LIFE IN MODERN VENICE: 
THE EFFECTS OF TOURISM ON THE VENETIAN MIDDLE CLASS

BY

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A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN LIBERAL STUDIES

May 2011

Winston-Salem, North Carolina

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Peter Kairoff for serving as my advisor on this thesis. His guidance, suggestions of resources, and editing assistance were greatly appreciated. In addition, I am grateful to Dr. Kairoff for teaching the course that piqued my interest in this topic and afforded me the opportunity to travel to Venice and reside at Casa Artom, an experience deeply enriched by Dr. Kairoff’s unparalleled knowledge of Venice and his ability to share this knowledge so effectively with his students.

I would also like to thank Dr. Monique O’Connell and Prof. Jason Goddard for their willingness to serve on my thesis committee, Dr. Martha Swann, for her assistance and enlightenment on qualitative analysis, Dr. Aaron Butler, for his time and encouragement, Wanda Duncan, for her support and assistance over the years, and to all my professors and classmates in the MALS program, each of whom has contributed in some way to this work.
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The Republic of Venice originated approximately 1500 years ago, and lasted until it fell to the Napoleonic Army in 1797. Throughout this long history, Venetian culture has been unique, and was admired and imitated throughout the world. This study considers the present effect of the tourist industry on the culture and traditions of the modern Venetian middle class.

An understanding of how Venetian culture developed leads to a better understanding of the city today and a better appreciation of the idea of the “city museum”. Venetian culture can be identified in architecture, religion, art, music, and pageantry - all things that have contributed to the city’s unique status as a destination to be experienced throughout history. This culture has been supported by the labor and traditions of the middle class.

This analysis of the relationship between tourism and the Venetian middle class reveals the important role tourism has played in the development of Venetian culture as well as its impact on its present condition.
INTRODUCTION

As a major port city geographically placed at the crossroads of the East and West, Venice did not simply exist on the edge of two worlds, it thrived. The Venetians became masters of not only their lagoon but the Adriatic Sea as well. This rich maritime tradition brought the Republic of Venice much wealth, and their success was evident in their culture and pageantry. The excessive use of the extraordinary was an everyday occurrence in ceremonies, style of dress, music, art, and almost every aspect of Venetian life. Sumptuary laws were in place to curb some of this zeal, but did little to curb Venice’s reputation as a destination to experience without restraint. These unique characteristics shaped an empire that was envied by the world and remained untouchable until Napoleon’s army conquered the republic at the end of the 18th century.

Venetian culture today is based on this history of triumph, wealth, ingenuity, and success. The current Venetian economic condition is much different from that of the 18th century; the era of poverty ushered in by Napoleon’s army had dramatic ramifications on the culture of the city. Venice lost its wealth but it did not lose the high costs associated with age. In an endless cycle of decay and repair, the city today needs a major restoration, the costs of which are staggering.

Years of economic decline have been aggravated by major environmental issues. The industrialization of the mainland and the resulting rapid settling of the lagoon floor have caused a recurrence of high tides called acqua altas which result in periodic flooding of the city. The overwhelming financial resources needed to stabilize the city
geologically are only part of the story. There is another, no less devastating change occurring as well, the loss of the city’s middle class.

Has Venice lost its wealth or simply become more costly to maintain? In a city of such antiquity, had not problems of restoration been encountered before? Was Venice truly in decline or simply in an ongoing cycle of re-birth? Was the apparent over run of Venice by tourists truly a new plague? Hadn’t the city always been a major port with a huge percentage of its population on any given day consisting of travelers and tourists? What are the numbers behind these observations, opinions, and ideas; what is a true empirical fact sheet of Venice today? What trends can be identified by comparing these numbers to those of its past? What conclusions can thus be drawn about its future? These are the questions that drove my study, with particular focus as to how their answers reveal the effect tourism in Venice has had upon the Venetian middle class.

My research is exploratory and descriptive; thus my research approach is qualitative rather than quantitative. While quantitative research seeks to confirm hypotheses, its measurements are usually more rigid and its use of questions highly structured. Research design in a quantitative study is consistent from beginning to end, and deviations into other topics that might arise during the study are not allowed. Qualitative research, on the other hand, uses academic research to confirm conclusions based on observation. Qualitative research also seeks to answer questions through the collection of data and evidence, reaching conclusions not predicted in advance, and can thus reveal findings the original study did not predict.

Qualitative research traditionally attempts to uncover the ‘why’, not the ‘how’ of its topic. It is extremely useful and appropriate to use qualitative research to gain insight
into individuals’ or groups’ attitudes, behavior, value systems, culture or lifestyles, for this insight contributes to overall academic knowledge and understanding. Qualitative research is about exploring issues, understanding changing conditions, and uncovering attitudes and beliefs. Another benefit of this research method is that it is flexible, and therefore allows an observer to explore topics that arise during the research that were not envisioned before the data collection began. As such, a qualitative approach is the chosen research methodology used for my study of the Venetian middle class.

My research approach utilizes a common element in any qualitative study, namely Participant Observation. Direct Observation is useful and necessary when one seeks to collect data on a naturally occurring event or behavior in its usual day to day context.

While my study into the middle class of Venice, and the modern changes it is currently encountering can be quantified, there is more to the story than just statistics. The human element must be explored in depth. I seek to uncover the often contradictory behaviors, beliefs, and opinions of the Venetian middle class in the midst of its struggle with its past and its welcoming embrace of technology and modernity.

Travel to Venice and participation in a Venetian study tour in June of 2010 was the crux of my research. Learning, seeing, and experiencing the culture with my own eyes and documenting this through photography and then applying scholarly research to endorse my findings is the prevalent model used in this paper. All photographs in this paper were taken by and are the sole property of the author. The unique resources available to participants in the Wake Forest Venice program allow for an in-depth understanding and analysis of the Venetian culture. My stay at Casa Artom, situated in the heart of Venice on the Grand Canal, afforded me this opportunity, complete with a
professor in residence and guided tours encompassing almost every aspect of Venetian
culture.
CHAPTER 1
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE VENETIAN MIDDLE CLASS

The Venetian middle class did much to contribute to the advancement of Venetian culture over time. Indeed, for any culture to sustainably progress and grow a healthy and vibrant middle class must exist. Arguably the backbone of society, middle class is defined by Webster's Third New International Dictionary as

a class achieving prominence in modern times during the transition from a medieval to a modern economy and constitutes a grouping of people (as artisans, independent farmers, tradesmen, and lesser officials) between the hereditary nobility on the one hand and the laborers and peasants on the other.

