

## Venice: the problem of overtourism and the impact of cruises

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**ABSTRACT:** This article aims to present the current tourism problem in Venice and specifically to analyse how the island and the lagoon are being affected by cruise ship tourism. Made a World Heritage Site by UNESCO as recently as 1987, from 2016 it has become a candidate for Heritage in Danger. UNESCO has imposed an ultimatum on the capital of Veneto in order to regulate the flow of tourism and ensure the care of the future of the city. For this purpose, the different socio-cultural factors that have affected the modification of the city will be analyzed, with a primary focus on the tourism sector, such as the relevance of space, the context in a city with such a symbolic past, or the relevance of the market and current economic interests. All these factors have led to one of the most impressive cases of turistification. Amongst all these factors, cruise ship tourism is particularly influential, given Venice's location at the heart of the Mediterranean circuit. Cruises cause a great impact in cities, particularly in Venice due to its uniqueness: pollution, noise, smoke, alteration of heritage and the environment, endangerment of citizenship, architectural and cultural heritage and the environment. And at what cost? With recent changes in mind, and given the extreme situation which has come to pass, it is hoped that public awareness will lead to heavier tourism regulation—in particular for cruises—which would be a key step towards achieving inhabitable, tourist-friendly cities.

**JEL Classification:** L83; O18; R1.

**Keywords:** tourism; mass tourism; overtourism; cruise tourism; cruises; Venice.

### Venecia: el problema del *overtourism* y el impacto de los cruceros

**RESUMEN:** Este trabajo pretende plantear el problema actual del turismo en la ciudad Venecia y, de manera más concreta, de cómo afecta el turismo de cruceros en la Venecia insular y en la laguna. El objetivo es poner de manifiesto cómo ha pasado de ser declarada Patrimonio de la Humanidad en 1987 a ser candidata a Patrimonio en Peligro desde 2016. La organización ha dado un ultimátum a la capital del Véneto para que sea capaz de regular el flujo turístico y velar por el cuidado del

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futuro de la ciudad. Para ello se analizarán los diferentes factores socio-culturales que han ido afectando a la modificación de la ciudad, principalmente relacionados con el sector turístico, como la relevancia del espacio y el contexto en una ciudad con tanta carga simbólica o el peso del mercado y los intereses económicos presentes en la actualidad, que han desembocado en uno de los casos de turistificación más impactantes. En toda esta problemática afecta especialmente el turismo de cruceros, siendo una de las ciudades principales dentro del circuito del Mediterráneo. Los cruceros crean un gran impacto en las ciudades y en Venecia en concreto, por su singularidad, con mayor impacto incluso. Contaminación, ruido, humo, alteración del patrimonio y del medio ambiente, puesta en peligro de la ciudadanía, del patrimonio arquitectónico y cultural y del medio ambiente. ¿A qué precio? Con todo este planteamiento, y dada la situación extrema a la que se ha llegado, se pretende llegar a una concienciación ciudadana, en la que una regulación y organización de los flujos turísticos y cruceísticos son claves para hacer que las ciudades sean habitables en un mundo en que el turismo no nos es ajeno.

**Clasificación JEL:** L83; O18; R1.

**Palabras clave:** turismo; turismo de masas; turismofobia; turismo de cruceros; cruceros; Venecia.

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays tourism is a democratised product, the true mark of globalization and of the different advances that both transport and technology have experienced. Sometimes, tourist consumption is so high that regulating it is complex. Due to this massive consumption some terms have emerged, such as «mass tourism» or «tourism-phobia», that affect the most visited cities in the world. Venice is one of these examples and its reduced space essentially forces visitors to be concentrated in the same place (at the same time) and so the actual visiting experience loses quality.

The main objective of the publication is to highlight the tragic transformation that Venice has experienced, from inscription to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1987 to the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2016. Venice is often referenced as a typical example, albeit on a smaller scale, reflected in a large number of cities worldwide

The article aims to question the cruise tourism and the way that it affects cities and more specifically Venice and to put in value Venice from different angles, analyzing different approaches and actions that have been taken. It aims to put in value the city from its spacial perspective, the historical Venice of Canals and the lagoon, out of the souvenir shops (ignored by many visitors).

To reach this objective it will be necessary first of all the situation of Venice, respect to (mass) tourism and how it affects the city, the context, society, the economy and the market. Secondly, the problem of cruises around the world and specifically in Venice. Finally, considering the different public and private proposals, as well as proposals from the citizenship and the reactions to the measures taken.

