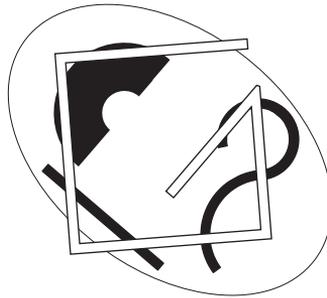


# “WHO SLEEPS IN VENICE?”

AN URBAN INVESTIGATION INTO STRS; IMPACTS, POLICIES, AND PROPOSALS

# “CHI DORME A VENEZIA?”

UN'INDAGINE URBANA SULLE STR; IMPATTI, POLITICHE E PROPOSTE



Thesis Project

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to investigate how a city with a unique and fragile historical fabric—such as Venice—relates to the people who experience and inhabit it. It seeks to understand how the city is shaped by various dynamics and what kind of spatial and social impacts are produced through these interactions.

The question “Who sleeps in Venice?” goes beyond a mere physical action. It invites reflection on spatial belonging, ownership, and interaction. To sleep in a space is to establish one of the most personal and intimate relationships with it; it represents a form of experience where the user engages with the space in its most private manner. As such, the act of sleeping personalizes and gives meaning to the place in which it occurs.

Sleeping spaces can take many forms: a permanent residence, a hotel room, a tent, or even a pavement. However, in a city like Venice—overwhelmed by intense tourist demand—these spaces acquire different and far more complex meanings. The high demand for tourism has increased the need for short-term accommodation, creating an urban condition that is detached from everyday local life and shaped instead by transience. While long-term residents tend to develop a sense of ownership over their homes, in Venice this has shifted toward short-term users, resulting in a gradual erosion of local belonging. As the number of permanent residents declines, the influx of tourists continues to rise.

The usage of sleeping spaces has also significantly transformed due to technological advancements and digital platforms. This thesis focuses specifically on one subset of these spaces: Short-Term Rentals (STRs). It investigates Venice and its surrounding context in depth through this lens.

The study also traces the historical evolution of STRs and examines how they have developed into their current forms. It aims to analyze the impacts of these alternative accommodation models on the urban environment, as well as how the city of Venice has responded to these changes—both socially and institutionally.

The thesis intends to present the effects of STRs through statistical data and visual narratives. It further provides a comparative analysis of regulatory frameworks implemented in other cities and countries in response to the STR phenomenon. Based on these analyses, the study proposes strategies for how Venice might address these challenges more effectively in the future. Beyond a purely academic investigation, the thesis culminates in the design of a public installation—a spatial and visual communication tool aimed at informing and engaging local citizens. Through this, the project seeks to foster awareness and civic dialogue around the pressing issue of STRs and their consequences for Venice.

## ABSTRACT

Questa tesi si propone di indagare come una città con un tessuto storico unico e fragile - come Venezia - si relazioni con le persone che la vivono e la abitano. Cerca di capire come la città sia plasmata da varie dinamiche e che tipo di impatti spaziali e sociali si producano attraverso queste interazioni.

La domanda “Chi dorme a Venezia?” va oltre la semplice azione fisica. Invita a riflettere sull'appartenenza, la proprietà e l'interazione spaziale. Dormire in uno spazio significa stabilire una delle relazioni più personali e intime con esso; rappresenta una forma di esperienza in cui l'utente si impegna con lo spazio nel suo modo più privato. In quanto tale, l'atto di dormire personalizza e dà significato al luogo in cui avviene.

Gli spazi per dormire possono assumere diverse forme: una residenza permanente, una camera d'albergo, una tenda o persino un marciapiede. Tuttavia, in una città come Venezia, travolta da un'intensa domanda turistica, questi spazi acquistano significati diversi e molto più complessi. L'elevata domanda di turismo ha aumentato la necessità di alloggi a breve termine, creando una condizione urbana distaccata dalla vita quotidiana locale e modellata invece dalla transitorietà. Mentre i residenti di lungo periodo tendono a sviluppare un senso di proprietà sulle loro case, a Venezia questo si è spostato verso gli utenti a breve termine, con una graduale erosione dell'appartenenza locale. Mentre il numero di residenti permanenti diminuisce, l'afflusso di turisti continua ad aumentare.

Anche l'uso degli spazi per dormire si è trasformato in modo significativo grazie ai progressi tecnologici e alle piattaforme digitali. Questa tesi si concentra in particolare su un sottoinsieme di questi spazi: Gli affitti a breve termine (STR). Indaga in profondità Venezia e il suo contesto circostante attraverso questa lente.

Lo studio traccia anche l'evoluzione storica degli STR ed esamina come si sono sviluppati nelle forme attuali. L'obiettivo è quello di analizzare l'impatto di questi modelli di alloggio alternativi sull'ambiente urbano, nonché il modo in cui la città di Venezia ha risposto a questi cambiamenti, sia a livello sociale che istituzionale.

La tesi intende presentare gli effetti delle STR attraverso dati statistici e narrazioni visive. Inoltre, fornisce un'analisi comparativa dei quadri normativi implementati in altre città e Paesi in risposta al fenomeno delle STR. Sulla base di queste analisi, lo studio propone strategie su come Venezia potrebbe affrontare queste sfide in modo più efficace in futuro. Al di là di un'indagine puramente accademica, la tesi culmina nella progettazione di un'installazione pubblica, uno strumento di comunicazione spaziale e visiva volto a informare e coinvolgere i cittadini locali. In questo modo, il progetto cerca di promuovere la consapevolezza e il dialogo civico intorno alla pressante questione delle STR e alle loro conseguenze per Venezia.

# INTRODUCTION

The notion of a “**sleeping space**” extends far beyond its literal interpretation as merely a place for rest. Fundamentally, **sleeping spaces embody some of the most intimate interactions between people and their environments**. These spaces, whether they take the form of hotel rooms, private bedrooms, hostels, Airbnb rentals, or even more unconventional settings such as tents and public spaces, become sites of personal identity, temporary belonging, and intricate social exchanges. Understanding sleeping spaces thus necessitates examining their diverse typologies, functions, and the relationships they foster between users and their broader urban contexts. According to Dincer. (2023), the sleeping environment is not only a physical setting for rest but a **multi-functional and socially significant space** shaped by evolving user habits and architectural contexts<sup>1</sup>.

Sleeping spaces can be broadly categorized into permanent residential settings, commercial accommodations (hotels, motels, hostels), informal arrangements (couch-surfing, shared housing), and contemporary digital-platform-based accommodations (Airbnb, Booking.com). **Permanent residential bedrooms signify stability, identity, and long-term belonging**, deeply embedded in the fabric of everyday life and community networks. Conversely, hotel rooms traditionally symbolize transient accommodation, commercial exchange, and the ephemeral experience of urban life. However, these boundaries between permanence and transience have increasingly blurred with the rise of digital platforms and the proliferation of short-term rentals (STRs).

**STRs**, particularly exemplified by platforms such as Airbnb and similar services, represent an evolution in the concept of temporary sleeping spaces. They offer travelers the opportunity to experience an ostensibly authentic sense of place, temporarily embedding themselves within residential contexts rather than conventional tourist zones. Despite their similarities to traditional hotel functions, notably providing short-term accommodation, **STRs differ significantly due to their decentralized, platform-driven nature** and integration into residential areas, creating unique social and spatial dynamics.

The discourse around STRs often delineates hotel accommodations from Airbnb-type rentals, arguing that hotels represent clearly delineated commercial spaces, whereas STRs infiltrate and alter residential neighborhoods. Yet, functionally, both hotels and STRs share significant commonalities in accommodating transient populations. This thesis thus **critically interrogates** the assertion that hotels differ fundamentally from STRs, suggesting instead that these differences are increasingly fluid in practice, notably in cities experiencing high tourism pressures like Venice.

Indeed, **when the home is transformed into a short-term rental, the space itself**

1. Dincer, D., Tietz, C. and Dalci, K. (2023) *An Investigation into Sleep Environment as a Multi-Functional Space*.

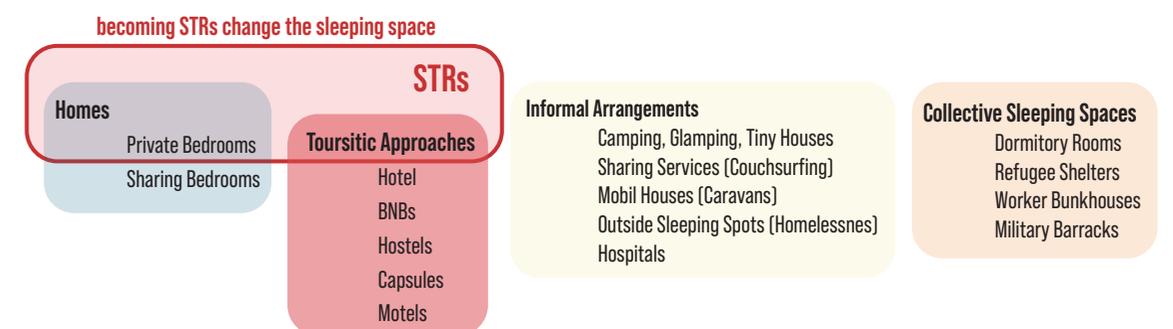
2. Salerno, G.-M. and Russo, A.P. (2020) 'Venice as a 'short-term city': Between global trends and local lock-ins'. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, pp. 1040–1059.

**undergoes a fundamental change: it shifts from a private, domestic domain to a commercialized, transactional one**. For the user, what was once a site of routine, intimacy, and identity becomes a commodified experience, governed by ratings, expectations, and economic exchange. For the city, the transformation of homes into STRs reconfigures residential patterns, disrupts community cohesion, and **reorients urban life around consumption rather than habitation**<sup>2</sup>.

The **profound impact of STRs on urban environments is particularly evident in Venice**, where the explosion of short-term accommodations has reshaped not only residential dynamics but also the city’s economic structure and social fabric. The integration of STRs within Venice’s residential neighborhoods has **exacerbated housing scarcity**, driven up rental prices, and contributed to a significant demographic shift, marked by **depopulation and residential displacement**. The prevalence of STRs has also intensified phenomena of overtourism, characterized by overcrowding, pressure on public services, and dilution of cultural authenticity.

This thesis seeks to deeply analyze the relationships between **sleeping spaces, their users, and urban environments**, focusing specifically on **Venice as a paradigmatic case study**. Through historical exploration, urban analysis, and comparative policy examination, the research will unravel how sleeping spaces—particularly STRs—reshape urban interactions, social cohesion, and the sense of belonging. A detailed exploration of regulatory frameworks will highlight both challenges and potential solutions, while a conceptual and practical proposal for a public installation will aim to foster **civic engagement and awareness** around this critical urban issue.

## SLEEPING SPACES



## METHODOLOGY

In recent decades, Venice has undergone a structural shift in the way it accommodates visitors. While traditional models of hospitality—ranging from religious guesthouses to luxury hotels—once shaped the relationship between host and guest, today this framework is increasingly mediated by digital platforms. The rise of **Short-Term Rentals (STRs)** has not only changed **where and how people sleep in the city**, but also **who holds space, and with what consequences**. The widespread adoption of STRs has blurred the boundaries between residential and tourist functions, generating new urban conditions that deeply affect housing, neighborhood cohesion, and local governance.

This thesis critically investigates **the spatial, economic, and cultural implications** of STR growth in Venice. It approaches the topic through a layered historical narrative, tracing the development of hospitality from its medieval roots to its present-day manifestations. Particular attention is given to the **intersection of digital technology, housing commodification, and tourism policy**, and to the ways in which these forces are actively reshaping urban life.

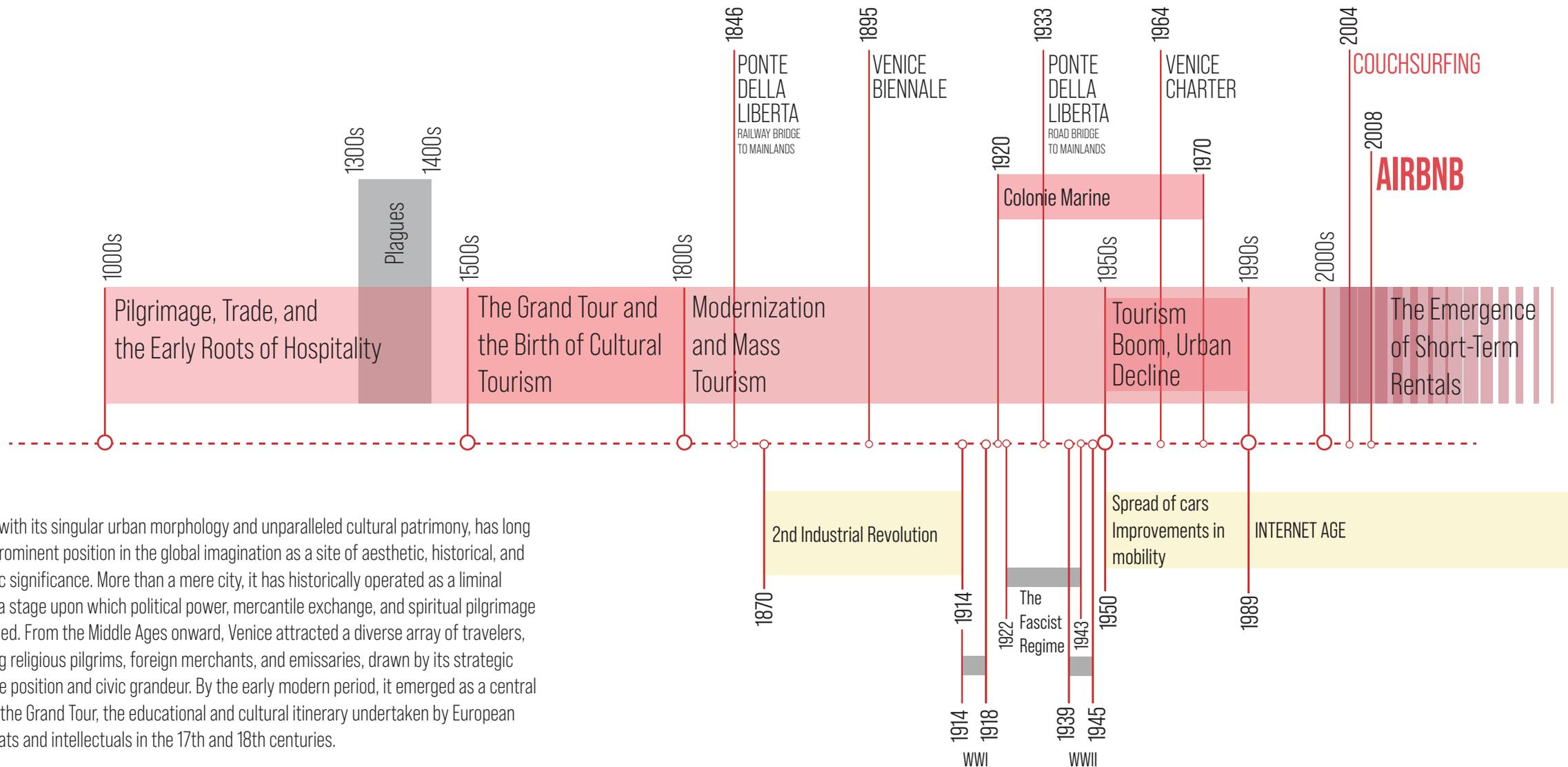
At its core, this research asks a simple but profound question: **Who sleeps in Venice?** In exploring this question, the study goes beyond statistical analysis to consider the symbolic and emotional dimensions of place attachment, ownership, and belonging. It also evaluates how different forms of sleeping—permanent, temporary, institutional, informal—carry distinct implications for how the city is inhabited and understood.

By combining **data-driven spatial analysis, policy comparison, and design-based intervention**, this thesis aims not only to describe the challenges Venice faces, but also to imagine pathways toward a more balanced and sustainable urban future.

# CHAPTER 1

## *Tourism and Hospitality in Venice : A Historical Perspective*

The rise of modern tourism in the 19th and 20th centuries ushered in a period of rapid infrastructural expansion, accommodating both elite and, later, mass forms of tourism. In the contemporary era, however, the city has witnessed a significant shift in its hospitality model, marked by the proliferation of short-term rentals (STRs) and platform-mediated accommodations. This paper examines the historical trajectory of tourism and hospitality in Venice, with particular attention to the socio-economic transformations that have reconfigured its built environment, altered patterns of residential life, and raised urgent questions about cultural heritage preservation and urban governance.

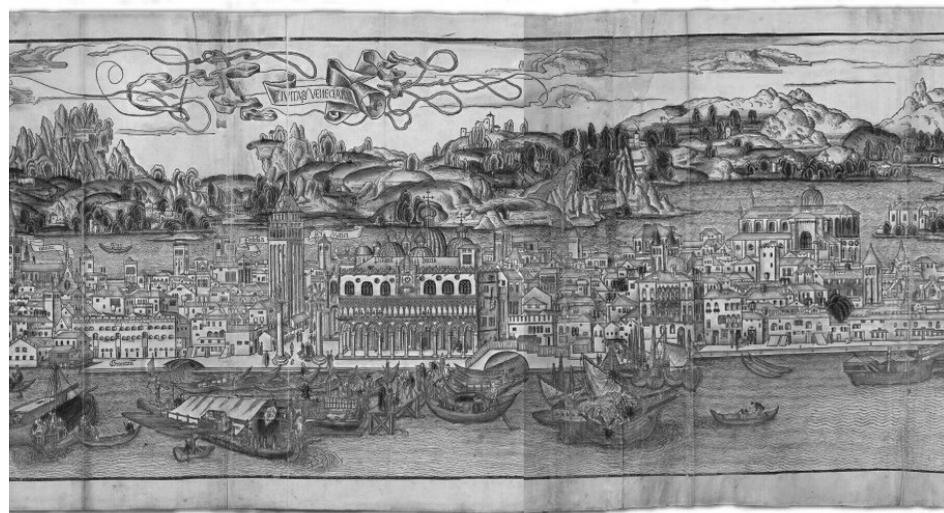


Venice, with its singular urban morphology and unparalleled cultural patrimony, has long held a prominent position in the global imagination as a site of aesthetic, historical, and symbolic significance. More than a mere city, it has historically operated as a liminal space—a stage upon which political power, mercantile exchange, and spiritual pilgrimage converged. From the Middle Ages onward, Venice attracted a diverse array of travelers, including religious pilgrims, foreign merchants, and emissaries, drawn by its strategic maritime position and civic grandeur. By the early modern period, it emerged as a central stop on the Grand Tour, the educational and cultural itinerary undertaken by European aristocrats and intellectuals in the 17th and 18th centuries.

## 1.1 Pilgrimage, Trade, and the Early Roots of Hospitality (11th–16th centuries)

The origins of Venice's hospitality infrastructure can be traced to its role as both a religious and commercial epicenter of medieval Europe. From the 11th century onward, Venice served as a principal departure point for pilgrims en route to the Holy Land, with its maritime fleet facilitating not only the Crusades but also spiritual voyages. The symbolic presence of the relics of **Saint Mark**, enshrined in the basilica bearing his name, made the city a pilgrimage destination in its own right, elevating it into a sacred urban landscape that attracted religious travelers from across Christendom.

To accommodate this devotional influx, **hospitia**, **xenodochia**, and **monastic guest-houses** proliferated. These were generally operated by religious orders or charitable confraternities and offered modest shelter to pilgrims and the poor. The architecture of these facilities was typically monastic—simple, communal, and spiritual in tone—and they embodied the Christian ethic of hospitality (*hospitalitas*) that underpinned much of the medieval world.



View of Venice with pilgrim's galleys, woodcut from the travel report of Bernhard von Breidenbach from 1486 (detail)  
Source: <https://medievalartresearch.com/2018/01/29/course-studienkurs-venedig-und-der-osten-venedig-9-17-sep-18/>

Venice's role as a **trading empire** expanded this need for accommodations beyond the devout. By the 13th century, the city had become the main entrepôt between the Byzantine East and Latin West. To serve the growing class of **foreign merchants**, Venice developed state-regulated complexes such as the **Fondaco dei Tedeschi**, founded in 1228 near the Rialto. This institution functioned as a hybrid facility: a **hostel, warehouse, customs house, and commercial meeting point**. It exemplified Venice's pragmatic fusion of hospitality with control, enabling the Republic to manage foreign presence while facilitating commerce.

The earliest records of **state-supervised inns** date back to the **1380s**, when the Venetian Republic recognized the economic and regulatory need to govern transient populations. The **Giustizia Nuova**, the magistracy in charge of public order and commerce, oversaw approximately **twenty osterie pubbliche** (public inns), mostly concentrated around **San Marco and Rialto**. These inns could host up to **forty guests** each, and provided basic food, wine, and lodging. Although rudimentary, they were Venice's **first officially recognized hotels**, marking the beginning of institutionalized hospitality management<sup>3</sup>.

3. Zannini, A. 'Il turismo a Venezia dal secondo dopoguerra ad oggi.' *Laboratoire Italien*, 15, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.4000/laboratoireit-alien.848>

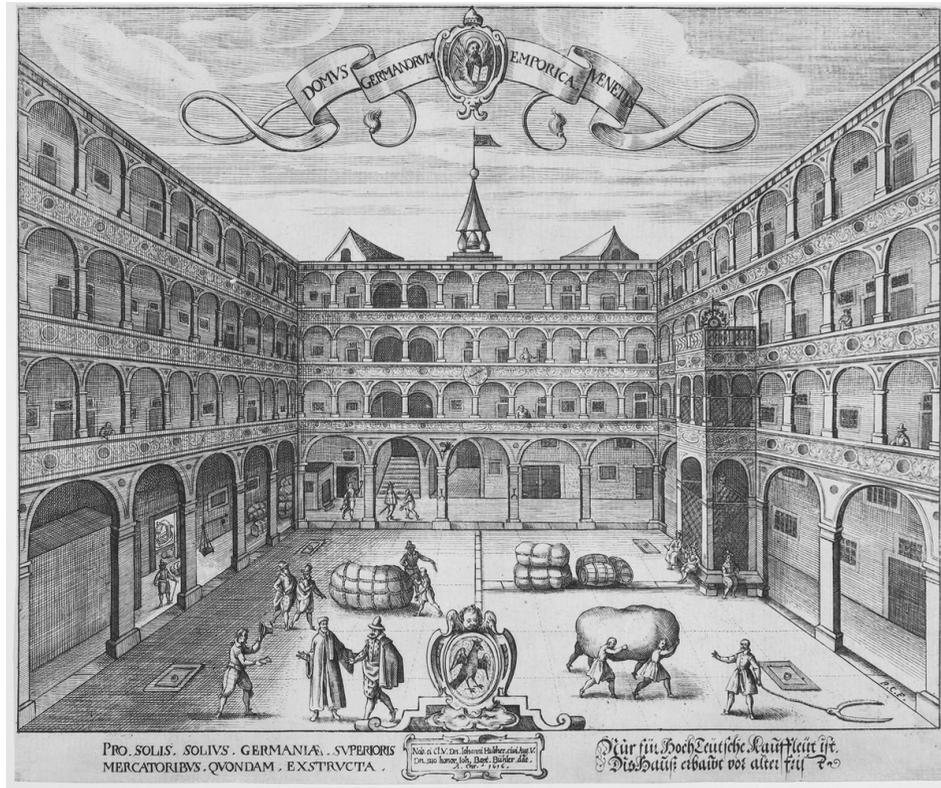


"Venetian send-off of Marco Polo." Illuminated manuscript miniature from *Le Devisement du Monde*, 15th century.  
Source: National Geographic France (2019). "L'odyssée de Marco Polo est l'un des premiers best-sellers de l'histoire." <https://www.nationalgeographic.fr/histoire/2019/09/odysee-de-marco-polo-est-lun-des-premiers-best-seller-de-lhistoire>.

By the **mid-16th century**, the scale of tourism—broadly defined to include pilgrims, merchants, diplomats, and early leisure travelers—had increased dramatically. Traditional accommodations proved insufficient, prompting a wave of **informal hospitality**. The Venetian authorities estimated that by **1560**, there were **over 5,000 private homes** offering lodging to visitors—a staggering rise from the original count of thirteen regulated inns<sup>4</sup>. This early version of **“domestic tourism economy”** was largely unregulated, but it reflected the adaptability of Venetian society to demand surges in mobility.

Importantly, Davis and Marvin emphasize that even in these early centuries, Venice was already developing a **“tourist logic”**: a tendency to present and commodify itself as a site of spectacle, ritual, and hospitality. The city’s layout—its scenic canals, monumental architecture, and festive atmosphere—was conducive to both religious awe and mercantile engagement, forming a foundation upon which centuries of tourism would be built.

4. Van der Borg, Jan & Costa, A. *Il turismo a Venezia. In: Turismo sostenibile a Venezia. Quaderni di Insula*, 2004.



Fondaco dei Tedeschi (1616). Source: Inner courtyard of the German trading post in Venice, copperplate engraving by Raphael Custos, *Domvs Germanorvm emporica*, 1616. Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg, Graphische Sammlung, Inventar-Nr. HB 2300, Kapsel-Nr. 1228. Photograph: Georg Janßen.

## 1.2 The Grand Tour and the Birth of Cultural Tourism (17th–18th centuries)

The 17th and 18th centuries marked a significant turning point in the evolution of tourism in Venice, transforming the city from its traditional role as a commercial and diplomatic hub into a central destination on the **Grand Tour**, a cultural and educational journey popular among young European aristocrats. The Grand Tour was primarily undertaken by upper-class travelers from Britain, France, and Northern Europe, aiming to complete their education by experiencing firsthand the rich cultural heritage of classical antiquity and Renaissance Europe. Venice quickly became an essential stop on this journey, admired not just for its political and maritime past, but especially for its extraordinary blend of **art, architecture, music, and theatrical entertainment**.

Venice was uniquely suited for this cultural role due to its wealth of artistic heritage and its distinctive urban landscape. Visitors perceived the city as a living museum, filled with architectural masterpieces, artistic treasures, and vibrant cultural events. Notable attractions included the Basilica of San Marco, the Doge’s Palace, and the numerous palazzos lining the Grand Canal, each offering insights into Venice’s storied history. Additionally, Venice’s famous Carnival and flourishing opera scene provided travelers with exceptional entertainment, reinforcing the city’s image as a destination of aesthetic appreciation and social refinement.<sup>5</sup> Davis and Marvin emphasize that Venice intentionally cultivated an atmosphere of **“aesthetic consumption,”** where tourists actively engaged in the city’s festive and theatrical life, blending the boundaries between spectator and participant.

Importantly, this period saw Venice deliberately promoting itself as a cultural destination,

5. Davis, Robert C., Marvin, Garry R. *Venice: The Tourist Maze: A Cultural Critique of the World’s Most Touristed City*. University of California Press, 2004.



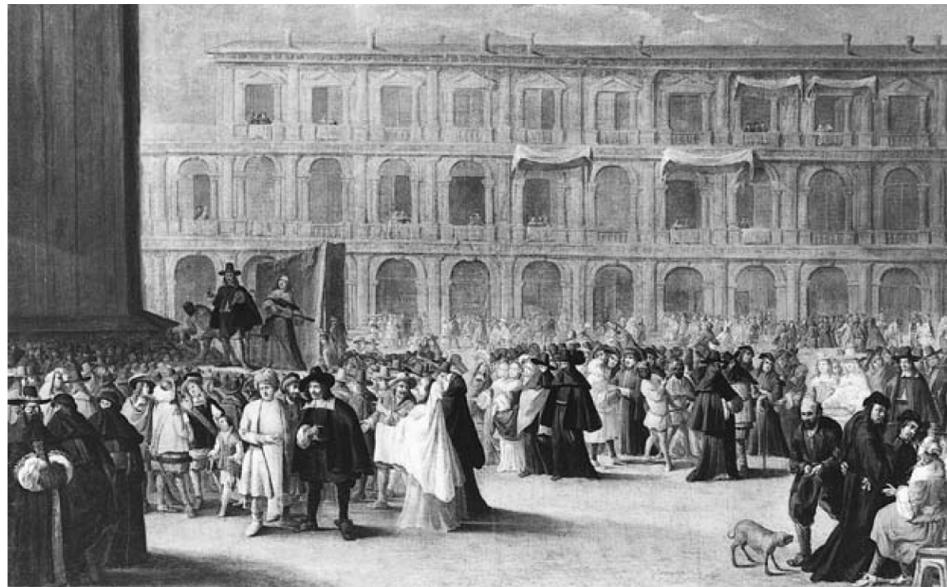
Canaletto, Giovanni Antonio Canal, *il Canaletto - Regatta on the Canale Grande*, 1740

adapting its services to appeal specifically to elite visitors. Venetian society, including nobles and local entrepreneurs, strategically developed hospitality services tailored explicitly to foreign guests. Inns and boarding houses, known as **alberghi** and **locande**, began providing personalized accommodations, employing multilingual staff, and facilitating access to local guides, artists, and intellectual salons<sup>6</sup>, highlights how Venice built a sophisticated hospitality infrastructure designed to meet the refined expectations of Grand Tourists, laying the foundations for modern cultural tourism.

Moreover, during this era, Venice began actively marketing its historical and cultural assets as attractive experiences for travelers. The emergence of guidebooks, souvenirs, and structured tours signaled the city's recognition of its heritage and cultural significance as resources that could attract visitors. Instead of traveling solely for religious devotion or commercial purposes, tourists increasingly visited Venice for its symbolic and aesthetic values, seeking cultural enrichment and historical engagement. Venice thus started positioning itself not only as a physical location but as a culturally significant destination, associated with elegance, sophistication, and historical depth.

Ultimately, the era of the Grand Tour significantly reshaped the tourism landscape of Venice, laying the groundwork for what we now call **heritage tourism**. The city shifted from reliance on trade and naval power to sustaining itself increasingly through its cultural heritage and its capacity to attract visitors interested in historical and artistic experiences. This transition had profound implications for subsequent patterns of tourism, influencing both the urban form and the economic structures of Venice into the modern era.

6. Van der Borg, J., Camatti, N., Bertocchi, D., & Albarea, A., 2017. WP DSE 05/17. Università Ca' Foscari Venezia. *Tourism in Venice: Mapping Overtourism and Exploring Solutions*.



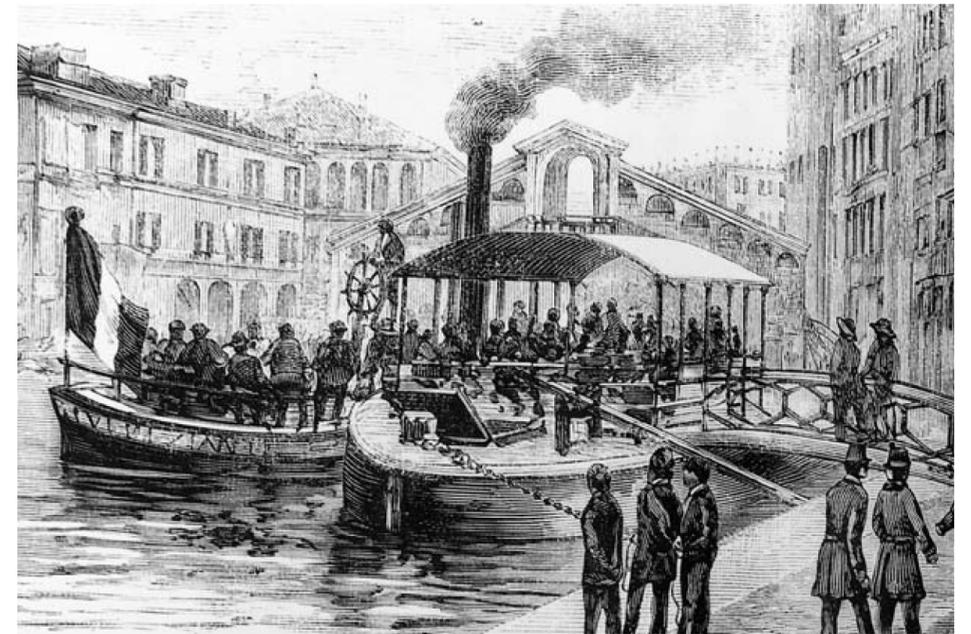
Seventeenth-century Carnival in Piazza San Marco. (Image from Museo Correr, Archivio Fotografico, M.9304.)  
Source : From Venice, the tourist maze: a cultural critique of the world's most toured city Robert C. Davis and Garry R. Marvin

### 1.3 Modernization and Mass Tourism (19th–20th centuries)

The 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed substantial shifts in the nature of tourism in Venice, driven largely by advancements in transportation and infrastructure. The introduction of **railways, steamships and vaporettos** significantly democratized travel, transforming Venice from a predominantly aristocratic destination into one accessible to a broader demographic. This transition marked the onset of modern mass tourism, reshaping the city's economy, social dynamics, and built environment.

The 1840s saw the emergence of organized group travel, notably through pioneering ventures by Thomas Cook, which laid the foundation for mass tourism across Europe. With increased accessibility, Venice became a favored destination, prompting the development of infrastructure to support the influx of visitors. A pivotal moment was the establishment of the **Società Civile dei Bagni di Lido in 1872**, designed to capitalize on the growing European interest in seaside leisure. By the early 20th century, the Lido transformed into an upscale resort, complete with hotels, cafes, and leisure facilities, drawing affluent tourists from across Europe and beyond<sup>7</sup>.

7. Davis, R. C., & Marvin, G. 'Venice: The Tourist Maze'. University of California Press, 2004.



First vaporetto and landing stage, 1881. (Image from Museo Correr, Archivio Fotografico, V.7758.)  
Source : From Venice, the tourist maze: a cultural critique of the world's most toured city Robert C. Davis and Garry R. Marvin

Parallel to infrastructural developments, Venice also leveraged cultural offerings to enhance its touristic appeal. The inception of the **Venice Biennale in 1895**, initially focused on visual arts, quickly evolved into a major international cultural event. The Biennale significantly reinforced Venice's reputation as a global center for art and culture, attracting visitors seeking refined cultural experiences. This strategic cultural positioning played a crucial role in the city's ongoing transformation into a prime cultural tourism destination<sup>8</sup>.

**The Fascist Regime** between 1922 and 1943 actively promoted tourism as part of its broader political agenda, using Venice to project a carefully curated national image to international audiences. During this period, significant investments were made into monumental architecture and public works projects, further prioritizing the city's visual and aesthetic appeal over local residential needs. This deliberate urban planning strategy, which emphasized grandeur and spectacle, laid the groundwork for a tourism-centered urban development model that persisted throughout the 20th century<sup>9</sup>.

Following **World War II**, the rapid economic recovery and increased leisure time among



Still from *Death in Venice* (*Morte a Venezia*), directed by Luchino Visconti (Italy: Warner Bros., 1971). Filming location: Hotel des Bains, Venice. Image source: Derek Winnert, "Death in Venice - Morte a Venezia - Classic Film Review 607," Derek Winnert, accessed June 24, 2025, <https://www.derekwinnert.com/death-in-venice-morte-a-venezia-classic-film-rview-607/>.

8. Van der Borg, J., Camatti, N., Bertocchi, D., & Albarea, A., 2017. WP DSE 05/17. Università Ca' Foscari Venezia.

9. Davis, R. C., & Marvin, G. 'Venice: The Tourist Maze'. University of California Press, 2004.

10. Van der Borg, J., Camatti, N., Bertocchi, D., & Albarea, A., 2017. WP DSE 05/17. Università Ca' Foscari Venezia.

the European middle class accelerated mass tourism dramatically. Advancements in air travel and automobiles made Venice accessible to unprecedented numbers of tourists, fundamentally altering the city's economy. Many traditional Venetian buildings, previously used as residences, were converted into tourist accommodations, significantly reshaping the city's urban fabric and contributing to a marked decline in the local resident population. The population decrease was dramatic: from approximately 150,000 residents in the historic center in 1950 to around 70,000 by the 1990s, reflecting the profound social and economic impacts of mass tourism<sup>10</sup>.



"Mario Borgoni (1869-1936), Grand Hotel des Bains, Lido, Venice, c. 1920s-1930s. Art Deco travel poster promoting the Grand Hotel des Bains as a stylish seaside destination on the Lido. The composition and design reflect the interwar period's emphasis on leisure, modernity, and tourism infrastructure expansion in Venice."

### 1.3.1 Mainland Growth and Its Influence on Venetian Tourism

The **significant expansion of Venice’s mainland**, particularly **Mestre and Marghera**, from the late 19th century through the 20th century, profoundly influenced tourism dynamics in the broader Venetian area. Initially rural and sparsely populated, the mainland’s transformation began primarily with **strategic infrastructural developments** aimed at enhancing connectivity and supporting **economic diversification** beyond traditional maritime commerce.