The middle class of Venice did achieve prominence during Europe's transition from medieval society to a modern one; all of Venice achieved prominence. A society of traders and craftsmen, the majority of Venetians did not belong to the upper class aristocracy nor to the lower classes, which consisted of various foreigners that Venice segregated from larger society. Being a port city with an economy centered on trade, the Venetian middle class included shipbuilders, merchants, and artisans who contributed to this vibrant economy.

Dating back over 1,500 years, Venice has survived when many other empires have fallen. It has survived plagues, inquisitions, and numerous attempts at invasion. Perhaps even more remarkably, Venice maintained her reputation as a haven for artists, book printers, and followers of religions outside of conventional Catholicism throughout the pre-Renaissance period of European history when very few countries or cultures tolerated any artistic or academic expression outside the status quo dictated by Papal law. These unique ties to printing and religious tolerance stand out as remarkable examples of the
Venetian's long-standing tradition to embrace free thought and go against mainstream religious views determined by Rome and supported by the rest of Europe.

There were few other locations in the western world where new ideas were so easily distributed and accessed through printing. Likewise, few other locations tolerated religious differences and allowed Jewish settlers, for example, to live within the city walls, even if in the sometimes squalid conditions of the ghetto and designated to the lowest class of society. For this research the important theme to understand is the Venetian willingness to operate outside the status quo set by her contemporaries. This willingness to be welcoming and accept differences contributed to Venice’s longstanding tradition as a tourist destination.

The ancient Republic of Venice had modest beginnings; the mudflats of the lagoon “were probably first settled in…the sixth century by mainland refugees seeking protection from the Lombards, a Germanic tribe who invaded the Italian peninsula in 568 AD” (Brown, 10). Out of these provincial beginnings grew the independent nature of the Venetian Republic and her people. A separate and proud empire in its own right, the identity of Venice, Italy today is a relatively new one when compared to the overall history of the Republic.

Venice developed economic independence through its maritime power. As the port of call through which East and West trading routes met, Venice had a firm hold on exotic trade. As Lane states, “Being on the edge of two worlds – the Byzantium and Moslem East and the Latin-Germanic West – Venetians looked sometimes eastward, at other times westward for power…” This unique position helped solidify “Venice’s leadership as the chief port of the Adriatic and the chief link in northern Italy between East and
West…” (Lane 5) This made Venice and Venetians exceedingly wealthy. Thus cocooned by the lagoon and their wealth, Venice developed a singularly independent culture that was modern and cosmopolitan when compared to her contemporaries over the centuries. Trade and the resulting exposure to other cultures cultivate an environment where differences were tolerated as a matter of business. This tolerance permeated into other aspects of society and created a haven for artists and artistic expression. As Brown states, “Venice’s secure position also had practical consequences for art. The very real safety and security of the city allowed a rich artistic tradition to build up and develop over time.” (Brown 16)

The cultural haven Venice offered artists and musicians contributed to the production of many of the masterpieces of the Renaissance and Baroque periods. Paintings by Titian and Bellini can be found throughout the city, and the music of prominent Venetian composers such as Monteverdi, Vivaldi, and Galuppi is still listened to and valued today. Many famous works of art commissioned during the Renaissance and Baroque periods are still in the original locations where the artists intended the works to be seen; this commitment to preserving the past is evident in Venice's architecture as well.

A map of Venice today is almost identical to a map of Venice 500 years ago, with many of the building and facades looking the same as they did in the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries. The love of pageantry and excessive luxury that Venice embodied ensured Venice’s position as a “must” stop on the Grand Tour, that luxurious trip taken by wealthy Europeans as the culmination of their education. As an early tourist destination, Venice enjoyed a reputation throughout Europe as being a city where excess was not merely tolerated, but encouraged. This reputation can be witnessed in the centuries old
annual celebration of Carnival and in the wondrous adornment of her churches that can still be seen today. Muir best describes the link between pageantry and identity when he states,

Venice’s historical reputation for beauty, religiosity, liberty, peacefulness, and republicanism modern scholars call “the myth of Venice”…Renaissance Venetians acknowledged the same myth in their visual arts, musical lyrics, poetry, official and popular history, humanist works, and above all in ritual and pageantry. (Muir 21)

Thus, the Venetian traditions of Carnival, pageantry, and love of art and decoration have been integrated into the history of the people and ensured the reputation of the city as a traveler’s destination for centuries.

The strong maritime connections of Venice must also be noted when discussing Venetian culture, a tradition obviously encouraged by Venice’s unique geography. More than simply being surrounded by water helped develop this strong culture of trade; also important is Venice’s proximity to land. Patricia Brown tells us,

Accessible to the cities of northern Europe by a number of Alpine passes and to the rest of Italy by the roads and rivers of the great alluvial plain of northern Italy, Venice was also ideally situated to play a significant role in land-based trade within continental Europe. (Brown 22)

This rich and long tradition of trade helped develop and foster a culture ideal to host all types of travelers despite their differences, for “Even Venetians who never left the confines of the lagoon were continually exposed to the widest range of goods, both exotic and mundane.” (Brown 22) Not only did Venetians develop a culture sympathetic to trade by developing service cultures to foster the flow of traffic and people necessary for continued profitability, but they also contributed to trade with their own unique goods particular to Venice. This allowed for the aforementioned “myth of Venice” to be carried
far beyond the boundaries of the Republic and contribute to Venice’s growing reputation as not just a center of trade but a destination to be experienced and enjoyed.

The remnants of this culture of luxury and excess can be viewed today and has contributed much to the tourist industry. Carnival swells the ranks of the city and is a tremendous source of revenue. Venetian masks, which gained notoriety through their use during early Carnival celebrations, have become a trademark of the city and a typical souvenir for travelers. The fine craftsmanship so highly valued throughout Venice’s golden age still exist and the indigenous population keeps alive such traditions as glassmaking, lace-making, and gondola making. Tourists eagerly flock to see and purchase these unique Venetian products.

The seemingly endless imperial age of the Republic of Venice drew to a slow conclusion finally ending in the 18th century as neighboring countries became increasingly jealous of Venice’s power and wealth. Scheltema tells us

…the prodigious opulence of Venice [was] a matter of common knowledge. Her cupidity became a proverb and a byword among the nations of three continents. Her worsted adversaries, ostensibly scandalized at her insatiable greed and domineering arrogance where jealousy of her prosperity was the real grievance…[competition and war] accelerated the decline brought about by the English and the Dutch emulating the Portuguese in the field of oriental commerce. Venice lost her monopoly of trade and consequent predominance. (Scheltema 423-24)

This transition from a trade based economy to one based on industry did not dampen Venice’s independence or cultural tolerance. Book printing and academic discourse flourished as did Venice’s tourist appeal. The debauchery of Carnival and the enchantments of the Venetian courtesans secured Venice a spot on the Grand Tour, and its reputation as a haven for artists endured.

