

THE COMMISSIONER MAYOR

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Telos: Every time someone talks about the direct election of the Prime Minister, people use the very evocative expression “Mayor of Italy”. So, is it true that Mayors have, in the administration of their own city, more power than the Prime Minister has today?

Marco Bucci: Mayor don’t have more power than the Prime Minister. I wish they did! They certainly have better knowledge of the local area and a direct relationship with the city and its citizens. The city administration must be seen as a facilitator, not as something foreign to the city. That was our attitude in Genoa. In my role as Mayor, I often go to Rome, even more frequently after being appointed Commissioner, which in September 2021 was extended for another year. I understood how important it is for the good of Genoa to have a constructive relationship with the government. What we’ve done and are doing in Genoa is important not only for the nation but for Europe. What we are seeing is an alignment of goals. What we do in Genoa is good for the Liguria region, for Italy, for the government and for everyone. Being the Mayor and the Commissioner means creating a synthesis of two parallel roles that often address almost contrasting needs. For example: as Commissioner my goal was to quickly demolish the bridge, as Mayor, to safeguard citizens’ health. As I understand it, being Mayor means establishing goals for my city, and a reasonable amount of time to meet them.

It’s only been a few months since you were re-elected as Mayor. We can’t forget your first term, though, which began in June 2017. A hard-won, landmark election for the city: the first centre-right Mayor of Genoa since the introduction of the direct election of the Mayor and the first to lead an executive committee that wasn’t left-wing since 1975. What were the main points, from the centre-right, in your programme and which of them did you succeed in accomplishing?

We changed the mood of the city. After years of city administrations whose goal was to manage degrowth in Genoa, in June 2017, the people of Genoa decided to change and embrace a vision of the city where the main goal is to create new jobs, increase the number of residents in our municipality and create projects that can make Genoa one of the most competitive cities in Europe. We succeeded in kicking off the *Waterfront di Levante* project by Renzo Piano. It will change the face of Genoa, and the people of Genoa will finally be able to enjoy a new window onto the sea. We hope to hand it over to the city in 2023. We developed local marketing initiatives that, in the short term, have helped us boost the number of visitors to the city. In the medium and long term, they will lead to new production plants in the city. We responded very efficiently in our handling of the emergency after the Morandi Bridge collapsed. We are sowing a lot of seeds and soon we will be celebrating Genoa as the most important city in the Mediterranean. We started by identifying the major trajectories where the city is the strongest. Like all successful businesses, that’s right where we need to invest, by valorising our core competences. There are three of them: ports and logistics, and I stress these two together; tourism and cultural tourism; and industry and high-tech. During this second term, we immediately got started working again on these foundations. It won’t be easy, because each trajectory has its own path, but the work we are doing on these three trajectories will lead to important results, such as creating 30,000 new jobs. But the Genoese have felt these results first-hand, and I can’t hide my satisfaction at being re-elected in the first round. I am happy to continue for another five years in order to build an international city, something the Genoese not only need, they want. The city of Genoa shares our vision.

The breakdown in the party system has very likely been the source of people’s widespread anti-political sentiment. And yet, this gap between citizens and politics is not nearly as wide when it comes to the Mayor. Are your citizens still passionate about politics?

The Mayor has to administrate, I’m not a politician. I see my citizens are satisfied with what we’re doing. When I walk the streets of the city, many of the people of Genoa stop me and thank me. However, the most important thing is that they feel like they’re an integral part of this change. Thanks also to the synergy between the President of the Liguria Region Giovanni Toti, we have shown that things can get done, even when time is tight.

With the Morandi Bridge tragedy and the sea storm in the autumn of 2019, we had to deal with situations of absolute emergency, contained through clear ideas and concrete action.

In this period, we have managed to create the right feeling with the Genoese people and we’re all rowing together so that Genoa will once again live up to its moniker “The Superb” (*NT: referring to its magnificence and pride*). Tragedy is something negative, but we have decided to use it as an opportunity to help Genoa come out of this phase better than it was before, with more infrastructures, more services and with international visibility that shows you can do things here, well and in the right

amount of time. It's always important to set a goal. One of the mistakes of the public administration, even at the national level, is that no one ever says when they're going to do things. Time is an important variable, along with quality and cost. If you work out these three variables, you have a 99% chance that the project will be a success.

What problems need to be addressed and solved in Genoa?

The new breakwater in Genoa is what I'm still working on from my first term. A *pang* of mine, but I won't despair. It's one of the main topics at the centre of public opinion, also because no one responded at the first call for tender. It won't stop us, but it's a hurdle. And we have to get over this hurdle, since the race must go on. It's important, not only for the city, but geographically, because Genoa is spread out along the sea. I'm sorry that in Genoa a lot of people are rowing against us. However, as they say, those people will end up getting hit in the head with an oar. Whoever rows against us doesn't deserve to be a citizen of Genoa. We will go on defending the interests of the city.

Regarding the port, we need to continue with all our parallel projects. We have to carry out our other works as we're working on the breakwater. We can do the same thing we did with the bridge. I want to finish everything I can, also because I'm not going to run for a third term. In 2027 I'll be 68 years old. Enough! Let's let the young people work. We need to pull out the stops. Then, one can always be ready to answer the phone and give advice. At 50 you have the energy for commitment, but at 68 you don't. Then, you should never do a job for too long. Things need to change. Change creates great opportunities and chances for growth.

