levels of accessibility as methods of "selective incapacitation" (Gillham & Noakes, 2007). The depiction of the Genoa Social Forum as a mob of violent protesters by the media, the pictures of the White Overalls preparing for the clashes with the police, the news of various bomb-packages in the days before the summit, the appearance of an alleged document of the Secret Services mistrusting the local political administration of the summit, and alarms of terrorism polarised the atmosphere even more, creating the conditions for the violence to unfold. In summary, Della Porta & Reiter (2016) inscribe their research in the "spatial turn" of contentious politics (Fyfe, 1991; Martin & Miller, 2003; Nicholls et al., 2013; Noakes et al., 2005; Polletta, 1999; Sewell, 2001; Stillerman, 2003; Tilly, 2000; Zajko & Béland, 2008), as they embed the police-protesters interactions in the squares and streets where they took place.

3.5 The Effects?

In summary, while most of the literature of Genoa centres on the days of the counter-summit, some authors adopt a broader temporal lens to examine the development and construction of its memory. What remains striking, however, is the lack of focused analyses on the effects of repression and the countermeasures employed by organisations and movements in response to violence. How did movement leaders behave? How were practices of care shaped? What forms did alliances and collaboration take? How were discussions, internal dynamics, and interpersonal relations impacted?

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[21] While not being the main aim of this research I want to highlight the proper impact of Genoa on everyday life. As I grew up, I remember Genoa being mentioned from the household to the square, from clearly politicised meetings to informal and non-ideological interactions between citizens. It was both a current topic, but also a shadow as many people felt almost embarrassed to mention it. As stated in the literature, the memory of Genoa is divided, fragmented, and in continuous evolution.

[22] These expectations are created by the police's knowledge of the movement, the media, the political elite, and the intelligence services (Noakes et al., 2005).

The only study that properly presents evidence as to the consequences of repression is Boyle's (2011) research on the Austrian VolxTheaterKarawane - a slow-moving caravan collective focusing on migrants and asylum-seekers through visual performances. They were arrested, tortured, and detained by the Italian police for three weeks under (false) accusations of organised crime (Boyle, 2011). This experience created a fracture in the group between those that saw fit dealing and recognising the charges, and those who interpreted it as legitimising police's claims. Furthermore, the press' persistent attempts to delve into the lives of the group after Genoa placed the activists under an unwelcome spotlight, exacerbating internal differences in approach. The group ultimately disbanded in 2005, with the violence experienced in Genoa cited as the primary factor behind its dissolution (Boyle, 2011).

Despite seemingly painting a negative post-Genoa trajectory for the VolxTheaterKarawane, Boyle (2011) explains that the activists rejected the label of "victims" and sought to reclaim agency by leveraging their media exposure to amplify their narratives and mobilise funding. This seemingly contradictory experience underscores that the effects of repression - and the ways they are negotiated buy those affected - constitute a complex fabric of actions, hopes, tactics, and challenges.

Considering the existing gaps in the literature, this study aims to shed new light on an often neglected dimension of the Genoa protests. Research on the impacts of Genoa's repression remains underdeveloped, often overlooking key aspects such as the care practices established in its aftermath and the tactical responses adopted by activists. This project seeks to address that gap by examining violence's impact on social mobilisation, focusing on the experiences of various organisations involved in the 2001 counter-summit in Genoa. Adopting an oral history approach, it aims to uncover the internal dynamics between individuals and organisations, with particular attention to the networked relationships, narrative frameworks, and micromobilisation processes that emerged.

4. Methodology

Selection, Sampling, and Significance

Aiming to reverse the flattening of protesters as either criminals or victims, Proglio's (2021) oral history reconstructed the days of contestation in Genoa. While sharing the epistemological starting point of his inquiry, this research departs from his framework in aim and methodology. Instead of reconstructing the G8 from a unified spatial standpoint, this study examines diverse responses to state violence. The emphasis lies not on where respondents came from, but on how they navigated repression's long-term effects in their practices. A territorially bound sample assumes territory a stable container for experience, an assumption that may not hold for post-Genoa activism. The 2001 repression reverberated nationally and transnationally, affecting groups and individuals differently based on their structures, geographies, and affiliations. Moreover, several respondents reorganised their practices far from the site of the G8, some even shifting political contexts entirely. A territorial framing risks reproducing the very spatial fixity that the movement - and its repression - disrupted. Allowing territorial variance, this sample reflects how the memory of Genoa travelled - across cities, organisations, and generations. The aim is to trace immediate tactical responses, as well as longer-term patterns of politicisation, demobilisation, care, and radicalisation. This means following people and practices, rather than anchoring them to place.

