Moving Towards a Collective Shaping of the City

The Case of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi: a Wake-up Call for the Community of Venice

A Dissertation submitted for

MSc in Architectural Conservation,
University of Edinburgh

by Svenja Klett s1408929

First Reader: Ruxandra-Iulia Stoica

Scottish Centre for Conservation Studies
Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture
Edinburgh College of Art
University of Edinburgh
2014-2015
Contents

Title Page .......................................................................................................................................................... i

Contents .............................................................................................................................................................. ii

List of Illustrations ............................................................................................................................................... iii

Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................................................ iv

1. Introduction ..................................................................................................................................................... 1

2. Tourists and Locals in Venice: Home or Attraction? ................................................................. 6

3. The Fondaco dei Tedeschi ......................................................................................................................... 9
   3.1. Cultural Significance .............................................................................................................................. 9
   3.2. Planned Transformation and Possible Impacts .................................................................................... 18
   3.3. Reactions, Discussion and Protest ....................................................................................................... 28
   3.4. Evaluation and Comparison ................................................................................................................ 33

4. Increased Awareness and Successful Community Engagement ...... 40
   4.1. Alternative Ideas for the Fondaco ........................................................................................................ 40
   4.2. New Community Initiatives ................................................................................................................ 44
   4.3. A Fight against Windmills? ................................................................................................................ 48

5. Recommendations ......................................................................................................................................... 49
   5.1. Public Administration .......................................................................................................................... 50
   5.2. Enhancing Community Involvement .................................................................................................. 52

6. Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................................... 55

7. Bibliography ..................................................................................................................................................... 59

Appendix A: Statistics ....................................................................................................................................... 61

Appendix B: Historic Research on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi ................................................................. 63

Appendix C: Interviews ....................................................................................................................................... 72
List of Illustrations

The photographs included in this thesis belong to the author, unless otherwise specified in this list of illustration.

Figure 1: Protest of local residents in Venice, 11/04/2008. (www.telegraph.uk, accessed 19/06/2015)

Figure 2: Raphael Custos, Domus Germanorum emporica Venetiis, 1616. Lieb, Norbert. Die Fugger und die Kunst im Zeitalter der hohen Renaissance. Munich, 1958. (Prometheus Bildarchiv)

Figure 3: Photograph of the Fondaco before renovation, around 1900. (Sopraintendenza)

Figure 4: Ground floor plan of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi showing historic development. (Archeological Survey, Sopraintendenza Venice, 2009)

Figure 5: Fondaco dei Tedeschi, Liebermann, Ralph: L'Architettura del Rinascimento a Venezia 1450-1540, Florence: Becocci, 1982, fig. 101. (Prometheus Bildarchiv)

Figure 6: Fondaco dei Tedeschi, inner courtyard, Liebermann, Ralph: L'Architettura del Rinascimento a Venezia 1450-1540, 1982, fig. 100. (Prometheus Bildarchiv)

Figure 7: Visual reconstruction of Titian’s frescoes on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, Venice. (Prometheus Bildarchiv)

Figure 8: Titian, Justice (Judith), 1508-09, fresco, detached from Fondaco dei Tedeschi, Galleria Franchetti alla Ca d'Oro, Venice, Italy. (Artstor)

Figure 9: Fondaco dei Tedeschi, Venice, around 1997, in Romanelli, Giandomenico: Venedig. Munich 1997, 160. (Prometheus Bildarchiv)

Figure 10: Jacopo de Barbari, Bird’s eye view of Venice, detail, 1500, Museo Correr, Venice. (Prometheus Bildarchiv)

Figure 11: OMA’s planned rooftop terrace from preliminary proposal. (OMA online)

Figure 12: Model with escalators in the courtyard from the preliminary proposal. (OMA online)

Figure 13: Movable escalator. (OMA online)

Figure 14: Visualisation of OMA’s modern interpretation of frescoes. (OMA online)

Figure 15: OMA cross section showing final roof terrace design, 2012. (Comune di Venezia online)

Figure 16: Cross section: roof terrace and escalators, 2012. (Comune di Venezia online)

Figure 17: San Bartolomeo Square, adjacent to the Fondaco, location of new future entrance, May 2015.

Figure 18: OMA cross section, escalators with circular hole in the centre of wall, 2012. (Comune di Venezia online)

Figure 19: Cross section showing hole and escalators, 2012. (Comune di Venezia online)
Figure 20: Plan of new foundations that have to be inserted, 2012. (Comune di Venezia online)

Figure 21: Distribution of uses on ground floor, 2012. (Comune di Venezia online)

Figure 22: Distribution of uses, 2012. (Comune di Venezia online)

Figure 23: Scaffolding on the Grand Canal facade in May 2015.

Figure 24: Sign on scaffolding, Fondaco dei Tedeschi, May 2015.