After analyzing the impact of tourism in economy and society, we conclude that we need to learn to live with tourism, trying to manage it in the most profitable way to society. Because of that, this article aims to be a compendium of all the causes of the touristic problem around Venice (that can also be applied to other cities), specially the problem of the cruises. We pretend this article to be a reflection and a reason for acting to reach the definitive change in a city that deserves to be protected and conserved, from different points of view: historically, patrimonially, architecturally, socially, anthropologically. Those causes of the problem should help to reach an improvement in regard to tourism management and avoiding «tourism-phobia».

## 2. The current situation of Venice

According to Salvatore Settis, archaeologist and art historian, «cities can die by three different ways: when they're destructed by an enemy, when a new civilization set up by force, expelling the natives and their gods and thirdly, when the inhabitants themselves lose their memory and become foreigners in their own city. If we look around, to our landscapes, to our cities, to be abandoned to beauty is not enough, is not even enough to ask beauty for a miraculous salvation [...]. Beauty will save nothing and no one, if even we are not able to save beauty. Neither culture, History, memory, economy [...] life» (Settis, 2014).

This reflection looks back on the restoration theory that was developed by John Ruskin in «The Seven Lamps of Architecture» (1849). Ruskin will be the first one defending the continued maintenance of an artwork, so that it does not disappear, defending conservation and avoiding restoration at all times. The objective of Ruskin is sustainability. He made eleven trips to Venice between 1835 and 1888 (Fernández, 2018), and thanks to them he wrote «The Stones of Venice» (1851-1853), an allegation against the Venetian contemporary restorations, defending the original artworks and, specially, the gothic ones, predominant in Venice at the moment. In the XIX century, Ruskin appealed for the defence of the buildings conservation and the city identity that today, two centuries later, is still being devastated.

The lagoon has been affected by different factors that have been developed over the years, even going worse. Today tourism is one of the biggest gentrification problems in cities and has become a double-edged weapon, especially when it is not controlled and become mass tourism, like has happened either in Barcelona, Florence, Prague or Venice. The last one is the more affected, because the city has not been able to maintain a balance between the primary needs of the citizen and the demands of the tourists, being the balance more in favour of the latter. Market has suffered a transformation, trying to be at the service of tourism and obviating the needs of the locals, increasingly more reduced, grown old and captive within the «sestieri» or neighbourhoods. Venice is one of the more tourism dependent cities all over the world, just to survive, and it is why it has developed a local economy destined entirely to tourism (Seguí, 2009).

The island is 156.9 km<sup>2</sup>, where 30 million tourists arrive each year (Valcárcel, 2018). Venetians do not want to live in their own city anymore and they are moving to the close Mestre. Because of this abandonment, and at this rate, Venice will become a «museum city». A similar situation occurred in 1630. Because of the bubonic plague there was a decrease in the population comparable to the current one (Bernabé, 2016). That makes us think about tourism as a pandemic. In the 1950s, as a result of the economic and demographic crisis in the city and the decadence of the tourist activity linked to the spas of the Lido, Venice started to promote a mass tourism in the city centre. From that moment on, the city has remained in a spiral of economical, residential, demographical crisis Urban crisis is still damaging Venice. It is reflected in exodus to mainland of many of the residents (mainly the youngest), the conquest of the city by tourists and foreign investors, the difficulties of renovation of the hamlet and the physical problems of the historical city centre. Because of all these problems the local and specialized market has lost prominence (Seguí, 2009).

Venice is one of the favourite destinies of the country, with an exponential growth that has overcome the global tourism growth trend. So much that between 1997 and 2010 the number of passengers increased by 440% and the landings of ships increased by 263%, indicating that the growth in tourist demand gradually flows in a growth of the ship size. Respect to cruises, the Stazione Marittima in Venice, is already considered one of the main gateways of tourism (Testa, 2011).

However, the different factors discussed above have caused that the indisputable label of Venice as World Heritage (1987) is put in doubt, faced with the threat of UNESCO to requalify it «in danger» and put it in the «blacklist» of the organization. The way that Venice has become from World Heritage Site to candidate for Heritage in Danger is clear and the factors that have influenced this change are different. Italia Nostra, responsible for the complaint (Menor, 2016), considers that if UNESCO decides to remove Venice from the list and put it into the «blacklist» is just a matter of time, as they did once with Dresden, after the building of a bridge visible from the baroque city (Settis, 2014).

## **2.1. Impact of tourism on space**

According to Settis, if Venice dies, it Will not happen because of an enemy invasion neither for the irruption of a new civilization (that could be tourism) but it will be because of the forgetfulness of itself. Settis means forgetfulness not the ignorance of the History but the lack of awareness regarding the specific role of the city, its uniqueness and diversity, something present in each city (Settis, 2014).

With this reflection makes responsible all Italians, Venetians (most of them already sensitized and victims of the situation) and authorities, who have the power of decision.