The respondents have been found through the help of numerous associations that participated in the counter-summit. Through snowballing, these networks allowed access a varied landscape of practices and ideologies. With the exception of anarchist associations and purely violent demonstrators, this thesis brings together the insights from 9 in-depth and semi-structured interviews.[23] The sample includes individuals who participated in Ya Basta/White Overalls (Laura, Paolo), Lilliput Network (Norma, Carlo), ATTAC (Marco), Giovani Comunisti (Enrico),[24] the medics and aid voluntaries (Massimo), and unaffiliated demonstrators (Claudia, Lorenzo).

The interview guide (Appendix, p. 46) was centred around short, medium, and long temporalities to properly assess the emotions, reactions and changes that the repression of Genoa stimulated. In summary, questions investigated the reactions and dynamics of the 20th and 21st of July, the changes in topics of discussions, the care practices employed by the different networks, the ways in which the mainstream narrative was interpreted, and the meaning that Genoa acquired in their lives.

Given the hardships of transcribing the oral into the written (Portelli, 1991), the audio recordings of the interviews were consistently consulted alongside the transcripts. This approach ensured that non-verbal nuances (irony, hope, hesitation, and avoidance) could be adequately captured and interpreted. Moreover, the interviews were not transcribed in full; instead, only the segments deemed were selected. The data was coded and thematically analysed using NVivo, which facilitated the identification and organisation of key themes, presented in the following section. Ethical considerations regarding data collection and participants' consent are detailed in the Appendix (p.48).

[23] The exclusion of anarchists and violent protesters derives from the fact that they did not respond to the invitations.
[24] Giovani Comunisti (Young Communist) is the young branch of the Rifondazione Comunista (Communist Refoundation) party.

5. Repression Remembered, Resistance Reimagined

Interpreting Oral Histories of Social Reorganisation in post-2001 Italy

The repression occurred in Genoa had multifaceted repercussions on individuals and organisations, producing a mix of deterrent effects and mobilising incentives. The present analysis is constructed around three temporal frames, namely short, medium, and long term. Throughout, mechanisms and patterns are highlighted and contextualised to give a proper overview of the trajectories and experiences that departed from Genoa. Specifically, particular focus is given to those micromobilisation processes set in place by the involved organisations. It is shown that a solid capacity (and willingness) to set up community-based practices of care works as a powerful deterrent in the face of repression.

5.1 Fear, Rage, and Care: The Immediate Aftermath of Repression

Accounts of the protests portray the unfolding of predator-prey dynamics between police forces and protesters, as illustrated by Claudia's account of the 20th of July: "I basically spent the Saturday demonstration running away with a friend, because they were beating us. […] We ran for hours. It was like a cat-and-mouse game. […] All the way from Piazza Alimonda to the Carlini stadium, we ran non-stop, with rubber bullets flying everywhere. […] It was just a total mess, running like that because they wouldn't let up." (personal communication, 2 May 2025).[25] The next day was no different as Laura describes that: "When we joined the march, we were already running. [...] At a certain point, they made us turn right onto a big tree-lined boulevard where we started walking down really slowly with this increasingly strong feeling that we were being hunted. [...] The march got strung out, even though we still moved in large blocks. I was with a big group, hundreds of people, and we reached the prison in what felt like calm. But that moment didn't last. Then came the attack on the prison, and the police vans started doing their rounds again. And right away, the word spread: 'Run, quick, go, we have to go!' And we moved again, in this big broken-up group with all sorts of people." (personal communication, 28 April 2025). Similarly, Paolo remembers that on the 20th: "I didn't have a clear perception of what was happening in front. [...] I did everything I could to escape. [...] I found what seemed to be a way out. [...] They got us because we ended up in this dead-end courtyard, and they got us completely gratuitously" (personal communication, 5 May 2025). Other accounts describe the atmosphere of uncertainty that reigned during those two days as no one knew what to expect (Lorenzo, personal communication, 5 May 2025). Not only that, but the series of random arrests that was initiated the evening of the 20th accentuated the feeling of being trapped, so much so that "the fear of being next stayed with us for the next 24 hours" (Laura, personal communication, 28 April 2025).

