

# Market Spaces, Production Sites, and Sound Landscape of European Cities: From History to Regeneration

Edited by Elena Svalduz



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# The Participants' Project Works for the International Summer School

Giulia Becevello

## The Context

The *Market Spaces and Production Sites of European Cities: From History to Regeneration* International Summer School offered to the participants the possibility to reflect on the current situation of trades and commercial exchanges in the markets. On one side these human activities have a rich history and precise traditions but, on the other side, today they are also forced to face a heavy crisis.

The description of several cases in Italy and in Europe, together with many different hypotheses of reuse and development, was the starting point for a well-structured meditation realised on important themes by the participants. The most relevant one concerned the role of market spaces and their buildings, not only as a commercial site, but also as a place in which people can meet themselves, exchange experiences and express traditions. From this perspective, these places must be considered not only a physical space and a centre of production but, above all, an important cultural and historical heritage. Therefore, the participants took inspiration from these themes and from the practical examples presented by the speakers of the International Summer School. The lectures offered an in-depth analysis of some important interventions that took place in Italian cities, like Venice, Bologna, Florence, Turin, Milan, and Euro-

pean ones, such as London, Antwerp, Paris and Barcelona. They all thought over their market spaces and developed a revitalisation that considered both economical and cultural activities.

### **The Team Works: Hypotheses for Market Spaces Regeneration in Venice and Padua**

The principal city to which the works developed by the participants of the International Summer School paid close attention was Venice, focusing in particular on the Rialto fish market. The proposal for its regeneration has been seen from several points of view, and the first draft project was developed by Tania Cerquiglini, Marin Duic, Intaraboonsom Nussara, Pietro Tonini, Caroline Vigna and Silvia Catarina Virgens on the Rialto market linked with a proposal for urban regeneration that involved several fields of knowledge, i.e. architecture, urban planning and cultural heritage. The result was the project *Per il mercato*, that started from a consideration on the background of the market, that was also a centre in which Venetians administered justice and the historical heart of the city. With the passing of time, this place had to face several problems, like the decrease of both the importance and the number of the local market stores in the historic city centre with the consequent reduction of buyers and sellers, accompanied by a huge contrast between public and private sectors.

For these reasons, the members of the group understood the need to think in a different way the central position of the Rialto market with the development of a *Four Dimensions Branding Model for Rialto Market*, based on new commercial activities and on social events, managed also by the local artisans and traders, in order to preserve their culture and traditions. On the practical side, the main focus of this project became a modular system of fish counter, that allows to use the market space even during the closing time, so as to redesign temporal and spatial perimeters. The fish counter is designed as a flexible element, that can be modulated as a stage, as a lecture or as an outdoor kitchen setting. This could represent a first step, together with the reconstruction of the culture of the market, that should be transmitted also through the iconographic image of the Rialto Market, replicated in recyclable bags for shopping, in the notebooks to mark the lists, in the food paper used to wrap fish. *Per il mercato* becomes in this way a project that tries to trace a new trajectory towards the Rialto market, imagining new perimeters to be built and able to cross the entire city, giving back to the Rialto area its central role in Venice.

A second project focused on the Rialto Market has been realised by the group formed by Elisa Dallanoce, Lucy Gallwey, Vendula Hoppe, Lara Meneghini, Alessia Socciarelli and Kate M. Wilcox. They developed a draft project on a

museum in the Rialto market in Venice, called *SENSORIUM - Storie dal mercato di Rialto. Venezia come centro di un'economia-mondo*.

The museum concept focuses on interpreting the market as a multidimensional space to be experienced through the five human senses. Tackling its historical impact and development, the museum will offer itself as a collective space where it is possible to connect past and present. Also the idea for the location is very important in this perspective: the group members proposed the upper floor of the Rialto fish market, allowing the visitors to get a deep glance to the market from up above. The wide room of the exhibition may be organised in many designed positions in order to express all the different themes in a clear way. First of all, entering into the museum space, past and present voices are heard through voiceovers, giving a sense of the core of Venice history and trading traditions, together with a video projection of the historical evolution of the Rialto market, with audio tracks replicating the sounds of the market and its evolution. Then the exhibition starts with the first sense, smell, with an overview of the history of the trade and the history of traded goods, followed by the sight, expressed by a comparison between the architectural structure of the market area in the past and today and a description of the changes in the trading traditions. Hearing should be depicted by using the voices of merchants, asked to tell their stories and to link them with the trades of the past. Touch and taste could be expressed by several different activities, such as workshops, educational activities, the description of ancient recipes and the display of archaeological artifacts, like tableware pottery and cooking tools. The exhibition underlines the importance of an analysis of the market spaces not only from a simple historical reconstruction, but also by using all the five senses, that are constantly stimulated through the market counters.

