

POPULAR SONGS, SOCIAL STRUGGLES AND CONFLICTUAL IDENTITIES IN MESTRE-MARGHERA (1970S–1980S)

PIETRO DI PAOLA

At the April 2008 Italian general election, the constituencies of Venice and Mestre were among the very few in Veneto in which the centre-left coalition gained—just—a majority of votes. In the rest of the region the centre-right coalition, including the parties Northern League and Il Popolo della Libertà, obtained an impressive victory.¹ In the Veneto region the Northern League, an autonomist party that claims a distinctive ethnic and separate identity for the “invented” region of Padania (Northern Italy) enjoyed the highest gains of any party in comparison with previous general elections.²

With the emergence of the political party Liga Veneta in 1980, followed by the merger of other autonomist movements into the Northern League in 1991, the term “identity” within political and historical debates in Veneto has assumed predominantly “racial” and “ethnic” connotations. In March 2001, the historical association “StoriAmestre” organised a conference, entitled “Identical to whom?”, as an open challenge to Veneto County Council.³ The conference was intended to both denounce and contest the Council’s attempts to institutionalise “civil rights” based exclusively on ethnicity and “racial” criteria rather than on citizenship. A few months earlier, in 2000, the Regional Council of the Veneto, one of the twenty administrative areas into which Italy is divided, had transformed its Cultural Committee (Assessorato alla Cultura) into the “Culture and Identity of the Veneto Committee” (Assessorato alle politiche per la cultura e l’identità veneta [AAPCIV]). The decision to change the name and the political direction of this Committee, which was, at that time, under the direction of a member of the Northern League, had broad cultural and political consequences. The “Regione Veneto” plays an executive role in directing educational programmes in primary and secondary schools and in funding research projects. Under the direction of the Northern League these activities were, and still are, focused on the

invention and construction of a specific “Veneto identity” through the sponsorship of conferences, folklore studies and historical re-enactments, and the publication of educational texts. Indeed, one of the first initiatives undertaken by the new Committee was the publication and distribution of a controversial historical text book entitled *We are Veneti. (Noi Veneti)* distributed in all primary and lower secondary schools in the region.⁴ The book was published in a period in which the relatively new phenomenon of immigration was having a noticeable effect in the region’s primary schools.⁵ At the official launch of the book, the head of the AAPCIV stated that his major hope was to see the Crucifix and the banner of Veneto displayed side by side in all classrooms of the region in the very near future. A research competition, focused on the “identity and the culture of Veneto”, was launched in schools with fifty winners sharing a significant prize of 250,000 euro.⁶

Another initiative organised by the AAPCIV was the Festival per la musica popolare dei veneti, a folk-music event. In rural and smaller urban areas in particular, popular and traditional songs ran alongside sponsorship of jousting re-enactments to elaborate and create a sense of a common belonging to the Veneto. Political and social songs were extrapolated from their historical context and emptied of their radical meaning to promote a less confrontational, more consensual identity.⁷

This approach to popular music was antithetic to that adopted in the 1960s and 1970s by the pioneering organisations Cantacronache (which included prominent intellectuals such as Franco Fortini, Italo Calvino, and Umberto Eco), and Il Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano (NCI), founded in 1962 by Gianni Bosio and Roberto Leydi and from which the Istituto Ernesto De Martino per la conoscenza critica e la presenza alternative del mondo popolare e proletario developed in 1966.⁸ These groups were devoted to researching the alternative and popular culture of the working classes, particularly through the discovery, collection and analysis of social and political songs in rural areas. Songs gave voice to the protest and the rebellion of the lower classes, and were an expression of a popular culture, independent from and antagonistic to that of “official” culture.⁹ This work was regarded as part of a militant activism, aimed at the discovery and investigation of the autonomous behaviour and consciousness of labour and the working classes. At the time, this research was disavowed by the Italian Communist Party, which was moving towards a policy of “national unity” with the Christian Democrats. The Communist Party was eager to find its legitimisation within “National” history, and mistrusted the local, systematic collections of documents that disclosed the spontaneous nature of much working class protest.¹⁰ In the first years of the 1960s, the