Striking is the collision of these vivid accounts with the loss of time perception shown by multiple protesters, strengthening the picture of the chaos that unfolded in Genoa. "Unfortunately, I can't tell you what time it was because during those three days I completely lost my sense of time" (Laura, personal communication, 28 April 2025), or "I don't remember it at all. [...] I have a total memory blank" (Norma, personal communication, 5 May 2025). These discrepancies in the encoding of space and time show the effectiveness of repression at shaping the sense of terror aimed for by the

[25] All the interviews have been conducted in Italian; all the direct quotations have been translated into English by the author.

state, but more importantly highlight the relevance of space as a mnemonic agent, especially following traumatic events (Cole, 2015; Kuusisto-Arponen, 2014; Murrani et al., 2023). In moments of chaos, terror, and crisis a time-centred and chronological perspective might not serve as the best approach to historical inquiry. Rather, anchoring accounts and reconstructions to spatial coordinates can offer a better insight in the context at hand. As it will be seen in this section, most of the respondents did not keep a clear chronological approach while describing the protests and their aftermath, with some even confusing dates and event's succession; rather they always tied their accounts to spaces and/or places, revealing their importance in the landscape of memory and reconstruction.[26]

On the 20th of July, similarly to what Proglio (2021) writes (p.192), Marco remembers that: "There was the huge problem of so many activists who wanted to go around the city to vent the rage they had accumulated over Carlo's death. Our attempt [...] was to keep people peaceful. Also because going around was dangerous for them too, apart from what they could have done out of excessive anger" (personal communication, 30 April 2025). This element of immediate rage is in line with the assumption that repression spurs feelings of deprivation and lights fire to mobilisation, creating new grievances and galvanising mobilisation (Opp & Roehl, 1990).

Not only, but "what was really beautiful and moving were the hundreds of phone calls coming in from ordinary people saying, 'I wasn't planning to go to Genoa, but after what happened today, I'll be there tomorrow.' And there really were so many of them" (Marco, personal communication, 30 April 2025).[27] These insights shows that an explanation solely based on rage is limited, as it does not consider repression's impact on latent solidarity. The violence in Genoa became an event of public communication, highlighting the vitality of visibility and producing a bandwagon effect on further mobilisation (Rasler, 1996). When the images of the 20th of July began to circulate, and repression became public, they generated affective responses outside of the activists' circles, creating the possibility for new political subjectivities.

The chaos, terror, and confusion of the day, along with the feeling of being cornered and hunted were turned around and used by both experienced and less-integrated individuals as a motivation for the next day, as Carlo mentions: "There was a sense of dismay, a sense of discomfort about what had happened, but also a desire for redemption in next day's march. We thought we could end with a dignified chapter" (personal communication, 5 May 2025). Such emphasis on dignity shows the importance that activists gave to the public perception of the counter-summit, and the knowledge of the consequences of the repressive media campaign enacted by state outlets. This element will be vital also in the aftermath of Genoa, as one of the main drivers of mobilisation will be the need to create a proper counter-narrative.

Finally, in attempt to make activists process the emotions and tension of the days, Marco remembers that on the 20th night at the Sciorba camping – where most of the ATTAC's activists stayed, "we held a meeting where we put fear on the agenda, and we asked everyone to say how they were; if they felt safe, if they were scared, so

[26] Given the emergence of new medias and the internet, space is understood both in its physical and virtual coordinates. As shown in this section, protesters narrate their stories linking their memories to the streets of Genoa, to their social centres, to the online networks they partook and advocated in, as well as the local territories where they pursued their activism.

[27] This element has been highlighted by Laura too: "What happened on the 20th motivated many people who hadn't originally left to come to Genoa. [...] So on the 21st there were a lot of people in Genoa, including those who hadn't been there on the 20th but had been, let's say, pushed, stirred, shocked by Carlo's murder and by what had started to emerge from the TV news images" (personal communication, 28 April 2025).

basically to bring down a part of the panic that, let's say, each person risked experiencing individually - which would have been the worst. Turning it into a sort of collective process. [...] We set up a stage, people would go up and speak, and so in some way they let things out. The anxiety, the anger, the fear. Everything people were going through. And in the end, it was a positive evening that allowed us to build a good demonstration the next day" (personal communication, 30 April 2025).

At the Carlini stadium instead "someone over the stadium's PA system [...] called for a minute of silence for the dead(s)[28] and for what had happened. And it was striking because I think there were more than 30,000 people at the Carlini, but that evening not a single sound was heard. I think it lasted much more than a minute. You could hear people crying, but no one spoke" (Laura, personal communication, 28 April 2025). Moreover, the protection of those "less integrated" protesters was regarded as a priority, as on the night of the 21st "two trains left from Genoa. [...] We comrades from the organisations decided to put on that train all the people [...] not immediately activists, to guarantee their return" (Laura, personal communication, 28 April 2025).

