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# Progetto Rialto: Urban History, Life and the Future



Progetto Rialto (<https://www.progettorialto.org/>) is a ground-breaking project. It gathers distinguished scholars, who disseminate their knowledge, as well as citizens living and working in Venice, all working towards the same goal: to preserve the inherited quality of urban life and to deliver it to future generations.

The heart of the project is Professor Donatella Calabi, whose academic achievements are recognized worldwide, and are too extensive to be listed here. However, the two most important aspects of her work should be emphasised: her teaching work as a professor at IUAV University in Venice and her supervising work as the Co-PI of the project *Visualising Venice*. Through both, she has educated many generations of scholars around the globe. Now, with Progetto Rialto, she has been gathering institutions and academics with whom she has been collaborating for decades, as well as fellow citizens with whom she has been sharing everyday life in Venice and its lagoon. The goal of the project is to strengthen the collaboration between public and private entities for a better understanding of the history and the present state of the merchant area of the Rialto, with the aim of revitalizing it successfully. Its second goal is the foundation of a museum where the importance of Venice on the global market throughout the centuries would be displayed, along with visualizations of its urban development and changes. The museum would also serve as a gathering point

for discussions on the preservation of the urban life that many cities are struggling for and as an educational centre where the best ideas and practices would be disseminated.

The institutions supporting the project are Università IUAV and Ca' Foscari di Venezia, Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Dipartimento Beni Culturali dell'Università di Padova, Accademia di Belle Arti, Ateneo Veneto, Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, Fondazione Cini, Associazione degli Artigiani and La Confederazione Nazionale dell'Artigianato e della Piccola e Media Impresa.

With the collaboration of the Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia, a series of public lectures was held. The first lecture was delivered by Donatella Calabi, introducing the project and emphasizing the importance of Venice as a historical global market and the impact that it had on the urban community and quality of life. It was followed by lectures by distinguished academics, highlighting multiple topics relating to Venice's rich urban history: Maurice Aymard (EHESS), Deborah Howard (U of Cambridge), Luca Molà (U of Warwick), Anna Bellavitis (U de Rouen-Normandie), Luciano Pezzolo (Ca'Foscari), Ludovica Galeazzo (I Tatti-The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies), Elena Svalduz (U di Padova), Mauro Bondioli (Ars Nautica-Institute for Maritime Heritage, Tkon), Gian Maria Varanini (Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Venezie), Gianmario Guidarelli (U di Padova), Giulio Manieri Elia (Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia), Gabriele Matino and Paolo

Lucchetta. Due to the pandemic, the lectures were transferred from in-person events to online events on the Zoom platform, but they are all recorded and available on the project's website.

In April 2021 a book entitled *Venezia 1576, la peste—una drammatica cronaca del Cinquecento*, edited by Donatella Calabi, Luca Molà, Simone Rauch and Elena Svalduz was published and launched online, reminding us of another pandemic that the city had successfully tackled. Another book by Donatella Calabi soon followed: *Venezia è viva e chiede aiuto*, published by Liana Levi. The book further promotes the efforts of the project. The other activities of the Progetto Rialto have been well presented in the video *A Historical Journey in the 'Rialto Market Place' (The Past—The Present—The Future)*, produced under the scholarly direction of Elena Svalduz. The video uncovers a 3D model of the old Rialto bridge, made by Mirka Dalla Longa, taking us back in time and revealing the changes that this urban area underwent. It also introduces us to the Venetians who are still working in the vicinity of the Rialto, and who are determined to preserve the knowledge of their arts and crafts as well as caring for the spaces they use - their stores. They are Marina and Susanna Sent, glass artists, Stefano and Daniele Attombri, designers, and Iginio Mascari, who runs an enoteca. A special role is played by Andrea Vio, the owner of the *banco di pesce*. Selling fresh fish and seafood, which was caught that very night in the lagoon, he cherishes the tradition of his

ancestors by providing quality food to Venice's citizens, as well as offering popular recipes on the project's website under the section entitled *Dal banco alla tavola*. Furthermore, Andrea Vio is a member of the project's Steering Committee, and is highly active in persuading the city government to act promptly for the sake of Venice.