The construction of the **railway bridge (1846)**<sup>11</sup> and subsequently the **road bridge (Ponte della Libertà, completed in 1933)**<sup>12</sup> provided pivotal connections between the historic island city and the mainland, notably increasing accessibility for **tourists, workers, and goods**. The establishment of the **industrial complex at Porto Marghera** in 1917 marked the decisive turning point for mainland development. Porto Marghera attracted **large-scale industrial activities**, fundamentally reshaping the mainland’s **socio economic profile**. Workers, drawn by employment opportunities, settled primarily in Mestre, triggering a **rapid expansion of residential and commercial infrastructure**<sup>13</sup>.

**Post-World War II reconstruction** and **economic revival in the 1950s** accelerated mainland urbanization. Mestre evolved into a **densely populated urban hub**, driven partly by **residential spill-over** from the historic city center. The **improved infrastructure** and increased availability of **affordable housing** made Mestre attractive not only to locals but also to **budget-conscious tourists** seeking accommodations more accessible than those on the historic island<sup>14</sup>.

The mainland’s expansion significantly impacted **Venice’s tourism model**. Mestre developed **extensive hotel and hospitality facilities**, complementing those on the island. This **dual-city structure** effectively broadened Venice’s **overall accommodation capacity**, enabling the region to absorb the increasing numbers of tourists visiting the historic center each year. Consequently, Mestre gradually assumed a **complementary role** in Venice’s tourism economy, hosting tourists whose primary interests remained centered on the historic city but who benefited from the mainland’s **comparatively lower accommodation costs** and **modern amenities**<sup>15</sup>.

However, the mainland’s growth also underscored **tensions** inherent in Venice’s evolving tourism landscape. While Mestre’s development initially relieved pressure from the historic center by providing alternative accommodation, the sheer scale of tourism eventually reinforced a **mass-tourism paradigm** characterized by **short visits, high turnover, and superficial engagement** with Venetian culture. The tourist influx, driven by **ease of access via mainland infrastructure** and **budget-friendly accommodations**, contributed to overtourism pressures in the historic center, exacerbating **congestion, environmental**

11. Davis, R. C., & Marvin, G. 'Venice: The Tourist Maze'. University of California Press, 2004.

12. Zannini, A. 'Il turismo a Venezia dal secondo dopoguerra ad oggi. Laboratorio Italian, 15', 2014. <https://doi.org/10.4000/laboratoireit-alien.848>

13. *ibid.*

14. Costa, P., & Van der Borg, J. 'Il turismo a Venezia: Diagnosi e prospettive'. Comune di Venezia, 1988.

15. Van der Borg, J., Costa, P., & Gotti, G. 'Tourism in European Heritage Cities, Annals of Tourism Research', (pp. 306-21), 1996.

**degradation**, and a **declining resident population** due to **rising living costs** and **tourism-induced gentrification**<sup>16</sup>.

In summary, the mainland’s growth profoundly influenced the **scale, nature, and spatial distribution** of Venetian tourism. By reshaping **urban dynamics and infrastructure**, Mestre and Marghera not only **expanded tourism capacities** but also embedded **structural challenges** linked to overtourism, deeply affecting the **socio-economic fabric** and **urban identity** of the Venetian region.



Industrial landscape of Porto Marghera during the 20th century, illustrating the refinery and canal infrastructure, a significant component of Venice’s mainland industrial expansion. Fonti Marghera 100 (n.d.) Porto Marghera: Storia. Available at: <https://www.fontimarghera100.it/>



Venezia Heritage Tower (n.d.) *Ponte della Libertà: Storica inaugurazione e sviluppo del collegamento stradale tra Venezia e la terraferma.* Available at: <http://tourveneziaheritagetower.com/en/aziende/ponte-della-liberta/> (Accessed: 26 June 2025).

## 1.4 Tourism Boom, Urban Decline (1950s–1990s)

The postwar period from the 1950s through the 1990s was characterized by a paradoxical dynamic of intense tourism-driven economic growth coupled with significant urban and demographic decline. Venice became increasingly reliant on tourism as its primary economic sector, shifting away from its historical industrial activities such as glassmaking, maritime trade, and artisanal crafts. The proliferation of large tour groups, cruise ships, and improved global connectivity exacerbated this trend, significantly increasing the number of short-stay visitors who contributed relatively little to the local economy compared to long-term visitors<sup>17</sup>.

As tourism intensified, the city underwent dramatic demographic shifts. The escalating cost of living and lack of affordable housing pushed many Venetian residents to move to mainland suburbs such as Mestre and Marghera. These demographic changes were starkly reflected in the declining resident population, which nearly halved between 1950 and 1994. This demographic exodus not only altered Venice's social fabric but also exacerbated the strain on municipal services and infrastructure, as the city's narrow streets, canals, and public utilities were increasingly overwhelmed by the sheer volume of visitors<sup>18</sup>.

17. Davis, R. C., & Marvin, G. *Venice: The Tourist Maze*. University of California Press, 2004.

18. Van der Borg, J., Camatti, N., Bertocchi, D., & Albarea, A. (2017) "Tourism in Venice: Mapping Overtourism and Exploring Solutions" WP DSE 05/17. Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, 2017.

19. Davis, R. C., & Marvin, G. *Venice: The Tourist Maze*. University of California Press, 2004.

20. *ibid.*

Economically, Venice became increasingly mono-cultural, highly dependent on tourism-related businesses such as hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops, and related services. This economic transition made the city especially vulnerable to fluctuations in tourist numbers and global economic conditions, further heightening concerns about sustainability. The dominance of tourism-related commerce also led to the commodification of Venetian culture, raising concerns about the authenticity and integrity of the city's heritage. Historic buildings were often repurposed into tourist accommodations or attractions, prioritizing commercial interests over conservation<sup>19</sup>.

In response to these growing pressures, various preservation and sustainability measures were introduced, notably the **1964 Venice Charter**, which established international standards for conserving historical monuments and urban landscapes. However, despite these efforts, Venice continually faced challenges in balancing tourism-driven economic benefits with the urgent need to preserve its unique urban identity and cultural heritage. The period between the 1950s and 1990s thus became a critical juncture, illustrating the complex interplay between economic prosperity derived from tourism and the social and urban challenges it engendered<sup>20</sup>.



Venezia Lido - Hotel des Bains beach, 1950s  
<https://www.historichotelsthenandnow.com/bainsvenicelido.html>



Tourists resting in Piazza San Marco, Venice, 1950s. This black-and-white photograph by Carl Mydans, published in LIFE Magazine, captures a postwar moment of leisure and growing tourist presence in the historic core of Venice. The image highlights the early signs of mass tourism's spatial occupation in one of the city's most symbolic locations.  
 Source: Carl Mydans, Vintage Venice, in and out of season, LIFE Magazine, published by Life.com. Accessed June 2025. <https://www.life.com/destinations/vintage-venice-in-and-out-of-season>

**SUMMARY TABLE**

Before exploring the transformative changes that shaped tourism in Venice in the 2000s, it is essential to contextualize the developments of the preceding decades. The following overview captures the key milestones and shifting dynamics that framed Venice's approach to hospitality and urban management in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

The evolution of tourism in Venice over the past century reflects a complex interplay of cultural, economic, and technological transformations. From its early emergence as a center of elite travel to its current status as a symbol of global overtourism, Venice has experienced continuous shifts in how it hosts, regulates, and responds to its visitors. The following table outlines key historical developments that have shaped the city's tourism trajectory, providing a chronological framework to understand the patterns, policies, and pressures that have defined Venice's unique relationship with the global tourism industry.



The cruise ship Costa Tropicale and a gondola on the Bacino of San Marco. From Venice, the tourist maze: a cultural critique of the world's most toured city. Robert C. Davis and Garry R. Marvin

Early 1900s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The emergence of elite tourism in Venice centered on the Lido area with the construction of luxury accommodations such as the Hotel des Bains (1900) and Hotel Excelsior (1908).</li> <li>-The founding of the CIGA group in 1906 marked the institutionalization of luxury hospitality.</li> </ul>
Pre-WWII (1930s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Italy experienced a nationwide expansion in tourism, recording approximately 40.8 million overnight stays in 1938.</li> <li>-Venice maintained its status as a high-end destination during this pre-war boom.</li> </ul>
Post-WWII (1945-1960s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Following WWII, Venice transitioned from elite to mass tourism, supported by infrastructure recovery and economic growth.</li> <li>-The average stay began to decline (e.g., from 8 nights in 1949 at the Lido).</li> </ul>
1970s-1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Venice gained prominence as a global cultural destination.</li> <li>-Legislative initiatives, including the 1973 Legge Speciale per Venezia, were introduced.</li> <li>-Planning frameworks began to address tourism and heritage conservation.</li> </ul>
2000s-2010s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-A significant surge in tourism was observed, with arrivals rising from ~3.2 million in 2005 to over 10 million by 2017.</li> <li>-The number of non-hotel accommodations approached the number of residents, raising concerns of overtourism.</li> </ul>
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The municipality imposed a moratorium on the approval of new hotels in the historic center.</li> <li>-Spatial studies identified critical overtourism zones, sparking debate on capacity and visitor management.</li> </ul>
2020s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The COVID-19 pandemic led to a temporary collapse in tourism.</li> <li>-Subsequent recovery saw a diversification of visitor profiles and accommodation types.</li> <li>-The 2023 Annuario documented 38 million overnight stays and ~10.4 million arrivals.</li> </ul>
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-New governance strategies are being implemented: including visitor access fees, tourist flow limits, digital entry controls, and enhanced regulation of short-term rentals (STRs).</li> <li>-The city is prioritizing sustainable tourism.</li> </ul>

## 1.5 The Emergence of Short-Term Rentals (2000s–Present)

The early 21st century marked a **significant shift in tourism accommodation practices**, particularly in Venice, driven largely by the emergence and rapid growth of **digital platforms** such as **Airbnb**, **Couchsurfing** and **Booking.com**. These platforms have **redefined urban hospitality** by facilitating **short-term rentals (STRs)**, enabling private property owners to rent their homes directly to transient visitors. This **decentralized model** presents an ostensibly **authentic and personalized alternative** to traditional hotel accommodations, profoundly influencing both the **housing market** and **urban dynamics** in Venice<sup>21</sup>.

The 2000s marked a profound transformation in Venice's tourism landscape, characterized by the **explosive growth of visitor numbers**, the **decline of traditional hospitality infrastructure**, and the **rise of digital platforms enabling short-term rentals (STRs)**. During this period, Venice began to experience the **early symptoms of overtourism**, with the number of annual visitors surpassing 20 million by the end of the decade<sup>22</sup>. This influx was accompanied by a **steady decline in the resident population**, especially in the historic center, where **housing stock increasingly shifted from long-term residential use to transient tourist accommodation**. The liberalization of the global travel economy and the emergence of **peer-to-peer platforms like Airbnb** allowed private citizens to rent out their homes on a nightly basis, **redefining the boundaries between residential and commercial space**<sup>23</sup>. As a result, entire neighborhoods were transformed, not through physical redevelopment but through **functional repurposing**, leading to **rising rents, housing scarcity, and demographic imbalance**<sup>24</sup>. At the same time, the municipality's response remained fragmented, with **regulatory efforts often outpaced by platform innovation and market demand**. These developments positioned Venice as a **critical example of the urban effects of tourism globalization**, and laid the groundwork for the even more dramatic transformations that followed in the 2010s.

The **2010s witnessed the acceleration of these trends**, as Venice became one of the most visited cities in Europe. The total number of overnight stays reached nearly **30 million by the end of the decade**, with a growing share occurring in **non-hotel accommodations**, particularly STRs<sup>25</sup>. Airbnb listings in the city more than doubled between 2015 and 2018, with more than **8,000 active listings recorded in 2018**, and around **76% of them offering entire apartments** rather than shared rooms<sup>26</sup>. This shift highlighted how STRs had evolved from casual, part-time income sources into a **professionalized and commercialized sector**, often managed by owners with multiple properties. As a result, the **already fragile residential balance of Venice was further destabilized**, with many locals pushed out of central districts due to **increased living costs and the scarcity of long-term rentals**<sup>27</sup>.

21. Caccese, A. 'The Airbnb Effect: Architecture and Urban Consequences of a New Way of Trading Homes.' *Politecnico di Torino*, 2019.

22. Camatti, N., & Bertocchi, D. 'Tourism in Venice: Mapping Overtourism and Exploring Solutions.' *Ca' Foscari University of Venice*, 2022.

23. Rossi, A. 'The Sharing Economy in Italian Cities: An Analysis of Airbnb in Venice.' *Università degli Studi di Padova*, 2018.

24. Tegen, L. 'Overtourism and Social Movements: The Case of Venice.' *Ca' Foscari University of Venice*, 2023.

25. *ibid.*

26. Rossi, A. 'The Sharing Economy in Italian Cities: An Analysis of Airbnb in Venice.' *Università degli Studi di Padova*, 2018.

27. Camatti, N., & Bertocchi, D. 'Tourism in Venice: Mapping Overtourism and Exploring Solutions.' *Ca' Foscari University of Venice*, 2022.

28. Ioannides, D., Rösler, M., & Van der Zee, E. 'Airbnb as an Instigator of 'Tourism Bubble' Expansion in Utrecht's Lombok Neighbourhood.' *Tourism Geographies*, (pp. 80–97), 2018.

29. Bei, G., & Celata, F. 'Challenges and Effects of Short-term Rentals Regulation: A Counterfactual Assessment of European Cities.' *Annals of Tourism Research*, 2023.

The rise of these digital platforms also changed **how tourists engaged with the city**. Unlike traditional visitors who stayed in defined hotel zones, STR guests were **dispersed throughout residential neighborhoods**, blurring the line between public and private space and creating new forms of pressure on everyday urban life. This contributed to a growing feeling among Venetians that the city was being "taken over" by tourism—not only in public areas but also within their homes and apartment buildings. During this time, **calls for stricter regulation** became louder, and **residents' movements gained strength**, demanding limits on STR growth and better protection for the local community<sup>28</sup>.

Despite these challenges, the 2010s also saw the beginning of **municipal policy experimentation**, such as freezing new hotel licenses in the historic center in 2017, enforcing **mandatory registration of tourist rentals**, and introducing debates around visitor caps and entrance fees<sup>29</sup>. However, enforcement remained uneven, and **platforms like Airbnb continued to operate in regulatory grey zones**, leveraging their global scale and user base. By the end of the decade, Venice had come to represent a **symbolic battleground in the global discussion around tourism, housing rights, and digital regulation**. The city stood not only as a heritage site under pressure but also as a **living laboratory for rethinking urban tourism in the 21st century**.



Mehta, A. (2019, August 27). The good, the bad, and the ugly of overtourism [Photograph]. *Condé Nast Traveler*. <https://www.cntraveler.com/story/loving-the-world-to-death-the-good-bad-and-ugly-of-overtourism>

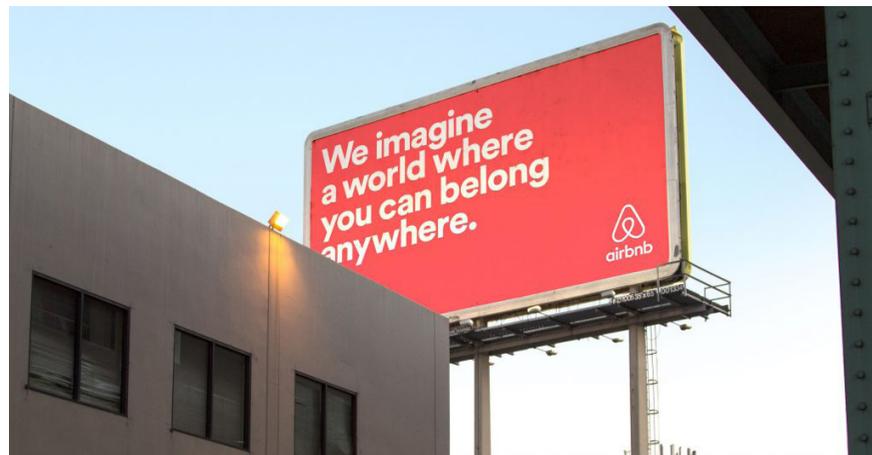
## 1.5.1 The Rise of Digital Platforms: Airbnb and Beyond

The story of Airbnb begins in October 2007, when two art school graduates, Joe Gebbia and Brian Chesky, struggling to pay rent in San Francisco, launched a modest experiment by renting out **air mattresses during a city-wide design conference**. Their early venture, initially branded as *AirBed & Breakfast*, offered guests basic accommodations combined with personal touches such as design books and motivational posters. The innovation was not simply in the product but in the **peer-to-peer model** that allowed hosts to earn income while guests accessed affordable lodging<sup>30</sup>.

By 2025, Airbnb had expanded to over **7.7 million active listings** and facilitated more than **1.5 billion guest arrivals** worldwide, becoming **the largest accommodation provider globally**—without building a single property. In 2014 alone, the room inventory grew from 300,000 to 1 million within months, surpassing major hotel chains such as Hilton and Marriott. Through its user-friendly platform, Airbnb enabled property owners to **list homes, manage bookings, and communicate directly with guests**, while guests could search, pay, and review with ease.

What made Airbnb revolutionary was its **dual revenue model**, collecting commissions from both hosts and guests (3% and up to 20%, respectively). This model created a scalable digital marketplace where **trust was mediated by user reviews**, secure payment systems, and identity verification tools, reducing the risk of renting among strangers.

Despite the emergence of competitors such as Wimdu, Roomorama, and HomeAway, Airbnb has maintained global leadership due to its intuitive design, widespread brand recognition, and critical **network effects**—the more users join, the more valuable the platform becomes.



Airbnb Advertisement

30. Airbnb. 'Company History and Milestones'. [Internal reference or Airbnb newsroom page if needed], 2025.

31. Guttentag, D. 'Airbnb: Disruptive Innovation and the Rise of an Informal Tourism Accommodation Sector'. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 2013.

32. Belk, R. 'You Are What You Can Access: Sharing and Collaborative Consumption Online'. *Journal of Business Research*, 2014.

33. Zervas, G., Proserpio, D., & Byers, J. W. 'The Rise of the Sharing Economy: Estimating the Impact of Airbnb on the Hotel Industry'. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 2017.

34. Frenken, K., & Schor, J. 'Putting the Sharing Economy into Perspective'. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, 2017.

35. Wachsmuth, D., & Weisler, A. 'Airbnb and the Rent Gap: Gentrification Through the Sharing Economy'. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 2018.

## 1.5.2 Keys to Airbnb's Success and Economic Model

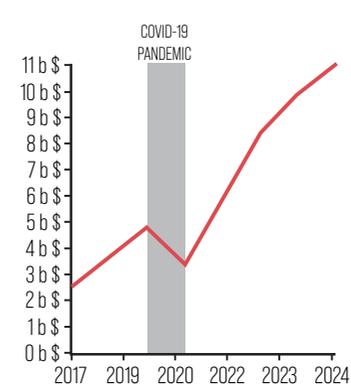
Airbnb's rapid rise is underpinned by two major elements: **its innovative web-based model and the cultural appeal of 'authentic' travel experiences**<sup>31</sup>. Economically, the platform allowed individuals to **monetize underutilized real estate**, offering travelers cost-effective options outside traditional hotels. Socially, it responded to a growing desire for **localized and personalized stays**, often in residential neighborhoods instead of tourist zones.

Scholars categorize Airbnb within the **sharing economy**, also described as **collaborative consumption** or **peer-to-peer (P2P) exchange**<sup>32</sup>. In this model, **access replaces ownership**, and digital platforms facilitate **temporary, decentralized transactions**. Airbnb's innovation lies in **blurring the roles between consumer and producer**, where hosts and guests co-create value.

Trust, the linchpin of this economy, is supported by platform features such as **user ratings, mutual reviews, and secure transactions**, which reduce the friction traditionally associated with short-term rentals<sup>33</sup>. This ecosystem has **challenged traditional hospitality**, promoting deregulated, flexible accommodations at scale. Yet it also **raised concerns about housing affordability**, neighborhood disruptions, and regulatory oversight<sup>34</sup>.

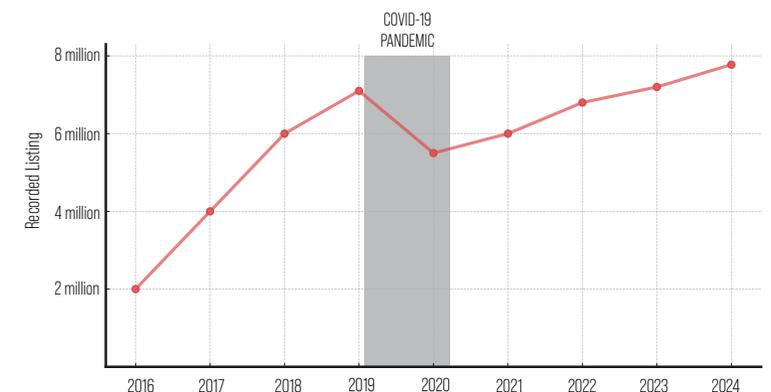
Platforms like Airbnb and Uber exemplify how **digital intermediaries can rapidly disrupt urban life and economic models**, initially praised for empowering users but later criticized for deepening inequality and precarity in housing and labor markets<sup>35</sup>.

AIRBNB ANNUAL REVENUE



Airbnb Data, Statista

AIRBNB LISTINGS RECORDED OVER THE YEARS



### 1.5.3 The Urban Impact of Airbnb: The Case of Venice

Airbnb's effects are not limited to digital convenience or economic innovation—they are also **profoundly spatial and social**, particularly in cities like Venice. Already a global tourism icon and facing severe challenges related to **overtourism**, Venice became a critical example of the **transformation driven by short-term rentals**.

By 2018, the city had over **8,000 Airbnb listings**, with around **76% of them being entire homes**, revealing a transition from informal hospitality to a **professionalized, profit-oriented real estate strategy**<sup>36</sup>. These conversions **reduced housing availability**, inflated rents, and fueled speculation, especially in districts like **Cannaregio, Santa Croce, and Castello**, traditionally working-class and residential neighborhoods<sup>37</sup>.

The **social consequences have been severe**. Long-term residents have been displaced, community networks fragmented, and neighborhoods “hollowed out” to make room for transient populations. In some cases, **STR units outnumber available long-term rentals**, pushing Venice closer to becoming a “**tourism mono-economy**”.

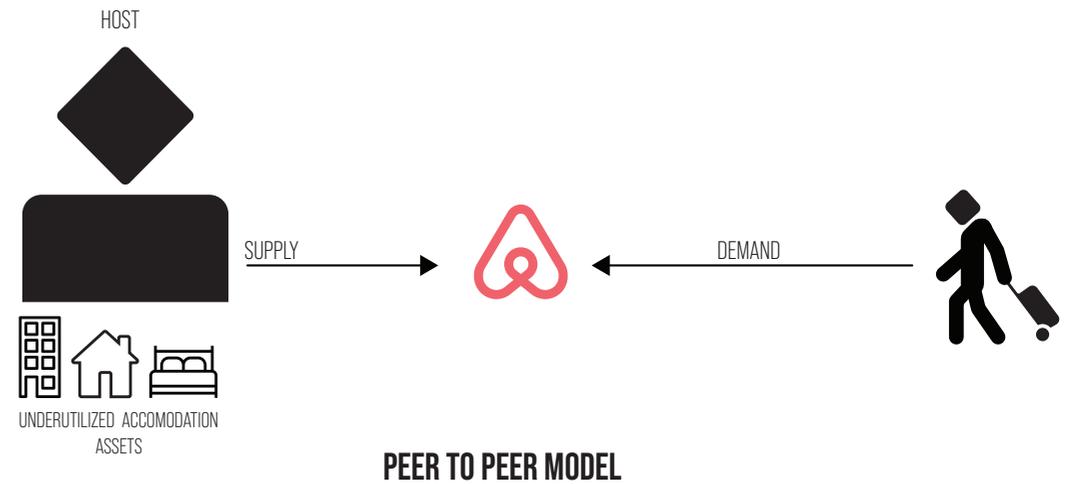
Municipal responses included the introduction of **STR license registration requirements**, and a freeze on new hotel developments in the historic center. However, enforcement has proven weak. Platforms continue to grow faster than regulations can adapt, and **data opacity** limits the city's ability to monitor compliance effectively<sup>38</sup>.

Ultimately, Airbnb—initially seen as a flexible, democratizing alternative—has become a **central agent of urban commodification**. In Venice, it symbolizes the complex balance between **economic gain and the erosion of urban life**, illustrating broader global tensions around **platform capitalism and heritage city sustainability**.

36. Caenazzo, A. T. 'Airbnb and the Cities: The Cases of Venice and Barcelona'. Università IUAV di Venezia, 2019.

37. Tegen, L. 'Overtourism and Social Movements: The Case of Venice'. Ca' Foscari University of Venice, 2023.

38. Bei, G., & Celata, F. 'Challenges and Effects of Short-Term Rentals Regulation: A Counterfactual Assessment of European Cities'. 2023.



EFFICIENT IN TERMS OF UTILIZING UNUSED ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES IN CERTAIN NUMBERS



## Sleeping Spaces and Spatial Change in Venice Throughout History

The evolution of *sleeping spaces* in Venice offers a revealing lens through which to examine the city's broader socio-spatial transformations. In the medieval and Renaissance periods, Venetian domestic spaces, whether in patrician palazzi or modest courtyard dwellings, were characterised by multifunctionality, with *sleeping areas integrated into larger rooms used for trade, domestic labour, and social life*<sup>39</sup>. The *portego*, a central hall traversing many Venetian homes, often contained alcoves or curtained sleeping quarters, reflecting the flexible use of space necessitated by the city's dense urban fabric<sup>40</sup>.

As Venice expanded its maritime power and wealth, spatial differentiation within the domestic sphere gradually increased. Wealthier households began to develop dedicated bedrooms (*camere*) for family members, signalling a shift toward privacy and the emergence of specialised sleeping areas. However, even in grand residences, these rooms were often shared among multiple family members and occasionally servants, demonstrating the collective nature of domestic life in pre-modern Venice<sup>41</sup>.



Bedroom Interior, (1718) , Stucco Palazzo Sagredo, Venice, reinstalled at Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (2023)

Source: Metropolitan Museum of Art (n.d.) Bedroom from the Sagredo Palace, Venice, ca. 1718-1720. Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian\\_Baroque\\_interior\\_design#/media/File:Stazio\\_-\\_Palazzo\\_Sagredo\\_-\\_Camera\\_da\\_letto\\_-\\_NewYork\\_-\\_Metropolitan\\_Museum\\_of\\_Art.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Baroque_interior_design#/media/File:Stazio_-_Palazzo_Sagredo_-_Camera_da_letto_-_NewYork_-_Metropolitan_Museum_of_Art.jpg)

39. Fortini Brown, P. (1996) *Venice and Antiquity: The Venetian Sense of the Past*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

40. Janin, H. (2004) *Venice: A Cultural and Literary Companion*. London: Signal Books.

41. Zannini, A. (2014) 'Il turismo a Venezia dal secondo dopoguerra ad oggi', *Laboratoire Italien*, 15.

42. Demet Dincer, C., Tietz, C. and Dalci, K. (2023) 'An investigation into sleep environment as a multi-functional space,

43. Davis, R.C. and Marvin, G.R. (2004) *Venice: The Tourist Maze*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

44. Rossi, A. (2018) *The Sharing Economy in Italian Cities: An Analysis of Airbnb in Venice*. Università degli Studi di Padova

45. Salerno, G.-M. and Russo, A.P. (2020) 'Venice as a "short-term city": Between global trends and local lock-ins', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 30(5), pp. 1040-1059

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, with the decline of Venice's economic dominance and the shift towards tourism and modern urban living, sleeping spaces became increasingly privatised and standardised within the domestic layout. The subdivision of former palazzi into apartments introduced modern bedrooms, aligning with broader European trends towards nuclear family living arrangements. During this period, the *average Venetian apartment ranged between 60-100 m<sup>2</sup>*, often with one or two bedrooms designed primarily for sleeping and minimal additional functions<sup>42</sup>.

The late 20th and early 21st centuries witnessed a significant transformation driven by *tourism and the rise of short-term rentals (STRs)*, fundamentally altering the function of sleeping spaces in Venice. Entire apartments, once vibrant with resident families, have been converted into tourist accommodations where bedrooms serve only as *transient sleeping spaces for visitors rather than sites of daily living*<sup>43</sup>. Studies indicate that a *typical tourist couple now occupies an entire 70-80 m<sup>2</sup> apartment for short stays, using the space solely for sleep and hygiene, consuming up to five times the spatial footprint required by standard housing norms for sleeping alone*<sup>44</sup>.

This shift reflects a broader trend in which Venice's domestic spaces have transitioned from multifunctional environments serving resident needs to *single-function sleeping quarters for transient visitors*. The overrepresentation of STRs in the historic centre has led to *a hollowing out of local communities*, transforming neighbourhoods into zones of temporary habitation devoid of the social functions that once defined Venetian urban life<sup>45</sup>.

Understanding these transformations is essential for addressing contemporary challenges in Venice, as the city grapples with *the spatial impacts of overtourism and the loss of its residential character*. Reconsidering the role of sleeping spaces, from multifunctional living environments to their current use in the STR economy, provides insight into *the urgent need for policy and spatial interventions that prioritise housing as a lived space rather than a commodity for tourism*.



Still from Death in Venice (1971), filmed at Hotel des Bains, screenshot from the movie

# CHAPTER 2

## *The Current Situation in Venice*

Due to its unique geographic setting, urban form, and strong cultural and touristic appeal, Venice is frequently regarded as a symbolic example of “hyper-tourism”<sup>39</sup>, and serves as a key case for examining the evolution of tourist destinations over time. The phenomenon of overtourism—manifesting both physically through high population density and socially through the perceptions of local residents—arises when the city’s capacity to accommodate visitors is exceeded. In Venice, this issue is further intensified by the geographical impossibility of diverting infrastructure or tourist flows to surrounding areas, as the city is confined to an island within a lagoon. Consequently, Venice is not simply seen as a city with a historic center, but as a historic destination in its entirety<sup>40</sup>.

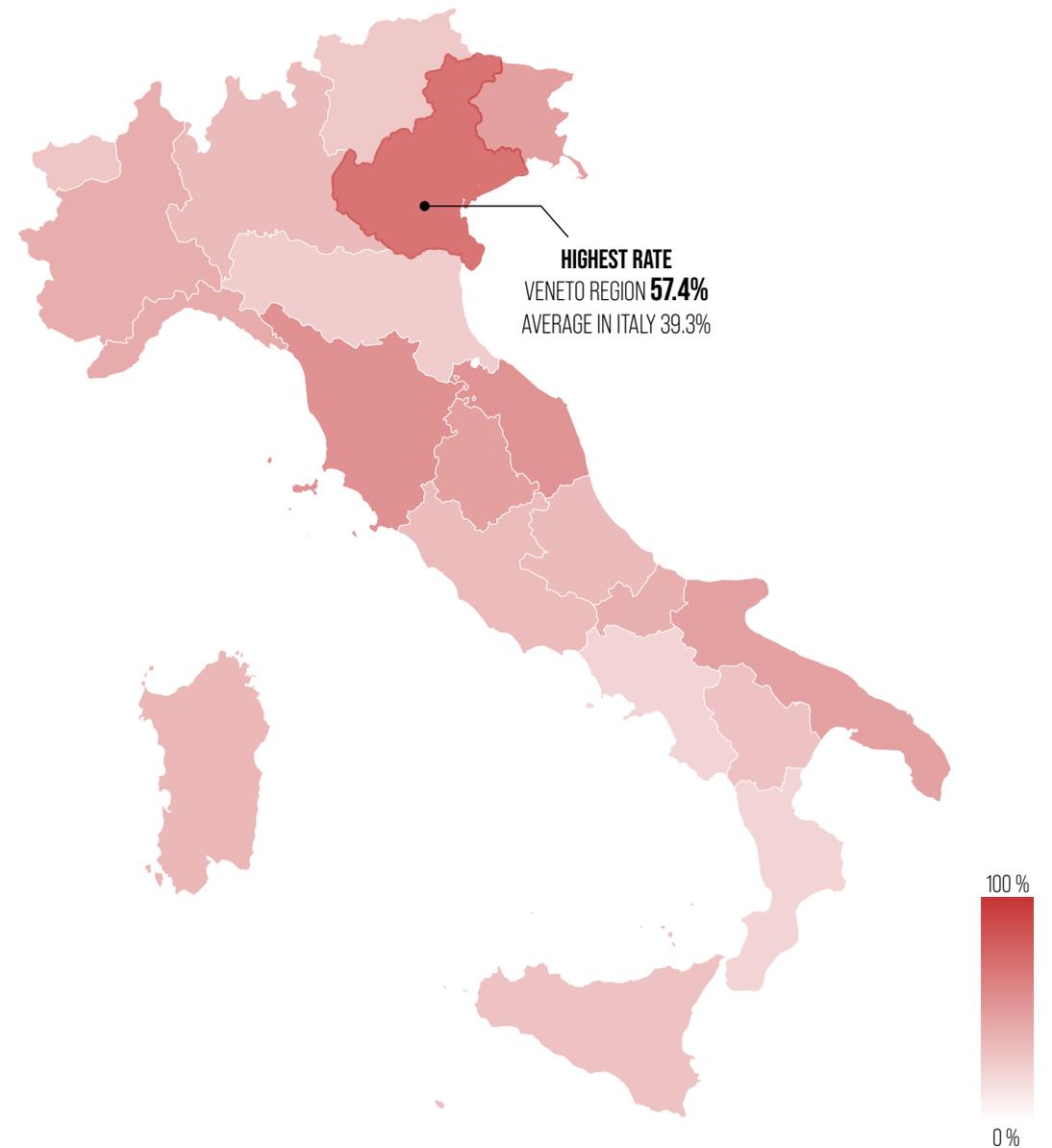
One of the key factors contributing to overtourism in Venice since 2008 has been the rise of Short-Term Rentals (STRs), largely driven by the spread of digital platforms. These platforms have brought significant changes to the city—not so much in its physical appearance, but in its social fabric. This transformation raises important questions: Can a city truly exist with only a very small number of local residents? And in such a case, do tourists become the new citizens of Venice?

This chapter of the thesis analyzes patterns of residential use in Venice through the lens of urban data. It investigates how the emergence of digital platforms has affected the urban fabric, particularly in relation to the growing presence of STRs. Special attention is given to how these changes have influenced population density and the overall texture of the city, contributing to the shift from long-term habitation to short-term occupancy.

39. Costa, P., & Martinotti, G. *Is Tourism a Sustainable Activity in Venice?* In P. Costa & G. Martinotti (Eds.), *Challenges for Venice and Its Lagoon: Sustainable Management* (pp. 15-36). Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2003.

40. Camatti, N. *Tourism in Venice: Mapping Overtourism and Exploring Solutions*. Ca' Foscari University of Venice, 2022.

NON-HOTEL ACCOMMODATION DENSITY



Source: Elaborations on Istat data, Movement of customers in accommodation establishments, and Ministry of the Interior,

## 2.1 The Urban Situation of STR Expansion

The **urban situation in Venice has been deeply transformed** by the expansion of **short-term rentals (STRs)**, which have become a defining feature of the city's housing and daily life in the past decade. As property owners shift apartments from long-term rentals to more profitable STR use, the **availability of homes for residents has steadily decreased**, making it increasingly difficult for families, workers, and students to find stable housing<sup>41</sup>. This shift is visible in neighborhoods across the historic center, where **entire buildings once filled with local residents now host a rotating flow of tourists**, who arrive with suitcases for stays that often last just a few days<sup>42</sup>.

41. Salerno, G.-M. & Russo, A.P. Venice as a "short-term city". *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, (pp. 1040-59), 2022.

42. Tegen, L. 'Overtourism and Social Movements: The Case of Venice'. *Ca' Foscari University of Venice*, 2023.

43. Caenazzo, A. T. 'Airbnb and the Cities: The Cases of Venice and Barcelona'. *Università IUAV di Venezia*, 2019.

44. Giuffrida, A. 'Venice awaits Unesco heritage ruling as beds for tourists outnumber residents for first time'. *The Guardian*, 11 September, 2023.