Practices of care were thus set in place to make sure people could go through, externalise, and process the intensity of the day, allowing them to recharge and unite in front of the violence. These micromobilisation practices proved vital in the days of Genoa, as people had places and times to come together and collectively reason on what had happened.[29]

5.2 From Disillusionment to Reorganisation: The Medium-Term Effects of Genoa

Denying that the repression experienced in Genoa engendered a negative incentive towards mobilisations is "pointless", as Enrico says (personal communication, 3 May 2025). In line with collective action theory (Francisco, 2004), most of the respondents agree that many people decided to leave the movement and sometimes quit activism altogether.[30] "So when we would say, 'let's go out in the streets, let's keep going,' many people would reply, 'no, no way, you won't see me again, I'm not going back out there, I'm afraid of dying, I'm scared.' There really was a wave of collective panic that spread like wildfire. [...] that was a deep wound, hard to heal. And on top of that, comrades started insulting each other" (Enrico, personal communication, 3 May 2025). The mainstream narrative that was injected in the social fabric got to the fringes of the movement too, where organisations and individuals started accusing one another of being responsible for the surge in violence.[31]

The repression, the fear of dying, the reflux of people abandoning militancy, the dynamics of blame, and the social narratives of the counter-summit fostered a relatively widespread sense of alienation, a feeling of exclusion. Claudia recalls that: "It kind of discouraged people, made it seem like... like movements, like things only really work on another level, as if - you know, I don't know, it's a bit hard to explain.

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[28] As Laura remembers, on the days of protest the number of killed people was uncertain, with some estimates talking about 3 casualties – Carlo, and two Spanish girls. Later it was concluded that there had been only one victim.

[29] Making another example of the type of care that had started in her organisation, Laura recalls that on the 22nd of July, in the evening, once back home in Benevento (Campania): "Without planning to meet that evening, we all went downstairs and ended up at the social centre without even saying it to each other. And actually, that night we didn't say much. On the evening of the 22nd, more than anything, we just hugged a lot" (personal communication, 28 April 2025).

[30] (Carlo, personal communication, 5 May 2025; Claudia, personal communication, 2 May 2025; Enrico, personal communication, 3 May 2025; Laura, personal communication, 28 April 2025; Lorenzo, personal communication, 5 May 2025; Paolo, personal communication, 5 May 2025)

[31] On this note, Laura (personal communication, 28 April 2025) and Norma (personal communication, 5 May 2025) recall that the debates within their organisations were shifted to the figures of the Black Blocs, their identity, practices, role in the movement, and also responsibilities.

[...] Well, it was one of our first experiences of fascism - but, you know, we were starting to get some practice. After all, now we're prepared. (ironic tone) [...] I don't know, it's kind of hard to put into words. [...] It definitely had a big impact on the movements. [...] I don't know, it's hard" (personal communication, 2 May 2025). Such inability to put feelings into words – the repetition of "I don't know" – shows the limits of language in the face of political violence, which did more than injuring bodies: it fractured the narrative frameworks used by activists to make sense of their political landscape. Genoa represented a cognitive and emotional break where familiar political categories (militancy, state, solidarity) became inadequate. Claudia's irony works as a coping mechanism in the face of such rupture. In this instance her linguistic fragmentation is a trace of the disillusionment and alienation created by the repression.[32]

The trauma of Genoa pushed activists to mobilise against the mainstream narrative of the counter-summit. "We felt the need - and the political responsibility - to begin organising a whole series of narrative and explanatory events, in the city and beyond." (Laura, personal communication, 28 April 2025). "How do we build a narrative that isn't the one put forwards by the mass media?" (Enrico, personal communication, 3 May 2025). On this wavelength, Carlo recalls that through Peacelink: "We began to think about the use of language, of technology, and public discourse as an alternative form of power. [...] There was what today we'd call factchecking, which at the time became a section on our website called 'Mediawatch', meaning, also there, the ability for ordinary citizens to report instances of misinformation" (personal communication, 5 May 2025).[33]

Drawing on the communal drive that animated the movement since its origin, activists managed to set up micromobilisation practices (Opp & Roehl, 1990) and deal with the emotional tolls of violence. "We started a practice that lasted for months, if not years, of saying to each other: 'Where were you?' 'What did you see?' 'What happened to you?' 'How did you come back?'" (Laura, personal communication, 28 April 2025). "As an association, we've always had this in our collective DNA - the idea that no one is self-sufficient, and that each person holds a piece of the truth. [...] Everyone brings something that enriches the association. That way of working, in my view, really helped ATTAC's activists to get through those phases and, more broadly, helped within movement work. [...] It allowed us to build networks, processes, and paths together" (Marco, personal communication, 30 April 2025). Collectively reconstructing the events and giving everyone time and space to internalise and externalise Genoa proved to be a successful tactic of resistance. "'Did you see? Another video from Genoa came out. Let's watch it - yes, but only together tonight. Don't watch it alone, don't be alone.' Those were the kinds of dynamics we had" (Laura, personal communication, 28 April 2025).