The third project about Venice was developed by the team work whose members were Paolo Notargiacomo, Giovanni Ratti, Giacomo Tozzato and Lisa Turatello. They analysed the area of Rialto with a draft project on a virtual tour in collaboration with *Progetto Rialto*, the Venetian association that tries to revitalise the area of the market with several different initiatives. The group members tried to develop an App, called *Rialto market*, in order to allow the users to discover the most attractive «secrets of the Rialto neighborhoods». Obviously, the starting point is the market with the *Pescaria*, described by using short historical notes and pictures. A second page is dedicated to Rialto Bridge, with the reconstruction of its transformations in the centuries, shown also through its representation in paintings and photos. The third section describes the San Giacomo church, strictly connected with the near market and described by using not only photos and pictures, but also with a video. Finally, the last part is



dedicated to a focus on the figure of the Dutch poet Constantijn Huygens, who visited Venice, and the Rialto area in particular way, in 1620.

The chance to discover these important monuments by using an App, allows the users to explore this part of the city while walking through its «calli» and to appreciate all the historical facts described directly on site.

Another way to examine the Rialto market concerned the development of a draft project on the traditional arts and crafts history. The team with Federico Camerin, Maki Ueta and Francesca Zanutto decided to focus on a specific subject: *Silk road as a cultural leverage. Bringing together history and future network*. Their idea is to create a new Silk Road Museum in the island of Lido, the original gateway of Venice from the sea before the construction of the Ponte della Libertà, to enhance the cultural and commercial connections between East and West. This place should be connected with stories related to the silk heritage in Venice and in other countries also through an App. Moreover it could offer a focus on the reconstruction of the history of the Venetian silk industry and its development through the centuries, until today, when the Venetian production has lost its competitiveness. An analysis of this evolution would be useful also in order to think about the future of Venice and to find out new proposals for the rebirth of these trades in the city. The group members closed their activity underlining the role of Venice in silk trade and in the relationship between East and West. In order to rediscover the importance of the city in this context, small scale initiatives based on local productions managed by local people should be welcomed for the site regeneration. Moreover, it would attract also external people, involved in new global networks and recovery projects.

The last project related to Venice and, in particular, to Rialto market, was dedicated to a study on a hypothetical historical exhibition, *The 19th-century projects for the Rialto Pescheria*, by the team work with Philippe Arthur dos Reis, Renata Geraissati, Giulia Riconzi, Ana Carolina Silva, Tommaso Zorzi. The exhibition was conceived as a virtual tour, with an ideal background with viewer accessing virtual «rooms» as to follow an actual exhibition path. The introduction could describe the transformation in Rialto through the centuries, with a focus on the present situation of the market. But the absolute protagonists of the exhibition should be the historical projects drawings, starting from the one realised by Giuseppe Salvadori in 1838 and suggesting a covered market with a Doric facade. The second group of drawings, suggested by Federico Berchet in 1865, would have transformed the entire area of Rialto, with the realisation of a grandiose iron structure in Lombard style and a direct connection to the train station via an iron bridge that would have underlined the role of Rialto as the city centre. In 1875, Annibale Forcellini projected a new covered central market

with a single facade on the Gran Canal. Only four years later, Antonio Saccomanni imagined for Rialto a space big enough to free the Rialto bridge area from street vendors, in order to restore the bridge arches. The result would have been a complex building made by glass and iron vaults with a classicist facade on the Gran Canal embellished by a triumphal arc at the centre. At the end the municipality decided to build just the fish market on the *Rio delle Beccarie*, with the final project of Domenico Rupolo e Cesare Laurenti, finished in 1908.