researchers of the NCI considered the study of economic and social changes in the rural areas of Italy indispensable in the development of a proper understanding of the formation of a “new” working class, and of the concurrent urban transformations caused by the rapid process of industrialisation. As a final outcome of their field work, the members of the NCI organised hundreds of musical performances and recorded large numbers of LPs, distributed by their record company I Dischi del Sole. The work of the NCI led to the creation of several similar regional and local organisations. In 1964, in Venice, Gualtiero Bertelli and Luisa Ronchini constituted the Nuovo Canzoniere Veneto (NCV). One of their first public performances was held during a strike against the dismissal of seven hundred workers at a metallurgic factory in Porto Marghera. The couple sang in front of the factory gates; first a folk song of the early twentieth century traditionally performed by rice weeders, then a new song composed by Bertelli directly inspired by the events that were occurring in that factory. The performance was recorded and played during workers’ two month occupation of the factory.¹¹

The explosion of social conflict in 1968–1969 shifted the focus of the activities of the NCI and the Istituto De Martino more specifically towards the larger towns and the working class. In accordance with their ideas about the organic relationship between the “intellectual” and the working class, and in order to document these conflicts, researchers of the Institute took an active part in political events and in the occupation of factories, universities and other institutions, interviewing and recording activists and other participants.¹²

Members of both NCI and the Istituto De Martino were active not only in the collection and study of radical and popular songs, but also in the composition and production of new ones. New and traditional songs were played in front of the gates of the factories during strikes, where they became a powerful means of communication and political propaganda. Most of the songs produced by NCI spread almost spontaneously to become the soundtrack of political demonstrations in the 1960s and 1970s.¹³ For some of those composers political songs came close to replacing the political leaflet. One worker involved in the strikes recalled how the presence of social and political songs within factories at this time was an important means of developing class consciousness and promoting a radical culture:

You know what? During a struggle there is nobody, I am saying nobody, who would dare to play anything, [...] apart from the *Red Flag*, nobody would dream to play, I do not know, *Cento rose per te...* If during a strike you dare to put on pop music, they beat you up. They beat you up because

the tension is so high that you need music and incitement ... like the *Marseillaise* ... it tells you that you have to fight, that you have to do something...¹⁴

Workers' identity in Porto Marghera: *First of August, Mestre '68*

The widespread diffusion of these songs reinforced a radical and class identity that was developing among workers particularly in the industrial districts of Northern Italy, such as Mestre and Marghera. The industrial area of Porto Marghera, located on the mainland west of Venice was planned and developed in the inter-war years on the initiative of Count Giuseppe Volpi di Misurata, industrialist and minister of finance under the Fascist regime.¹⁵ Venice City Council supported the enterprise and facilitated the construction in Marghera of a “garden city”—following the example of Letchworth in Hertfordshire—with the twofold aim of lightening the demographic pressure of industrialisation on Venice and housing the future cohorts of workers. Neither of these objectives was achieved. The belief that new workplaces would attract a considerable proportion of the dockyard men employed in the Arsenal (the shipyard) in Venice—traditionally one of the most radical sectors of the Venetian population—proved to be wrong. In fact, the majority of workers in Marghera did not come from Venice, but from the surrounding rural areas. Companies, bypassing legislation, recruited their workforce directly, looking especially to attract the tenant farmers, considered fittest for hard labour and most committed to work. For several years, the largest quota of manpower in Marghera, therefore, consisted of “peasant-workers” who maintained a fluctuating relationship between their farms (where they continued to live, without moving into the urban area of Mestre and Marghera) and the factories. This hampered the development of a collective identity amongst the workforce and any associated growth of radicalism, such as in Berlin or Turin, where urban structure, class segregation and the development of distinctive cultural and leisure organisations proved decisive in the construction of class consciousness and radicalism.¹⁶ In Porto Marghera perceived rural values such as submissiveness and respect for authority were reproduced in the paternalistic relationship established by employers with their labour force in a completely new working environment. This culture, combined with high levels of turn-over, guaranteed employers the availability of a peaceful working class during the fascist regime and in the post-war years.¹⁷ The influence of this rural culture on the relationship between

workers and employers persisted into the 1960s and 1970s. Its consequences in shaping the power relationship between shop foremen and chief supervisors in the workshops was vividly recollected by Germano Mariti, a leading militant activist in a medium size metallurgical factory in the 1970s and 1980s:

and then you found yourself working with all those religious people. Perhaps even good people, on personal grounds but they were fundamentally untrustworthy, because they worked in agreement with the bosses, with the foremen. Just to give an example, the Venetian who was living in Mestre or in the town did not have ... anything to exchange but his labour while those who came from the countryside, periodically, when they butchered the pig, for example, they took to the bosses, to the foremen: salami, sausages, some eggs... And so they were given authority and responsibilities...¹⁸