On the other side of the coin, Paolo's experience exemplifies the consequences of a lack of solidarity. "I kind of stepped away from the actual movement, the one I had walked with for the past years. There was definitely some disappointment - about the

[32] Among the respondents no one exhibited elements of alienation like Claudia, but it was still possible to perceive that many of them had lost hope towards the system: Carlo highlighted the separation between the elites and the civil society, Enrico described the dismay in front of the efficiency of the mass media to paint a distorted picture of the events despite the murder of Carlo Giuliani, and Norma mentioned that the big 8 came to Genoa to reiterate a decision (about the world order) that was already made, implying that democratic discussion had never been an option.

[33] Peacelink began in 1991 and expanded in the years that followed. It aimed to create a network that could be accessed to consult and comment articles related to peace and social justice, de facto engendering an embryo to the social networks we use nowadays. It can still be consulted at: https://www.peacelink.it/index.html.

attitude, about the lack of help or solidarity. I was a bit let down by the movement's leadership, and so I stayed somewhat on the margins. [...] I pretty much left the organisation early on - in fact, I left it almost entirely and dealt with my issues more or less on my own. [...] I wanted to distance myself from everything, really - it was a choice of the moment, driven by the desire to close a chapter" (Paolo, personal communication, 5 May 2025). When asked to detail more his choice and the dynamics that took place he answered: "I basically left the national Ya Basta! Network. Why? I don't know if it's worth going back over every single detail about how they dealt with those of us who were accused. No. Maybe there wasn't even much willingness to talk about those things, about the... I don't know. I just sort of dropped it - that's the simplest way to put it" (Paolo, personal communication, 5 May 2025).

His avoidance reflects the sense of betrayal and abandonment created by the absence of a safety net that could have helped him face the charges.[34] If care and solidarity work as a proper filter of repressive violence, their lack exposes individuals to the repercussions of repression. His desire to "close a chapter" points to a need for closure without confrontation, revealing how the effects of repression were not only external but also internalised, leading to quiet withdrawals rather than explosive breaks. His experience illustrates how repression, when compounded by a lack of collective care, can fracture solidarities and induce a kind of self-imposed marginalisation, where avoidance becomes a strategy of survival.[35]

Finally, social organisation did not stop after Genoa; it multiplied. Activists across Italy began to reconfigure their political practices and networks, channelling the shock of repression into new forms of social organisation that extended the movement's life beyond the immediate trauma. The momentum of Genoa was soon taken up starting with the organisation of various demonstrations on the day of Carlo's funeral – 25th of July 2001. People gathered in front of all the prefectures of Italy demanding justice and accountability (Laura, personal communication, 28 April 2025; Marco, personal communication, 30 April 2025). The ability to organise and mobilise was thus not lost – not even for a day. In August 2001 Laura's social centre organised a camping in Sant'Angelo a Scala (Avellino, Campania) where many people from all over Italy, most of whom were present in Genoa, participated. There, she said, they manage to come together as a community and started piecing together what had happened, especially inside the Diaz school and the Bolzaneto police station. In Genoa, in the fall of 2001, Norma's community set up "In Silence for Peace", an association practising – to this day -peaceful weekly sit-ins in front of Genoa's municipality asking for peace and demilitarisation.

Moreover, "in 2003, as the Giovani Comunisti, we managed to convince the other social centres to occupy a space together. That's how, in May 2003, the self-managed social lab Buridda was born. It emerged directly from the momentum created by the G8, from the will not to stop, but to keep denouncing and talking about what the world was experiencing. It was one of the biggest occupations here in Genoa. [...] Many

[34] This element of disillusionment can be found across other movement's reactions to policing, especially among cases of repression on leftist mobilisation, e.g., the repression of the Turkish left in the 1980s (Pekesen, 2021).

[35] On this note it is important to highlight that Paolo's activism did not end completely. He left the White Overalls and the disobedient fringes as stated above, but later on found a new place among the Comitato Verità e Giustizia, advocating and seeking justice for the victims of state violence. Through the newfound care of the committee, Paolo managed to restart and reimagine his political trajectory. This epilogue to his story adds even more solidity to the argument that the key factor to the effectiveness/failure of repression lays in the collectivity of the network and its micromobilisation processes. Moreover, seeking justice can also be added to the list of elements of micromobilisation that were mobilised after Genoa. Massimo's account of the help that the medical personnel gave to the lawyers to prepare expert reports is proof of this (personal communication, 7 May 2025).

different groups came together, going beyond their differences - again drawing from the vision that had led to organising the G8 days. So in some way, we managed to preserve the best lessons we had learned from those days" (Enrico, personal communication, 3 May 2025).

