Università
Ca'Foscari
Venezia

Master's Degree programme

in Marketing and Communication

Final Thesis

From Place Identity to the Identity of a Place: Place Branding practices against the contemporary Urban Challenges of Venice

Supervisor
Ch. Prof. Cinza Colapinto

Graduand
Diego Domenichelli
Matriculation Number 890071

Academic Year
2022 / 2023

SUMMARY

ABSTRACT

The urban challenges that the City of Venice has to face are complex and interrelated. The overabundance of tourism creates imbalances in the city centre, in the natural ecosystem of the Lagoon, and in the relationship between the renowned historical centre and its counterpart on the mainland. The city appears divided in two halves, one in the water and one on the land, separated but bound to each other. In this thesis, the issues of overtourism, depopulation and environmental fragility of Venice have been reframed in terms of the concepts of place and identity to offer a better understanding of the present and future of the City of Venice. The sociological theory of frontstage-backstage proposed by Goffman was utilised in concomitance with the framework of place identity introduced by Relph and the concept of the non-place by French anthropologist Marc Augé. Considering this toolbox, the problems of Venice and Mestre on the mainland cannot be solved without a multi-stakeholder approach aimed at consulting the voices of the residents. Interviews with creative personalities of Venice were collected to understand the internal point of view that is key for the development of the creative city. Co-creation will be the key for the new place branding of the city centre and the creative placemaking in Mestre, to allow both halves to have a role on the stage of Venice.

Keywords

Venice, Mestre, place identity, place branding, placemaking, creative cities, quarter.

INTRODUCTION

In his novel *Invisible cities* (1972), Italian writer Italo Calvino collects the descriptions of dozens of cities. The narrative ploy follows the tales of Marco Polo, tasked by the emperor Kublai Khan to depict all the cities of his empire, for it is so vast that he will never be able to visit it all. Marco Polo, on the contrary, recollects his visits to some fifty-five cities from first-hand experience, although it is never clear if any of these fantastic places are even real or not. Like the historic explorer, the narrator in Calvino's fiction is linked to Venice, from where he started his voyages. The Khan confronts him about it:

> "There is still one of which you never speak."
> Marco Polo bowed his head.
> "Venice," the Khan said.
> Marco smiled. "What else do you believe I have been talking to you about?"
>
> (Calvino, 1974: 86, English translation by W. Weaver)

For any reader who has ever set foot in Venice, in fact, it is impossible not to recognise some of the characteristics of the city in Calvino's book. Venice is so iconic that even in real life any time a city interacts with water it gets compared to it: Amsterdam is "the Venice of the North" while a few canals on the Californian coast are enough to call the neighbourhood Venice Beach, and the list could go on. A clear picture comes to mind whenever the name of Venice comes up, almost every person in the world can recollect a picture of its iconic canals and bridges. Yet this is an illusion: the concept of the City of Venice is foggy, mixing various levels of inclusion in its borders. The identity of the City of Venice seems unclear because paramount features of identity are not delineated with clarity: the name does not match one singular entity, instead it can be reconducted to a plurality of concentric areas: the narrow streets and bridges over the canals, the archipelago immerged in its Lagoon, the capital of the Veneto region of Italy, a big city that stretches on the mainland much more than through the sandbanks of the Lagoon. This thesis originates from this confusion.

Urbanist Ali Cheshmehzangi published a book titled *Identity of Cities and City of Identities* (2020) where he collected analysis of several iconic cities all over the world to compare what makes them unique and what characteristics could instead create bridges

among them. The identity of a city is presented in the book to be as important as the identity that people develop based on the city in which they live, highlighting the complex interplay between the characteristics of the place one inhabits and the personal wellbeing and well-adjustment that is manifested in their day-to-day life. Theories like this intersect place and identity, creating a net that brings together notions of urban architecture, sociology, and marketing. In this thesis, the main findings in the literature around these concepts will be explored in order to create a framework through which the case of Venice can be interpreted and therefore approached.

The search for the identity of a city is not a straightforward process. When talking about individuals, the definition of one's identity emerges through various interactions with the surrounding environment. Identity is described as "bricolage" (Leyshon & Bull, 2011) representing the negotiations to distinguish and name various categories, such as class, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexuality, consumption preferences. Individuals constantly bargain their membership to these categories to delineate their identity (Vainikka, 2012). The process of identification unites the individual to its peers while at the same time distancing him or her from others. The duality of individual identity, on one hand connecting to others and on the other hand setting the individual apart from everybody else, is mirrored in the duality of collective identity. The identity of a community emerges in contrast with outsiders, forming a shared sense of "we" that can be both rooted in actual structures or fictional features and experiences (Paasi, 1986). Collective identity is thus a process rather than a property (Smith, 1996; Snow & Corrigall-Brown, 2015). The connection of collective identity to the spatial setting is clear. Boundaries are fundamental in the differentiation between the "here" and "there", "us" and "them" (Eisenstadt & Giesen, 1995). Place and community are strongly connected, and individuals become aware of it when they stand at the borders of their culture. The strength of preserving local identities also resides in the right to decide who can enjoy it and who cannot (Huigen *et al*., 2000).

If identity is so strictly bound to notions of place, how is place defined then? The definition proposed by Relph (1976) indicates place as a centre of special importance and meaning that is differentiated from the rest by the quality of "*insideness*": nodes of meaning, intention and purpose for humans that can be attached to buildings or wide areas (Relph, 1976: 21). The concept of place can be interpreted in essentially two ways.

On one hand, place is hardly tangible at all, being analysed as the canvas on which political and interpersonal interactions get displayed along their ever-changing process (Sheller & Urry, 2009). On the other hand, it lays at the intersection of human activities and the realm of experience that shapes and gets shaped by its physical setting. This mutual influencing of experience and place is the framework that seems the most appropriate to evaluate the case of Venice. The city shapes the existence of any person who inhabits or visits it, maybe more than any other city, yet at the same time its neighbourhoods seem so vulnerable to the activity of humans now more than ever.

Recognising the interplay between place and identity is the key to understanding the differences between place identity and identity of place. Peng, Strijker and Wu (2020) explain that both places and people can manifest place identity, but through two different processes that are however linked. On the one hand, *place identity of people* derives from the aspects of one's identity that are shaped through the person's relationship with important places. It becomes part of one's identity: a person can be blonde, a musician, born in Manchester and living in Nairobi. Place can be seen as an extension of the self, experienced for example through the feeling of loss when moving houses; a reflection of the self, noticeable in the way people mould their places according to their personalities; or a connection to the self, which is place attachment (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2012). *Place attachment* is the subjective tie to the cultural and historical contexts of a place, it can form through a plethora of experiences of familiarity, security, memory, or shared activities; it can be linked to an explicit spiritual or communal sacred significance, but also to a mundane interaction (Tuan, 1976). Place attachment is a complex phenomenon that can vary in spatial level, degree of specificity, and social or physical features of the place (Masterson *et al.*, 2017).

A second outcome of the interaction between place and identity is represented by *place identity of places* (Peng, Strijker & Wu, 2020), which seems to identify the characteristics that separate one place from all others, like the city's identity in Cheshmehzangi's book sets the selected city apart in the world of cities. It is intended here the identity of the city or, more in general, the *identity of place*: the characteristics that make it possible to distinguish a place from all other places. Every city in Calvino's book, for example, appears different from all others because the words of Marco Polo narrate their identity, the characteristics that make them unique. As was noted by the resilience

theory (Leixnering & Höllerer, 2022), there is something on top of the physical setting: a "spirit of the place" that persists even through impactful change in the basic components of identity. *Genius loci* is described as the "living ecological relationship between an observer and an environment, a person and a place" (Relph, 1976: 66). The term is borrowed from the Roman religion which worshipped the protective spirit of a place and evolved into an unselfconscious side of place that describes the specific cultural and social characteristics that exist within a place (Walczak & Kepczynska-Walczak, 2013). Residents themselves may not easily identify it, but it emerges through the unique physical and social character of a place. In a city, it is conveyed through multiple sign systems: the built environment, historical experiences and cultural understandings, depictions in the media or in guidebooks (Jones & Svejenova, 2017). Place identity and identity of place are the two main axis along which Venice and its places will be studied in this thesis. Recognising the ambiguity of the name and boundaries of the city, for instance, is the first step towards the definition of the identity of Venice. If Marco Polo had to describe it to Kublai Khan, would he talk about churches and bridges? Would he mention the myriad of islands in the lagoon? Would he include the neighbourhoods on the mainland?

If place is shaped by human experience, the dimension of the city allows for interaction to happen faster and more directly than anywhere else (Relph, 1976). Venice appears to be an excellent case to therefore analyse the interactions between a place and its dwellers. Anybody would probably be able to sum up what are the characteristics that, in their own opinion, make Venice stand out from other places. However, the uniqueness that is most relevant to this analysis is the fact that Venice is a *city* like no other. The historic centre, being designed entirely for the human scale, represents the perfect place where for a walker to appropriate its environment (Jones & Svejenova, 2017). In Venice the interaction of the pedestrian with the cityscape cultivates a deeper understanding of its nuances; the movement along the preset paths is immersive, letting the dweller observe not just a couple of monumental buildings, but instead discover smaller details like a window, a balcony, a boat, an unexpected and picturesque view (Parmeggiani, 2016). From an urbanistic point of view, the islands of Venice represent an excellent example of human-centric urban design. Moreover, the duality between the Lagoon and the Mainland of Venice offers fertile terrain to discuss the past, present, and future of

urban areas, evolving from smaller collections of neighbourhoods easily identifiable through their specific crafts (Trivellato, 2000), into larger megalopolis and urban sprawls around a distinctive city centre (Florida *et al*., 2008a), back into several autonomous districts interconnected within mega-regions (van Houtum & Lagendijk, 2001). The relationship between the city centre and its counterpart on the mainland is not smooth at all. On one side, Mestre would benefit from a separation, gaining its independence and the ability to focus its resources on the mainland alone, but the area would also lose most of its attractivity, perhaps continuing to serve as a dormitory for the overflow of Venice but with more difficult administration across the two towns. On the other side, Venice could regain its historical role as the city on the water, capital of its own Republic like San Marino, but at the risk of becoming an empty shell of a city, filled with attractions like a theme park or the Mont Saint Michel, void of any life after dark (Muscarà, 1990). Lastly, the case of Venice as the setting for research came naturally for this thesis since I personally resided in the city and took part to several projects that highlighted the obstacles of the city but also its potential. This project came as the coronation of a cycle of studies deeply affected by the characteristics of the city that hosted me, as well as the strong affection towards its places that I found in most people that orbit around Venice in one way or another.

The data was gathered in collaboration with the Urban GoodCamp (UCAMP) project, an initiative founded by the European Commission that sets out to empower Higher Education Institutions and their urban partners in confronting the most pressing urban challenges of our time. The spatial context was investigated through an urban analysis in form of desktop research, focusing at once on extensive literature review and content analysis of newspaper articles from several countries. The involvement of residents was carried out instead through several semi-structured interviews with several exponents of the creative potential of Venice to gather insights regarding the challenges of the city. The Gioia method (Gioia *et al*., 2012) was then applied to the recordings of the interviews to extrapolate the three most pressing urban challenges of the city and to evaluate possible alternative solutions.

This thesis offers a contribution to the literature on place identity and identity of place with a specific focus on the City of Venice. If represents a novel setting for the intersection of the two concepts, with a blending of the notions of place identity and

identity of place that is mostly absent in the extant literature (Peng, Strijker & Wu, 2020). The main research question was thus aimed at reframing the urban challenges that hover below every discourse surrounding Venice.

1) What are the impacts of environmental fragility, overtourism, and depopulation in terms of place identity and identity of place?
2) What influence do these urban challenges represent to the relationship between the two sides of Venice?
3) What solutions can theories of place and identity offer?

This thesis presents an overview of significant theories of place and identity in the first two chapters. The third chapter explains the methodology of data collection and interpretation. The fourth chapter is aimed at answering the first research question, while the fifth and sixth part try to propose solutions to the urban challenges, presenting strategies of place branding and placemaking respectively to answer the second and third research question.

Trends of overtourism and depopulation in the city centre emerge as detrimental for Venice. The touristic monoculture of the city negates a regular lifestyle for the ever-diminishing local population, which is in fact pushed out from the historic centre towards the mainland quarters at first and subsequently to other cities altogether. The fragility of the ecosystem of the Lagoon is threatened by the overabundance of visitors, the industrial complexes of the mainland, and the global environmental change. A detachment of the city from its natural environment is a consequence of the forced modernisation of its urban area and the loss of historic knowledge of the human-nature balances. The lack of attachment to the uniqueness of Venice is mirrored by the decision of many residents to leave the city, manifesting a loss of place identity both in the sense of not recognising themselves as part of the city anymore, and refusing the city as part of their individual identity. The absence of place identity, or *placelessness*, is exacerbated by phenomena of *kitsch* and *technique* (Relph, 1976) that can be observed both in the Lagoon and on the mainland. *Kitsch*, characterized by its stereotyped, contrived, and superficial nature, stands as a stark reminder of the commodification of place identity. The replication of souvenir shops and the mass production of sentimentalized objects contribute to a homogenized, exchangeable image of places, robbing them of their unique soul.

Technique, on the other hand, can be witnessed when places are manipulable in the public interest and perceived solely in terms of functionality. This would be the case of the areas of Mestre that are converted in dormitories for the tourists that move towards the Lagoon to visit Venice daily. The functionality of housing the overflow of visitors inhibits any sense of place identity towards the town that is simply *used* to visit downtown Venice. Flattening the depth of place to a mere function is what Augé (1995) defined *non-place*: areas of the world where communication is wordless and dictated by commerce, where dwellers only pass through in order to get somewhere else or to reach an objective that is separate from the place itself. Whether Venice risks to become a *non-place*, or if its Mestre part already is one, is challenging to assert. What is undeniable is that both sides of the city need to adapt to current trends to overturn the challenges that threaten them and escape the risk of the *non-place*.

Place branding tactics are presented as a valuable alternative for a place that struggles to present its identity (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). Of course, they cannot stem from complete absence of potential, but both Venice and Mestre offer an abundance in that sphere. These places have become "thin" over the decades, more permeable to outside influence, losing their sense of local difference to become less distinctive (Entrikin 1999). The discipline of place branding transcends the mere destination branding for touristic purposes, involving public entities that must coordinate policies, mobilize stakeholders, and foster communication with citizens. Confusion on the scale of place is not admissible like it is in place attachment and specificity in understanding the problems faced by a place is essential to develop an appropriate branding strategy (Anholt, 2006). Place branding is like mining the strategy from the history, culture, geography, and society of the place. Placemaking, on the other hand, emerges from the analysis as a long-term strategy aimed at re-building the place identity that seems to be lost. One cannot expect to operate any place branding without an internal audience, as this should provide the base identity on which the brand should be built. Identity of place and place identity are connected, and where place identity should fade, placemaking processes will nourish it, reshaping the relationship between people and their places: the sense of community is key to foster the feeling of belonging. The adoption of a co-creation place brand identity paradigm facilitates the promotion of a place's character in terms of brand elements, meanings, and attributes (Rodrigues & Schimdt, 2021). This form of participatory place

branding encourages residents to actively participate in the process through interactive stakeholder conversations and collaborative projects. Placemaking cannot stem from an absent community and place branding cannot start from a non-existent identity.

Drawing from the dramaturgical framework of sociology, the city is compared to a play where the historic centre is the frontstage, where the eyes of every public is drawn, where the lights shine the brightest, and the narration is shaped towards the audience. The mainland is instead the backstage, a poorly lit area that few notice and that is instead often hidden, but that effectively nourishes the front stage. Both elements need each other to survive, but their relationship is distorted, with unbalanced resources dedicated to either side. Maybe Venice is the Smeraldina from Calvino's book, where the itineraries of its residents follow a zigzag between the city's net of roads and canals, balconies and ferries, so that the daily routine is never the same and the trajectory is just as beautiful as the destination. Maybe Venice is Maurilia, the little town that became metropolis: its inhabitants and visitors miss the old tranquillity, yet if the city had remained the same it would not be of any relevance today, and nobody would find its past image beautiful. Maybe Venice is Ottavia, the city built on a fragile web stretched over a deep crevice in the mountains, where life is less uncertain than elsewhere, for people are certain that the strings cannot endure forever. Maybe it is its own city that is not in the book, but that Marco Polo knows well, Venezia, a combination of all these features and more, with a complex identity that more often than not doesn't meet the eye. The interplay between the frontstage and its backstage is just as fragile as the balances between the urban areas and their natural surroundings, constantly shaped and being shaped by human action. The connection of place and identity cannot be understated: much of our wellbeing comes from the stability and attachment we manifest towards place. We construct and adapt our places, but we also take them with us as integral part of our identity. Marco Polo explains it himself to Kublai Khan:

> The emperor did not turn a hair. "And yet I have never heard you mention that name."
> And Polo said: "Every time I describe a city I am saying something about Venice."
>
> (Calvino, 1974: 86, English translation by W. Weaver)

CHAPTER 1 – PLACE IDENTITY

This first chapter is aimed at setting the base theory for an understanding of the concepts of place, identity, and the combinations of the two. Being these concepts so pervasive in our everyday life, it is understandable how scholars could develop a plethora of models, especially if one considers the multiple backgrounds that can be used as a filter to analyse them: anthropology, psychology, sociology and so on. The literature on the topic of place and identity has had over the years many relevant voices challenging each other to define the fundamental elements and advance on the theory, yet many of these scholars appear in dissonance with each other, each one offering a slightly different approach. Understanding how place and identity interact with each other will build the foundations necessary to explore the way the inhabitants of Venice negotiate their identity through the places they dwell in, but also to analyse the identity of Venice: what makes it stand out and which aspects are threatened in today's environment.

In this setting, the framework advanced by Canadian geographer Christopher Lyon (2014) seems the most appropriate to present the various nuances behind the deceptively simple concept of place. His model proposes to split it into three distinct dimensions:

- *Incarnate place*, defined as the physical embodiment of place, most notably individuated in natural and built environment or in the services and infrastructures developed around it.
- *Discarnate place*, which refers to an abstract concept separated from a tangible body, therefore characterising the "unconscious social and physical manifestation of local heritage, tradition, and culture." (Lyon, 2014: 1011)
- *Chimerical place*, which finally identifies place attachment and sense of place. These ideas represent the "emotive element revealed in the ways people articulate their relationship to place." (Lyon, 2014: 1011)

This chapter presents a scheme similar to Lyon's division. The concept of place will be analysed first and foremost in its tangible sense. Secondly, the aspect of community will be brought in to tackle place as a shared entity. Finally, these two elements will be brought together to define place identity and its variations in the extant literature.

Defining Place

In his book *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), Michel de Certeau puts place at the centre of the existence of man. From his point of view place takes up so much of our everyday life that it is almost indistinguishable from time, and since every story refers to movement both in time and space, all narrated adventures produce "geographies of actions", and storytelling can always be brought back to the creation of space: "every story is a travel story, a spatial practice" (de Certeau, 1984: 116). Of course, this point of view can be considered extreme, and not every author agrees on the pervasiveness of place. In fact, the study of place was not linked to man until recently. For example, Lukermann (1964) lists many attributes of the concept of place, but the activity of humans does not appear if not for a tiny part at the very end. He characterises place as the combination of:

- A location, in relation with other things and places.
- A collection of elements from nature and culture.
- A network of spatial interactions and transfers between places.
- The localisation of places as part of larger areas.
- A dynamic process, with emerging and becoming components.
- A meaning characterised by the beliefs of *man*.

Only the last element is linked to the human interaction with place. On the same wavelength Parkes and Thrift (1980), cited by Paasi (1986: 107), had shown little to no attention to the origins of places, or to the elements that elevates places above a mere collection of material objects. This interpretation is defined "modernist" by Casey (2001), who roots the origin of the approach in the writings of Locke. For the English philosopher, places are relegated to the physical realm and completely void of consciousness, thus denying any relation between place and self, which is in turn confined to the realm of consciousness (Casey, 2001). Stemming from this early understanding of place, two main flows can be identified within the literature.

The first major stream of theory highlights the phenomenological impact of place and minimises the relevance of its physical elements. Edward Relph (1976) was one of the first scholars to describe the centrality that place has in the lives of people. His idea of place encompassed the one expressed by Lukermann, as in this case the aspect of location or position is neither necessary nor sufficient to characterise place. The practical aspects

of place can be relevant to study their explicit functions, but the bond between place and people goes well beyond, as "people are their place and a place is its people" (Relph, 1976: 34), or as Casey put it: "there is no place without self and no self without place" (Casey, 2001: 484). Pred (1984) too, argues that place is not merely a physical location, but a socially constructed entity imbued with social practices, cultural meanings, and historical contexts, while Ernawati (2018) defines place as the result of the intersection between a location, people, and their activities. In Entrikin (1999), place cannot be confined to the mere setting of human activity, but it's the necessary context for these actions to reach fulfilment and as such needs to be safeguarded. In the field of environmental psychology as well, the concept of place is heavily dependent on the individual activity: place is defined as a physical environment that is created from the interaction of the mental and social processes of the individual with activities done in that specific place (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015b).

According to Casey (2001), the view switched from the one of Locke when the dichotomy of self and body was transcended, hence exploring a more complex relation between self and place. For Relph, humans cannot avoid stepping into places no matter what they do, but at the same time these places have an influence in the development of the self because humans are designed to understand the concept of belonging somewhere and constantly seek the feeling: "to be human is to have and to know your place" (Relph, 1976: 1). The definition of place proposed by Relph is therefore a centre of special importance and meaning that is differentiated from the rest by the quality of "*insideness*": nodes of meaning, intention and purpose for humans that can be attached to buildings or wide areas (Relph, 1976: 21). The nature of place is to become profound centres of human experience, absorbing the meaning given by significant experiences that happened there: being born, growing up, witnessing a particularly moving event (Relph, 1976: 43). The meanings attached to places are certainly altered by culture and shared values, let alone by context. As Tuan notices, the simple phrase "I am in my office" could be intended as two opposite inflections: "come in and see me", or "do not disturb", depending on the context (Tuan, 1976: 45). Ray (1998) called "cultural markers" the material structures reflecting complex combinations of socio-economic, cultural, natural, and structural actors over time reproduced in the minds of people or experienced through processes that form shared meaning (Knaps & Herrmann, 2018). The "culture" to which Ray refers

is the one outlined by Geertz (1973): "the web of significance which man himself has spun", therefore the shared practices and meanings that are adapted from past generation and passed down to the future ones (Foley, 1997). Entrikin (1999) proposes a differentiation between thick and thin places to create a spectrum: on one end thick places are rich in cultural traditions and customs, they form evident boundaries and restrict entry through political borders or social barriers, while on the other end of the spectrum thin places are more permeable to outside influences and may lose a sense of local difference to become less distinctive.

There is a material side to places. Giddens (1984) had coined the term *locale* to designate the material aspect of place, as a reminder that the experience humans have of it cannot be independent from a tangible setting (Paasi, 1986): a locale can be anything from the shade of one specific tree to a building (Tuan, 1976). To be even more neutral, Augé (1995) proposes the term *area* as the antithesis of place, introduced as a transition concept to the *non-place* that is central to his theory. Tuan (1976) instead argued that human activity can be divided in the two essential elements of the body's posture and structure, and the interactions with other human beings, but both these features represent spatial organisation, nonetheless. Since humans always impose their schema on space, it comes mostly involuntarily but one becomes aware of it as soon as the schema is gone, for example when they get lost. From this perspective, although the physical realm does not overcome the importance of the individual experience, it is clearly instrumental to the creation of place. Tuan (1976) highlights that not all senses help humans navigate space to the same extent, because sight, touch, and kinaesthesia (the awareness of the position and movement of one's body) are the essential ones to develop a sense of space. Although other senses contribute to expanding and enriching our understanding of the environment, sight plays a crucial role in organizing human space (Tuan, 1976), and this predominance can be seen reflected in language: in English, for example, the phrase "I see" is often used to imply comprehension, while phrase "out of sight, out of mind" reflects the idea that what is not seen or perceived tends to be forgotten or neglected (Tuan, 1976). De Certeau (1984) adds how significant sight is when it comes to predict what is coming ahead in a spatial environment, while Relph (1976) emphasizes the function of landscape as a medium of communication, with various elements conveying messages.

The term used in the literature to encompass the visible aspects of space is *landscape* (Casey, 2001). According to Nogué and Vicente (2004), landscape is the perceptible result of abiotic (rocks, for instance), biotic (flora and fauna), and anthropic elements. This complex composition gives rise to a visual representation that captures the essence of a place. As Relph (1977: 30) suggests, the spirit of a place resides in its landscape. It is through the landscape that the character and identity of a location are manifested. Landscape in this sense is the language with which place communicates with us, and sight is the sense we can use to decipher the messages coming from different elements: buildings, streets, events (Relph, 1976: 34). Visual features serve as visible markers of concentrated human engagement, manifesting the character and purpose of a place, uniting communities, and making them explicit (Relph, 1976). According to Casey (2001), the *homo geographicus* engages with the world in an outgoing direction, meeting place along the binary oppositions of up/down, front/back, right/left, which are matched by the primary dimensions of a place: verticality, frontality, and horizontality, but in return the body is itself shaped by the places it encounters through an incoming movement (Casey, 2001). Casey (2001) incorporates landscape in his three distinct dimensions of place in contrast to space: a) The *self* represents the agency and identity of the individual within a geographical context; b) The *body* serves as the connecting link between the self and the lived experience of a place, grounding the individual in its tangible and perceptible features; c) The *landscape* encompasses the presentation of a collection of places, not merely their accumulation but their collective embodiment (Casey, 2001: 683). Without the body, any place would pass us by without leaving any mark, but without landscape we would be confined to a single place (Casey, 2001: 690).

The second stream of theory on place is represented by the relational approach. Although these fundamental basis of the literature on place are still relevant today, the scholarship has expanded a lot since the Seventies, adding new perspective on the concept. For Wheeler (2015), who focused a big part of his research on the impact of wind turbines on rural communities, the countryside does not exist without its opposition to the urban area, and this ever-changing relation is influenced by processes involving human and non-human actors (Wheeler, 2015). In the relational framework, space can be therefore viewed as an agent in the production of differences, rather than a passive

reflection of them. This does not negate the role of individuals but collocates them in a collective production of difference, identity, and citizenship (Clayton, 2009). The focus that Clayton poses on demographic differences introduces the political role of place: the dynamic and relational nature of place is directly linked to the constant negotiation happening between people that share the space. A more ample interpretation of the concept recognises it as a "political, physical, and phenomenological experience" (Humphrey, 2016: 49): ethnic or social differences are reflected in the experience individuals have of place, and this in turn shapes the place in the eyes of the people (Clayton, 2009). The term used by Soja (1996) is "*thirdspace*", to symbolise the environment that is actively lived and experienced, not simply perceived or conceived. The dynamism of place emerges as relations of power set in time-space happen along the reproduction of social and cultural forms, the formation of biographies and the transformation of nature. This view of place as a process is a development of the points made by Lukermann (1964), who recognised the components of place that appear and mutate with time. As Paasi (2001) elaborates, place can be envisaged as a network of processes, distinguished from a pure and specific location, while Sheller and Urry (2006) specify that since place does not need to be bound to the material realm can be conceptualised as mobile. Vainikka (2012: 7) specifies: "instead of fixing a place to a specific locale, it can be conceptualized as a resultant of an individual's personal, embodied spatial history."

On this topic, Sheller and Urry (2009) acknowledge the study of place as an essential element of the study of humanity but note a lack of attention to *movement* in the literature. They note how this can be observed in the failure of social sciences to critically examine the profound implications of the car as a transformative force in society (Sheller & Urry, 2009). They thus label "sedentarism" the tendency of social sciences to ignore mobility, while presenting the "new mobilities paradigm", which proposes a focus on the importance of systematic human movements in various domains such as work, family life, leisure, pleasure, politics, and protest. The new mobilities paradigm argues that all places are intricately connected through networks that extend beyond their boundaries, dismissing the notion of places as isolated while recognizing the fluidity and relationality between places and people (Sheller & Urry, 2009). The focus on movement advances trends of deterritorialisation, while the analysis on "*homing*" or "*regrounding*" highlights

how individuals navigate between the dwelling in their home and unfamiliar territories. (Sheller & Urry, 2009). This nomadic perspective helps developing a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between mobilities, the places they intersect, and the individuals that travel from one to the other (Sheller & Urry, 2009).

In sum, the concept of place, although heavily impactful on our everyday lives, can be interpreted in wildly diverse ways. On one hand, place is hardly tangible at all, being analysed as the canvas on which political and interpersonal interactions get displayed along their ever-changing process. On the other hand, it lays at the intersection of human activities and the realm of experience that shapes and gets shaped by its physical setting. This mutual influencing of experience and place is the framework that seems the most appropriate to evaluate the case of Venice. The city shapes the existence of any person who visits it, maybe even more than other cities, yet at the same time its neighbourhoods seem so vulnerable to the activity of humans now more than ever. The past, present, and future of the places of Venice have been created through the experience of the people that described them but will continue to influence newcomers through their uniqueness.

Space and Place

At this point it is worth specifying the difference between the two concepts of space and place, as they often appear as synonyms but conceal significantly distinct meanings in social sciences. De Certeau suggests a semantic division: he writes that space is a practiced place, as it emerges when individuals take into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables (de Certeau, 1984: 117). In his interpretation, it is space that is shaped by human activities and movements, while place is an instantaneous configuration of positions that implies stability. Thus, place reflects a sense of order and coherence within a specific context, while space is composed of intersections of mobile elements (de Certeau, 1984).

Relph (1976), on the other hand, proposes the opposite. He emphasizes that places are not abstract concepts but directly experienced phenomena within the lived world, and hence are vessels of meanings, filled with real objects and ongoing activities. The elements of the world that we distinguish as places are differentiated because they gather the intentions, attitudes, and purposes of the individuals that experience them. This focus sets them apart from the surrounding space, while remaining a part of it: the special quality of

insideness and the experience of being inside sets *places* apart in *space* (Relph, 1976). Tuan (1976) furthermore highlights how places define space. He provides the example of the Mississippi River's source: before scientist pinned the exact location onto a map, the various possible sources where nothing but space. Labelling the exact one identified a place that holds cultural and symbolic importance, acknowledging the power to create places that lies in the ability to assign significance and draw attention to a specific location (Tuan, 1976: 147). Thus, places are not inherent in the physical environment but are constructed through human perceptions and interaction. This does not negate that space should be explored in term of experience too: Relph (1976) extrapolates experiences of space that are inherent to the tangible body, such as the perceptual space which develops around the observer in multiple directions, but also ones connected to an ideal plane, like the abstraction of space that we experience when we plan on an architectural level (Seamon & Sowers, 2008). Space is not a void container, but it does lack the cultural construction that allows us to structure places from the general space to a particular and familiar place (Stedman, 2003). This interpretation is the most widespread in the literature (Casey, 2001; Entrikin, 1999; Ujang & Zakariya, 2015b): the place refers to a real event or a supposed or fantastic history, a specific setting recognisable from a sea of abstraction, while the term space identifies the infinite pure extension from which places can be carved out.