Augusto Finzi, one of the leaders of the extra parliamentary group Potere Operaio and for several years an activist at the Petrolchimico, entered the factory in the 1960s:

Suddenly the doors of hell opened in front of me ... There was an atmosphere of fear, of total submission, to a level of human degradation, towards the bosses, the petty bosses who, often, had previous military experience in the Salò Republic.¹⁹

In the peak period of the conflict of the 1970s, some of the “peasant-workers” adopted their own strategies to find alternative income in order to recover wages lost during the strikes, strategies that Mariti discovered only many years later. Some of his fellow workers enthusiastically recalled the hearty meals they used to have after working together as daily labourers in the fields, when picket lines or psychological pressure from colleagues made it impossible to access the factory during the strikes. Mariti retrospectively commented that this practice, although “politically incorrect”, indirectly helped the longevity of strikes by enabling some workers to return to alternative waged labour.

The influence exercised by the Church also maintained workers’ submission. A recommendation from the priest was often indispensable to finding employment in a factory. Mariti himself had to ask the priest of his parish to intercede for him, “as a Christian”, with the director of the factory before submitting his application when he was not yet eighteen. Moreover, for several decades, a private Catholic electro-technical school in Marghera represented the main recruitment centre for the factories in the area.

The development of a new radical identity among the working class in Marghera was therefore the result of a long process. Several factors contributed to its completion in the late 1960s. One of them was a generational change in the labour force with the injection of young workers from a different cultural background, particularly in the chemical sectors.²⁰ These young workers were keener to question their working conditions and the power relations in the factory, which had substantial effects when they mixed with older radical workers. Mariti remembered:

I was only thirty-three, thirty-four years old, but I was already an old worker. Culturally and physically I was at my peak and as an older worker I became immediately a point of reference. Because you were the one who gave confidence, you knew how to work, you were mature, physically strong, you know. And you inspired confidence and trust, when they found a worker willing to listen to them and to organise things together...²¹

The political input of the events of May 1968 in France and the students' mobilisations that followed; the persistent political propaganda of students and militants of left revolutionary groups such as Lotta Continua and Potere Operaio in front of the gates of the factories; dramatic events such as the massacres in Avola and Battipaglia, all contributed to the increase of radicalism and the development of a class consciousness.²² All these factors impacted on a national and international scale. At a local level the turning point in the collective recognition of a new identity among the working class in Marghera, not only as "workers" but also as "politically active" subjects, is generally traced to a demonstration held on 1 August 1968. For two months trade unions had been engaged in difficult collective bargaining at national level for the renewal of their contract with the chemical corporation Montedison, and several strikes had already taken place.²³ On 1 August, the directors of the Petrolchimico, the biggest chemical plant of the industrial area, announced a lockout. Immediately, the workers blocked all chemical factories in Porto Marghera and marched in their thousands toward Mestre to make their protest visible to the inhabitants of the city and to put pressure on employers and local authorities. During the demonstration they deviated from the main route and occupied Mestre rail station. Protesters resisted the charges from the police, who were eventually ordered to withdraw. The strikers maintained control of the rail station and stopped trains, a "victory" that made them consciously aware of their force.

Political songs of the period mirror these transformations and emphasise the links between radical cultures and local identities among workers. During an interview, when recollecting the events of that

demonstration, Mariti started immediately singing the first lines of a song, *I August Mestre 68* written by Gualtiero Bertelli in 1968. The significance of the occupation of the rail station and the successful resistance to the challenge from police forces are the core of the lyric.

At home with no voice, and with
our hands
dirty because of the stones we
picked up from the platforms;
once again, after a long time,
I felt armed and not defenceless
against our historical enemies.

You tried to find
the derision and the coldness on
the faces
of those who charged you many
times:
“Fascist police, do come on”
an unknown anger and strength.

August the 1st, Mestre, 1968:
five thousand of us at the train
station,
three hundred policemen in front
ready to shoot as usual
to defend my boss.

You swear to yourself
that you will never give up
even if you can't forget that fear
of the blows and of the guns
that you felt too many times.