Venice, once the leader in trade, began to lag behind her European
contemporaries in the late 17th and 18th centuries. Lane summarizes this economic shift when he explains

The general economic growth of the sixteenth century affected Venice most strikingly by expanding markets for her manufactures. Her traditional chemical industries such as glassmaking benefited, [and] new industries such as printing took root...(Lane 309).

Rich from her long and successful trading history, Venice turned inward and shifted to an economy that created commodities, not simply one that distributed them. The results of this shift can still be viewed today in the glassmaking and lace-making industries.

Throughout these long hundreds of years, various wars, plagues, and religious movements changed the boundaries of Europe and the world. The boundaries of the Republic of Venice also changed over the centuries; the city of Venice however, remained essentially the same. Being finite in size, the city of Venice of the 18th century physically resembled its younger self of the 15th and 16th centuries. The independent nature of the Republic and her citizens also remained intact over the course of time. The Doge ruled until 1797 under the same republican system that had been in place for centuries, the arts were continually highly regarded and valued, and the economy was still healthy and vibrant.

The consistency of the Republic throughout the decades is evident in the artwork that Venetians of every era coveted and loved to adorn every inch of every wall in their beloved city. The mosaics of St. Mark’s show the changing of trends through the centuries as the oldest Byzantium style shifts and flows from early and then late Renaissance styles to the much later Rococo period of the 18th century. The decorations changed, but the traditions and identity of Venice as a proud and serene republic did not. Throughout this grand history, Venice continued to be a major travel destination that
catered to tourists: “From the days of medieval pilgrims flocking to the Holy Land down to modern mass tours, Venice had catered to tourists” (Lane 431).

Venice in the 18th century was known not only for vice, with her notorious reputation regarding gambling institutions and prostitution, but also for theater, opera, and love of pageantry. Ultimately however, the end of the Republic is regarded as a time when

A new myth of Venice was woven…Just as the early history of Venice is wrapped in the myth of pristine independence and its period of greatness is veiled by myths of the unfailing wisdom of the Venetian Senate, so the old age of the Republic is befogged by a myth of unsurpassed vice (Lane 433).

The Republic of Venice came to an end in 1797 with a complete surrender to the army of Napoleon. Thus began approximately 75 years of inconsistency in government until Venice joined the Italian nation in 1866 (Lane 436). This also marked a rapid decline in wealth as Venice no longer had the means to maintain her costly existence. Much of this loss occurred when “Napoleon plundered Venice systematically: its Mine, its Arsenal, its fleet, its archive, and its art treasures.” (Lane 436)

Venice of the 19th century is characterized by strife. The Doge was eliminated and the aristocracy eradicated under Napoleon's rule, followed by tumultuous years of various foreign rule. This period of Venetian history is in stark contrast to the origins of the Republic:

After almost fourteen centuries it was a humiliating termination, as the Republic of the Serenissima had been independent since its foundation in 412 AD. There seemed to be no recovery: run-down, impoverished in trade, it passed to Austria in 1798, to France again in 1806 and to Austria again in 1814. Then, with a brief and brave interregnum in 1848-9, it remained under imperial Austrian rule until united with Italy in 1866. (Plant 1)
The early part of the 19th century is arguably the lowest point in Venetian history, as the city was in a spiritual and physical decay (Plant 89). Venetians were not idle during this period, however, and were able to safeguard the return of their beloved horses of St. Mark's which were returned in 1814 (Plant 81) and began the transformation of the city into a city museum. The first civic museum opened in 1836, and "This marked the official debut of Venice as a museum city, a status already accorded it in the guides to the city's churches and public buildings." (Plant 103)

Other physical changes occurred in Venice that were a result of the fall of the aristocracy and began the dependency of the Venetian economy on tourism. As Plant states,

The fall of the Republic altered the structure of real estate. Patrician fortunes declined and palaces fell empty. Some palaces were converted into apartments for local residents; they also became attractive to rich and aristocratic visitors…The conversion of palaces into hotels and the renting of apartments in palaces may have made them appealing to many travelers, but they represented the decline of local aristocracy and resulted in the demolition of edifices that were not suitable for such conversions. (111)

The last years of the Austrian occupation had worn the survivors of the Republic. Once rich. Venetians were now bankrupt and the social system had changed dramatically. The middle class had once enjoyed one of the highest standards of living in Europe. Now, with the aristocracy gone and living under foreign rule the people of Venice found themselves living in a social system where class was diminished. The remnants of the elite now became the more traditional middle class as we know it today; those in the middle class of the Republic found themselves counted amongst peasants. The lives of the people were well documented in photography during the latter half of the 19th century. As Plant tells us,
Whether intentionally or not, mendicancy and poverty were bluntly on record; faces worn by hardship and exposure to the elements register expressions of tragic inertia, even in such subjects as fishermen mending their nets or a woman selling a roasted pumpkin...sitting in the shadow of buildings whose brickwork is stripped of stucco. It is the squalor of Venice and its islands, and not the glamour, that these photographs record – perhaps the most authentic face of Venice. (181)

The industrialization of Mestre and Marghera has intensified the effects of the tourist industry on the culture of Venice as well as environmental threats. Industrialization intensified man-made threats to the life of the lagoons. An industrial

“Venice” was begun in the 1920s at Porto Marghera, next to the Mestre at the end of the bridge or causeway which had brought the railroad to Venice. In the 1930s this was broadened to bring also automobiles...In the 1960s, a second Industrial Zone spread southward from Marghera over what until 1953 had been tideland. By 1970 the industries at Marghera – chemicals, petroleum, plastics, etc. – provided nearly 40,000 jobs. Overcrowding and urban sprawl changed much of Mestre from “garden suburb” to “workers slums”. (Lane 454)

This over-industrialization did bring worldwide attention to the decline of Venice in the historic flooding that occurred in 1966 when the water level of the lagoon rose six feet and submerged much of historic Venice after a period of heavy rains. The decline of the artistic treasure of Venice and the knowledge that without restoration they would be lost was noticed globally by generous donors and world-wide organizations such as UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The industrialization of the mainland had a causal effect on water levels:

...after electric pumps were introduced at Marghera in the 1930s to draw from the subsoil the water demanded by its industries the sinking which had been going on slowly, about a half-inch in ten years, became relatively rapid, about two inches in ten years, the exact amount differing from place to place. Although other geological changes contributed to raising the high water line, the pumping of water from the subsoil was the main cause of Venice’s sinking beneath the waves... (Lane 456)

As such, environmental concerns have become increasingly important to the middle class, and these concerns threaten the region’s tourist industry. The Venetian middle
class has a past and a culture deeply entwined with tourism; as such, an understanding of the current Venetian tourist industry is now essential and will be discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 2
TOURISM AND CULTURE

The eagerness to explore and appreciate cultural differences through experience is what drives tourism. These differences can be subtle and unassuming, or strikingly and startlingly different. We travel to experience cultures different from our own. These differences can be found in language, architecture, costume, pageantry, food, and just about every aspect of life. Inexorably linked, one cannot engage in tourism without experiencing culture.