Defining Identity

Among the two distinct interpretations of place, the one introduced by Relph (1976), and Tuan (1976) is usually linked to the topic of identity (Paasi, 2001). According to Relph (1976), places are important sources of identity both for individuals and for entire communities, as they are essentials forums of human existence (Relph, 1976: 141). In this thesis regarding places and the identities therein bound, places will be analysed in relation to the human experience as both background and agents in the development of identity, following Relph's framework, rather than a measure of social and political processes, like the relational approach demands. Having analysed the *incarnate place* in the previous section, the second element of Lyon's (2014) framework will be now eviscerated: *discarnate place* and the impact of identity on the concept of place.

A focus on local identity would seem in opposition to contemporary trends of uniformisation through globalisation, but it is rather the contrary. The transnational forces can be overwhelming for many people, giving the impression of an unstable world and an uncertain future thus pushing them back on the focus on their immediate surroundings. Trends of "*localisation*" (Huigen *et al*., 2000) or "*neotribalism*" (Maffesoli, 1996) have been observed when people search for reassurance in their proximity (Ray, 1998) or in the identity of their small community (Entrikin, 1999). Turning inward is not surprising in Western societies, where the attention to the individual is central (Augé, 1995) and the "here", "now" and "I" are unquestionable and self-evident starting points for exploring (Eisenstadt & Giesen, 1995: 75). The term identity in relation to places can be often witnessed as an element of the marketing mix of tourism promotion or real estate investments (Huigen *et al*., 2000), and yet the weight of the concept is much wider: a crucial feature of identity is spatial (Paasi, 2001).

When identity is described as "bricolage" (Leyshon & Bull, 2011) it represents the negotiations to distinguish and name various categories, such as class, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexuality, consumption preferences. Individuals constantly negotiate their membership to these categories to delineate their identity (Vainikka, 2012). A "weak" conception of identity recognises its volatile and fragmented nature (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000), a "blurred but indispensable" concept (Tilly, 1996). Identity is this way investigated as an equilibrium between the validation and similarity that come from the feeling of belonging on one side, and the uniqueness and individuality needed by the single member of the community to obtain "optimal distinctiveness" (Brewer, 1991). However, a more complex interaction of inclusion and exclusion is at play. The work of Brubaker and Cooper (2000) summarises it like this:

- Identity as collective phenomenon identifies the fundamental sameness among members of a group or category, which therefore feel a sense of belonging to a specific group. It can be a synonym of "commonality" when it refers to a group that shares one attribute, like religion, or "connectedness" when members are linked through relational ties.
- Identity as the intangible product of competing negotiations addresses the unstable, fluctuating, and fragmented nature of the contemporary self.

The interconnectedness between collective and individual identity appears at its strongest in Augé (1995), who argues that it is the representation of private "*otherness*" that makes it impossible to distinguish between collective and individual identity. Lalli (1992) adds a concrete dimension to the differentiation process, acknowledging how identity development involves the assignment of specific attributes to locate different categories. While the principles of identity that Breakwell (1992) singles out are rooted in the self – them being self-esteem, self-efficacy, distinctiveness, and continuity – Lalli (1992) highlights a more spatial approach, linking identity to the urban sphere and listing aspects of sustainability with one's past, attachment, familiarity, commitment, and external evaluation. The notion of identity that is relevant in this thesis is the dual process of delimitating groups with shared characteristics throughout all their members and then intersecting multiple communities to carve out individual identity as a combination of several shared identities (Ramos *et al.*, 2016).

The sociological framework that is used here follows the constructivist guidelines (Peng, Strijker & Wu, 2020). According to these theories of identity, human beings develop their persona through interactions with others, recognising their characteristics in other larger groups and forming their identity along the way. This makes the influence of space and place central to the formation of identity: even though characteristics inherent to the human being are deemed relevant, such as the place of birth, what stays central is the environment in which the individual grew up that eventually shapes their features during their lifetime (Lalli, 1992).

Places and Communities

It is the element of "*othering*" that is the key to the spatial feature of identity. It started as a process to discern the Western world from the exotic and fascinating "Orient" and was then applied in social sciences to the differentiation between self and others (Rijnks & Strijker, 2013). Othering is essential at first to create collective identity, from which individuals can then identify their personal characteristics from a variety of communities to which they belong. Eisenstadt and Giesen (1995: 74-84) delineate the process to build collective identities as a deliberate human activity rather than a natural process:

1) The boundaries set up by the community demarcate inside from outside, strangers from familiars, culture from nature, civilisation from barbarity: this first ideal type of collective identity is *primordial* and awards an egalitarian distribution of entitlements on the inside, with the main goal to reinforce the boundaries, as these fragile limits need constant effort to be maintained (Augé, 1995.
2) On the inside, then, the collective identity structures the entitlements of the members through the division of labour and the control over resources, creating social groups who are the carriers of a symbolic code and function as constructors of collective identity. This second connotation of identity is the *civic* one, constructed on the basis of familiarity with implicit rules of conduct, traditions, and social routines. The social construction of the community often emerges from a variety of diverging interests when the dominating hegemonic identity wins them over (Paasi, 2001).
3) The last code of identity is *cultural* and represents how the boundaries that set members of the community apart from others are connected to the "sacred", equating culture to the shared identity within a group (Ray, 1998). Collective identity is therefore reliant on the relations to the "other" (Paasi, 2001: 8), most notably in the first and third phases, while the attention to space is evident in the first phase alone.

The duality of individual identity, on one hand connecting to others and on the other hand setting the individual apart from everybody else, is mirrored in the duality of collective identity. The essence emerges in contrast with the outsiders, and at the same time is found in the shared sense of "we", which can be both rooted in actual structures, like the participation to an association (*factual* identification), or fictional features and experiences, the image projected by institutions to illustrate such identity (*ideal* identification) (Paasi, 1986: 133). Collective identity is a process rather than a property (Smith, 1996; Snow & Corrigall-Brown, 2015). The fascination regarding the strong bonds within a community is justified when one considers the actions that individuals push themselves to for the sake of their group: even without thinking about the extreme cases, like going to war, individuals sometimes agree to decisions that threaten their own

interests (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). The student movements that in 1989 challenged the Chinese regime in Tienanmen Square are a fascinating example of the honour that binds the self to a collective identity through historical changes (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Snow & Corrigall-Brown, 2015). The grouping of Chinese immigrants in South Korea also delineates how clustering within a foreign society offers more comfort than blending in to be seamlessly assimilated (Cho, 2018).

The political underpinnings of the delineation of a place have a constant influence on us, most notably regarding the ownership of the place itself. At the roots of the definition is identified a collective agreement, a set of interactions between individuals and institutions that form political geography. One evident consequence of such political geography can be observed in nationalism, the form of territorial ideology that awards places a new set of powers, directly linked to the ruling regime (Nogué & Vicente, 2004). Place and its inhabitants interact, and this appears ever more clearly should the relation stop: for the exiled man, what ceased to exist was not only the privileges of living in a community, but also the protection of the local laws. Place can nourish, inspire, reassure like a motherly embrace even those that do not seem to have a fixed home; even hunters and gatherers can develop a strong affection for the nurturing earth they step on (Tuan, 1976: 154). Nationalism is often described as the basic element of territorialisation of the community (Paasi, 2001): even if it remains a mere political movement (Smith, 1996), it is the visible proof of the power that comes with the act of drawing boundaries (Paasi, 2001: 23). The connection of collective identity to the spatial setting is clear. The boundaries to which Eisenstadt and Giesen (1995) refer are fundamental in the differentiation between the "here" and "there" of the *primordial* phase, and the "us" and "them" of the *cultural* phase. Place and community are strongly connected, and individuals become aware of it when they stand at the borders of their culture. The strength of preserving local identities also resides in the right to decide who can enjoy it and who cannot (Huigen *et al*., 2000). The magnitude of boundaries will be further explored later on, but it is worth specifying here how they are not merely physical, traced on maps as if they were following preset lines, but rather "social, cultural and political constructs that are made meaningful and exploited by human beings as part of the institutionalisation process of territories" (Paasi, 2001: 22).

Place Identity

Exploring the main theories behind place and identity was instrumental to move forward to the main topic of this chapter: the *chimerical place*, as intended by Lyon (2014). Early developments of the study of place were aimed at understanding how human beings relate to it, how they interact with space and place, and most importantly how they incorporate their setting in their identity (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1976). Seeing identity as the interconnection of feelings of belonging to multiple groups allows for the inclusion of spatial features of one's existence: the concept of *place identity* encompasses various dimensions of self that define an individual's personal identity in relation to the physical environment (Masterson *et al.*, 2017; Peng, Strijker & Wu, 2020; Ujang & Zakariya, 2015b), elevating place as a significant factor of a broader self-identification (Rijnks & Strijker, 2013). According to Vainikka (2012), people are able to modify their attachment to place, choosing among different locales on various scales of space, through what he calls "*elective belonging*".

What Peng, Strijker and Wu (2020) describe as a "complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, feelings, values, goals, preferences, skills, and behavioural tendencies" can be as relevant to define one's identity as categories like gender (Rijnks & Strijker, 2013). Bernardo and Palma-Oliveira (2012) identify three declinations of this concept to be researched in an empirical setting:

- Place as an *extension* of the self, observable in the implication that a threat to one's home can have on their identity.
- Place as a *reflection* of the self, observable in the physical disposition of a place to mimic the values and attitudes of people.
- Place as a *connection* to the self, also called place attachment, is the most researched area and the one this chapter focuses on.

The existence of such complexity, combined with an abundance of terminology with vaguely defined boundaries has led to criticisms of the ambiguity surrounding the concept of place identity (Kibler *et al.*, 2018; Peng, Strijker & Wu, 2020). To discern the vocabulary is to better assess the punctual topic of this thesis.

Sense of Place

Sense of place refers to the meanings and attachments that individuals or groups hold toward a particular setting (Masterson *et al.*, 2017). It amalgamates in its definition the meanings, attachment, and satisfaction that individuals or groups associate with a particular place (Stedman, 2003). It is a natural feature of man (Lewicka, 2011) because it derives from the human ability to recognise different places and different identities of a place to form a full range of possible awareness (Relph, 1976). It represents the raw experience, genuine and not distorted by stereotyped conventions and social norms (Seamon & Sowers, 2008). Sense of place is thus dynamic and may be best understood as a process influenced by various individual and social experiences: it is not confined to a static state but evolves and adapts over time, reflecting the ever-changing interactions between people and their environment (Kibler *et al.*, 2018).

Place Attachment

Place attachment is defined as "an emotional bond, usually positive, between individuals or groups and their environment" (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001) and has been even labelled "topophilia" by Tuan (1974), literally the love for a place. The subjective tie to the cultural and historical contexts of a place can form through a plethora of experiences of familiarity, security, memory, or shared activities; it can be linked to an explicit spiritual or communal sacred significance, but also to a mundane interaction (Tuan, 1976). Place attachment is a complex phenomenon that can vary in spatial level, degree of specificity, and social or physical features of the place (Masterson *et al.*, 2017), but the three necessary elements for its creation are identified in the person-process-place (PPP) framework (Rijnks & Strijker, 2013):

- The first dimension summarises the *who*: the actor can be an individual, attached to a place through personal milestones and experiences, or a group, in which case it is religious or historical aspects that give symbolic meaning to the place (Scannell & Gifford, 2010: 3).
- The second dimension represents the *how*: the psychological process involves affection, like love and happiness that are the most evident in the case of forced displacement; the cognitive aspect of familiarity and memory; and the

behavioural level, meaning the effort to remain close to the place, caring for it or reconstructing it after it is lost (Scannell & Gifford, 2010: 4).

- The third dimension is the *what*: the object of the attachment, including the physical characteristics of the place between natural features and anthropic elements, but also the intangible social aspects, the community, and its interpersonal connections (Scannell & Gifford, 2010: 5).

Places Dependence

Place dependence conveys the instrumental connection between individuals or groups and their environment rather than an emotional bond (Masterson *et al.*, 2017). The strength of the association between a person and a place is based on the perceived ability of that place to fulfil their functional needs and support their goals (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Rijnks & Strijker, 2013). Place dependence is focused on the pragmatic aspect of human-environment relationships, emphasizing how the qualities of a place enable individuals to achieve their objectives and meet their requirements effectively. It derives from two considerations: the quality of the current place and the quality of comparable alternative places (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015b).

Other terms

Place meanings are descriptive statements that individuals and groups associate with a particular setting. These meanings are subjective and vary systematically, contributing to the predictability of specific types of behaviour in relation to a place (Masterson *et al.*, 2017). *Rootedness*, as an unconscious sense of place, is considered the most natural and unmediated form of attachment to a place (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015b). When individuals feel rooted and deeply attached to a place, it often involves a high degree of familiarity and care for that location.

In conclusion, the theories surrounding place identity, sense of place, and place attachment reveal the complexities of human-environment relationships. Despite the confusion and overlap between these concepts, they provide valuable insights into how people develop emotional bonds with their surroundings, shaping their identity and understanding of the world.

Place Identity for the Individual and for the Community

Place defined as deeply dependant on the human experience of it needs to be studied from the individual point of view. Relph (1976) highlights how, since every different person uses their own senses as a filter to experience place, every place is uniquely and privately their own, and this can often mean that a person's geography-making does not match the objective cartographic reality (Vainikka, 2012). Relph (1976: 36) adds that "when occupying his space the individual should not be disturbed, when absent his possessions are not to be rearranged" to highlight the nature of place as an expression of a person's individuality. The attachment to place that derives from this individuality is connected to the need to delimitate one's place from the power of others (de Certeau, 1984).

The concept of "home" stands at the heart of place identity theories, embodying a profound sense of attachment, belonging, and personal identity for individuals and communities. Home is a deeply personal and intimate space, serving as the ultimate anchor for individuals' emotional bonds with their surroundings (Masterson *et al.*, 2017). Memories, shared experiences, and the feeling of safety within its walls contribute to the formation of a strong emotional attachment (Tuan, 1976), but home as the true place of dwelling is realised through the act of *sparing* – leaving things as they are – and the act of *taking care* of a place, much like an interpersonal relationship: the deep relationship with one's home is as necessary and inevitable as a true connection with people (Relph, 1976: 40-44). From the individual point of view, space develops endlessly around this dwelling place, making home the focal point of the cosmic structure: this is evidenced by the absolute centrality of home in archaic spirituality, but also by the weight that exile imposed on the individual, as pointed out above (Tuan, 1976).

Of course, the scale of home can vary significantly, from the comfort of a chair to a whole city (Tuan, 1976). Much literature, for example, focuses on the influence of the region on place identity (Deacon, 2004; Paasi, 2001; Simon *et al*., 2009): collective regional characteristics that people choose to reflect in their own identity help them to construct their sense of self in contrast with people and objects outside of their region (Rijnks & Strijker, 2013). Other factors influence the connection to one's home: racial, ethnic, or class identity strengthen place attachment and social cohesion within a

community while the perceptions of people's memories and familiarisation with the place develop the meanings of the spaces (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015a). The significance of *homeland* is another aspect that underlines the importance of place for the individual. "To be born is to be born in a place, to be 'assigned to residence'" writes Augé (1995), to highlight that the place of birth has a profound impact on one's place identity. Tuan (1976) points out that attachment to the homeland is a universal phenomenon that can emerge even without any explicit concept of sacredness or heroic history or even without a sworn enemy; rather, it is fostered by the familiarity and security of shared experiences and homely pleasures. Homeland is considered like a nourishing mother, an archive of fond memories and proud achievements whose permanence reassures man in a precarious world (Tuan, 1976).

Place identity, like any identity in general, is not a static concept. It evolves and changes over time based on temporal elements, as individuals experience different life stages and encounter changes in their physical and social environments (Lalli, 1992). For this reason, the significance of place of birth is only confirmed when the person spends at least his or her childhood and adolescence in that same place, to the point that some scholars only label "home" the place where one grew up, although there is evidence of the fact that people born and raised in a town identify with it more than people that moved there later on (Lalli, 1992). This temporal factor is explained by Ujang & Zakariya (2015b), who state that the "places to which individuals become most attached are those with which they have the highest levels of experience", and that can mean important events but also time of habitation. The relevance of time was also found in the acceptance of change within the landscape that is dear to local inhabitants: Wheeler (2015) studied how wind farms in rural areas are more and more welcomed into one's place identity after enough time has allowed them to be assimilated into the familiar background of everyday life. On the flipside, some memories and meanings that were formed before the change in the landscape, can be threatened when new elements eventually arrive, threatening the place identity of older inhabitants (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015a). The development of identity is not only based on individual, interpersonal and social processes, but also on the physical environment, meaning that place identity is subject to change over the lifecycle, because of changes in the physical and social environment (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2012).

As seen before, the development of personal and local identity is furthermore intertwined with social relationships (Lalli, 1992), therefore the connection between attachment and identity is emphasized as a communal and social issue (Vainikka, 2012). Augé (1995) emphasised the significance of studying the relationship between people and the places they inhabit, stressing the delineation of signifying spaces and the cultural universes of meaning where individuals and groups define themselves. In understanding place attachment, the presence of people with similar interests plays a pivotal role in creating a sense of home and belonging (Relph, 1976), highlighting the socially based place bonds are formed when attachment is directed towards the people living in a place rather than the mere physical aspects of the place itself (Scannell & Gifford, 2010).

This attachment to others fosters the place-based construction of identity presented so far: place-protective actions are understandable consequences of the self-identification with a place and the community that lives there (Wheeler, 2015). Social movements such as NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) in response to local infrastructure management get a justification from an environmental psychology point of view (Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010). Scannell and Gifford (2010) highlighted this concept as one of the functions of place attachment: along with the sense of security that comes from being surrounded by like-minded allies, and the freedom to pursue one's objectives obtained by a stable and well-known environment, the continuity of the features of the home are reassuring over time, pushing residents to object any alteration. The benefits of high place attachment, as explained by Peng, Strijker and Wu (2020), further support the notion of its importance in undertaking protective actions for one's place, preventing negative environmental consequences, improving the commitment of residents towards their neighbourhoods. The strength of these bonds will be the main focus of the upcoming chapters. These various perspectives collectively reinforce the idea that place attachment is deeply rooted in social interactions and communal bonds, but the perspective of the identity of the place itself has been so far ignored. Using the same constructivist framework as the identity of the individual, the next chapter will explore how identity can also be applied to places, and in particular to the city.

CHAPTER 2 – IDENTITY OF A PLACE

Having analysed the impact of place on the identity of the individuals that experience it in the first chapter, it is now time to introduce the more tangible and practical side of place identity. According to Paasi (2001), identity is crucially linked to the spatial realm, given that any definition of the *self* derives from the definition of the *Other*. Similarly, Augè (1995) emphasizes the role of space to symbolize three sides of identity: the *shared* identity among group members, the *particular* identity in relation to others, and the *singular* identity unique to the group or individual. In order to discuss the identity of Venice and the issues that the city is facing nowadays, the concept of place identity needs to be split in two according to the classification proposed by Peng, Strijker and Wu (2020):

- *Place identity of people*, defined as the place identity described in the previous chapter, thus identifying the fragment of one's identity that is linked to a place.
- *Place identity of places*, defined as the characteristics that make it possible to distinguish a place from all other places.

In the words of Relph (1976), the first is identified as the identity *with* a place whereas the second is the identity *of* a place. Although this differentiation is key to move forward in the literature (Huigen *et al*., 2000; Masterson *et al.*, 2017; Paasi, 2001), it is often overlooked by environmental psychologists who tend to exclusively focus on the first element. Both sides of place identity tackle the bonds that individuals develop with the physical world, but the place identity of places reflects how the individuals' identification with a place tends to translate into the characteristics of the place itself (Peng, Strijker & Wu, 2020). To be clear moving on, *place identity* will be the term used to identify the place identity of people, as it was called in the previous chapter, indicating part of one's self-identification on the same level of categories like gender (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). Place identity of places will instead be addressed as *identity of place*, and its various declinations will be explored in the next pages. Both concepts will be central in the analysis of the case of Venice, not only offering a new framework to reimagine the urban challenges that the city is facing, but also providing some key concepts for valuable solutions to these issues. This chapter will delve into the identity of a place and its neighbouring concept of place character. These will then be applied to the regional and

urban level, highlighting the relevance of parameters such as scale and boundaries when discussing place.

The Identity of Place

Paasi (1986) had recognised the interconnection between the two sides of place identity in his studies regarding the region. He articulated regional identity as the sum of the identity of the region itself and "regional consciousness", which he described as the combination of idealized and factual aspects of the community, the role of the region within regional hierarchies, and images of the region. For Peng, Strijker and Wu (2020), this regional consciousness can be reconducted to the "subjective identity of a region", reflecting the images held by the people living in and outside the region. Rijnks and Strijker (2013) introduced the concept of the *image of a place* as a determinant of how the place is produced, represented, and utilized by people. According to them, an "image" is nothing but a representation of identity, therefore images held by both residents of a place and outsiders play a pivotal role in shaping perceptions and interactions. An image is a "mental picture, product of experiences, attitudes, memories and sensations, intentional interpretations of what is or what is believed to be" (Relph, 1976: 56). These images, often stable and learned, will define how the place is represented, calcifying its representation to wider publics, eventually unconsciously shaping their place-based actions (Lyon, 2014). The process of the formation of this identity happens through the ascribing of characteristics to places, and therefore to the people inhabiting them (Rijnks & Strijker, 2013). Subjective features of the identity of a place originate a plurality of identities for the same place (Lalli, 1992). The perception of the residents of a place will never fully match the one of outsiders. Finding the identity of a region equals to defining the specific set of common characteristics such as geographical location, physical features, socio-economic qualifications, political situations, and cultural characteristics (Relph, 1976: 58). In some sense, identity of place is the highest common denominator of these elements.

In architecture, identity of place is used to describe the physical configuration of spaces, emphasizing the visual images of places (Saleh, 1998). This notion highlights the significance of the visual representation of spaces in guiding human interactions within the environment, but most importantly it introduces the tension between forces that try

to shape space according to the acceleration of social, economic, and technological changes, and the ones that aim at designing anonymous and universal solutions that can meet any functional demand. The architectural approach is close to the geographical one proposed by Paasi (2001): the identity of a place resides in the elements of nature, culture, and regional life that distinguish it from others. The combination of physical and manmade processes encompasses the elements and structures and meanings ascribed to places (Peng, Strijker & Wu, 2020). This however does not limit the identity of places to the physical plane, as there is a less tangible side that can be labelled "cultural landscapes" (Ramos *et al*., 2016).

The identity of a place differs from the identity of a person because it appears to lack its duality: the identity of a place focuses much more on the distinction from other places than on the characteristics that make it belong to a certain group. When considering for example resilience, which refers to a system's ability to endure shocks while retaining its essential identity, change can be termed as "adaptation" when it affects a resilient place, whereas a non-resilient system's fundamental shift is deemed "transformation" because the core identity is changed. This is to say that identity, in terms of places, corresponds to the essential features of a system that remain stable throughout a process of adaptation, while the place would lose its identity should these be erased through transformation (Leixnering & Höllerer, 2022). In the words of Augé (1995: 47-48): "when bulldozers deface the landscape […] the landmarks – not just of the territory, but of identity itself – are erased". The resilience theory underlines the existence of something on top of the physical setting: a "spirit of the place" that persists in spite of profound change in the basic components of identity. The *genius loci* is described as the "living ecological relationship between an observer and an environment, a person and a place" (Relph, 1976: 66). The term is borrowed from the Roman religion which worshipped the protective spirit of a place, but over the centuries, the concept was translated to the manmade features of landscape, indicating that any design should always be adapted to its context (Walczak & Kepczynska-Walczak, 2013). In architecture, *genius loci* was introduced by Christian Norberg-Schulz in 1979, who indicated that there are countless aspects of the environment that result in the essence of the place. The *genius loci* refers to an unselfconscious side of place that describes the specific cultural and social

characteristics that exist within a place. Residents themselves may not easily identify it, but it may emerge in the unique physical and social character of a place.

Place Character

Identity is defined by the combination of a sense of belonging and the character of the place (Masterson *et al.*, 2017). Unfortunately, like identity or place, the term "character" is not easily determined (Dovey *et al*., 2009). Character usually refers to "the features which distinguish one place, person, object or action from another" (Davison & Rowden, 2012: 190). By this definition, people obviously have a character, but so do places, buildings, neighbourhoods. Landscape character is defined as the distinct, recognisable, and consistent pattern of elements that make one landscape unique, giving it its singular sense of place. The societal and physical influences that shape the identity of a place to form its character are the same that eventually strip that character away (Ramos *et al*., 2016), hence it is spectacularly difficult to evaluate change before its consequences are all laid out completely. Dembsky (2012) introduces the term "symbolic markers" to individuate the visible elements of institutional change, used by planners to make change explicit through linguistic tropes, iconic architecture, or cultural manifestations.

The concept of place character is remarkably applied to urban development, where its slipperiness makes both a liability for well-defined urban regulation and, at the same time, an asset in terms of flexibility of planning systems (Dovey *et al*., 2009). The complexity lies in the fact that character resides on a deeper level than the physical elements of a landscape, yet it can be heavily impacted by modification to these elements. At the same time, the simple re-creation of physical features to expand an area does not seem enough to mimic the original character. In sum, if planning does not pay attention to the way that a place character came to be and how it is valued by its residents, urban development cannot be successful (Davison & Rowden, 2012). Wherever there are economic, social, and environmental necessities that legislators exploit to push development, the implementation of new policies is inevitably met by some sort of resistance from the local community, often in the name of "neighbourhood character" (Dovey *et al*., 2009). Saleh (1998) argues that it is in the hands of planners to be mindful of the social and cultural influences and the public perspective as valuable inputs: the

system that he hopes to be used in development regards the ritual and sociological aspects as much as climate or functionality. Change needs to be founded in the pre-existing identity of the place: the best practice links the development to the character and identity of the places that are already there (Musterd & van Zelm, 2001). The connection between the identity of a place and place identity is the most evident at this moment: the identity of a place is structured through the images that residents and outsiders create of a landscape, and it is to this identity that individuals link their place attachment and therefore place identity, through a mutual equilibrium of influences that seems so difficult to replicate yet surprisingly easy to dismantle. In her search for the identity of the Costwolds region of England, Brace (1999) collected significant intuitions: the distinctiveness of the region not only is decisive to single it out from the mosaic of other British landscapes, especially when compared to the rather dull neighbouring regions, but it is so iconic that it can in fact represent the whole country. Where the identity of a place can be so hard to clearly define in words, it can nonetheless appear obvious in some of its landscapes.

In conclusion, although place identity is a dynamic rooted in the recognition of place within both the spatial fabric of society and its collective awareness, people's consciousness of a place should not overshadow the understanding of the identity of that place (Peng, Strijker & Wu, 2020). The significance of the physicality of the identity of place underscores the tangible aspects that shape the essence of a location, and this is strikingly highlighted in the context of Venice. The concept of *heritage* adds another layer to the identity of landscape, since it enables local inhabitants to demarcate their domain and forge a connection with their surroundings, learning the value of preservation of significant spaces (Ramos *et al*., 2016). The concluding remarks from UNESCO's General Conference in 2011 confirm that urban areas stand as diverse and abundant embodiments of our shared cultural heritage, highlighting the role of places in nurturing a deeper understanding of our shared history and values (Walczak & Kepczynska-Walczak, 2013). The exploration of the identity of place within the context of established spatial structures and collective awareness unveils a nuanced interplay between the people's consciousness and the place's distinctiveness.

The Scale of Place

Proshansky offered a definition of place identity that is widely agreed upon in the literature: "those dimensions of self that define the individual's personal identity in relation to the physical environment by means of a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, feelings, values, goals, preferences, skills, and behavioural tendencies relevant to a specific environment" (Proshansky, 1978: 156). In his conceptualisation, the scale of place is not mentioned, yet he recognises the relevance of it, while in authors like Tuan (1976: 149) the spectrum of place attachment can extend from the familiarity of an armchair to the vastness of the entire Earth, because the focus is on the deeply individual process that is neither simple nor static (Proshansky, 1978). Painter (2008) challenges the need for a classification of scale, arguing that places are understood as interactions between a myriad of social and material networks; a flexible, open, fluid, and contested concept that varies immensely according to the individual (Peng, Strijker & Wu, 2020).

The gap between the micro and the macro level of place, can however be filled with several intermediate elements that is worth analysing separately (Lalli, 1992). Focusing in this chapter on the contingent side of place, it seems relevant to finally tackle the scale at which it operates. Hidalgo and Hernández (2001) encourage the scholarship to investigate place identity across the multiple levels of the spectrum, envisioning place at the scale of neighbourhood, city, or continent (Ernawati, 2018). Altman and Low (1992) have grouped multiple investigations of attachment to a place that can go from one's home, down to a small object or up even to the whole universe. Lewicka (2011) remarks this tendency in research to concentrate on a single scale of place attachment, leaving comparative analyses underexplored. She adds that neighbourhoods receive significant attention, followed by homes, cities, and regions in smaller magnitude, but Hidalgo and Hernández (2001) suggest that while people do hold attachments to their neighbourhoods, these attachments might be comparatively weaker when juxtaposed with other scales. The remaining part of this chapter tries to understand how to set the borders for these scales.

The Boundaries of Place

"Most definitions of 'region' and 'place' still begin from an assumption that these are specific bounded entities" (Paasi, 2001: 22). It is then worth spending some words on

the essence of these boundaries and their interplay with space. Quoting Aristotle, when Relph (1976) introduces place, he highlights the separation between an object and its location, defining place by the boundary of the objects it encloses. Boundaries delineate, define, and create distinctions between spaces, generating the conceptual dilemma introduced by de Certeau (1984): to whom does the frontier belong? If the border is not part of the object, nor it is part of its place, how can one define it? In this confusion, what is the role of the bridge that crosses the border made by a river?