In the two years following Genoa, the movement's ability for analysis and transnational coordination found a new ground through the 2002 and 2003's European Social Forums (ESF), in Florence and Paris respectively.[36] These were pivotal in shifting the focus toward a renewed emphasis on global justice and systemic critique. "In Florence, we managed to refocus on the content - on proposals and shared experiences. So it was really, really positive" (Marco, personal communication, 30 April 2025).[37] These ESFs allowed for a recomposition of the networks and a reaffirmation of shared values. "The ability to develop ideas and proposals didn't disappear. If you go back and look at the contents of the European Social Forums, you'll find a very high level of analysis, significant proposals, and a deep understanding of global phenomena" (Lorenzo, personal communication, 5 May 2025). These events enabled the movement to reimagine itself not solely through the lens of resistance, but as a space of transnational unity. Maintaining the openness of Genoa, the ESFs of the following years allowed for a renewed transnational collaboration among (not only) European networks (Bieler & Morton, 2004). Through ample use of the internet's power, with mailing-lists (Kavada, 2010) and websites (Saeed et al., 2011), the movement managed to set up the European Preparatory Assembly (EPA), that would maintain the methods of participatory democracy and meet bi-monthly in different states to ensure inclusiveness and transparency (Haug et al., 2009). In Florence, the movement managed to overcome the (once again) antagonising narrative of the mainstream media by actively counter-presenting itself as peaceful (Mosca et al., 2009), and laid the ground to organise the Global Day of Action on the 15th of February 2003 to oppose the invasion of Iraq (Bieler & Morton, 2004).

While transnational forums provided a much-needed space to rebuild cohesion and reaffirm shared political horizons, the following years saw a gradual reorientation of energies toward the local.[38] As the no-war movement – into which the alter-globalisation had flowed – reached its peak "we realised we couldn't ignore what was happening right under our noses, in our own territories. We were all making these really important arguments about how necessary it was to oppose war [...] but at the same time, we weren't addressing the raw, lived reality of the growing and widespread poverty in our cities. [...] And so environmental issues started to resurface in our work. [...] No landfills, no incinerators - those were the ones that directly affected us. [...] In Campania around 2009, 2010, 2011, there was a huge environmental movement called 'Stop Biocide'. We started joining, rebelling against the waste emergency, the indiscriminate landfills, the incinerators".[39]

[36] It is worth noticing that the European Social Forums continued in the yeas after – 2004 in London, 2006 in Athens, 2008 in Malmo, and 2010 in Istanbul. Here I make reference to these two because they were the ones mentioned by the respondents.

[37] This shift in discourse has been outlined by Della Porta & Reiter (2016) and Bracaglia & Denegri (2020), who focused respectively on the organisations' shift towards discussions on civil liberties, and public debates on the introduction of torture in the Italian penal code

[38] This trend – despite being underrepresented in the literature – can be recognised in other contexts as explained by Voss & Williams's (2012) analysis of the Brazilian Landless Workers and the Justice for Janitors campaign in LA.

[39] Similarly, Marco says: "The alter-globalization movement understood how the world was changing, but it didn't yet have territorial roots. [...] That movement actually gave birth to a new phase - a phase in which local territories began generating struggles, disputes that continue even today. For example, there are now many grassroots ecological movements."

Within this shift rests the 2011 abrogative referendum to stop the privatisation of clean water, which engendered a moment of broader network coordination post-Genoa. ATTAC was one of the main promoter of this action, organising and managing the signature collection, but other realities like the Disobedients also joined the struggle, making so that the referendum succeeded.[40] While seemingly national, the campaign resonated with a wider transnational wave of mobilisations aimed at reversing the 1990s trend of water's commodification (Balanyá, 2005). Despite their initial divergencies on methods (the Disobedients did not think that an abrogative referendum could change anything), in the end the different organisations and associations managed to work in tandem in a similar vein to what had been the collaboration in the Genoa Social Forum.

All in all, the medium-term consequences of repression reveal a tension between fragmentation and care. While fear, alienation, and disillusionment pushed some to leave the ranks, the movement experienced with new forms of organisations and solidarity. These trajectories show that organisations evolved out of the trauma created by Genoa. Ruptures and recompositions emerged as strategies and dynamics were re-evaluated. Practices of care – like those described by Marco and Laura – were pivotal in sustaining collective identity and individual feelings. At the same time, the lack of these practices, as in Paolo's story, highlights how vulnerability without support can lead to isolation. Repression thus acted as a rupture and transformation. This period laid the groundwork for future mobilisations and redefined what it meant to resist.