Figure 25: Department store Coin adjacent to the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, May 2015.

Figure 26: Harry Bedford Lemere, The Royal High School, Regent Road, Edinburgh, 1825-29 (built), 1895. (Scran)

Figure 27: Old Royal High School in front of Calton Hill, February 3, 2010 (Architects Journal online).

Figure 28: An artist’s impression of how the new hotel building could look if the development goes ahead. (Scotsman online, 16/03/2015, accessed 02/07/2015)

Figure 29: Title page of “Un altro Fontego. Storie di città.” 2012.

Figure 30: Entrance to the Area of the Arsenale, 2015.

Figure 31: Inside of the Arsenale, Art Biennale 2015.

Figure 32: Area of the Arsenale that has been bought by the Comune of Venice in 2013. (Accessed 17/07/15, www.arsenale.comune.venezia.it)

Figure 33: Protesting community in front of Villa Heriot 2014. (La Nuova Venezia, 15/12/14, accessed 18/07/15, www.nuovavenezia.gelocal.it.)
Acknowledgements

This project required a huge amount of work, research and dedication on my part. However, this would not have been possible without the help of many individuals and organisations. I would like to thank my personal tutor Ruxandra-Iulia Stoica for guidance during the process of writing this dissertation as well as Miles Glendinning for the support throughout the year.

I am also very grateful to Paola Somma, Adriano De Vita, Barbara Pastor and Susanna Böhme-Kuby for taking time to talk to me about my subject during my visit to Venice. In addition, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Sopraintendenza belle arti e paesaggio per Venezia e laguna and the Comune di Venezia for their kind cooperation.

Thanks also to AHSS for the dialogue about community engagement in Scotland.

Finally, I would like to say thank you to my family, who made it possible for me to come to Edinburgh to participate in the course and complete this thesis.
1. Introduction

Responsibility for cultural heritage and the management of it belongs, in the first place, to the cultural community that has generated it, and subsequently to that which cares for it.¹

— The Nara Document on Authenticity

In 1966, Venice was struck by its highest flooding on record; the great flood abruptly jeopardised the floating city’s heritage, generating a fear of losing the unique city all around the world. The awareness and international concern about the danger was increased by campaigns, such as the one by UNESCO, in the following years. As a result many organisations around the globe were formed, raising money in order to save and restore the World Heritage Site.² However, one thing was seemingly neglected: the community of people that lived in Venice and what they considered to be their heritage. In 2008, over forty years later, when one of the most massive historic structures in the heart of Venice was sold to private investors, it resulted in another outcry. This time, the threat of losing heritage did not derive from any uncontrollable forces of nature, but from within the city itself. Yet, this time something else had also changed: the counter reaction came from within – from the Venetian community concerned for their heritage. In our modern times characterised by globalisation and crises of identity, it is important to understand the significance of a participatory culture and to support the local population in their efforts to safeguard and shape their home.

The focus of this thesis is the conversion of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi in Venice and its function as a trigger for unleashing activities in community engagement that were previously unseen. The sixteenth century former merchant quarter, which is currently under

construction, will be converted into a luxury shopping mall by 2016. This thesis studies the change of function and reuse of the historically important structure. It concentrates on the impact of the alterations on the building and the city, as well as examines the inhabitant’s reactions. The aim of this study is to analyse the relation between the changes that are to happen to the ancient building, the public reactions and the developments concerning public engagement in heritage preservation. Public engagement hereby is defined as the contribution to public policy decisions in a meaningful, transparent and responsible manner. Community engagement addresses the need of the people outside the official decision-making to discuss the actions of public bodies.\textsuperscript{3} It should not be seen as a substitute for authorized decision-making but as a complement to it.\textsuperscript{4}

In order to illustrate the importance of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, this study will first outline the dimensions of its cultural significance. The impact on the structure will be analysed based on the examination of the plans for the new shopping mall. Further consideration will be given to the effects that the planning process and the decision-making had on the public discussion and protest. Additional case studies on community engagement will be included that reflect on events following the Fondaco dei Tedeschi ‘affair’. These case studies help to evaluate the impact of the public’s participation regarding heritage issues. Moreover, the problems these initiatives are facing will also be addressed. The essay concludes by suggesting ways to improve public participation in heritage questions as well as how to implement these changes into the administration.


Justification of the Research and Literature Review

To address the important issue of community participation and local identity in conservation, this study will explore means of public involvement regarding urban developments in Venice and how these can be improved. This analysis is based on the case study of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi. The building is one of the most prominent features of the Rialto Area. The change of use from public to private as well as the transformation into retail use follows a trend in the development of the city of Venice, as well as Italy as a whole. When the Benetton Group purchased the Fondaco dei Tedeschi and proposed the new project, the outrage within the Venetian community became visible in meetings, newspaper articles and websites such as the one of Italia Nostra’s Venetian group.