We were shouting: “Down with
Edison!”
And then: “Montecatini
assassin!”:
your weapons are lined up there,
bosses, but this time you are afraid
of us
because we are many, too many
for you.

And while we were waiting for
you,
servants of our exploiters,
you finally withdrew,
overwhelmed, this time,
by the fear of being attacked.

If this is violence, boss,
we have forgotten your legality:
only your violence is authorised:
to that we oppose unity.

With no illusions,
day by day, with no more fear,
man after man, the fight is being
born:
our liberation will be made
by many August the 1st;
our revolution will be made
by many August the 1st.

However, concepts of workers' identity and radical culture within the labour force were not unanimous. In the late 1960s, young employees brought new forms of identity into the factories which differed profoundly from those of their working class representatives. In the post-war years up to 1967–68 the ethic of work had been the main factor in constructing workers' identity. It defined them both as individuals and as a class. The dignity and pride of the labour force originated from their work. This was

particularly the case for the skilled workers who constituted the core of the Communist and Socialist Parties. Workers shared the belief that the country and the whole society were only running thanks to their activity; the ruling classes were regarded as profiteers and parasites. Practices of self-management and occupation of factories were legitimised by this set of beliefs and aimed to demonstrate to the employers and the whole society that workers had the knowledge and the skills to run and manage factories autonomously. This idea of work was deeply rooted in the trade unions as well; in times of negotiations their claims sought and were based on the recognition of competence, precision and quality with which work was accomplished.²⁴ These ideas are still traceable among old retired workers, as evidenced by some of the interviews carried out by Laura Cerasi.²⁵

However, in the 1970s a new generation of employees not only failed to recognise itself in this mind-set but disputed its very root. A number of factors contributed to this transformation. Among the most significant was the introduction of large-scale assembly line production and the subsequent emergence of the “mass worker”.²⁶ Repetitiveness, time constraints, and alienation made it impossible for masses of unskilled workers to identify themselves with life in the factory.²⁷

Gualtiero Bertelli, one of the founders of NCV shows the beginning of this transformation by denouncing the alienation of working conditions in a song recorded in 1967:

You will see how wonderful... (Gualtiero Bertelli)

I was fifteen years old when they
told me
To study electrical engineering
It's a safe degree
Future guarantee

With that piece of paper
You will never have problems
You will never have masters
You will always have your job

You will see how wonderful
It will be working with pleasure
In a dream factory
All light and freedom!

Everything I studied
does not help here
It does not matter a damn
What you wish to do

The most important right
Is the assembly line
Way and times of work
Every day, every hour

Here the time does not exist
There is not space for people
Here one moves with the
machines
And does not talk about
freedom

I was fifteen when they told me
 Do the specialisation
 It is important in the factory
 You will do the job that you like

Your freedom
 Stays behind the gates
 You can find it again
 In your home

I did it, and at twenty years old
 I get my degree
 And in a company training course
 They even round me off

You will see how wonderful
 It will be working with pleasure
 In a dream factory
 All light and freedom!

You will see how wonderful...

The refusal of work from the factories to the district

In the late 1960s, the Comitato Operaio di Porto Marghera (COPM), an organisation with connections to the extra parliamentary groups of the New Left, particularly “Potere Operaio” (Workers’ Power) and “Lotta Continua” (Continuous Struggle), which developed into the Assemblée Autonoma in 1972, became a main actor in the industrial conflict in Porto Marghera. The COPM played a leading role in the struggles within the biggest factory in Marghera, the Petrolchimico.²⁸ Its innovatory objectives and practices undermined the hegemony of both trade union organisations and of the Italian Communist Party.²⁹ In 1969, the COPM published a document theorising the strategy of refusing work³⁰ which represented a decisive shift not only for subsequent political outcomes, but also in the construction of the identity and the culture of factory workers. This document raised the question of the use of science and technology by capitalist forces to exercise political control over the working class. It argued that science was not neutral and that technological advancements were only applied to systems of production to increase productivity and to maintain control over the working class. Workers had to impose a different use of scientific and technological advancements in order to reduce working time until they achieved a total release from the need to work. The destruction of the capitalist system would not be achieved by the seizure of power and the elimination of private property, but through the destruction of the relations of production and the elimination of the necessity to work in order to make a living.³¹ According to this analysis, working time and salary would become two independent variables: reduction of the former did not have to imply a reduction of the latter.