In this regard, what is it about the cultures of the locations we choose to visit that determines their appeal? It is not simply that they are richly varied and different; differences alone do not translate to desirability. How do we decide that one place is more desirable than another and denote this value? Definitions of value are usually concrete – based on numbers and the costs of goods and services. What happens when the commodity being valued is an experience? How does one define the social and cultural capital of a place? This question is best summarized by Karlsson when he states:

A central concern is to identify the types of social relations that are highly valued and that are propitious to production of tourism. Cultural capital refers to the influence of culture and tradition for the development of tourism. Another central concern is to identify the types of social relations that are highly valued and that are propitious to production of tourism. Cultural capital refers to the influence of cultural and tradition for the development of tourism. Another central concern is thus to examine the types of culture, in a wide sense, that have a high value in this respect. The core questions are thus how the social and cultural capital can be transformed into economic capital, i.e. how they can promote and develop the tourism trade, and also, how previous economic capital has been transformed into social and cultural capital that now form so called sedimented structures, which in turn are influential to the current economic capital. (Karlsson 107)

While tourism transforms intangible cultural capital into economic capital, what effect does this transformation of culture into tangible currency have upon the people
who live at these locations? How has their culture been affected by tourism and tourists? Aside from the economic impact, travelers also make impressions upon the people and places they visit. Surely, in the famous tourist destinations – those infused with a hyper-charged appeal to many people of multiple cultures – the original identity of the location must be altered by the constant ebb and flow of tourist traffic.

Where the economy is dependent upon strangers enjoying its culture, how do indigenous residents manage the constant annoyances and problems tourists cause while still welcoming them? When a location’s economy is dependent upon its culture, what happens if the culture becomes dependent upon the economy? These questions will be addressed in later chapters.

The importance of tourism on the global economy cannot be disputed: “Tourism has emerged as one of the chief industries in the world economy over the last decade” (Lazzeretti and Capone 214). However it is the draw and pull of a particular location’s culture that determines its tourism success. As Lazzeretti and Capone state

Notwithstanding the process of globalization and the ever-increasing role played by major intermediaries and international tour operators, the ties linking a territory (a tourist place) with its tourist industry are still particularly strong. These ties are associated not only with the cultural and natural resources of a place, but also with its particular socio-economic environment, which plays a primary role in the steadiness of local economic development (Lazzeretti and Capone 214 - 15).

In short, the industry of an area can be just as important as the cultural and natural resources. In one of the hyper-tourist destinations, it should be of no surprise to find a combination of industry, natural resources, and cultural enticements contributing to the over-all appeal of the location. As a location’s natural resources often affect industry, and employment is inextricably linked with culture, it can be understood that the result of
these combined factors will determine its level of tourist appeal. A destination with high cultural capital will have an identity that is the product of the combination of strong industry, desirable natural resources, and an environment which cultivates and values artistic expression.

Industries comprised of specific and locally based trades that cannot easily be acquired elsewhere lend to the development of an artisan sub-culture unique to the area of industry. This sub-culture then develops its own customs and tourist appeals and enhances the overall culture’s cultural capital. For, “In tourist districts there is a strong division and specialization of labor among enterprises.” and “The enterprises are strongly rooted in the territory, where every enterprise is like a link in the value chain that forms the local system.” (Lazzeretti and Capone 216)

Capone details in a separate study the crucial connection between a location’s tourist appeal and cultural identity and can be summarized in the following five elements of tourist district characterization:

(a) First, a tourist district is a place where the social community and the economic community co-exist (for example a local labour market area).
(b) There is a stable and durable core industry developing wealth and thus generating local activities, i.e. tourism activities; other complementary activities are also performed.
(c) The main tourism productive process is localized within the district and developed by resident people; a crucial part of the production is made within the district boundaries. The cultural, artistic and natural resources have an impact on the consumption processes in the area.
(d) The area can be represented as a tourism filière [industry or network] since enterprises are specialized in one or more phases of the ‘productive processes’ in the area.
(e) Most enterprises are small and medium enterprises (SME). There is not a prevailing enterprise, but an autonomous population of SME.

(Lazzeretti and Capone 217)
Of these elements, four (b-e) can be found in abundance in Venice. The localized and independent enterprises are exemplified in Venice’s glassmaking industry, the famous Burano lace, and the guild of Gondoliers. Each of these is a small yet stable industry that contributes to tourism and is dependent upon the local middle class population, and the production of these industries is localized and stays within the geographic confines of the city, or tourist area. Also of note, all of these industries have historical roots based on the provision of life’s necessities and did not originate as tourist commodities. The presence of the first element, (a), is perhaps the most questionable and important, and that is the coexistence of the community’s social base with the economic tourist industry. This point will be explored further throughout this paper. Now that the links between tourism and culture have been identified, it is necessary to understand the particular culture this paper addresses.
CHAPTER 3
ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT VENETIAN TOURISM

To better understand Venetian tourism today it is beneficial to have some background information about the broader region. One of the largest economies in Italy is situated in the Venice city-region, defined as the totality of the provinces of Venice, Padua and Treviso, along with the Venice Lagoon and its archipelago of 117 islands. The Venetian city-region ranks as among the most dynamic and productive areas in Europe. Although Venetians are richer than the average Italian, they have a per capita GDP (USD 32, 941) comparable to that of Toronto or Barcelona, which rank behind the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) average. However, the Venice city-region is catching up fast. Compared to OECD metro-regions, its economic growth rate can be compared to that of London, Stockholm or Houston, placing it among the top ten performers in Europe. (OECD Report)

Venice is part of the larger provinces of Padua, Treviso, and Venice, as an interconnected city-region of 2.6 million people. Ranking among the most dynamic and productive city-regions in the OECD, Venice has high employment levels and growth rates. Though it has thrived on a model of small firms and industrial clusters, it is undergoing a deep economic transformation. Venice confronts growing environmental challenges as a result of rising traffic congestion and costly infrastructure pressures, exacerbated by sprawl. Demographics are also changing, due to ageing inhabitants, immigrant settlement and the rapid depopulation of the historic city of Venice.