The evolving understanding of borders, from once being mere lines of delineation to becoming political entities, reflects the complex interplay between physical features and discourses of identity, where borders are now seen as "socio-territorial constructs reflecting the discourses and practices of national identity" (Agnew, 2007: 399). The politics of boundaries are soon introduced, specifically regarding cartography and its intricacies. The concept of "cartographic anxiety" reveals the tension between the power to define and the fear of misrepresentation or manipulation that comes with a map (Painter, 2008), contributing to the complex relationship between space and power. Boundaries are not only lines on maps, accurately describing and delineating a given locality through its material features and resources (Heley & Jones, 2012); they are symbols and institutions embedded in territorial practices. Tracing a border is implicitly an act of violence (Painter, 2008), and the entities enclosed within often establish specific institutions bound with maintaining territoriality (Paasi, 2001). Boundaries, far from being static empirical lines, extend beyond the physical realm, manifesting as social, cultural, and political constructs deeply intertwined with the institutionalisation of territories (Paasi, 2001). If space is power for those who own it and exploit it (Tuan, 1976), boundaries become the symbol of the territorial ideology (Nogué & Vicente, 2004), reflecting the top-down influences on the subaltern and marginalised (Heley & Jones, 2012).

The delineation of territory is the delimitation of community, with borders covering a dual role in the establishment of the insiders that belong to the place and the outsiders that are excluded (Paasi, 2001). Boundaries of place assume various forms, encompassing legal-administrational definitions as well as socio-cultural distinctions like communities and vernacular regions (Lewicka, 2011). However, the demarcation of boundaries, whether formal or not, does not inherently indicate the establishment of

discrete territories: regions may possess complex economic, political, and cultural interconnections, while formal boundaries may sometimes delimit areas that lack internal cohesion (Painter, 2008). According to Paasi (2009), what is at play here is individual "mental maps" that organise society through territorial ideologies: he quotes the anthropologist Cohen (1998: 22), who denied that boundaries came from factual law, to claim instead that they are a matter of consciousness and experience.

Delimiting a region, in any case, presupposes an examination of historical reconstitution processes, acknowledging the fluidity of socio-spatial features shaped by urbanisation (Cardoso & Meijers, 2021), not to mention the flexibility of territorial identity: individuals may simultaneously identify with various levels, from global citizenship to local affiliation (Heley & Jones, 2012), or what Vainikka (2012) called "elective belonging". Cardoso and Meijers (2021) identify a phenomenon that they label "*inversion*": the trend in the scholarship is, according to them, to shift from the "regionalisation of the city" to the "citification of the region". What they intend is that, while years ago the approach to discuss the city was focused on broad categorisations, much like one would do for a region, recent studies on broad areas focus on the interconnections between cities, describing regions as multicentric urban areas. The fuzziness of the border between the concepts is more and more relevant as processes of urbanisation turn rural areas into megalopolis and connections between cities are faster than ever. The challenge of defining borders applies across scales (Georg *et al*., 2012), but this chapter tries to identify specifically what can be intended as a region and what instead is the city.

Identity of the Region

The terms "region" and "place" are sometimes used interchangeably (Peng, Strijker & Wu, 2020), blurring the lines between larger collective contexts and more localized individual experiences. However, the distinction between the terms was first proposed by Paasi (1986): while places identify individual practices and experiences, regions refer to "collective institutional practices and collective structures of meaning within a time frame that stretches across generations." Notably, regions can extend beyond mere geographical constructs; they can become integral components of self-identity, entwined with factors like ethnicity and gender. Deacon (2004) argues that regions can help organizing

everyday life, while also remaining distant from individual perspectives, as citizens can have personal views on the symbolic shape and the iconographies of the region. Paasi (2001) proposes four scales of categorisation of space: global, plurinational, national, and regional. The regional level, therefore, becomes the fundamental building block of the broader system. Nonetheless, according to Peng *et al.*, the regional identity can become too encompassing, making regional identity too vague for the individual. Painter (2008) seems to resolve this conflict: although treating regions as centred totalities can be a useful tool in the literature, it does not imply that they have to offer internal homogeneity. It is the bounds that tie regions together that appear as the central animating principle.

As stated before, the fluidity of place in today's setting calls for a dynamic definition of regions, but undeniable features of its geographical location, socio-economic attributes, political situations, and cultural traits are still fundamental for its demarcation (Rijnks & Strijker, 2013). This understanding of region as a socially produced spatial category transcends the mere physical boundaries to encompass a multidimensional plethora of factors, shaped by historical contexts, collective identities, and ongoing socio-cultural interactions (Frisvoll & Rye, 2009). The concepts are linked: defining a region implies finding a common set of characteristics that distinguishes it from other regions, which in turn indicates precisely the identity of the region (Rijnks & Strijker, 2013). This conceptual interplay is at the heart of New Regionalism, a paradigm shift from the conventional understanding of regions as static entities defined by historical and cultural attributes. Keating (1998) used the concept to name the emergence of regionalist politics in the latter half of the 1970s: it did not represent an antimodern resurrection of old provincialism, but rather the discovery of regions as the vehicle for new forms of development and enhanced economic opportunities (Painter, 2008). In modern Europe[1], regions are now more than ever products of the regionalisation processes, reflecting the

[1] The concept of "region" carries a Eurocentric underpinning, suggesting its origin as part of the European integration process. This insight challenges the idea that regions serve as universally applicable territorial entities and highlights how region conceptualization might be specific to European historical and political circumstances (Painter, 2009). In this context, Europe can be comprehended not only as an institution and structural body but also as an experiential process; after all, the definition of "Europe" has always been dynamic, as it defined itself and simultaneously excluded those not participating in the evolving process (Paasi, 2001).

intricate interactions between global influences and local responses (Paasi, 2001). This shift highlights the evolving nature of regions as products of dynamic sociopolitical interactions, rather than passive repositories of heritage. According to New Regionalism, the definition of regions is often guided by regional development, governance, education, and media and tourism marketing institutions, which assume an affective connection with the region in the everyday life of its citizens (Vainikka, 2012). Although this could be an overstatement, it is recognised that regions serve as dynamic mediums for social interaction, symbols of collective spatial identification that play a pivotal role as social constructions of space. The identity of a region finds expression in multiple dimensions: the socio-cultural representations of regions are promulgated by political elites and media through literary depictions, commodified collective heritages, and symbolic sites. In turn, these constructions contribute to the formation of territorially grounded identities, illustrating how regions serve as mediums for social interaction and collective spatial identification (Vainikka, 2012).

Regional identity adapts to the shifting currents of globalisation and the economic influence of tourism. Notably, the complexities of globalisation have led to a significant reconfiguration of boundaries (Musterd & van Zelm, 2001). Rather than a unidirectional dominance or a simple imposition of global forces over local ones, globalisation has sparked intricate processes of negotiation, manipulation, and hybridisation that reshape rural places (Heley & Jones, 2012), contrary to the notion of solely homogenisation promotion. Globalisation operates as a crucial lens to understand how cultural differences are accentuated and produced (Paasi, 2001), what Ploner (2009) defines "*miniaturisation*". In addition, the concept of region proves to be in fact integral for comprehending the nature and origins of modern tourism, dominating contemporary tourism planning, administration, and research, reflected in guidebooks, websites, and the overall creation of desirable travel destinations (Ploner, 2009). The tourism industry identifies physical landscapes, heritage elements, and intangible aspects as the reference points for regional identity, placing cultural markers such as historic events to culinary traditions, crafts, language, folklore, and more at the centre of the identity of the region (Knaps & Hermann, 2018; Ray, 1998). These narratives are produced and reproduced by the regional press, education systems and other cultural actors, canonizing the regional identity (Vainiakka, 2012). Such activities melt the borders between the

commercialisation of a region and the characteristics that define it in the eyes of its inhabitants, effectively mixing the place identity described in chapter one with the identity of the place defined above. As such, the concept of a region has become a prominent symbol of prosperity and development across many countries (Frisvoll & Rye, 2009), especially in response of an overwhelming globalisation that erodes local cultures and traditions (Ploner, 2009).

While these discourses increasingly intertwine with competitiveness, regions become actively engaged in self-promotion to preserve their cultural identity while enhancing socio-economic vitality: the quest for identity is thus indistinguishable from a need of identity to survive in a competitive battle among regions (Ray, 1998). The renewed focus on identity is intertwined with the language of tourism and cultural narration by official bodies like the European Union and UNESCO, making "region", "diversity" or "culture" evergreen hashtags for prosperity and development (Ploner, 2009). On the other hand, the identity of the region is absorbed as a reality in the minds of its inhabitants (Knaps & Hermann, 2018), turning "rural positiveness" from a tool of tourism promotion to individual and communal pride and identity (Ray, 1998).

Identity of the City

When urban sociology first surfaced, a prevailing negative image of the city was often portrayed (Lalli, 1992). This view depicted cities as noisier, dirtier, more crowded, less serene, and less predictable than other forms of human communities (Proshansky, 1978). However, it is essential to recognize that these characterisations were rather a caricature than the reality, portraying the city as a less desirable community when compared to a more traditional rural lifestyle. Contrasting this, positive traits of the city were subsequently brought up: cities are now understood as hubs of social concentration and platforms for diverse practices of belonging, ethnic mixture, and cultural diversity, fostering intense encounters with difference (Clayton, 2009). Under this rather positive light, cities are said to provide a sense of freedom, enabling identities to embrace flexibility by drawing from a diverse range of cultural resources. Among these contrasting views on the city, Jones and Svejenova (2017) argue that such duality is to be blamed on to two specific rhetorical acts that have always influenced perception:

- The first is *synecdoche*, where a “part” symbolizes the “whole” it belongs to. In the case of the city, the relevance of one element of the whole is blown out of proportion to identify the entirety of the city. For example, the Eiffel Tower may stand for Paris in written text or visual representations, reducing the rest of the enormous urban area to a minimum.
- The second is *asyndeton*, the act of disrupting the spatial continuum by retaining selected elements and excluding others. For instance, describing New York City merely by quoting Broadway or Wall Street reduces the city to its theatre and finance spheres, neglecting its multifaceted nature.

Just like place identity and the identity of a place were differentiated, the same process can be applied to the city: city identity – or *urban-related identity* – encompasses various dimensions that contribute to an individual's sense of self and belonging within the urban context. Urban-related identity can be an integral facet of a person's broader self-identity, even serving as a means to cultivate positive self-regard and self-esteem (Lalli, 1992). Furthermore, distinguishing between the concepts of place identity and urban-related identity highlights the significance of the city elements in the self-definition of its residents. Lalli (1992) outlines these elements organising them into five fundamental facets of urban-related identity: continuity with one's past, attachment, familiarity, commitment, and external evaluation. These five aspects collectively form the core of urban-related identity, serving as a framework to delve into the underlying dimensions that compose the concept of place identity (Ernawati, 2018).

The role of personal experience in shaping place identity is underlined by the fact that the concept of a neighbourhood does not inherently expand from the sentiment one holds for a specific local street, for instance the intimate connection between individuals and the street they grew up on. This discrepancy highlights the relationship between tangible personal encounters and more generalized conceptual notions (Tuan, 1976: 170). City identity in an individual emerges therefore as a complex interplay of personal experiences, emotional attachments, familiarity, commitment, and external perceptions. The unique characteristics of urban-related identity, grounded in the distinctiveness of urban living, contribute to individuals' self-perception within the broader urban context.

The *identity of the city*, on the other hand, is intrinsically tied to its architectural and physical configuration. Saleh (1998) contends that the way cities are perceived by individuals and the broader public derives from the architectural design and arrangement of urban environments. Of course, this view seems reductive considering Relph's (1976) views, where the mere activity of city planning is deemed two-dimensional and the architectural conception of space lacks experiential depth and creativity for the sake of optimisation and efficiency of space. Most of the literature settles in between these extremes: Haapala (2003), for example, recognises inherent qualities of the city, but explains that these traits orient the interaction humans have with the city itself: a surplus of meaning, unfamiliarity, potential for novelty, surprise, and uncontrollability are the filters through which the individual experiences the city.

Jones and Svejenova (2017), in line with Saleh (1998), admit the existence of recognizable aspects that define iconic cities such as Paris or Vienna. Neighbourhood character emerges in particular as a prominent factor due to neighbourhoods often having a recognizable affinity of style (Dovey *et al*., 2009). However, it is also true that metropolis like London boasts a wide diversity of districts, each with its distinct identity, be it financial, residential, or multicultural. Such diversity enriches the city's identity rather than diluting it, offering a multiplicity of experiences that shape residents' perceptions and separating the city from the "village", where such unpredictability in landscape is not present (Haapala, 2003). This is because the city's identity is conveyed through multiple sign systems, encompassing its material, visual, and rhetorical aspects: these systems interact to communicate and reinforce various facets of the city's character. The built environment, including architecture, monuments, and landmarks, serves as a central resource for constructing the city's identity, but the city's identity is not static like stone buildings, and instead evolves over time to create a distinctive character that reflects historical experiences and cultural understandings, for instance the depictions of the city itself in the media or in guidebooks (Jones & Svejenova, 2017).

Remaining on the material side of the identity of the city, Jones and Svejenova (2017) establish the three key characteristics that serve as cornerstones for shared interactions and the establishment of identity: exclusivity, uniqueness, and fixedness. The built environment of monuments or parks presents not only interpretations but also the potential to imagine future identities, serving as aspirational identity artifacts that

facilitate reflection, reorientation, and the reclamation of a city's unique features while envisioning an alternative future (Zamparini *et al*., 2023). Architectural styles that encapsulate the city's history, experiences, conventions, and cultural understandings distils the essence of the city, enhancing its legibility towards both residents and foreign observers (Jones & Svejenova, 2017). Even when talking about the strictly material side of the city's identity, then, communal experiences come into play. Leixnering and Höllerer (2022) highlight this concept, writing that the sociological and geographical discourse suggests that city identity is an outcome of a social construct, an "imagined community" that emerges from interpretative, symbolic, and manipulative practices that encapsulate the city's unique essence. Urban structures, while critical components of a city, do not singularly define city identity (Zamparini *et al*., 2023): infrastructural changes have the potential to trigger shifts in identity on both an ideational and structural scale. This perspective aligns with the concepts of adaptive resilience and transformative urban change, where the persistence of values is essential to the desirability of a particular course of action, depending on their resonance across the broader polity (Leixnering & Höllerer, 2022).

Cheshmehzangi (2020) proposes a classification of the identities of a city. Urban identities, in his book, consist of qualities, characteristics, and materials, both in the tangible and intangible realm. The urban identity cannot be detached from these features, activities, and meanings. The *ethos* of the city (Bell & de-Shalit, 2011) is what generates the huge differences between different cities, withstanding the homologising forces of globalisation. It can be reduced to an aesthetic pleasure, where variety across cities showcases human creativity, but there is also a moral case for diversity: differences among urban environments can regard social and political life.

1. The first city's identity listed is the *landmark*: cities represented by an iconic building (like the Sydney Opera House) or by a cluster of buildings (the Forbidden City of Beijing) are identified by singularity identity. the potential of a single manmade construction attracts "starchitect-led" city branding, where with the creation of a single building, policy makers hope to brand an entire city (Evans, 2015).
2. A *functional* city's identity: it is the purpose of the city that shapes its image. For instance, the street art on the Berlin Wall is able to showcase the history of

the city, but often the general field of entertainment seems to work successfully when it offers uniqueness and exoticness.

3. The *political* or *economic* importance of the city can also represent its function. The financial centres of London or Shanghai represent the money-led development of the world, while the buildings of Washington, D.C. identify the city as the political centre of the country.
4. The *perception* of the features of the city represents another level of its identity when the distinctiveness of a city is based on a subjective or fictional attribute other than a building or environment. This includes iconic elements like the yellow cabs of New York City, but such small details are dependent on the active branding by the city itself, which is crucial for audiences to link features like these to their own mental image of the city.
5. The *geographical* landscape can represent the distinctive feature of a city. Although this is quite rare, the examples are quite iconic: Istanbul perched on the border between two continents or Rio de Janeiro developed around its many beaches and peaks. One of the most evident examples of geographical urban identity feature is in fact Venice. It is not the only "city of water", but it sure has its mark on the global imagery: Amsterdam, after all, is considered "the Venice of the North", and not the other way around.
6. The last element of city's identity is *historical*. It is not necessary to have a consistent image across the centuries, what is relevant is how the city has developed over a certain period of time. Most Italian cities fit this level of urban identity, most significantly Rome. The continuity in the temporal dimension is an important part of shaping and strengthening the identity of a place.

The level of identity within an urban context can be categorized into three main tiers (Cheshmehzangi, 2020). The first, referred to as the *macro* level, revolves around the conceptualisation of urban identity for purposes such as urban branding and industry, overlapping both the global perspective and the environmental framework. In other words, it refers to the image of the city in the eyes of the broadest audiences. A second level proposed refers to the connections between individuals and places. This concept evokes the place identity tackled in the first chapter, although the connections are not

personalized but rather situated within a comprehensive framework that fosters social cohesion through a socio-spatial understanding of a place. It is this *social* level of urban identity that allows place identity to shape and contribute to the local identity, awarding public spaces and squares with the role of the most visually iconic and socially significant components of a city. At this level of urban identity, cities should celebrate their environments beyond mere physical attributes, tapping into their social and cultural values, which form the essential foundation of any community. Finally, a *personal* scale is listed as the finest level of a city's identity. This micro level is the most specific and intricate tier, delving into the individual's perspective on a place or city, emphasizing the experiences, connections, and memories associated with a particular locale and how these aspects are reflected in an individual's perception. For these reasons it is challenging to provide examples of such a private level of urban identity (Cheshmehzangi, 2020)

Cheshmehzangi (2020) argues that the islands of Venice offer one of the most iconic examples of geography-based identity of a city. It is true that the characteristic of being immerged in its lagoon have probably conferred to Venice the relevance it has in popular culture today, but Venice is so multifaceted that cases could be made to claim that the urban identity of the Serenissima can fall into other categories as well. For instance, like any other Italian city of relevance, the history of Venice and its evolution through the centuries are enough to claim it identity in these terms. Moreover, one could argue the landmark identity of Venice based on its combination of fascinating buildings – San Marco's belltower and the Rialto bridge, for instance – because when the hotel and casino The Venetian in Las Vegas wanted to evoke the Italian city it had to recreate these landmarks. Perhaps, the most fitting category of identity is the perceptual, given the "Venetian-ness" that gondolas and canals exude, since so many elements of the city have become prominently represented in the global imagery: the Carnival masks, the tiny glass sculptures, the narrow buildings with crooked facades directly mirrored their canals, the striped shirts and straw hats of the gondoliers. Over the last decades, finally, the function of the city has also emerged as significant: Venice is not the icon of political or monetary power, but it does represent one of the most touristic destinations in the world. As it will be explored later on, the tourism industry has come to define Venice more than vice versa, overcoming most other activities in the Lagoon and creating a "touristic monoculture".

The small town of Locarno is brought as an example by Zamparini *et al.* (2023), given its character of a town of peace that was instrumental to the decision of signing there the Locarno Treaties in 1925. Although these qualities are hardly ever brought up in public discourse, they remain aspects of pride for the residents, testament of the absorption of physical features of the environment into the identity of its inhabitants. City life is deeply intertwined with identity, and the city itself holds profound significance as a centre of meaning. As Tuan (1976: 173) highlights, Shakespeare was already noticing this centuries ago: "What is the Citie, but the People? True, the People are the Citie" (Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, act 3, scene 1). This view has been shared by scholars to come in many fields, most notably by Danish architect Jan Gehl (2010), who stressed the significance of human experiences and emotions in shaping the identity of cities and the need for human-centric urban planning. Moreover, Sassen (1996) argues that in the era of multicultural megalopolis, it is the collective identity of citizens that make up the identity of the city. And finally, Florida (2002) writes that nowhere else the creative class can find its fulfilment like it does in the urban context, making the city the perfect hub for great minds to come together and shape its overall identity.

Place identity has been defined as the complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, feelings, values, goals, preferences, skills, and behavioural tendencies that individuals associate with a certain place to individuate their own identity (Peng, Strijker & Wu, 2020). The identity of the city, on the other hand, is conveyed through material, visual, and rhetorical aspects: monuments and landmarks, historical experiences and cultural understandings, depictions in the media (Jones & Svejenova, 2017). As concluding remarks, it seems appropriate to mention the competitivity aspect that was introduced in the previous chapter about the region. Ernawati (2018: 272) warns us that "the city's future depends on urban competitiveness". Not only cities appear to battle each other in the economic field of tourism, for which the city's identity is relevant in terms of marketing and destination management. Cities are also competing in general terms of urban sustainability and globalisation, where the survival of the fittest seems to rule in the upcoming decades. One should hope that the "creative class", which according to Florida (2002) is attracted to the city, will be ready to face the challenges that are already showing up. The attention now shifts on the case of the counterpart on the

mainland of the City of Venice. The area of Mestre fell behind, into the shadow of its iconic neighbour. What kind of urban identity can Mestre offer? Given the distinct levels of a city's identity presented by Cheshmehzangi (2020), which framework works best to understand the place identity in Mestre? The next chapters will try to frame the issues of Venice and Mestre in terms of place in order to offer in turn solutions based on place and *placeness* for a sustainable identity.

CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH AND METHODOLODY

Literature Review

In the study of place and its profound impact on individuals, various scholars have approached the subject from different angles. Kim, Vaswani, and Lee (2017) proposed a biographic approach to place that seems in accordance with the perspective put forth by Relph (1976), emphasizing the deeply personal relationship that individuals have with their surroundings. Augé (1995) offered the ethnographical method to concurrently study places and their inhabitants: this mean of data collection underscores the interconnectedness of people and the locations they inhabit (MacCannell, 1973). As these authors suggest, the recurring theme in the literature on place and identity is the predominance of qualitative methodologies. Even in the field of tourism impacts, Horváth (2018) noted that most studies have relied heavily on quantitative approaches.

The reason behind such focus on qualitative research is the fluid and transactional nature of people's relationships with places. Smaldone *et al*. (2005) argued that individuals' concepts of nature, and by extension, their relationship with the places they inhabit, are inherently subjective and can vary significantly. This perspective challenges traditional models that tend to oversimplify the complexity of human-place interactions and suggests that place attachment can change due to evolving circumstances. In the realm of place identity, observations by Peng, Strijker, and Wu (2020) highlight a disconnect between citizens' perceptions of place identities and the discourses propagated by media and regional administrations. Ethnography renders itself necessary as researchers must analyse place identity from two perspectives: external observations of physical appearances and behaviours, as well as internal thoughts and perceptions of place. This dual perspective allows for a more holistic understanding of how individuals relate to and construct their identities within specific places (Peng, Strijker & Wu, 2020). Moreover, the influence of residents on the place brand is a critical aspect: local stakeholders play a pivotal role in shaping – and being shaped by – the image of a place, making them key actors in the branding process (Hudak, 2019). Although dealing with a unitary and cohesive identity of place would be more linear, place branding needs to negotiate multiple representations of a city (Insch & Walters, 2018).

A vast variety of qualitative methods have been explored by the literature. In the field of place identity, for example, Clayton (2009) conducted interviews in the town of Leicester, United Kingdom, primarily focusing on young people's perspectives, whereas Lyon (2014) resorted to ethnographic data for the area of British Columbia, Canada. Interviews conducted by Klanicka *et al*. (2006) were directed both at locals and tourists in rural New Zealand, while Smaldone *et al*. (2005) separated the two groups in their analysis of Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Interviews seem the most frequent method of data collection regarding place belonging: Frost and Catney (2020) in Liverpool, United Kingdom; Hidalgo and Hernández (2001) conducted theirs in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain; Ujang and Zakariya (2015a) interviewed street dwellers of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Dovey *et al*. (2009) consulted the residents of a neighbourhood of Melbourne, Australia. Some outliers in this trend seem to be Jorgensen and Stedman (2001), who employed the self-analysis of homeowners to measure the sense of place through Likert scales, or Cuba and Hummon (1993) when they studied the "sense of home" in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, through surveys and quantitative data within the local communities.

In the domain of place branding, qualitative research again finds the most representation in the literature, most notably for the opportunity it offers to scholars to interpret the way places are portrayed and experienced (Acharya & Rahman, 2016). Focus groups and semi-structured interviews were employed by de San Eugenio *et al*. (2019); Insch and Walters (2018) conducted in-depth interviews with residents of Dunedin, New Zealand; and Oliveira and Panyik (2015) produced a content analysis of the online materials related to Portugal's destination branding efforts. Consulting multiple stakeholders before and after place branding processes appears evident in Jain *et al*. (2022), as well as in the work of Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015), who described the conflicts between consultants and local stakeholders. Finally, interviews were collected also by de Andrade and Forte dos Santos (2020) to analyse the branding of the creative cities of Galway, Bradford, Busan, and Sydney.

Researchers in the field of placemaking have employed primarily qualitative methods too. Quantitative methods are again limited, and mostly deriving from surveys and questionnaires (Bertocchi & Visentin, 2019): Ernawati (2018) utilized Likert questionnaires to study urban development in Malang, Indonesia. Zamparini *et al*. (2023) instead employed content analysis in their research about Locarno, Switzerland; Agostini

et al. (1998) engaged the residents of a Venice neighbourhood through workshops and collaborations with schools; Rosbrook-Thompson (2015) conducted interviews to gain insights into placemaking processes. Creativity plays a big part in the placemaking literature: Crisman (2021) delved into the role of the arts in Los Angeles, Guaraldo (2021) focused on artists in Venice, shedding light on their contributions to placemaking, Webb (2022) too investigated artist-led creative placemaking initiatives.

Methodology

Scholarly debates about the selection of interviewees in research are evident in the literature. For instance, Horváth (2018) questioned opinion leaders from local, regional, and international levels surrounding the case of Venice, while Rodrigues and Schimdt (2021) utilised a snowballing sample selection method when exploring the concept of the creative city. The role of individuals in shaping and defining the identity of a city cannot be understated: as Sassen (1996) suggests, people are integral to the makeup of their own city. City branding and theories of place identity are inherently intertwined, emphasizing the importance of starting research on these topics from the perspective of the people who inhabit these spaces. Ploner (2009) raised questions about the limited research into how people living in a region relate to such imaginaries and the way these ties strengthen or challenge the sense of belonging to a particular place. Residents were limited to target market in place marketing and branding efforts, but this perspective underscores the importance of residents alongside companies and visitors as key stakeholders in shaping a place's identity and reputation.

However, the issue emerges of the nebulous nature of publics (Griffiths & Barbour, 2016), imposing the acknowledgement that publics are constantly evolving, forming, dispersing, and undergoing transformation through processes like adoption, insertion, or rejection. Moreover, the everchanging public has an influence on places: Klanicka *et al*. (2006) explored whether “outsiders” and “insiders” perceive the same places differently. Places can hold deep meaning for both groups, either as symbols of significant experiences or for their restorative value: Kibler *et al*. (2018) highlight that differences in the evaluation of landscape development between residents and non-residents can be attributed to their distinct senses of place, which stem from the varying meanings they

attribute to the same place characteristics. Acknowledging these differences is essential to avoid alienating key stakeholders in the evaluation and restoration process.

Data collection

The interviews selected for this thesis are embedded in the Urban GoodCamp (UCAMP) project, an initiative founded by the European Commission. UCAMP is a pioneering European program that sets out to empower Higher Education Institutions and their urban partners in confronting the most pressing urban challenges of our time. Over a span of 36 months (September 2021 - December 2023), UCAMP aims at harnessing collective knowledge and expertise from seven diverse European countries: Denmark, Slovenia, Spain, Finland, France, Italy, and the Netherlands. The urban setting that took part in the project was the City of Venice. At its core, UCAMP seeks to address the question of how we can design more sustainable urban environments, with the term "sustainability" encompassing here financial, social, and environmental dimensions. To achieve its objectives, UCAMP was founded on the creation of vibrant urban communities within each participating city, fostering active citizen involvement in the process. The first of the multiple phases of the project involved the exploration of various challenges unique to each city: in the case of Venice, the three issues described in the next chapter emerged from the discussion and the desktop research (urbangoodcamp.eu). The subsequent phase involved the interviews that are central for the data collection of this thesis. Following the multi-stakeholder approach that emerged as inevitable from the scholarship, a vast variety of individuals were interviewed to represent multiple facets of the people of Venice: representatives in the City Hall, hospitality industry experts, higher education specialists, creative industries professionals. The quotes from the interviews that seemed the most relevant for this thesis are collected in Appendix 1.

Data interpretation

The interviews were utilised in parallel development with the desktop research, analysed specifically through the Gioia method. The Gioia method is designed to introduce a systematic approach for developing fresh concepts and constructing grounded theories, aiming to bring qualitative precision to the practice and presentation of inductive research (Gioia *et al*., 2012). The "Grounded Theory" is a qualitative research technique

pioneered by Glaser and Strauss (1967), where theory is directly derived from research findings. It comprises three stages of data coding: 1) Open coding, where an initial set of categories is created to organize data with similar characteristics. 2) Axial coding, which establishes connections between categories and initiates the formation of a conceptual network. 3) Selective coding, where more abstract categories are identified to establish a comprehensive theory. The approach developed by Dennis Gioia is rooted in the Grounded Theory and ensures the credibility of interpretations generated through data analysis because readers can trace their origins. After defining a research question, data is collected from various sources, and theoretical statements are developed. As the process leading to theoretical interpretations from evidence is transparent, these conclusions become plausible and defensible. The steps in this process discussed here can be summarized as follows:

a) Defining a research question related to a specific phenomenon.

b) Reviewing relevant literature.

c) Collecting data through interviews with informants.

d) Analysing the data using a coding system.

e) Formulating the theory.

The fundamental assumptions include interviewees being "conscious agents," meaning they are aware of their intentions and can explain their actions, and the analyst's ability to extract concepts and relationships from the gathered information that may elude informants, thereby forming pertinent theories (Gioia *et al.*, 2012). After the interviews are conducted, the transcripts are examined, and the data is coded to identify lower-level categories (first-order analysis) that encapsulate the responses and reactions of informants, using their own expressions. These are then combined to create more abstract categories (referred to as second-order analysis), with an analytical and theoretical focus. Ultimately, these are consolidated into broader dimensions that constitute the final theoretical framework (Cicala, 2022).

CHAPTER 4 – THE CITY OF VENICE THROUGH ITS PLACES

This chapter utilises the tools previously defined to extrapolate the contemporary situation of Venice in terms of the concepts of place, identity, and the combination of the two. The most evident issues of the city – gathered from the interviews – will be categorised into three main urban challenges, while the concept of *placelessness* and *non-place* – extrapolated from the literature analysed so far – will help in the understanding of the situation of the mainland, hinting to possible solutions to its critical elements. In the face of significant societal and environmental changes in today's world, the concept of place remains crucial (Horan 2000), and it shall remain central in this analysis of the case of Venice.