The projects could be accompanied by a group of paintings and photos, showing the transformation of Rialto during the nineteenth and twentieth century, by descriptions and handbooks written by the travellers. In this way the virtual exhibition offers the possibility to show the Rialto market of the nineteenth century as a vital place, with several personalities involved.

Another city with a rich and popular market also nowadays is Padua. The group made by Giulia Becevello, Martina Ghelli, Sarah Spencer, Enrico Valseriati had the possibility to work on urban regeneration, developing a draft project on main «piazze» (i.e. market squares) in the city centre. The group members tried to express their ideas and researches through the podcast *Padua and its markets*. The aim was to discuss the very particular relationship of Padua and its market squares, which pulsate with life at the heart of the city. Testified for the first time at the end of the twelfth century, the two main commercial squares of the city, *Piazza delle Erbe* and *Piazza della Frutta*, were conceived by the municipal authorities in dialogue with the institutional buildings: firstly, the *Palazzo della Ragione*, and subsequently the palaces of the *Podestà*, the *Anziani* and the Civic Council. Apart from the architectural exterior of these urban spaces, the most interesting aspect is the continuous use of the squares as places of commerce and markets throughout the centuries: a real rarity, even for a country with such strong commercial traditions as Italy. Today the squares of Padua are still urban spaces of strong social interaction and attachment to civic identity.

Yet even this symbol of a historic city today is experiencing a state of crisis, which began before the Covid19 pandemic. Amidst the risks of closures and economic difficulties, however, traders and buyers have strongly defended the social role of markets and squares in the urban fabric of Padua, and have promoted a protection consortium, known as «Il Salone».

The group members decided to interview traders and patrons of this historic city market to understand what they expect from the future and what solutions can be found to keep the medieval markets of Padua alive. The traders underlined the strong link between Padua and its markets, that are the distinctive sign of a true “market life”. They also spoke about some problems, like the difficulties to maintain traditions connected to these activities also nowadays

with globalisation or the competition of the online sites. Some solutions could be linked to a better organisation of transports and to a better management of marketing, that encourages visitors to walk around and through the city.

Also patrons expressed interesting opinions about the connection between Padua and its markets but they underlined also the competition of supermarkets: they are more convenient and they offer also a higher variety of products in the same place. However, markets are always very busy, because they take place in the most famous and popular squares, which also attract both the Paduans who go out for a walk and tourists.

The interviews showed that Padua retains a strong connection to its market spaces, even if they are nonetheless facing unprecedented challenges as shopping habits change rapidly, with consumers preferring to shop at supermarkets or online for convenience. For this reason, although the history of these market spaces and the continuous function they have served throughout the centuries, these spaces must move with the times if they are to survive. The market squares should work for everyone, but above all, for the citizens of the city itself, with the introduction of more spaces for the community. In this way the markets in Padua will not be dead spaces of the past, but will remain very much alive, today and in the future too.

## Conclusions

Through these workshop experiences, the different groups had the opportunity to reflect on two particular cases, Venice and Padua. However these two examples can be considered also as a paradigm for many other cases in Italy and, more in general, in Europe. Indeed, the regeneration of market spaces can be realised in several cities, analysed by considering several points of view, such as the complex mechanisms of history, the present experiences and hypotheses for the future.

All the team works considered these ideas while working and developed their interesting draft projects by using different ways to express, such as PowerPoint presentations, Apps and podcasts. The final results have been collected and it is possible to discover more about them by visiting the link designated to the *Market Spaces, Production Sites, and Sound Landscape of European Cities: from History to Regeneration* International Summer School.<sup>1</sup> Every draft project offers the possibility to examine the different themes developed in depth, with a well-finished bibliography and a rich collection of links concerning related topics.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.beniculturali.unipd.it/www/corsi/summer-schools/international-summer-scho->

The possibility to reflect on these themes and, in particular, on the regeneration of historical markets, represents an important starting point for the safeguard and the exploitation of city centres, as witnesses of a great past but also as protagonists of the present and the future life of all the citizens that everyday walk through their counters.