Within the factories, the campaign for the reduction of working time that arose from this theory of the refusal of work became strongly connected with campaigns against pollution and dangerous working

conditions. In the 1970s the collective bargaining undertaken by the COPM alongside other extra-parliamentary organisations focused on the reduction of working time rather than on wage increases or the granting of particular allowances for employees working in dangerous environments.

In Mariti's workshop, the workers succeeded in reducing their working time by two hours a day without any cut in pay. However, they were unable to extend this victory to the rest of the factory, and restrictions were placed on their newly-won free time, which had to be spent in the factory where they organised their own cultural activities such as games, cards, massages and readings. The struggle against dangerous working conditions at the Petrolchimico, the most dangerous chemical factory in Marghera, proved extremely controversial. There, the contradictions between pollution, workers' safety, preservation of employment, and the relationship with the factory's surrounding environment remained unresolved, with dramatic consequences. Although CVM, the factory's main product, had been known to be carcinogenic since the early 1970s, the factory had no proper systems in place to safeguard workers' health, and hundreds died from tumours as a result of their exposure to it. In 2006, after a lengthy trial, Montedison was found guilty of manslaughter and ordered to pay compensation to the families of the victims.³² Nonattendance at work became a generalised form of defence against the unsafe conditions, and at the same time, a way for workers to liberate themselves. According to Mariti, absenteeism reached peaks of 27% in his factory in 1976. The Assemblea Autonoma distributed a booklet among the workers of Porto Marghera discussing absenteeism as a form of political action and giving instructions as to how it should be practised.³³

In May 1974, the Assemblea Autonoma's journal *Rosso* republished the COPM's treatise on the refusal of work. This idea had already spread from the factories into different sections of society, with important implications for radical and confrontational behaviour, especially among the younger generations. The culture of refusing work became one of the main characteristics of Italian social movements in the final decades of the twentieth century.³⁴ From the early 1970s, large numbers of young people entered different forms of informal economic activity, becoming small traders or devising other systems of self-employment in order to avoid becoming wage-earners for as long as possible. Illegal strategies or those bordering on legality were adopted to avoid paying bills, and for procuring food, clothes and travel tickets. Systems to forge train, cinema and concert tickets, shopping vouchers and official documents were invented and diffused as part of this process.³⁵

The 1970s saw the peak of an economic crisis which resulted in the dismissal of thousands of workers and galloping inflation that eroded all economic gains obtained hitherto. As a consequence, forms of direct action extended from the factories into surrounding locales, and a plethora of local collectives and residents' associations formed. Several groups practiced forms of civil disobedience and direct action in their districts following the example of the struggle in the factories. One participant recalled how "as far as we were concerned this...was part of the struggle that arrived from the factory into the district: for our requirements, for our needs..."³⁶

In various ways and with different degrees of participation, several thousand inhabitants of Marghera, Mestre and Venice became involved in these political initiatives in which the link between radical culture and local identities played a major role. Local collectives dealt with a large spectrum of social problems including housing, welfare, unemployment, women's rights, education and environmental issues. One of the major initiatives organised by local collectives in the province of Venice was an autonomous reduction in the cost of electricity that had increased by 40% in 1973 alone. Leaflets were distributed in the town with detailed instructions regarding the calculation of reduced bills.³⁷ In 1974, the *Assemblea Autonoma* introduced this form of struggle into the factories of Porto Marghera to defend the real value of wages. The collection of bills was centralised in the *Petrolchimico* factory. This form of action obtained widespread support, and more than 15,000 bills were self-reduced in the province of Venice.³⁸ This was a struggle that linked radical conflicts in the district with those in the factories.³⁹ Another initiative, organised by local groups with the active participation of the inhabitants of the quarters of Mestre and Marghera, was the fight to obtain basic products at low costs through the practice of "shopping strikes". Picket-lines were organised in front of the supermarkets, with the participation of retired people, housewives and workers, to impose reductions in the price of basic commodities. A list of fifty products was drawn up and their prices negotiated with supermarket managers. Afterwards private citizens were encouraged to check on the prices⁴⁰