In spite of these challenges, the Venetian tourist industry has many examples of local trade and area specific industry that adds to its appeal and, as noted in Chapter 1, ensures
its continued existence as a major tourist destination. Examples of such artisan crafts include the famous Venetian lace of Burano, Venetian glass of Murano, and the gondola, which can be subdivided into an artisan craft as well as a profession. Each of these has an originally utilitarian history within Venetian culture and has morphed into a tourist commodity today. These three crafts will now be specifically examined with regards to current tourism.

Figure 1 – A main entrance to the island of Murano.

The Venetian glassblowing industry enjoyed tremendous throughout the history of the Republic and peaked in the 16th century. It was then that Venetian glassmakers were at the peak of their fame and multiplied their specialties. Hourglasses accurately blown at Venice were sold by ship chandlers all over Europe. Mirrors gained enormously in popularity when made of crystal-clear glass, such as the Venetians had developed while imitating rock crystal in order to make spectacles. Mirror makers multiplied to such an extent that they formed a separate guild in 1564. Window glass became so common that a laudatory description of Venice boasted that every parish had its glazier. (Lane 310)
The practicality of the origins of Venetian glassmaking is evident in the mirrors, ship chandeliers, and window panes Venetians produced as outlined by Lane. These everyday objects are in sharp contrast to the nonfunctional and clearly aesthetic pieces currently being produced in Venice. No longer a utilitarian craft, today the glass industry continues to use traditional production methods.

Demonstrations showcasing this uniquely Venetian skill are routinely held to entertain tourists and market the authenticity of the finished products. The glassblowing industry is a source of welcome commerce for the island of Murano, evident in its fantastic sculptures which are strategically placed at the main tourist entrances (see Figure 1). The galleries of Murano are filled with the creations of the glassblowers with many pieces costing hundreds of Euros apiece.

Much like Murano, the small island of Burano has distinguished itself as the birthplace and center of a unique craft which is integrated throughout Venice’s history. Similar to the glassblowers of Murano, the “production of Burano lace in the Venetian Republic reached its heyday in the 16th century...[and]...There are very few experts in the art of needle lace today...” (Zampedri). Davis and Marvin further point out the similarities between these crafts when they state,

...parallel to Murano’s touristware industry [is] Burano lacework. As with glass, the lace of this outer island once enjoyed a Europe-wide reputation, only to fall on hard times after the collapse of the Serenissima. As with glass, a few...individuals managed to bring lace making back to life in the later nineteenth century, also largely for the tourist market. (Davis 279)
Figure 2 - An example of a Burano lace shop.

Figure 2 shows an example of a Burano lace shop with all its wares on display; everything inside is made of lace. The art of lace-making in Burano is kept alive in its original form as evidenced in Figure 3. As in Murano, we see artisanship joined with performance as the product of a traditional Venetian ware valued along with the production process with the intention “to provide tourists with the sort of performance-authenticating show that the glass factories stage” (Davis 279)
Figure 3 - Example of Burano lacemaking

A third type of performance craft which is vibrant and essential to current Venetian tourism industry is the gondola. The gondola is world renowned as a symbol of Venice and does much to contribute to the cultural capital of the city and increase its tourism appeal.
Gondolas are all made and repaired by hand, painstaking work that can take months or years. A gondola boatyard today, near the church of san Trovaso (see Figure 4), is similar to one of the 17th century. This preservation of traditional ways is one of the desirable facets of gondolas as a service and cultural artifact. As with the glass of Murano and the of lace on Burano, centuries old traditional production methods are used to create what was originally a utilitarian service – in this case transportation – and has morphed into a tourist commodity today. Note the exquisite attention to detail as shown in Figure 5; every gondola in Venice features its own unique design. The cultural authentic production of the craft is evidenced in the art of steering a gondola, as providing transportation is as much a commodity as the boat itself. Steering a gondola is an incredibly difficult skill to master, but a trained gondolier can turn on a dime and navigate through the narrowest canals.
In this regard, the gondolier is truly a performer showcasing a unique skill-set while also entertaining and providing transportation to those aboard. Before the fall of the Republic, the number of gondolas in Venice is estimated at 10 to 12 thousand (Davis 136). Those that were not connected to wealthy households were often considered a part of the lower class and were compared to beggars. As Venice emerged as a major tourist destination at the turn of the 20th century, gondoliers profited from the tourist industry and, much like lace-making and glassblowing had a re-birth by offering their services as a tourist commodity. Today there are “about 400 gondoliers in active service” (Davis 143). This decline is best summarized by Davis and Martin when they state:

The problem, over the course of the twentieth century, was less in finding enough work to support this many oarsmen than in finding enough gondoliers themselves: as the population of Venice nose-dived after 1960, there were no longer enough sons willing to follow their father into the business, in the traditional manner.
These examples of specialized and unique handmade crafts - glassblowing, lace-making, and the gondola - have been produced in Venice for centuries. Today, they are still alive and well, and the necessary skill and talents have been passed on to the current generation. While once part of Venice’s day-to-day economy, they are now well adapted to its tourism industry. One could argue that, in large part, they are a necessary and integral part of the tourist economy in Venice. The next chapter will now discuss the cultural impact the tourist industry has upon the Venetian middle class by taking into account these three industries as well as by examining other aspects of tourism and Venetian life.
CHAPTER 4

CULTURAL IMPACT OF THE TOURIST INDUSTRY

Tourism made Venice wealthy, and this had a profound effect on the development of a proud and independent Venetian culture. Over the centuries, the unique culture and traditions that evolved came to be appreciated throughout the globe, a circumstance encouraged by the geographic position as the trading nexus between the East and the West. This unique position brought immense wealth to Venice, a condition that allowed Venetians to live in and develop a culture that was independent of the mores and traditions of the rest of Europe for it was economically dependent upon no other empire.

As,

The institutions which make Venice memorable evolved during many hundred years of effort. From the sixth century A.D. to the end of the eighteenth, the Venetians were a separate people. Looked at from the point of view of there means of livelihood, those twelve centuries divide into three periods which overlap considerably and are each of about four hundred years in length. Until about 1000 A.D., the Venetians were primarily boatmen or barge men operating small craft across the lagoons and up and down the rivers and canals leading into the mainland of northern Italy. After 1000 A.D., they became a seagoing nation, sailing trading, and fighting in many parts of the Mediterranean and from the rivers of southern Russia to the English Channel. Finally, Venice became a city of craftsmen, functionaries, and a few aristocrats, a city renowned for its skills in handiwork, finance, and government. (Lane 1)

As we have seen, these traits of independence and originality backed by capitalism and trade created the original melting pot of cultures. For in Venice, relationships with individuals from different cultures and beliefs systems were tolerated as nowhere else, as long as they were profitable. The common thread of an economy dependent upon the different constituents of the Republic allowed for an unprecedented civility and at times even respect amongst the citizens of Venice. Venetians enjoyed a seemingly endless era of economic success that flowed continuously through the centuries and was enjoyed by
many generations. The results of this success are integrated into the framework of the city, as the buildings bear marks from hundreds of years ago, and the trunks of trees cultivated over 1,500 years before make up the foundations.