With this reflection Settis reaches the conclusion that cities are not only made of buildings and streets, but also of women and men with different relationships: cul-

tural, religious, social, vital. The urban form is generated and modified over the time according to a powerful mechanism that Henri Lefebvre calls production on space, which means that the space we live in is a social space per se, produced by the human, result of economic processes, politic decisions, cultural elections that modify the balance between public and private, religious and laic, functional and symbolic. Each society produces its own space, a necessary context of the economic activity, social hierarchies, power, knowledge, rites... Space is very relevant and identity. For this reason Venice has produced along the centuries a cultural and social space, with originality without measure (Settis, 2014).

Social space wraps and determines the body, generates perceptions, an order of values, layers of memory, experiences... Everything in the life of somebody depends on the space is surrounded by, and very rarely it can be controlled. However, the act of society in the space alters those relations, because of the change of traditions and habits, for example. In the city, in the way it was created, space is loaded with meaning. So, it offers to each one the physical coordinates of its experience, but also the meaning of membership, the collective identity where we reflect. Space in Venice was, and still is, own identity, not just because of the History, but also because of the ambient, with the environment of the lagoon, the life and memory of families, the canals, the cultural, artistic, religious and economical life (Settis, 2014).

Last February 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2018, the month of the Carnival, the appearance of Venice was unusual. We even did not find the famous «acqua alta», the scene was upset. On this occasion, an unusual low tide giving an image of empty Canals and gondolas stranded in the mud. Is not the first time that something like that happens in Venice. The city has suffered significant drops in water levels before. This year it has dropped 60 centimetres, in 2016 the water level dropped 66 centimetres, in 2008 and in 1989 it dropped 90 centimetres (La Vanguardia, 2018). The historical record of low tide occurred in 1934, with less 121 centimetres (La Nación). It could be because of the astronomical phenomenon of the blood blue super moon, which came out on the same week of February. But, on the other hand, another cause of this problem, of this alteration of its context and its reality, is due to tourism (and cruise tourism), because when the city put the interest in citizens, Canals were cleaned up of excess mud and were navigable most of the time (La Vanguardia, 2018).

Jacopo De' Barbari designed in 1500 in his famous Venice map the framework of secrets under the canals and the division in six neighbourhoods or «sestieri» that represent the six «ferro» teeth, the iron of the bow that decorates gondolas. But Venice is not just beauty, is the syncretism between East and West itself, is Marco Polo, is market, music, l' Arsenal and the ships, the salvation of the classics. Venice is Petrarca, the Biblioteca Marciana, Aldo Manuzio printing. It is also Lepanto, Palladio's architecture, the paintings of Carpaccio, Gentile Bellini, Tiziano, Tintoretto, «La Scuola Grande di San Rocco»... (Valcárcel, 2018) St Mark's horses, the «campanille» and the «com'era e dov'era» by Luca Beltrami.

It is so important the identity of Venice that from itself also emerges a very important concept in restoration, the «com'era e dov'era» by Luca Beltrami. On July 14,

1902, the «campanille» of St Mark collapsed, remaining the city without bell tower (again for not paying attention to the needs of the city). With the need for lifting a new tower, the purposes done are many and diverse, but at the end the chosen one is that made by Luca Beltrami, heir to the theories of John Ruskin and William Morris, because the sense of identity and membership were essential in Venice, and they are still important. On this occasion the idea is not to change the original view of the most representative square in the city. So Beltrami built the bell tower «com'era e dov'era», as it was and where it was. With Beltrami the current of the historical restoration starts.

## 2.2. Relation between tourism and market

Protected by its lagoon, in a millenary symbiosis, this city seems to be immune to any attack and unable to grow old: a happy island. But it is not really like this. The happiness that each traveller feels once arrived to Venice, instantly caught by the urban (and human) dimension and also the feeling of total immersion in a natural environment, soon gives way to other thoughts. It is enough to stay for a few hours in Venice to feel the dark ghosts of a «modernity» without future. Cruises burst the quiet walk, like enormous skyscrapers, creating a huge impact in the space of the city. Cruises never stop remembering us in each meeting that Venice is not eternally young and wonderfully complete in itself (like it seems to be), but nevertheless is old, dying, poor and it needs to begging from tourists. At all cost (Settis, 2014).

The Venice urban form seems to contradict the idea of «modernity» related to skyscrapers, because of the fact that it has no one and no traffic, apparently is an idyllic island. However cruises arrive at the heart of Venice, taking the shape of a «skyscraper-ship» humiliating the city and the Venetians, becoming an ephemeral and arrogant form of the skyscrapers. According to Settis, it happens just because impact of damage cannot be measured (Settis, 2014). It rather happens because Venice is sold to the consequences of the damages.