Marco Sansini

Editorial

A commissioner? You mean, like a police commissioner? Like Inspector Montalbano from the world-famous Sicilian TV and book series? Not really, or maybe a bit. For Marco Bucci, Mayor of Genoa and our guest in the September issue of PRIMOPIANOSCALA^c, being appointed "Commissioner for the reconstruction of the Polcevera viaduct" [Editor's note: *the Morandi Bridge*] has meant and still means constantly having to make sure things are in accordance with the law.

In our interview, the Morandi Bridge was inevitably a big talking point. The Commissioner-Mayor, as we've decided to call him, succinctly illustrates the constant conflict of interests he had to face in these two roles: "*as Commissioner my goal was to quickly demolish the bridge in absolute compliance with all the rules, as Mayor, to safeguard citizens' health*". Bucci just started his second term a few months ago after getting re-elected last June. Let's not forget that he was the first centre-right Mayor of Genoa since the introduction of the direct election of the mayor and the first to lead an executive that wasn't connected to the centre-left since 1975.

So, today he is enjoying the opportunity to continue the things he started in the first five years, especially the things that were not finished.

Genoa isn't an easy city - *what city really is, though* - and this confirmation, never taken for granted and not at all rhetorical, is the fruit of his effort and concrete commitment over the first five years. The list of things he has done is long, just as long as the list of things he has started to do and that are still left to do. Bucci talks more at length about two projects in particular: the *Waterfront di Levante* and the new Breakwater in the Port of Genoa. The first is an amazing project, an architectural gem suspended over the blue of the Mediterranean, by leading Italian architect Renzo Piano.

Piano himself defined it a "*realisable utopia*", an idea for a green Genoa with clean air, far cleaner than other Italian cities. Creating a place that isn't like the old port, because people will be living there in a blend of function and yachting-related activities.

"*The style has to be poetic, the volumes almost fly over the land because the sense of transparency grows. Starting with the materials. Metal. Fabrics that quiver and move with the wind. The buildings will harness solar energy, with low energy consumption. An architecture of water and behind it the great wall of Genoa with Corso Aurelio Saffi, the limit of the Genoa of stone, continues with a lighter, sea-oriented Genoa,*" says Piano.

The second is just a tad problematic. The last problem cropped up in June: the deadline of the call for tenders for Phase A of the project elapsed June 30, and no constructors participated to it since they considered the starting bid to be very low, certain building costs were considered ill-defined and the tender didn't take into account increases in the prices of raw materials.

Now things seem to have started moving again and two consortiums have submitted their technical proposals. *Let's hope this time's the charm.*

So, this month's Mayor is super committed to his job but he's also prepared to step back. He certainly doesn't want to be a hindrance. When we press him on the likelihood of a third term, he answers: "*In 2027 I'll be 68 years old. Enough! Let's let the young people work. We need to pull out the stops. Then, one can always be ready to answer the phone and give advice.*"

So, what have we come up with for the cover of this issue of PRIMOPIANOSCALA^c and our guest Marco Bucci? After digging into his history and using the information he shared with us, we *obviously* chose some of the symbols of Genoa, his hometown, though we hope our choices aren't too obvious: the silhouette of some of the city's buildings and dolphins that represent the Aquarium.

Then, how could we not mention his wife's family's historic pastry shop and his passion for the sea and sailing, his past as a boy scout and his present as a mountaineer and hiker? Then his favourite book, *Everest: Expedition to the Ultimate* by Reinhold Messner forms the background of the skier, another sport he adores.

The cover has the same pop, oneiric look, featuring the face of our guest and a collage of juxtaposed, unelaborated images that are symbols of his work, role and life arranged around his head like a hat. Just like the Genoese: few frills and lots of substance.

Mariella Palazzolo

Marco Bucci is the Mayor of Genoa and of its Metropolitan City. He was first elected in 2017 with a centre-right coalition,



then was re-elected last June in the first round of voting with 55.49% of the preference votes.

During his first term, in October 2018, the Government also appointed him as the Extraordinary Commissioner for the reconstruction of the Morandi Bridge.

He has a Degree in Pharmacy and Chemistry from the University of Genoa and he specialised at the University of Michigan and the University of Minnesota. Starting in the mid-eighties, he worked, at a senior level, for important multinationals in the chemical and biomedical industry in Europe and the USA (3M, Kodak, SGS, *etc.*)

From 2015 to 2017 he was the Sole Administrator of Liguria Digitale, a regional public company focusing on digitalising the Liguria Region. He was a boy scout as a kid and scout educator from 1980 to 1986.

He served in the military as a reserve officer (Coast Guard CP) in the Navy. He loves mountain sports - hiking and skiing - and sea sports. He is an avid sailor and proud owner of a Dufour 44 Performance yacht.

He was born in Genoa and is 63 years old. He is married to Laura, who, despite stints in the US, doesn't appreciate being called the "first lady" (in Italian literally, *prima signora*) and reluctantly offers the equivalent in Genoese dialect *primma scignoa* as an alternative. They have two children, Matteo, 31, and Francesca, 29.

Marco Sonsini

Telos Analisi & Strategie srl

telos@telosaes.it - @Telosaes - VAT IT11825701003 - REA Roma 1330388