This contrast was striking and I often took note of the overwhelming antiquity of the city compared with the modern identity of the individuals who now dwell there. Perhaps that is what it means to be Venetian: an existence that spans decades of time to simultaneously accept youth and old age - the struggle for the social system to co-exist with the tourist industry. Thus, the cultural impact of the tourist industry has affected the development of Venetian culture throughout history by contributing to the development of two crucial aspects of the Venetian identity: pride and independence. Today’s tourist impact can be seen throughout the city in ways that are concrete and noticeable.

One such example can be found in the luxury shops around St. Mark’s Square which are expansive and numerous. Figure 6 is one such example.

Figure 6 - One of the many luxury shops near St. Mark’s Square.
As these examples exist in the high traffic tourist areas of St. Mark’s Square and the Rialto Bridge but are not found in the inner Campos or on the outer island of Burano and Murano it seems apparent they market to tourists and not the average Venetian.

Other examples of the tourists industry’s impact on Venetian culture can be seen in the area of the Rialto Bridge and outlying market.

Figure 7 - Graffiti on the Rialto Bridge

Graffiti is everywhere in Venice, and is even apparent on famous and heavily frequented tourist markers such as the Rialto Bridge. The contrast and struggle between the old and new is shockingly evident in the graffiti shown in Figure 7. Davis summarizes this struggle when he tells us

As one of the main focal points of international preservation efforts since the early nineteenth century, Venice has long served as a powerful and dramatic metaphor for the tension between the old and the new in modern societies. (Davis, and Marvin 507)
Once a high end market for the exotic trades which flowed through Venice, the Rialto Bridge and surrounding market have become the quintessential tourist trap with shops selling cheap Venetian masks that upon further inspection bear a “made in China” stamp on the back driving the more expensive and better quality shops with traditional handmade wares out of business. An example of these masks can be seen in the top left corner of Figure 8; also of note is the number and variety of Venetian maps that can be for sale, a testament to the number and variety if tourists who frequent this area.

Figure 8 – Masks made in China and maps available in many languages.
The globalization and cultural mongrelization of this area of Venice is further evidenced by the presence of a Chinese restaurant (see Figure 9) and epitomized by a Disney Store (Figure 10).
My time on the island of Murano encompassed one rainy afternoon; as such, I missed the glassblowing demonstrations, which are frequently held for tourists. These demonstrations are another example of how production process is valued in tandem with the finished product and both increase and contribute to the cultural capital of Venice. This also authenticates the product by eliminating the possibility of imported replications of Venetian crafts being substituted and marketed as authentic cultural items. At one of the glass factories I entered, the shop owner asked if I would like a private tour of the upstairs gallery, where I was amazed at the artistry and display of the various and expensive pieces. When I asked if I could take photographs, I was told I could take a few and then informed I was being given a special entitlement as photography is normally prohibited in the gallery. Obviously successful and proud of his work, for the owner was a glassblower as well, he showed me some of his pieces which can be seen in Figure 11. He informed me he learned the trade from his father, as growing up with glass was how this skill was learned.
Figure 11 - Gallery inside a Murano glass factory.

The model of Saturn in Figure 11 is one of the pieces the shop owner created; every piece in the gallery was blown by hand.

It is interesting to compare this experience to the island of Burano and the art of lace-making. There as well, photographs inside the shop were forbidden. This was remarkable in comparison to the signs forbidding photography inside the shop of the actual goods for sale. Indeed, the old woman at her work is as much on display as the necklaces for sale behind her (see Figure 12). The shopkeeper not only allowed me to take pictures of the woman but encouraged me to do so with an obvious pride that this talent was on display in her shop. For her part, the old woman took no notice of me whatsoever and gave no reaction to being photographed; this is not surprising as it probably happened constantly.
The creation of performance commodity is also apparent in the traditional gondola ride. On my gondola tour of Venice our gondolier was just as quick to tell us his name is “Casanova” as he was to point out the home of Mozart. Upon further questioning, I was able to glean that his real name is Andrew (although this could also be a contrived response, see right figure in Figure 13) and he is wont to respond to the question of his name with other colorful responses such as Elvis, Marco Polo, or “Bond, James Bond”.

Figure 12 – Performance of Burano lace-making.
While it was obvious that Andrew only had a working knowledge of the English language it is interesting to recognize the pervasive appeal to other cultures in his prepared responses which are intended to please and flatter tourists. Also of note, Andrew told me he is a father of two small children and lives with his family in the city of Mestre for they cannot afford to live in Venice proper.

Another dominating aspect of Venetian tourism is the cruise industry; the Port of Venice is very active today and cruise ships can routinely be seen sailing through the Guidecca Canal as shown in Figure 14 below. Cruisers often only have limited time to tour Venice and can be found in abundance in St. Mark’s Square and the Rialto Bridge market. The cruise ships are massive and in my experience send strong gusts of wind through the smaller alleys and canals as they pass.
Figure 14 - Cruise ship on the Guidecca Canal

For the Venetians, the cruise ships cause problems other than congested tourist areas and blocked views. As Davis summarizes:

It is not just, as residents have increasingly begun to complain, that these floating hotels block the view or intimidate with their presence: they also torment locals at home, even in their beds. When a cruise ship …docks overnight at the Riva dei Sette Mariri – and despite having the facilities of the Port of Venice, the big ships continue to tie up at this more convenient anchorage nearer to San Marco—it can wreck havoc deep inside the city. Thank to the massive engine that drive such ships air-condition and power systems, residents ling several hundred meters from dockside are tormented by a “continuous booming and buzzing [causing] the windows [to] vibrate constantly. (Davis 206)

A negative side effect of Venetian tourism is the gypsy presence throughout the city. Prevalent and invasive, this subculture survives purely on the tourist presence and does nothing to contribute to or attempt a coexistence with long standing Venetian social systems that can be found in the tight knit communities of the various Campos or the artist enclaves of Murano and Burano. Gypsy women can be found throughout the city.
begging for money. The person shown in Figure 15 was especially convincing with her loud wailing.

Figure 15 – The gypsy presence.