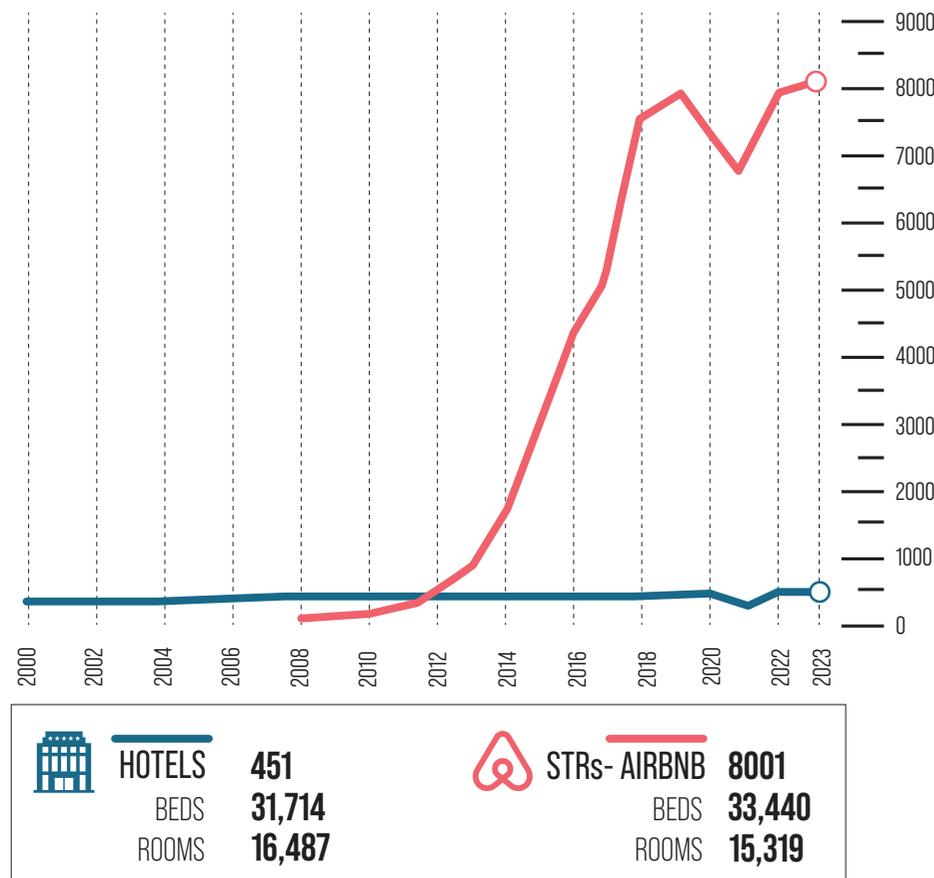
45. Bei, G. & Celata, F. 'Challenges and effects of short-term rentals regulation: A counterfactual assessment of European cities'. *Current Issues in Tourism*, (pp. 175-91), 2023.

The **social impacts of this expansion are profound**. Streets that once supported local bakeries, grocery shops, and small artisans are now lined with businesses catering mainly to visitors, from fast-food counters to souvenir stalls. This change reduces the availability of services needed for daily living and erodes the character of neighborhoods, which lose the steady rhythms of local life and become tied instead to the seasonal and daily fluctuations of tourism. Many Venetians share stories of how their streets feel less like a neighborhood and more like a corridor for visitors, as **familiar faces disappear and the sense of community weakens**<sup>43</sup>.

The presence of STRs in almost every part of the historic center has also **increased congestion in spaces not designed for continuous high volumes of visitors**. Unlike hotels, which were historically clustered near major tourist sites, STRs are spread throughout residential streets, **bringing the impacts of tourism into daily residential life**. This means that narrow alleys and small bridges see a constant stream of visitors, making it harder for residents to carry out simple tasks like shopping, taking children to school, or returning home after work<sup>44</sup>. Additionally, the increased waste, noise, and energy consumption associated with STR turnover places additional pressure on local infrastructure, stretching services like garbage collection and public water transport beyond their intended capacities<sup>45</sup>.

### Comparison of Hotel and STRs Numbers in Venice

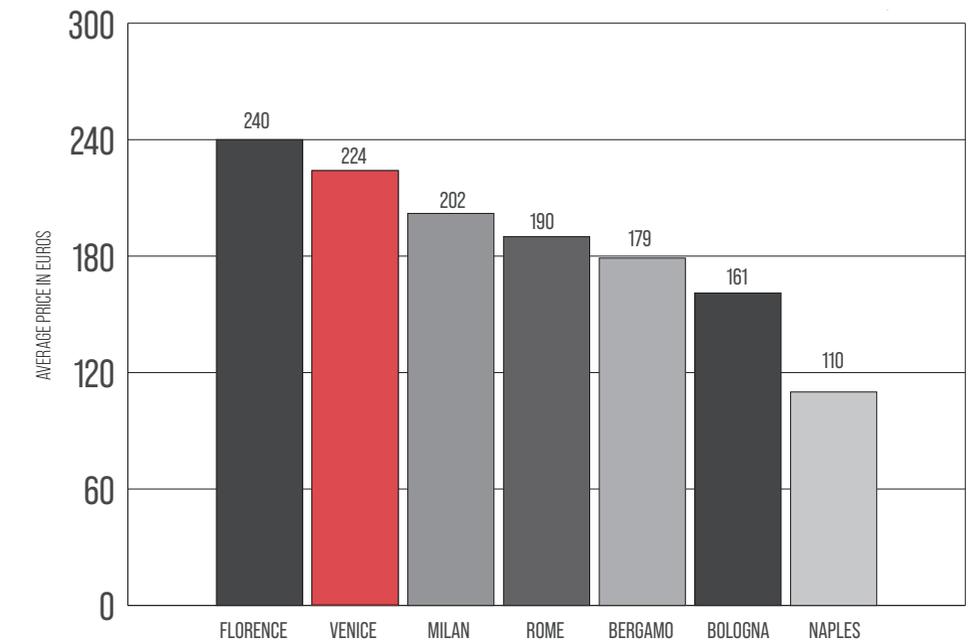
2000 - 2023



Re-arranged from Fabian, L. & Mantelli, G. (2021). Venice Hyper-tourism / Voci: echii: laguna City of Venice Tourism Department. Yearbook of Tourism Data 2023. Source: City of Venice Tourism Department processing - Tourism Observatory based on data from the Statistical Office of Veneto Region.

### Average Price per Night of Airbnb Listings in Selected Cities in Italy

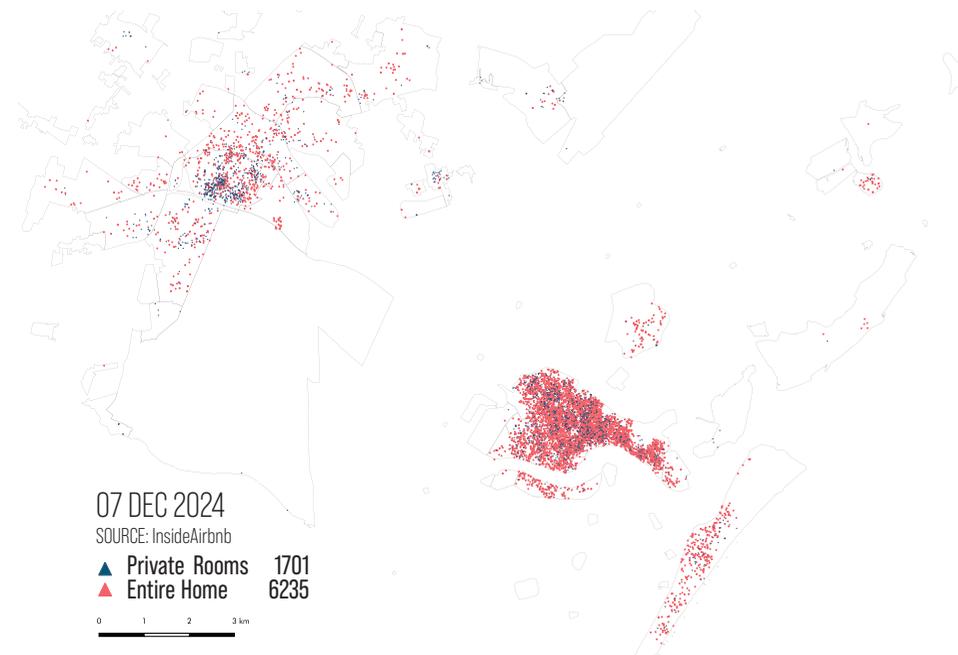
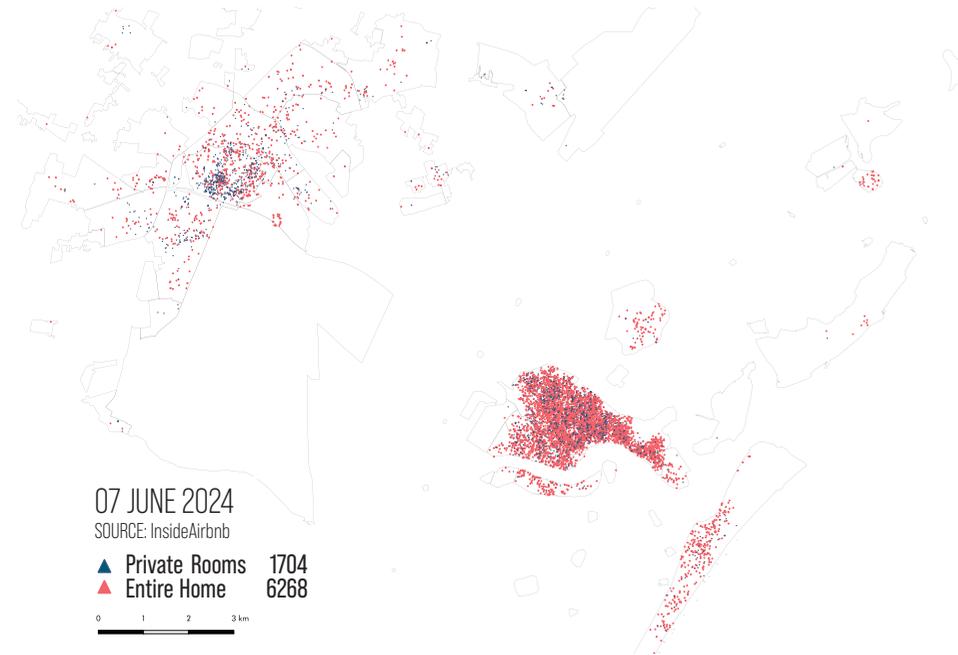
2024, September



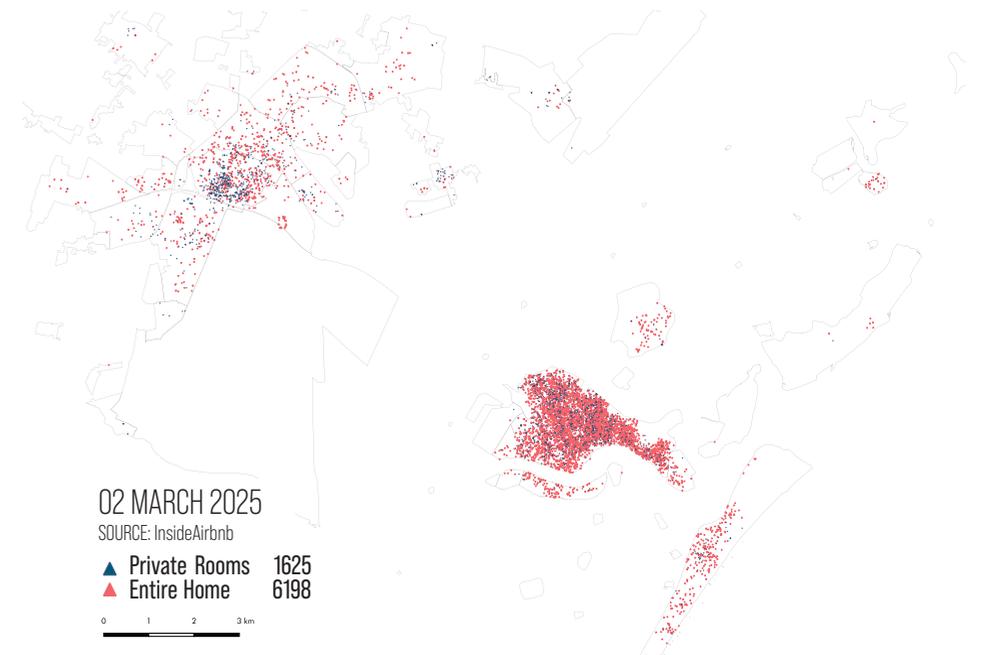
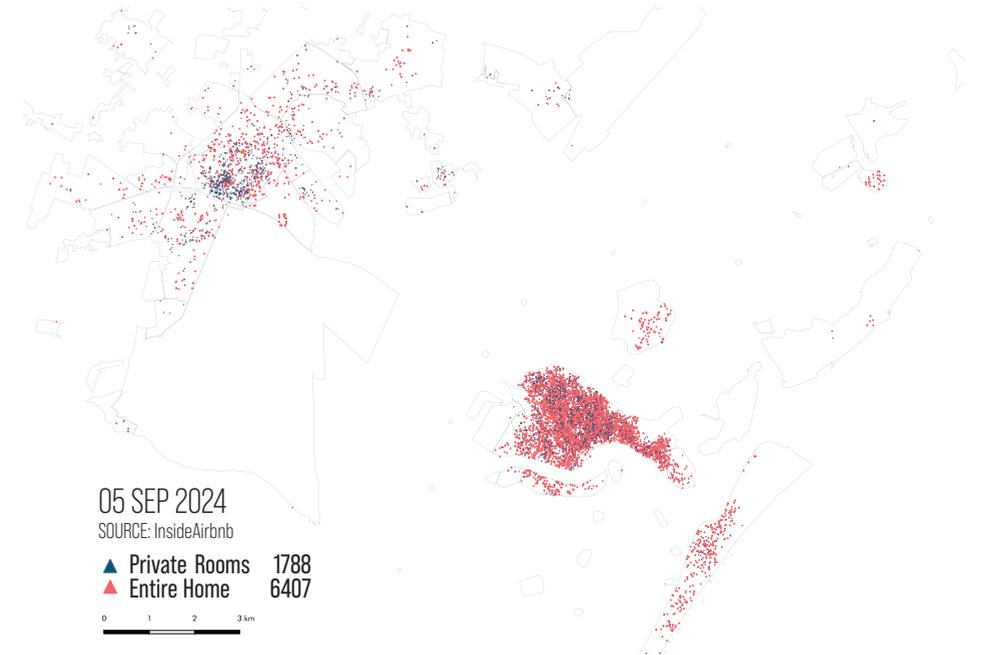
Source: Airbnb; Inside Airbnb, Statistica

## Airbnb Numbers in 1 year

This consistent volume of STRs demonstrates how **tourism demand in Venice maintains high occupancy potential throughout the year**, providing continuous incentives for owners to keep properties in the STR market rather than making them available for long-term rental



The maps also illustrate **geographic saturation**, where even secondary islands and peripheral parts of the lagoon are increasingly hosting STRs, suggesting **tourism pressure is spreading beyond the traditional tourist core**. This reflects the spatial spillover that occurs as central areas become saturated, prompting STR operators to move into new areas to capture visitor demand, **further eroding residential stability across the lagoon city**.



The data **demonstrate the dominance of entire apartment rentals over room sharing**, confirming that **STRs in Venice largely remove full housing units from the local rental market**, directly **reducing housing availability for residents and pushing up rents**<sup>46</sup>. Entire home STRs effectively operate as unregulated micro-hotels, driving the “hollowing out” of residential buildings described in Section 2.1, where entire staircases and neighborhoods lose permanent residents and shift to transient occupancy patterns.

The **high concentration of STRs on the islands (historic center) underlines the imbalance between residential and tourism uses of urban space**. The data shows that **nearly 4 out of 5 STRs are located within the fragile historic fabric**, intensifying the **pressure on infrastructure, local services, and public spaces** that residents rely upon daily<sup>47</sup>. Additionally, the prevalence of entire home rentals over room-sharing contradicts the narrative of the “sharing economy,” highlighting that **STRs in Venice primarily function as commercial operations rather than community-based hospitality**, contributing to depopulation and the erosion of neighborhood life<sup>48</sup>.

46. Salerno, G.-M. & Russo, A.P. 'Venice as a "short-term city"', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, (pp. 1040-59), 2022).

47. Tegan, L. 'Overtourism and Social Movements: The Case of Venice'. Ca' Foscari University of Venice, 2023.

48. Camatti, N. 'Tourism in Venice: Mapping Overtourism and Exploring Solutions'. Ca' Foscari University of Venice, 2022.

49. Giuffrida, A. 'Venice awaits Unesco heritage ruling as beds for tourists outnumber residents for first time'. *The Guardian*, 11 September, 2023.

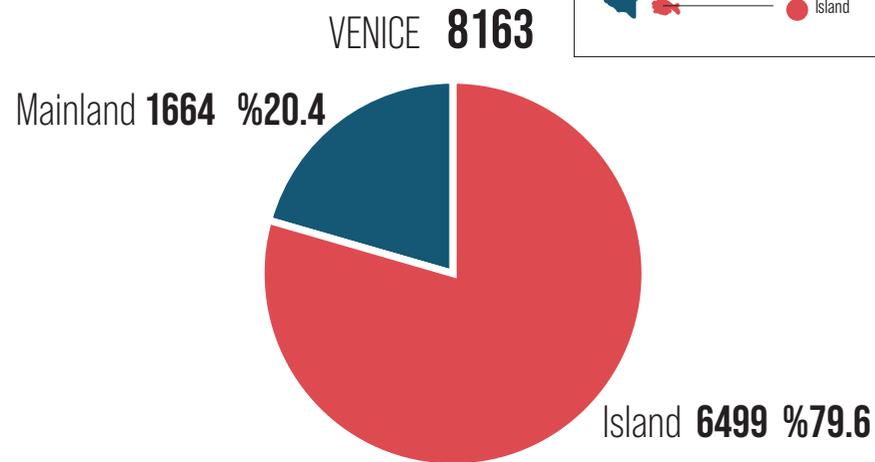
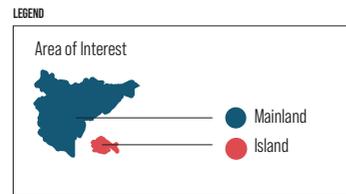
50. Bei, G. & Celata, F. 'Challenges and effects of short-term rentals regulation: A counterfactual assessment of European cities'. *Current Issues in Tourism*, (pp. 175-91), 2023.

Residents often describe a feeling of **alienation in their own city**, as Venice's urban spaces transform to accommodate visitors rather than those who live there. This dynamic contributes to the long-term depopulation of Venice, with many residents choosing to leave for the mainland due to the combined pressures of rising rents, reduced housing availability, and the daily challenges of living in a city that increasingly prioritizes visitors over residents. Between 2000 and 2024, the resident population of Venice's historic center fell sharply, dropping below 50,000 for the first time while the number of tourist beds surpassed the number of residents<sup>49</sup>.

Municipal authorities have recognized these challenges, introducing registration requirements for STR operators and discussing potential caps on STR growth, but the pace of expansion has often outstripped the implementation and enforcement of such measures. The **urban situation created by STR expansion has thus become a central issue for Venice's future**, requiring a careful balance between benefiting from tourism economically and protecting the livability of the city for its residents. Without effective policies, the ongoing STR expansion risks transforming Venice into a city where **transience replaces stability**, and where the needs of short-term visitors overshadow the rights and daily experiences of those who call Venice home<sup>50</sup>.

### Listed Airbnb Units Analyses

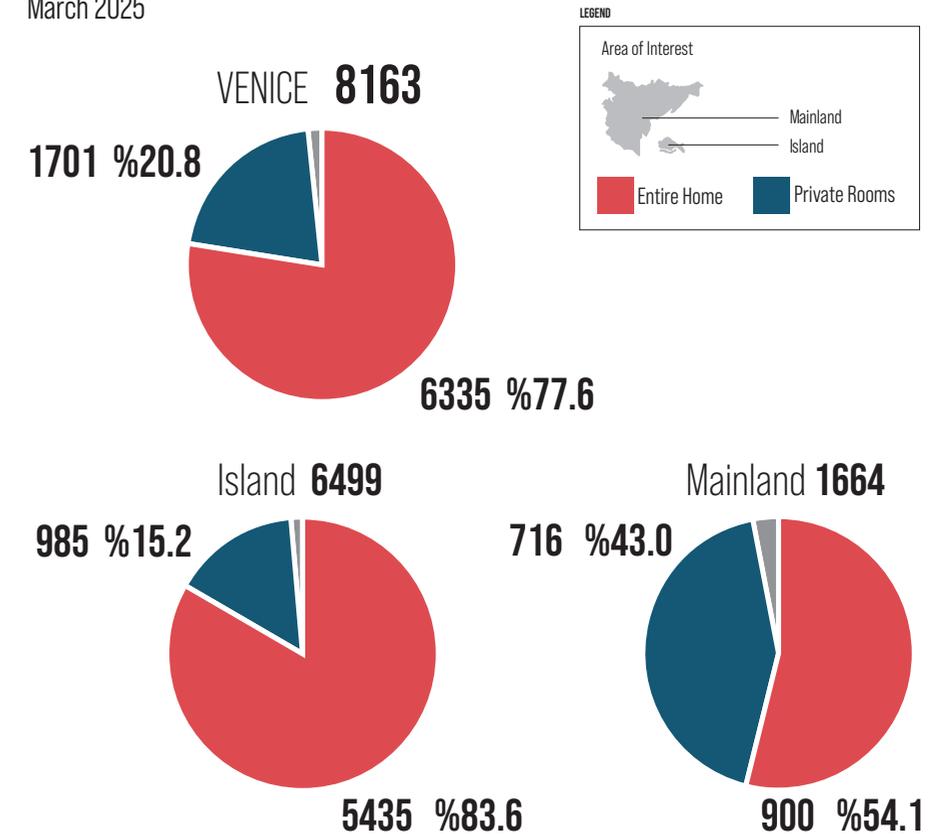
March 2025



Source: Inside Airbnb data.

### Comparison Between Entire Home and Private Rooms

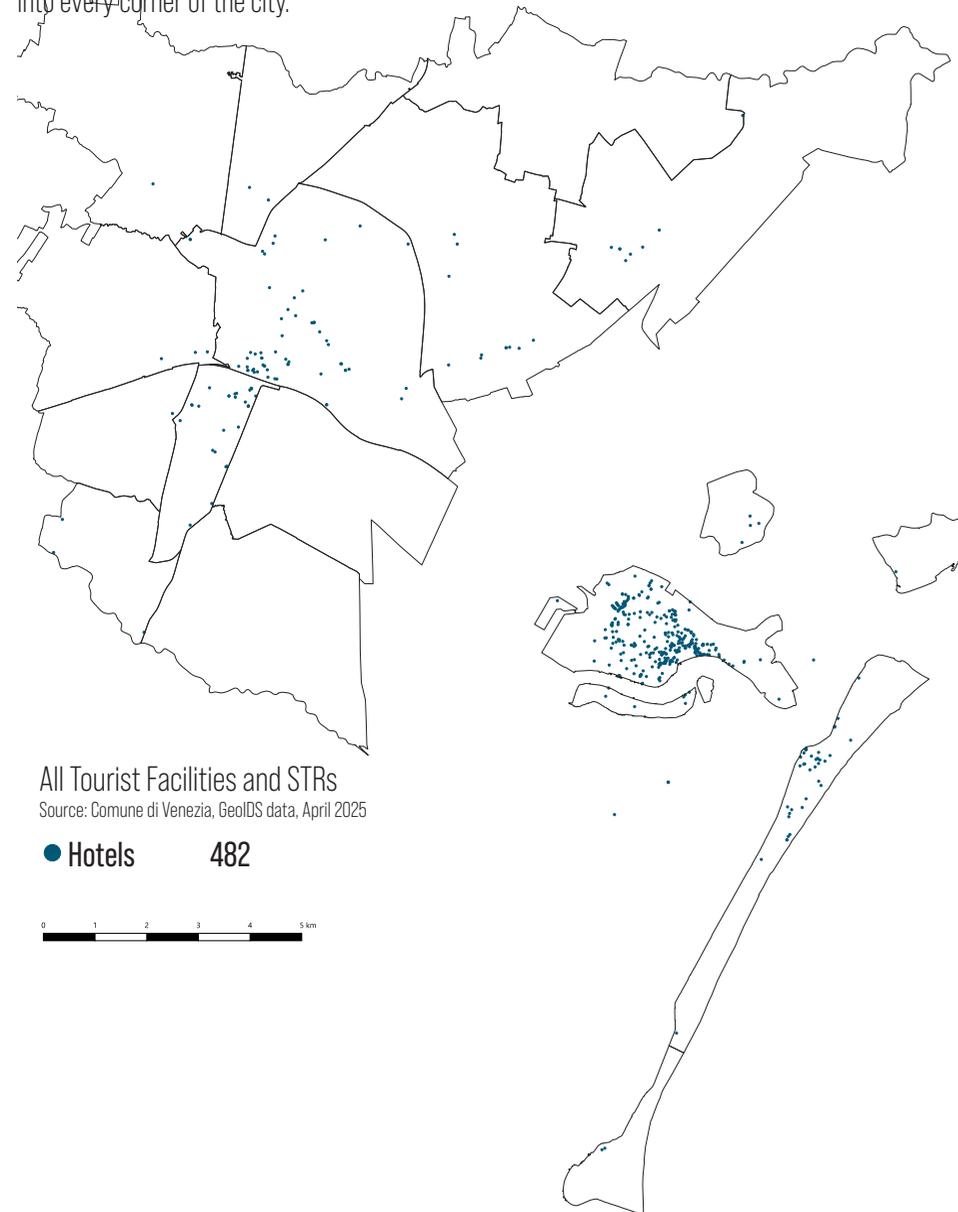
March 2025



Source: Inside Airbnb data.

## 2.2 Spatial Distribution and Density of STRs and Other Tourist Facilities

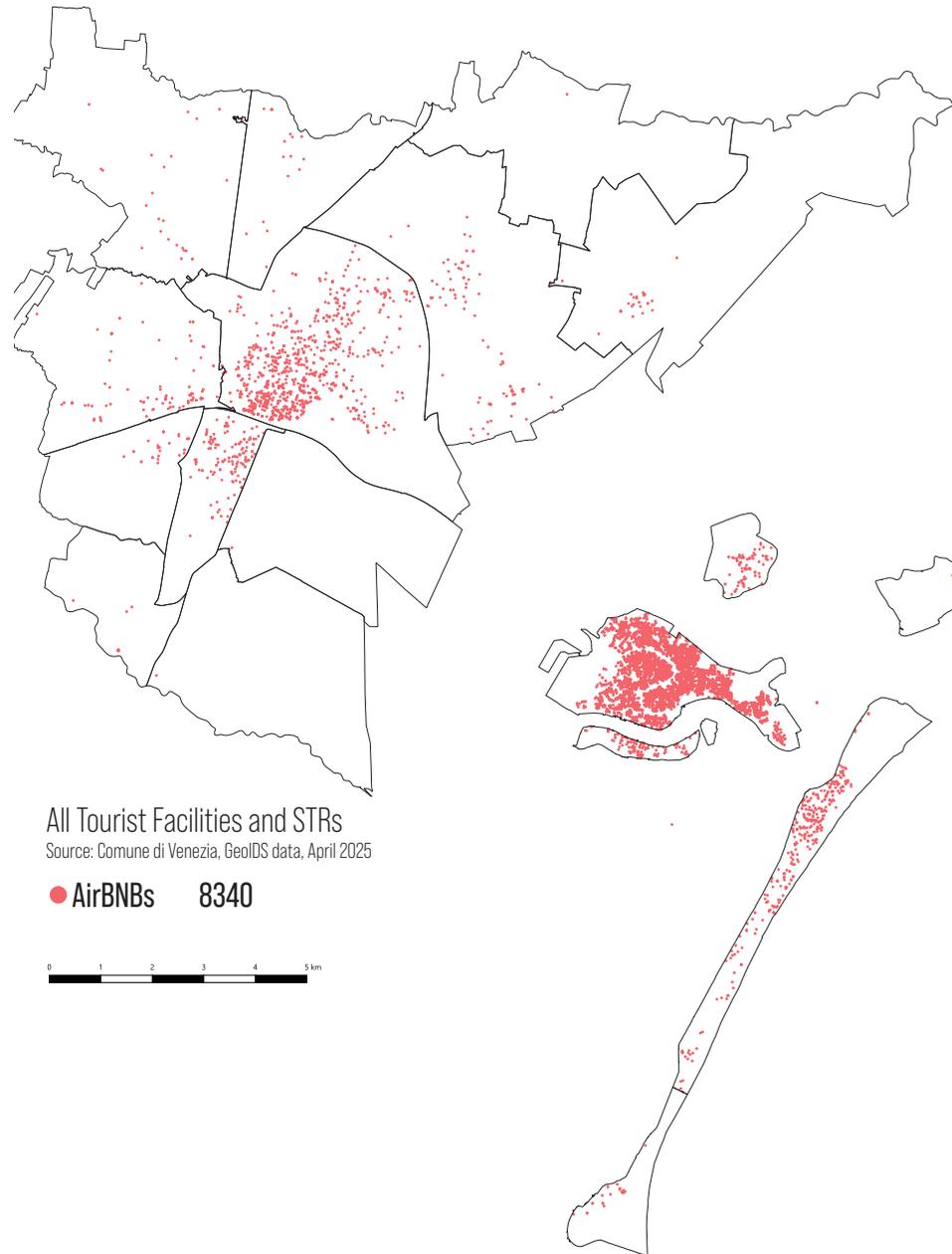
The **spatial distribution and density of STRs in Venice clearly illustrate how tourism has permeated the urban fabric**, shaping the daily experiences of residents while reinforcing tourism dependency. Unlike traditional hotels, which were historically clustered near main arrival points and major attractions, **short-term rentals (STRs) are spread throughout the entire historic center**, bringing visitors into areas once primarily residential<sup>1</sup>. This **diffusion of tourism** means that streets, bridges, and even small canals that were previously quieter are now part of the visitor circuit, extending the impacts of tourism into every corner of the city.



Recent data shows that **nearly 80% of Venice's STR listings are located on the islands of the historic center, with only about 20% on the mainland**. Within these island districts, the **highest densities are found in San Marco, Cannaregio, and Dorsoduro**, where visitors are drawn to iconic sites, but STRs are also increasingly present in Castello, Santa Croce, and even Giudecca<sup>2</sup>. The result is that **no part of Venice is untouched by STR activity**, with the constant presence of visitors changing the rhythms of life, increasing noise, and altering neighborhood dynamics.



An important aspect of this spatial pattern is the **overwhelming dominance of entire home rentals over private room offerings**. In March 2025, **over 77% of STR listings were entire apartments, compared to around 21% for private rooms**<sup>51</sup>. This means that the STR market in Venice is not primarily driven by residents sharing their homes to supplement income but by the **conversion of entire housing units into tourist facilities**, removing them from the long-term residential market<sup>52</sup>. The clustering of these units in the historic center further reduces housing availability in the areas where locals have traditionally lived, adding to the pressures of rising rents and housing scarcity discussed in Section 2.1.

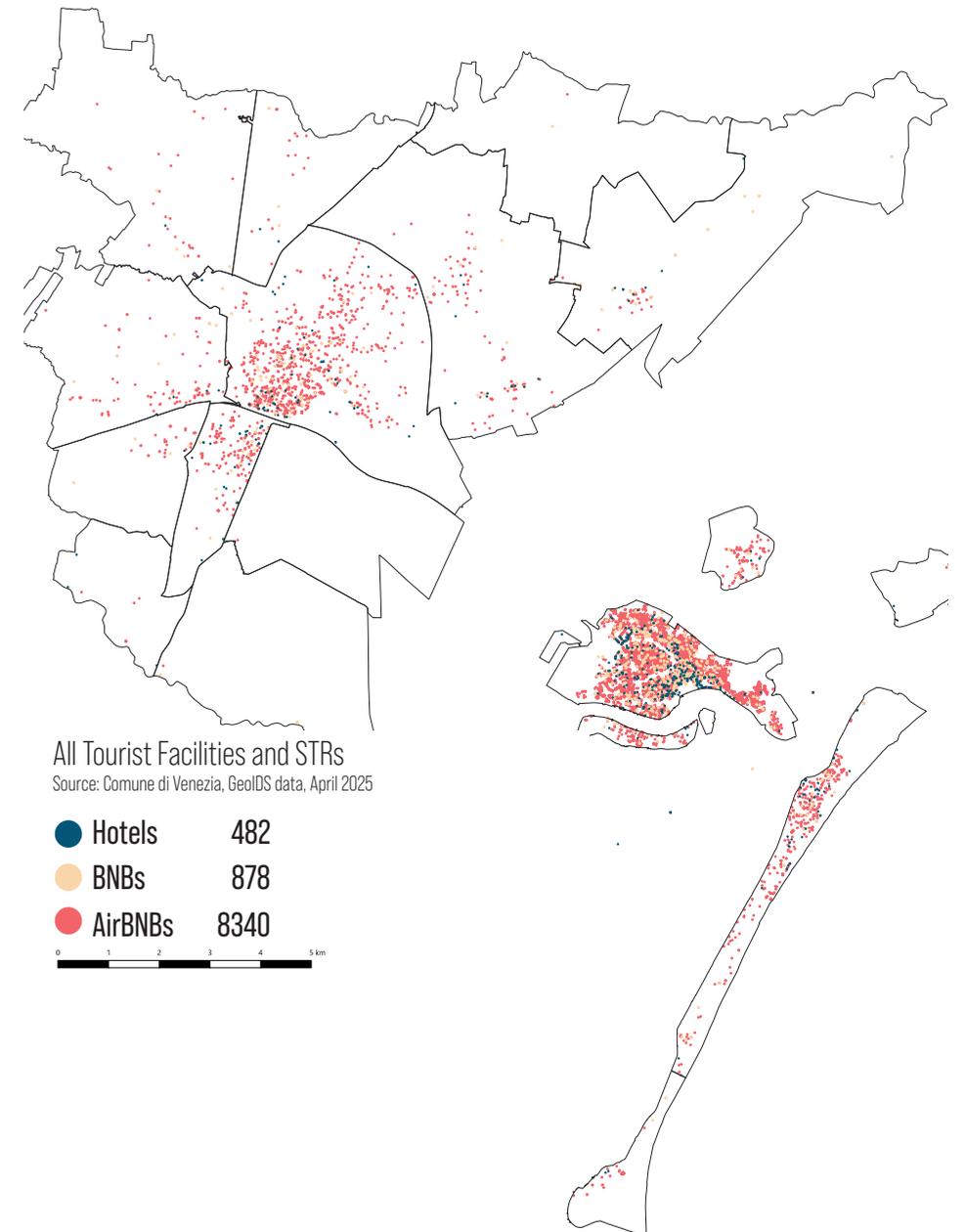


51. Salerno, G.-M. & Russo, A.P. 'Venice as a "short-term city"', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, (pp. 1040-59), 2022).

52. Camatti, N. 'Tourism in Venice: Mapping Overtourism and Exploring Solutions'. Ca' Foscari University of Venice, 2022.

The **spatial saturation of STRs has also intensified the strain on local infrastructure and services**. Waste collection systems, public transport, and utilities experience additional demand due to the constant turnover of visitors staying in dispersed STR units across the city, increasing operational costs for the municipality<sup>53</sup>. Additionally, the widespread availability of STRs encourages longer and more immersive stays within the fragile historic environment, increasing foot traffic on delicate structures and contributing to physical wear on Venice's unique built heritage.