In the second half of the 1970s, housing became a central issue in the political struggles in Venice and Mestre. In 1978 the rent of council properties tripled and a few hundred families in Marghera refused to pay the increase and self reduced their rents. The same year the *Comitato per il diritto alla casa* was set up to counter the surge of evictions in Mestre and Venice caused by a law regulating private sector rents in these districts. In

the city centre of Venice the struggle focused on the occupation of empty houses and in stopping the eviction of families and their relocation to the mainland.⁴¹ The practice of preventing evictions by stopping bailiffs and the police entering houses became commonplace and was deeply rooted in the radical culture of the population. Such activities inspired a large number of radical songs that accompanied the struggle in the districts of Venice and Mestre as they had done in the factories. One song that entered into the consciousness of the radical and popular culture of the area was composed by Alberto D'Amico, a member of NCV, and it is still sung at popular political festivals or demonstrations to the present day.

Giudecca (Alberto D'Amico)

Our neglected Giudecca
twenty years of fights and exploitation
but now the time has arrived
To say "enough!" and to change.

The schools with rats
the houses without loos
and when you collapse on the bed
You always dream of working

The kids get hepatitis
in the mud of the Giudecca
Cipriani eats steak
And he wants to evict us from our houses

The people who work wear out
At Eriunx, in the dockyards at the Jungans
If you strike
the police give you black eyes

Countesses organised after school activities
with face powder and chocolate
the bosses' Pro Giudecca cheated the giudecchini

Students, women, workers
we have occupied the after-school
let the Prefect come and the policemen
We will not move, we will stay here!

Our neglected Giudecca
twenty years of fights and exploitation
the time has arrived
To say "enough!" and to change...

Conclusions

By the early 1980s crises in left wing politics in Italy, augmented by the contraction of political space caused by terrorism and reactive state repression, brought about widespread depoliticisation and a return to the private sphere. For more than a decade the Istituto De Martino suffered a drastic reduction in its activities. It was only at the beginning of the 1990s that the first hints of a revival of interest in political songs appeared. A new generation of highly politicised music bands (rap, hip hop, “posse”) found their cultural background in the national network of occupied social centres, “centri sociali”, that sprouted after the occupation of Italian universities (the movement known as *la Pantera*, “the Panther”) in the winter of 1989. In Venice and Marghera, this had two dynamic and fertile outcomes.⁴² In 1992 and 1993 in Turin and Venice for the first time some of the most famous “posse” played together with singers of the NCI in an attempt to create an encounter between “traditional” and new political music bands.

In the most recent period, in Venice and Mestre the use of political and social songs has developed into a different form of cultural production that, particularly with the works of Bertelli, combines music and theatre to diffuse concepts and ideas which openly contest those promoted by the Northern League.

The political use made by the Northern League of social and traditional songs is aimed at reinforcing a supposed local identity in direct contrast to the “other” (particularly immigrants) in defence of what is defined as “our [local] tradition”, “our history”, and at encouraging northerners to rediscover “their roots” and “identity”. Social songs are not used by the League to challenge power, but to state to whom one should give obedience through normalising the present social and economic system as “natural” and “traditional”. Ultimately, the message conveyed is that the population of Veneto has more in common and more values to share with a mythical “paleo-veneto” than with new citizens represented by foreign migrant workers.⁴³

The works of Bertelli, and of other theatrical companies that are similarly inspired by musical traditions from the past, look at previous and present social conditions in a different way: for example, by reconstructing exploitations, prejudices and persecutions suffered by Italian migrants in the past.⁴⁴

The district of Mestre, together with Turin and Milan, was at the core of the conflict that shook Italian society in the 1970s. The concentration of chemical factories in the industrial area of Porto Marghera was a magnet

for political and militant activism. However, social conflicts were not confined to labour struggles within the workplace. A multitude of organisations disseminated the protests into local districts as well. The extension and propagation of these forms of antagonism cannot be explained only in terms of political militancy. This analysis cannot be limited to political aims and economic disputes, but needs to transcend to social and cultural fields; it needs to investigate, for example, not only the ways in which political songs became a shared heritage among militants, but also their role in the development of new forms of language and communication (i.e. the phenomenon of “free radios” in the late 1970s) and their relationship to more “commercial” songs and music.⁴⁵ Indeed, Mestre and Porto Marghera are an ideal case study through which the relationship and the mutual influences between social conflict, radicalism, and local identities can be examined. However, research on the subject has hitherto focused primarily on industrial relations and on collective bargaining within the factories in Porto Marghera or on the personal experiences of leading political militants. There are promising fields of investigation to be undertaken in order to disentangle the complex relationships between the conflicts in the factories in Porto Marghera, and those that developed in the district, in order to understand if and how conflictual behaviours became part of a “collective” rather than of a “militant” identity, and to discover the mutual influences that shaped and transformed radical and local identities within and outside work places in the 1970s.