If Venice dies it won't die just Venice, but also the own idea of modern city, the city as a space where to develop the social life and to create culture. Venice is the largest icon of the western city preserved and, for that reason, is the biggest goal of the new barbarians, which want to put it to the «God market» service. Offending Venice is not an unwanted consequence, but the intention of the project itself. Desecration, moreover, the visibility of desecration has a symbolic meaning, it is a vulgar statement of «hypermodernity», that wants a past revenge, to humiliate Venice looking at it from the top of one of the big cruises either a rooftop in Rialto, or a skyscraper in Marghera, as if they were visiting the thematic park «Italia in miniatura» in Rimini (Settis, 2014). Venice does not need anything of this to be admired. It just needs services. It has been invested only in the tourism industry. If that policy had been followed Venice would only need to be preserved, because the good tourist admires it on its own.

To save Venice from the repeated commercial offers that can drive it to death, it is not enough to reactivate our memory or aesthetic taste, and not even to be conscious

of the problem. The key is to know how to do something relevant, trying to go further, creating social awareness, elaborating a project for the future that preserves the unity of the city and the care of the context and the environment. For this reason, Venice became a national and international fireproof, an experiment to analyze the accelerated degradation of city centres (Settis, 2014).

Market in Venice has entered into a phase of very pronounced specialization that leads the city to a musealization, like a tourist product itself. Venice has created a tourism dependant relationship, because the city does not conceive its survival without it. Venice has obviated the first need products and prevail the touristic sector, so that they need to demand tourists constantly, otherwise tourism makes life in Venice untenable. In a city with many conservation problems and with such a high maintenance cost, those who can afford to live in it are very few. The problem started with the investor's arrivals who are not involved in the management of the commercial space or the hamlet, where the city has being adapted to visitor's needs and demand, putting little resistance to a commercial and touristic model that does not benefit the city and that tests constantly its tourism carrying capacity. The city centre has been occupied by locals intended exclusively for tourists, such as souvenir shops, Venetian and regional craft (mainly masks and Murano glass objects) and, in this century, international luxury brands (Seguí, 2009). According to Seguí, the public agents declared that «the luxury shops seek to associate the beauty of the city with the beauty of their products, although the main controversy is that services have been closed to residents to open businesses oriented to tourism».

Luxury market includes a lot of products, such as leisure, tourism and culture services, that generate in the consumer a unique experience away from mass consumption. Taking into account the situation of Venice, some people think that luxury tourism is the solution of the problem, limiting the number of travellers and increasing the money income per tourist. That is why a maximum capacity was applied during the Carnival or control barriers were placed during the long weekend of May 2018 (Seguí, 2009). The idea of controlling the capacity in the Carnival came out to not overcrowd St Mark's Square. So to be able to attend the events it was a must to arrive in advance, while if you did not succeed more than 200 activities were offered. In 2017, 100,000 people came to «Il Volo dell' Angelo», so the need for controlling the capacity was clear, just for security reasons (Nuova Venezia, 2018, Contapersona, il Carnevale di Venezia sarà a numero chiuso). At the end, after considering different options, it was decided to fix a maximum capacity of 11,000 people in each show, as a measure of control of tourist flows, while resident's access was guaranteed. On the other hand, in St Mark's Square, the maximum capacity was 20,000 people, while the «voli dell' Angello e del Aquila», was the fifth of the capacity of previous years (Nuova Venezia, 2018, Carnevale di Venezia al via con il numero chiuso: steward ai varchi d'accesso). The installation of the four turnstiles in April 28, 2018, tried to regulate the capacity during the longweek of May and control the pedestrian and aquatic traffic. It was expected to be an action well accepted by Venetians. However, lot of venetians have reacted against this installation, because they felt even more in a kind of «Veniceland». Venetians think that «what it is necessary are houses, no check

points» so the same day as they were installed, one of the turnstiles was ripped (Repubblica, 2018, Tornelli per turisti a Venezia, ripristinato il varco rimosso dai centri sociali). The mayor testifies that he feels proud of the initiative because he considers that is the first action that has been taken, although the reception was expected to be more positive. However, the Council will try to take other measurements to regulate the flow of tourism (Verdú, 2018). The capacity has not been exceeded and the turnstiles were opened, even if the protests have continued throughout the month of June (Repubblica, 2018, Venezia, nuovo blitz dei centri sociali contro i tornelli: «Benvenuti a Veniceland»).

Lux market can be considered as a tool to renew and get better the commercial image of a city, but always with a local commitment. When it does not happen, a functional area can be gentrified and dedicated it to restricted users, causing an increase in the price of land, the expulsion of small local and regional commerce and the creation of a commercial duality. In small cities, as Venice, the differences between both types of commerce are much more visible and accused, so it is necessary to integrate the business establishments within the commercial planning policies that are to be carried out (Seguí, 2009).