First and foremost, the places of Venice are much more complex than what may transpire from the most shared imaginary. The Municipality of Venice (Comune di Venezia) is a subnational jurisdiction of Italy, but its area is composed of several pluralities. First of all, the municipality is split between the Mainland and the Lagoon. The Venice Lagoon counts hundreds of islands, like Murano, Burano, Torcello, Lido, Pellestrina and so on, while the most well-known part of Venice, with San Marco Square and the Rialto bridge, is in turn an archipelago of 118 islands. However, most of the inhabitants of the municipality reside in fact on the mainland (Pierantoni *et al*., 2014). The municipality is spread across an extended area on the mainland, comprising another plurality: Marghera, Favaro, the bigger centre of Mestre, and other centres (Casagrande, 2016). Among this abundance of places, the islands of Venice take the spotlight, raising questions about what exactly constitutes *Venice*: is it just the island, is it the entire Lagoon, is it the administrative municipality? Issues regarding the ambiguity of the name(s) of Venice have emerged in the interviewing process:

> "Venice is taken for granted, but it's a very ambiguous word. […] Venice is the island, the island and the lagoon, the hinterland, the mainland city, a post-industrial city, the 20 million tourists... a grand scenic stage where one slips each time when searching for meaning." (Stakeholder 2).

For simplicity, from now on, the name 'Mestre' will identify the mainland area of the municipality of Venice (the *Terraferma* area, composed of the municipalities of Favaro Veneto, Marghera, Chirignago-Zelarino and Mestre-Carpenedo), while with 'Venice' we

will intend the archipelago of famous islands in the lagoon (the *Estuario* area, composed of the municipalities of Venezia-Murano-Burano and Lido and Pellestrina), according to most of the literature and the common imaginary (DeVine *et al*., 2016). By "the City of Venice" we will intend the combination of the two halves.

Many attempts to separate the islands from the mainland have been promoted over the years in form of referendum. The opposing opinions have always exposed convincing arguments for both the separation of the municipalities and their union, and the latter has always won so far. On one side, Mestre would benefit from the separation, gaining its independence and the ability to focus its resources on the mainland alone, but the area would also lose most of its attractivity, perhaps continuing to serve as a dormitory for the overflow of Venice but with harder administration across the two towns. On the other side, Venice could regain its historical role as the city on the water, capital of its own Republic like San Marino, but at the risk of becoming an empty shell of a city, filled with attractions like a theme park or the Mont Saint Michel, void of any life after dark (Muscarà, 1990). Several interviews exposed that in fact the two sides of the municipality do need each other to thrive (see Appendix 1, quotes 7 and 13). The urban sprawl around Mestre originated only after Venice was finally connected to the mainland with the Ponte della Libertà in 1846, putting an end to the isolation of the Serenissima and integrating it to the north-eastern region of Italy (Muscarà, 1990). The real development of the industrial port of Marghera, however, was the first industrial endeavour of the lagoon since its shipbuilding years, attracting intranational immigrants. The industry on the mainland is the only business endeavour of the municipality that could rival the touristic sector, so it should not be ignored.

The uniqueness of Venice is nothing less than iconic. What makes it interesting for an analysis in terms of place and identity is that everybody would probably be able to sum up what are the characteristics that, in their own opinion, make Venice stand out from other places, in other words, what is the place character of Venice. However, the uniqueness that is most relevant to this analysis is the fact that Venice is a *city* like no other. The experience of city dwellers unfolds in various ways. Relph (1976) suggested that it might only be complete when the city is viewed from above, since from down below, the space of the city does not expand over one street, blocked on all sides by buildings. Because of this fractured horizon, the street remains a central facet of urban reality, the

canvas on which the city dweller can draw his or her experience of the city as he or she walks through it: the city being designed entirely for the human scale, it represents the place where the walker can appropriate its environment (Jones & Svejenova, 2017). De Certeau's (1984) notion of the pedestrian appropriating the city finds resonance in Venice's labyrinthine alleys and canals. Bell and de-Shalit (2011) reference Walter Benjamin's concept of the *flâneur* to underscore the significance of strolling as a means of understanding urban dynamics. Benjamin's exploration of nineteenth-century Paris exemplified the intimate connection between the observer and the observed. This intimacy is mirrored in Venice, where the interaction of the pedestrian with the cityscape cultivates a deeper understanding of its nuances.

From an urbanistic point of view, the islands of Venice represent an excellent example of human-centric urban design. Gehl's (2010) assertion that cities should be scaled for human interaction aligns with Venice's condensed layout. The city's compactness fosters direct connections with the landscape, allowing inhabitants and visitors alike to experience the world up close. Like most Western European city centres, the streets are narrow and the buildings usually do not rise above the fourth floor (Trancoso González, 2018). In addition to this, the physical setting of the city, made it impossible for urban development to introduce cars or alter the net of roads, leaving the spaces of the city within the reach of human anatomy and in the range of their senses (Gehl, 2010). The movement along the preset paths is immersive, letting the dweller observe not just a couple of monumental buildings, but instead discover smaller details like a window, a balcony, a boat, an unexpected, picturesque view (Parmeggiani, 2016). Venice is a remarkable testament to human ingenuity, and its architectural space takes the centre stage. This physical placemaking, as described by Relph (1976), marks Venice as an entity that has been intentionally shaped, signifying the city's identity. Proshansky (1978) notes that children that grow up in cities learn skills that essential in their environment, such as navigating a crowd or moving in the metro’s underground tunnels, underlining the immersive nature of urban living. The concept of the everyday urban environment reveals a dynamic interplay between space and society: de Certeau's (1984) idea of the city walker adds another layer, illustrating how the act of walking itself organizes spatial possibilities. Urban travellers become active agents in the production of difference, identity, and citizenship (Clayton, 2009). The identity of a city is not merely a

product of its physical form and infrastructure; it is intrinsically tied to the collective identity of its citizens.

In conclusion, if place is shaped by human experience, the dimension of the city allows for interaction to happen faster and more directly than anywhere else (Relph, 1976). Venice appears to be an excellent case to therefore analyse the interactions between the places and their dwellers. As we navigate the intricate labyrinth of Venice's canals and alleys, we recognize that the city's essence is woven not only through its stratified history but also through the footsteps of those who walk its streets. In Venice, identity is not solely a reflection of its buildings and monuments but is also mirrored into the collective experiences of its inhabitants and visitors.

The Contemporary Challenges of Venice

In 1987, the United Nations Brundtland Commission defined sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (un.org). This concept of sustainability was purposely intended broad in order to include a threefold meaning: the environment, of course, but social and economic issues as well, which matter just as much and should be tackled synergically. This combination culminated with the ideation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which represent a "call for action to promote prosperity while protecting the planet" (un.org). The SDGs recognize that communities are sustainable only when they can meet social sustainability (by improving education and reducing poverty, for example), economical sustainability (like creating new job opportunities and fostering economic growth), while ultimately respect the environment in the wave of climate change.

Within the SDGs, goal 11 aims at making cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Considering today's trends of urbanisation, goal 11 is particularly relevant for the near future: cities are drivers of economic growth and contribute more than 80% of global GDP and by 2050, an estimated 7 out of 10 people will likely live in urban areas. At the same time, cities account for more than 70%of global greenhouse gas emissions, while the deep inequalities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and other cascading crises highlight the importance of sustainable urban development. It is evident that strengthening the preparedness and resilience of cities is crucial in responding to future

crises. Moreover, the pedestrian-intensive urban areas and their cultural and historical poles of attraction increasingly bear the imprint of globalisation and can contribute to creating urban decline and a chaotic atmosphere, including increased episodes of street crime (Sepe, 2012).

Venice is not immune from struggling in being a sustainable city. During the process of semi-structured interviews, creative professionals of the city were asked to summarise the issues that they recognised as the most impactful around the entire ecosystem of the city. Their answers were subsequently organised following the Gioia methodology to extrapolate three main urban challenges. The most impactful sector is of course tourism, to the point that the city is challenged on an economic, social, cultural, and environmental level. Being such an economic monoculture exposes Venice to external events that become harder to control. Be it because of a pandemic, an extreme weather event, the re-emerging of an economic crisis, if the tourist inflow slows down or even stops the life and economy of the city can be strongly affected and might ultimately collapse. Made a world heritage site by UNESCO in 1987, Venice is constantly being monitored, for its destruction would be a loss for all humankind. As such, even though the city has desperately been installing measures to curb its list of growing issues, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) is not satisfied with its progress, recommending that the site should be added to the World Heritage in Danger list (cntraveler.com, 2023). The concept of vulnerability captures the idea of susceptibility to harm, including sensitivity and exposure to perturbation (Kibler *et al.*, 2018), collocating the site of Venice in a wider spectrum: the interaction between the city and its natural environment needs to go back to the symbiotic bond it maintained for centuries in order to preserve the ecosystem and the cultural heritage of the city itself. In this sense, Venice is highly vulnerable to three specific forces that challenge its sustainability, intended here as the liveability, quality, and identity of the town (Sepe, 2012).

Environmental fragility

The environmental side to sustainability is often the most prominent in the literature. Interviews highlighted the catastrophic potential of the activities of the city in relation to the ecosystem in the past decades:

> "If one grows up in Venice, they can feel the challenges, even the conversations among young people comment on what happens in the city and form an idea of Venice's future. Living in Venice is extremely complicated, especially if one wants to be independent and find a job. […] Environmental challenges make it difficult to envision oneself in 10, 20, 30, or 100 years and still see oneself alive, still seeing Venice." (Stakeholder 3)

In correlation of the most drastic changes due to global warming, Venice had to face significant challenges and the administration is now tasked to implement tangible solutions in order to preserve the fragile environment of the Lagoon. The hospitality sector has to face a dilemma: focusing all the resources on welcoming tourism can enhance the capacity of the city in terms of this lucrative business, but at the same time the preservation of the places of Venice is essential to their marketability to visitors. This balance is the key to translate environmentalism for the sake of environmentalism to the entrepreneurial mindset of the policy makers of Venice. The most prominent example of this is the bottom-up fight against the passage of cruise ships in the San Marco basin and the Giudecca Canal. Of course, the economic impact of thousands of paying tourists can be evaluated positively for the municipality (Araya López, 2022), but in the eyes of residents and environmentalists the risks outnumber the advantages by far (Trancoso González, 2018). On the environmental side, the pollution of just one of these enormous vessels has the potential to be disruptive in the confined and fragile ecosystem of the lagoon. Moreover, the tourism fostered by cruise ships has been labelled "mass tourism", or "fast tourism" to parallel it to fast food or fast fashion (Moira *et al.*, 2017): in the same way, these phenomena threaten the traditional sector while offering a faster, cheaper option that is often unhealthy, unsustainable, and potentially dangerous. Fast tourism specifically encourages cheap foreign-made souvenir shops and fast dining alternatives to the detriment of local activities.

Braga *et al.* (2020) additionally made some observations regarding the sudden cessation of tourism for the first part of the COVID-19 lockdown in the first half of 2020. Of course, this abrupt halt in the tourism industry has triggered a substantial economic crisis in Venice, revealing its overdependence on a single source of revenue, but the cessation of water traffic also exposed the immense pressure exerted on the delicate ecosystem of the lagoon due to constant urban activity. The lockdown led to an unprecedented enhancement of water transparency in Venice's waterways, capturing the

attention of international news outlets and social media platforms alike, sparking discussions about the potential rejuvenation of the city's environment.

Transit of cruise ships in the Giudecca canal was eventually banned in 2021 (The Guardian, 2021), however these enormous vessels are still allowed to enter the Lagoon and approach the Venice islands from other canals (Araya López, 2022). Excessive amounts of people flying into the same place degrades local ecosystems and weakens natural defences against the effects of climate change. This in turn is causing worries that these oversaturated cities are going to be particularly vulnerable to climate change. The fragility of Venice's environment is a pressing concern that demands the immediate attention of the city's administration. The preservation of the environment transcends economic considerations: it is an imperative that resonates with the very essence of the city's identity.

Overtourism

Globalisation facilitates unprecedented levels of interconnectedness, and tourism is no exception (Trancoso González, 2018). In this democratized age of travel, the pursuit of status recognition has taken a new form: with improved welfare and easier travel opportunities, more individuals are seeking recognition through leisure experiences (Minoia, 2017). Augé's (1995) concept of the "supermodernity" captures the paradoxical nature of our times: a world that simultaneously shrinks due to connectivity while expanding in spatial abundance. This duality is particularly evident in the context of global tourism, which on one hand allows travellers to easily reach the most exotic destinations, while at the same time broadening the list of places towards which directing the flows of tourists. The result is the democratisation of the knowledge regarding these destinations: more and more iconic landscapes are familiar to people from all over the world. The role of tourism is this way highlighted by Dredge and Jenkins (2003): the production of destination identity, creating distinctive experiences and images, often operating at various scales, such as national or regional.

With a global increment of population comes a worldwide increase in tourists. Overtourism is a neologism, but it is not a new concept at all (Bertocchi & Visentin, 2019). According to de Waard (2012), the encouragement of movement has been a European policy for years to foster a borderless continent of cultural diversity, of sight-seeing (the

viewing of images), site-seeing (the viewing of places), and citizenship. However, this tension led to a standardisation of the cultural-historical markers of difference and authenticity: instead of constituting the identity of a place, these elements are now converted into currency. The consequences of excessive tourism on urban landscapes had already found a voice by the middle of the 1990's (Anguelovski, 2014). In their quest to cater to increasing tourist numbers, cities often fell prey to gentrification and real estate speculation, eroding the urban infrastructure and losing the authentic identity of their central neighbourhoods. These trends widened the "rent gap": the difference between the actual land value of a plot and the potential that might be extrapolated through tourism (Smith, 1987). The gentrification side of overtourism is highlighted in the definition offered by the European Parliament (2018): "the situation in which the impact of tourism, at certain times and in certain locations, exceeds physical, ecological, social, economic, psychological, and/or political capacity thresholds." Venice is one of the most notorious examples, alongside other European cities such as Barcelona, Amsterdam, Dubrovnik, and Prague. Challenges arising from this are alienated inhabitants, an overburdened infrastructure, damage to nature or threats to culture and heritage (European Parliament, 2018). The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines overtourism based on this primarily social line: "the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitors experiences in a negative way" (UNWTO, 2018, p.4).

The tourism sector has obviously had a great impact on the evolution of Venice, especially during the last decades, to the point where the identity of the city is indistinguishable from its touristic endeavours: "the poster child of overtourism" (Bertocchi & Visentin, 2019). Conflict arises in the moment when the preservation of heritage does not appear to be destined to the residents of the area, and it instead benefits corporations that exploit the city for its touristic potential. The result is that while the necessities of the residents are ignored and overruled, the tourists experience an inauthentic landscape, mistaking it for an amusement park (see Appendix 1, quote 11). Bertocchi and Visentin (2019) explain the "tourist carrying capacity", which indicates the maximum limit to tourism development. Even when talking about cruise tourism and its impact on the city, the main issue is not the single event, but rather a long-term strategy:

> "Venice is an attractive factor, the interest is strong so [if one removes the cruise ships] vacationers stay, but without the port revenue from ships in the port. […] The challenge is to move towards a Venice 2030 that understands what it wants to become. Cruise ships may or may not be a part of this project, but it's essential to pay attention to tourist flows. […] The cruise ship issue is one element, but it's an example of how people focus on a single point. There are stakeholders who view it positively or negatively, but it can lead us to lose sight of the overall vision for Venice as a destination city." (Stakeholder 8)

Tourism development becomes no longer sustainable when its costs surpass its benefits, and interventions make themselves necessary when the pressure of tourism modifies spaces, alters facilities, blocks infrastructure, and distorts the overall identity of the place.

Depopulation

As highlighted by the European Parliament (2018), overtourism consequences overflow in the everyday lives of residents and their relationship towards tourists. In Venice, this translates into the ever-growing number of restaurants and bars, hospitality facilities, and shops which push out local business and boost the prices of everyday services. Venice is becoming a "Company Town", where development depends on the single industrial sector of tourism (Bertocchi & Visentin, 2019). However, Anguelovski (2014) highlights the "right to the city", which contends that cities are intended to serve the interests of their inhabitants rather than being solely driven by profit-seeking developers. Activists acquire such right by taking part in the daily making of the urban fabric by living in the city and by meeting responsibilities that entitle people to participate in decision making.

One of the most prominent consequences of excessive tourism is the alienation experienced by the local population (Szromek *et al*., 2019). The numbers are striking: the population of the city centre peaked in 1931 at more than 160,000 people, but it dropped to 60.000 in 2009 (The Guardian, 2009), and in 2022 it hit less than 50.000 inhabitants for the first time ever recorded (Ansa.it, 2022). Horváth (2018) underscores how overtourism has led to the erosion of Venice's cultural fabric. The influx of tourists has triggered the displacement of traditional artisans, who are being crowded out by cheap souvenir shops. This shift results in the loss of authentic cultural experiences, as locally

made handicrafts are replaced by mass-produced, low-quality items manufactured outside of Venice. Just like residents leave their houses to rent them to visitors, local shop owners give up their stores to foreign investors or they have to face harsh competition and rising living prices. The commodification of culture transforms Venice's historic centre into a backdrop of mass-produced goods, diluting its uniqueness and erasing the distinctiveness that once defined the city. The economic repercussions of overtourism are profound. Hospers (2019) calls it the "tragedy of the commons": while tourism may initially provide economic benefits, over time the unchecked entry of visitors can contribute to the deterioration of the quality of life for local communities. This discontentment has driven some residents to leave the city centre, resulting in a declining population and contributing to the shrinking city phenomenon that Venice has experienced for years. Although the city council has recognized the downsides of tourism for long, it has taken action only recently. Examples of policy measures are limited to contingent entry for tourists or fines for visitors that are disturbing public order.

An opposing trend to depopulation is starting to emerge. Some scholars recognise a new cosmopolitan identity of long-term residents, drew in by the changing demographic landscape that may seem inclusive, yet it is nothing but a new kind of gentrification, driving out low-middle-class locals that become daily commuters to participate in servient economies (Genç *et al*., 2022). Minoia (2017) is critical towards this influx of new residents, claiming that this transformation, while enhancing urbanicity, comes at the cost of limiting the traditional local way of life and exacerbating the dominance of the tourist monoculture. On the same plane, Casagrande (2016) claims that the consequences of such trends are tangible in the architecture across Venice. The focus on major historical attractions leads to neglect of the buildings that once housed the city's residents. Instead, these buildings are repurposed as short-term accommodations for tourists, with little incentive to invest in their preservation, further eroding the architectural heritage that once defined Venice's urban landscape. The renovation and maintenance of private buildings outside of the touristic paths is becoming a luxury that only a few international investors can afford, forcing them to seek profit after their investments, which usually drives them right back into the tourism sphere:

> "The touristic monoculture becomes part of the city's daily reality, a mechanism of distortion and valorisation of the residential heritage of the city, with complicity of its residents, with the active participation of those who have a home, who should help by remaining in Venice. Active participation in exchange for income [from renting to tourists]." (Stakeholder 11)

While Venice grapples with these challenges, finding a balance between preserving its cultural identity, ensuring the well-being of its residents, and sustaining a thriving tourism industry remains a pressing concern. Collaborative efforts between local authorities, residents, and the tourism sector are crucial in steering Venice towards a sustainable future that harmonizes its rich history with the demands of the modern world.

Issues of Venice in terms of Identity of Place

Drawing from the dramaturgical framework of sociology, we can interpret the duality between Venice and Mestre as a "frontstage-backstage" relationship, where Venice always takes the stage, while Mestre occupies the backstage, often overlooked. This framework is rooted in interactionism and stems from Goffman's theory that likens society to a theatre, where individuals perform on different stages for various audiences. In brief, one's self-presentation is similar to a performance with expectations negotiated between the actor and the public, and success comes when both parties understand the context. Ethnomethodology, a form of social constructivism, argues that reality is a product of human perception and social interaction. As highlighted above, according to constructivism the identity of individuals can be thought of as a bricolage of several inputs, and therefore so can their role in society. By extension, when constructivism is applied to the study of place, the claim is that the identity of place is the result of the various influences it has received and continues to be subjected to.

The contributions of Goffman (1959) and Garfinkel (1967) allowed the passage of the theory from the social sphere to a more private realm of personal beliefs. Extrapolating from everyday procedures, like hiding the broom that sweeps the house, or separating the personal rooms from the meeting place of guests, the sociologist theorised "front" and "back" regions in society. This division is based on the type of social performance that is staged in a place, and on the social roles found there (see Appendix 1, quote 6). The theatrical metaphor offered by Goffman sheds light on how the identities of

places and people are constructed and perceived, providing insights into whether Venice is on the verge of becoming a *non-place* and losing its unique identity. This frontstage-backstage also prompts consideration of whether Mestre is bound to remain the hidden part of Venice or if it requires its own distinct identity. Of course, there is evidence in the literature of adverse opinions: Tuan (1976), for example, claims that cities lack a clear division between a "front" and the "back". In modern cities, the sense of front and back is instead shaped by traffic flow and architectural symbols, but these points of reference remain subjective, as every person stands at the centre of their world while space is organised in accordance with the schema of their body.

However, linkages can be made between the scholarship on the identity of places and the issues that one can recognise in the relationship between Mestre and Venice. In particular Relph (1976: 60) highlights two distinct instances where the identity of place is in danger: changes of environmental conditions and changes in the belief system. This seems to go along the resilience theory quoted above, where the character of place is challenged by transformation (Leixnering & Höllerer, 2022). Of course, the more superficial the identity, the easier it is to delete it. In the case of Venice, the trends of overtourism and depopulation seem to be enough to shake its identity, bringing themes of Disneyfication (Tzatzadaki, 2018) and danger (cntraveler.com, 2023) in the press about the city. Mestre, on the other hand, suffers from being constantly overshadowed by its prominent counterpart, appearing to be in need of significant transformations in order to express its identity. Jones and Svejenova (2017) would put this in terms of synecdoche and asyndeton, where the incumbency of Venice overshadows Mestre in the minds of the observer, as Stakeholder 11 claimed in the interview:

> "Venice is not a monoculture. […] Venice has always been industrial, for example, the glass factories that were in the city centre and later moved to Murano to avoid fires." (Stakeholder 11)

What is troubling is the insight offered by Augé (1995): if a place is defined in terms of its relational, historical identity, then space that lacks identity is labelled *non-place*. In Augé's theory, *non-places* are specific areas of the world where communication is wordless and dictated by commerce, where dwellers only pass through in order to get somewhere else or to reach an objective that is separate from the place itself. The French

anthropologist brings the example of the place of the traveller as the archetype of *non-place*: the highway, clearly identified by the movement of its users, offers a second level of movement to the traveller: the landscapes that go by. This is opposed to the slow medieval road, where the speed of the traveller allowed for a three-dimensional experience of the place, stopping more often, and interacting with others. A shopping mall is another notorious example of *non-place*, as the activities of its dwellers could be completed anywhere else since they are detached from the actual place.

Whether Venice risks to become a *non-place*, or if Mestre already is one, is challenging to assert. What is undeniable is that both sides of the city need to adapt to current trends to overturn the challenges that threaten them and escape the risk of the *non-place*. Solís Trapero *et al*. (2015) offer some guidance in terms of adaptation to the globalisation trends for the sake of the identity of place, as the traditionally pictured city is threatened from above and from below: national systems of fast communication and transportation link cities in mega-regions that squish their individuality (Florida *et al*., 2008a), while internal forces split their identity among neighbourhoods and quarters with prominent characters (Dovey *et al*., 2009). Although this representation may be distorted, Solís Trapero *et al.* (2015) acknowledge that the simple centre-periphery representation may still be relevant in many cases, like ours: conflict between "the centre" (Venice) and "the periphery" (Mestre) can be reconducted to the frontstage-backstage paradigm: in their interpretation, specifically, Venice would be the "historical medium-sized city", "freestanding cities with administrative and/or economic roles in the national urban system since industrialisation and the nation-state formation", while Mestre would be categorized as a NEC (New Employment Centre), that three decades ago was a satellite or dormitory city.

In sum, the Gioia method brought up a conflicted relationship between the historic centre and the urban sprawl outside the Lagoon (see Appendix 1, quote 6). Venice, with its conflicted duality split between the city of water and the counterpart on the mainland, is endangered by forces that menace its identity. The confusion with the names is the tip of the iceberg: the representation of Venice in the media and its replicas all over the world put its authenticity in question (Parmeggiani, 2016). Authenticity becomes a paradoxically indispensable feature for the tourism industry which so absentmindedly hinders it. What role can authenticity play today? MacCannell (1973) equates it to the

introduction of chemical nitrates injected into hams in the Sixties: to make the hams more appealing, heathy, and authentic, they were enhanced with additives that brought them further away from authentic hams. A similar inquiry could be asked about Venice: will efforts to bring the city back to an idealised past make it feel more authentic, or is this altering of the course of the city the real elimination of authenticity? Do copies around the world make the "original" Venice look more authentic in comparison, only cementing its role as a global icon, or perhaps they make it disappear into the list of the "Venices of the world", where there is no distinction between the Italian city, the Venetian in Las Vegas, the town of Suzhou near Shanghai, the Qanat Quartier in Qatar. What can be sold as a destination needs to be "true" yet selling it as such automatically warps it (Taylor, 2001). What makes Venice more authentic than its copies? What defines the identity of a city that seems to lose its inhabitants as they flee from rising tourism, leaving behind only transient visitors? The dweller-tourist dichotomy challenges the conventional notion of urban identity, posing a conundrum that reflects the shifting landscape of contemporary cities. What identity is left for the under-populated and over-visited islands, and what identity can be distilled for the mainland?

Issues of Venice in terms of Place Identity

Erosion of place identity is the other side of the same coin. Humphrey (2016), who focuses on the digital aspect of place, notes the continuous stream of standardized content from various sources on social media as part of the causes that make national and place-based identities more porous. In a more general sense, globalisation is often highlighted as one of the most influential causes of loss of place identity (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015b). The loss of place identity is obviously also reconducted to the loss of place (Crisman, 2021), as gentrification and displacement put an end to the sense of belonging that links people to a place. Belk (1992) too emphasizes that transformation over time can lead to a sense of detachment, especially when individuals become disconnected from valued locales. The term that Relph (1976) preferred to use is *placelessness*, and the specific forces that fuel it are mass communication and mass culture, resulting in an inability to maintain emotional connections and recall experiences. *Placelessness* is defined as "the casual eradication of distinctive places, coupled with the creation of standardized landscapes, stems from a lack of sensitivity to the significance of place" (Seamon, 2008:

46), strongly linking the erasure of the identity of place (the *non-place* discussed above) to the loss of place identity. This is seen in tourist-oriented "pseudo-places" and megalopolises, characterised by uniformity, formlessness, instability, and constant redevelopment. The question arises whether the inhabitants of Venice are experiencing *placelessness*, as their connection to their unique identity seems to wane and the places they were attached to are threatened. In the terms traced by Entrikin (1999), Venice risks to become a "thin place," becoming permeable and open to view while losing its distinct local differences and adopting characteristics of other places. This transformation leads to the forced destruction of the previous identity for the creation of a new one (Entrikin, 1999).

The main trends that cause the sense of *placelessness* according to Relph (1976) are two: the predominance of *technique* and the success of the *kitsch*. *Technique* can be witnessed when places are manipulable in the public interest and perceived solely in terms of functionality. This would be the case of the areas of Mestre that are converted in dormitories for the tourists that move towards the Lagoon to visit Venice daily. The functionality of housing the overflow of visitors inhibits any sense of place identity towards the town that is simply *used* to visit downtown Venice. *Kitsch* on the other hand, characterized by its stereotyped, contrived, and superficial nature, stands as a stark reminder of the commodification of place identity. The replication of souvenir shops and the mass production of sentimentalized objects contribute to a homogenized, exchangeable image of places, robbing them of their unique soul. The ramifications of tourism on place identity emerge here as a central theme. While the influx of tourists can stimulate economic success and bolster a place's identity, it also exposes these identities to the powerful forces of globalisation, forcing places to find a delicate balance between catering to outsiders while preserving genuine local character (Huigen *et al*., 2000). In the case of Venice, it seems fit to quote the shift that Relph (1976) had already described almost fifty years ago towards the inauthenticity at the base of contemporary mass tourism:

- *Disneyfication*, when the architecture deliberately directed at outsiders blends myth and reality into a surreal version of the past, which he labels "plastic history". The city is turned into a "vacationland" or "consumerland". In Venice, fantasy and romance guide tourists to the Ponte dei Sospiri, stripping the place

from its authenticity and turning it into an attraction worthy of a theme park, where storytelling is king and reality and authenticity fades in the background.

- *Museumisation*, which happens with the preservation, reconstruction, and idealisation of history, incredibly fitting for the case of the islands of Venice. At the same time, Relph is weary of *futurisation*, which he describes as the expression of faith in progress technological utopias that he witnessed in the grand international expositions.

The perspective for which tourism is the root of all evil, just like globalisation, is met by opposing opinions. The insights from van Rekom and Go (2006) echo the sentiment that tourism can also serve as a conduit for fostering regional identities. Of course, it potentially erodes certain aspects of local culture, but the authors suggest that tourism and the investors it attracts can help to confirm the distinctive character of destinations, preserving some local identities that would otherwise get lost in the winds of modernisation. This point of view shines light on a question: would Venice still embody its essence without the presence of tourism? This query extends to the preservation of iconic symbols like gondolas and the colourful houses of Burano, which might face the risk of losing their relevance in the rapidity and efficiency of modernity.

Overall, the loss of place identity can be linked to mental health issues and a loss of self (Kim, Vaswani & Lee, 2017). The erosion of place identity, as posited by Relph, becomes a catalyst for broader individual and societal struggles, accentuating the profound implications of this phenomenon. In Seamon's (2008) exploration, the core of place lies in its significance within human experience. The feeling of being inside a place signifies an existential "*insideness*", a profound immersion experienced when one is at home in their own community or region. On the contrary, the feeling of separateness or alienation from a place is termed "*outsideness*", representing a sense of strangeness often encountered by newcomers. Belk (1992) proposes a typology of place attachment based on symbolic linkages between individuals and their environment that can be at the base of the feeling of *insideness*: these include genealogical linkage through history or family lineage, economic linkage through ownership and inheritance, cosmological linkage through spiritual or mythological connections, but also narrative linkage through storytelling and place naming. When these elements go missing and the individuals

experience existential *outsideness*, the parts of their identity that are linked to place enter a state of crisis.