At the same time, it emerges a gradual sectorialisation of the movement's organisational structure, despite occasional moments of national-level collaboration. Veltri (2003), discussing the trajectory of the Lilliput Network, had already highlighted the progressive "rationalisation" of the tactics, with a more solid and immovable position in favour of non-violence. Such a shift goes against the assumptions of substitution theories arguing that the repression of peaceful protest generates radicalisation (Francisco, 1996; Lichbach, 1987; Moore, 1998). Similarly, the account of activists blaming each other allude to a deterioration in the inter-network relations; and finally, the "local turn" of activism exemplifies a shift in content and focus. All in all, these elements need to be related to the pursued transnationalism of the movement. The experiences of the European Social Forums, and the inscription of the local turn into a wider shift, allow us to understand that the apparent turn inward was not a retreat from global ambitions, rather a reconfiguration. Despite fragmentation and sectorialisation, transnationalism was not dead. It evolved in new forms grounded in shared repertoires, values, and memories. The transnational dimension adapted to new conditions, surviving in networks of solidarity and recurring mobilisations.

5.3 What remained: Revisionism and Resistance

The long-term legacy of Genoa remains contested between those voices claiming that repression annihilated the movement, and those calling this narrative "scrap paper" (Laura, personal communication, 28 April 2025). This division reflects a broader tension in Genoa's mnemonic landscape, allowing to grasp the dividedness of Genoa's memory from a new perspective. Niwot (2021) traced it through the

[40] It is important to note that the Disobedients, as a formally organised and institutionalised network, ceased to exist shortly after Genoa. In this context, however, the term is used metonymically to refer to the many social centres that had once been part of the network.

generational and symbolic references invoked by documentary filmmakers, and Proglio (2021) located it in the tension between victims' efforts to preserve memory and the broader societal drift toward forgetting. This section shows that the aftermath of Genoa constitutes a contested terrain of remembrance, as some describe it as a "spark", an "end", or a "transformation".

Claudia sustains: "that ability to act in a plural way without needing to have a single line of thought has been somewhat lost, and therefore the ability to find connections and build strength from them too" (personal communication, 2 May 2025). Similarly, Paolo says that: "There are those who see the good in what came out - the creation of a thousand other movements, other offshoots. [...] But I think more water was lost than what continued to flow. [...] I really believed things could change. Yes, they did - they definitely stopped us, they scared us. And what came afterward [...] I see that it's different, in the sense that the groups I frequent are very sectoral. There's one issue, and they tackle that issue without looking at the big picture. Which is something I think we were doing at the time" (personal communication, 5 May 2025).

On the other side of the spectrum, Norma argues that Genoa engendered a strengthening experience both mentally and practically. This view is shared by Marco too who says that: "Many activists came back from Genoa, from the anti-war battles, with a backpack full of experiences" (personal communication, 30 April 2025).

Calling Genoa "a sparkle", Laura says that: "Today, generally speaking, each of us has found something to do and a place to belong. Many have made that piece of history - without denying it - a foundation to build on. So no, nothing died. They hurt us, that's undeniable. They hurt us deeply. It was terrifying, but giving up would have been madness" (personal communication, 28 April 2025).

In light of these divergencies, it does not appear useful trying to argue whether the movement and its ideals really died in Genoa, as there are many G8s, one for every person who marched. Rather, what appears more meaningful is to explore why some activists managed to perceive continuity from the counter-summit, while others did not.

Trough oral history's capacity to foreground personal histories, a pattern emerges: those who were embedded in practices of care - mutual support, emotional labour, and collective responsibility - tend to retain a more positive and generative memory of Genoa. It is precisely within these micromobilisation processes that resilience was nurtured, allowing some to carry the legacy of Genoa into new forms of engagement, even as others felt disillusioned or detached. This suggests that the affective and relational dimensions of activism were crucial in mediating the long-term impact of repression. The striking opposition between Claudia, Paolo, Marco, and Laura lays in their different trajectories. While the former two did not partake into communal practices of care, whether voluntarily or due to the circumstances, the latter two, being completely embed in them, managed to retain a more positive vision of Genoa's aftermath and legacy of mobilisation.