In view of the above, different conclusions can be drawn: first at all the impact of tourism in society, economy and politics and the need to control it; secondly, the rejection reaction that arises from society to tourism; and finally, that Venice suffers a problem of special attention for different reasons, which should have already been solved.

### **3. The plague of cruise tourism in Venice**

#### **3.1. The World cruise activity**

The World Tourism Organization defines cruises from the conception of the ship as a floating resort and not as a mere means of transport, where recreational activities alternate both in the ship and in onshore. Therefore, cruise industry is different from other ways of travelling because it can be marketed like a transport or like a destiny, and you can enjoy one or both parts of the trip (Luna Buades, 2005). It is known as a tourist resort because it incorporates all kinds of facilities of a resort (Butler, 2008).

From the creation of the cruise service, the demand has been growing at an accelerated rate (one of the biggest growths in the last 30 years, close to the +8% cumulative annual), reflected in the touristic ranking, taking the main cruise companies the first positions. Cruises have boosted marine transport, exceeding 21 million passengers in 2014. It is a delocalized and global business with a huge impact because of its quick settlement. It highlights the success and economics strength, reducing costs to offer a low-cost service (Butler, 2008).

Calculating the economic impact of a destination is relevant since it allows objectively to assess whether cruise tourism is economically beneficial or not for the



local community. For this, must be considered the available infrastructures, level of development and accessibility of the destination, as well as the economic agents that intervene and an analysis of socioeconomic and environmental sustainability. The concept of cruise as marine resort implies greater interest of shipping companies in increasing the time of passengers on board, decreasing their stay at the destination and, therefore, reducing the local consumption. Furthermore, on some occasions, there is some competition between destinations and shipping companies, because the ship is a destination itself, generating almost no impact on the local economy. There is no doubt that tourism entails a transfer of income to the destination, although it is also true that a good part of the profits obtained reverts back to the tourism multi-nationals of developed countries, mainly hotel chains, tour operators and airlines or shipping companies. Part of this problem is because of the low participation of local agents and the limited regulation and taxation (Butler, 2008).

### 3.2. «No alle grandi navi»: the cruise problem in Venice

One of the main entry routes for tourists is the arrival of large cruises, one of the biggest current enemies of the city, because they generate a huge impact on the environment, they damage its basic constructive structure and the ecosystem and do not generate a prolonged wealth in the city. Venice receives 66,000 tourists a day. Of all these people, two and a half million tourists arrive on cruise each year (Valcárcel, 2018). In 2009, the number of passengers that have disembarked in Venice from cruises have been 1,420,490 and in 2010 1,598,616, with an increase of 12%. The crossing of the cruises by Bacino San Marco was of 1258 in 2010. Cruise passengers suppose a high number of visitors per year, who crowd in the same space during a specific time slot, turning the city into the kitsch card of itself (Testa, 2011).

Settis considers that the removal of cruisers from the city is not ordered because the damage cannot be accurately measured. What the authorities hide behind is in benefits. President of Venezia Terminal Passeggeri (vtp), Sandro Trevisanato, affirms that ships enrich the whole city and that the port guarantees direct products (230 million spent in the city by passengers) and indirect products (the complex of the economic activity triggered by cruise activity) of almost 500 million euros a year (Balance de previsión aprobado el 27 de septiembre de 2010) ([www.vtp.it](http://www.vtp.it)). It is estimated that the average daily expenditure of tourists in Venice is 120 to 160 €, which means 250,000,000 € a year (Valcárcel, 2018). Even so, a local impact cannot be demonstrated in all cases. Ministers, mayors and port authorities cannot be unaware of so much destruction, but they tolerate it (moreover, they encourage and promote it) in the name of a single value: money. A million and a half tourists a year, after having a distracted look at Venice, wander or buy something in the stalls, and most of the time the biggest impact is that they just pay an access fee (Settis, 2014).

The environmental factor is also added, if aesthetic or economy factors are not enough to put a stop to cruises. How much it costs to hurt Venice? Cruises are harmful and dangerous to the city and its inhabitants, despite the port authorities say the

opposite (Testa, 2011). Cruises represent a threat to the environment and it is essential that they respect the environment to preserve the local ecosystem (Luna Buades, 2005). To the horrible visual impact are added an increase in the turbidity of the water and the risk of collisions and spills of hydrocarbons in the heart of the city.