53. AirDNA (2025). *Venice - Market Overview*.



# Close-Up View Of The Entrance To Venice



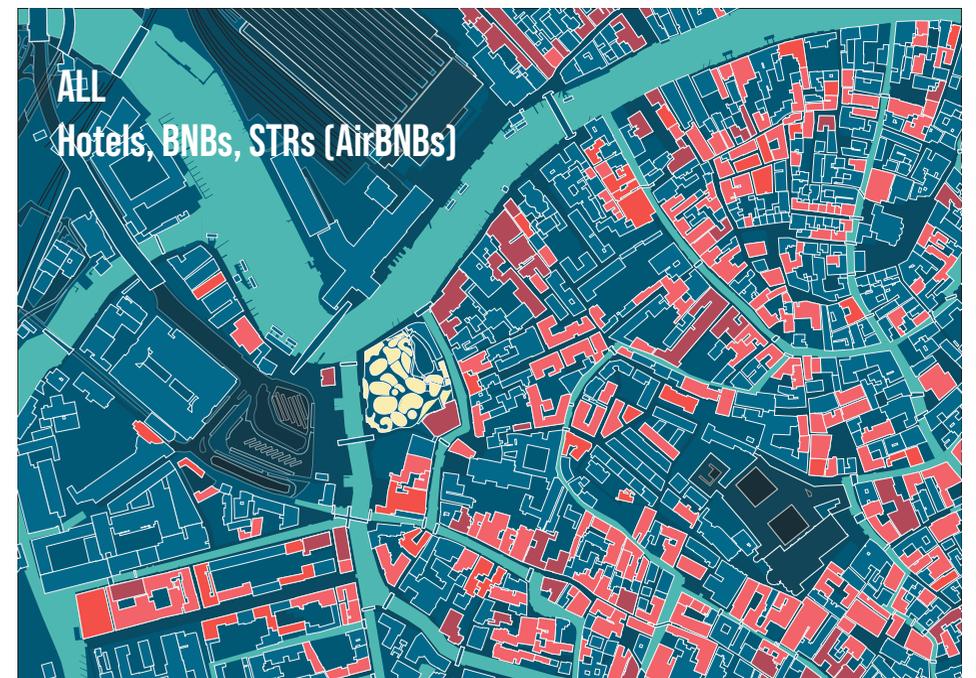
Source: Comune di Venezia, GeoIDS data, April 2025



Source: Comune di Venezia, GeoIDS data, April 2025



Source: Comune di Venezia, GeoIDS data, April 2025



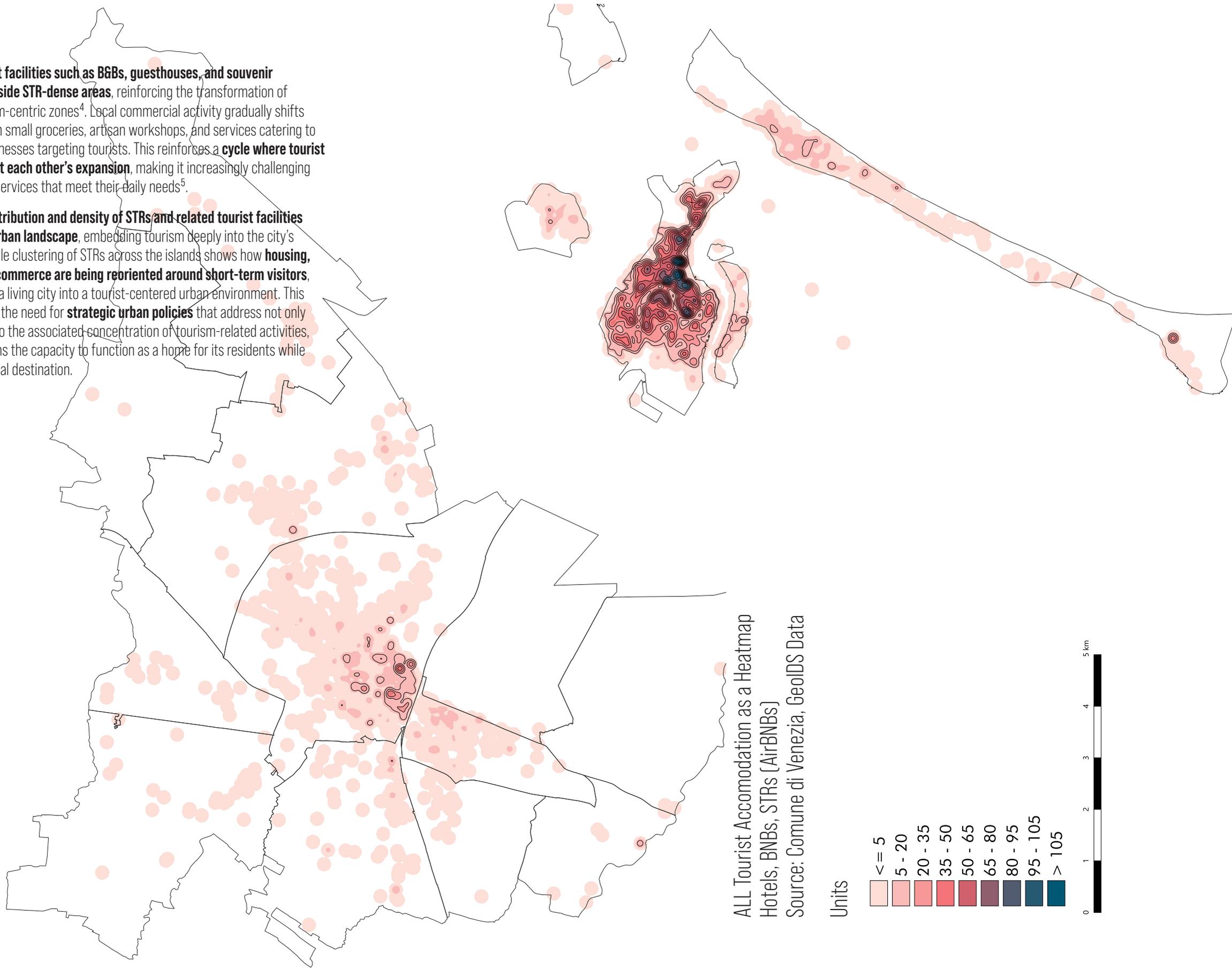
Source: Comune di Venezia, GeoIDS data, April 2025

The maps highlight that **STRs are not merely an addition to Venice’s tourism infrastructure but have become a primary mode of visitor accommodation within the city’s residential landscape.** When combined with hotels and formal B&Bs, **it is estimated that over 30% of buildings in Venice’s historic center are directly linked to tourism accommodation activities**<sup>54</sup>.

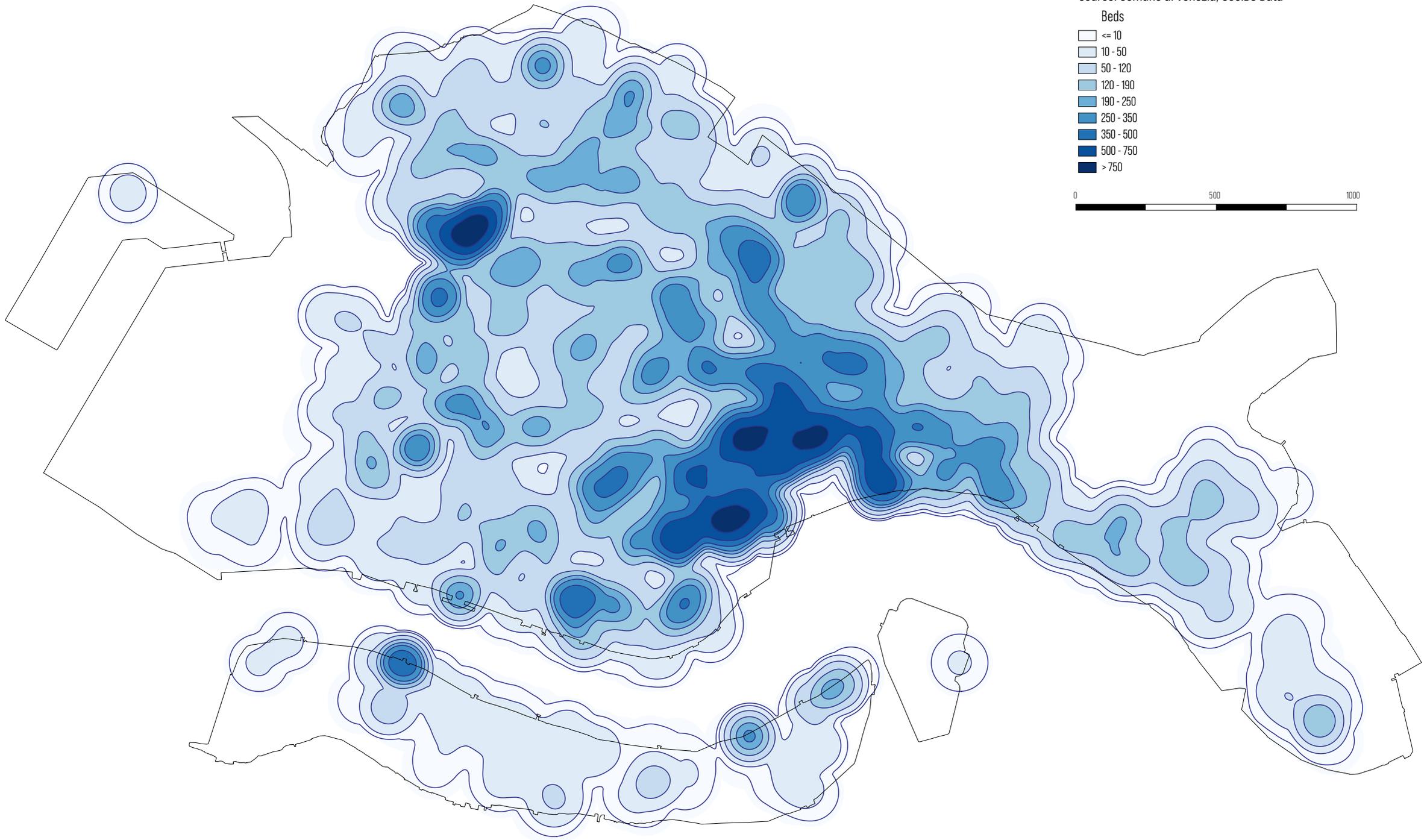
54. Bei, G. & Celata, F. 'Challenges and effects of short-term rentals regulation: A counterfactual assessment of European cities'. *Current Issues in Tourism*, (pp. 175-91), 2023.

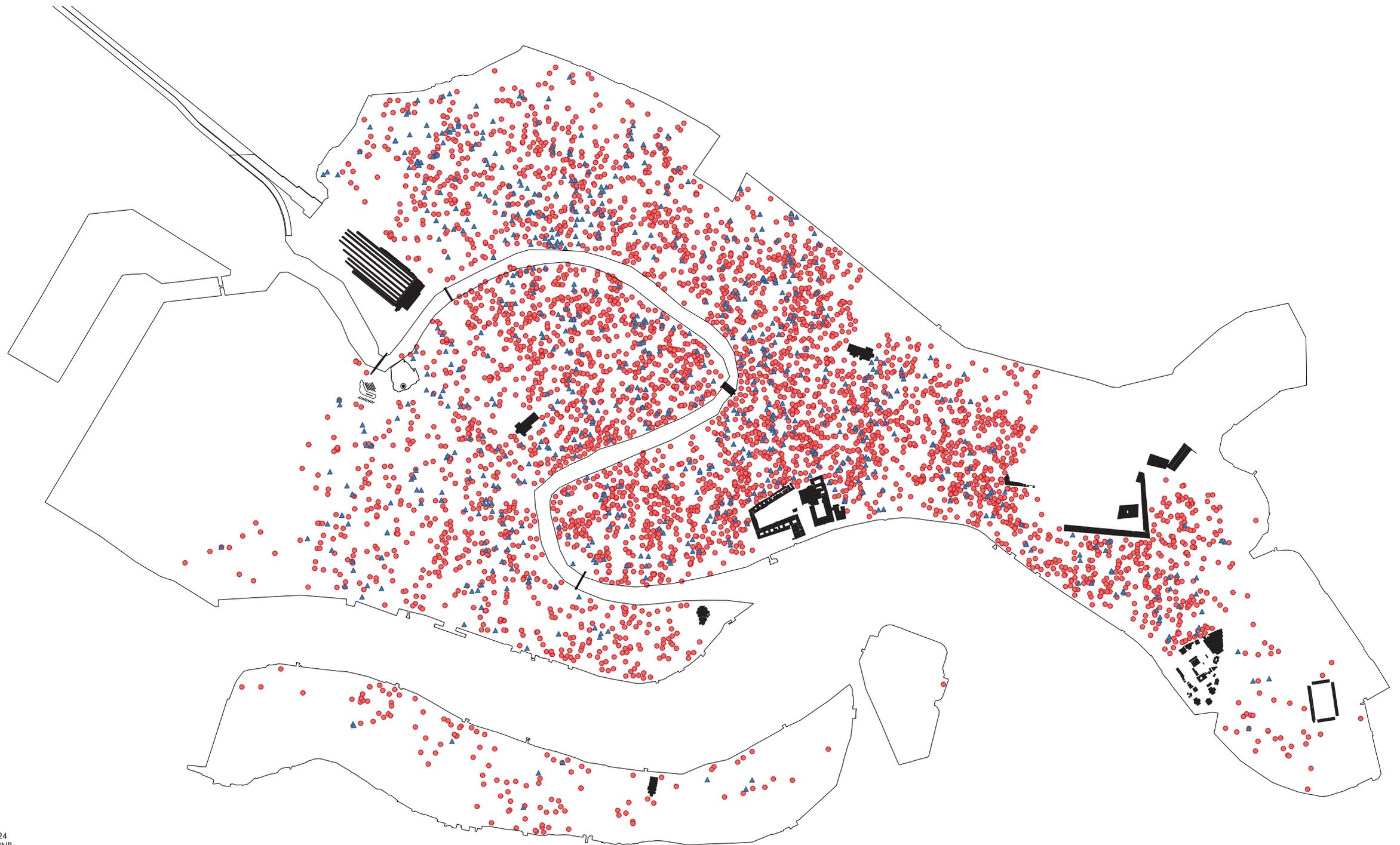
Beyond STRs, **other tourist facilities such as B&Bs, guesthouses, and souvenir shops often cluster alongside STR-dense areas**, reinforcing the transformation of neighborhoods into tourism-centric zones<sup>4</sup>. Local commercial activity gradually shifts to serve visitor needs, with small groceries, artisan workshops, and services catering to residents replaced by businesses targeting tourists. This reinforces a **cycle where tourist facilities and STRs support each other's expansion**, making it increasingly challenging for local residents to find services that meet their daily needs<sup>5</sup>.

In essence, the **spatial distribution and density of STRs and related tourist facilities have reshaped Venice's urban landscape**, embedding tourism deeply into the city's everyday spaces. The visible clustering of STRs across the islands shows how **housing, infrastructure, and local commerce are being reoriented around short-term visitors**, transforming Venice from a living city into a tourist-centered urban environment. This spatial reality makes clear the need for **strategic urban policies** that address not only the growth of STRs but also the associated concentration of tourism-related activities, ensuring that Venice retains the capacity to function as a home for its residents while managing its role as a global destination.



All Hotels, BNBs, STRs Bed Number, Tourist Approach Beds in Venice  
Source: Comune di Venezia, GeoIDS Data





07 December 2024  
Source: InsideAirBNB

◆ Private Room 869  
● Entire Home 4853



# CHAPTER 3

## Impacts of Overtourism and STRs Effect

Venice has become a **symbol of overtourism**, where the volume and concentration of visitors **overwhelm local infrastructure, public spaces, and daily life**<sup>54</sup>. The city's unique geography and limited space make it particularly vulnerable, with the **historic center regularly hosting more tourists than residents**, leading to congestion and pressures on essential services<sup>55</sup>.

The **rise of short-term rentals (STRs)** has intensified these challenges. Platforms like Airbnb, initially seen as part of the sharing economy, have **embedded tourism within residential neighborhoods**, increasing visitor capacity without adequate regulation<sup>56</sup>. This expansion has removed housing from the local market, pushed up rents, and accelerated **resident displacement**, while transforming homes into **informal tourist accommodations**<sup>57</sup>.

As STRs spread, local services shift towards visitors, weakening neighborhood life and replacing community shops with tourist-oriented businesses<sup>58</sup>. Entire districts have seen their identity change, with **residents reporting a loss of community, rising noise, and a sense of alienation** as tourism saturates their streets<sup>59</sup>.

This chapter explores how **overtourism and STR expansion jointly impact Venice** by intensifying urban crowding, transforming the housing market, and altering the host-guest-city relationship. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for shaping policies that protect **Venice's identity as a living city while managing its role as a global destination**<sup>60</sup>.

54. Camatti, N. 'Tourism in Venice: Mapping Overtourism and Exploring Solutions'. Ca' Foscari University of Venice, 2022.

55. Tegen, L. 'Overtourism and Social Movements: The Case of Venice'. Ca' Foscari University of Venice, 2023.

56. Guttentag, D. 'Airbnb: Disruptive Innovation and the Rise of an Informal Tourism Accommodation Sector'. Current Issues in Tourism, 2013.

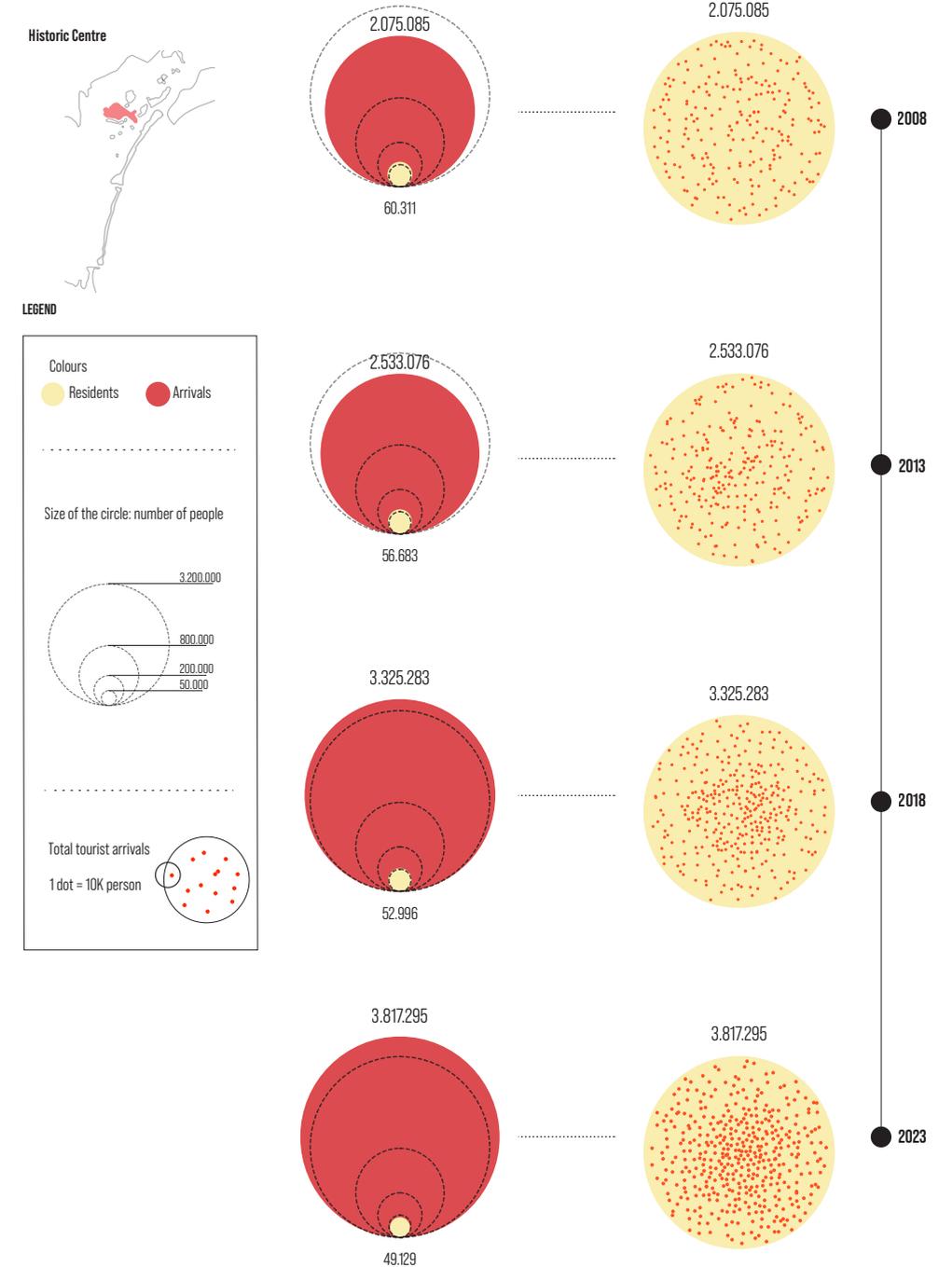
57. Salerno, G.-M. & Russo, A.P. 'Venice as a "short-term city', Journal of Sustainable Tourism, (pp. 1040-59), 2022.

58. Van der Borg et al. 'The Rise of the Sharing Economy in Tourism'. 2017.

59. Rolando 'Il fenomeno Airbnb e l'abitare contemporaneo'. 2022.

60. Salerno, G.-M. & Russo, A.P. 'Venice as a "short-term city', Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 2022.

### Comparison Of The Number Of Tourist Arrivals And The Number Of Residents In Venice from 2008 to 2023



Re-arranged from Parisi, R. (2024). Overtourism in Venice [SVG chart]  
The visualization is made crossing datasets from <https://www.comune.venezia.it/it/content/serie-storiche> (for data about number of residents) and from [https://statistica.regione.veneto.it/jsp/focus\\_su\\_venezia.jsp](https://statistica.regione.veneto.it/jsp/focus_su_venezia.jsp) (for data about tourism).

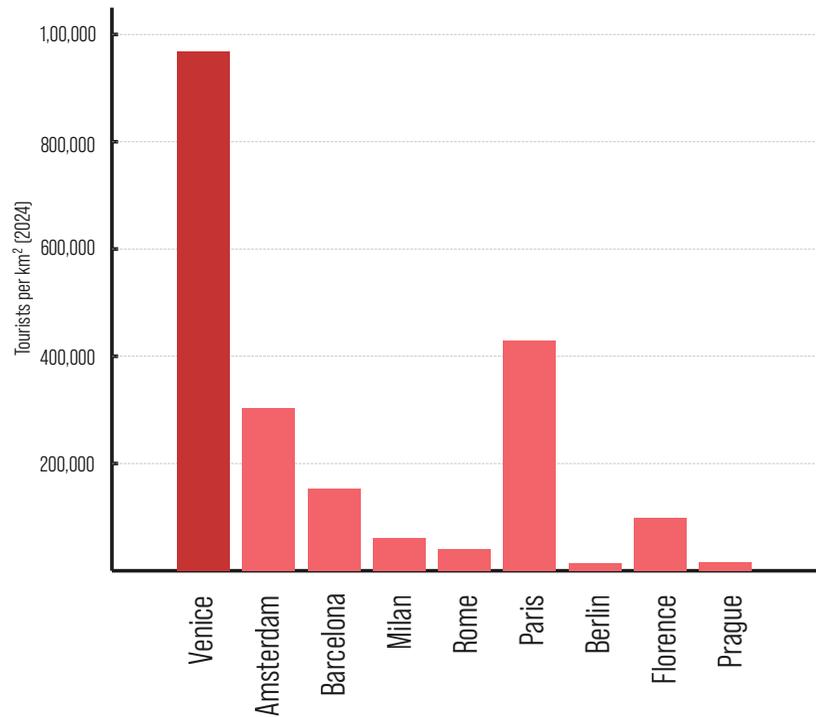
### 3.1 Overtourism and Urban Saturation

Venice is often cited as an **emblematic case of overtourism** – where **visitor numbers overwhelm the city’s capacity and infrastructure**. Annual tourist arrivals to the historic city roughly doubled from 1.5 million in 2000 to over 3.1 million in 2017, with overnight stays jumping from 3.5 million to 7.8 million in the same period. These figures do not even include the massive day-tripper influx: an estimated **17.5 million day visitors and 7.5 million commuters swarm Venice each year**, equating to about **66,000 tourists per day alongside the city’s dwindling resident population**. By comparison, Venice’s historic centre now holds only around 50,000 inhabitants. This imbalance manifests in **extreme urban saturation** – on a typical day, tourists vastly outnumber locals, straining the **narrow streets, public transport, and basic services**<sup>61</sup>.

61. Salerno, G.-M. & Russo, A.P. 'Venice as a "short-term city', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, (pp. 1040-59), 2022.

#### Tourist Density in European Cities (2024)

Total Tourists / City Area (km<sup>2</sup>)

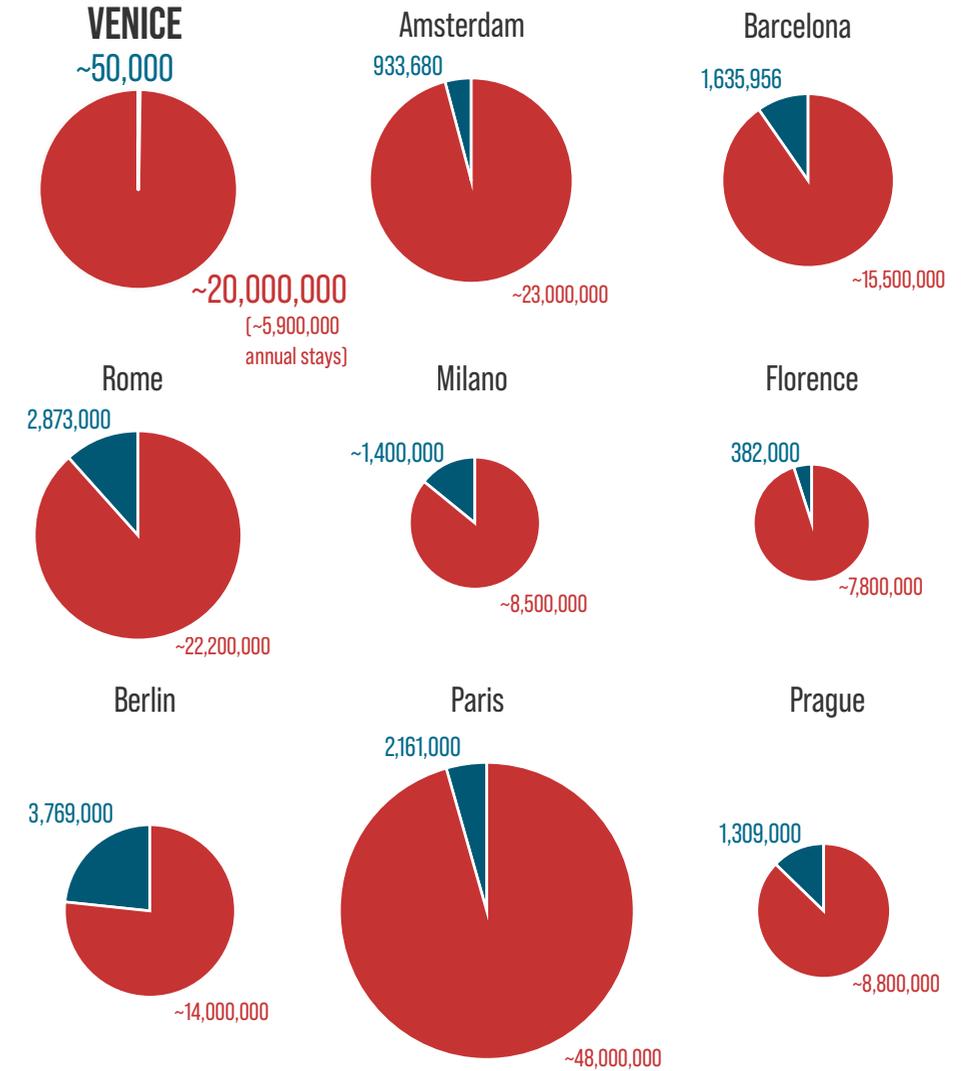


Tourist arrival data for 2024 were compiled from various official tourism boards, statistical agencies, and recent news reports. City area figures reflect city-proper administrative boundaries, excluding suburban or metropolitan zones. Sources include:

- INSEE (2024) Tourism in Paris and France, <https://www.insee.fr>
- CBS Netherlands (2024) Tourism in Amsterdam, <https://www.cbs.nl>
- WeTheItalians (2024) Rome Sets Tourism Record, <https://www.wetheitalians.com>
- VisitBerlin (2024) Current Tourism Statistics, <https://about.visitberlin.de>
- WPTTravel (2024) Most Visited Cities in the World, <https://wptravel.io>

Area data cross-referenced with city planning websites and national statistics portals. Tourist density calculated as total annual visitors ÷ city proper land area (km<sup>2</sup>).

#### Comparison of Resident and Tourist Numbers in European Cities 2023 - 2024



Tourist arrival and population data compiled from the most recent sources available as of mid-2025:  
 Venice: Tourist arrival estimates based on media coverage of 2024's entry fee pilot and municipal data indicating daily flows and ticketing (ANSA, 2024; Il Sole 24 Ore, 2024). Population data from ISTAT (2023) and Comune di Venezia.  
 Amsterdam: 2024 figures from Amsterdam Marketing and Statistics Netherlands (CBS, 2024), as cited in NL Times (2024) and official city tourism press releases.  
 Barcelona: Data based on January–November 2024 tourist arrivals from INE (Instituto Nacional de Estadística) and Ajuntament de Barcelona open data.  
 Milan: Tourist arrival estimates extrapolated from national trends reported by ENIT and Statista; population from ISTAT and Comune di Milano (2024).  
 Rome: 2024 tourist figures and overnight stays reported by the Rome Tourism Board and Italian Government Tourist Board (ENIT, 2024); population from ISTAT.  
 Paris: Based on 2024 Olympic tourism projections and post-Olympic evaluations by the Paris Region Tourism Office and Atout France; resident population from INSEE (2024).  
 Berlin: 2024 tourism report published by Berlin Tourismus & Kongress GmbH (visitBerlin); population from Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg.  
 Florence: Tourist figures from Regione Toscana and Comune di Firenze (2024 quarterly tourism reports); population from ISTAT (2024).  
 Prague: Tourism data extrapolated from Czech Statistical Office's 2024 Q3–Q4 national reports; population from Czech Statistical Office and Prague City Hall.

Multiple factors have driven this oversaturation. The expansion of **low-cost flights** to regional airports has made the city more accessible to budget travelers, while cruise tourism brings over 1.5 million passengers annually, with images of cruise ships towering over St. Mark's Square becoming symbolic of overtourism's excesses. The result is intense congestion: at peak times, famous sites like Rialto and Piazza San Marco are so crowded that authorities have trialled emergency flow control gates to redirect visitor traffic. Public ferries and walkways are **packed shoulder-to-shoulder**, slowing local commutes and daily errands<sup>62</sup>.

Long-time residents describe feeling **"suffocated" by constant throngs of visitors** and the transformation of their hometown into a **"cash machine" for tourism**. The proliferation of souvenir shops and tourist-oriented businesses gradually displaces shops catering to everyday needs, driving up prices for basic goods and services. The **fabric of urban life has been skewed toward serving visitors**, echoing what scholars call **"Disneyfication"** – a historic city turned into a **tourist theme park**<sup>63</sup>.

62. Tegan, L. 'Overtourism and Social Movements: The Case of Venice'. Ca' Foscari University of Venice, 2023.

63. Camatti, N. 'Tourism in Venice: Mapping Overtourism and Exploring Solutions'. Ca' Foscari University of Venice, 2022.

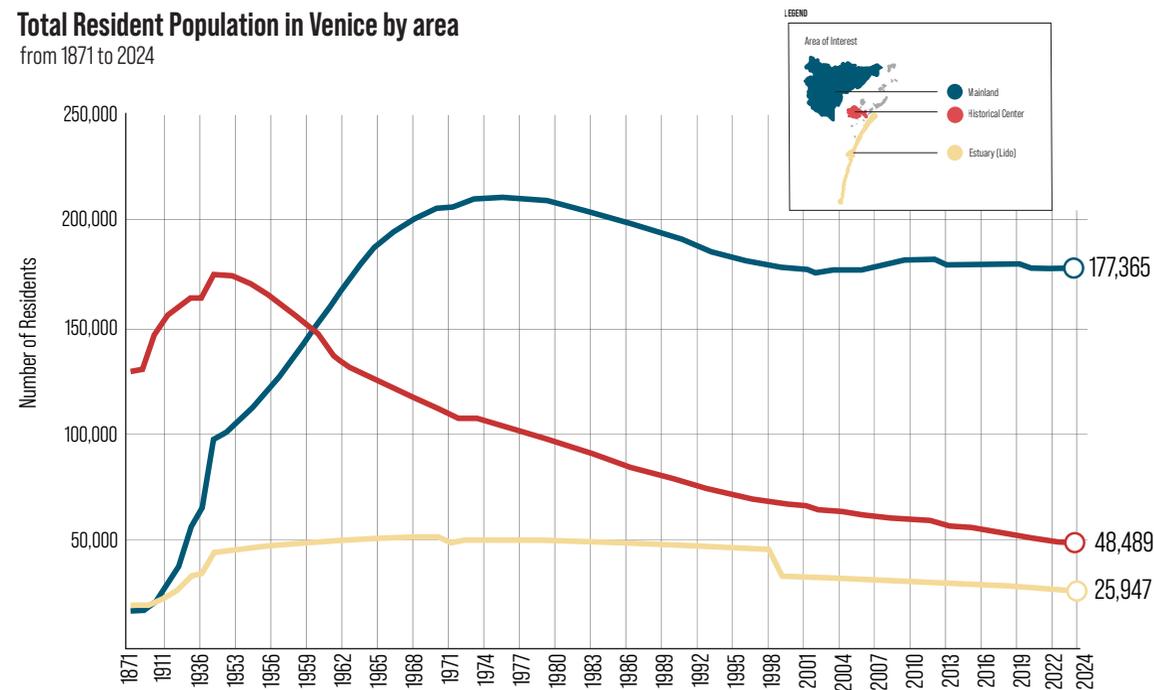
64. Giuffrida, A. 'Venetians fear 'museum relic' status as population drops below 50,000'. The Guardian, 10 August, 2023.

65. Bei, G. & Celata, F. 'Challenges and effects of short-term rentals regulation: A counterfactual assessment of European cities'. Current Issues in Tourism, (pp. 175-91), 2023.

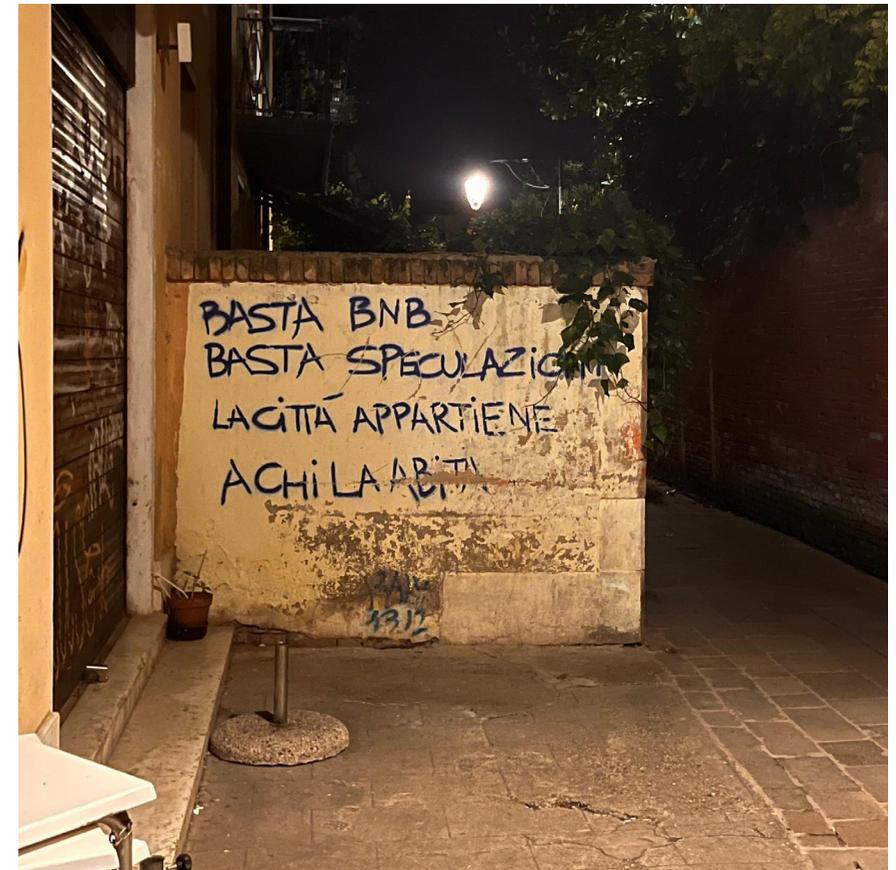
Importantly, the rise of **short-term rentals (STRs)** like Airbnb has contributed to Venice's urban saturation by vastly expanding tourist accommodation within the city. Unlike traditional hotels constrained by regulations and space, STRs have permeated residential buildings across all six sestieri, **increasing the city's carrying capacity for tourists and intensifying overcrowding** in previously residential areas<sup>64</sup>. From 2016–2018 alone, Venice saw roughly 18,600 new STR bed spaces in the historic centre, a growth equal to the previous 15 years combined. By 2017, non-hotel lodging beds (apartments, B&Bs) surpassed hotel beds for the first time, reversing the traditional balance. As of early 2020, there were around 49,300 tourist bed places in the historic centre, nearly matching the resident population<sup>65</sup>.