The centre of Venice is experiencing incredible stress from multiple sides. Since the identity of a place finds expression, among other dimensions, through its depictions in the media (Jones & Svejenova, 2017; Vainikka, 2012), the identity of Venice has been analysed through its appearances in the headlines. The media play a vital role in creating and popularizing a brand image and identity (Jain *et al*., 2022): "the overwhelmed city" (Bertocchi & Visentin, 2019) struggles to transmit its prestige, while only its challenges seem to emerge from its representation in the media, creating a negative image in the mind of the reader (Zaghis, 2022). On the other hand, the neighbouring islands in the Lagoon experience an idyllic narration in the media, contributing to the utopic perception of rural areas (Wheeler, 2015; Basso *et al*., 2023). Sadly, the mainland suffers an even worse fate, with a negative image perpetrated by media but with no redemption derived from a globally renowned urban identity. As one of the interviewees said:

> "Venice is not often described by its own citizens; alas, it is usually described by others." (Stakeholder 1)

The trends of overtourism have been monitored in terms of both qualitative and quantitative research. Venice currently welcomes, on average, 141,600 people per day, or 51 million people per year, estimating day-trippers due to a lack of data (Connor *et al*., 2015). On top on the considerations about the unsustainability of a touristic monoculture, these data spark worries regarding the maximum capacity of a town with such narrow streets, lack of broad open spaces, limited escape options, and surrounded by water. The consequences of the difficulties of living in Venice are represented by the progressive shrinking of the inhabitants in the Lagoon, migrating elsewhere, for example on the mainland (DeVine *et al*., 2016). Ramos *et al.* (2016) call "tipping points" the moments where gradual or drastic shifts reshape the character of a landscape. Is it possible to gage whether Venice has encountered and/or surpassed them? Venice has however also displayed an admirable resilience in the past (Malanotte Rizzoli, 2022). What is needed is a sustainable resolution of these interconnected challenges. The identity of Venice,

encompassing not just its canals but also the Lagoon and the mainland, is pondered. Could the Mainland offer some help to the sinking Island? The potential of attracting medium-long term residents and harnessing their creative contributions is contemplated to put a brake to the depopulation trend, along with the theme of educating tourists about Venice's multidimensional nature, history, fragility, and its connection to the mainland.

CHAPTER 5 – PLACE SOLUTIONS TO PLACE PROBLEMS

The previous chapters exposed some of the main issues of the City of Venice in terms of place and identity. First, the duality of the mainland and the Lagoon has been interpreted from a sociological perspective, comparing the role of Venice to the protagonist actor on a well-lit stage, and the one of Mestre to the backstage, a dormitory for the tourists that cannot fit in the historic centre and the workers of the industries of the mainland. The attention thus shifted towards the identity of Mestre, or maybe its lack of identity, in order to advance a sustainable alternative to the risks of becoming a *non-place*, space with a finality that is separated from the space itself, a transitional area that does not seem to deserve attention before arriving to the final destination.

The discourse of identity blends into the social sustainability that is key for urban development in light of the goals set by the United Nations. The ever-evolving discourse on sustainable development is astonishingly prevalent in today's world. The advocacy for sustainable development appears as a beacon of hope, promising revolutionary transformations in our daily lives, and any dissenting voices must only come from the greedy and myopic industrialists. If we define a "crisis" as the incapacity of a system to perpetuate itself, then "sustainability" represents its diametric opposite: the long-term resilience of a system, its capacity to endure through the ages (Campbell, 1996). This fundamental concept lies at the heart of the sustainable development dialogue, challenging us to reimagine our relationship with the environment and society. Although urbanisation endeavours pose a heavy toll on nature, the choice between an anthropocentric or ecocentric worldview emerges as a false dichotomy: we are inherently anthropocentric. The critical question becomes which human values and priorities we choose to apply to the world around us, both natural and social.

Campbell (1996) explains this intricate dance of priorities that surpasses mere economic growth. The triangle he drew (figure 1) connects the fostering of economic prosperity, an equitable distribution of this growth, and the safeguard of our fragile ecosystem. These three poles match our understanding of the sustainability goals based on the Brundtland Commission: economic, social, and environmental principals. Dudek-Mańkowska and Grochowski (2019) identified three forces that shall direct the development of the creative city: a well-developed creative sector (economy), a dynamic creative community (society), and well-designed policies to support creativity (policy).

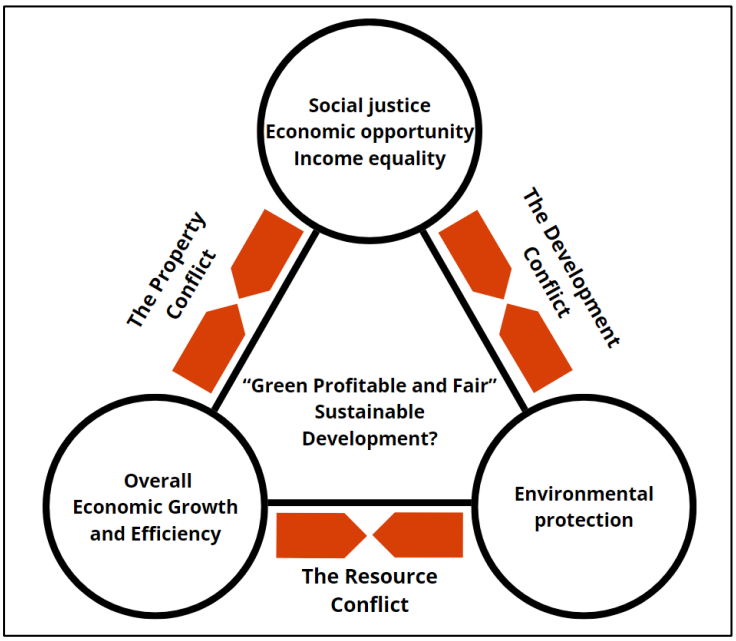

Figure 1: The triangle of conflicting goals for planning (adapted from Campbell, 1996: 298).

Yet, the definition of sustainability leaves two crucial aspects shrouded in ambiguity: the very path and outcome of sustainable practices (Campbell, 1996). The assumption that a sustainable economy will automatically ensure social justice in resource distribution is just wishful thinking. While the role of the planner may be to arrange procedures for decision-making without dictating the specific outcomes, there are tangible elements that are part of the sustainable development of a place, such as the preservation of traditional businesses, a positive media engagement, responsive governance, improved lifestyle standards, and continuous infrastructural enhancements (de San Eugenio *et al.*, 2019).

The quest for the identity of place is aimed at finding the right combination of manmade environment, historical heritage, cultural markers, and media representations (Jones & Svejenova, 2017). These systems interact to communicate and reinforce various aspects of the city's character, its places and its community. When one describes the role of Mestre as the backstage behind the well-lit spotlight of Venice, the identity of the place becomes fuzzy, lacking both the distinctive characteristics that define its uniqueness as well as the features that align it with other urban centres. This duality is highlighted in Peng, Strijker and Wu (2020), who point out how the pressure of globalisation forces places to merge into each other, but place identities stand to maintain their

distinctiveness. The identity of place, as defined in chapter 2, needs to be carved out in order to escape the abyss of the *non-place*. In this chapter, place branding is introduced as a powerful tool to mine the identity of a city and direct the image that is portrayed elsewhere.

Place Branding against the *Non-Place*

The voice of Simon Anholt is one of the most relevant in the debate on place branding. He explains how this branch is not only desirable, but necessary, because of many underlying conditions, such as the growing power of the international media, the falling cost of international travel, a tightly linked global economic system, a global competition enhanced by an intense movement of talented immigrants reflected in the growing demand for a rich and diverse cultural diet by consumers (Anholt, 2006). Ploner (2009) also brings forth the notion that globalisation and tourism are potent forces shaping the diversity of our locales.

Maheshwari *et al*. (2011) shed light on the connection between place branding and sustainable development, emphasizing the pivotal role place branding plays in a locale's growth prospects, because the transformation of the physical infrastructure, economic sustainability, and the attraction of businesses, tourists, and investors are all intertwined with a place's identity. Baker and Cameron (2008) further illustrate the practical dimensions of place branding, which encompasses strategies to attract tourists, businesses, and residents, all of which shape the economic and social fabric of a place. Finally, Hanna and Rowley (2008) observe how the evolving discourse around place branding is shifting from a focus on tourism to a broader consideration of business and marketing. In a world of increasing competition among places, the need to craft a compelling identity becomes more pronounced than ever, although one should not forget that this focus on "selling" the place might forget to consider the wellbeing of its inhabitants (Peng, Strijker & Wu, 2020)

Place Branding

A place brand goes beyond physical attributes to encompass a clear and distinct image that sets a place apart from others. This image is not just about quality but also about creating a unique and lasting competitive advantage. Place brands are, in essence,

something greater than a mere collection of physical attributes; they evoke a complex web of associations in the minds of people who encounter the place (Baker & Cameron, 2008). These associations can be diverse and sometimes conflicting, reflecting the variety of perceptions and beliefs held by various stakeholders. The subjective interpretation of the place brand derives both from actions and objects explicitly aimed at the definition of the brand and other events that shape the brand without any intention by its promoters (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). In sum, the place brand is the perception that people have about a place. It can be applied to any scale, from a neighbourhood to a whole nation, encompassing individual beliefs, perceptions, and prejudices that converge and diverge, collectively shaping a place's reputation among those who engage with it. Thus, place branding is a dynamic interplay of images, associations, and stakeholder perspectives, contributing to the multifaceted identity of a locale (Maheshwari *et al*., 2011).

Anholt (2006) defines place branding as the practice of applying brand strategy and marketing techniques to the economic, social and political dimensions of cities, regions, and countries. The context in which the concept of place brand is immerged is a competitive world. Places have all the interest to manage their place brand through place branding, choosing the narrative from the perceptions of multiple stakeholders (Hudak, 2019) until cities, regions, or countries define their unique attributes through the most authentic, interesting and convincing strategies (Maheshwari *et al*., 2011). This holistic approach encompasses not only leisure tourism but also delves into diverse forms of place branding, including business tourism, culture, sports, and even the realms of film, literature, and music (Hanna & Rowley, 2008).

The discipline of place branding therefore transcends the mere destination branding for touristic purposes. The actors involved first hand in place branding are mostly public entities that must coordinate policies, mobilize stakeholders, and foster communication with citizens. The combination is arduous: on the one hand, public institutions should reject the corporate world while addressing the tangible and intangible values of a specific territory; on the other hand, the public administration has to adopt strategies that link residents when designing place brands that guarantee effective spatial planning, local development, and economic promotion. (de San Eugenio *et al*., 2019). A distinction is furthermore clarified by Boisen *et al*. (2018). Although some similarities appear, place promotion focuses on increasing attention to what a place has

to offer, whereas place marketing delves into the refinement of a place to manage supply and demand for the sake of the product-market combinations. Place marketing is defined in Braun *et al*. (2010) as "the coordinated use of marketing tools supported by a shared customer-oriented philosophy, for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging urban offerings that have value for the city's customers and the city's community at large". Place branding, finally, emerges as the most comprehensive of the three concepts, demanding the highest level of organisational capacity. It is a strategic process that intertwines perception, identity, and narrative to craft a distinctive vision that resonates with stakeholders and defines the essence of a place.

The term of place branding itself often raises apprehensions. The notion of "selling" a place like it was a product, with logos, slogans, and marketing tactics, can elicit scepticism. Anholt (2006) specifically raises the issue of the "negative brand of branding", highlighting how the very act of branding something can at times inspire a negative reaction in its audiences that immediately associate it to the sale of unnecessary products through sneaky marketing tactics. What goes unnoticed at this superficial level is that sophisticated place branding can represent the first step to escape the grim fate of the *non-place*. As reported above, French anthropologist Marc Augé (1995) introduced the term *non-place* as opposed to the place clearly connotated in terms of its relational and historical identity. Mestre, for its role of backstage to the protagonist counterpart in the Lagoon, by the very definition given by Augé, Mestre is a *non-place* as it represents the last stop before Venice, a locale of movement from and towards somewhere else, just like a highway, or a site with one clearly defined role separated from the place itself, a dormitory for overflowing tourists and daily commuters.

But it does not have to be like this. Mestre did originate from the urban sprawl derived from the industrialisation of the Lagoon of Venice (Muscarà, 1990), but it subsequently evolved into a multicultural town that should have its own identity. For this, the correct strategy of place branding should define the right image for Mestre. Baker and Cameron (2008) point out how the brand identity, brand positioning, and brand image are tightly linked. Working on one of them means elaborating the others. After all, Zimmerbauer (2011) claims a similar connection: "It would be wrong to think that constructing the image would not construct identity at the same time."

However, a common pitfall in place branding lies in the assumption that places are blank canvases onto which a manufactured brand can be imposed (Hudak, 2019). The prevailing stance in the literature on place branding emphasizes the amalgamation of various representations of a city into a unified place brand; however, there has been comparatively less focus on acknowledging the presence of alternative and sometimes conflicting narratives within place branding (Insch & Walters, 2018). The dynamics of place identity and branding are complex. Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) challenge what they label the "static view of identity", which assumes that place branding can distil the essence of a place. Place branding is therefore limited to 1) identifying such identity, 2) finding audiences that might respond to such identity, and 3) convincing these publics that the identity is relevant. A more contemporary view suggests that brand identity is rather a dynamic, reciprocal, and interactive concept, emerging from a continuous dialogue rather than a static set of features (Rodrigues & Schimdt, 2021).

Places go through cycles of growth and decline (Hanna & Rowley, 2008) and are in this similar to the erratic and fluid nature of identities of places (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). A distinction that is worth highlighting, however, is the fact that place identity and place attachment may overlap, given how the sense of belonging can electively be associated to different scales (Vainikka, 2012). Residents' identification with their place, whether a neighbourhood or a city, often serves as a basis for differentiation, further blurring the lines between place attachment and place identity (Insch & Walters, 2018). Place branding, however, is connected to the identity of place, not the place identity of its residents: borders and demarcations are necessary for branding, so that, for example, the place brand of the city of Barcelona does not get confused with its region of Cataluña or the entire nation of Spain. This is emphasized by Anholt (2006): specificity in understanding the problems faced by a place is essential to develop an appropriate branding strategy. Place branding resembles the process of mining, where the strategy emerges from the history, culture, geography, and society of the place. Confusion on the scale of place is not admissible like it is in place attachment.

Evans (2015) introduces the concept of "zero-base" city identity-building to separate policies that are solely driven by political or commercial imperatives from a new notion of branding that acknowledges the multifaceted cultural entities. Co-creating a place brand with local stakeholders is imperative, starting from the initial steps of

defining place identity and then communicating it through the place brand. Only a consistent and unique place value proposition when building a strong place brand identity enables effective positioning and differentiation in a competitive landscape (Rodrigues & Schimdt, 2021).

City branding

It has been stated already, but it is worth saying again: in recent times, several key trends have shaped the discourse around cities and their branding. Demographic shifts of urbanisation have placed cities on the world stage, and their role as hubs of human activity has garnered attention. Moreover, the urban framework is particularly interesting in terms of identity and place, being the environment that by its very nature caters to the human dimension (Gehl, 2010). In this context, however, Kavaratzis (2004) poses a compelling question: can a city be regarded as a brand, and if so, in what ways? To answer this, he draws on a specific definition of brands: "a product or service made distinctive by its positioning relative to the competition and by its personality, which comprises a unique combination of functional attributes and symbolic values" (Kavaratzis, 2004: 65). The application of marketing practices in cities has sometimes led to a tendency towards homogeneity, eroding local identity. City branding, however, offers an avenue to counteract this trend, and has therefore attracted a great deal of economic and human resources (de Andrade & Forte dos Santos, 2020). Bristow (2005) even claims that the competition between regions is so intense that the "survival of the fittest" seems to rule their relationships, as cities are in need of marketing and selling themselves like commodities (Evan, 2015).

Cheshmehzangi (2020) therefore defines city branding as the overarching structure and meaning that communicates essential information about specific places. It encompasses factors such as media-generated image, branding of urban elements, city life branding, and the significance of signature architecture and historical structures in shaping a city's overall identity. The geographical marketing mix specific to city branding is presented in Kavaratzis (2004): promotional measures, spatial-functional measures, organisational measures, and financial measures. He also identifies four distinct strategies for place improvement that are all contributing to the competitive advantage of the city:

- *Design*, where place is seen as character,
- *Infrastructure*, which understands place as a fixed environment,
- *Basic services*, that is place as a service provider,
- *Attractions*, which considers place for entertainment and recreational potential.

The "zero-based" identity building introduced by Evans (2015) cannot be applied to the city branding. The spirit of the city can be revived and nourished by policy makers and concerned citizens who make informed decisions (Bell & de-Shalit, 2011). Cheshmehzangi (2020) in fact highlights that a city brand never stems from nothing (figure 2):

- Cities that already possess existing values of tangible and intangible heritage and non-heritage can restore their identity, rather than forming it point blank. Urban identity restoration is similar to the measures and approaches of regeneration strategies. Cheshmehzangi calls it "reclaiming the space", offering simple and low-cost initiatives for the revitalisation and regeneration of the city environments to enhance its economic performance, support regeneration, build community pride and foster and social integration.
- Cities that require an enhancement and promotion are usually facing a decline in their identity. Such improvements can be fostered in association with a comprehensive strategy of economic growth.
- Cities that succeed in their processes of urban identity formation, restoration, and enhancement are the ones that can eventually transmit their experiences to other cases of a similar status. Learning from success stories is a common practice in the shaping of identity.

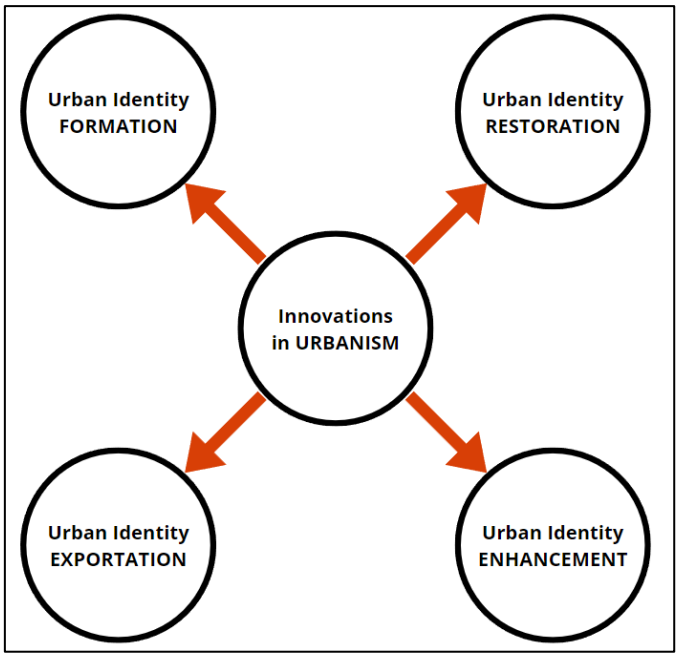

Figure 2: Urban intervention opportunities across the whole spectrum in innovations in urbanism (adapted from Cheshmehzangi, 2020: 251).

Strategies of city branding are incredibly varied. From the perspective of business strategy, urban identity can promote new images and values of a city or a neighbourhood: branding aims at communicating the quality, reliability, and utility essential to any product. The subjectivity of place, the dynamic materiality of the environments, their characteristics signify the identity of place, therefore the debate of urban design focus on their changes and transformations (Cheshmehzangi, 2020). Evans (2015) points out the strong responsibility of physical imagery. What is known as "the Bilbao effect" is a clear example of this: a city rebranded almost entirely around a single new building. The construction of the iconic Guggenheim Museum by Frank Gehry shifted the perception of the Basque capital from an industrial centre in decline to a vibrant node of culture for northern Spain, improving tourism and development through investments (Bell & de-Shalit, 2011). Cases like this are rare though, and more importantly are impossible to predict with certainty. The construction of an ambitious landmark is an example of materiality, one four elements of place formation highlighted by Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015), but it cannot overshadow the other elements: representations, institutions, and practices.

Again, under this cold entrepreneurial perspective, one must remember the importance of the creative city as a foundational framework for exploring the relationship

between urban branding and development planning. Since cities with compelling development visions tend to attract consumers, tourists, and investors more effectively, culture and creativity have come to play a central role in place branding (Dudek-Mańkowska & Grochowski, 2019). Although cities may be simpler to brand than a nation (Anholt, 2006), the literature has expanded the roster of stakeholders well beyond the historical prevalence of the tourists (Insch & Walters, 2018). The City Brands Index reveals that cities, much like countries, possess images that change gradually, offering both advantages and disadvantages to policy makers. Only once or twice in a generation a city like Sydney or Dubai demonstrates a sudden, remarkable ascent to fame and widespread popularity (Anholt, 2006).

Of course, it is not meant in this context that cities are on par with any mere product or service that can be easily branded, communicated, and sold. In fact, by city branding one cannot easily extrapolate the city's identity. Branding represents the "purposeful strategic symbolic constructions geared towards positioning a place in the minds of external stakeholders in particular" (Zamparini *et al*., 2023: 4). Although the formation of a city brand can stem from the city's identity, which provides a base from which the city's brand is developed and even marketed, one cannot create the urban identity. An urban identity for Mestre should instead slowly emerge through the deliberate use of identity discursive articulations, along a nonlinear path with a long-term temporal horizon. "There is no determinism to identity of a place, but rather a perceptible network of mutual relations that can define, materialise and revive a particular place" (Cheshmehzangi, 2020: 113).

Implications for Management

The imperative of a multi-stakeholder approach appears evident when it comes to city branding aimed at the definition of the identity of a place. Only through the involvement of multiple actors the policy makers can assure a socially sustainable solution to the extensive urban challenges that Venice is facing. The goal is best explained by Campbell (1996): in his triangle of green, profitable, and fair development, conflicts arise when different fields need to be matched. The resource conflict emerges through the combination of economic growth and the resources that must accompany it in an environmentally sustainable way. A property conflict appears when the economic

efficiency needs to meet social requirements of justice and equality. Finally, what is crucial in our analysis, the development conflict emerges at the intersection of environmental protection and equal opportunities for every section of society (figure 3).

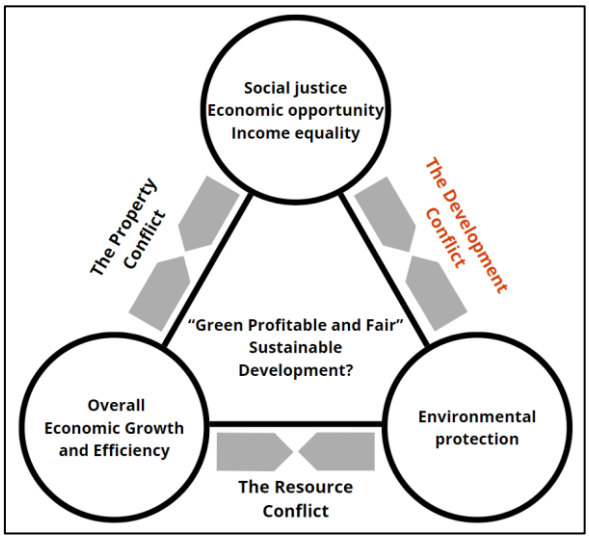

Figure 3: The development conflict highlighted in the triangle of conflicting goals for planning (adapted from Campbell, 1996: 298).

Three variables are crucial for establishing sustainable management: adopting a holistic management perspective, embracing a long-term process, and involving stakeholders actively (de San Eugenio *et al*., 2019). For a place brand to succeed, local residents must align with the image projected for their place of residence: without this alignment, a disconnect between perception and reality can create dissonance that is reflected when tourists, foreign investors, and others discover that the portrayed image of the city doesn't align with reality. "Managing the place brand is not solely a task for the public sector, private sector or local governing authorities, but rather a collaborative undertaking of the place's key stakeholders" (Maheshwari *et al*., 2011: 201).

The brand identity of place needs to emerge from continuous interactions between internal and external stakeholders. The adoption of a co-creation place brand identity paradigm facilitates the promotion of a place's character in terms of brand elements, meanings, and attributes (Rodrigues & Schimdt, 2021). This form of participatory place branding encourages residents to actively participate in the process through interactive stakeholder conversations and collaborative projects. Various stakeholders, including tourists, business owners, government entities, non-profits, religious organisations, social

groups, and academic institutions, contribute to the complexity of how these areas are experienced (Hudak, 2019). The UCAMP project appears in line with these warnings. In designing a more sustainable urban environment for the City of Venice, the co-creation of vibrant urban communities should foster active citizen involvement in the process. The process does not resemble a top-down approach nor a bottom-up movement. The goal is to be in the middle, connecting the creative potential of the residents with the finances and overarching goals of institutions and powerful stakeholders. Harnessing collective knowledge and expertise through Higher Education Institutions encourages a dialogue between the opposite sides of urban development to face pressing urban challenges with the efficiency of their combined efforts (urbangoodcamp.eu).

The risk of not considering bottom-up involvement is clear: residents may perceive city branding, like other urban governance strategies, as potentially disruptive to the physical and social characteristics of the city that they highly value (Insch & Walters, 2018). Bell and de-Shalit (2011) remind that changing the ethos of a city is expensive in terms of money and effort. Phenomena such as NIMBY (Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010) are clear examples of this: a sense of defence against foreign aggression is perceived any time that local stakeholders are not addressed before implementing change, even in cases of positive development. Such change can threaten their place attachment and identity: a one-size-fits-all approach to place branding cannot be suitable for all cities.

The work of Acharya and Rahman (2016) underscores the increased interest in stakeholder-based place branding and the need to examine methods for involving residents in building the place brand. Residents represent significant inputs in the co-creation in governing processes as discussed in urban governing literature. However, their role is more multilayered than one might believe at first. Braun *et al*. had already noted this in 2010: residents can be treated as a mere target group, integrated part of the place brand, active ambassadors of their place brand, or citizens that support and assist the place branding activities. Therefore, the guidelines offered by the authors, in quality of speakers at the 50th Congress of the European Science Association, were as follows:

- To boost the quality and effectiveness of policies through citizen participation and the activation of their knowledge and resources.
- To reduce the communication gap between public institutions and citizens and to gain back legitimacy for state action.

- To strengthen the sense of citizenship, belonging and care of local environments.
- To deepen democracy and to increase the negotiating capacity of excluded groups.

Tools for the inclusion of this multi-stakeholder strategy are numerous. Hildreth (2010), for example, proposes a series of steps in the place branding process. Firstly, it entails identifying the prevailing narrative that dominates the perception of a place. Next, it involves determining what the story of the place could and should be. Step three comprises finding new and improved methods to directly convey the story and utilizing multiple indirect channels to disseminate it. Finally, in step four, the focus is on strengthening the story, ensuring its authenticity, and making it more readily shareable. When implemented, however, these processes prove to be more nuanced than anticipated. The study by Stoica *et al*. (2022) revealed significant challenges in the way storytelling by institutions is perceived by other actors that have not been consulted. Moreover, "authentic stories" are still received with suspicion when they seem oriented towards a goal, proving that particular care in the selection of a representative plethora of voices is key, but at the same time complete satisfaction will never be achieved with broad opinionated publics that are personally invested.

The organisation of events is considered the quintessential form of territorial marketing intervention: they bring benefits to the area in terms of generating and sustaining tourist flows and the resulting economic spin-offs, with a decisive contribution in terms of visibility and image-building. In parallel, there is also growth in productive activities and services offered to support the increased tourism generated (Militello, 2019). Events represent an indirect form of communication that has the potential of extreme success, such as being the host city for the Olympics, but at the same time cannot be used as instant place branding: just like in the case of manmade landmarks, most of the world' s icons became iconic unintentionally (Hildreth, 2010). The potential of the islands of Venice, for example, has been tapped into. Thanks to the presence of mental images in audiences worldwide, using Venice as the background of any event gives the certainty of participation. The traditional occurrences like the Carnival or other annual religious celebrations are but the tip of the iceberg: Venice perpetually operates as a stage for

international displays of human creativity, of which the Biennale is the most prominent example. Contemporary arts and crafts mix with the most traditional ones that have been so important for the city and its lagoon (Pierantoni *et al*., 2014).

What remains under the control of policy makers is communication. Kavaratzis (2004) explains that the communication within the context of place branding is categorized into three main types. *Primary* communication pertains to the communicative effects of a city's actions when communication is not the primary objective of these actions. *Secondary* communication encompasses formal, intentional communication that typically occurs through established marketing practices like indoor and outdoor advertising, public relations, graphic design, and the use of logos. *Tertiary* communication involves word of mouth: it is at this point that it escapes the authority of the institutions involved in the city branding, tertiary communication often being reinforced by media and competitors' communication efforts.

In lieu of a conclusion, it seems worth quoting the warnings offered by Herstein *et al*. (2014). Five typical city branding mistakes are listed by the authors: the occurrence of one of these elements has proven to be decisive for the success of city rebranding.

1. *Myopia*: the co-creation of a place brand needs to involve multiple stakeholders, especially those that will be first-hand impacted by its development. Purely top-down approach is to be avoided.
2. *Misguidance*: collaboration between stakeholders needs to make the common goals clear to all actors.
3. *Minimisation*: place rebranding requires the adequate long-term perspective, reformulating the process in stages.
4. *Mispositioning*: the aim of the rebranding process needs to nurture a realistic and sustainable market position.
5. *Mismarketing*: regarding communication, the city is required to make use of all levels of communication: primary, secondary, and tertiary.

In all this, then, what can the place branding of Mestre be? What does the quest for identity look like for such a troubled area? As Anholt (2006) highlighted, specificity is key. One of the main issues of Mestre is how easily it can disappear in the shadow of Venice. On the one hand, the name of Venice solely indicates the iconic islands in the Lagoon,

filling the shared imagery with canals, bridges, and churches. On a global scale, even elements that strictly belong to other islands seems to be absorbed into the name of Venice, such as the international cinema Biennale events, historically held on the Lido island, yet named "Venice Film Festival", or the glass of Murano, traditionally hand-made on the nearby island, even though industrialised counterfeits and foreign-made sculptures fill the windows of souvenir shops all around the narrow streets of Venice. Mestre does not seem to have any room in this mosaic of identities within the name of Venice, yet it does not have its own independence, falling withing the administrative borders of the City of Venice. A first step towards an identity of Mestre should start from the etiquettes of the places within Venice, so that clarifications like the ones made so far in these pages shall not be necessary in the future.

In the realm of place branding, names play such a central role (Paasi, 2001; Relph, 1976). Anholt (2010) discusses the tradition of naming new cities and countries, connecting them to established meanings. There is a plethora of examples that he quotes to explain that the practice of naming a place is a basic form of branding. It can be based on, for example, the country's history (France, land of the Franks, or Liberia, the African country for freed slaves), a country's influential individual (Bolivia, Colombia), or a characteristic of the land (Anguilla, shaped like an eel, or Albania, from its white peaks). There is so much more in a name that meets the eye. Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015) claim that there still are significant gaps in our comprehension of how place brands are shaped, as it remains unclear which elements individuals draw upon to create associations, both from the place itself and what they might fabricate to establish connections related to that place. Furthermore, the collective functioning of these associations and how they interrelate to craft the overarching place brand is not well-understood. Within this confusion, they bring a clear example that somehow matches our case of Venice. Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015) use the name of Milan: this name conjures a reasonably clear mental image, even though the actual place has undergone significant changes over the centuries. What truly defines Milan? Is it the iconic Piazza del Duomo, the artistic Brera district, or perhaps the housing blocks in the periphery? Does the essence of Milan lie in the shopping opportunities, which may be more appealing to tourists than locals? It is possible that Milan's true identity is rooted in its inherent connection to all things Italian, encompassing food, style, temperament, and more, even

though, for some Italians, Milan might be considered a bit too geographically removed from the core of Italian culture. The dominant perspective of place brands as collections of diverse associations suggests that all these Milan-related perceptions collectively contribute to the Milan brand simply by their existence within a broader framework. In the words of Augé (1995), behind charged names such the White House or the Kremlin lie simultaneously to a monumental locale, a human individual, and a power structure. The importance of names can effectively be detached from the objects they identify, like a metaphor (de Certeau, 1984: 104).