No one in the Ministry of the Environment or Palazzo Chigi has calculated the effects of displacement, the pressure of thousands of tons of water on the fragile coasts of Venice. Nobody has offered data on fine dust pollution (500 tons unloaded from ships in Venice in 2010); or the presence of highly toxic benzopyrene in the lagoon. No one offers data on radar contamination or on the release of poisons from antifouling paints (Testa, 2011). No one can say if the tumour diseases that could have these causes are increasing in recent years, even if the tumours registry indicates for Venice a «significant excess of pulmonary neoplasia» (Settis, 2014). Emissions produced by cruises are comparable to those of hundreds of thousands, even millions of cars. So, unfortunately, a city without traffic is now exposed to noise and pollution of cruises («Grandi navi a Venezia: tra turismo e tutela della Laguna, giusto lasciarle fuori?», 2017).

More than 12 cruises are often found in Venice at the same time and the Marittima docks are insufficient to park at night. Because of that, ships use to park to in Riva dei Sette Martiri, very close to houses, with engines running day and night, which means vibrations, smoke, noise, electromagnetic pollution by non-stop radars, etc. A 2004 agreement pretends that this situation in Riva dei Sette Martiri does not take place more than 7 times a year; however, this agreement is violated much more frequently (Settis, 2014).

Cruises problem affects in a global way because it supposes a great (mass) tourist impact instantly, a space impact and with little monetary repercussion (which would not justify it either). Locally there are few benefits, even if the cruise passenger benefits from the experience of visiting the city just for a few hours. Lot of cities suffer the spatial impact, altering their context and their routine. In Venice, where space is even more limited, the presence of these great ships (and tourists) is immediately noticed.

Salvatore Settis wonders: why, if we want to bring tourists to Venice by sea, does it have to be with super-polluting ships that glide through the city like they were skyscrapers? The excuse is always the same: without the cruises there would be no tourists (Settis, 2014). It is remarkable how a high percentage of citizens see a positive contribution and employment creation; on the other hand, others see the collateral damage created in the environment by the cruises in the lagoon, at the bottom of the canals, in the environment... («Grandi navi a Venezia: tra turismo e tutela della Laguna, giusto lasciarle fuori?», 2017).

«And they call them ships». That is the name of the publication of Silvio Testa, Venetian journalist that has followed closely, during the last 40 years, the main events of his city. Actually they should be ships, but are not very similar to the great ships that are remembered from History (Testa, 2011). Testa defines these giants like temples of consumerism, a «super-cruises» that shamelessly conquer the capital of Veneto, destroying its horizon (and its sunsets). They look more like one of the Las

Vegas hotels than a ship. As in Las Vegas, here we can find ships with thousands of rooms of «exclusive» luxury. And they transmit the illusion of apparent luxury, but keeping costs low: here the unskilled staff, the disasters such as Isola del Giglio with Costa Concordia on January 13, 2012. Many platforms testify the fear of a catastrophe in the city centre.

These ships look more and more to cities, they are the reincarnation of skyscrapers. However, there is nothing naturalness. Actually, their moment of glory is when they break in Bacino San Marco, showing their arrogance, challenging millenary basilica, the bronze horses, the Palazzo Ducale (Settis, 2014). Fortunately, it is not happening now, after the action taken by UNESCO in January 2018 to ships of more than 55,000 tons. The solution is to cross Malamocco and to dock in the port of Marghera, in Mestre and tourists being transferred to the city by bus (Cadena Ser, 2017).

These cruises are like floating cities, 60 meters high, even more, higher than the «palazzi» of the Grand Canal. Actually, the average height of the buildings in Venice does not exceed 15 meters (Testa, 2011). For example, the Voyager of the seas is 63 meters high, 311 long and 47 wide. Because of that any visual perception is upset. Cruises come into the heart of Venice to appreciate its beauty. However they damage it and disturb the perception of the city (aesthetically and culturally), its context, its environment, to people in their home or the street, creating a shadowy effect like seeing an eclipse (Settis, 2014). Cruise tourism is selfish and vague commitment.

The conclusion of this chapter is that cruise tourism is one of the touristic offers with higher impact on space, society and environment. It is one of the more difficult ways to control tourism flow. Moreover, it highlights the case of Venice, where economic interests prevail over the other ones.

## **4. Responses to cruise tourism in Venice**

### **4.1. Measures against irresponsible tourism plans**

Once all the studies and problems caused by cruises as a touristic option and in Venice in particular have been raised, proposals are different to keep them out of the city. Nowadays, there is no consensus, so the decision has been taken to divert cruises weighing more than 40,000 tons, preventing them from passing through Bacino. At least this measure is already recognizing the risk («Grandi navi a Venezia: tra turismo e tutela della Laguna, giusto lasciarle fuori?», 2017).