**"ENOUGH BNB,  
ENOUGH SPECULATION,  
THE CITY BELONGS  
TO THOSE WHO LIVE IN IT."**

**Total Resident Population in Venice by area**  
from 1871 to 2024



Re-arranged from Statistica  
The visualization is made crossing datasets from <https://www.comune.venezia.it>



Photos from Venice Streets  
Source :Author

This remarkable density underscores how STR platforms have **“hyper-touristified” Venice’s urban core**, converting formerly residential apartments into mini-hotels and allowing more visitors to stay overnight inside the city rather than on the mainland or in traditional hotels. The outcome is that **no corner of Venice is untouched by tourism**, even quiet residential canals echo with luggage wheels and late-night check-ins. In summary, short-term rentals have **amplified overtourism by saturating Venice’s finite urban space with ever more visitors**, pushing the city beyond its sustainable carrying capacity. The phenomenon of overtourism in Venice is thus **not just about raw visitor numbers but about their concentration in a fragile island city**, a city now grappling with how to reclaim livability amid the onslaught of its own popularity.

## “TOURIST GO HOME”



Photos from Venice Streets  
Source :Author



## “SQUAT BNBS”

Photos from Venice Streets  
Source :Author

## 3.2 Effects on Housing and Long-Term Accommodation Availability

“Burbank and I are sitting on a terrace at sunset in Campo Santo Stefano, a plaza in one of the city’s wealthiest neighbourhoods. He’s heading to tango class after this interview – with his mum. They live in the same apartment, because that’s the only way Burbank [whose father is American] can afford to stay in Venice.”

**“It’s not just that it’s expensive,”** he tells me over a couple of beers.  
**“It’s that there are no places for exactly one guy to live.”**

(Rose,2015, Independent)

66. Rose, J. 'The death of Venice: Corrupt officials, mass tourism and soaring property prices have stifled life in the city', *The Independent*, 15 May, 2015.  
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/the-death-of-venice-corrupt-officials-mass-tourism-and-soaring-property-prices-have-stifled-life-in-the-city-10251434.html>

One of the most visible and concerning impacts of **short-term rentals (STRs) in Venice** has been on housing availability and affordability for residents. As STR platforms like Airbnb have grown, many landlords have shifted from long-term rentals to more lucrative short-term leases, **removing thousands of apartments from the local housing market**<sup>67</sup>. This has created a **scarcity of available housing**, driving up rental prices and making it harder for young people, families, and workers to find and maintain stable homes within the historic center<sup>68</sup>.

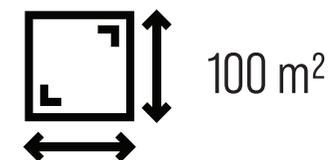
Entire buildings that once housed families are now dominated by STR units, transforming them into **informal hotels while maintaining the façade of residential housing**. The result is the **hollowing out of communities**, where neighbors are replaced by a constant flow of tourists, reducing the potential for local relationships and community stability. Streets that once echoed with the daily rhythms of local life increasingly resonate with the sounds of rolling suitcases and transient visitors checking in and out<sup>69</sup>.

67. Salerno, G.-M. & Russo, A.P. 'Venice as a "short-term city"', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, (pp. 1040-59), 2022.

68. Tegen, L. 'Overtourism and Social Movements: The Case of Venice'. *Ca' Foscari University of Venice*, 2023.

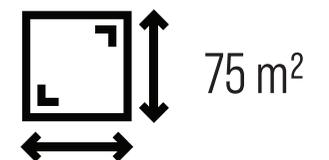
69. Giuffrida, A. 'Venetians fear 'museum relic' status as population drops below 50,000'. *The Guardian*, 10 August, 2023.

### AVERAGE AREA OF HOMES FOR SALE IN VENICE



1529 listing homes from immobiliare.it November/22

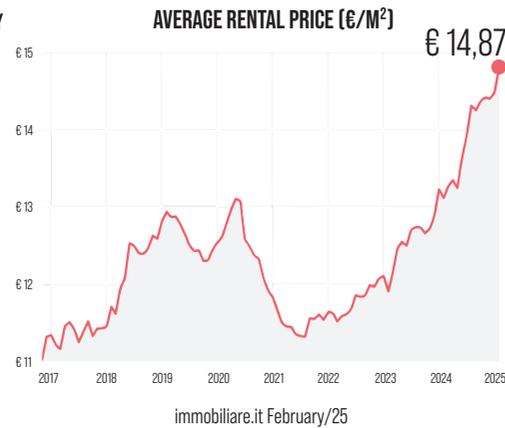
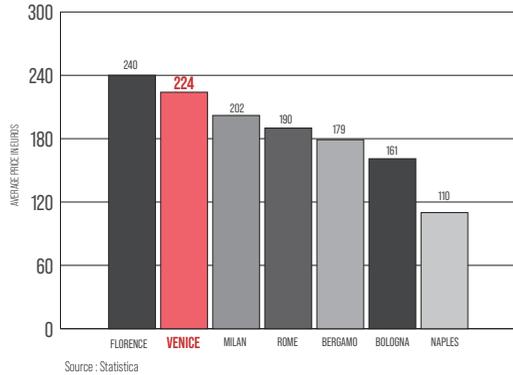
### AVERAGE AREA OF HOMES FOR RENT IN VENICE



124 listing homes from immobiliare.it November/22

Recent data illustrates **why landlords increasingly prefer STRs over long-term rentals in Venice**. An average apartment in Venice rents for around €1,115 per month, generating approximately €13,380 annually from a stable tenant. In contrast, even with the upcoming 120-day rental cap, **an Airbnb can earn around €179 per night, bringing in over €21,000 annually if rented for just 19 nights per month**. This results in **60% more income compared to long-term renting**, offering landlords an additional €2,286 per month on average. Given Venice's high tourist demand and limited housing stock, these financial incentives strongly encourage owners to convert long-term rental units into STRs, **reducing the availability of homes for residents and increasing rental competition in the local market**.

AVERAGE PRICE PER NIGHT OF AIRBNB LISTINGS IN SELECTED CITIES IN ITALY  
SEPTEMBER, 2024



179 € IN MARCH/ 25

If an AirBNB makes €179 per night and is rented out 19 nights out of the month, they are able to make

3401 € PER MONTH

Compared to median renting price of 1115 €

= 2286 € extra a month renting as a STR

If the house is rented for a maximum of 120 days due to the regulation coming in 2026

21.480 € yearly income as a STR

75 m<sup>2</sup> x 14,87€ = 1115 €

AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT

12 x 1115 € = 13.380 €

AVERAGE YEARLY RENT

**%60** more income  
only renting 120 days  
as a STR

This transformation contributes directly to Venice's ongoing **depopulation crisis**. As rents rise and housing options shrink, residents are forced to move to the mainland, leaving behind a historic center where the population has dropped below 50,000, while the number of tourist beds surpasses the number of inhabitants. This demographic shift also impacts the local economy beyond tourism: schools close due to a lack of students, neighborhood shops catering to residents struggle to survive, and essential services are reduced due to declining demand from locals.

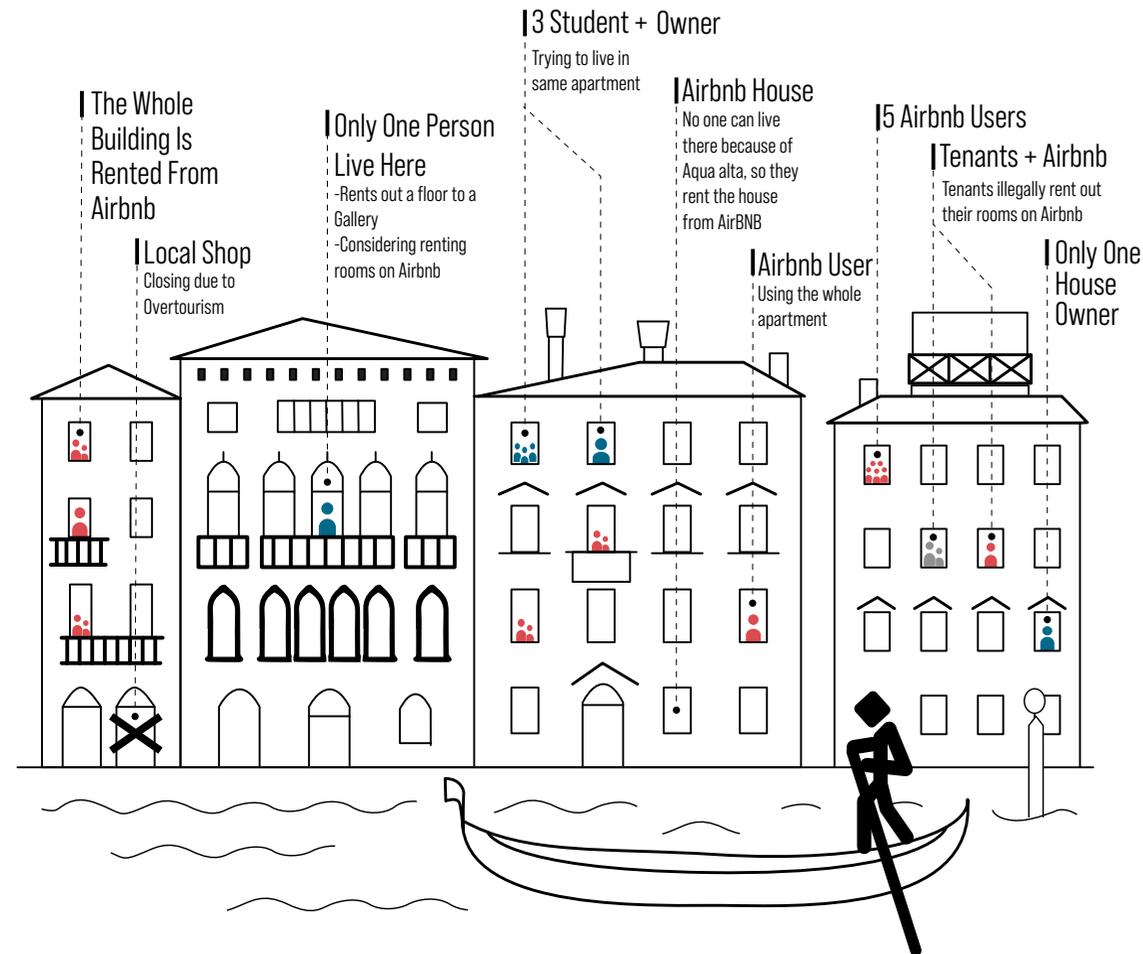
Moreover, the dominance of STRs fuels a **cycle of speculation and property value inflation**. As property owners see the potential for high tourist income, housing increasingly becomes an investment vehicle rather than a social good, prioritizing visitors over residents. This pushes out lower- and middle-income residents, replacing them with temporary guests who contribute to the local economy in narrow, seasonal ways while reducing the long-term economic diversity and resilience of the city.

In summary, the expansion of STRs in Venice has dramatically **reduced the availability of long-term housing, increased rents, displaced residents, and reshaped the housing market into a system that prioritizes tourists over the local community**. This creates a **vicious cycle where housing becomes a tool for profit extraction, undermining Venice's social fabric and threatening its identity as a living city rather than a tourist destination**.

### 3.3 Changing Urban Relationships: Host, Guest, and the City

The rise of **short-term rentals (STRs) in Venice** has redefined the relationship between hosts, guests, and the city, reshaping how tourism interacts with urban life. In traditional tourism models, visitors were separated from residents by staying in designated hotel zones, but STRs embed tourists directly into residential buildings, creating a **new form of proximity between locals and visitors**<sup>70</sup>.

While platforms like Airbnb originally framed STRs as a form of “sharing economy” hospitality, in Venice, the reality often differs. Many hosts are no longer residents renting out a spare room but **investors managing multiple properties as full-time STR businesses**. This commercialization of residential housing has shifted the host-guest dynamic, transforming what could have been cultural exchanges into transactions with minimal human connection<sup>71</sup>.



70. Salerno, G.-M. & Russo, A.P. 'Venice as a "short-term city"', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 2022.

71. Guttentag, D. 'Airbnb: Disruptive Innovation and the Rise of an Informal Tourism Accommodation Sector', *Current Issues in Tourism*, 2013.

72. Tegan, L. 'Overtourism and Social Movements: The Case of Venice', *Ca' Foscari University of Venice*, 2023.

73. Camatti, N. 'Tourism in Venice: Mapping Overtourism and Exploring Solutions', *Ca' Foscari University of Venice*, 2022.

74. Van der Borg, J., Camatti, N., Bertocchi, D., & Albarea, A. *WP DSE 05/17. Università Ca' Foscari Venezia*, 2017.

75. Rolando 'Il fenomeno Airbnb e l'abitare contemporaneo', *Politecnico di Torino*, 2022.

76. Salerno, G.-M. & Russo, A.P. 'Venice as a "short-term city"', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 2022.

For residents, the daily reality of living alongside STR guests can mean **increased noise, crowded shared spaces, and a loss of privacy**. It also creates uncertainty, as neighbors are replaced by a rotating stream of strangers, reducing the stability that forms the foundation of community life. Many Venetians describe feeling like strangers in their own buildings and neighborhoods, which impacts their sense of security and belonging<sup>72</sup>.

The diagram, **visually illustrates these dynamics within Venice's housing environment**. It shows how STRs fragment residential life by enabling **one owner to convert entire buildings into Airbnb units, forcing multiple tenants and students to compete for limited affordable spaces, and creating situations where even legally rented apartments are sublet on Airbnb without owners' oversight**. It depicts local shops closing **under overtourism pressure**, with residential spaces being used primarily for STR profit as owners increasingly prefer renting to tourists over residents. The diagram also highlights how **a single Airbnb user can occupy an entire apartment, displacing potential long-term residents**, and how the pervasive STR culture encourages even cautious owners to consider STR as a more profitable alternative, deepening Venice's transformation from a lived city into a tourism platform. This visualization reinforces how **STRs alter not just housing markets but everyday relationships in buildings and neighborhoods**, aligning with the arguments of this section.

At a citywide scale, the embeddedness of tourism within residential spaces has **blurred the boundary between tourist zones and local life**, turning entire neighborhoods into extensions of the tourism economy. Shops and services shift toward visitor needs, schools and services for families shrink, and public spaces become dominated by temporary visitors<sup>73</sup>. This reorientation of urban priorities creates a city that increasingly serves visitors over residents, transforming Venice into a stage for tourism rather than a lived-in community<sup>74</sup>.

The city government has recognized these challenges and has attempted to regulate STR growth, but enforcement remains uneven, and economic incentives continue to drive the expansion of STRs. The outcome is a **fundamental shift in the social and spatial fabric of Venice**, where the guest becomes a central figure in the city, the host becomes an investor, and the city itself becomes a platform for tourism transactions rather than a shared space for community life<sup>75</sup>.

In conclusion, STRs have changed the host-guest-city relationship in Venice by **embedding tourism into the heart of residential life, weakening community bonds, and shifting the city's priorities toward temporary visitors over long-term residents**. This transformation challenges the future of Venice as a living city, demanding policies that protect local communities while managing tourism responsibly<sup>76</sup>.

# CHAPTER 4

## *Policy and Regulation Frameworks*

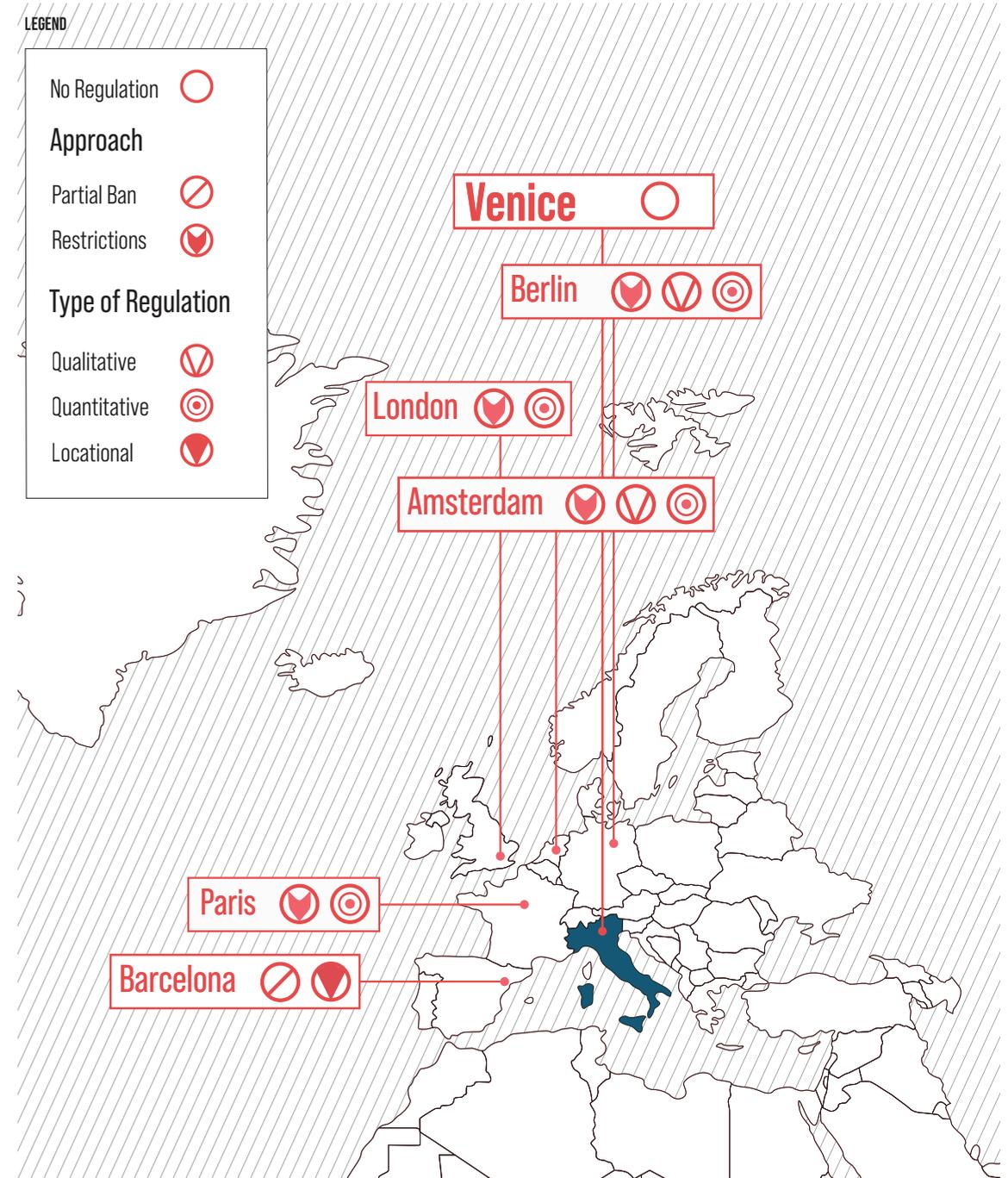
In response to the rapid expansion of short-term rentals (STRs), especially through platforms such as Airbnb, urban policymakers have been compelled to adopt regulatory frameworks aimed at mitigating adverse effects on housing markets, resident displacement, and neighborhood cohesion. **Regulating STRs has emerged as a complex task**, as it must balance competing interests: safeguarding affordable housing, ensuring fiscal compliance, and accommodating tourism-driven economic benefits<sup>77</sup>.

**European cities face particular regulatory challenges**, given the multi-tiered governance structure encompassing municipal, regional, national, and EU levels. Local governments often lack the autonomous power to enforce stringent controls, while national and EU-level frameworks have historically favored market liberalization and platform immunity<sup>78</sup>. For instance, until recent updates like the *Digital Services Act*, digital platforms were not obliged to share data with public authorities, severely limiting monitoring and enforcement capacity.

77. Bei, G., & Celata, F. 'Challenges and Effects of Short-Term Rentals Regulation: A Counterfactual Assessment of European Cities. *Annals of Tourism Research*'. 2023.

78. Colomb, C., & de Souza, T. *Regulating Short-Term Rentals in European Cities: Policy Approaches, Challenges, and Implications. Urban Studies*, (pp. 3025-41), 2021.

### Regulation Map of Europe 2023



Re-arranged from Caccese, A (2019). *The Airbnb effect : Architecture and urban consequences of a new way of trading homes*

Moreover, **enforcement asymmetries and data opacity** have emerged as central issues. Without full access to transaction data or the authority to remove non-compliant listings, **municipalities are reliant on platform cooperation**, which is not always forthcoming. This power imbalance, often described as *“datapower”*<sup>79</sup>, underscores the need for **more robust public-private data-sharing mechanisms**.

Political factors also play a crucial role: divergent interests between governance levels can cause **regulatory fractures** and delays. While local authorities are typically more concerned with housing affordability and overtourism, national governments may prioritize economic growth and tax collection<sup>80</sup>. Additionally, platform resistance is not only top-down but **mobilized from below**, with users advocating for STRs under the banner of the *sharing economy*<sup>81</sup>. This further complicates consensus around regulatory enforcement.

In light of these tensions, scholars such as Ferreri and Sanyal (2018) emphasize that **the current state of STR governance often legitimizes rather than restricts platform expansion**, unless coupled with robust control over online data and strong local enforcement mechanisms<sup>82</sup>.

79. Söderström, O., & Mermet, A. C. 'Data Power in the Platform Urbanism of Airbnb: Implications for Urban Governance. *Urban Geography*, (pp. 393-410), 2020.

80. Aguilera, T., Artioli, F., & Colomb, C. 'Explaining the Diversity of Policy Responses to Platform-Mediated Short-Term Rentals in European Cities: A Comparison of Barcelona, Paris and Milan'. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, (pp. 1568-91), 2021.

81. Celata, F., Romano, L., & Sanna, V. 'Political Geography of Sharing Economy in Urban Contexts: The Case of Airbnb in Rome'. 2017.

82. Ferreri, M., & Sanyal, R. *Platform Economies and Urban Planning: Airbnb and Regulated Housing in London*. *Urban Studies*, 2018.

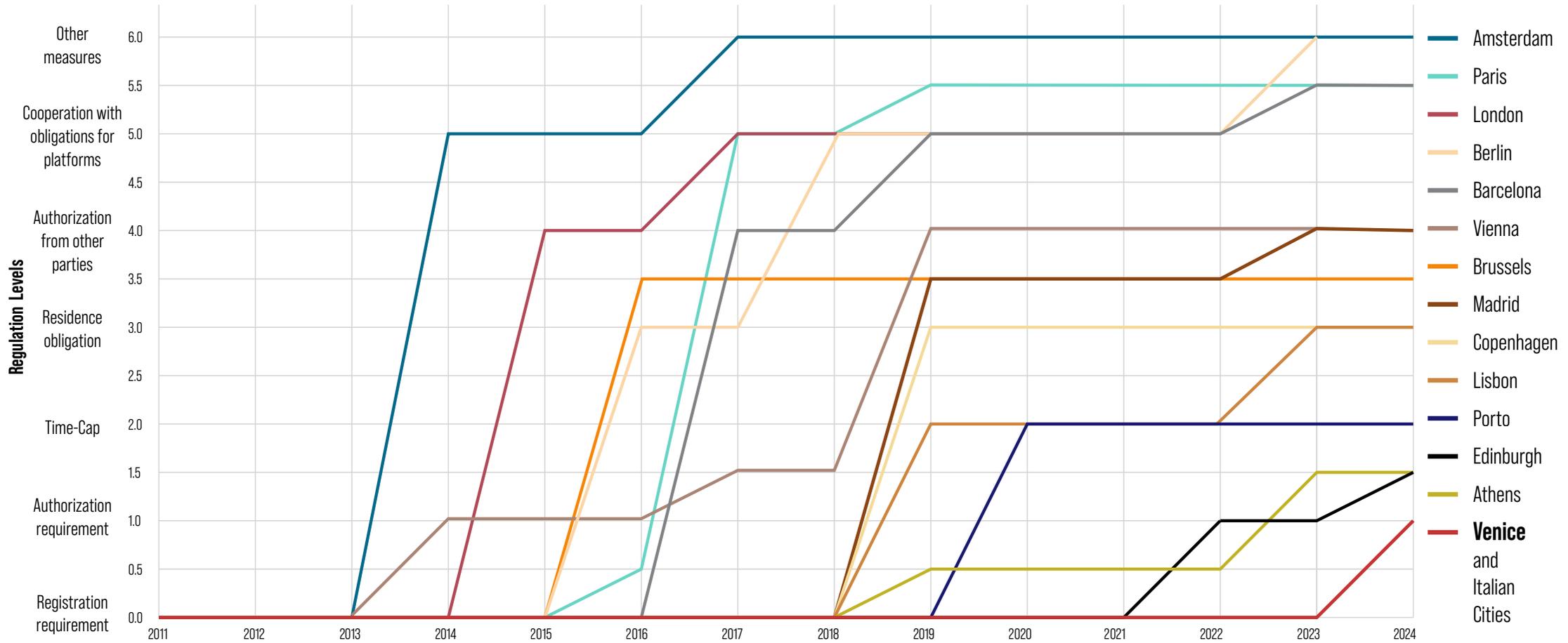


Photos from article Airbnb, a cornerstone of gentrification  
Source :<https://campaignforlivingvenice.org/2018/05/21/airbnb-a-cornerstone-of-gentrification/>

City	Registration requirement	Authorization requirement	Time-Cap	Residence obligation	Zonal restrictions	Authorization from other parties	Cooperation with obligations for platforms	Other measures
Amsterdam	Yes	Yes	60 days (from 2020: 30 days), (15 in 2026)	Yes	Yes (from 2020)	Landlord; condominium/homeowners' association; bank/insurer	Sharing data / block irregular listings (interrupted in 2019); tax collection	Min rental period: 7 days; ban on social housing
Barcelona	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes (limited in special zones)	Landlord; condominium/homeowners' association	Sharing data/ block irregular listings	Max one accommodation per non-professional hosts
Berlin	Yes	Yes	90 days	Yes	Yes (few licenses restricted to more touristic districts)	Landlord	No	No
Brussels	Yes	Yes	120 days (if primary residence)	No	No	Landlord; condominium/homeowners' association	Obligation to share data	No
Copenhagen	No	No	70 days (100 days on collaborative platforms)	Yes	No	No	Sharing data for tax purposes	No
London	Yes	Yes (if primary residence, if >90 days)	90	No	Yes (few licenses restricted to more touristic boroughs)	Bank/insurer/-freeholder	Block irregular listings	Ban on social housing
Madrid	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes (in central areas only if independent entrance)	Condominium/homeowners' association	Obligation to share data (interrupted)	No
Paris	Yes	Yes (if primary residence, if >120 days)	120 days	Yes	No (recent proposal)	Landlord; condominium/homeowners' association	Obligation to share data and block irregular listings in the first four districts	Ban on social housing
Vienna	Yes	Yes (not if primary residence)	No	Yes	Yes (prohibited in specific zones)	Landlord; condominium/homeowners' association	Obligation to share data and block irregular listings	Ban on social and co-operative housing
Athens	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Obligation to share data and block irregular listings	No
Edinburgh	Yes	Yes, Since 2022	No	No	No	No	No	No
Florence	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Tourist tax collection	No
Lisbon	Yes	No (from Nov 2019, in containment areas)	No	No	No (from Nov 2019: licenses limited in containment areas)	No	Tourist tax collection	No
Porto	Yes	No (from Jan 2020, in containment areas)	No	No	No (from Jan 2020: licenses limited in containment areas)	No	Tourist tax collection	No
Rome	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Tourist tax collection (from Jul 2020)	No
Venice	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Tourist tax collection	No

Re-arranged from Bei, G., & Celata, F. (2023). Challenges and effects of short-term rentals regulation: A counterfactual assessment of European cities. *Annals of Tourism Research*  
Source: Source: based on Colomb& de Souza, 2021; Scottish Government, 2019, 2022; von Briel & Dolnicar, 2021; Hübscher & Kallert, 2022; Nieuwland& VanMelik, 2020; AirbnbHelp-Center, 2022; Airbnb News, 2019, 2022; Camara Municipal de Lisboa, 2022; Camara Municipal de Porto, 2022; Città di Venezia, 2022; Città Metropolitana di Firenze, 2019;AADE, 2022; Guest Ready, 2022; Greater London Authority, 2022; Regione Toscana, 2022; Regione Veneto, 2022; City of Edinburgh, 2022.

## Regulation Level Table (2025)



Re-arranged from Bei, G., & Celata, F. (2023). Challenges and effects of short-term rentals regulation: A counterfactual assessment of European cities. *Annals of Tourism Research*. Degree of stringency of short-term rental regulation in 16 European cities, 2011-2022. Source: based on Colomb & de Souza, 2021; Scottish Government, 2019, 2022; von Briel & Dolnicar, 2021; Hübscher & Kallert, 2022; Nieuwland & Van Melik, 2020; Airbnb Help Center, 2022; AirbnB News, 2019, 2022; Camara Municipal de Lisboa, 2022; Camara Municipal de Porto, 2022; Città di Venezia, 2022; Città Metropolitana di Firenze, 2019; AADE, 2022; Guest Ready, 2022; Greater London Authority, 2022; Regione Toscana, 2022; Regione Veneto, 2022; City of Edinburgh, 2022.

## Key Regulations (2025)

- Amsterdam** 30-60 day annual limit; mandatory city registration; automatic delisting by platforms; safety inspections.
- Paris** 120-day cap for primary residences; mandatory registration and tax agreements with platforms; regular inspections.
- London** 90-day annual cap on short-let entire homes; licensing mandatory in Scotland (including Edinburgh); varying across boroughs.
- Berlin** 90-day cap on STRs; license/permit required; ban on entire apartments in many districts; enforcement ongoing.
- Barcelona** PEUAT zoning limits continue; license cap/freeze in central districts; fines and cooperation with platforms under unique ID scheme.
- Vienna** Under general Austrian law; permit/license not nationally mandated; Vienna retains municipal authority for local STR limits—but no major city-specific STR rules yet.
- Brussels** From May 1, 2025: mandatory landlord registration for all rental contracts including STRs; subject to future legal review under EU directive.

- Madrid** Upcoming registration requirement by July 2025; tourist accommodations must feature license IDs; local "Plan Reside" zones with zero new licenses in city center.
- Copenhagen** Relatively low STR regulation; still evolving; some licensing in preparation—monitor local authority updates.
- Lisbon** AL regime continues: mandatory registration (Decree-Law 128/2014 + 63/2015); ban on new licenses in saturated zones where STR > 5% housing stock.
- Porto** All STRs must hold an Alojamento Local (AL) license issued by the municipality.
- Edinburgh** Mandatory licensing since Oct 2022; license required before booking; health & safety compliance; fee structure revised.
- Athens** One-year freeze on new STR registrations in central districts (e.g., Koukaki, Exarchia) from Jan 1–Dec 31, 2025.
- Venice** Hosts must file STR communication via SUAP; flat tax at 21%, rising to 26% for multi-property hosts; tourist tax & guest registration required within 24 hrs.

## 4.1 Comparative Analysis: Regulatory Strategies in Other Cities

### • Barcelona, Amsterdam, etc.

To understand Venice's position within the broader European context, it is essential to examine the regulatory frameworks of other cities facing similar STR challenges—particularly **Barcelona, Amsterdam, Paris, Berlin, and London**.

**Barcelona** has been one of the most proactive cities in Europe, developing a multilayered strategy aimed at rebalancing the territorial distribution of STRs, preserving housing affordability, and countering overtourism. Its regulatory tools include **mandatory registration, zoning restrictions, a ban on new licenses in saturated neighborhoods, and active enforcement in collaboration with platforms**<sup>83</sup>. The city also limits the number of licenses non-professional hosts can hold.

**Amsterdam**, similarly, enforces **strict caps on STR days (reduced from 60 to 30 annually), imposes residence obligations, and enables data sharing and listing blockades by platforms**<sup>84</sup>. The city has also banned STRs in certain areas to preserve housing stock and residential life, curbing professionalization of the STR market<sup>85</sup>.

**Paris** has a **120-day cap for primary residences, a requirement for landlord and condo approval, and a tax on STR income**. Enforcement includes blocking irregular listings in specific districts and requiring platforms to share data<sup>86</sup>.

**Berlin** takes a **housing-focused approach**, limiting STRs to 90 days per year and mandating licenses, particularly in touristic areas. The goal is to protect the residential function of neighborhoods and reduce speculative property investments<sup>87</sup>.

**London** maintains a **90-day cap** but has been less aggressive in platform cooperation. However, it still requires registration and some zoning limitations, focusing on maintaining a balance between tourist accommodation and residents' needs<sup>88</sup>.

According to **Bei and Celata's comparative assessment** of 16 European cities, regulated cities show measurable success in reducing entire-home listings, curbing multi-property professional hosts, and shifting the market composition back toward shared accommodations<sup>89</sup>. However, none of the strategies significantly altered the **spatial concentration of STRs**, as tourist demand continues to cluster in central and iconic districts.

In contrast, cities like **Venice, Florence, Rome, and Lisbon** have remained largely unregulated or adopted only partial fiscal and definitional frameworks. **Venice**, in particular, has not yet implemented strong enforcement measures or cooperation agreements with platforms, despite its highly saturated STR market and urgent housing affordability issues.

This comparative analysis illustrates that **stringent regulation—particularly when combined with active platform cooperation—can produce tangible results in mitigating the negative impacts of STRs**. However, effectiveness depends on **political will, legal authority, and platform accountability mechanisms**, all of which remain unevenly distributed across European cities.

83. Colomb, C., & de Souza, T. *Regulating Short-Term Rentals in European Cities: Policy Approaches, Challenges, and Implications*. *Urban Studies*, (pp. 3025–41), 2021.

84. Bei, G., & Celata, F. 'Challenges and Effects of Short-Term Rentals Regulation: A Counterfactual Assessment of European Cities'. *Annals of Tourism Research*. 2023.

85. Caenazzo, A. T. 'Airbnb and the Cities: The Cases of Venice and Barcelona'. *Università IUAV di Venezia*. 2019.

86. *ibid.*

87. *ibid.*

88. Celata, F., & Romano, L. 'The Political Geography of Short-Term Rentals in European Cities'. 2022. In M. Kagermeier & H. Stangel-Meseke (Eds.), *Overtourism and Tourism Education* (pp. 45–63).

89. Bei, G., & Celata, F. 'Challenges and Effects of Short-Term Rentals Regulation: A Counterfactual Assessment of European Cities'. *Annals of Tourism Research*. 2023.

90. Celata, F., & Romano, L. 'The Political Geography of Short-Term Rentals in European Cities'. 2022. In M. Kagermeier & H. Stangel-Meseke (Eds.), *Overtourism and Tourism Education* (pp. 45–63).

91. Bei, G., & Celata, F. 'Challenges and Effects of Short-Term Rentals Regulation: A Counterfactual Assessment of European Cities'. *Annals of Tourism Research*. 2023.

92. Hübscher, M., & Kallert, A. (2022). *Short-Term Rentals Regulation in Amsterdam, Berlin, and London*.

## Comparative Analysis: Regulatory Strategies in Amsterdam, Barcelona, and Venice

As the proliferation of short-term rentals has reshaped urban housing markets and intensified tourist pressures, several European cities have adopted increasingly interventionist policies. While **Barcelona and Amsterdam have implemented robust and multilayered regulatory systems, Venice remains comparatively underregulated**, despite facing acute impacts from overtourism and residential displacement.

### Amsterdam: A Proactive, Data-Driven Model

Amsterdam has emerged as a pioneer in STR regulation, with a long-standing commitment to protecting residential neighborhoods and curbing the professionalization of the rental market. The city introduced a **60-day annual limit on STRs, later reduced to 30 days, and requires registration and compliance with safety codes**. Amsterdam has a **direct data-sharing agreement with Airbnb**, allowing the municipality to automatically delist non-compliant properties, enhancing monitoring. **Entire-home listings are limited, and multiple-property hosting is explicitly restricted** to prevent speculative conversions<sup>90</sup>.