It is interesting to note that this picture was taken in the high tourist area of the Academia, where tourism is not dependent upon the indigenous population. I did not note a gypsy presence in the inner Campos or on the islands of Murano and Burano. It can definitely be argued that the inner Campos do not provide enough attraction for tourist and are therefore not profitable for begging purposes. The islands of Murano and Burano however, have a constant flow of tourist traffic. Whether or not the gypsy presence was there or if the apparent co-existence of the indigenous populations with the tourist industry provides a cultural barrier that prevents begging in these parts of Venice is for another study.
Row after row of Rental cabins dominates the beachfront of the Lido as shown in Figure 16. The Lido is the 7 mile long barrier island separating Venice from the Adriatic Sea; a long-standing tourist destination for jet-setters, this part of Venice does not seem negatively affected by tourism as is Venice proper. Nor does the Lido offer the cultural craftsmanship that can be found on the islands of Burano and Murano. Perhaps this disconnect is because it lacks the independent economic systems necessary for the linkage and then necessary coexistence of culture and tourism, as the cultural capital and economic independence of the Lido are the result of its natural resources and not an indigenous workforce or social system.
The Public Gardens also offer a destination where natural beauty is highlighted and enjoyed. Small, yet full of life the gardens offer sweeping vistas of the lagoon and hidden statues can be located throughout the trails. Many, such as the one in Figure 17, are in obvious need of restoration; note the graffiti behind the statue as well. I did not see many tourists in this part of Venice and for the first time, felt like an intruder into a part of the city reserved for residents alone. Parents played with children on playgrounds, soccer games were being held, and couples strolled by. As in the inner Campos, the Venetian middle class appeared to have adopted the gardens as an area where they could be themselves as opposed to being the eternal hosts to the multitude of visitors they see daily. More discussion on the inner Campos and the Venetian middle class will occur in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5
CURRENT CONDITION OF THE VENETIAN MIDDLE CLASS

Official economic and planning studies may offer insight into Venice’s unique situation, but they do not necessarily take into account the actual circumstances encountered in day-to-day living. For example, the OCED official recommendations, based on its 2010 in depth study of Venice, stated:

- Boost innovation by developing links between universities and firms, business development for SMEs and improving business environment (improving tax collection, reducing court backlogs)
- Expand labour market integration programmes for women, older workers, and immigrants, by providing continuous training and job placement services
- Promote high density development, by reduction of land consumption and more transit-oriented development
- Integrate land use and water planning
- Increase vertical co-ordination within the Venice city-region, especially through co-ordinated land use planning.
- Extend horizontal co-operation, through pilot-projects in tourism, inter-city flagship projects, metropolitan climate change strategies, the creation of a metropolitan transit authority and the preparation for a debate on more radical governance options (such as a metropolitan city or “città metropolitana”).

However, very different data and information can be obtained through observations and interviews.

A conversation with Dr. Shaul Bassi, a native Venetian and professor at The University of Venice, Ca’ Foscari as well as a member of the adjunct faculty of Wake Forest, pinpointed the frustration of being Venetian as he described what it’s like to live in a society caught between modernity and its ancient past. The restoration of the city is an ongoing project and has created an environment where citizens must cope with restrictions on necessities that most individuals take for granted. What it means to be elderly in Venice, for example, is exceedingly more complicated that in other cities. The same can be said for any individual who is physically impaired. The endless steps and
uneven stone walkways make this maze of a city challenging for the physically fit; it’s difficult to imagine how individuals who have these challenges make their way around the city.

In its past Venice was exceedingly modern with its cosmopolitan and tolerant culture; in modern times the city is exceedingly old, with its ancient buildings and aging population. Dr. Bassi also touched on what it is like to live in a city over run with tourists. The crowds hinder maneuverability whether on foot or using the public water transit system. The rhythm of daily life, that pace with which we move about to conduct our affairs, is constantly interrupted by tourists who stroll without purpose or awkwardly amble through the maze that is Venice oftentimes suddenly stopping the flow of traffic to appreciate an architectural detail or check a map. In Venice this is especially disruptive off the main canals as many of the side streets are so small they necessitate walking in single file. I imagine the tourist industry in Venice, at least to Venetians, is akin to a parasite that keeps its host body alive. As Plant tell us,

Venice may appear to attract the most superficial of tourists, or be an extended convention centre or , less kindly, a propped-up stage set, or theme park. The Venetians, a dramatically declining populations, themselves refer to their city overtaken by commercial carnival, bereft of supermarkets and facilities, as 'Disneyland'. (2)

However, the city cannot survive without the revenue created by tourism; the endless restorations make Venice the quintessential money pit. Then there is the enormously expensive gamble of the MOSE Project (Modulo Sperimentale Elettromeccanico — in English, Experimental Electromechanical Module), which is a proposed solution to the rising waters of the Adriatic, and places another huge financial burden on an already strapped city.
The industrialization of Mestre and Marghera has intensified the effects of the tourist industry on the culture of Venice as well as environmental threats.

Industrialization intensified man-made threats to the life of the lagoons. An industrial “Venice was begun in the 1920s at Porto Marghera, next to the Mestre at the end of the bridge or causeway which had brought the railroad to Venice. In the 1930s this was broadened to bring also automobiles...In the 1960s, a second Industrial Zone spread southward from Marghera over what until 1953 had been tideland. By 1970 the industries at Marghera – chemicals, petroleum, plastics, etc. – provided nearly 40,000 jobs. Overcrowding and urban sprawl changed much of Mestre from “garden suburb” to “workers slums”. (Lane 1973)

This over-industrialization did bring worldwide attention to the decline of Venice in the historic flooding which occurred in 1966 when the water level of the lagoon rose six feet and submerged much of historic Venice after a period of heavy rains. High tide can be viewed in Figure 18. The tides are a regular and accepted part of life in Venice. As Plant states, "Venice is so well known, and its high tides and flooding so familiar as a recurrent threat, that it has become a metaphor for survival of the old, the delicate and the exotic. (2)
As Dr. Agnese Chiari, an expert in Venetian art, told me many times in a tour of the artistic masterpieces of Venice, “There is never enough money.” This was in response to my group’s questions regarding our surprise at how so many priceless works of art were out in the open, close enough to touch, without any safeguards against the wear and tear of the elements or curiosity of the visitors. There is simply not enough money to do all of the restoration and maintenance Venice needs.