What can then be said regarding the features that create the image of Venice? And what about Mestre? The issue of names goes hand in hand with the dilemma of clear boundaries of the place one is trying to brand. The role of clear borders in delineating urban areas is of paramount importance, especially when considering expansive urban systems on a global scale (Georg *et al*., 2016). Establishing distinct borders between areas like Mestre and Venice becomes crucial for precise research and place branding initiatives (Muscarà, 1990). Defining where Venice ends and Mestre starts, in addition to what are the names that apply to such areas, is essential to the development of a successful place brand and an effective identity. Ultimately, however, the concept of a "successful city brand" remains subjective and can vary depending on diverse perspectives, such as a brand that is broadly accepted, especially by internal audiences (Jain *et al*., 2022). Co-creation, wherein various stakeholders actively engage in the place branding process, is often regarded as a key element in crafting a well-received city brand and should be regarded as the main takeaway of this analysis.

CHAPTER 6 – MAKING PLACE, MAKING PEOPLE

Whereas the previous chapter proposed place branding as a plausible precaution to avoid making a *non-place* out of Mestre, this last chapter will try to offer a solution to the *placelessness* for the communities of Venice. Following the distinction that has been key for this thesis so far, identity of place and place identity are strictly correlated, yet they present two different concepts. Place branding, and city branding specifically, should be able to portray the identity, polishing its existing features and showcasing its potential to numerous audiences: place branding, when done correctly, can bring out the identity of place at its best. Place identity is a much harder concept to influence. It derives from the interconnection of people and the places they inhabit, through an evolving balance of influencing and being influenced (Relph, 1976). The absence of a healthy relation with place opens the residents to the feeling of *placelessness*: Seamon (2008) described it like the shortfall of a portion of oneself caused by the loss of meaning of the places one inhabits. This is a dramatic take on the issues of Venice, much like describing Venice or Mestre as a *non-place*; yet the dramaturgical framework of sociology calls for a dramatic exaggeration of the case of the City of Venice for the sake of proposing a solution to its issues. It does emerge from the interviews:

> "To leave Venice as a beautiful necropolis or to roll up one's sleeves." (Stakeholder 2)

> "The greatest challenge is to break free from this condition of a city that watches itself die with complacency, and envision it as a potential contemporary city, where people come to work even though there is no enterprise, because there are the workers, so to speak." (Stakeholder 1)

Placemaking against the *Placelessness*

The case study proposes a city rich with history but plagued by a crisis of identity. Venice's struggle is emblematic of a broader issue faced by countless urban centres: the interplay between places and people. When places lack the essence of human presence, they risk fading into oblivion. Conversely, places that are shaped by the vitality of their inhabitants eventually mould their identity in return: they forge their place identity. The trends of overtourism and depopulation are hollowing out the human soul of Venice, exposing the city to the dangers that Relph was already calling out in 1976: the standardisation of *kitsch* and the automation of *technique*.

Anholt (2006) phrased it this way: "the people are the brand – the brand reflects the genius of the people." One cannot expect to operate any place branding without an internal audience, as this should provide the base identity on which the brand can be built. Identity of place and place identity are connected, and where place identity should fade, placemaking processes will nourish it, reshaping the relationship between people and their places: the sense of community is key to foster the feeling of belonging. Without it, place is soulless, wilts into a *non-place*, and its dwellers experience *placelessness*. On the contrary, citizens that are satisfied with their place have a strong sense of place identity and attachment. Such elements are essential in fostering authenticity for a city and communicating its allure to tourists and stakeholders in terms of place branding (Hakala *et al*., 2020). Case studies on translocal communities confirm that immigrants often seek to remake places where they can forge social and cultural connections that reconfirm their past identities. This underscores the profound impact of place on identity and belonging, highlighting the need for inclusive and community-driven approaches to creative placemaking (Main & Sandoval, 2015). Cho (2018) explored a Chinese community in South Korea to conclude that there are three takes on placemaking: first, "placemaking of the people" details how ethnic spaces emerge within a globalised city like Seoul; second, "placemaking by the people" examines how these places become transnational ethnic communities accommodating everyday life; finally, "placemaking for the people" demonstrates how citizens and non-citizens collaborate to create inclusive public spheres in transnational enclaves.

In the chapter that follows, placemaking will be considered not just as a solution to the problem of *placelessness*, but as a profound opportunity for cities to redefine themselves, harness their uniqueness, and foster a sense of belonging among their inhabitants.

Creative Placemaking

In the ever-evolving tapestry of urban development, the transformative power of creative placemaking for modern cities is not just about the physical transformation of urban spaces but is a deeply human-centred approach, rooted in the principles of identity, belonging, and distinctiveness. At the heart of creative placemaking lies the duality of identity that was presented in chapter one: on one side lies the uniqueness of standing

out, on the other is the sense of belonging to a larger ensemble. Identity of a place is not merely “distinction from other things, its recognition as a separable entity” (Sepe, 2012), but it entails the idea of equality with something else. In a world where cities vie for recognition and relevance, the sense of belonging becomes an intrinsic aspect of identity.

Cities have found a unique avenue to foster this sense of belonging through participation in international networks. The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN), for instance, was founded in 2004 and counts now almost 300 cities around the world with a common goal: placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans at the local level and cooperating actively at the international level (unesco.org). the network collects cities that embrace creativity to define themselves, a global community of like-minded places that also stand out as unique, each in its own way. Much like individuals, cities possess multifaceted identities that are shaped by many factors, from cultural heritage to modern aspirations. Some places are known for a singular, recognizable identity, while others navigate the intricate landscape of multiple identities, offering a diverse array of experiences to their inhabitants and visitors alike (Cheshmehzangi, 2020). With these premises, the City of Venice can find its unique voice through the place branding process explored thus far, yet at the same time it should also pursue the sense of belonging through one of the multiple networks of cities around the world. The UCCN, with its values of creativity and culture, appears to match the potential of Venice. Creative placemaking could be the next step for the administration of the city.

Taking a historical perspective, placemaking has assumed the role of shaping the identity of empire capitals before. This process of course had a top-down direction, with city elites constructing the city's identity, often manifested through architectural endeavours and civic culture, reflecting a city's essence and distinguishing it from rival metropolises (Groten, 2022). In today’s context, however, placemaking needs to be centred around the people it will affect, as highlighted by the co-creation framework supported in the UCAMP project (urbangoodcamp.eu). A top-down effort between technology firms and local governments needs to consider essential rights such as active engagement and a feeling of inclusion: the concealed planning of ecosystems, data networks, and infrastructure (Griffiths & Barbour, 2016). Urban planning, design, and management should involve keen observation and engagement with the local community

to discover their needs and aspirations, ultimately leading to the creation of a shared vision for the place (Molavi, 2016).

The tangible ways to placemaking can take many forms. Rijnks and Strijker (2013) considered placemaking through the process of *othering*, where distinction from outsiders can be the base for community, however this is just one of the possibilities. The act of creating place has been rooted in the human ability to build with the purpose of exiting wilderness (Tuan, 1976), although architecture is not even necessary for humans to naturally create vernacular constructions (Rudofsky, 1964). The simple acts of naming (Anholt, 2010) or storytelling (de Certeau, 1984) can create place. All these propositions reflect the fluidity of place itself. "The making of places is equally fluid, and the individuals who frequent them may be conceptualised as publics if their point of assembly is a shared interest, or if they are visible – however fleetingly – to each other" (Griffiths & Barbour, 2016: 2).

Webb (2022: 35) calls for a placemaking process that addresses "the complexities of today's urban neighbourhoods, a new model that develops places of belonging for the collective good; measures empowerment, cultural stewardship and community attachment as indicators of success; and is committed to addressing the root causes of social inequity through artist-led civic engagement activities." Creative placemaking is defined as a strategic shaping of the economic, physical, and social characteristics of a place around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking not only revitalizes urban spaces but also fosters community attachment, empowerment, and cultural stewardship. It is a commitment to addressing the root causes of social inequity through artist-led civic engagement activities, building healthier and more resilient communities. Scholars like Bedoya (2012) caution against placemaking driven solely by speculative economic interests. Place that is manufactured as such ignores two aspects essential for successful placemaking: the articulation of the concept of *beauty*, beyond aesthetics or experiences to encompass the beauty of community, and *cultural stewardship*, that is the non-stop act of listening, looking, and learning from the surroundings.

Community-based placemaking

Although the trends in Venice seem disastrous, it may not be time to insert its name in the list of endangered human heritage sites of the UNESCO yet (Povoledo, 2023).

Residents could interpret their role as “heroic islanders”, facing their urban challenges and valiantly defending their insular identity against outside forces; or maybe they should focus on preserving their unique character, even if it requires help; or maybe even avoid any influence from the mainland altogether (Casagrande, 2016). In reality, communities should rather exploit any opportunity with creative and unconventional policies. Individuals within island communities often seek to legitimize their authenticity, whether through asserting their membership as “local” residents or through actions that can have broader socio-political implications, shaping relations of spatial inclusion and exclusion within these unique island settings.

Sassen (1996) argues that the traditional sources of place identity, such as the nation or the village, have become more porous in the era of globalisation. This is not to say that the formation of one’s identity does not rely on their provenience anymore, but it goes to show that place identity has become rooted on notions of community. The topic of community goes hand in hand with the placemaking process, as evidenced by the centrality during the process reserved to the people inhabiting the place. In fact, the sense of community has been associated to place identity ever since the inception of the theory (Relph, 1976). The process of *othering* that is essential for the creation of place (Rinjnks & Strijker, 2013) has a twofold meaning: on one side of the imaginary border stands the Other, excluded for whatever reason may be, but on the other side stands a group, a collection of individuals that share a bond, a *community*. The process of creating place cannot be separated from the process of making community: the creation of “us” and “them” is reflected in the cultural “other” and “we” that identify collective representation (van Houtum, & Lagendijk, 2001). Cheshmehzangi (2020) offers a community-based approach to socio-spatial transformation to maximise the potential of place through people-centric considerations. The presence of exhibitions and public arts in many examples around the world, for instance, have proved to promote a less commercialised atmosphere, where people can freely gather and socialise. These interventions, when developed to support communities rather than commercial interests, have the potential of reviving the identities of places, people, and communities.

Kuvač and Schwai (2017) propose a threefold scheme for placemaking (figure 4): spatial context, participation in construction, and action in place need to come together in order to ensure a successful process: “The (un)planned system of construction and other

factors are obvious in terms of the (in)efficiency of a neighbourhood's identity construction" (Kuvač & Schwai, 2017: 93).

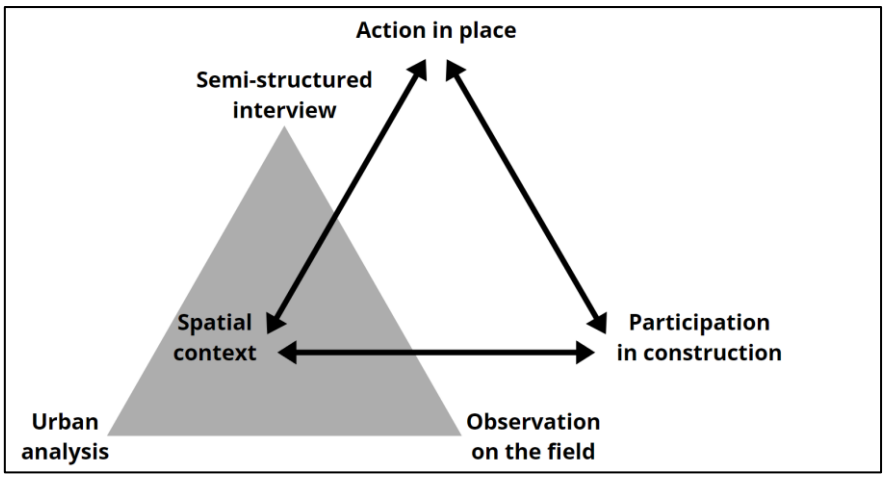

Figure 4: The Triangle Model (adapted from: Kuvač & Schwai, 2017: 85).

However, the path to creative placemaking is not without its challenges. Kuvač and Schwai derive their qualitative research method from Seamon's (2012) people-place triad. They match the three phases of the process to each element of the triangle model:

1. The first element of spatial context is achieved through an *urban analysis*. The UCAMP project, for example, completed this phase through desktop research. This meant analysing much of the media published in relation to Venice, focusing on newspaper articles from many countries.
2. The second element, *participation in construction*, requires observation on the field. Evidently, the involvement of local residents in the placemaking process inevitably means a collection of their opinions and expertise regarding their places. The UCAMP project partnered with the University of Venice in several junctures to co-create activities of interaction with the students in the analysis of Venice and the production of valuable solutions.
3. The last element, *action in place*, is matched by semi-structured interviews, which correspond to the conversations with the creative personalities of the City of Venice that were essential for the UCAMP project, and which served as the main data for this thesis.

A comprehensive framework for successful placemaking strategies entails six components in Webb (2022) instead. It starts with an entrepreneurial initiator, often an artist, who demonstrates a genuine commitment to preserving the unique character of a place. The initiator should mobilise public support at both the government and citizen level, as well as the private sector, particularly from cultural industries and developers. He or she should finally activate the participation from arts and cultural leaders, while also building a network of partnerships across sectors, missions, and government levels. Creative placemaking is not a mere transformation of urban spaces; it is a catalyst for identity formation, belonging, and ethical stewardship. It requires a shift towards community-driven approaches that prioritize the essence of place and the people who shape it. Ultimately, it is through such inclusive practices that we can foster vibrant, resilient, and culturally rich communities.

Placemaking in the city

Differences among cities are critical. It seems impossible to imagine a resident of Montreal that does not have to deal with the city's linguistic politics, or an inhabitant of Jerusalem that is not confronted daily with questions of religious identity. The *ethos* of the city, as Bell and de-Shalit (2011) call it, goes well beyond the superficiality of having street signs in two languages as a quirky feature of a city, instead it explores the physical, social, and political characteristics of a place that seep down into everyday life to shape place identity. The case of Venice is extremely valuable. The iconic characteristics of the city centre are not only relevant for residents because they catch public transport by boat rather than by bus; the particularities of Venice intersect the daily lives of its residents in unexpected ways, pushing them to consider their surroundings much more than citizens of other places. The tourist can experience this only at a smaller scale: moving through the narrow streets outside the beaten path is challenging, and the time it takes to cross the whole city centre is much more than elsewhere. But the issues of mobility do not stop there: every bridge imposes the crosser to climb a few steps, and this can be challenging for the population that ages more and more. The events of various nature that decorate the yearly calendar of Venice, moreover, inevitably congest the few lines of public transportation available. Residents are also tasked with the constant maintenance of the city, of its sidewalks and its historic buildings, but most of these processes need to be done

by hand, with agile machinery and trying to least block the flow of walkers. The presence of Venice in the daily life of the Venetians is constant, shaping their relationship with place, and with each other. The diminishing community of inhabitants of Venice are more and more pushed together from the outside pressure of the tourism industry, and the number of places dedicated solely to them is shrinking all the time.

Since the relationship between people and place is subjective, interpretative residential affiliations shape place identity of residents just as much as their demographic qualities (Cuba & Hummon, 1993). In other words, social participation within the local community is deemed essential for establishing community identity, as social factors play a significant role in the ways people interpret their places. However, these communal bonds are often overlooked (Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2020): acknowledging the social, cultural, and discursive dimensions of person-place bonds means recognising their origin through the way people refer to their own relationship with place. Place identity can thus be considered through the lens of broader ideological processes that mould person-place relations, for example regulating socio-spatial entitlements. The disparity in opportunities for the citizens of different neighbourhoods within the main city, for instance, needs to be re-evaluated in terms of place identity. A reflection of these discrepancies can be seen in Venice. Its counterpart on the mainland experiences a totally different lifestyle than the city centre: the lifestyle in Mestre is much closer to any other city in Western Europe, with regular car traffic, shopping centres and bus stops. However, the administration of the mainland neighbourhoods cannot be separated from the historic centre (DeVine *et al*., 2016), therefore the attention inevitably verges to the "mainstage", as can be seen in the representation in the media (Zaghis, 2022), while Mestre and its neighbouring districts are hardly ever mentioned in a positive way. The creation of community, formed in Venice through a sense of belonging to the iconic city, can be perceived in Mestre through the process of "othering". The residents of Venice are united thanks to a common link to their city, with the feeling of pride of inhabiting a "museum in open air" and the sensation of being the last ones standing in the deserted town. Citizens of Mestre, on the other hand, can be gathered through a negative sense of belonging, the citizens of the "other Venice", the ones that do *not* reside in the historic part of the city. If this is the only way Mestre can be seen outside its own borders, and sometimes even within, then it experiences the *technique* that Relph (1976) was mentioning. Augé (1995)

would compare the situation to the highway that only serves its purpose and offers nothing else to its dwellers, but Relph intends here a larger scale. *Technique* refers to locales where "differentiation by significance is of little importance and places are reduced to simple locations with their greatest quality being development potential" (Relph, 1976: 87).

Mestre and the entire mainland around the Lagoon of Venice cannot be reduced to such image. Creative placemaking in the city goes hand in hand with its creative residents, which is where the theories of Richard Florida (2002; 2008) encounter the City of Venice. While the processes exposed in chapter four clearly point to the depopulation of Venice, the idea of fostering creativity and encouraging residents and newcomers to stay in Venice are central to the concept of the creative city. Florida's book *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002) emphasizes how creative individuals can drive economic and cultural growth. Venice must tap into this creative potential and provide incentives for its students to remain in the city after their studies. The question shifts therefore to "why are people turning away from Venice?" to "what kind of incentives must the city offer for them to stay?". The importance of cultural-creative clusters is central for strengthening place identity and stimulating an entrepreneurial mindset in the field of arts and culture (Rodrigues & Schimdt, 2021). To succeed in this sense, Florida (2002) calls for a tolerant and multicultural society, welcoming of diverse cultures and lifestyles. This theme opens the floor to significant topics of social differences: the multiculturalism envisioned by Florida relies on resourceful and economically advantaged class that can *choose* where to live, while the immigration of the urban areas in the Region of Venice more often derives from necessity, from lack of resources in one's native country. New residents in the historic centre, often drawn by Venice's unique charm, play a significant role in shaping the city's identity. However, this inflow cannot satisfy the quantitative need of new residents in the old town, on the contrary it raises questions about gentrification, as housing affordability remains a challenge for the city and this elitist migration might even deteriorate the balances. Instead of reviving the city's labour market, job opportunities may attract experts in the most prominent industry of Venice at the moment – tourism – with no interest for the functioning of residential services such as schools or hospitals (Minoia, 2017). An example in this direction is the purchase of Sacca Sessola, an artificial island created in the late nineteenth century from waste material of the new port of Santa

Marta in Venice. The island was converted into a luxury resort by Marriott International and was even renamed as "Isola delle Rose" (Island of the Roses), thus erasing the memory of its origins. The purchase was met with scepticism from socio-environmental activists that would rather prefer new creative site-specific modes of opposition to the deterioration of the lagoon and urban environment (Guaraldo, 2021).

Lifestyle migration emerges as a contemporary form of movement driven by affluent individuals seeking specific lifestyles. It stems from individuals that are able to choose not only how to live but also where to live, a phenomenon deeply rooted in late modern, global, elitist, borderless, and highly mobile social practices. A case study of lifestyle migration to Southern Portugal (Torkington, 2012) exposes the paradox of counter-urbanisation movements that eventually contribute to the urbanisation of coastlines. Lifestyle migration ends up aiming at a utopian and glocal place identity, reflecting the desire for an idealized and customized urban environment that aligns with the values and aspirations of these migrants. Basso *et al*. (2023), in their call for an open resistance to the touristification of the Lagoon, claim that even practices of slow tourism and detours could not be the answer, instead spreading the bane of tourism across smaller destinations in the Lagoon and even on the mainland. According to their research, a social approach to housing should prioritise residential accessibility, commonality, and participation to fight gentrification: this means heterogeneous and conflicting practices that purposedly reflect the conflicting feelings of individuals, "re-imagining and re-inventing the landscape of the lagoon through practices of sustainable use and reuse of space" (Basso *et al.*, 2023: 112). The goal here is not to simply oppose tourism, but rather to propose proper design actions: tourism per se is not the enemy, overtourism is. Through the interviewing process, a different take on lifestyle migration emerged:

> "Creating a different layer of population: not tourists, nor citizens, nor students, who are somewhat the three current components; but another one that could help imagine the city not only as a historical city but also as a contemporary city." (Stakeholder 1)

Multiculturalism emphasises the coexistence of diverse ethnic cultures in urban society (Cho, 2018) and it is essential for the vitality of Venice, contributing to the cultural richness of the city, and creating a vibrant urban environment. This is not to minimise the administrative efforts that a multicultural society poses to policy makers, but instead to

highlight that they must foster a sense of inclusivity and community among native and immigrant residents. The concept of "denizenship" proposed by Rosbrook-Thompson (2015) revolves around the differentiation between temporary foreign visitors or guest workers, denizens, and citizens. These distinctions are regulated by three entrance gates: the first gate pertains to immigration regulation, the second gate relates to the regulation of domicile and residential status, and the third gate concerns the regulation of naturalisation into full citizenship. Denizens specifically occupy the unique position between the second and third gate: they have been granted permanent resident status but have not undergone the process of naturalisation, which would grant them full citizenship.

The degrowth paradigm that warns about relentless urban expansion advises for a reduction in development to combat worrying contemporary trends. However, even among these voices arguing against GDP-driven growth, a prominent role is reserved to local experts. When their expertise is deeply rooted in their communities, it possesses invaluable knowledge of the local context, making their involvement a bridge across the gap between degrowth principles and real-world urbanisation practices (Kaika *et al*., 2023). In terms of the tourism industry that is central in Venice, such cooperation between official institutions and urban experts could merge the discourse on the potential of creative placemaking with the imperative of listening to the voices of residents. The presence of these local voices in the Venice Lagoon is evident and proud. Assemblea Sociale per la Casa (Social Assembly for Housing) is the urban movement aligning with the guidelines traced by Basso *et al*. (2023), but many other associations voice the discontent and demands of locals: Comitato No Grandi Navi, fighting against the cruise ships that navigate the Lagoon, Poveglia per Tutti, which aims at a shared use for the tiny island of Poveglia, Gruppo 25 Aprile, demanding sustainable and socially inclusive tourism, or OCIO – Osservatorio Civico sulla casa e la residenza (Civic Observatory for housing and residency). At the heart of Venice's potential for transformation lies its creative class, a group encompassing all those who contribute to the city's artistic and cultural fabric. Individuals at the intersection of art and society serve as change agents, inciting systemic social change through place-based artistic activities (Webb, 2022). Florida *et al*. (2008b) identify three characteristics of a place that moderate development through the creative class: high human capital and education, focus on STEM and business

occupations, and elevated degrees of tolerance. Artistic networks that contribute to the spread of new ideas and knowledge transfer represent the last piece of the puzzle, offering open-minded and meritocratic environments for self-expression that foster creativity and an entrepreneurial mindset. Can modern day Venice match the requests of such globalised and fast world? What could the role of the mainland be regarding this goal?

Long before the concept of the creative class was brought up, Venice could count on centuries of uninterrupted artistic production, encompassing different art styles and an extended plethora of fields. High quality productions from the arts and crafts corporations of the Middle Ages find their legacies in contemporary Venice, and even if they are threatened by forced industrialisation, the city's artistic endeavours endure, providing a foundation for revitalisation (Pierantoni *et al.*, 2014): the glass blowing industry in Murano is a prime example of this. Venice has been a hub of artistic production for centuries, nurturing artisans and preserving its unique cultural identity through the arts and crafts corporations (Trivellato, 2000), however the creative identity of the city has faced challenges during the 20th century due to forced industrialisation. Today, an artistic take on the contradictions of Venice has been proposed by the "creative class". Many artistic voices took part to the debate on the cruise ships in the Lagoon like Banksy's provocative installation "Venice in oil", portraying the iconic landscape of the historic buildings of Venice obstructed by a large ship sailing by (banksyfilm, 2019). The efforts of artists and activists who advocate against the impact of cruise tourism demonstrate the ongoing relevance of Venice's creative class.

The UCAMP project individuated Higher Education Institutions as the revitalising hub of European cities, forming the bridge between the creative potential of free young minds and the financial interests of business developers. Managing to tap into the creativity of students, validating their voices through the realisation of their research, the UCAMP project aimed at reconsidering urban challenges from a co-creation point of view. In the specific case of Venice, the availability of students is certainly not an issue: the relatively small city hosts, among other institutions, the Ca' Foscari University of Venice, the Venice University of Architecture, the Conservatory of Music, the Academy of Fine Arts, and the Venice International University. The task of these institutions is to convince their students to remain invested in the city, to repopulate its neighbourhoods, to pour their efforts into solving its challenges. The future creative class is already living in Venice,

studying its places and identities, however the urban challenges of overtourism and environmental fragility pose such a weight on the survival of the city that the administrations are not able to tap into the potential, and students end up moving away after graduation.

Utilising creativity to approach the urban challenges of Venice has been proposed in the literature already. Creative tourism indicates travellers who seek authentic experiences that connect them with local culture and residents (Nieuwland & Lavanga, 2021). Venice possesses the opportunity to leverage its creative heritage for economic development through creative tourism, with its rich history and artistic traditions. UNESCO (2006) incorporates into the definition of creative tourism a participative learning, a connection with those who reside in the place and create its culture. This exposes the educational potential of tourism, teaching newcomers about the city's cultural significance and the importance of responsible tourism as a way to balance the interests of both travellers and dwellers. It may even represent a bridge over Torkington's (2012) criticisms towards lifestyle migration: if welcoming new residents comports an emphasis on Venice's unique identity and challenges, it can foster sense of responsibility among newcomers to preserve the cultural heritage of the city. The creative tourist is interested in the less visible “backstage”, but balancing their desire for authenticity with the demands of residents that want to retain their peace and privacy is a delicate challenge, but it can be addressed through educational initiatives aimed at both tourists and residents (Ray, 1998). Nonetheless, the reality in Venice is the opposite of the one presented by van Rekom and Go (2006), according to which it seems that the tourism industry encourages the survival of traditions and visitors are the most regretful regarding the loss of local authenticity. In Venice, overtourism erases the place character, levelling every shop’s window to the same offer, while residents lament the erasure of the city’s traditions. The detachment of the city from its natural ecosystem was brought up in an interview, but creative tourism may propose an antidote:

> “The serious issue isn't shouting "Look at the sea!" when you arrive in the Lagoon. The problem is when they leave and say "Bid goodbye to the sea!". They haven't had the opportunity to learn.” (Stakeholder 10)

The role of Venice in fostering creative tourism in this sense is to teach its visitors about not only the cultural heritage of the city, but also its ecosystem. The environmental challenges faced by the city can be traced back to the last decades when the city tried to keep up with transnational development while its fragile ecosystem could not afford it in terms of resources. Inserting this detail in the framework of slow tourism and creative tourism is essential to operate towards the environmental sustainability of Venice.

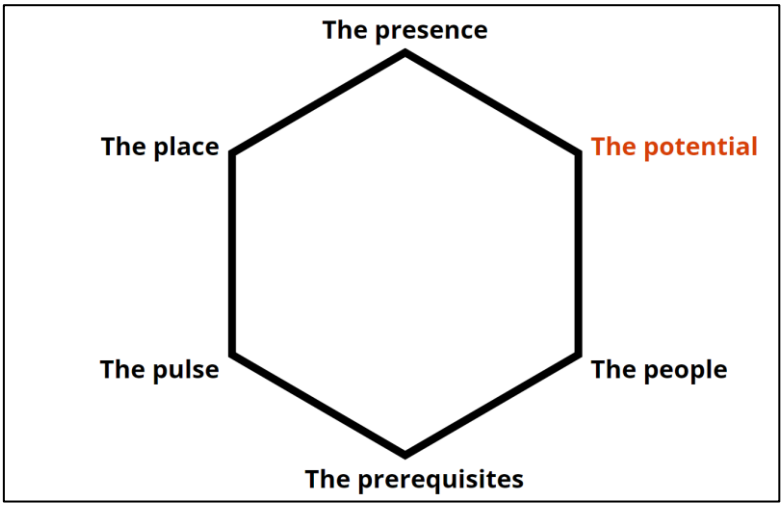

Figure 5: The potential highlighted from the City Brands Index hexagon (adapted from Anholt, 2006: 60)

In conclusion, Anholt's (2006) City Brands hexagon (figure 5) highlights the importance of education as well. Within the concept of potential of a place, he includes the economic and educational opportunities that each city can offer visitors, businesses, and immigrants. Promoting the city as a place for education, not only of tourists but also of potential residents and entrepreneurs, can stimulate economic and educational opportunities. Venice stands at a crucial juncture, where its creative class, artistic heritage, and potential for educational creative tourism intersect. By preserving its unique identity, educating both residents and visitors, and embracing its creative legacy, Venice can navigate the challenges of the modern world while remaining a beacon of art, culture, and education. In doing so, it can continue to be a city of transformation, arts, and social innovation, shaping its own destiny.

The *Terraferma* District

As explored so far, the question of whether Mestre should be considered a separate entity from Venice has been a topic of discussion, reflecting the importance of borders and identity of places. If Mestre needs to stay attached to the historic centre, as past referendums have decreed (Muscarà, 1990), then it should remain an integral part of the City of Venice. The evident boundaries separating the two areas of the city, however, call for the establishment of Mestre's own identity as an autonomous district. Physical distance, historic disparities, and overall place character differences should be enough to develop processes of place branding and placemaking in the "*Terraferma* district". The goal should be to elevate the district of Mestre to the sophistication of Murano or Lido, respectively characterized by the glass blowing industry and the Venice film festival. An identity for the mainland could be shaped through the process of "othering", identifying Mestre as the Venice that is not quite Venice, but that would be detrimental. However, the distinction from the historic centre should be present to stimulate feelings of "elective belonging": developing one's identity as being from Mestre, as opposed to being a Venetian.