Despite these measures, **Amsterdam continues to experience tensions between housing access and tourism income**. However, compared to Venice, it offers a **model of regulatory maturity**, enabled by cooperative governance and strong administrative capacity.

### Barcelona: Territorial Zoning and Saturation-Based Limits

Barcelona developed its **Special Urban Plan for Tourist Accommodation (PEUAT)** in 2017, dividing the city into regulatory zones based on saturation levels. In **high-pressure areas like the Gothic Quarter, no new STR licenses are issued**, while lower-density zones are controlled. **Barcelona enforces strict registration, licensing quotas, inspections, and fines platforms for unauthorized listings**<sup>91</sup>. Citizen activism has been central, with resident associations influencing STR policy as part of a **broader right-to-housing agenda**<sup>2</sup>.

### Venice: Partial Measures and Regulatory Lag

Venice, by contrast, has **adopted fewer concrete regulations** despite severe STR impacts. As of 2023, it **has no effective cap on STR licenses and lacks direct agreements with platforms**. Registration systems and tourist taxes face delays and resistance, and **Venice does not apply zoning restrictions or deactivate illegal listings**, leading to an unregulated environment, particularly in **Cannaregio and Dorsoduro**.

Venice's **governance challenges are compounded by fragmentation**, hindering coherent and enforceable policy compared to Amsterdam and Barcelona<sup>92</sup>.

**Summary Comparison**

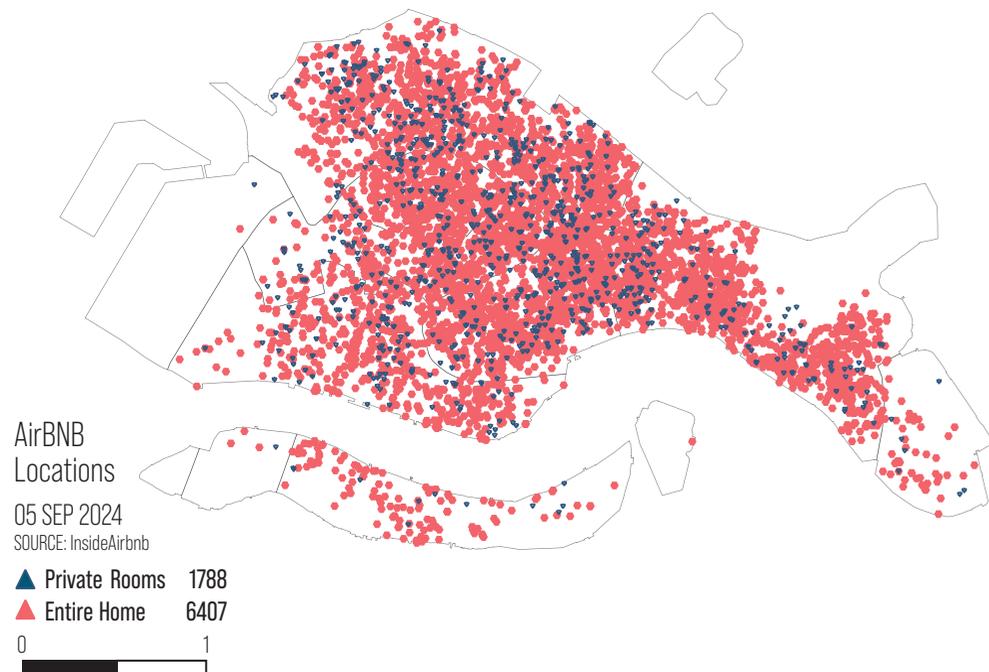
Feature	Amsterdam	Barcelona	Venice
STR License Cap	Yes (30–60 days), from 2020: 30 days),(15 in 2026)	Yes (zone-based quotas, some zero-growth zones)	No
Platform Cooperation	Yes (data sharing, automated delisting)	Moderate (platform fines, partial compliance)	No formal agreements
Zoning Restrictions	Partial (residential protections)	Strong (territorial zoning via PEUAT)	None
Host Registration	Mandatory	Mandatory	Limited and poorly enforced
Enforcement Mechanism	Digital + legal	Field inspections + legal action	Weak
Resident Involvement	Limited	High (citizen coalitions, activism)	Low
Political Will	Strong	Very strong	Weak

This comparative analysis highlights that **Amsterdam and Barcelona's mature, multilevel governance models** use **data access, zoning, and civic engagement** to mitigate STR impacts, while **Venice illustrates the risks of delayed or fragmented regulation**, allowing STR proliferation to threaten its urban fabric<sup>3</sup>.

# CHAPTER 5

## Proposals

In light of the profound challenges posed by **overtourism, housing crisis, and the rise of short-term rentals (STRs) in Venice**, this chapter presents **proposals aimed at fostering a more sustainable and socially equitable urban future**. The preceding analysis has demonstrated how the unchecked expansion of tourism and platform capitalism has contributed to the erosion of Venice's residential fabric, transforming its neighborhoods into transient spaces and undermining the rights of local communities to inhabit their city. Building on the comparative regulatory insights from other European cities and the contextual realities of Venice, this chapter seeks to **reframe the governance of tourism and STRs not merely as economic management but as a question of urban justice and the right to the city**.



## 5.1 Reimagining Regulations for a Sustainable Urban Future

### Reduce the Multi-Listed Host

Presently, a significant proportion of STR listings in Venice are controlled by **multi-property hosts**, many of whom do not reside in the city, exacerbating the **conversion of residential housing into tourist accommodations** and fueling **speculative investment practices** that undermine housing affordability<sup>91</sup>.

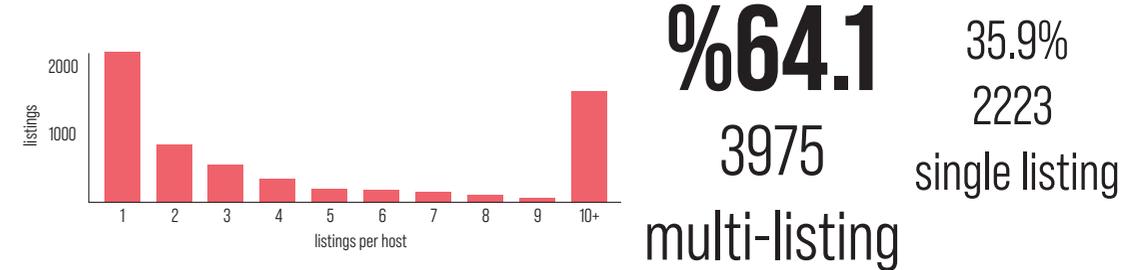
As depicted in the **upper portion of the diagram**, **64.1% of entire-home STR listings are operated by multi-listers**, while only **35.9% represent single-listing hosts**. This imbalance highlights the **professionalization and commercialization of the STR market** in Venice, where agencies and external investors capitalize on the city's global tourist appeal to operate large-scale STR portfolios<sup>92</sup>. The **spatial concentration** of these STR units in historically residential neighborhoods such as **Cannaregio, Castello, and Dorsoduro** intensifies **overtourism pressures**, contributing to **overcrowding, rising rents, and community displacement**<sup>93</sup>.

91. Tegen, L. (2023). *Overtourism and Social Movements: The Case of Venice*. Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

92. Camatti, N., & Bertocchi, D. (2022). *Tourism in Venice: Mapping Overtourism and Exploring Solutions*. Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

93. Caenazzo, A. T. (2019). *Airbnb and the Cities: The Cases of Venice and Barcelona*. Università IUAV

LISTING PER HOST ONLY ENTIRE HOME/APARTMENT



94. Wachsmuth, D., & Weisler, A. (2018). Airbnb and the Rent Gap: Gentrification Through the Sharing Economy. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 50(6), 1147-1170.

In contrast, the **lower portion of the diagram outlines a proposed regulatory framework** aimed at restoring housing availability for residents while addressing excessive tourist pressure. The proposal suggests that **only Venice residents should be allowed to operate STRs**, specifically by renting out a second property, and that **each resident may operate only one STR unit**. Such a limitation directly targets the **multi-listing practices that currently dominate the STR landscape**, seeking to **re-align STR activity with local housing needs** while maintaining controlled levels of tourism-related income for residents<sup>94</sup>.

Additionally, the proposal advocates for **tax increases on agencies and non-resident multi-property hosts** while introducing **financial support mechanisms for local residents**. This dual strategy would discourage speculative STR expansion by external investors while **empowering residents to participate in the STR economy without undermining the city's housing market**. The intention is to **reduce the number of tourists accommodated in STRs**, thereby **mitigating overcrowding** and facilitating the **return of local residents to the historic center**, aligning with broader efforts to rebalance Venice's residential and tourist populations.

This regulatory direction aligns with **successful elements observed in comparative European contexts**, such as **Amsterdam’s registration and day caps**, and **Barcelona’s zoning restrictions and platform enforcement**, which have demonstrated the efficacy of targeted, resident-centered STR regulations in reducing the negative impacts of overtourism and housing commodification while preserving economic benefits for local populations<sup>95</sup>.

By implementing these proposed measures, Venice could transition toward a **more sustainable and socially equitable tourism model**, addressing the **housing affordability crisis and demographic decline** while **protecting the city’s fragile urban fabric** against unchecked touristification and platform capitalism<sup>95</sup>.

95. Colomb, C., & de Souza, T. (2021). Regulating Short-Term Rentals in European Cities: Policy Approaches, Challenges, and Implications. *Urban Studies*, 58(15), 3025-3041.

96. Camatti, N., & Bertocchi, D. (2022). *Tourism in Venice: Mapping overtourism and exploring solutions*. Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

97. Rossi, A. (2018). *The Sharing Economy in Italian Cities: An Analysis of Airbnb in Venice*. Università degli Studi di Padova.

2. Caenazzo, A. T. (2019). *Airbnb and the Cities: The Cases of Venice and Barcelona*. Thesis, Università luav di Venezia.

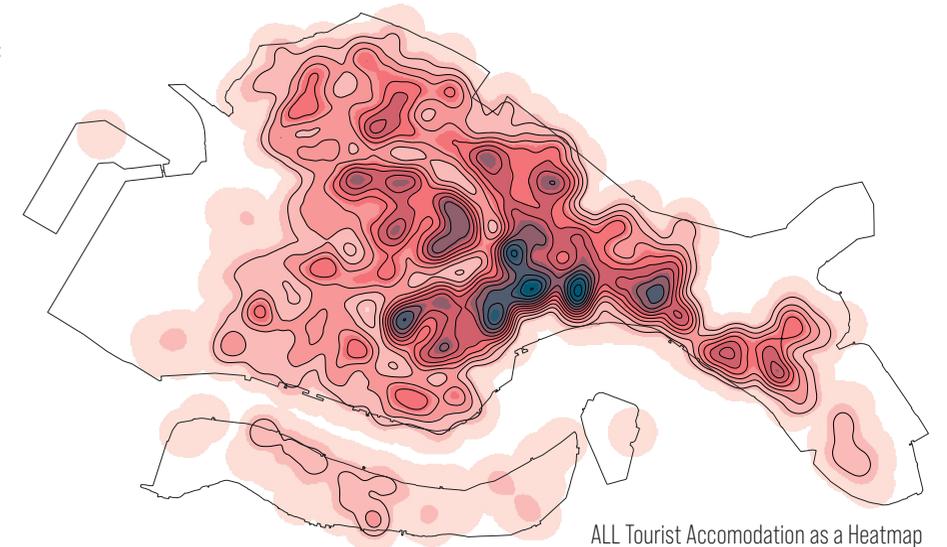
4. Tegan, L. (2023). *Overtourism and Social Movements: The Case of Venice*. Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

5. Bei, G., & Celata, F. (2023). Challenges and effects of short-term rentals regulation: A counterfactual assessment of European cities. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 101.

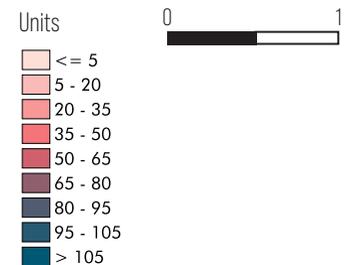
## Protect The Locals

Despite its small geographic footprint, Venice displays significant spatial variations in tourist density, as illustrated by the heat map analysis. The **historic core around San Marco, Rialto, and Strada Nova registers the highest concentrations of visitors**, reflecting the city’s central role in global tourism flows. However, **neighbourhoods such as Dorsoduro, Cannaregio (particularly the northern and western sections), and the eastern parts of Castello exhibit lower levels of tourist saturation and retain a stronger residential character**, with local commerce, artisanal economies, and intergenerational community networks still present<sup>96</sup>.

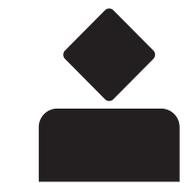
These areas function as **the last bastions of everyday Venetian life within a city increasingly shaped by transient consumption and platform-mediated short-term rentals (STRs)**. The spread of STRs, particularly through platforms such as Airbnb, has intensified pressures on housing availability and affordability across Venice, leading to the **progressive erosion of the social fabric, demographic decline, and the replacement of residents with transient populations**<sup>97</sup>. However, the lower-density zones of Dorsoduro, Cannaregio, and Castello have, to a degree, resisted these dynamics, maintaining a more balanced mix between residential use and tourism-dependent activities.



ALL Tourist Accomodation as a Heatmap  
Hotels, BNs, STRs (AirBNBs)  
Source: Comune di Venezia, GeoIDS Data



### CUREENT SITUATION



owns



one host  
doesn't live in  
Venice

multiple airbnb`s

more tourists coming  
causing accommodation crisis  
and overcrowding

### PROPOSAL



Only Venice  
residents rent  
second house as  
a STR



only allow  
one rental property  
per resident



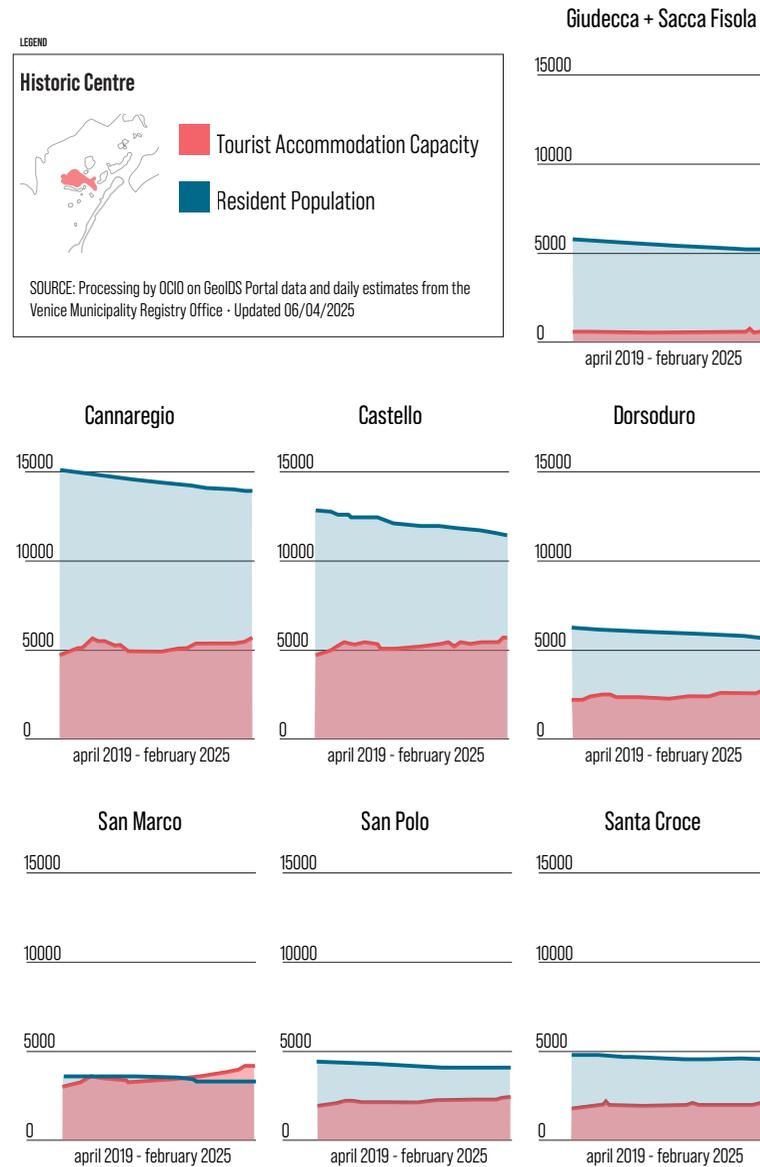
will reduce the number of tourists  
and bring back the locals

**TAX INCREASES CAN BE MADE TO AGENCIES FOR MULTIPLE RENTALS  
AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT CAN BE GIVEN TO LOCAL PEOPLE.**

Protecting these neighbourhoods is critical to preserving Venice’s identity as a living city rather than a tourist enclave. The implementation of **targeted Residential Protection Zones (RPZs)** within Dorsoduro, Cannaregio, and Castello would represent a concrete strategy to **manage tourism pressures while safeguarding the housing stock and community resilience**. Within these RPZs, **restrictions on new STR licenses, caps on STR densities, and incentives for long-term residential leases could be introduced, coupled with strengthened enforcement mechanisms and data-sharing agreements with STR platforms**<sup>98</sup>.

98. Bei, G., & Celata, F. (2023). Challenges and effects of short-term rentals regulation: A counterfactual assessment of European cities. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 101.

The Diverse Distribution Of Residents And Accommodation Supply In The Historic City from 2019 to 2025



OCIO (2025) 'La diversa distribuzione di residenti e offerta ricettiva nella Città Antica'. OCIO Venezia. Available at: <https://ocio-venezia.it/report/gli-squilibri-del-turismo-veneziano>

Venice faces an ongoing crisis of **overtourism**, driven by rising visitor numbers, the expansion of short-term rentals (STRs), and the spatial concentration of tourist flows in its fragile historic centre (Camatti & Bertocchi, 2022<sup>1</sup>). The **heat map** provided indicates the highest tourist densities around **San Marco, Rialto, and key corridors**, while neighbourhoods such as **Dorsoduro, Cannaregio (northern and western areas), Castello (eastern areas), and Giudecca** exhibit **lower tourist densities and higher resident populations**<sup>99</sup>.

99. OCIO (2025). *Processing on GeoIDS Portal data and Venice Municipality Registry Office estimates.*

100. Tegen, L. (2023). *Overtourism and Social Movements: The Case of Venice*. Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

101. Caenazzo, A. T. (2019). *Airbnb and the Cities: The Cases of Venice and Barcelona*. Università Iuav di Venezia.

These districts function as **residual strongholds of local life**, where community ties, artisanal economies, and intergenerational living persist despite the pressures of tourism-led displacement<sup>100</sup>. However, these areas remain **at risk of STR expansion**, particularly as saturated zones push investors and hosts into adjacent local areas, threatening further **housing erosion and social fragmentation**<sup>101</sup>.

- **Preserve the local character and resident communities of Dorsoduro, Cannaregio, Castello, and Giudecca.**
- **Mitigate STR-induced housing pressures in these districts.**
- **Manage tourism flows to avoid overflow into lower-density residential areas.**
- **Align with Venice’s broader climate resilience and heritage preservation goals.**

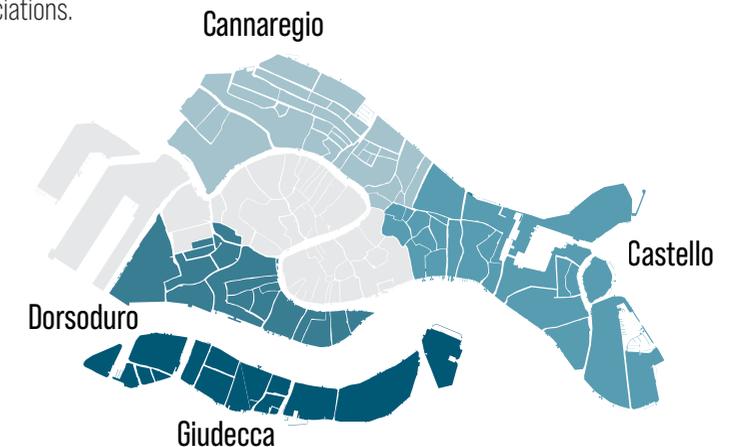
### Key Neighbourhood Characteristics

**Dorsoduro:** Artisanal workshops, student populations, local commerce; lower STR saturation outside Zattere and Accademia zones.

**Cannaregio:** Highest remaining resident population, strong community networks, local businesses; vulnerable near Strada Nova.

**Castello:** Eastern sections maintain traditional housing and small-scale commerce; closer to Arsenale, lower tourist saturation.

**Giudecca:** Predominantly residential, limited STR penetration, active community associations.



## Proposal Strategies

### 1 Establish Residential Protection Zones (RPZs)

- Designate Dorsoduro, Cannaregio (north/west), Castello (east), and Giudecca as **RPZs**.
- **Prohibit entire-home STRs in these areas**, allowing **only room-sharing by resident owners** to ensure STR activity remains supplementary, not extractive.
- Enforce a **maximum of 1 STR unit per resident** within RPZs.
- Impose **higher tourist tax rates on STR stays within these districts** to discourage speculative STR expansion.

### 2 Fiscal Measures

- Introduce **tiered tax regimes**:
  - **Lower tax rates** for long-term residential leases.
  - **Higher taxes for non-resident STR operators**.
- Redirect collected STR taxes to a **Venice Housing Fund** for local residents and maintenance of residential housing stock.

### 3 Monitoring and Data Sharing

- Require **STR platforms to share listing data** with municipal authorities for RPZs.
- Use **heat map and registry data (OCIO, 2025<sup>2</sup>)** to monitor STR activity and tourism density shifts.

### 4 Supporting Local Economies

- Provide **financial incentives and micro-grants for local shops, artisans, and social enterprises** operating in RPZs.
- Promote **community-led tourism initiatives** that allow residents to benefit from tourism while controlling its scale.

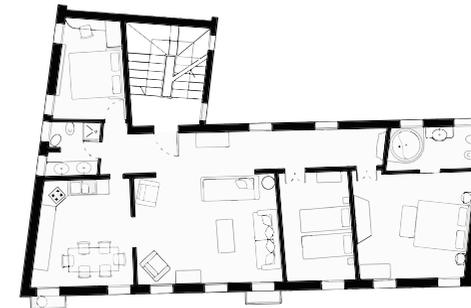
## Expected Outcomes

- Stabilisation of residential populations in key local districts.
- Reduction in entire-home STR conversions and housing speculation.
- Strengthening of local community resilience and economic diversity.
- Sustainable tourism management that respects Venice's social fabric.

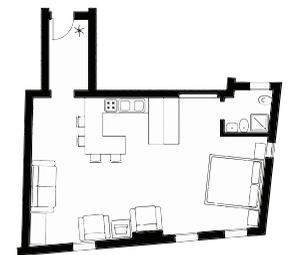
Protecting Dorsoduro, Cannaregio, Castello, and Giudecca through targeted STR restrictions and community-supportive policies represents a **pragmatic and socially just step towards a livable Venice**. By **limiting STRs to resident room-sharing and increasing fiscal barriers for non-resident operators**, Venice can mitigate overtourism's pressures while safeguarding the city's identity as a place for residents, not only visitors.

## Improvement Of Space Efficiency

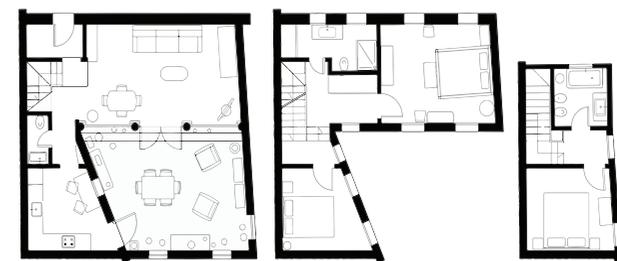
Typical Venetian residences are generally compact by modern standards. Contemporary real-estate data indicate that the **average apartment size** in the historic city is around 75–100 m<sup>2</sup>. For example, as of late 2022 the median home for sale in Venice was ~100 m<sup>2</sup> with 4 rooms (often this corresponds to a two-bedroom flat), whereas the median long-term rental apartment was ~75 m<sup>2</sup> with 3 rooms (usually a one-bedroom unit plus living/dining space). These sizes reflect the historic building fabric: many apartments are subdivided floors of former single-family palaces or merchant houses, featuring high ceilings (3–5 m not uncommon in older buildings) but relatively small floor plans per unit. **Floor plans** of typical Venetian flats often show a central entrance or corridor with rooms opening off it, a combined living/dining area, a small kitchen, and one or two bedrooms. Notably, spaces in Venetian homes have traditionally been used in a **multifunctional** manner by residents. The living room might double as a dining room; a bedroom might also serve as a study or workspace. Indeed, a recent study on domestic space use found that about 40% of people use their bedroom also as a living or work space, rather than exclusively for sleep. This aligns with the Venetian reality that limited space must serve diverse daily needs. In contrast to purpose-built modern homes, historic layouts were adapted over time – e.g. a large sala or hall could be partitioned or repurposed – making the Venetian house a flexible, lived-in space rather than a series of single-function rooms.



Floor plans of an apartment from San Marco - 3 Bedrooms - ~110 m<sup>2</sup>  
Source: <https://www.trulyveniceapartments.com/apartments/da-vinci-venetian-apartment-canal-view-near-san-marco>



Floor plans of an apartment from Castello 60 m<sup>2</sup>, 5 meter tall Ceiling  
Source: <https://www.trulyveniceapartments.com/apartments/greci-studio-open-space-loft-castello>

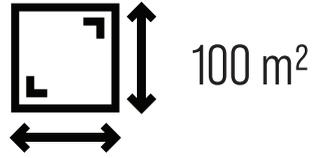


Floor plans of an apartment from Dorsoduro - 3 Floors - 3 Bedrooms - ~130 m<sup>2</sup>  
Source: <https://www.trulyveniceapartments.com/apartments/bredan-venetian-house-with-private-courtyard>

102. Fabian, L., De Marchi, M., Luorio, L. & Tosi, M.C. (eds.), 2021. *Voci: echi: laguna*. Serie City Lab n.0. Università luav di Venezia, Anteferma Edizioni, Conegliano.

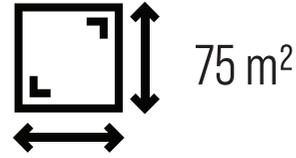
Venice's housing landscape is defined by its **compact, layered historical structures**, with typical apartments (case a schiera, case minime) often consisting of **50–70 m<sup>2</sup>** subdivided into small rooms across multiple floors, reflecting centuries of adaptation to limited land and lagoon conditions. These homes are not merely shelters but **multi-functional spaces** where living, working, cooking, and socializing co-exist, embodying Venice's urban identity<sup>102</sup>.

**AVERAGE AREA OF HOMES FOR SALE IN VENICE**



1529 listing homes from immobiliare.it November/22

**AVERAGE AREA OF HOMES FOR RENT IN VENICE**



124 listing homes from immobiliare.it November/22

The **emergence of STRs in Venice has redefined these domestic environments**, repurposing them from spaces of continuous local habitation to sites of **transient occupancy** primarily used for **sleeping** by tourists. Unlike residents who utilize these spaces throughout the day, tourists typically consume only the “sleeping function” of the home, while the broader domestic and social functions remain dormant during their stay.

Research shows that an adult requires **7-9 hours of sleep**, with **an average sleeping environment occupancy of around 7-9 m<sup>2</sup> per person** in hotel design standards<sup>4</sup>. However, in Venice’s STR context, **entire 50-70 m<sup>2</sup> apartments are occupied by one or two tourists**, meaning each visitor effectively consumes **25-35 m<sup>2</sup> per night**—a **space consumption 3-4 times higher than the functional need for sleeping**<sup>103</sup>. This disproportionate spatial use intensifies Venice’s housing scarcity and reduces available stock for long-term residents.

Generally most homes in Venice are between 50 and 80 m<sup>2</sup>, and rooms must meet minimum sizes to be considered livable, usually 9 m<sup>2</sup> for single rooms and 14 m<sup>2</sup> for double rooms. However, short-term rentals often do not have clear rules about minimum or maximum space requirements, which means that entire apartments can be used just for tourists. This changes the way these spaces function, shifting them from everyday living spaces to places used only for short stays.

102. Fabian, L., De Marchi, M., Luorio, L. & Tosi, M.C. (eds.), 2021. *Voci: echi: laguna*. Serie City Lab n.0, Università Iuav di Venezia, Anteferma Edizioni, Conegliano.

103. Rossi, A. (2018) *The Sharing Economy in Italian Cities: An Analysis of Airbnb in Venice*. Università degli Studi di Padova.

104. Bei, G. & Celata, F. (2023) ‘Challenges and Effects of Short-Term Rentals Regulation: A Counterfactual Assessment of European Cities’, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 101.

105. Tegen, L. (2023) *Overtourism and Social Movements: The Case of Venice*. Ca’ Foscari University of Venice.

To mitigate these impacts, **policy frameworks could introduce differential taxation for entire-home STRs in local neighborhoods like Cannaregio, Castello, and Dorsoduro, while incentivizing room-sharing models over entire unit rentals**. This approach would preserve **housing stock for residents while enabling limited tourism-related income generation** within the principles of “right to the city” and sustainable urban hospitality<sup>104</sup>.

By framing Venice’s STR challenges through **the lens of spatial justice and functional use**, this analysis underscores the need for **regulations aligning space consumption with actual functional needs** and preserving the city’s **residential fabric** against the pressures of overtourism and platform capitalism<sup>105</sup>.

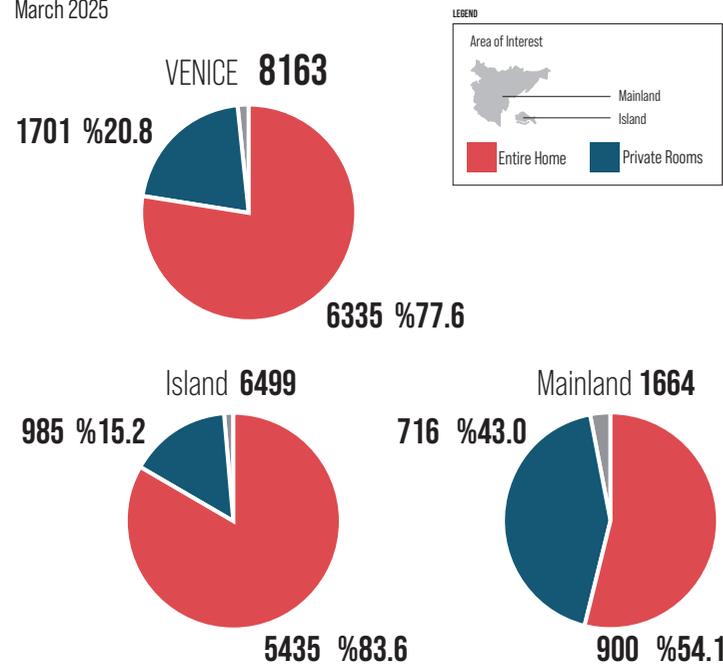
**FOR SHORT-TERM RENTALS,**

**A MAXIMUM AREA LIMIT OF 75 m<sup>2</sup>**  
 should be **enforced for entire-home STRs**;  
 larger units should incur an additional tax

This measure is intended to **encourage hosts to offer private-room STRs** within their primary residence, or **to favor long-term rentals** over full-home tourist lets.

**Comparison Between Entire Home and Private Rooms**

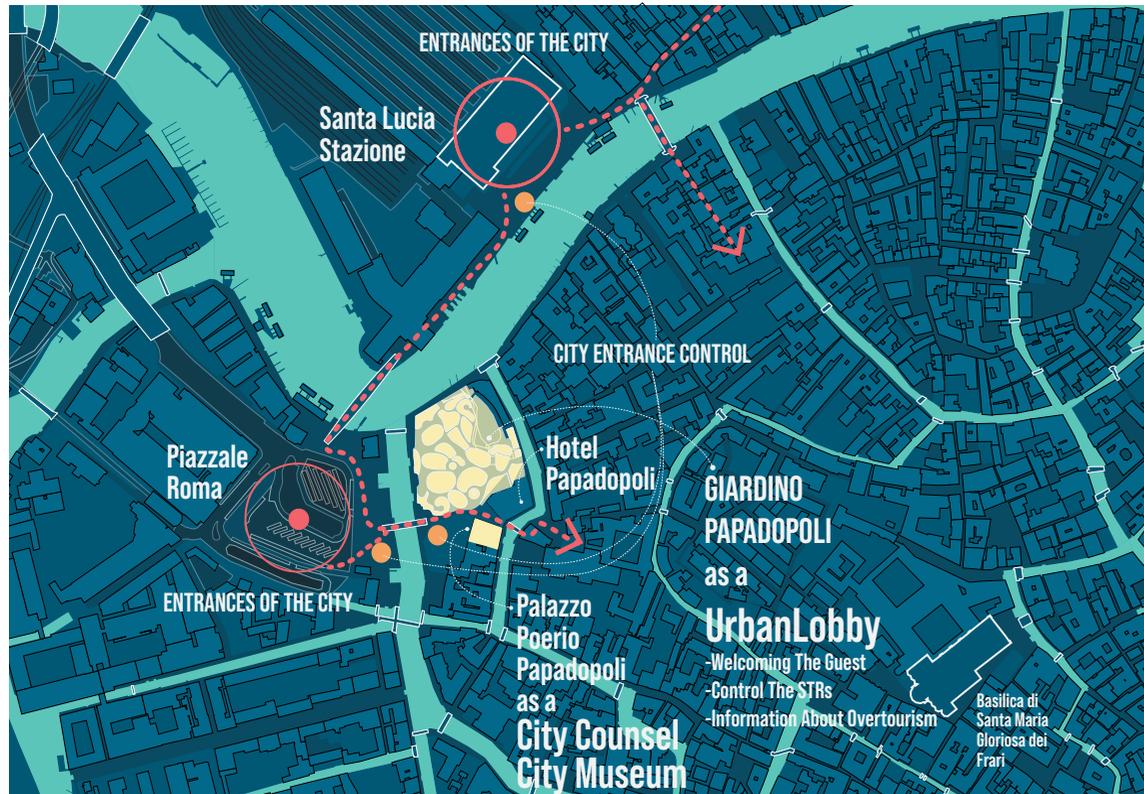
March 2025



## 5.2 Creating Urban Awareness: A Public Installation as Civic Engagement: URBAN LOBBY

In a city like Venice, where the tension between global tourism and local life is acutely felt, **public space becomes a critical arena for civic engagement and urban reflection**<sup>106</sup>. Temporary installations can play a transformative role in reactivating underused or contested spaces, offering **residents and visitors opportunities to encounter the city outside the logics of consumption and spectacle**<sup>107</sup>. The **Urban Lobby** is proposed as a temporary pavilion-installation designed to function as a civic interface: a space where citizens, policymakers, researchers, and tourists can interact around the themes of housing, tourism, and the future of Venice.

This intervention draws inspiration from **temporary pavilions such as the Serpentine Pavilion in London and Aldo Rossi's Teatro del Mondo, which demonstrated how light, reversible architecture can catalyse cultural dialogue and public participation within the urban fabric**<sup>108</sup>. Located near the entrance of the Giardino Papadopoli and adjacent to Palazzo Papadopoli, the Urban Lobby will utilise a minimal footprint to ensure reversibility while providing an accessible, sheltered platform for exhibitions, public talks, and informal gatherings. The goal is to **reclaim a fragment of the city for residents, emphasising Venice's identity as a living city rather than solely a tourist destination**. By establishing a clear civic presence in the urban landscape, this temporary installation aims to provoke reflection on spatial justice, housing rights, and the right to the city within the unique context of Venice.



106. Camatti, N. & Bertocchi, D. (2022). *Tourism in Venice: Mapping Overtourism and Exploring Solutions*. Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

107. Van der Borg, J. & Costa, P. (2017). *Venezia e il turismo: una lettura di lungo periodo*. Venezia: Marsilio.

108. Obrist, H.U. (2018). *Serpentine Pavilion: The First Decade*. Koenig Books.

109. Comune di Venezia (2020) *Spazi Verdi a Venezia: Inventario e Valorizzazione*.

110. Bagnara, F. (1835) *Progetto per il Giardino Papadopoli*, Biblioteca Marciana, Venice.

111. Zorzi, A. (1991) *I Giardini di Venezia*. Milano: Electa.

112. Fortini Brown, P. (1996) *Venice & Antiquity: The Venetian Sense of the Past*. Yale University Press.

113. Città di Venezia (1933) *Relazione sul piano di realizzazione di Piazzale Roma*.

114. Comune di Venezia (2023) *Piano del Verde Urbano*.

## Giardino Papadopoli,

The **Giardino Papadopoli**, located in the **Santa Croce district of Venice**, near Piazzale Roma, is one of the few significant **green spaces within the historic center of Venice**.