Moreover, the widespread narrative framing Genoa as the death of mobilisation suggests that repression contributed to a form of historical revisionism. The memory of the movement thus becomes anchored almost exclusively on its repression, overshadowing the political imagination, organisational experimentation, and practices of care that also defined it. The emphasis on victimisation and defeat has, in multiple accounts, eclipsed the memory of shared proposals and transnational solidarities. As a result, Genoa is too often remembered as the end of a political cycle, rather than as a moment of transformation and renewal. This interpretation, however, is not shared

by all: those who remained involved often retained a more constructive memory of the summit, one that recognises both the violence and the enduring organisational legacy it helped to shape.

In conclusion, Genoa 2001 did not mark a definitive end, but rather a complex transformation in the trajectories of Italian and transnational activism. Repression fractured solidarities, reshaped memory, and contributed to a form of historical revisionism that risks reducing the counter-summit to a moment of victimhood alone. Yet, the oral histories reveal a more nuanced legacy - one in which practices of care, micromobilisation, and collective meaning-making allowed many to recompose their political identities and sustain engagement. Moreover, the experiences of the ESFs in Florence and Paris allowed the movement to pursue its transnational agenda by maintaining its decision-making techniques and setting up new coordination bodies.

Finally, the divergence between those who remember Genoa as a point of collapse and those who see it as a foundation reflects not only differing experiences of violence but also differing levels of embeddedness in collective networks of support. Recognising this complexity is essential to understanding both the endurance and the evolution of activism in the shadow of state violence.

6. Conclusion

Legacies of protest: What Genoa 2001 Means Today

The repression unfolded in Genoa during the 2001 G8, has been described as a rupture (Proglio, 2021). By some it has been interpreted as the end of the alter-globalisation movement, by others as the transformative event increasing mobilisation and solidarity. Through an interdisciplinary approach combining oral history and theories on repression's effects, this research has traced the personal and collective trajectories that followed Genoa.

The oral histories showed that the aftermath of repression is shaped by a complex mix of emotions and responses. Tracing these through different temporalities helped clarify key dynamics. By adopting a historical approach, this thesis shed light on post-repression dynamics and the interplay of multiple theories. Rather than privileging a single model, it showed that repression's effects are non-linear, unfolding across time, and shaped by a movement's internal relational infrastructure. The immediate aftermath was marked by backlash and deprivation, as activists recalled hundreds of calls from people moved to join after witnessing the violence. The mass protest on the 21st of July supports deprivation and bandwagon theories. In the medium-term, repression produced fear and disillusionment, leading many to withdraw, as predicted by collective action theory. Yet groups that developed strong practices of care enabled activists to process and act on their experiences. The contrast between Claudia and Paolo's disengagement and Marco and Laura's continued involvement underscores micromobilisation's role in sustaining engagement. Moreover, Genoa's media violence triggered a collective drive to counter-narrate, leading to fact-checking platforms and educational initiatives.

Finally, asking activists to reflect on Genoa's legacy 24 years later revealed the fragmented ways in which the counter-summit is remembered. For some, it marked a moment of rupture and loss; for others, it ignited enduring forms of engagement and solidarity. This thesis showed that the aftermath of Genoa constitutes a contested terrain of remembrance, as some describe it as a "spark", an "end", or a "transformation". Through oral histories, this research revealed both the diversity of interpretations and the mechanisms behind them. A clear pattern emerges: those engaged in collective care and mutual support tend to recall Genoa more constructively, while those who experienced repression in isolation often express disillusionment. The divided memory of Genoa thus stems not only from external narratives, but also from the internal emotional and relational dynamics shaped in its aftermath.

In conclusion, situating individual experiences within broader organisational and temporal structures, this research contributed both to the historiography of the Italian alter-globalisation movement and to contemporary political science debates on protest, repression, and resilience. Ultimately, it affirmed the importance of interdisciplinary, and grounded inquiries to understand how resistance survives, transforms, or fragments in the shadow of state violence. This study showed that a temporality-based qualitative approach can offer useful insights into the effects of repression, as it manages to portray the overall picture and capture the internal dynamics within movements. While temporality is not a new lens in movement studies, it remains underexplored in the literature on repression, which often emphasises the

immediacy and singularity of policing. Applying a longitudinal approach can therefore prove useful for both inquiries into past and contemporary movements. While being a solid starting point, additional research is needed to address the processes that took place in different contexts, such as the anarchist fringes of the movement, and the foreign organisation that participated to Genoa. Moreover, a temporality-based approach could be extended to other contexts of contention to grasp repression's effects in different political and social environments.

All in all, in an age where repression, media manipulation, and fragmented activism remain pressing challenges across democratic and authoritarian contexts alike, the lessons of Genoa remain urgently relevant. They remind us that the endurance of collective action lies not only in its numbers or visibility, but in its capacity to care, adapt, and remember on its own terms.

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