Notes

¹ In the constituency of Venice for the Camera the major centre-left party gained 44.2%, the right coalition 40.2%. The total aggregate for the Veneto region was 55% for the centre-right, against 30% for the centre-left.

² On the relationship between social identities and political cultures: A. Cento Bull, *Social identities and political cultures in Italy: Catholic, Communist and Leghist communities between civicness and localism* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000).

³ P. Brunello and L. Pes, eds, *Identici a chi? Contro L'Assessorato alle politiche per la cultura e l'identità veneta*, Quaderno n. 4 Osservatorio Veneto (2002).

⁴ M. Cortelazzo, *Noi Veneti. Viaggio nella storia e nella cultura veneta* (Verona: Cierre Edizioni, 2001).

⁵ In 2000, 13% of the total of immigrant students in Italy were residing in Veneto.

⁶ P. Brunello, “Romper il cerimoniale”, in *A rivista anarchica*, 286 (December 2002–January 2003), 16–18.

⁷ Conversation with C. Bermani, 10 October 2008.

⁸ C. Bermani, *Una Storia Cantata. 1962–1997: trentacinque anni di attività del Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano/Istituto Ernesto De Martino* (Milan: Jaca Books 1997).

⁹ C. Bermani, *Guerra guerra ai palazzi e alle chiese. Saggi sul canto sociale* (Rome: Odradek, 2003).

¹⁰ C. Bermani and S. Bologna, “Soggettività e storia del movimento operaio”, in *Il Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano. La Soggettività Antagonista* 4–5 (1977): 7–36.

¹¹ Bermani, *Una Storia cantata*, 65–66.

¹² G. Bosio, *L’Intellettuale rovesciato* (Milan: Edizioni del Gallo, 1967). The activities of the Istituto De Martino contributed greatly to the introduction of oral history in Italy.

¹³ C. Bermani, *Una Storia Cantata*, 111. See also P. Pietrangeli, “Gli anni cantati”, in M. Ghirelli, *‘68. Vent’anni dopo* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1988), 194–200. For example, *Contessa* by Paolo Pietrangeli, *Cara Moglie* by Ivan Della Mea, *I treni per Reggio Emilia* by Fausto Amodei.

¹⁴ “Uso del suono nella lotta proletaria. Conversazione tra Luigi Non, Giovanni Pirelli e due operai torinesi”, in *Il Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano*, Terza serie, 2 (1975): 53.

¹⁵ On the constitution of Marghera, see C. Chinello, *Porto Marghera, 1902–1926. Alle origini del problema di Venezia* (Venice: Marsilio, 1979); R. Petri, *La zona industriale di Marghera 1919–1939. Un’analisi quantitativa dello sviluppo tra le due guerre* (Venice: Quaderni centro tedesco di studi veneziani, 1985).

¹⁶ M. Gribaudi, *Mondo operaio e mito operaio. Spazi e percorsi operai a Torino nel primo Novecento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1987); D. Geary, “Beer and Skittles? Workers and Culture in Early Twentieth-Century Germany”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 46.3 (2000): 388–402.

¹⁷ F. Piva, *Contadini in fabbrica. Il caso Marghera: 1920–1945* (Rome: Edizioni Lavoro, 1991).

¹⁸ P. Di Paola, *Lavoro, nocività, lotte di fabbrica. Esperienze di autonomia operaia all’AMMI di Porto Maghera, 1969–1980* (Tesi di laurea, Università di Ca’ Foscari, (1997): 31–32.

¹⁹ A. Grandi, *La generazione degli anni perduti, Storie di Potere Operaio* (Turin: Einaudi, 2003), 29. See also the documentary by M. Pellarin, *Marghera: gli ultimi fuochi* (Controcampo produzioni, 2004).

²⁰ F. Donaggio, *In fabbrica ogni giorno tutti i giorni* (Verona: Bertani Editore, 1977), 24–25.

²¹ P. Di Paola, *Lavoro, nocività, lotte di fabbrica*, 233–234.