The garden was established in **1834** by Teresa Mosconi Papadopoli, wife of Count Spiridione Papadopoli, who acquired and demolished several pre-existing structures to create a private landscaped garden adjacent to the family's properties<sup>109</sup>.

Designed by **Francesco Bagnara**, a prominent landscape architect, the **garden was laid out in the English Romantic style**, featuring meandering paths, small artificial hills, and a carefully curated variety of exotic and native plant species<sup>110</sup>. The space included **sculptures, fountains, and shaded seating areas**, embodying the 19th-century ideal of the garden as a place of leisure and contemplation for the Venetians<sup>111</sup>.

Throughout the 19th century, **Giardino Papadopoli became a social hub**, hosting gatherings and offering a rare green refuge within the dense urban fabric of Venice. After the **annexation of Veneto to Italy**, the Papadopoli family gradually opened parts of the garden to the public, and by the early 20th century, the garden had become a semi-public space while still retaining its private ownership<sup>112</sup>.

**Significant transformations occurred in 1933**, when the construction of Piazzale Roma and the adjacent bridge (Ponte della Libertà) required the reduction of a portion of the garden to accommodate modern transport infrastructure<sup>113</sup>. Despite these alterations, **Giardino Papadopoli has remained a vital green space**, with its remaining 7,500 m<sup>2</sup> continuing to serve as a **public park**<sup>114</sup>.



Giardino Papadopoli,  
Source :Author

In recent decades, **the garden has faced challenges related to maintenance, funding, and pressure from surrounding tourist flows**, particularly due to its proximity to Venice's primary arrival hub at Piazzale Roma. However, it remains a crucial **threshold space between the contemporary flows of mass tourism and the historical layers of the city**, offering both locals and visitors a transitional, contemplative environment<sup>115</sup>.

Given its **strategic location near Piazzale Roma and the proximity to Palazzo Poerio Papadopoli**, *Giardino Papadopoli* is ideally positioned to serve as the **entrance point for a public installation under “Urban Lobby” concept**. The garden's role as a **liminal space between Venice's infrastructural node and its historic core** makes it suitable for interventions that aim to engage residents and visitors alike in discussions around urban sustainability, civic identity, and responsible tourism<sup>1</sup>.

## Palazzo Poerio Papadopoli

**Palazzo Poerio Papadopoli** is a **significant 16th-century Venetian palace** located in the Santa Croce district along the Grand Canal, near the Tolentini and San Stae areas. Originally constructed for the Coccina family in the second half of the 16th century, the palace is attributed to the architect **Giangiaco­mo de' Grigi**, who followed Palladian principles while respecting the dense urban conditions of Venice. The structure features a **distinctive Renaissance façade**, with a symmetrical arrangement of large arched windows and classical decorative elements, making it a notable example of **Venetian Renaissance urban palace architecture**<sup>117</sup>.

In **1837**, the **Papadopoli family**, wealthy bankers of Greek origin, acquired the palace and undertook extensive renovations, including **interior embellishments in a neoclassical style**, while preserving its Renaissance exterior. During this period, the palace became a center of **cultural gatherings and intellectual salons**, reflecting the role of Venetian patrician residences in the city's socio-cultural fabric<sup>118</sup>.

The palace later passed to the **Poerio family** through inheritance, leading to its current combined name, **Palazzo Poerio Papadopoli**. Despite the transformations, the building has retained its historical layout and façade, and the interiors still preserve **frescoes and stucco work from the Papadopoli period**, offering **rich interpretative opportunities for a potential adaptive reuse as a city museum**.

In recent decades, the palace has undergone periods of **partial vacancy and private use**, while maintaining its architectural integrity. Notably, in **2023**, **the property was listed for sale by the current private owners**, highlighting the ongoing financial pressures on maintaining large historic properties in Venice and the shifting ownership patterns within the city's real estate market<sup>119</sup>. The sale of Palazzo Poerio Papadopoli has been discussed in the local press and among heritage advocates as a **critical opportunity for public acquisition**, aligning with broader calls for Venice to reclaim key historic spaces for civic and cultural purposes to counteract pressures from luxury real estate conversions<sup>120</sup>.

115. Camatti, N. & Bertocchi, D. (2022) *Tourism in Venice: Mapping Overtourism and Exploring Solutions*. Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

116. Bertocchi, D. (2023) 'Civic Spaces in Tourist Cities: Opportunities for Sustainable Engagement', *Journal of Urbanism*.

117. Tafuri, M. (1995) *Venice and the Renaissance*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

118. Fortini Brown, P. (1996) *Venice & Antiquity: The Venetian Sense of the Past*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

119. Il Gazzettino Venezia (2023) 'Il Palazzo Poerio Papadopoli in vendita: il futuro di un gioiello sul Canal Grande', 17 October.

120. Italia Nostra Venezia (2023) 'Patrimonio pubblico e cultura: la proposta di acquistare Palazzo Poerio Papadopoli', Press Release, 20 October.

Janin, H. (2004) *Venice: A Cultural and Literary Companion*. London: Signal Books.

Camatti, N. & Bertocchi, D. (2022) *Tourism in Venice: Mapping Overtourism and Exploring Solutions*. Ca' Foscari University of Venice.



Palazzo Poerio Papadopoli  
Source : Photo by Didier Descouens, 2014

Its **location along the Grand Canal, proximity to transportation nodes (Piazzale Roma and Ferrovia), and generous internal spaces make it well-suited for conversion into a public cultural facility**, aligning with Venice's broader need to reclaim historic spaces for local and civic uses<sup>121</sup>.

Given its **significant architectural value, central location, and layered historical associations**, *Palazzo Poerio Papadopoli* presents a **strategic opportunity for transformation into a city museum**, enabling the preservation of Venice's architectural heritage while creating a new community-oriented cultural anchor within the historic center.

## Temporary Pavilions as Experimental Urban Interfaces

**Temporary pavilions** have emerged as **powerful tools for testing architectural ideas, activating public space, and fostering civic dialogue within cities**<sup>122</sup>. Unlike permanent civic buildings, these **ephemeral structures operate for limited periods**, creating opportunities to **experiment with materials, forms, and programmatic uses while inviting public participation**. Positioned in **prominent urban sites**, they transform underused or transitional spaces into **vibrant cultural arenas**, aligning with **sustainable, low-impact design philosophies** critical in contemporary practice.

Across the world, initiatives such as the **Serpentine Pavilion (London)**, **MPavilion (Melbourne)**, and **MoMA PS1 Young Architects Program (New York)** demonstrate how temporary pavilions can act as **urban laboratories**, encouraging architects to **push boundaries**, engage directly with local communities, and adapt interventions to evolving social, environmental, and cultural contexts.

### Serpentine Pavilion (London)

Established in 2000, the **Serpentine Pavilion** commissions an internationally acclaimed architect each year to design a temporary structure in **Kensington Gardens**. It has become a **benchmark for architectural experimentation**, offering architects the chance to **build in the UK for the first time while exploring innovative spatial and material concepts**.

Pavilions have ranged from **Toyo Ito's aluminium lattices** to **Sou Fujimoto's cloud-like steel mesh structures** and **Bjarke Ingels Group's fibreglass "unzipped wall."** These structures remain **open to the public during summer**, hosting **lectures, performances, and gatherings**, transforming the park into a **dynamic cultural forum** while encouraging informal yet critical public engagement with architecture<sup>123</sup>.



Serpentine Pavilion by Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG) (2016), photo by Iwan Baan, from ArchDaily:

Baan, I. (2016) *First Look at BIG's Serpentine Pavilion in London*. ArchDaily. Available at: <https://www.archdaily.com/790418/first-look-at-bigs-serpentine-pavilion-in-london>



Serpentine Pavilion by Diebedo Francis Kéré (2017), photo by Laurian Ghinitoiu via Dezeen:

Ghinitoiu, L. (2017) *Francis Kéré's Serpentine Pavilion Opens in London's Kensington Gardens*. Dezeen. Available at: <https://www.dezeen.com/2017/06/20/francis-kere-serpentine-pavilion-2017-london-architecture/>

123. Serpentine Galleries, "History of the Pavilion Programme."

### MPavilion (Melbourne)

The **MPavilion in Melbourne** is **Australia's leading temporary architecture commission**, founded in 2014 by the **Naomi Milgrom Foundation**. Constructed annually in **Queen Victoria Gardens**, the pavilion remains open from **October to March** before relocation within Melbourne, contributing to the city's **public space network**.

Architects such as **Amanda Levete**, **Rem Koolhaas** and **David Gianotten**, and **Glenn Murcutt** have designed pavilions that emphasize **lightness, environmental sensitivity, and social inclusivity**. MPavilion is deeply connected to **community activation**, providing a program of **free talks, performances, and workshops**, fostering **public engagement with architecture and design**<sup>124</sup>.



MPavilion by OMA (2017), photo by Timothy Burgess, from ArchDaily:

Burgess, T. (2017) *OMA's MPavilion 2017 Opens to the Public in Melbourne*. ArchDaily. Available at: <https://www.archdaily.com/882136/omas-mpavilion-2017-opens-to-the-public-in-melbourne>



MPavilion by Sean Godsell Architects (2017),

Source: <https://archello.com/es/project/mpavilion>

124. MPavilion (2023), Serpentine Galleries (2023), MoMA PS1 (2023).

### MoMA PS1 Young Architects Program (New York)

Since 2000, the **MoMA PS1 Young Architects Program (YAP)** has invited emerging architects to design temporary installations for the **PS1 courtyard** in New York. YAP emphasizes **sustainability**, requiring designers to incorporate **shade, water, seating, and environmental responsibility**, transforming the courtyard into a **lively social space**<sup>125</sup>.

Projects such as **CODA's "Party Wall"** (from reclaimed wood) and **The Living's "Hy-Fi"** (biodegradable mycelium bricks) have **tested innovative ecological materials and design strategies**, providing inclusive spaces for public interaction.

125. Museum of Modern Art, "Young Architects Program," 2023.



MoMA PS1 Young Architects Program (PS1 YAP) installation (2010) by SO-IL, sourced via Contemporary Green Design:

Contemporary Green Design (2010) *SO-IL's Pole Dance at MoMA PS1*. Contemporary Green Design. Available at: <https://contemporarygreendesign.info/so-ils-pole-dance-at-moma-ps1>



MoMA PS1 YAP "Hi-Fi Tower" by The Living (2014), photographed by Miguel de Guzmán, found via ArchDaily:

de Guzmán, M. (2014) *Hi-Fi by The Living / MoMA PS1 Young Architects Program 2014*. ArchDaily. Available at: <https://www.archdaily.com/523763/hi-fi-by-the-living-moma-ps1-young-architects-program-2014>

## Connection for Venice and the Urban Lobby Proposal

The success of these pavilions illustrates the **potential of temporary architecture to address challenges faced by cities like Venice**, where **spatial limitations, heritage preservation, and overtourism intersect**<sup>6</sup>. Temporary pavilions can **reclaim and activate underutilized public spaces without permanent alterations**, engaging both **residents and visitors in sustainable urban dialogues**.

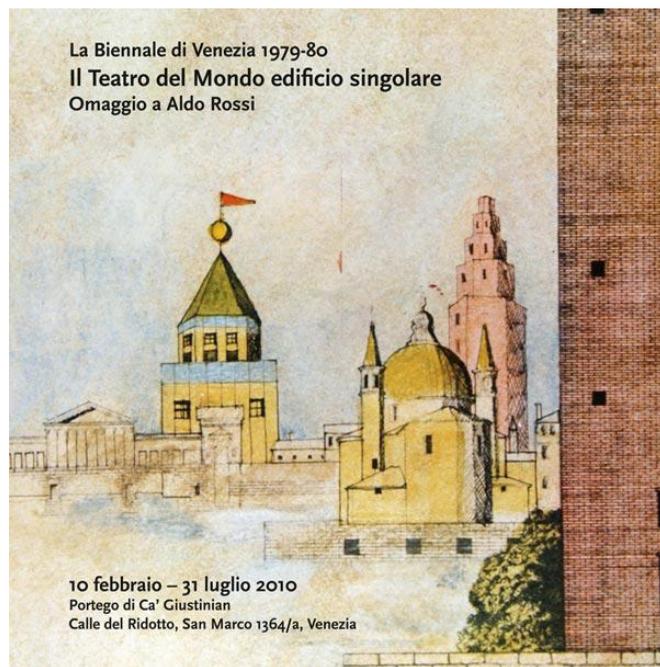
In your *Urban Lobby* proposal, these models demonstrate how **light, reversible interventions can foster civic participation, test spatial solutions, and create symbolic spaces enhancing urban identity**. Venice could adopt these principles to **reassert the public character of contested spaces**, offering **cultural and civic gathering moments within a tourism-oriented city**.

These pavilions further show that **architecture can be used not only to shelter or impress but also to provoke, educate, and empower communities**, reinforcing that **temporary interventions can have a long-lasting impact on the cultural and civic landscape of a city**.

## Aldo Rossi's Teatro del Mondo: A Temporary Theatre in Venice

Aldo Rossi's *Teatro del Mondo* (1979–1980) stands as a **seminal example of temporary architecture engaging directly with Venice's urban and cultural identity**<sup>126</sup>. Constructed as a **floating theatre on a barge for the Venice Biennale**, the theatre was moored near Punta della Dogana before being towed across the Adriatic to Dubrovnik, embodying both **Rossi's theoretical interest in typology and the temporality inherent in Venice's maritime context**. Its **simple geometric form**, echoing Venetian campanili and historic wooden theatres, became an emblem of how **ephemeral architecture can intersect with history while asserting a contemporary presence**. The design used **lightweight, modular construction**, underscoring the practicality of temporary structures while enabling a **striking architectural presence that actively shaped public space on the water**.

The *Teatro del Mondo* was not only a **stage for performances but a spatial and cultural provocation**, illustrating Rossi's belief in architecture's capacity to **evoke collective memory through form and context**<sup>127</sup>. Its **temporary nature did not diminish its impact**; instead, its transience highlighted **Venice's identity as a city negotiating water, history, and change**. Rossi's theatre created a **civic space inviting participation and contemplation**, demonstrating how **temporary interventions can animate urban life while respecting the character of historic environments**. Today, the project remains a **pivotal reference in discussions on temporary architecture, public space, and the role of architecture in constructing cultural narratives within cities like Venice, where the tension between permanence and ephemerality is intrinsic to its identity**.



Rossi, A. (1979–80) *Teatro del Mondo*. Venezia. Photographic documentation of the temporary floating theatre installation during the Venice Biennale [Photograph]. Archivio Storico, La Biennale di Venezia.<sup>1</sup>

126. Rossi, A. (1981). *A Scientific Autobiography*. MIT Press.

127. Tafuri, M. (1989). *Venice and the Renaissance*. MIT Press.

## Venice Entrance Fee Ticket Office vs. Carlo Scarpa's Biennale Ticket Office

The **Venice entrance fee ticket office (2024)** represents an **administrative infrastructure devoid of architectural design ambition**, functioning solely as a checkpoint for the flows of mass tourism. Its **prefabricated, opaque, and rigid structure prioritizes control and efficiency over spatial experience**, establishing a transactional relationship between the visitor and the city. The kiosk's lack of permeability and engagement with the surrounding environment underlines its **detachment from the local context**, framing the visitor not as a participant in civic life but as a subject of regulation. It becomes a **threshold of exclusion**, emphasizing the visitor's position as a tourist within a monitored system rather than as a guest invited to discover the city.

In stark contrast, **Carlo Scarpa's Biennale Ticket Office (1952)** demonstrates a **sensitive architectural approach where even a small-scale service structure is an opportunity to enrich the public realm**. Scarpa carefully designed the ticket office with **light steel columns, wooden frames, curved glass, and a floating canopy**, creating a welcoming, open, and **tactile space that encourages human interaction and pauses rather than simply transaction**. The curved counter invites eye-level encounters, while the transparency of the glass connects visitors visually to the gardens, creating a **continuity between interior and exterior**. Scarpa's design is rooted in the material and cultural context of Venice, **establishing a connection with local craftsmanship and spatial traditions while serving an international audience**.

The **key difference lies in the type of connection each structure fosters**: Scarpa's pavilion creates a **human-scale, locally rooted space that invites visitors to participate in the cultural fabric of Venice**, while the new ticket office reduces the visitor experience to a **procedural checkpoint, aligning the tourist with a system of control rather than with the city itself**. Where Scarpa's design **dissolves the boundary between host and guest through spatial generosity**, the entrance fee kiosk **reinforces the boundary through spatial indifference**, offering a clear reflection on how **design—or its absence—directly shapes the relationship between people and place, and between tourists and locals**.



Carlo Scarpa - Biglietteria-Giardini della Biennale photos by Gianluca Longo  
Source: <https://www.worldofinteriors.com/story/carlo-scarpa-ticket-office-cassina-venice>

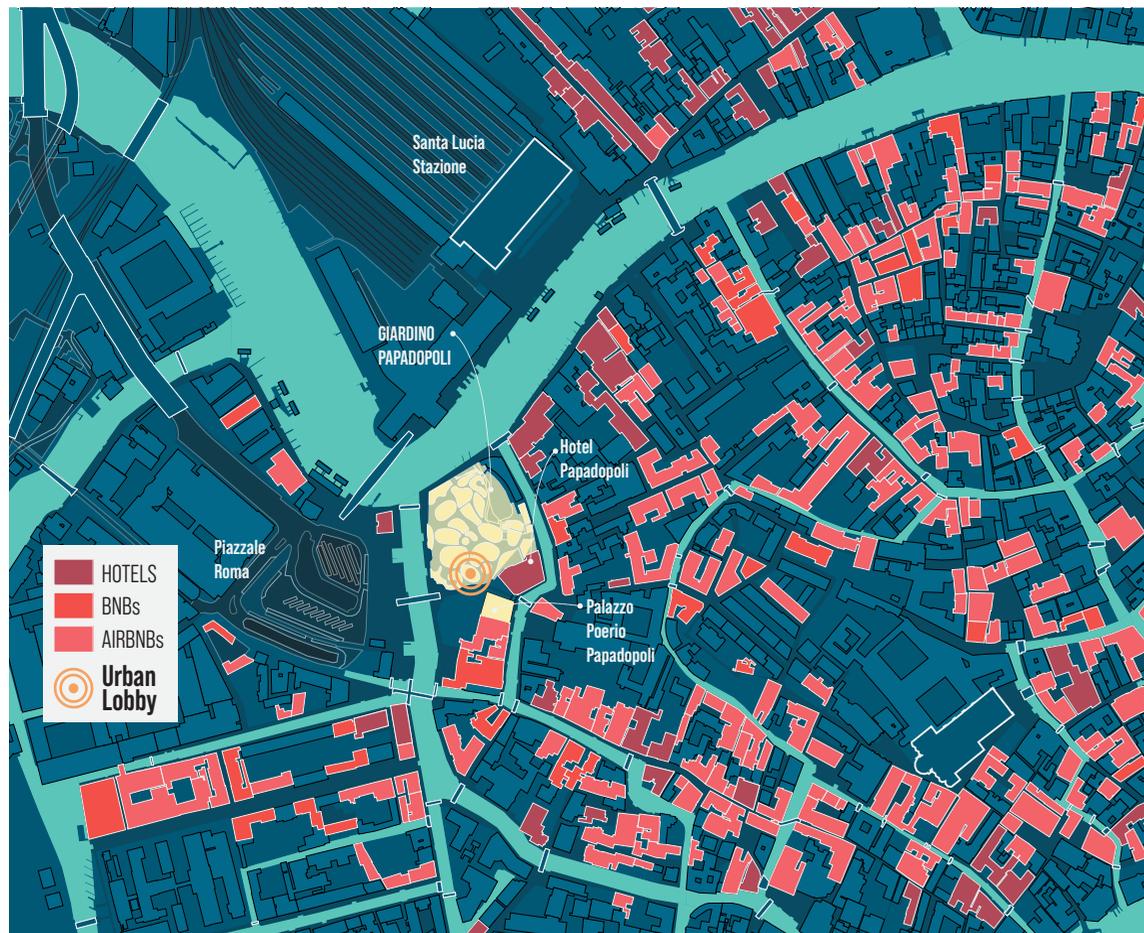


Venice city council has placed an office where tickets can be purchased in the railway station forecourt  
Source: <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/news/venice-introduces-new-booking-system-and-entry-fee-for-visitors>

## URBAN LOBBY

The **Urban Lobby pavilion** is conceived as a strategic response to the overtourism crisis in Venice, seeking to generate social impact and cultivate collective awareness around this urgent urban challenge. By providing a temporary, adaptable structure that acts as a civic meeting point, the pavilion aims to bridge the disconnect between the local population and the overwhelming presence of visitors, transforming a symbolic gesture into a tangible tool for dialogue and engagement.

### The Area Surrounding Giardino Papadopoli: An Analysis of Tourist Accommodation Patterns



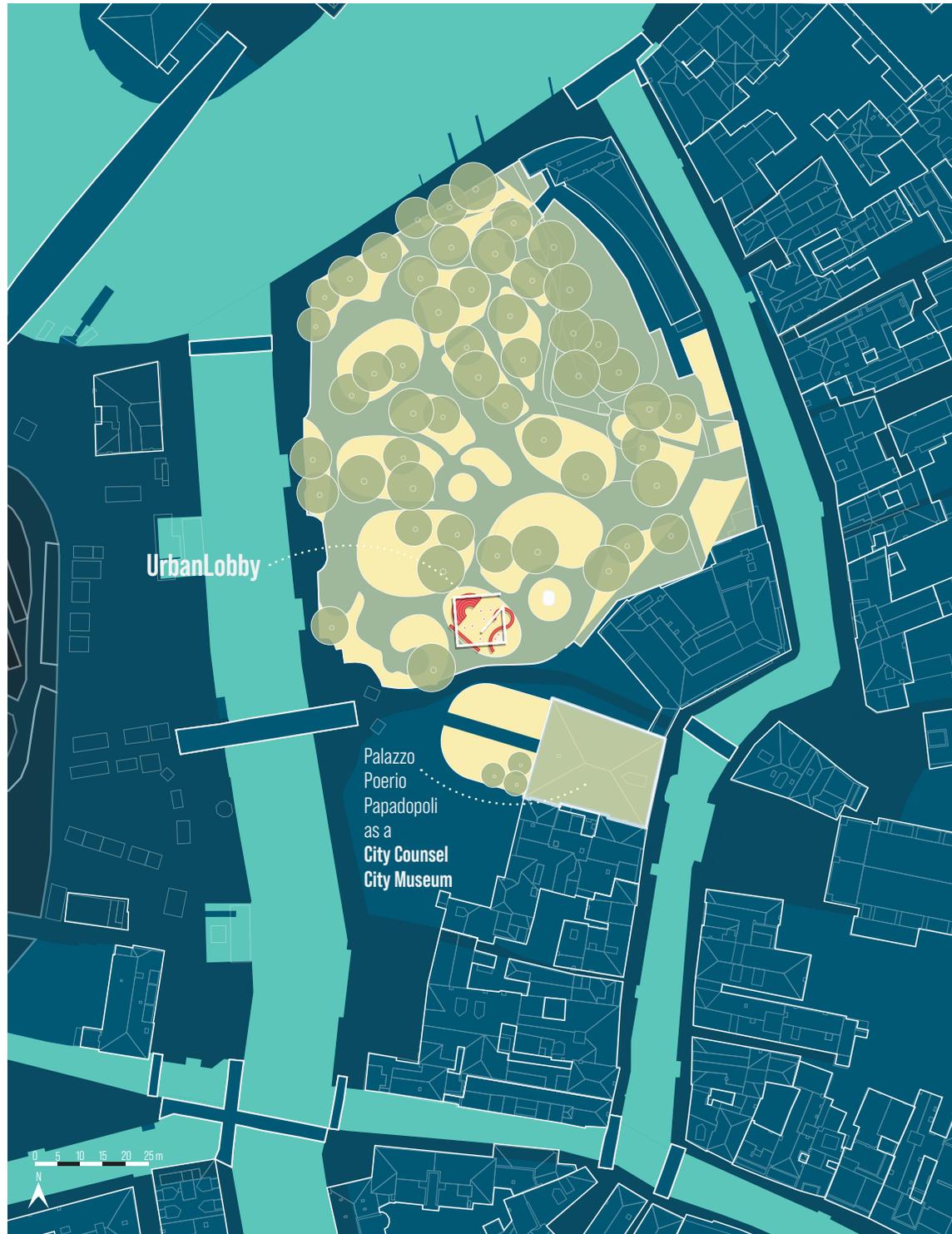
Situated in connection with the proposed **City Museum and City Council initiatives**, the Urban Lobby functions as a **platform for public debate, co-creation of ideas, and visibility of alternative urban futures**. It aspires to **reconnect residents with their city by reclaiming a fragment of public space for communal use**, while simultaneously **inviting tourists to engage with Venice beyond the consumptive logic of spectacle**. In this way, the pavilion **establishes a spatial and social interface between locals and visitors**, encouraging mutual understanding while foregrounding **the right of residents to participate actively in shaping the city's trajectory**.

Ultimately, the Urban Lobby positions architecture as an **instrument of social agency**, using the ephemeral nature of temporary pavilions to **spark critical conversations, strengthen civic networks, and explore innovative pathways toward a more balanced coexistence between tourism and local life in Venice**.





### 1/1000 SITE MAP

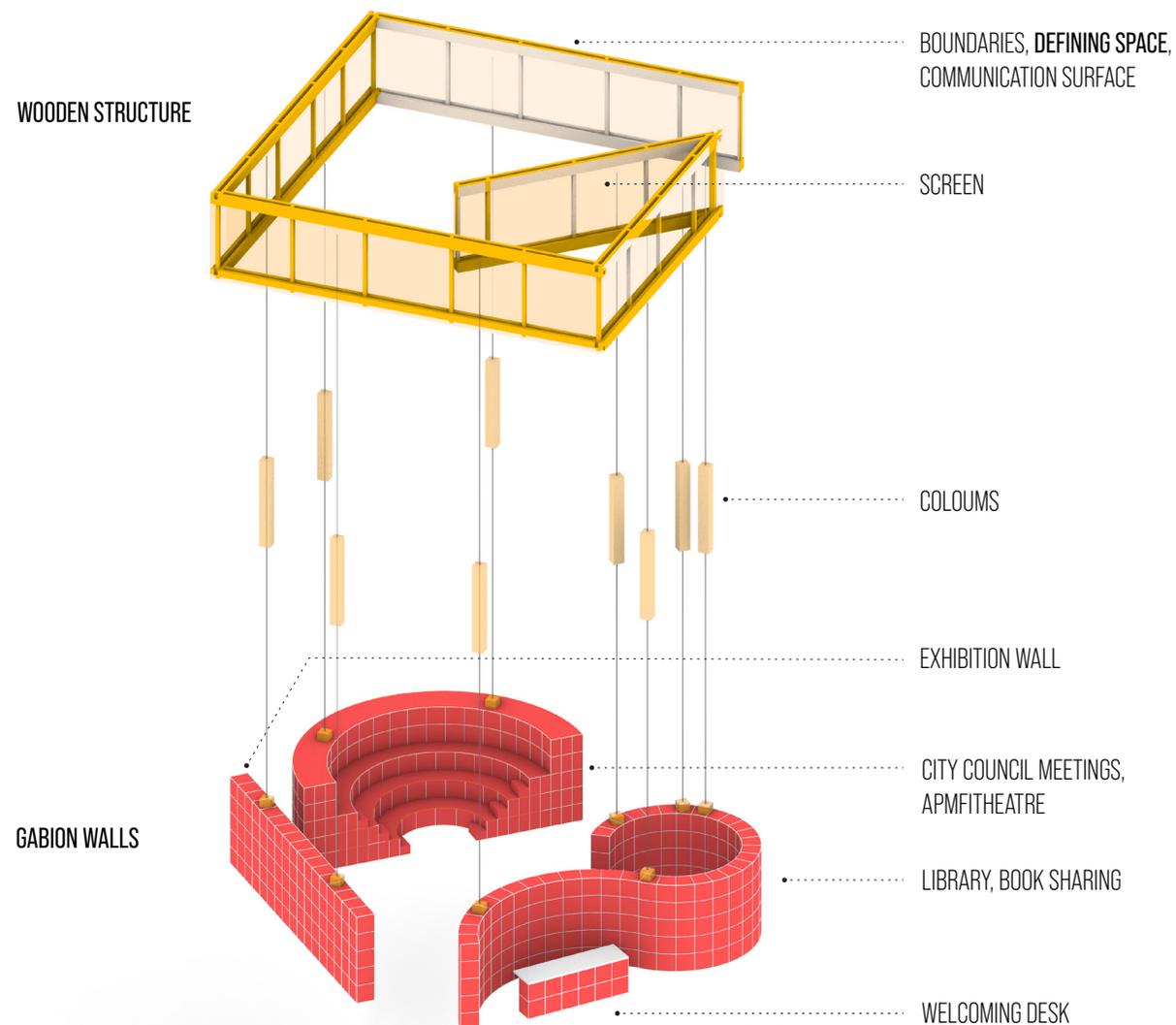


### 1/200 SITE PLAN - URBAN LOBBY



## LAYERS

The project was developed through a direct and straightforward approach. Initially, the pavilion's communicative and functional characteristics, intended to address the issue of overtourism within the context of Venice, were defined with the goal of optimally positioning these functions within the designated site. Structural elements were integrated into the design, effectively accommodating the functions while simultaneously protecting or concealing load-bearing components. The spatial configuration was completed by incorporating a defining and boundary-setting upper structure intended to foster dialogue with the city. Given the temporary nature of the pavilion, gabion wall systems and wooden structures were selected to allow for easy assembly and disassembly.

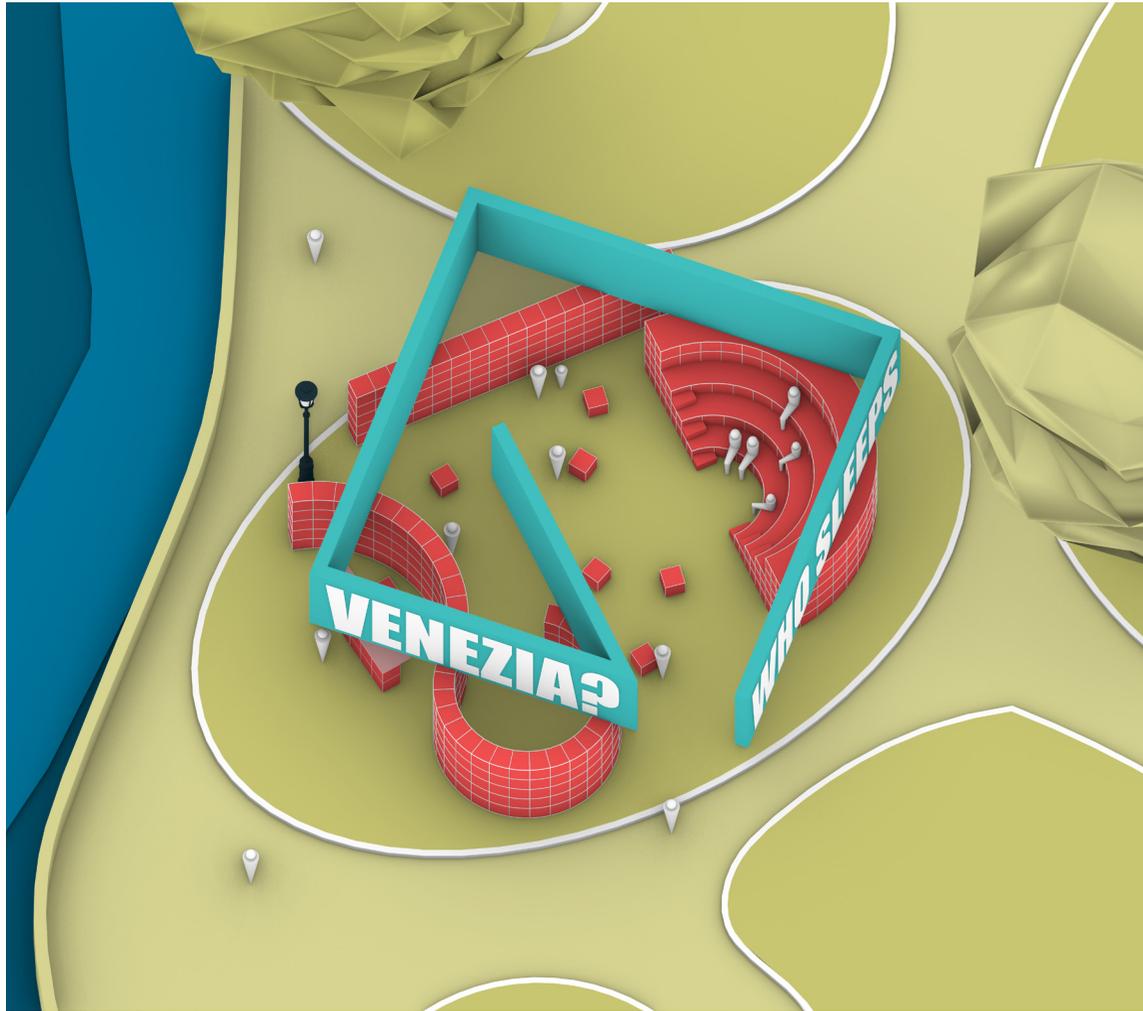


## GABION WALL SYSTEM

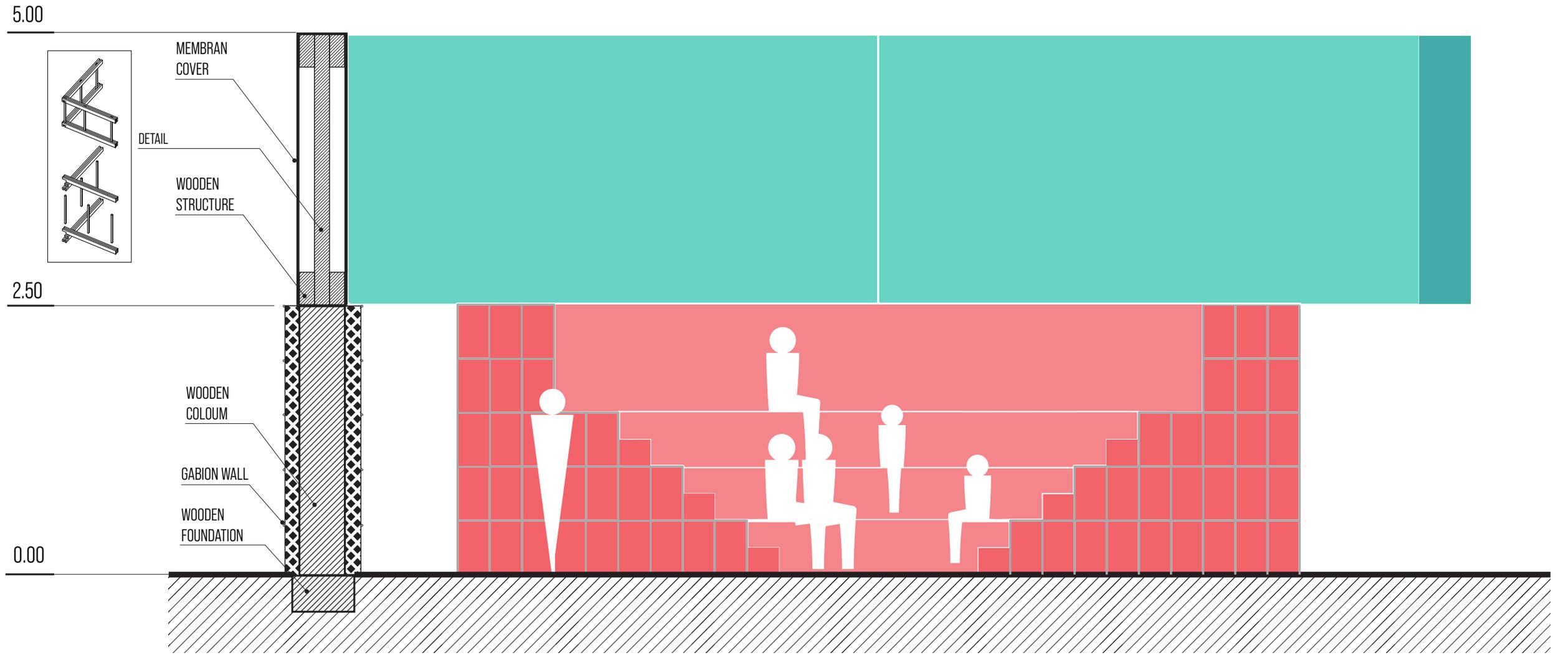
The use of gabion walls is particularly suitable for temporary pavilions in Venice. Gabion structures offer sustainability benefits, as the materials used to fill the walls can be sourced locally from demolition debris and rubble generated by the renovation and reconstruction of existing buildings in Venice. This approach not only reduces environmental impact by reusing waste materials but also resonates with the city's ongoing renewal processes, making gabion walls a contextually relevant and environmentally responsible construction method.