All these efforts, experiences and knowledge are further disseminated, aiming at educating young scholars to understand the importance of the preservation of Venetian urban life, to learn how to act and further develop new methods, as well as to create a global network of academics and citizens in order to preserve keep inherited urban sites of value around the world.

The international summer school Market Spaces, Production Sites, and the Sound Landscape of European Cities: From History to Regeneration was held in 2020–2021. It consisted of two intensive three-day meetings in September and March, and attendees' activities in between. Although it was meant to be partly held in person, due to the pandemic it took place only online.

The September part started with an introductory lecture by Donatella Calabi, where participants learned about the history and problems of the Venetian Rialto Market as well as the methodology needed to address the challenges of historic markets in modern times. Several case studies of historic markets or contemporary renovations of markets were presented: Marcus Binney (Save Europe's Heritage) and Sharon

Ament on Smithfield Market, which is now the Museum of London; Peter Stabel (U Antwerpen) set an example for the cities of the Hanseatic League; Natacha Coquery (U Lyon 2) presented on 18th-century Parisian markets; Soléne Rivoal (U de Tours) spoke of Venice and Toulouse; and Umberto Montano (Mercato Centrale) on the markets of Florence, Turin, and Milan. Since the emphasis of the summer school was placed on Venice, the lectures also dealt with the history of the city. Deborah Howard contextualized trade with the East; Luca Molà provided insight into the art of luxury in Venice; Laura Moretti (U of St. Andrews) discussed the art trade in 16th century Venice; Anna Bellavitis (U Rouen) talked about women, work, and trade in early modern Venice, and Simone Sfriso (U of Portsmouth) spoke of Venice as a city of commons. It was also necessary to consider the modern tourist context, so we learned from Nicola Orio (U di Padova) about 'smart tourism' and its advantages and disadvantages, and Ludovica Galeazzo showed us how to use modern technologies to present the historical context of a space.

The participants had to translate the information they obtained about the history of the markets in the first part of the summer school, including the problems and possibilities of individual localities, into solutions for specific spaces and tasks for the second part of the summer school. A total of 31 participants from Europe, North and South America and Asia were divided into six groups and developed their

solutions from September to March, when the second part of the summer school took place.

In addition to the presentation of the works, in the second part of the summer school, Elena Svalduz spoke about the relationship between architecture and trade in Venice and Padua; Andrea Caracausi (U di Padova) on sites of production; Martina Massaro (U di Padova) took us through the past, present, and future of the Rialto Market; Paolo Zavagna (Conservatorio di Musica “Benedetto Marcello” di Venezia) presented the project *Venezia Soundmap*; Nuria Schoenberg Nono and Roberto Calabretto (U di Udine) gave the introduction to Olivier Mille’s 1988 film *Archipel Luigi Nono*; Giulio Manieri Ellia and Roberta Battaglia (both from Gallerie dell’Accademia) took us on a virtual tour through the Gallerie dell’Accademia, and Giovanni Caniato (Archivio di Stato di Venezia) showed us the tools used in the archive.

Six groups of participants presented their solutions. The first group proposed an urban regeneration project for the Rialto Market in Venice and the second group for the main ‘piazze’ in Padua. The third group of participants explored the possibilities of a museum in the Rialto Market, while the fourth group worked on a virtual space project in collaboration with the ‘Progetto Rialto’. The fifth group proposed a project on Venetian arts and crafts history, and the sixth group worked on a draft exhibition entitled *The 19th-Century Projects for the Rialto Pescheria (i.e., Fishmarket)*. The participants in the summer school were architects, art historians,

historians, anthropologists, graphic designers, brand designers, etc., so the six solutions were extremely interdisciplinary, which added extra value to the entire program. Each participant approached the problem from their professional point of view and incorporated their solutions into a joint project.

This summer school showed once again how useful international networking and interdisciplinary collaboration is. Participants from different countries and with different professions had the opportunity to listen to lectures by distinguished academics and experts from different fields and different international institutions and connect. By getting acquainted with the problems of historical markets located on sites of global significance such as the Rialto Market in Venice, participants learned about the history of markets and the methodology for their renewal, which provided an opportunity to transfer knowledge and experience to their communities. ✕

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