The Campos of Venice, (see Figure 19) consist of neighborhoods rich in tradition and antiquity; where people live life in much the same way as it has been lived for many generations. Sadly though, these parts of Venice are increasingly denied to middle class Venetians as the cost of housing is astronomical. Some attempts have been made to alleviate his problem, but as Newman states, “A 1999 law that eased regulations on the
conversion of residential buildings to tourist accommodations exacerbated an ongoing housing shortage. Meanwhile, the number of hotels and guesthouses since 1999 has increased by 600 percent” (Newman)

Figure 19 - Day to day life for Venetians in an inner Campo

The middle class of Venice has many strong traditions and long-standing historic ties to tourism. The tourist industry has had many effects upon the middle class, ranging from providing economic stability by generating a consistent market for the goods and services tourists require as well as providing a market for the specialized skills of lace-making, glassblowing, and the gondolier. Diametrically opposed to the positive effects are the negative ramifications the tourist industry has had upon the Venetian middle class. Unaffordable real-estate threatens the ability of the average Venetian to continue to reside in Venice and has forced many to move to the mainland while still providing services in Venice. This breakdown in community structure effects church attendance, community
ownership, the available labor market, and the tourist industry. These conclusions will be discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

My personal observations in Venice caused me to question many of the opinions I encountered in my study of Venice. The Venetian middle class, while severely handicapped by its many challenges, is also incredibly innovative. What other culture conquered a mudflat and built a city? What other population has encountered the engineering and logistical problems Venetians have and found creative solutions? The MOSE Project is a testament to this ingenuity - not only do Venetians expect to conquer their lagoon but now they wish to take on the Adriatic. The project is also a gamble and is indicative of the entrepreneurial spirit of the Venetians. The larger the risk the larger the possible gain; what else could be expected from a tradition or mariners who became incredibly wealthy by risking it all? Ingenuity also implies hope – for there is no incentive to solve a problem or to improve one's situation without belief in the possibility of success. The combination of hope and ingenuity in the face of such frustration can only be found with one other characteristic: determination.

There are many bridges but few ramps in Venice; they are prohibited by zoning laws designed to protect the ancient buildings that make up the city – many that still possess the same facade as they did in the Renaissance. Not only do the zoning laws keep the city in the past but so does the lack of modern transportation – the majority of Venice must be walked to be experienced, certainly the inner Campos. Perhaps this is why these Campos do not bear the same marks as does the Grand Canal and St. Mark’s Square - they exist independently of the tourist industry.
Burano is all color and gaiety; Murano lacks the vulgar graffiti and sheer masses of Venice proper. Is it because - with their independent economic systems which rely on the indigenous population (lace and glassmaking) - these outer islands have found a way to co-exist with the tourist industry? It would appear that Venetian culture along the Grand Canal has died (or perhaps given in) due to the tourist industry as evidenced by the exclusive shops and boutiques that are too expensive for all but the wealthiest patrons. Authentic Venetian culture can now only be accessed by leaving the excess of the canal and St. Mark’s Square and accessing the remote inner Campos. This is where the majority of real life takes place for those Venetians who are still able to reside in the city.

The necessity of the tourist dollars is without doubt; the expense of restoring and maintaining the ancient buildings and crumbling foundations of the city is obvious. This dependence on tourist dollars does not, however, come without costs. For in this uneven economic relationship the culture of Venice has survived but not thrived. The middle class has been forced out, and more ground is being lost as the tourist industry fuels itself on dollars that are not dependent upon the indigenous population.

Venetians have successfully determined their fate for centuries and, I hope, this characteristic will see the city though its current challenges into a new era of restored glory. The tourist industry does have the capability to provide much needed funds necessary for the major renovations, creation of ecologically sustainable solutions, and the creation of an economic system that does not disenfranchise its own citizens.

The tourist industry on one hand invades the city and allows foreigners to establish businesses based on tourism while local Venetians cannot, yet also allows the city to collect the necessary revenue to maintain the public works and some renovations. Sadly,
(and with more than a touch of irony), the tourists have pushed out the locals and through sheer force of numbers and congestion, are drowning the very customs that contribute to Venice’s tourism appeal and have driven them almost to extinction.

The following seven questions were posed at the beginning of this study:

- Has Venice lost its wealth or simply become more costly to maintain?
- In a city of such antiquity, have not problems of restoration been encountered before?
- Is Venice truly in decline or simply in an ongoing cycle of re-birth?
- Is the apparent over run of Venice by tourists truly a new plague?
- What are the numbers behind these observations, opinions, and ideas; what is the true empirical fact sheet of Venice today?
- What trends can be identified by comparing these numbers to those of its past?
- What conclusions can thus be drawn about its future?

The answer to the first question is that Venice has simultaneously lost its wealth and become more costly to maintain. When the Republic fell to Napoleon many of her artistic treasures were stolen or destroyed. The system of government by an aristocracy under a Doge was destroyed and Venice underwent a period of conquered turmoil. As many of Venice’s ruling class fled they took their wealth with them; those that stayed were no longer able to enjoy the same profits as before as trade and tourism dried up due to war and strife.

With regard to previous problems of restoration, the constant maintenance Venice needed to withstand the dual effects of proximity to water and old age did not occur. The result of renovations not occurring was that the problems became larger and even more
expensive undertakings. This conclusion leads to my next finding: undoubtedly Venice was in a state of decline for much of the 19th and 20th centuries. The more recent global attention to preserve Venice has done much to slow this decline and at best has created a static state of restoration progression as new parts of the city reach crisis state and other areas are restored.

To address the fourth question, it is evident Venice has always been a city filled with tourists. In fact, tourism has helped shape the Venetian identity by affirming their pride while interweaving a sense of respect and hospitality toward other peoples and cultures. The fifth question has been discussed at length in Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

The sixth question raises issues about Venice’s current and future trends. It is safe to say that nowhere have a people been so envied and visited, yet nowhere is a people so dependent upon the desire of other cultures to experience its own. Without being hospitable and accepting, Venice would not have affirmed itself as a trade and tourist destination and would not have become as wealthy or as proud. There is nothing to indicate that current tourist and economic trends will not continue into the 21st century.

Finally, I believe these conclusions about Venice’s future teach us that for Venice to once again thrive, it must find a way to develop a model of sustainable tourism that benefits the Venetian middle class while also meeting the city’s restoration needs. Long-term solutions must be sought and short-cuts that have short-term gains but disenfranchise the middle class will lead to lasting consequences for both the tourist industry and the people of Venice. If the city can take a lesson from her own book and learn to co-exist with tourism while maintain an original identity such as has occurred on the outer islands of Murano and Burano, perhaps the “myth of Venice” can be
transformed into the “lesson of Venice”, and other world heritage sites can apply these lessons to their own respective tourist destinations.
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Cecilia Frances Stach was born May 7, 1980 in Montgomery, Alabama. She completed her undergraduate work at Catawba College in Salisbury, NC receiving a Bachelor’s of Business Administration in 2005. After completing her degree, Cecilia began working for her Alma Matter and continued to reside in Salisbury. She began work on her Master of Arts in Liberal Studies in 2007 with the purpose of exploring new disciplines and ideas at the graduate level.