Who want to abuse the lagoon always remember that it is artificial, which is true, but it has been for thousands of years, while its balance it has been only broken less than two hundred years ago, to allow the development of a modern port. In 1901 the average depth of the mouths of the port was 7.5 meters in Lido, 9.5 meters in Malamocco and 4 meters in Chioggia. Today, to allow the passage of cruises (increasingly large) the depth has reached 12 meters in Lido, 17 meters in Malamocco and 9 meters in Chioggia (Testa, 2011).

Proposals are very varied: to build a floating port in the entrance to the port, outside the island of MoSe (Modulo Sperimentale Elettromeccanico), therefore at the sea; to build a fix port co-located; or, as Italia Nostra proposes, that ships go to other cities such as Trieste or Ancona... The interests are strong, also in Europe, but the Italian State has the power to prohibit the definitive entrance to the ships («Grandi navi a Venezia: tra turismo e tutela della Laguna, giusto lasciarle fuori?», 2017).

It is remarkable that the MoSe, the project of mobile dams in the entrances of the port, does not serve to protect Venice from «acqua alta», as the rest of the world is led to believe. However, its function is to maintain an incompatible port in the lagoon. With a port with some functions in line with the place, it could return to a more balanced lagoon and the «acqua alta» would have lower levels and frequencies (Testa, 2011). This argument has been a taboo, as a port outside the lagoon would have made useless the MoSe.

With regard to the open sea port, it can be taken into account for cruises, trying to solve in a sustainable manner the way of taking passengers to Venice. In any case, the number of cruises should be reduced, because they can not only depend on the exponential growth imposed by world trends and port, economic and tourism interests. Moreover, this kind of tourism must be regulated, because is not respectful (Testa, 2011).

## **4.2. Private initiatives**

The article focuses mainly on private initiatives, because public support is limited. Due to the gentrification process that the city has suffered, many movements (physical and virtual) have been organized in and around Venice, to defend it from all the points in which it is affected and attacked by this new epidemic.

Many platforms have been created, because there are many venetians who are against cruises and are joining forces. In Facebook, for example, you can find the group «Fuori le maxinavi dal Bacino di San Marco» (Fuori le maxinavi del bacino di San Marco, 2018). There are posted news, pictures, videos about the city, events appointments, relevant information...

The organization «Comitato No grandi navi – Laguna Bene Comune» organizes a movement that seeks the expulsion of the cruises from the Bacino di San Marco (today those exceeding 40,000 tons), defending the symbiosis between Venice and the lagoon. The organization organized a self-managed referendum on June 18, 2017. In this referendum population should answer the following question: «Do you want the cruises to be out of the Venetian lagoon and that no new excavations are made in the lagoon?» Results were unexpected for the organization, with a participation of 18,105 people, 80% of them venetians, the rest foreign. 17,874 people, that is a 98.72%, voted affirmatively. Undoubtedly, the referendum will be decisive to advance with the problema (Pietrobelli, 2017).

Thanks to the project Venexodus, hundreds of venetians have protested (picture 14) against what is probably the most alarming depopulation in the world, caused by high rents, the shortage of housing supply and growing tourist industry. Citizens demand a limit on the flow of tourism and more affordable housing (to prevent the population diminishing further). Population in Venice has decreased to 55,000, since around 175,000 in 1951, with a decrease of 66% (La Nuova di Venezia e Mestre, 2017). Around a thousand residents leave the city each year. Meanwhile, the number of visitors has experienced a massive increase in the last 25 years, benefiting hotels and local operators, as well as those who rent apartments to tourists. It is difficult to try to find a balance in a city where tourism gives life to it while taking it away, at the same time. «Tourism made us rich in a short term, but it is killing us in a long term», said Matteo Secchi, from the Secchi community group. «We are turning into Pompeii, a place where people come to visit and says is fantastic, but nobody lives in there». Our of the thirty million tourists that Venice receives, only 25% overnight (Valcárcel, 2018).

There are other initiatives to deal with the matter from another focus, as «Venecia (NO) está en venta», the curatorial project by Anita Ozores and Valentina Negro selected for the sevillian contemporary artfair S.A.CO. Different contemporary problems of Venice are highlighted through different artistic projects. The Venetian life and the impact of cruises in it versus the touristic city are shown through photography and videoart. Venetians have participated in some of the projects, as Vogliamo Venezia, who organized a Flash mob in front of Palazzo Ducale with photographs of cruises after rejecting the exhibition of the artist Gardin, who works on this subject [S.A.CO 2016: Venecia (NO) está en venta, entrevista a Anita Ozores y Valentina Negri, 2016].

It is very useful to make a search in social network with the hashtag #NoGrandiNavi. Users even public pictures of other cities like Genoa. Thanks to this hashtag we can analyze the involvement of the population with the cruises conflict, their presence in demonstrations and what they demand.