"No Time to Waste", project by Elisabeth Terrisse de Botton and Matthieu Brasebin,



SECTION



SECTION 1/50



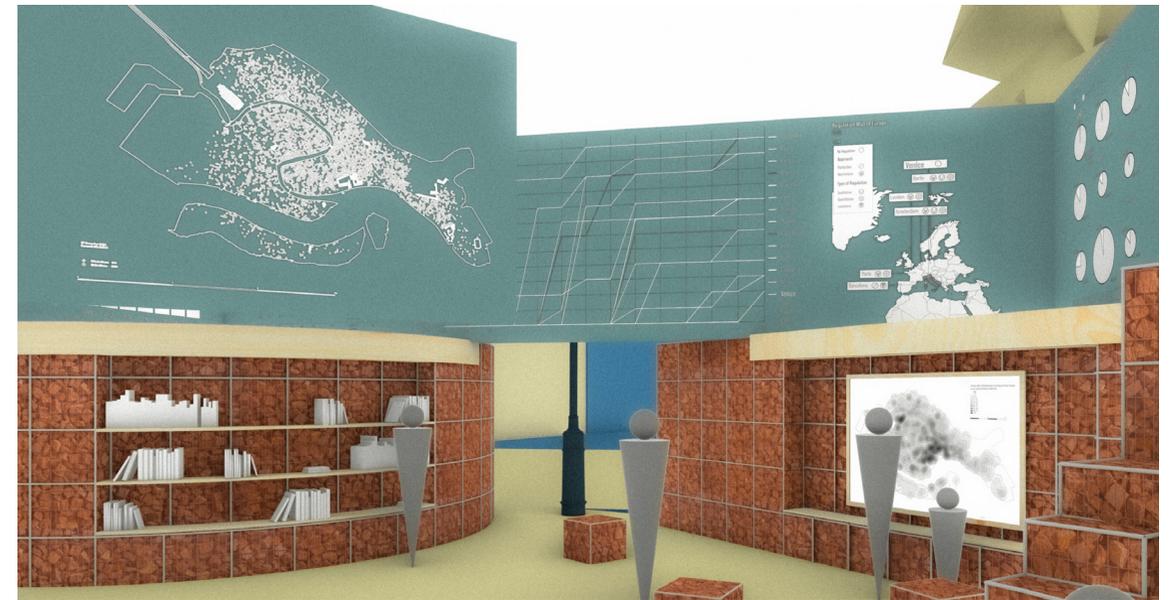
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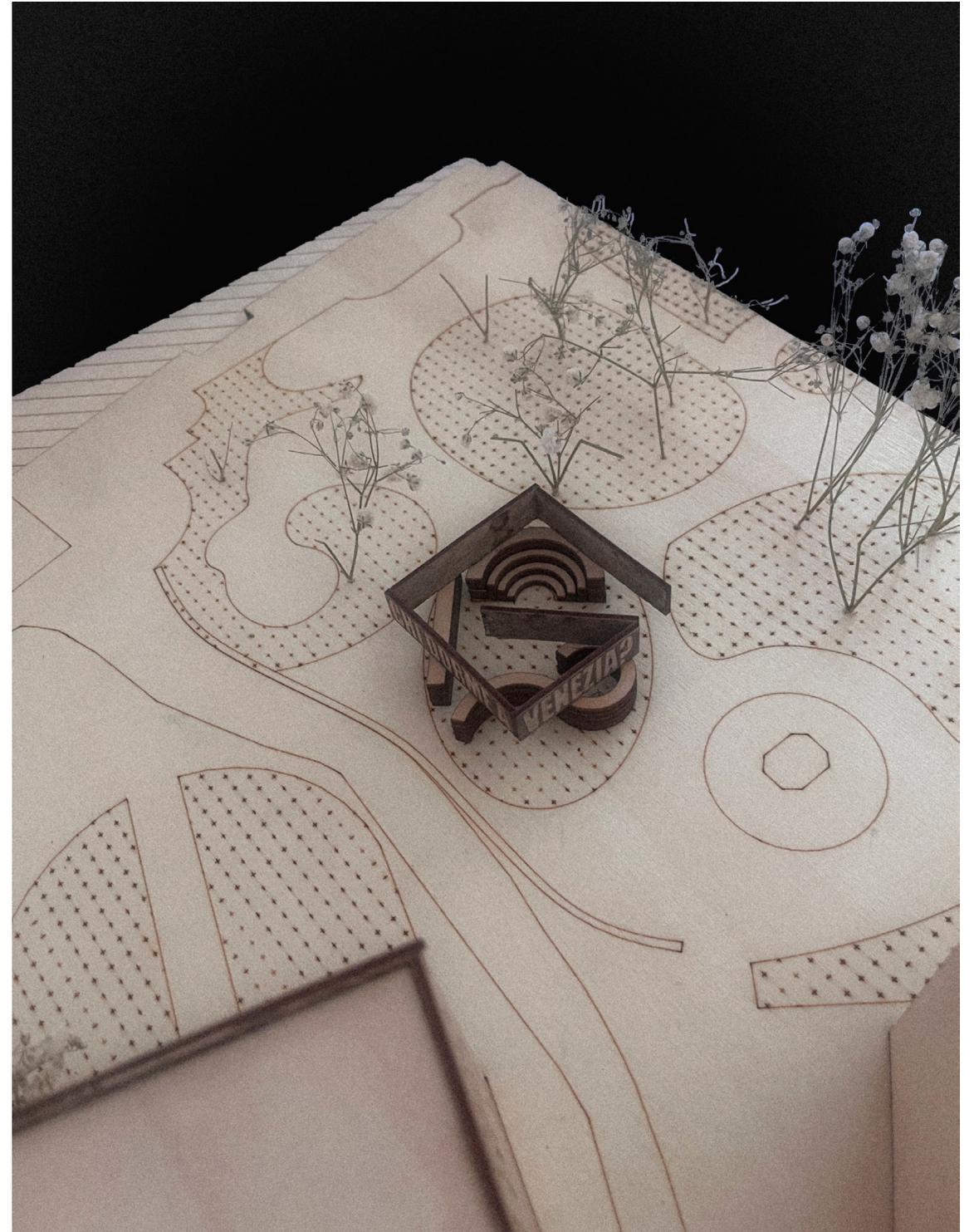
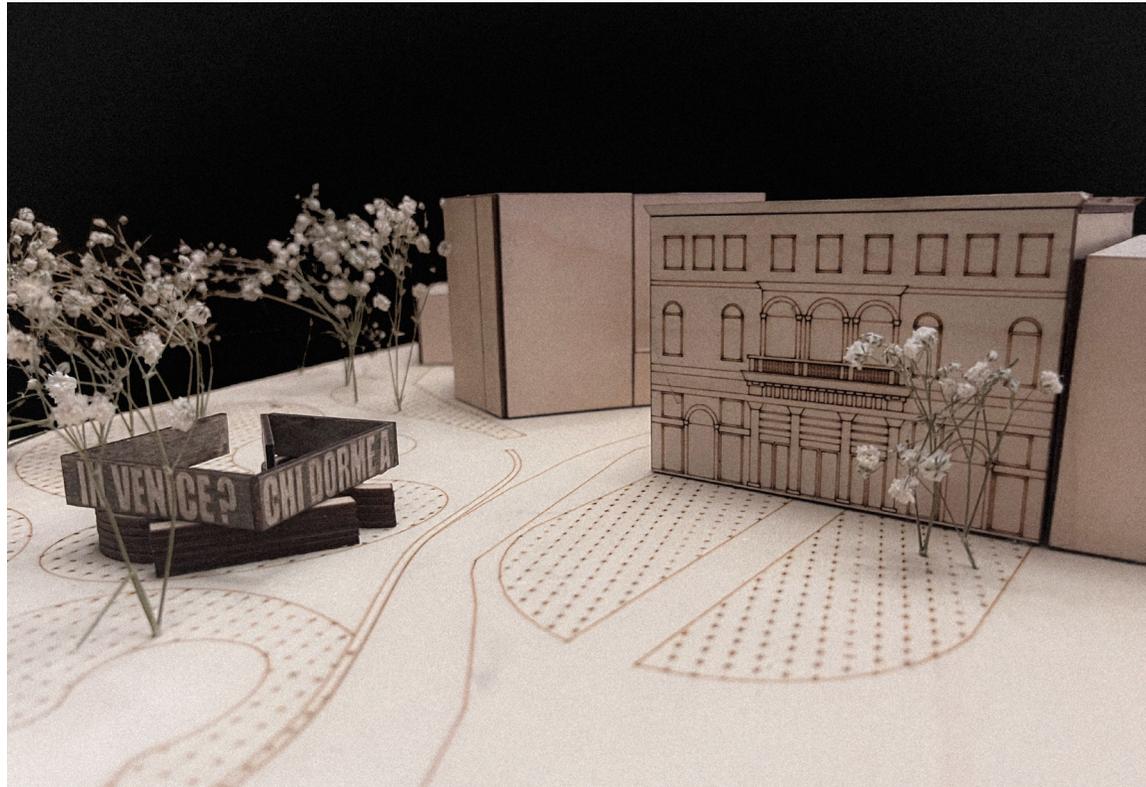
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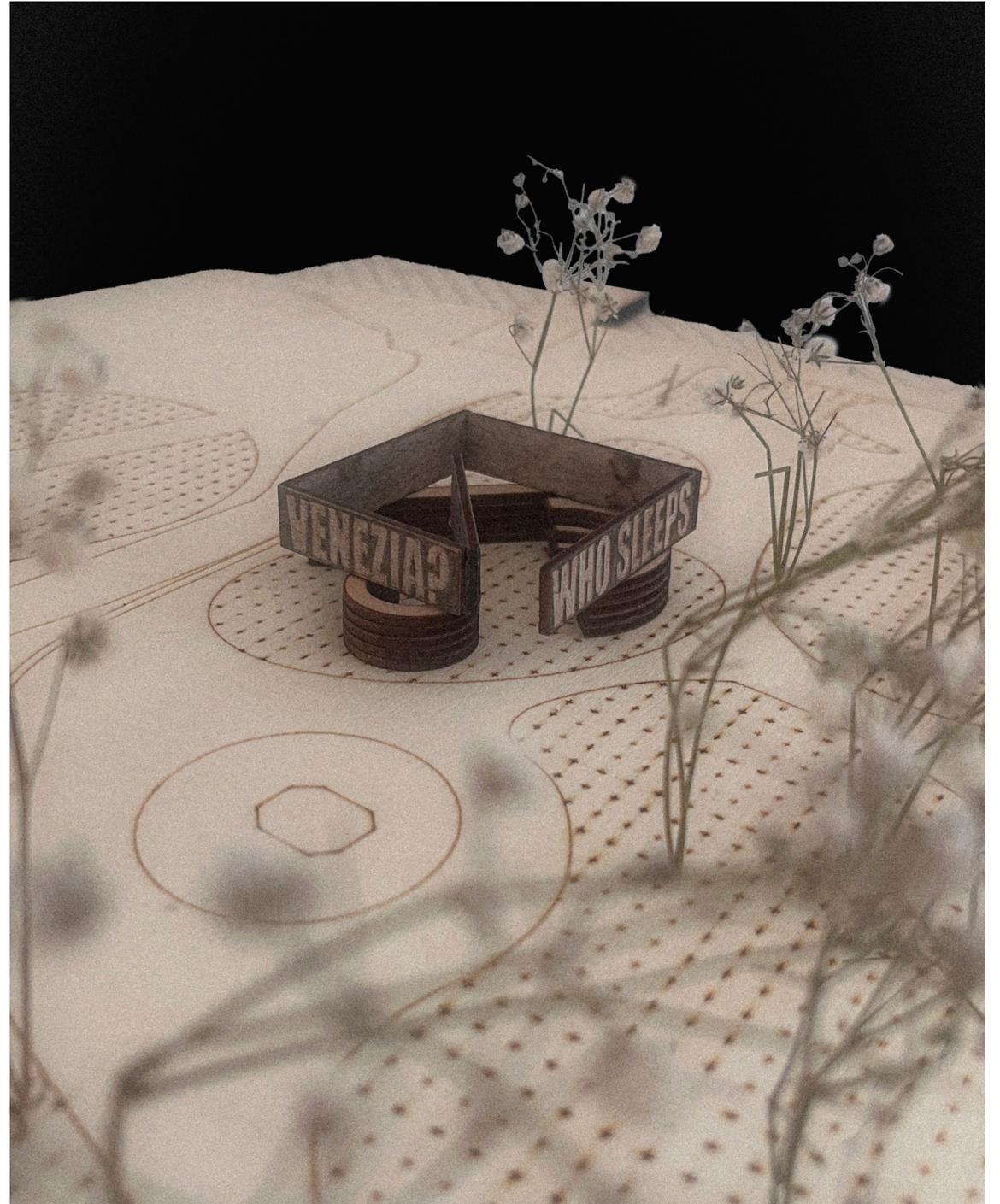
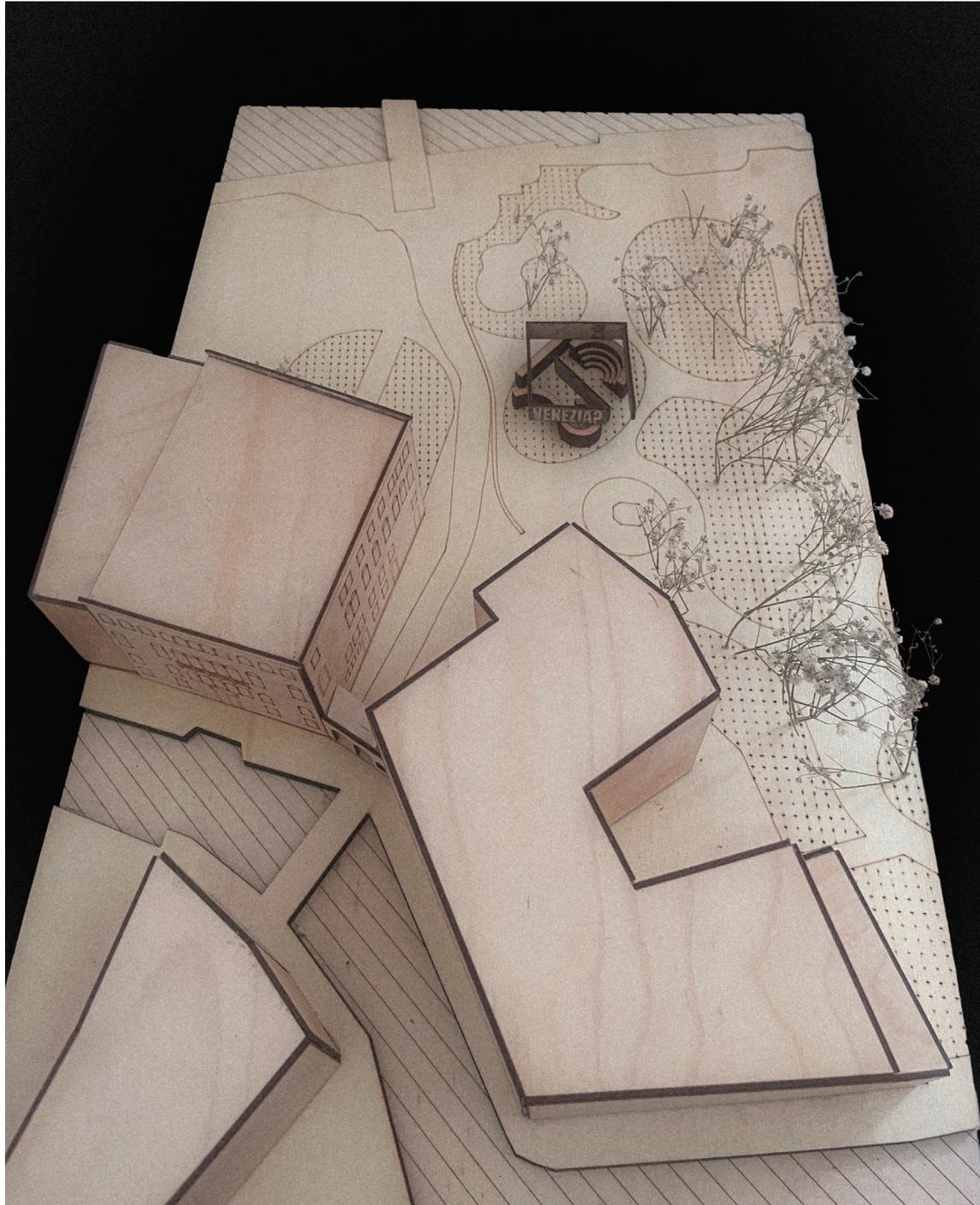




MODEL PHOTOS

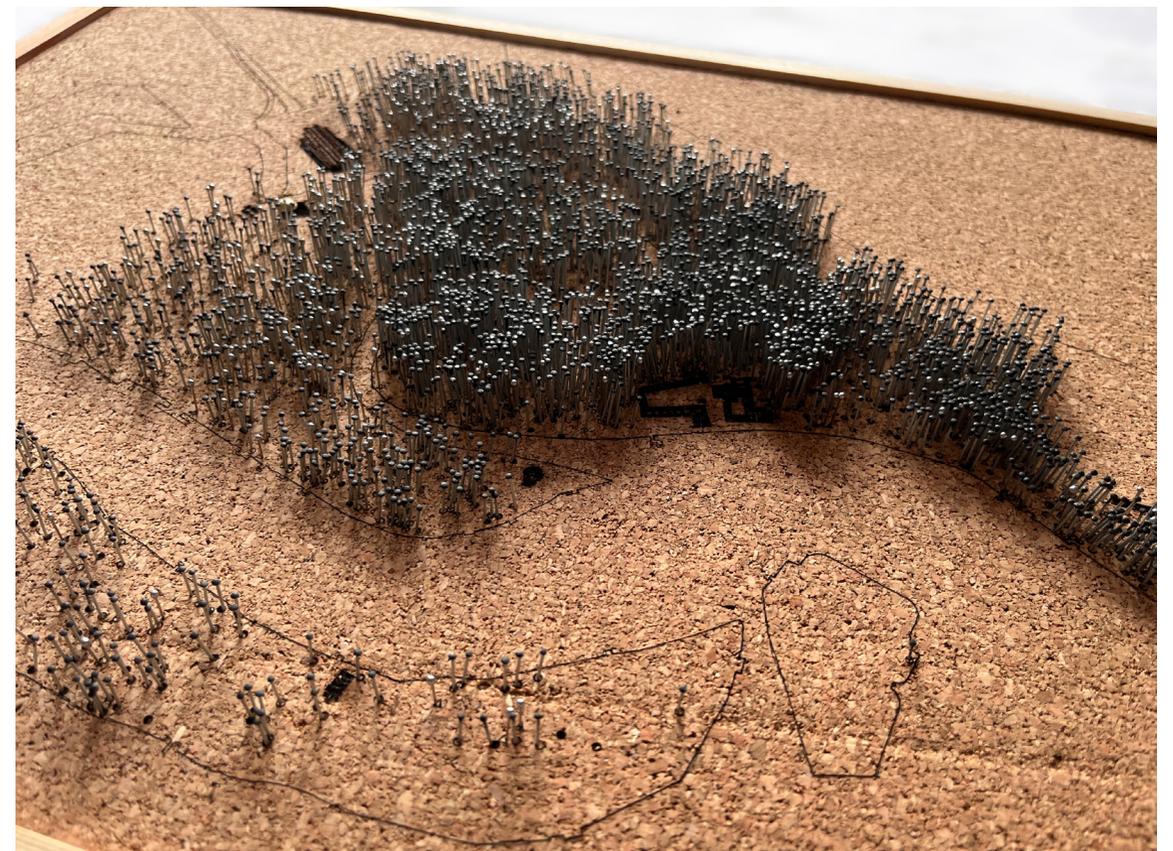


MODEL PHOTOS



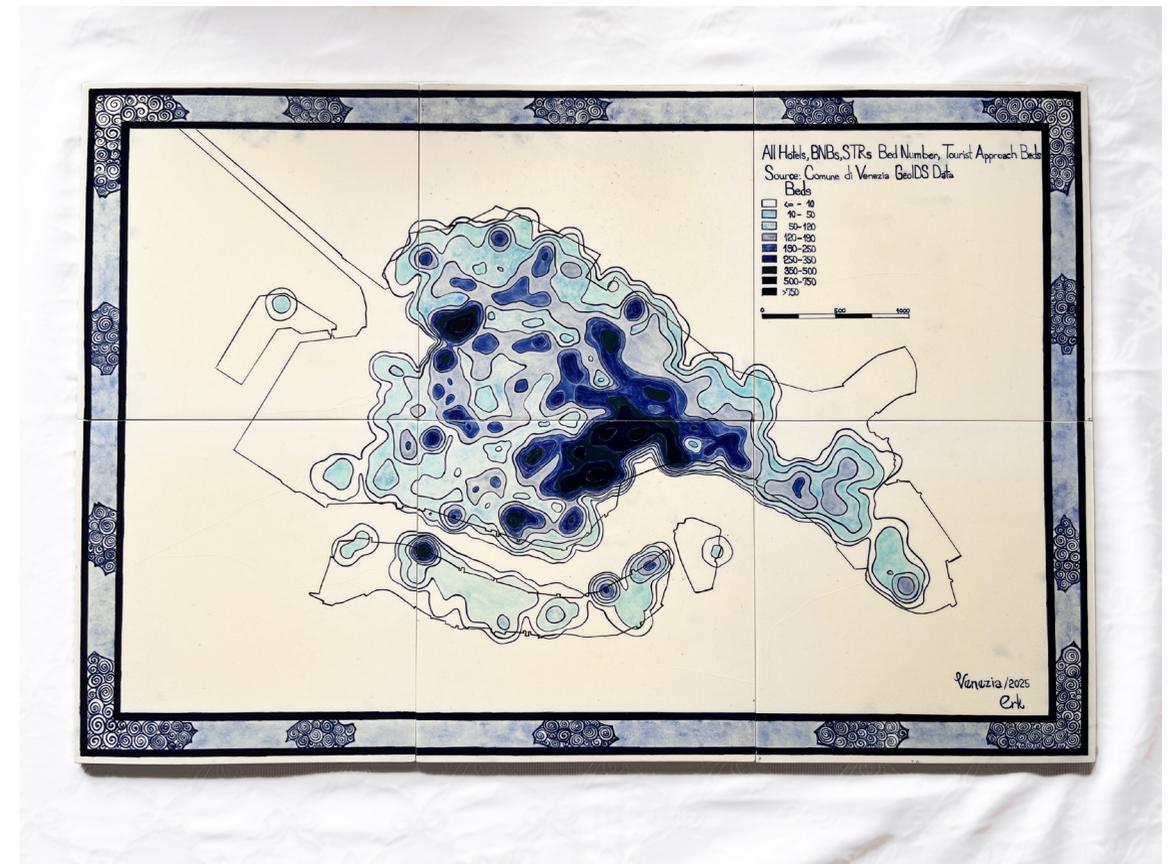
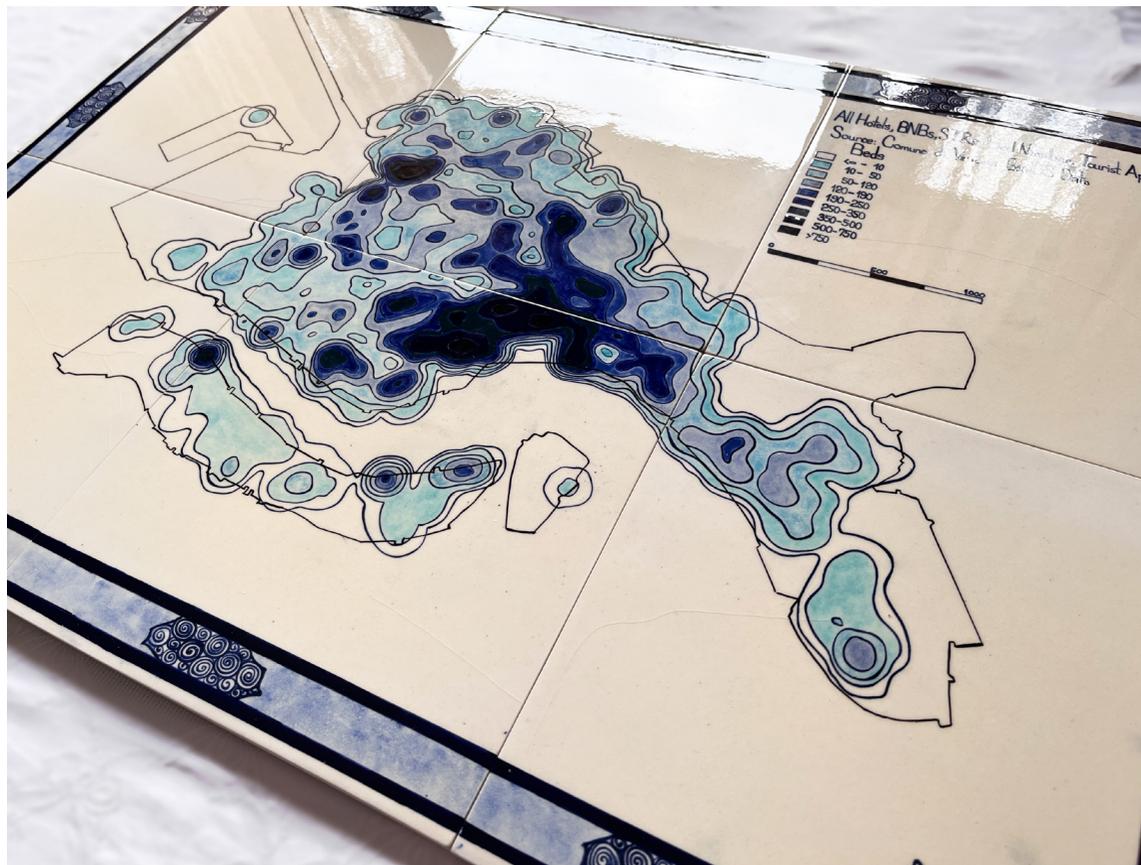
## WORKS FOR EXHIBITION ON URBAN LOBBY

As part of the methodological approach to this research on short-term rentals and overtourism in Venice, I produced a physical visualization of Airbnb listings across the historic city. The map was constructed on a cork panel, where each black pin corresponds to an individual listing, differentiated between entire homes and private rooms. This analogue cartography translates quantitative digital data into a tangible and spatially legible form, highlighting the density and distribution of STRs within the fragile urban fabric of Venice.



## WORKS FOR EXHIBITION ON URBAN LOBBY

This map, executed in traditional gini ceramic art, visualizes the distribution of tourist accommodation capacity in Venice. Drawing on data from the Comune di Venezia GeoIDS, it represents the number of beds across hotels, B&Bs, and short-term rentals through a heat-map system, where tonal variations of blue indicate different density levels. The translation of statistical data into a handcrafted ceramic medium underscores the interplay between material permanence and the transient pressures of mass tourism on the city. Moreover, this work was conceived as an example of the type of pieces that could be exhibited within the Urban Lobby temporary installation proposed by the thesis, thereby linking analytical research with public engagement through spatial and artistic display.



## CONCLUSION

The central question driving this thesis – “**Who sleeps in Venice?**” – is a provocative lens through which to examine the city’s overtourism crisis. By focusing on *sleeping space* as an indicator, the thesis explores who actually occupies Venice’s domestic realm each night, revealing a dramatic shift from resident population to transient visitors. This inquiry shows that Venice’s housing has effectively been commandeered by tourism: hotels, B&Bs, and short-term rentals now consume a huge portion of the city’s dwellings. In fact, by mid-2023 the number of tourist beds in Venice **exceeded** the number of actual residents (approximately 49,700 tourist beds vs. 49,300 inhabitants)<sup>128</sup>. The very spaces of rest – beds and bedrooms – have become the frontline of urban change, illustrating how an influx of outsiders displaces local life. The question “Who sleeps in Venice?” thus serves to pinpoint a core symptom of overtourism: **the inversion of the city’s population**, where visitors increasingly outnumber and replace those who try to live in the city.

Using sleeping space as a focal point, the thesis links tourists’ spatial consumption to broader urban crises of depopulation, housing scarcity, and socio-spatial inequality. As thousands of apartments are converted into vacation rentals, Venice’s permanent population has plummeted – from over 170,000 in the 1950s to under 50,000 today<sup>129</sup> – in large part because locals cannot compete with the lucrative short-term rental market. Homes stand empty off-season or serve ever-changing tourists instead of sustaining year-round residents. This **transformation of housing stock into tourist accommodation** leaves Venetians with few places to live: affordable long-term rentals are nearly impossible to find. Those flats that remain on the market are prohibitively expensive, contributing to an exodus of families and young people to the mainland. Overtourism thus directly **fuels depopulation** – a feedback loop wherein the more space visitors occupy, the less viable the city becomes for locals. The thesis makes this dynamic plainly visible, for example by mapping the proliferation of *Locazione Turistica* plaques now affixed to virtually every building – each one a marker of a dwelling given over to short-term guests. These spatial patterns underscore the central argument: that Venice’s crisis is not merely one of crowded streets, but of a housing market and urban fabric distorted by tourist demand.

Furthermore, the research highlights how this spatial consumption by tourists produces stark **socio-spatial inequalities**. A new hierarchy has emerged in which real-estate owners and outside investors reap windfalls from renting to visitors, while ordinary residents who need housing face untenable conditions. Long-time Venetians who don’t own property find themselves pushed into ever smaller, costlier, and more precarious quarters – or forced out of the city entirely – while a minority benefit from tourist

128. Remi Wacogne, *et al.*, “Keeping an eye on overtourism,” *Eurozine*, 16 Oct 2024, eurozine.comeurozine.com.

129. *ibidem*

130. *Unmasking Tourism in Venice* (MIT Urban Planning research project), 2020, overtourismvenice.mit.edu.

revenues. This inequity has a physical dimension in Venice’s urban space: essential services evaporate as the resident population dwindles, tilting the city’s commerce toward visitors. Stores selling daily necessities give way to souvenir shops and holiday rentals, leaving some neighborhoods without even a local grocery or pharmacy. As the **social fabric frays**, public infrastructure also suffers; with fewer locals to use schools, markets or transit regularly, these amenities shrink, further eroding livability<sup>130</sup>. It’s a vicious cycle, where the dominance of tourism undermines the very urban life that makes Venice a living city. The thesis connects these dots, showing that the question of “who sleeps” in the city is inextricable from questions of **who thrives** in the city and who is excluded.

To bolster these arguments, the thesis integrates extensive visual analysis and precedent studies, using diagrams, maps, and case studies to illuminate the spatial realities and possibilities in Venice. Data-driven maps plot the distribution of tourist rentals against resident population decline, graphically conveying how tourist bed hotspots overlap with the emptiest residential blocks. Comparative diagrams illustrate, for instance, the shrinking footprint of local amenities versus the expanding reach of tourist infrastructure. These visuals make the abstract issues tangible – one can literally see the city hollowing out in certain quarters – thereby strengthening the call for intervention. In parallel, **architectural case studies** provide insight into how design can critique or counteract these trends. The thesis examines Aldo Rossi’s *Teatro del Mondo*, a floating theater temporarily moored in Venice’s lagoon, as a symbol of how ephemeral architecture can capture the city’s cultural identity and invite public engagement even if only briefly. Likewise, Carlo Scarpa’s 1952 **Biennale ticket pavilion** in the Giardini is highlighted as a small yet powerful example of architecture mediating between global visitors and local context – a humane and artful gateway that served both the Biennale audience and the Venetian setting. The study also looks to contemporary precedents like Melbourne’s **MPavilion** and London’s **Serpentine Pavilion** – annual temporary pavilions that act as free, public gathering spaces – to demonstrate the capacity of **temporary installations** to galvanize community interaction and cultural discourse. These visual and case-study references reinforce the thesis’s propositions: they show how thoughtfully designed spaces, whether permanent or transient, can foster civic life and cultural awareness. In doing so, they provide inspiration for Venice to reclaim its public realm from monofunctional tourist use and to re-center local experiences.

Recognizing the urban dimensions of this crisis, the thesis proposes targeted regulatory measures designed to rebalance Venice’s residential landscape. These proposals include limiting short-term rental licenses per owner, protecting the local neighbourhoods, and applying differentiated taxation based on spatial consumption. By disincentivizing the conversion of large apartments into tourist accommodations and encouraging more

sustainable room-sharing models, such regulations aim to preserve housing for local residents. Additionally, zoning policies inspired by successful models from cities like Barcelona and Amsterdam would restrict STR density, maintaining a balanced residential-to-tourist ratio within neighborhoods. These regulatory measures are critical, as they provide the policy foundation upon which spatial and architectural interventions can meaningfully operate.

Building on the research findings, the thesis culminates in a primary design proposal of an **"Urban Lobby"** a civic installation intended to address overtourism's impacts by reconnecting residents with their city and sensitizing tourists to Venice's lived realities. The Urban Lobby is envisioned as a temporary public installation or series of installations strategically integrated into the urban fabric of Venice, functioning as a new kind of urban room or threshold. It acts as a grand communal living room, fostering civic engagement and social interaction. **The installation serves as a welcoming hub for both locals and tourists, encouraging visitors to move beyond superficial tourism and engage meaningfully with the Venice.** Programmatically, the Urban Lobby provides communal amenities such as seating areas, informative cultural displays, local art exhibitions, performances, and spaces designed specifically for public dialogue and interaction. **Through its design, the installation intentionally slows down tourist experiences, prompting reflection, learning, and respectful engagement with the city.**

Complementary to the Urban Lobby, a secondary proposal suggested in the research is the establishment of a **City Museum** within **Palazzo Papadopoli**. Although the thesis primarily concentrates on the Urban Lobby installation, the idea of repurposing Palazzo Papadopoli—a prominent but privately operated historic palazzo on the Grand Canal—emerged from broader urban discussions during the research. While considerations were made regarding renovation and its practical suitability, the proposal remained largely conceptual. Its strategic location and potential to address Venice's cultural and spatial needs rendered Palazzo Papadopoli suitable for transformation into a City Museum. This complementary suggestion symbolizes an act of reappropriation, converting an elite, tourist-focused space into a public center dedicated to collective memory and urban awareness. However, this museum proposal was presented as supplementary, reinforcing rather than overshadowing the central focus on the temporary, socially-oriented Urban Lobby installation.

In closing, this thesis highlights the potential of targeted regulatory frameworks and thoughtful architectural interventions, such as the Urban Lobby, in addressing the impacts of overtourism. The exploration of "Who sleeps in Venice?" has underscored that seemingly mundane spatial conditions – like sleeping arrangements – reveal profound urban inequalities. Moving forward, future research might examine pilot implementations

of these proposals, evaluating their practical effectiveness and implications for visitor behavior and community resilience. Ultimately, this thesis concludes with the hopeful yet humble assertion that incremental, strategic urban interventions can contribute to rebalancing Venice's urban landscape, fostering a city that is both a welcoming destination and a sustainable home for its residents.

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This thesis topic has been particularly meaningful to me, as studying in Venice allowed me to experience the challenges of overtourism and housing transformation firsthand. Working on a subject so closely connected to my own daily life has been both engaging and rewarding, allowing me to explore how my professional practice can contribute to addressing these issues. I hope that the ideas developed here may contribute, in some way, to ongoing discussions and inspire further reflections on the future of the city.

Finally, I am deeply thankful to my family especially my mother and my friends for their constant support, patience, and encouragement throughout this journey. Their understanding and belief in my work have been invaluable, and I am truly grateful for their presence by my side.