²² In December 1968 two day-labourers were killed by the police during a strike in Avola. Four months later another two workers were killed in Battipaglia.

²³ See C. Chinello, *Sindacato, PCI, movimenti negli anni sessanta. Porto Marghera-Venezia 1955–1970* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1996), vol. 2, 616–640.

²⁴ P. Tripodi, “L’ultima rivoluzione (con appunti per la prossima)”, in S. Bianchi and L. Caminiti, eds, *Gli autonomi. Le storie, le lotte, le teorie* (Rome: Deriveapprodi, 2007, vol. 1, 51.

²⁵ L. Cerasi, *Perdonare Marghera. La città del lavoro nella memoria post-industriale* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2007).

²⁶ See M. Revelli, *Lavorare in Fiat* (Milan: Garzanti 1989); N. Balestrini and P. Moroni, *L'orda d'oro. 1968–1977. La grande ondata rivoluzionaria e creativa, politica ed esistenziale* (Milan: SugarCo, 1988).

²⁷ G. Girardi, ed., *Coscienza Opeai oggi. I nuovi comportamenti operai in una ricerca gestita dai lavoratori* (Bari: De Donato, 1980), 127–188.

²⁸ For the Comitato Operaio of Porto Marghera, see A. Grandi, *La Generazione degli anni Perduti*, 127–128.

²⁹ Some documentation in C. Perna, *Classe, sindacato, operaismo al Petrolchimico di Porto Marghera* (Rome: Editrice Sindacale Italiana, 1980).

³⁰ I. Sbrogiò, *Tuberi e pan secco* (Venice: Il poligrafo, 1990).

³¹ Comitato Operaio di Porto Marghera, *Il rifiuto del lavoro* (1969), Centro di Documentazione di Storia Locale Marghera, *Archivio Operaio Augusto Finzi*.

³² G. Bortolozzo, *L'erba ha voglia di vita* (Mestre-Venice: Associazione Bortolozzo, 1998); G. Bettin and M. Dianese, *Petrokiller* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2002); N. Benatelli, G. Favarato and E. Trevisan, *Processo a Marghera* (Portogruaro: Associazione Bortolozzo, 2002).

³³ G. Sbrogiò, “L’Assemblea autonoma di Porto Marghera”, in S. Bianchi and L. Caminiti, eds, *Gli autonomi*, 233.

³⁴ N. Balestrini and P. Moroni, *L'orda d'oro*, 426.

³⁵ P. Tripodi, “Gli autonomi”, 54.

³⁶ Oral interview Gianni Sbrogiò, P. Di Paola, *Lavoro, nocività, lotte di fabbrica*, 189.

³⁷ Collettivo Autonomo Villaggio San Marco, “Parità normativa con i padroni”, leaflet, 16 April 1973.

³⁸ Comitato Autoriduzione Ammi, *Lavoratori dell’AMMI*, leaflet, 18 February 1974.

³⁹ Coordinamento dei Comitati per l’autoriduzione Venezia-Mestre-Marghera, *Autoriduzione: prima vittoria!*, leaflet, 23 December 1974. At the end of 1974, the national trade unions that initially had opposed this practice, forced by the extension of the movement for self-reduction, obtained from the government a lowering of the cost of electricity.

⁴⁰ G. Sbrogiò, “L’Assemblea autonoma di Porto Marghera”, in S. Bianchi and L. Caminiti, eds, *Gli autonomi*, 236.

⁴¹ Comitato Per il Diritto Alla Casa Venezia-Mestre, *Dal Blocco degli sfratti alle occupazioni* (Venice, 1981). London School of Economics and Political Science Archive, *Red Notes*, RN 653.

⁴² In Venice, the Centro Sociale “Morion”; in Marghera, the Centro Sociale Occupato “Rivolta!”. On this experience see N. Montagna, *Questioning while walking. The ‘disobedient movement’ and the Centro Sociale Rivolta in Italy* (PhD thesis, Middlesex University, 2005).

⁴³ P. Brunello, “Identità a Nord-Est”, *A Rivista Anarchica* 273 (2001), 35–36.

⁴⁴ See the performance “L’Orda”, organised in collaboration with G. A. Stella, the author of the book, *L’Orda. Quando gli albanesi eravamo noi* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2003).

⁴⁵ U. Eco, *Apocalypse postponed*, ed. R. Lumley (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).