On the occasion of the celebration of the LGTBIQ Pride, Facebook launched a campaign in June 2015, in which users could add an automatic filter with the multicolour flag, in defence of sexual rights (20 Minutos, 2015, Facebook crea un filtro arcoíris para que sus usuarios celebren el orgullo gay en su foto de perfil). The next option that Facebook brought was to allow to place the French flag on the occasion of the Parisian attacks, some months later, in November 2015 (20 Minutos, 2015, Facebook habilita la opción de poner la bandera francesa en la foto de perfil). The social network has added different frameworks. Since 2017 one can be added against all that is involved in cruise tourism, thanks to the collaboration of the Facebook group «Fuori le maxinavi del Bacino di San Marco».

After all the issues raised in this chapter, it can be concluded that there is a certain level of awareness, reflected in the different efforts of action. However they have not been enough to provide a solution to the trinomial Venice-tourism-cruises. It is a must that Venice tries to reach a balance between its immediate economic

needs, protected by tourism, and to ensure its role as a city and to be able to perpetuate itself.

## 5. Conclusions

Once the whole article has been examined, different conclusions can be drawn, from the analysis of tourism and cruises tourism in general and particularly in Venice. After analyzing the current situation of tourism, it is remarkable the impact that it makes economically, socially and contextually, so the negative social reaction to in many cases. Tourism democratization has led to a disproportionate use of it, not in excess but with a bad management, even if an increasing consumption was foreseen. The problem in Venice is even more remarkable for its particularities. Figures are overwhelming. A city of 156.9 km<sup>2</sup> receives 30 million tourists per year. Tourists do not stop coming, motivated by cruises too (in 2017 2.5 millions of people landed). Population has descended two-thirds since the last century, becoming one of the most notable case of gentrification and touristification. The problem in the island has been that the market of tourism has been imposed on the needs of citizens, and now tourism has an effect on space day by day. All this has ended in «tourism-phobia». Many travellers visit Venice, admiring it, and getting lost in its corners, going beyond St Marks, the Bridge of Sighs or Rialto. Tourism is a power in Venice, but Venetian people must take care of it, taking actions to not to squeeze the city (like getting out the cruises of the Bacino). Venetians (and Italians) should ask for a cultural focus, with visitors able to appreciate its value and history. All this is a long-term problem and without being solved yet, which still requires strict control measures. Cruise tourism makes a negative impact and that is why citizens of different cities are mobilising. If actions are not taken, people will reject tourism, generating new cases of «tourism-phobia».

After analyzing all the problems caused by cruises tourism, in any of our cities and particularly in Venice, it can be concluded that is necessary to control the entrance of cruises to the heart of the city. Each city, from its identity, capabilities and qualities, should be able to offer a rich tourist offer. Personally, I consider cruises incompatible with this option, maybe the cruises on the high seas, but not tourists in mainland, who are unable to enter the city (regardless of what their interests are). Even though, cruises as means of transport produce a huge environmental impact that has to start to be disregard, considering the wide touristic offer that we can find on Internet and in touristic agencies. Cruise tourism is one of the tourism offers that cause the biggest impact in space, society and environment. And controlling tourism flow through cruises is very difficult. Moreover, it is remarkable the economic interests, that prevail over the other one. This is a typical management problem that must be improved following smart tourism destination tools.

Venice has fought against different problems along its history, trying to preserve its values to remain the unique city which is today. July 14, 1902 the Bell Tower collapsed, for not taking due measures in advance. With Beltrami starts the

current of the historical restoration, a response inspired in John Ruskin and in William Morris. The campanile was reconstructed «com'era e dov'era» (like it was and where it was), a concept that will be known internationally. From that moment the bell tower of St Mark honours the conservation of the spatial concept and the context. Every time that a cruise comes into the lagoon and breaks the context, taints the name of Ruskin, Morris and Beltrami, their publications, the «com'era e dov'era» and the later restoration letter and current restoration documents influenced by all of them.

We admire Venice and its lagoon because of its ability to adapt (now missing), for its struggle, against invasions, against epidemics, tides, humidity, but not against itself. Venice has too many problems to be damaged by extra pollution, with excesses of tides, with giants that break its context, a context that anyone admires just for the fact of being Venice. Because when Venice plays not to be itself, the city loses. And now the countdown has started.

Venice is digging its own tomb, being aware of it. Because of its particularities, Venice needs a special action (didn't take). It is why the state of the city has been worst than others. However, it is expected to be a global example to not allow a touristic management problem become a social problem with an unpopulated city. To prevent that is necessary to consider the touristic behaviours, the consequence of all the problems and the action of the State, and to be focus in a quality and respectful tourism.

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