Even if it doesn't constitute an actual administrative border, the frontier between the Lagoon and the *Terraferma* district needs to be considered in depth. After all, every border is an arbitrary but necessary act of violence (Paasi, 2009). Referendums regarding the division have never been decisive about it, but several propositions have been pondered. The exploration of potential boundaries for such a split emphasizes the economic and historical aspects that should be considered: a boundary grounded in historical significance that offers economic advantages by creating balanced economies between the islands of Venice and the mainland. DeVine *et al*. (2016) propose the split represented in figure 6: dividing Venice along the lines of division it presented in 1917 makes the most sense economically, with the industry being the main identifying characteristic for the mainland.

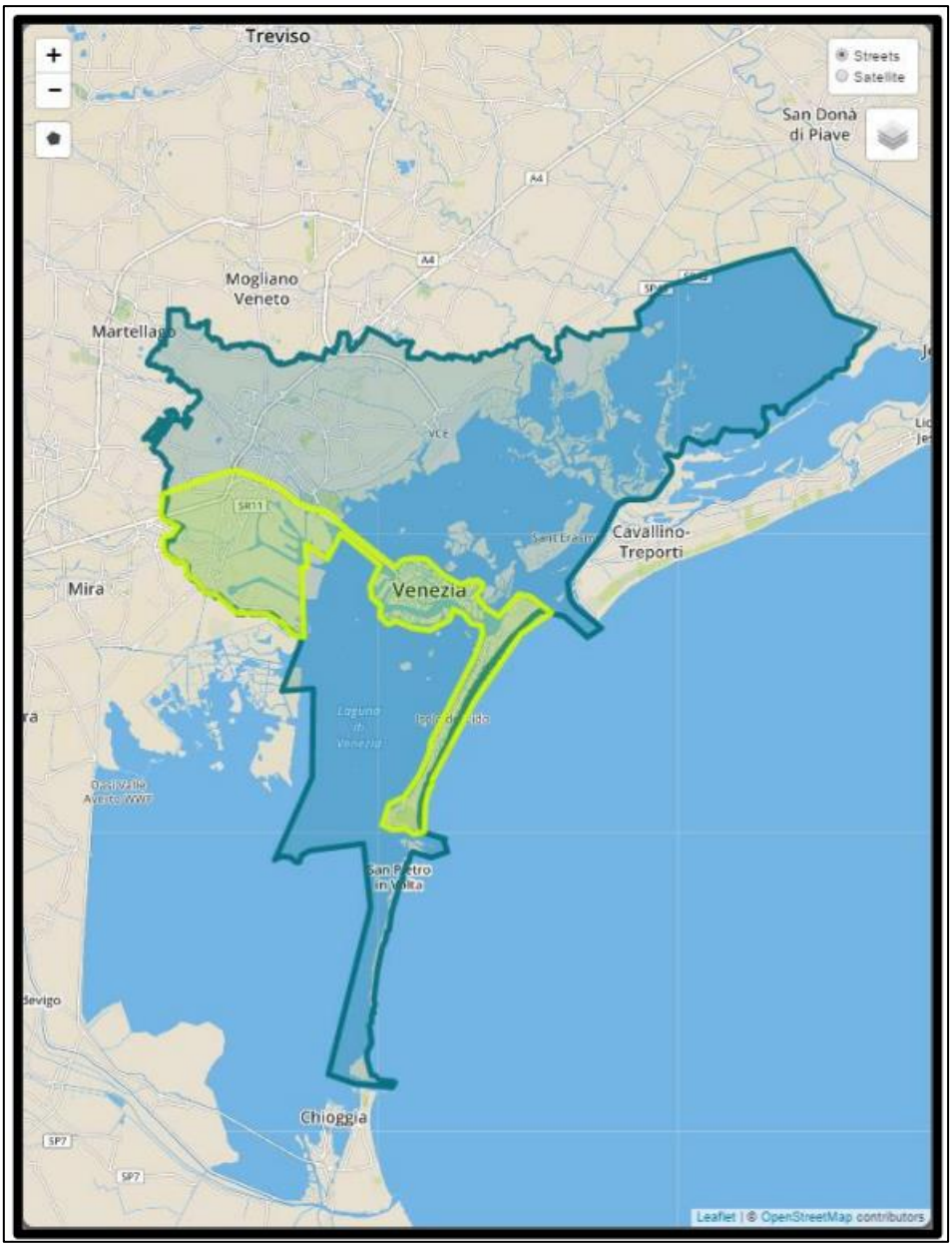

Figure 6: The separation of Venice proposed by DeVine et al. Venice is in yellow, encompassing the historic city centre, Lido and Marghera. Mestre is in blue, comprising all the rest (DeVine et al., 2016: 126).

Nevertheless, such separation would only exacerbate the urban challenges of both halves. The historic centre would be condemned to become the Veniceland that most activists are fighting to avoid, a touristic theme park that once was a city and is now a hollow collection of hotels and identical souvenir shops, barely connected to its mainland if not by a bridge to the industrial port of Marghera. The danger of *Disneyfication* in the Lagoon would be matched on the mainland by a soulless area with an industrial past that now carries the burden of a destroyed surrounding natural environment. The plan that

sparked original separation movements (figure 7) divides regions that are ideologically, economically, and politically different. Although it is the most likely border to be used in a divide, it may leave the *Estuario* at a great economic disadvantage compared to the *Terraferma*, which would retain control of both the Port of Marghera and Marco Polo Airport. Moreover, disregarding economic and demographic factors, this proposition would divide Venice into two even more polarized regions.

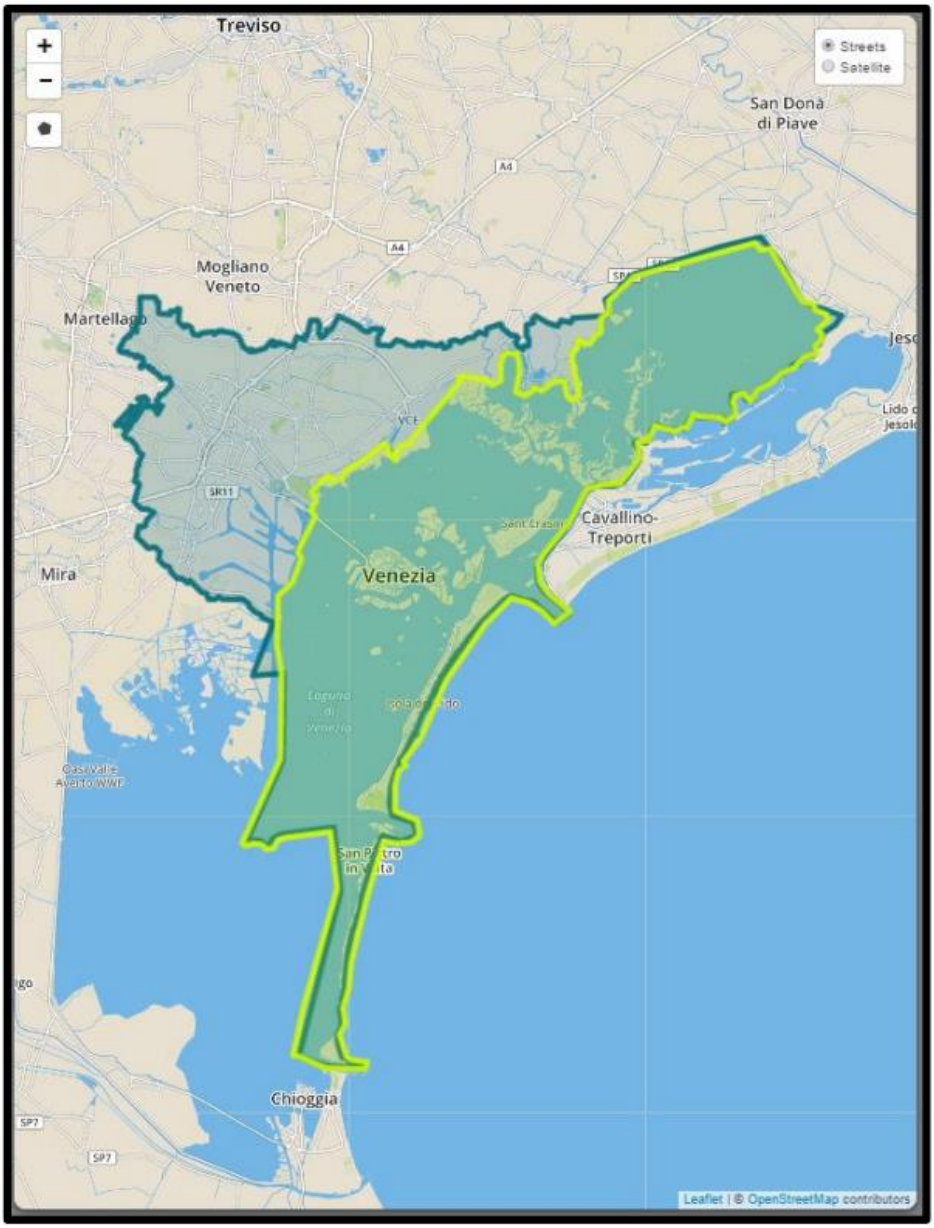

Figure 7: The separation of Venice into two separate townsl. The Estuario in yellow, the Terraferma in blue (DeVine et al., 2016: 126).

Regardless of trivial discussions hardly based on reality, Mestre's potential to establish its unique identity becomes evident when examining its role in creative initiatives. Creative initiatives, as highlighted by Pierantoni *et al*. (2014), have been crucial in sustaining the identity of Venice, a unique opportunity to leverage its heritage as an "open-air museum". Culture and education play pivotal roles in defining a place's identity, especially in the city of arts and culture. Tolerance, as Florida *et al*. (2008b) highlighted, is crucial in development because it harbours the integration of diverse peoples that can bring their own creative mindsets to the table. Venice emerged along the centuries as a "melting pot" of all different nationalities, welcoming in its islands all sorts of communities and behaving as a bridge between Western, Eastern and Arabic culture:

> "Venice is perhaps one of the first melting pots. I could tell the Chinese to come to Venice in search of their own culture. The same can be done with anyone, Germans, French, etc. […] Understanding diverse cultures also extends to hospitality. [Venice is] a mix of everything where everyone has contributed something." (Stakeholder 7)

The multiculturalism that defined the historic centre for centuries now characterises the mosaic of nationalities inhabiting the mainland. In fact, most of the workforce of the hospitality industry in Venice resides on the mainland and commutes daily, composing a hidden stakeholder for the future of the city, one that perhaps doesn't always agree with the rest. In the period of the protests against cruise ships passing through the Canale di Giudecca in front of Piazza San Marco, for instance, people were seen parading on a boat with a sign claiming that those cruise ships docking in Venice provided a job for thousands of families. This hidden class of workers cannot be asked to put a stop to the overtourism of Venice, being that they need it to survive, but they can offer their creative potential in the urban areas where they reside. After all, after a long day working in Venice, they go back to mainland to go shopping, meet their peers, and inhabit their places:

> "A significant part of the workforce that revolves around Venice consists of foreigners. […] The mainland has the potential to become a cosmopolite city if it could only see this possibility. It represents a significant cultural leap." (Stakeholder 2)

The tolerance that allowed Venice to paint its landscapes with strokes from all sorts of cultures and provenances, has now the potential to exploit the diversity of its suburbs to foster creative placemaking through co-creation. Sassen (1993) suggests that every major Western city gives the impression of containing many cities within its boundaries. Larger cities represent spaces of political and cultural differences, complex and messy systems where place branding and placemaking practices could gain substantial support from their creative quarters (Evans, 2015). If the scale of the city seems too reductive, regions seem to follow the same trajectory: Van Criekingen *et al*. (2007) reference to the "death of distance" to signify that technological advances in communication and transportation are erasing spatial boundaries. This concept finds its archetype in cities like Los Angeles, where traditional urban centres and borders seem to dissolve and are replaced by what is referred to as "la città diffusa", or the diffused city. This placeless world signifies a departure from traditional urban forms to step into city systems linked by economic interdependence of individual urban units within a country or region. The "mega-region" (Florida *et al*., 2008a) does not negate however the conventional centre-periphery dichotomy seen in many cities, for example in Venice, the "bipolar city" (Pierantoni *et al*., 2014). Existing political and administrative divisions lead to the stark divide between on one side the ancient urban core, the epicentre of political and cultural power, housing institutions like universities and international cultural centres, full of the historically significant attractions that further reinforce this centrality, and on the other side the periphery that has evolved into dense urban agglomerations, with Mestre representing the residential area, while Marghera is marked by industrial activity.

The concept of "quarterisation" resonates with Venice's evolution, where diverse districts reflect unique identities, whether historical, cultural, or economic. Paasi (1986) traces it back to the division of labour within society, highlighting its spatial consequences. Economic and power relations play a crucial role in defining the roles of individuals in creating, maintaining, and reproducing societal structures, even the ones regarding place and identity. Socio-spatial consciousness represents a broader form of collective awareness: the division of roles between the Lagoon and the mainland could take on any shape, but they shall opt towards one that benefits both, in a sort of urban network, a "polycentric urban region" (PUR) (van Houtum, & Lagendijk, 2001). The

strategic aspect of networks is central, as Venice and Mestre should play complementary roles, rather than competitive. The division of cities into discrete zones that reflect their land use, morphology, and economic activities resonates with historical practices where quarters specialized in specific crafts or cultural activities, often linked through bonds of ethnicity. Quarters hold symbolic and cultural value, fostering the formation of community and, therefore, place identity. For instance, the city of London has steadfastly preserved its historical and cultural identity over centuries. Beyond its recognition on the global stage, London's diverse urban settings have consistently stood out as distinctive and influential facets of the city's identity. The sense of belonging and place attachment to quarters envisioned in this way could be the key to the urban challenges of Venice. Interestingly, these new production quarters often emerge organically and are not necessarily institutionally planned; however, waves of regeneration guided by strategic place branding and placemaking need to steer the wheel of cultural redevelopment.

Building on Florida *et al*. (2008b), who claim that technology and business are drivers for the creative class, the role for Mestre is discussed in these terms. Van Criekingen *et al*. (2007) list a small number of types into which sort urban centres and sub-centres: Mestre could fall into the category of business centres focusing on command and control, or a hub for technology and innovation. These roles reflect the evolving dynamics of Mestre as it seeks to define its identity within the broader urban landscape. Venice's historical creative districts have been instrumental in shaping the city's identity, even though the contemporary perception of Venice leans more towards a global showcase for monuments, exhibitions, and events, with limited space for the expression of local creativity. It is thus safe to claim that the historic core is closer to a culture and retail centre. While these areas continue to be focal points for culture, entertainment, retail, and tourism, there is also a growing trend of these activities expanding into decentralized locations. Mestre and Marghera are identified as places where creative industries are beginning to thrive, thanks to the initiatives of young creative entrepreneurs. This highlights the potential for Mestre to evolve as a hub for innovation and creativity, contributing to the overall cultural and economic landscape of the region. The idea of converting Forte Marghera, a vast abandoned military precinct, into a creative park works directly in this trajectory. This concept aligns with the global discourse on

"creative cities" and presents an opportunity to address various challenges, potentially serving as a catalyst for local creativity and innovation.

Conclusion and Future Research

Venice is facing incredibly complex challenges that threaten its multiple equilibria. Worldwide environmental changes pressure the city to regain the connections with its lagoon in order to preserve such a fragile ecosystem. Resuming this symbiotic relationship between the city and its water means understating its uniqueness: some things in Venice just needs to be different, simply because its logistics propose key characteristics unique to the city. First and foremost, for instance, speed needs to be thought as a luxury: defending Venice means that boats just need to sail slower (la Nuova di Venezia e Mestre, 2023). Coming to terms with concepts like this has a twofold consequence. On the one hand, the administration of the city shall realise the city limits, which transfer for example to its maximum capacity in terms of tourism inflow. On the other hand, the case of Venice cannot be thought of like any other city: the particularities that made its historic centre so iconic and admired worldwide must be conceived as the force that moves the city and its lucrative tourism industry, rather than factors to brutally exploit. The imperative of respecting the limits of Venice needs to be translated to its temporary inhabitants, starting from tourists. Creative tourism, with its ideal of teaching newcomers how to live the city in the most sustainable way, should be matched with policies that make it possible for foreigners to learn about the city. The educational role of the administration also applies to long-term residents and lifestyle migrants: their creative potential for the city can only be positive if their impact on the whole system does not recreate the issues brought by overtourism. Recognising the strengths and weaknesses that make up the identity of Venice is the first step to forge the correct strategy of place branding: the absence of place character brough by identical souvenir shops and absence of local residents must be reversed to give back to the city its identity that made it so resourceful and central for centuries.

The identity of the city must not shy away from valorising its two sides. Venice and Mestre, rather than being in competition, can be complementary in a polycentric urban network. With their rich histories and evolving identities, the two sides of the same coin stand at a crossroads of defining their relationship. The questions of boundaries and

identity are complex, influenced by historical, economic, and cultural factors, yet they must be explored beyond a possible separation between the two and instead their differences must be seen as resources for each other. The concept of polycentric urban regions by van Houtum and Lagendijk (2001) aligns with the Venice-Mestre dynamic. The duality between the historical core of Venice and the modern, industrialized mainland of Mestre mirrors the idea of multiple interrelated centres in regional configurations.

Mestre's emergence as a creative hub, its potential for placemaking, and the recognition of its multiculturalism present opportunities for both regions to thrive. Placemaking cannot stem from an absent community and place branding cannot start from a non-existent identity, thus the multiculturalism that was key for the Republic of Venice can now identify the identity potential for the mainland, like it emerged from the interviewing process for this thesis. The identity of place for Mestre can be traced back to what already characterised the history of the urban sprawl on the mainland: the industrial past of the area and the overwhelmingly multicultural residents of the present. Webb (2022) suggests that placemaking across immigrating communities contributes to the perspective that sees multiculturalism as an asset. Mestre, as a multicultural hub, can capitalize on its the potential to become a thriving cultural district where different communities contribute to its identity.

Embracing creativity, culture, and education can be pivotal in shaping the future of Venice and Mestre. By recognizing the distinct identities within each quarter, these regions can foster a harmonious relationship in a polycentric urban network. In doing so, they can preserve their historical legacies while embracing the dynamism of the present and future, ultimately redefining their place in the world. The role of Higher Education Institutions is crucial in forming a bridge between stakeholders with their economic interests and the desires and necessities of residents, who most often than not are forgotten in placemaking practices. The desktop research and interviewing process inevitably point towards one implication for policymakers: co-creation is key for both place branding and placemaking practices. The multi-stakeholder approach is a requirement for successful policies, while the involvement of residents emerged as resourceful and stimulating:

> "People become passionate, and when people are passionate, they find their cure. When they become passionate and engage together, people take care of their homeland. It's impossible for someone to take care of it if we don't take care of it ourselves first. It builds a social fabric through two dimensions: personal empowerment, you feel inclined to take care of something. And in the globalized world with few reference points, being part of a bigger story than yourself gives you a frame, it defines your identity, makes you feel more contained, peaceful, and serene. It's what we all continuously seek. This is what culture is, it is society." (Stakeholder 4)

> "The community takes care, reports endangered sandbanks, and serves as a monitoring system." (Stakeholder 9)

Future research should deepen the understanding of this collaboration between financial institutions and local inhabitants, focusing on hidden stakeholders that slip between the crevices of policies. Urban actors like postmen, street sweepers and garbage collectors, for instance, offer a unique perspective of their city, in addition to their unparallel knowledge of every street and corner of the city they work in, especially in the case of the historic centre of Venice. Moreover, the workforce that sustains the hospitality sector in the old town and resides on the mainland can offer not only a bridge between the two halves of the city, but also a perspective that has not been evaluated so far.

Valorising all points of view is crucial for composing strategies of placemaking that are enduring and sustainable. Providing ideas of place that people can recognise themselves into is the cornerstone of fostering place identity: in the age of *kitsch* and *technique*, the personal interpretation of place is necessary to develop the feeling of belonging. This applies to residents of course, which should feel passion and affection for their places and protect them from subversive threats, but also to visitors and migrants, who should respect the places they visit or move to, understanding its characteristics and its identity. The case of Venice and Mestre offer an inimitable setting for such practices, with its inner differences, history, and high stakes. The future of the city depends on the balances of yesteryear and policies of today.

REFERENCES

Acharya, A., Rahman, Z. 2016. Place branding research: a thematic review and future research agenda, *International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing*, 13: 289-317. doi: 10.1007/s12208-015-0150-7

Agnew, J. (2007). No Borders, No Nations: Making Greece in Macedonia, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 97(2): 398-422.

Agostini, A., Giannella, V., Grasso, A., Tinini, R., (1998, September 14). Designing Collective Memories, *7th Le Travail Humain Workshop*, [Workshop], Paris, France

Altman, I., Low, S. (1992). *Place Attachment*. New York: Plenum.

Anguelovski, I. (2014). *Neighborhood as Refuge: Community Reconstruction, Place Remaking, and Environmental Justice in the City*. The MIT Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qf73z

Anholt, S. (2006). *Competitive Identity. The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Anholt, S. (2010). Definitions of place branding – Working towards a resolution, *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 6: 1-10. DOI: 10.1057/pb.2010.3

Ansa.it (2022). Venezia scesa sotto i 50mila abitanti in centro storico. Available at: https://www.ansa.it/veneto/notizie/2022/08/11/venezia-scesa-sotto-i-50mila-abitanti-in-centro-storico_4236e916-62c6-4c32-968f-09ab96702361.html#:~:text=Venezia%20%C3%A8%20scesa%20per%20la,Giudecca)%20era%20di%2049.997%20persone. (accessed on: 31.08.2023)

Araya López, A. (2022). Venice Without Cruise Ships: Hard Facts or Fake News? *Shima*, 16(1): 256–264. 10.21463/shima.151

Augé, M. (1995). *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (J. Howe, Trans). London: Verso.

Baker, M. J., Cameron, E. (2008). Critical Success Factors in Destination Marketing. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 8(2): 79-97. https://doi.org/10.1057/thr.2008.9

banksyfilm (2019, May 22). Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2YRRS5aBRw (accessed on 16.09.2023)

Basso, M., Fava, F., Fregolent, L. (2023). Resisting Venice: individual and collective housing practices to stay put in the tourist city, *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 40(2): 95-117, DOI: 10.1080/08873631.2023.2215399

Bedoya, R. (2012). The politics of belonging and dis-belonging. Arts in a Changing America. Webpage retrieved from www.artinachangingamerica.net

Bell, D. A., de-Shalit, A. (2011). *The Spirit of Cities. Why Identity of a City Matters in a Global Age*. Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Bernardo, F., Palma-Oliveira, J. (2013). Place identity, place attachment and the scale of place: The impact of place salience. *Psyecology*. 4, 167-179. 10.1080/21711976.2013.10773867.

Bertocchi, D., Visentin, F. (2019). The Overwhelmed City": Physical and Social Over-Capacities of Global Tourism in Venice," *Sustainability*, *MDPI*, 11(24): 1-19.

Boisen, M., Terlouw, K., Groote, P., Couwenberg, O. (2018). Reframing place promotion, place marketing, and place branding - moving beyond conceptual confusion. *Cities*, 80: 4-11.

Brace, C. (1999). Finding England everywhere: regional identity and the construction of national identity, 1890–1940, Ecumene 6(1).

Braga F, Scarpa GM, Brando VE, Manfè G, Zaggia L. (2020). COVID-19 lockdown measures reveal human impact on water transparency in the Venice Lagoon. *Science of the Total Environment*. 736(139612). doi: 10.1016/j.scitotenv.2020.139612.

Braun, E., Kavaratzis, M., Zenker, S., (2010, August 19-23). My City - My Brand: The Role of Residents in Place Branding [Conference]. Sustainable Regional Growth and Development in the Creative Knowledge Economy: 50th Congress of the European Regional Science Association, Jönköping, Sweden.

Breakwell, G. M. (1992). Processes of Selfevaluation: efficacy and estrangement. In G.M. Breakwell (ed), *Social Psychology of Identity and the Self-concept*. Surrey: Surrey University Press.

Brewer, M.B. (1991). The Social Self: On Being the Same and Different at the Same Time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17(5), 475-482. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167291175001

Bristow, G. (2005). Everyone's a "winner": problematising the discourse of regional competitiveness. *Journal of Economic Geography*, 5(3); 285-304. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26160922

Brubaker, R., Cooper, F. (2000). Beyond "identity". *Theory and Society*. 29, 147. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007068714468

Calvino, I. (1972). *Le città invisibili*, Torino: Einaudi.

Campbell, S. (1996). Green Cities, Growing Cities, Just Cities?: Urban Planning and the Contradictions of Sustainable Development, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 62(3): 296-312, DOI: 10.1080/01944369608975696

Cardoso, R.V., Meijers, E. (2021). Metropolisation: the winding road toward the citification of the region, *Urban Geography*, 42(1): 1-20, DOI: 10.1080/02723638.2020.1828558

Casagrande, M. (2016). Heritage, Tourism, and Demography in the Island City of Venice: Depopulation and Heritagisation. *Urban Island Studies*, 2: 121-141.

Casey, E. S. (2001). Between Geography and Philosophy: What Does It Mean to Be in the Place-World? 91(4), 683-693, DOI: 10.1111/0004-5608.00266

Cicala, P. M. (2022). Sviluppo delle tecnologie mediche nate dalla ricerca accademica: inibitori e strumenti utili per superare la valle della morte. [Thesis, Politecnico di Torino]

Clayton, J. (2009) Thinking spatially: towards an everyday understanding of inter-ethnic relations, *Social & Cultural Geography*, 10(4): 481-498, DOI: 10.1080/14649360902853288

Cheshmehzangi, A. (2020). *Identity of Cities and City of Identities*. Singapore: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-3963-3

Cho, M. R. (2018). Ethnic Place-Making in Cosmopolis. The Case of Yeonbeon Village in Seoul. 10.1515/9789048536252-015.

Cohen, A.P. (1998). Boundaries and boundary consciousness: politicizing cultural identity. In: M. Anderson and E. Bort, eds. *The frontiers of Europe*. London: Pinter, 22–35

Connor, C. J., Hanna, T. S, Van Rensselaer, W. A., Wingerter, Z. R. (2015). Safe and Sustainable Tourism: Managing Venice's Millions of Visitors. [Interdisciplinary Qualifying Project, Worcester Polytechnic Institute]

cntraveler.com (2023), available at: https://www.cntraveler.com/story/venice-unesco-world-heritage-in-danger-list#:~:text=UNESCO%20Says%20Venice%20Is%20in,plaguing%20the%20uniq

Crisman, J. J. (2021). Art and the Aesthetics of Cultural Gentrification: The Cases of Boyle Heights and Little Tokyo in Los Angeles. In C. Lindner & G. F. Sandoval (eds.), *Aesthetics of Gentrification: Seductive Spaces and Exclusive Communities in the Neoliberal City* (pp. 137–154). Amsterdam University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1hp5hpc.10

Cuba, L., Hummon, D. M. (1993). A Place to Call Home: Identification with Dwelling, Community, and Region. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 34(1): 111-131. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4121561

Davison, G., Rowden, E. (2012). "There's Something about Subi": Defending and Creating Neighbourhood Character in Perth, Australia, *Journal of Urban Design*, 17(2): 189-212, DOI: 10.1080/13574809.2012.666386

de Andrade, N., Forte dos Santos, S. (2020). Crossroads between city diplomacy and city branding towards the future: case study on the film cities at UNESCO Creative Cities Network. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 17(1): 105-125. https://doi.org/10.1057/S41254-020-00174-3

de Certeau, M. (1984). *The Practice of Everyday Life* (S. Rendall, Trans.). Berkeley: University of California Press.

de San Eugenio, J., Ginesta, X., Compte-Pujol, M., Frigola-Reig, J. (2019). Building a Place Brand on Local Assets: The Case of The Pla de l'Estany District and Its Rebranding. *Sustainability*. 11(11): 3218. https://doi.org/10.3390/su11113218

de Waard, M. (2012). 1. Amsterdam and the Global Imaginary. In M. de Waard (eds.) *Imagining Global Amsterdam: History, Culture, and Geography in a World City*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Deacon, B. (2004). Under Construction: Culture and Regional Formation in South-West England. *European Urban and Regional Studies* 11, 213-225.

Dembski, S. (2012). Symbolic markers and institutional innovation in transforming urban spaces. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

DeVine, J., Wey, J., Vouldjeff, D., Lundgren, M. (2016). *The Boundaries of Venice: Digitally Mapping Historical Venetian Borders and their ModernDay Implications.* Venice: Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

Devine-Wright, P., Howes, Y. (2010). Disruption to Place Attachment and the Protection of Restorative Environments: A Wind Energy Case Study. Journal of Environmental Psychology. 30. 271-280. 10.1016/j.jenvp.2010.01.008.

Dredge, D., Jenkins, J. (2003). Destination place identity and regional tourism policy, *Tourism Geographies*, 5(4): 383-407, DOI: 10.1080/1461668032000129137

Dovey, K., Woodcock, I., Wood, S. (2009). A Test of Character: Regulating Place-identity in Inner-city Melbourne. *Urban Studies*, *46*(12), 2595–2615. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098009344229

Dudek-Mańkowska, S., Grochowski, M. (2019). From creative industries to the creative place brand: some reflections on city branding in Poland, *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 15(4): 274-287.

Eisenstadt, S. N., Giesen, B. (1995). The construction of collective identity. *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv Für Soziologie*, 36(1), 72-102. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23999434

Entrikin, J. N. (1999). Political Community, Identity and Cosmopolitan Place. *International Sociology*, 14(3), 269–282. https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580999014003003

Ernawati, J. (2018). Dimensions Underlying Place Identity For Sustainable Urban Development, *MATTER: International Journal of Science and Technology*, 3(3), 271-285. https://doi.org/10.20319/mijst.2018.33.271285

European Parliament (2018). Research for TRAN Committee - Overtourism: impact and possible policy responses. Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf (accessed on: 22.03.2020)

Evans, G. (2015). Rethinking Place Branding and Place Making Through Creative and Cultural Quarters. In Kavaratzis, M., Warnaby, G., Ashworth, G. (eds) *Rethinking Place Branding*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-12424-7_10

Florida, R. (2002). *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life*. New York: Basic Books.

Florida, R. (2008). *Who's your city?: how the creative economy is making where to live the most important decision of your life.* New York, Basic Books.

Florida, R., Gulden, T., Mellander, C. (2008a). The rise of the mega-region, *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 1(3): 459-476.

Florida, R., Mellander, C., Stolarick, K. (2008b). Inside the black box of regional development—human capital, the creative class and tolerance. *Journal of Economic Geography*, 8(5): 615–649.

Foley, W. A. (1997). *Anthropological linguistics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Frisvoll, S., Rye, J.F. (2009). Elite discourses of regional identity in a new regionalism development scheme: The case of the 'Mountain Region' in Norway. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift – Norwegian Journal of Geography*, 63(3): 175-190.

Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Gehl, J. (2010). *Cities for People*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Genç, K., Türkay, O., Ulema, S. (2022). Tourism Gentrification: Barcelona and Venice. *Turismo y Sociedad*. 31: 125-140. 10.18601/01207555.n31.06.

Georg, I., Blaschke, T., Taubenböck, H. (2016), New spatial dimensions of global cityscapes: From reviewing existing concepts to a conceptual spatial approach, *Journal of Geographical Sciences*, 26(3): 355-380

Giddens, A. (1984). *The Constitution of Society. Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gioia D., Thomas J., Clark S., Chittipeddi K. (1994), Symbolism and strategic change in academia: the dynamics of sensemaking and influence, *Organization Science*, 5: 363- 383.

Gioia D., Corley K., Hamilton A. (2012), Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology, *Organizational Research Methods*, 16: 15-31.

Glaser, B. G., Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday.

Griffiths, M., Barbour, K. (2016), *Making Publics, Making Places*. University of Adelaide Press.

Groten, M. (2022). *The Architecture of Empire in Modern Europe: Space, Place, and the Construction of an Imperial Environment, 1860-1960*. Amsterdam University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2zjz71m

Guaraldo, E. (2021). Resisting the Tourist Gaze. Art Activism Against Cruise Ship Extractivism in the Venice Lagoon. *Lagoonscapes. The Venice Journal of Environmental Humanities*, 1(1): 101-124.

Haapala, A. (2003). The Urban Identity: The City as a Place to Dwell. In V. Sarapik & K. Tüür (Eds.), *Place and Location III* (pp. 13-24). Estonian Academy of Arts.

Hakala, U., Lemmetyinen, A., Nieminen, L. (2020). Rebranding a "rather strange, definitely unique" city via co-creation with its residents, *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 16(4): 316-325.

Hanna, S., Rowley, J. (2008). An analysis of terminology use in place branding. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 4: 61-75. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.pb.6000084

Heley, J., Jones, L. (2012). Relational rurals: Some thoughts on relating things and theory in rural studies, *Journal of Rural Studies*, 28: 208-217

Herstein, R., Berger, R., Jafe, E.D. (2014). Five typical city branding mistakes: Why cities tend to fail in implementation of rebranding strategies. *Journal of Brand Strategy*, 2(4): 392-402.

Hidalgo, M.C., Hernández, B. (2001). Place Attachment: Conceptual and Empirical Questions, *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 21: 273-281

Hildreth, J. (2010). Place branding: A view at arm's length. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy, 6*, 27-35.

Horan, T. A. (2000). *Digital Places: Building Our City of Bits*. Washington, DC: Urban Land Institute.

Horváth, D. B. (2018). A New Era for Urban Tourism? The Case of Venice, Italy. *Almatourism - Journal of Tourism, Culture and Territorial Development*, 9(17): 13-32. https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2036-5195/8225

Hospers, G. J. (2019). Overtourism in European Cities: From Challenges to Coping Strategies, *CESifo Forum*, ISSN 2190-717X, *ifo Institut – Leibniz-Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung an der Universität München*, 20(3): 20-24.

Hudak, K. C. (2019). Resident stories and digital storytelling for participatory place branding, *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 15(2): 97-108.

Huigen, P., Groote, P., Haartsen, T. (2000). Claiming Rural Identities. Dynamics, contexts, policies.

Humphrey, A. (2016). *Picturing Placelessness: Online graphic narratives and Australia's refugee detention centres*. In M. Griffiths and K. Barbour (eds), *Making Publics, Making Places*. University of Adelaide Press.

Insch, A., Walters, T. (2018). Challenging assumptions about residents' engagement with place branding, *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 14(3): 152-162.

Jain, V., Shroff, P., Merchant, A., Bezbaruah, S. (2022). Introducing bi-directional participatory place branding: a theoretical model with multi-stakeholder perspectives. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 31(1): 73-95. https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-05-2020-2921

Jones, C., Svejenova, S. (2017). The architecture of city identities: A multimodal study of Barcelona and Boston. *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, 54B: 1-42. DOI: 10.1108/S0733- 558X2017000054B007

Jorgensen, B., Stedman, R. (2001). Sense of Place as an attitude: Lakeshore owners attitudes toward their properties. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 21, 233-248. 10.1006/jevp.2001.0226.

Kaika, M., Varvarousis, A., Demaria, F., March, H. (2023). Urbanizing degrowth: Five steps towards a Radical Spatial Degrowth Agenda for planning in the face of climate emergency. *Urban Studies*, 60(7): 1191-1211. https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980231162234

Kavaratzis, M. (2004). From city marketing to city branding: Towards a theoretical framework for developing city brands. *Place Branding*, 1(1): 58-73. https://doi.org/10.1057/PALGRAVE.PB.5990005

Kavaratzis, M., Hatch, M. J. (2013). The dynamics of place brands: An identity-based approach to place branding theory. *Marketing Theory*, 13(1): 69-86. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593112467268

Kavaratzis, M., Kalandides, A. (2015). Rethinking the place brand: the interactive formation of place brands and the role of participatory place branding.

Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space, 47(6): 1368-1382. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X15594918

Keating, M. (1998). The New Regionalism in Western Europe, Books, Edward Elgar Publishing, number 1193.

Kibler, K. M., Cook, G. S., Chambers, L. G., Donnelly, M., Hawthorne, T. L., Rivera, F. I., Walters, L. (2018). Integrating sense of place into ecosystem restoration: a novel approach to achieve synergistic social-ecological impact. *Ecology and Society.* 23(4).

Kim, G., Vaswani, R. T. and Lee, D. (2017). Social-ecological memory in an autobiographical novel: ecoliteracy, place attachment, and identity related to the Korean traditional village landscape. *Ecology and Society*, 22(2): 27. https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-09284-220227

Klanicka, S., Buchecker, M., Hunziker, M., Müller-Böker, U. (2006). Locals' and Tourists' Sense of Place: A Case Study of a Swiss Alpine Village, *Mountain Research and Development*, 26(1): 55-63.

Knaps, F., Herrmann, S. (2018). Analyzing Cultural Markers to Characterize Regional Identity for Rural Planning. *Rural Landscapes: Society, Environment, History*, 5(1): 1, 1-15, DOI: https://doi.org/10.16993/rl.41

Kuvač, I., Schwai, M. (2017). Three elements in the construction of spatial identities in Mađir, *Urbani Izziv*, 28(1): 83-95.

La Nuova di Venezia e Mestre (2023, September 21), Ora è ufficiale: per difendere Venezia i natanti devono andare più lenti, *la Nuova di Venezia e Mestre*. Available at: https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/regione/2023/09/21/news/venezia_pericolo_onde_soluzione-13397267/?ref=NUVE-M11-S6-T1

Lalli, M. (1992). Urban-related identity: Theory, measurement, and empirical findings. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 12(4), 285-303. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-4944(05)80078-7

Leixnering, S., Höllerer, M. (2022). Remaining the same or becoming another?' Adaptive resilience versus transformative urban change. *Urban Studies*, 59(6): 1300-1310

Lewicka, M. (2011). Place Attachment: How Far have We Come in the Last 40 Years? *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 31, 207-230. 10.1016/j.jenvp.2010.10.001.

Leyshon, M., Bull, J. (2011). The bricolage of the here: young people's narratives of identity in the countryside, *Social & Cultural Geography*. 12: 159-180.

Lyon, C. (2014). Place Systems and Social Resilience: A Framework for Understanding Place in Social Adaptation, Resilience, and Transformation, *Society & Natural Resources: An International Journal*, 27(10), 1009-1023. DOI: 10.1080/08941920.2014.918228

Lukermann, F. (1964). Geography as a Formal Intellectual Discipline and the Way in Which It Contributes to Human Knowledge. The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe canadien. 8(4), 167-172. DOI: 10.1111/j.1541-0064.1964.tb00605.x.

MacCannell, D. (1973). Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings. *American Journal of Sociology*, 79 (3): 589-603.

Main, K., Sandoval, G. F. (2015), Placemaking in a translocal receiving community: The relevance of place to identity and agency, *Urban Studies*, 52(1): 71-86.

Malanotte Rizzoli, P. (2022, October 26). The Resilience of Venice: The Past, the Present, the Future [Conference]. Save Venice, Istituto Italiano di Cultura, New York, United States.

Maffesoli, M. (1996) *The time of the tribes*. London: Sage.

Manzo, L., Devine-Wright, P. (2020), *Place attachment: advances in theory, methods and applications*. New York: Routledge.

Masterson, V. A., Stedman, R. C., Enqvist, J., Tengö, M., Giusti, M., Wahl, D., Svedin, U. (2017). The contribution of sense of place to social-ecological systems research: a review and research agenda. *Ecology and Society*. 22(1): 49. https://doi.org/10.5751/ ES-08872-220149

Militello, S. (2019). *Marketing turistico e territoriale*. Roma: UniversItalia.

Minoia, P. (2017). Venice reshaped? Tourism gentrification and sense of place. In Bellini N., Pasquinelli C. (eds) *Tourism in the City -Towards an integrative agenda on urban tourism*, (pp. 261-274). Heidelberg: Springer.

Moira, P., Dimitrios M., Aikaterini K. (2017). The Application of Slow Movement to Tourism: Is Slow Tourism a New Paradigm? *Journal of Tourism and Leisure Studies*. 2(2): 1-10. doi:10.18848/2470-9336/CGP/v02i02/1-10.

Molavi, M., Mardoukhi, Z., Jalili, F. (2016). Utilization Of Place-Making Approach In Urban Spaces Using Historic Mansions Attractions, *Theoretical and Empirical Researches in Urban Management*, 11(4): 61-73.

Muscarà, C. (1990). Three models for the future of Venice: A case study of territorial polarization in a growing area of an urban periphery. *Ekistics*, 57(340/341): 22-34.

Musterd, S., van Zelm, I. (2001). Polycentricity, Households and the Identity of Places, *Urban Studies*, 38(4): 679-696.

Nieuwland, S., Lavanga, M. (2021). The consequences of being 'the Capital of Cool'. Creative entrepreneurs and the sustainable development of creative tourism in the urban context of Rotterdam, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 29(6): 926-943, DOI: 10.1080/09669582.2020.1841780

Nogué, J., Vicente, J. (2004). Landscape and national identity in Catalonia. *Political Geography*. 23, 113-132. 10.1016/j.polgeo.2003.09.005.

Oliveira, E., Panyik, E. (2015). Content, context and co-creation: Digital challenges in destination branding with references to Portugal as a tourist destination. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 21(1): 53-74.

Paasi, A. (1986). The institutionalization of regions: a theoretical framework for understanding the emergence of regions and the constitution of regional identity. *Fennia - International Journal of Geography*, 164(1), 105–146.

Paasi, A. (2001). Europe as a Social Process and Discourse: Considerations of Place, Boundaries and Identity. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 8(1), 7-28. https://doi.org/10.1177/096977640100800102

Paasi, A. (2009). Bounded spaces in a 'borderless world': border studies, power and the anatomy of territory, *Journal of Power*, 2(2): 213-234, DOI: 10.1080/17540290903064275

Painter, J. (2008). Cartographic anxiety and the search for regionality, Environment and Planning 40: 342-361.

Parmeggiani, P. (2016). Guardare Venezia la città come dispositivo visuale. *California Italian Studies*, 6. 10.5070/C361028408.

Peng J., Strijker D., Wu Q. (2020). Place Identity: How Far Have We Come in Exploring Its Meanings? *Front. Psychol.* 11:294. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00294

Pierantoni, L., Calcagno, M., Panozzo, F. (2014). History, dilemmas and hopes of Venice as a creative city.

Ploner, J. (2009). Narrating regional identity in tourism – sketches from the Austrian Danube valley, *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 9(1): 2-14, DOI: 10.1080/14708470802684465

Povoledo, E. (2023, September 14). Venice Keeps Off List of Endangered World Sites. *The New York Times*. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/14/world/europe/venice-unesco-danger-list-tourism.html#:~:text=Venice%20almost%20made%20the%20danger,member%20countries%20rejected%20the%20proposal.&text=Despite%20the%20changes%20in%20Venice,government%20had%20not%20done%20enough.

Pred, A. (1984). Place as Historically Contingent Process: Structuration and the Time-Geography of Becoming Places. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 74(2), 279–297.

Proshansky, H.M. (1978). The City and Self-Identity, *Environment and Behavior*, 10(2): 147-169.

Ramos, I. L., Bernardo, F., Carvalho Ribeiro, S., Van Eetvelde, V. (2016). Landscape identity: Implications for policy making, Land Use Policy, *Elsevier*, 53(C), 36-43.

Ray, C. (1998). Culture, intellectual property and territorial rural development. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 38(1), 3-20. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9523.00060

Relph, E. (1976). *Place and Placelessness*. London: Pion.

Richards, G., Wilson, J. (2004). The impact of cultural events on city image: Rotterdam cultural capital of Europe 2001. *Urban Studies*, 41(10): 1931-1951.

Rijnks, R. H., Strijker, D. (2013). Spatial effects on the image and identity of a rural area. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 36, 103-111. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2013.07.008

Rodrigues, C., Schmidt, H. J. (2021). How the Creative Class Co-creates a City's Brand Identity: A Qualitative Study. *Journal of Creating Value*, 7(1): 19-43. https://doi.org/10.1177/23949643211010594

Rudofsky, B. (1964). *Architecture without Architects: An Introduction to Nonpedigreed Architecture*. New York: Museum of Modern Art.

Rosbrook-Thompson, J. (2015). I'm a local and a foreigner: Belonging, the city and the case for denizenship, *Urban Studies*, 52(9): 1615-1630.

Saleh, M.A.E. (1998). Place Identity: The Visual Image of Saudi Arabian Cities. Habitat ITNL, 22(2): 149-164.

Sassen, S. (1993). Rebuilding the Global City: Economy, Ethnicity, and Space. *Social Justice*, 20(3/4 (53-54)): 32-50. http://www.jstor.org/stable/29766753

Sassen, S. (1996). Whose City Is It? Globalization and the Formation of New Claims. Public Culture, 8(2): 205-223. doi: https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-8-2-205

Scannell, L., Gifford, R. (2010). Defining Place Attachment: A Tripartite Organizing Framework. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 30, 1-10. 10.1016/j.jenvp.2009.09.006.

Seamon, D., Sowers, J. (2008). Place and Placelessness, Edward Relph, in P. Hubbard, R. Kitchen & G. Vallentine (eds), *Key Texts in Human Geography*, London: Sage. 43-51.

Seamon, D. (2012) Place, place identity, and phenomenology: A triadic interpretation based on J.G. Bennett's systematics. In: H. Casakin & F. Bernardo (eds.), *The role of place identity in the perception, understanding, and design of built environments*, pp. 3–21. Sharjah, Bentham Science Publishers.

Sepe, M. (2012). Principles for place identity enhancement: A sustainable challenge for changes to the contemporary city. *WIT Transactions on Ecology and the Environment*. 155. 993-1004. 10.2495/SC120832.

Sheller, M., Urry, J. (2006). The New Mobilities Paradigm. *Environment and Planning* A. 38. 207-226. 10.1068/a37268.

Simon, C., Huigen, P., Groote, P. (2009). Analysing Regional Identities In The Netherlands, *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 101(4), 409-421. DOI:10.1111/j.1467-9663.2009.00564.x.

Smaldone, D., Harris, C., Sanyal, N. (2005). An exploration of place as a process: The case of Jackson Hole, WY. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 25(4): 397-414. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2005.12.003

Smith, N. (1987). Gentrification and the Rent Gap. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 77(3): 462-465.

Smith, A. D. (1996). Culture, Community and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism, *International Affairs*, 72(3), 445.458.

Snow, D., Corrigall-Brown, C. (2015). Collective Identity. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*. 10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.10403-9.

Soja, E. W. (1996). *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Solís Trapero, E., Mohíno Sanz, I., de Ureña Francés, J. M. (2015). Global Metropolitan-Regional Scale in Evolution: Metropolitan Intermediary Cities and Metropolitan Cities, *European Planning Studies*, 23:3, 568-596, DOI: 10.1080/09654313.2013.878691

Stedman, R. (2003). Sense of Place and Forest Science: Toward a Program of Quantitative Research. *Forest Science*. 49, 822-829.

Stoica, I. S., Kavaratzis, M., Schwabenland, C., Haag, M. (2022). Place Brand Co-Creation through Storytelling: Benefits, Risks and Preconditions. Tourism and Hospitality, 3: 15-30. https://doi.org/10.3390/ tourhosp3010002

Szromek, A. R., Hysa, B., Karasek, A. (2019). The Perception of Overtourism from the Perspective of Different Generations. *Sustainability*. 2019; 11(24): 7151. https://doi.org/10.3390/su11247151

Taylor, J. P. (2001). Authenticity and Sincerity in Tourism, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 28(1): 7-26.

The Guardian (2009). Who now can stop the slow death of Venice? Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/mar/01/venice-population-exodus-tourism (accessed on: 31.08.2023)

The Guardian (2021). Italy bans cruise ships from Venice lagoon after Unesco threat. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/13/italy-bans-cruise-ships-from-venice-lagoon-after-unesco-threat (accessed on: 31.08.2023)

Tilly, C. (1995). Citizenship, Identity and Social History. *International Review of Social History,* 40, 1-17.

Torkington, K. (2012). Place and Lifestyle Migration: The Discursive Construction of 'Glocal' Place-Identity, *Mobilities*, 7(1): 71-92. DOI: 10.1080/17450101.2012.631812

Trancoso González, A. (2018). Venice: the problem of overtourism and the impact of cruises, *Investigaciones Regionales – Journal of Regional Research*, 42: 35-51.

Trivellato, F. (2000). Intorno alla corporazione: identità professionale e stratificazione sociale tra Murano e Venezia nel sei e settecento, *Le regole dei mestieri e delle professioni: secoli 15-19*, pp. 52-74.

Tuan, Y. F. (1976). *Space and place*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Tuan, Y. F. (1974). *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perceptions, Attitudes, and Values*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Tzatzadaki, O. (2018). 5 Instagram Tourism Vs Invisible City: A Research About Venice's Artisanal Activities. *Ábaco*, *98*, 65–72.

UCamp E-zine, available at: https://www.urbangoodcamp.eu/publications.html (accessed on: 13.09.2023).

un.org (2023), available at: https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/sustainability

unesco.org, available at: https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/home (accessed on: 14.09.2023)

UNESCO Creative Cities Network (2006). Towards sustainable strategies for creative tourism. discussion report of the planning meeting for 2008 international conference on creative tourism. UNESCO. Available at: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001598/159811e.p

UNWTO (2018). 'Overtourism'? – Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth beyond Perceptions. Executive Summary. Available at: https://www.eunwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284420070 (accessed on: 22.03.2020)

Ujang, N., Zakariya, K. (2015a). Place Attachment and the Value of Place in the Life of the Users. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 168. 10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.10.243.

Ujang, N., Zakariya, K. (2015b). The Notion of Place, Place Meaning and Identity in Urban Regeneration. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 170, 709-717. 10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.01.073.

Vainikka, J. (2012). Narrative claims on regions: prospecting for spatial identities among social movements. *Finland, Social & Cultural Geography*, 13:6, 587-605

Van Criekingen, M., Bachmann, M., Guisset, C., Lennert, M. (2007). Towards Polycentric Cities. An Investigation into the Restructuring of Intra-metropolitan Spatial Configurations in Europe. *Belgeo*, 1: 31-50. 10.4000/belgeo.11629.

van Houtum, H., Lagendijk, A. (2001). Contextualising Regional Identity and Imagination in the Construction of Polycentric Urban Regions: The Cases of the Ruhr Area and the Basque Country. *Urban Studies*, 38(4): 747-767.

van Rekom, J., Go, F. (2006). Being discovered: a blessing to local identities? *Annuals of Tourism Research*, 33: 767–784. doi: 10.1016/j.annals.2006.03.002

Walczak, B., Kepczynska-Walczak, A. (2013). Visualising " genius loci " of built heritage.

Webb, D. (2022). Placemaking and Social Equity: Expanding the Framework of Creative Placemaking. *Artivate*, 3: 35-48.

Wheeler, R. (2015). Reconciling Windfarms with Rural Place Identity: Exploring Residents' Attitudes to Existing Sites. *Sociologia Ruralis*. 57. n/a-n/a. 10.1111/soru.12121.

Woodcock, I., Dovey, K., Davison, G. (2012). Envisioning the compact city: resident responses to urban design imagery, *Australian Planner*, 49(1): 65-78, DOI: 10.1080/07293682.2011.595726

Zaghis, G. (2022). Il marketing applicato al territorio: Indagine sulle sfide urbane e sull'immagine mediatica della Serenissima [Thesis, University of Venice]

Zamparini, A., Gualtieri, G., Lurati, F. (2023). Iconic buildings in the making of city identity: The role of aspirational identity artefacts, *Urban Studies*, 00(0): 1-22.

Zimmerbauer, K. (2011). From Image to Identity: Building Regions by Place Promotion, *European Planning Studies*, 19(2):243-260, DOI: 10.1080/09654313.2011.532667

APPENDIX 1

In this table are gathered relevant extracts from the interviews conducted for this study. The quotes have been selected according to the Gioia method (2012). All interviews have been conducted in Italian, given that all interviewees were Italian. The quotes were translated by the author of this thesis.

Quote number	*Interviewee*	*Quotation*	*Page in the text*
1	Stakeholder 1 – University	Venice is not often described by its own citizens; alas, it is usually described by others.	69
2	Stakeholder 1 – University	The greatest challenge is to break free from this condition of a city that watches itself die with complacency, and envision it as a potential contemporary city, where people come to work even though there is no enterprise, because there are the workers, so to speak.	87
3	Stakeholder 1 – University	Creating a different layer of population: not tourists, nor citizens, nor students, who are somewhat the three current components; but yet another one that could help imagine the city not only as a historical city but also as a contemporary city.	96
4	Stakeholder 2 – Journalist	To leave Venice as a beautiful necropolis or to roll up one's sleeves.	87
5	Stakeholder 2 – Journalist	Venice is taken for granted, but it's a very ambiguous word. […] Venice is the island, the island and the lagoon, the hinterland, the mainland city, a post-industrial city, the 20 million tourists... a grand scenic stage where one slips each time when searching for meaning."	53
6	Stakeholder 2 – Journalist	There are significant physical challenges on stage, but behind the scenes, there's the city of Mestre, and a crumbling appendage that is Marghera. A city that doesn't realize it's a city: many of those who live in Venice don't live in Venice, but on the mainland. Behind the scenes, there's real life. On the stage, there's the city in the water that attracts the world.	63, 65
7	Stakeholder 2 – Journalist	You cannot look at Venice without this physical, social, economic complexity. The historic center is not autonomous or self-sufficient.	54
8	Stakeholder 2 – Journalist	A significant part of the workforce that revolves around Venice consists of foreigners. […] The mainland has the potential to become a cosmopolite city if it could only see this possibility. It represents a significant cultural leap.	104
9	Stakeholder 3 – Non-profit	If one grows up in Venice, they can feel the challenges, even the conversations among young people comment on what happens in the city and form an idea of Venice's future. Living in Venice is extremely complicated, especially if one wants to be independent and find a job. […] Environmental challenges make it difficult to envision oneself in 10, 20, 30, or 100 years and still see oneself alive, still seeing Venice.	58

10	Stakeholder 4 – Ecology	Venice was always at the forefront, making experimentation, insights, and staying ahead of others its value to dominate, even from a political and economic point of view.	
11	Stakeholder 4 – Ecology	A dead city is not interesting to anyone. And the idea one has is that it's also quite artificial, and this impression already exists to some extent.	60
12	Stakeholder 4 – Ecology	People become passionate, and when people are passionate, they find their cure. When they become passionate and engage together, people take care of their homeland. It's impossible for someone to take care of it if we don't take care of it ourselves first. It builds a social fabric through two dimensions: personal empowerment, you feel inclined to take care of something. And in the globalized world with few reference points, being part of a bigger story than yourself gives you a frame, it defines your identity, makes you feel more contained, peaceful, and serene. It's what we all continuously seek. This is what culture is, it is society.	109
13	Stakeholder 7 – Politics	Venice wouldn't exist without its mainland, and the mainland wouldn't be the same without Venice.	54
14	Stakeholder 7 – Politics	Venice is perhaps one of the first melting pots. I could tell the Chinese to come to Venice in search of their own culture. The same can be done with anyone, Germans, French, etc. […] Understanding diverse cultures also extends to hospitality. [Venice is] a mix of everything where everyone has contributed something.	104
15	Stakeholder 8 – Tourism	Venice is an attractive factor, the interest is strong so [if one removes the cruise ships] vacationers stay, but without the port revenue from ships in the port.	61
16	Stakeholder 8 – Tourism	The challenge is to move towards a Venice 2030 that understands what it wants to become. Cruise ships may or may not be a part of this project, but it's essential to pay attention to tourist flows. […] The cruise ship issue is one element, but it's an example of how people focus on a single point. There are stakeholders who view it positively or negatively, but it can lead us to lose sight of the overall vision for Venice as a destination city.	61
17	Stakeholder 9 – University	The community takes care, reports endangered sandbanks, and serves as a monitoring system.	109
18	Stakeholder 10 - Museum	The serious issue isn't shouting "Look at the sea!" when you arrive in the lagoon. The problem is when they leave and say "Bid goodbye to the sea!". They haven't had the opportunity to learn.	99
19	Stakeholder 11 – Writer	The touristic monoculture becomes part of the city's daily reality, a mechanism of distortion and valorisation of the residential heritage of the city, with complicity of its residents, with the active participation of those who have a home, who should help by remaining in Venice. Active participation in exchange for income [from renting to tourists].	63
20	Stakeholder 11 – Writer	Venice is not a monoculture. […] Venice has always been industrial, for example, the glass factories that were in the city centre and later moved to Murano to avoid fires.	64

APPENDIX 2

This table organises the items from the literature that were used in the analysis and elaboration of the case study. The column of the topic broadly gathers them in two main spheres: place identity and identity of place.

Topic	Item	Reference	Page in the text	Description
Place identity	People are their place and place is its people	Relph, 1976: 34	14	Can Venice survive without its citizens? What will it become of it with just tourists?
Identity of place	Thick and thin places	Entrikin, 1999	15	Venice is a thick place, full of a culture, but risks of becoming a thin place, permeable.
Place identity	Sight is the most relevant sense to experience place	Tuan, 1976	16	Venice is built to be experienced up close. The experience of place is intense.
Identity of place	Landscape is the language in which place communicates with us	Relph, 1976	16	What is the message that visual features communicate in Venice?
Place identity	Homo geographicus	Casey, 2001	16	Up/down, front/back, right/left dimensions of place experience.
Place identity	Identity at the intersection of belonging and standing out	Brewer, 1991	20	Venice can pinpoint its uniqueness very easily. The key to its sustainability may be finding to what it is similar.
Place identity	Identity as bricolage	Leyshon & Bull, 2011	20	Being a Venetian is as important as gender, religion, age
Place identity	Process of Othering	Rijnks & Strijker, 2013	21	Who is Venice othering? Why does it feel like the answer is Mestre? Who is Mestre othering in turn?
Place identity	Borders in community making	Huigen et al., 2000	23	Creating community defines who is in it but also who stays out of it.

Identity of place	Boundaries for inclusion and exclusion	Paasi, 2001	36	Who is included within the boundary of Venice?
Place identity	Elective belonging	Vainikka, 2012	24	Inhabitants of Venice decide to identify with a specific meaning of "Venice".
Place identity	Place as extension, reflection, connection	Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2012	24	Adaptation of home, place as a reflection of the self.
Place identity	"Home" as place attachment	Masterson et al., 2017	27	Intricacies of being born in Venice, or recognizing it as one's home
Place identity	Space and time influence home	Tuan, 1976; Ujang & Zakariya, 2015b	27	Home can go from a room to the entire city. Long-term residents feel at home even if they're not native.
Identity of place	Scale of place	Altman & Low, 199	35	What scale of Venice is the most significant?
Place identity	NIMBY movements	Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010	29	Protective view of Venice, yet it is abandoned by many.
Place identity	Studying place and its inhabitants at once	Augé, 1995	30	Interviewing people of Venice to understand Venice itself.
Identity of place	Images shapes the identity of a place	Rijnks & Strijker, 2013	30	What images of Venice come up to outsiders and insiders? Are representation of Venice relevant?
Identity of place	Highest common denominator	Lalli, 1992	31	Perception of place is personal yet the image is shared
Identity of place	Adaptation vs Transformation	Leixnering & Höllerer, 2022	32	What are the core values of Venice that go unchanged through adaptation, and how did the city change through transformation?
Identity of place	Genius loci	Norberg-Schulz, 1979	32	Essence of Venice that shines through.
Identity of place	Place character	Davison & Rowden, 2012	33	Development needs to understand how the place character came to

				be if they want to succeed.
Identity of place	Heritage of place	Ramos et al., 2016	34	Relevance (and weight) of history in the shaping of the identity of Venice
Identity of place	Boundaries as socio-territorial constructs	Agnew, 2007: 399	36	Where does Venice end? What are the interests involved in such fuzzy boundaries?
Identity of place	Politics and power of boundaries	Paasi, 2001	36	What balances should be shifted to guarantee some level of autonomy to Mestre?
Identity of place	New regionalism	Keating, 1998	38	Resurrection of the region not as provincialism but as a form of local development.
Identity of place	The interest in region by the tourism industry	Ray, 1998; Knaps & Hermann, 2018	39	Cultural markers such as historic events to culinary traditions, crafts, language, folklore etc.
Identity of place	Distortion of the image of the city	Jones & Svejenova, 2017	41	Synecdoche: the islands as the whole municipality? Asyndeton: the cultural production erasing the everyday life of Venice?
Identity of place	The city's identity	Jones & Svejenova, 2017	42	The city's identity is conveyed through multiple sign systems, encompassing its material, visual, and rhetorical aspects.
Identity of place	Ethos of a city	Bell & de-Shalit, 2011	43	Historic and political traits in the definition of the ethos of Venice
Identity of place	Types of city's identity	Cheshmehzangi, 2020	43-44	What identity does Venice have? And Mestre?
Identity of place	Legibility of the city's identity	Zamparini et al., 2023	46	Architectural styles that encapsulate the city's history, experiences, conventions, and cultural understandings.

Placemaking	The people make up the city's identity	Sassen, 1996; Florida, 2002	50	Interviews to people that orbit around Venice is meaningful to understand the situation of the city.
Placemaking	Multiplicity as an asset	Haapala, 2003	42	Diversity among neighbourhoods that enriches. What is the past, present, and future of the districts of Venice?
Place identity	Walking the city to live it	de Certeau, 1984; Clayton, 2009	55	Walking is the *only* way to navigate Venice. Is it the citiest of cities?