The investigation into the circumstances of the whole development is quite a delicate matter on the administrative side. This is because in 2014, after all the permissions for change were already granted, the mayor and most of the administrative staff of the city were involved in a corruption scandal and therefore, were removed from office. In addition, the responsible staff member of the Sopraintendenza⁵ was also moved to another city’s office. As a result, only limited insight into the decision-making from an administrative side could be gained from Sopraintendenza archive documents. Moreover, the architect’s company OMA⁶ was not available for statements or further information on the project. The history of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi is well researched in Italian and German literature. The works on the topic reach from its ancient history, such as the two 1887 volumes by Henry Simonsfeld “Der Fondaco Dei Tedeschi in Venedig Und Die Deutsch-Venetianischen Handelsbeziehungen” to very recent publications. Donatella Calabi and Paolo Morachiello’s “Il Fontego dei Tedeschi” from 2012 and Lidia Fersuoch’s booklet from the same series

⁵ The so called Sopraintendenza per i Beni Architettonici e Paesaggistici del Comune di Venezia is the heritage protection department of Venice. It is a periphal organ of the Ministery of Culture, not in the same institution as the City Council (Comune di Venezia).
⁶ Office for Metropolitan Architecture.
“Nostro Fontego dei Tedeschi” (2015) explore the history and significance of the building up until the latest developments. “Benettown. Un ventennio di mecenatismo” (2011) by Paola Somma discusses the influence of the Benetton Group on Venice and its built fabric. This work gives a further insight into the commercial and touristic aspects of the new development in the Fondaco dei Tedeschi as well as other parts of Venice. The effects, issues and opportunities of tourism on heritage cities and Venice in particular have been studied extensively. Ashworth’s “The Tourist-Historic City” (1990) gives a general overview of historic cities as tourist attractions and the effects of tourism on the cities. The number of actual Venetian inhabitants keeps decreasing, which has resulted in many naming it a ‘dead city’. In 2014, Salvatore Settis published a book that looks into the urban, social and touristic developments in Venice over the years. It is called “Se Venezia muore” (If Venice dies). The central question is how the city can survive while also keeping its heritage and culture alive and intact. The Venetian professor Francesco Bandarin released a book together with Ron van Oers “The Historic Urban Landscape. Managing Heritage in an Urban Century” (2012) that discusses current problems and ways of managing heritage cities. No previous research has linked the Fondaco dei Tedeschi events with the effect on developments in local community involvement.

Research Methodologies

The research has been carried out through work both on site in Venice and by studying plans, print, image sources, and online resources from the University of Edinburgh, the Comune of Venice, the Sopraintendenza in Venice, as well as material produced by community groups. Furthermore, previous archival works and studies that have been carried out were included in this work. Sources were used to trace architectural and touristic developments and statistics about population in order to address the issues discussed. A field

7 The local City Council of Venice.
visit to Venice enabled qualitative research to be conducted. Interviews were held with a former professor of architecture at IUAV in Venice, two members of the heritage group Faro Venezia as well as a political candidate of the Veneto region.

Structure

This document is subdivided into six main chapters. Following this Introduction, the relation between tourism and urban developments in the city is addressed in the chapter Tourists and Locals in Venice: Home or Attraction? Afterwards, the section The Fondaco dei Tedeschi examines the case study in detail, beginning with its Cultural Significance, followed by the Planned Transformation and Possible Impact, the Reactions, Discussions and Protest, concluding with the Evaluation and Comparison. The fourth chapter looks at the Increased Awareness and Successful Community Engagement. Next, suggestions for the enhancement of community engagement are made in the chapter Recommendations. The sixth and final section covers the Conclusion.
2. Tourists and Locals in Venice: Home or Attraction?

It is splendid architecture and a stage set with few comparisons; it is a range of activities with ancient traditions, a dialect, a way of living and dying that the rest of the world has forgotten; it is a museum, a company, a place of culture and normal residents and more besides.\(^8\)

Visiting this place, the floating city of Venice, is a dream for many people around the world. It is said to have been an attraction even before the word was invented. The city records say that tour guides already existed in 1204. Tourism, therefore, can be described as a part of the Venetian culture. By the eighteenth century, it was a must-see in the European Grand Tour.\(^9\) Thanks to the ongoing globalisation and recent developments in the tourist sector, such as low cost flights, the dream of visiting Venice has become possible for more and more individuals. A dream come true for many is a nightmare for others.

The statistics of the Municipality of Venice show that the number of tourists is constantly rising. The mass of tourists mainly consists of day tourists who only generate low financial revenue for the city (appendix A). In the year 2010 over two million tourists stayed overnight in the historic centre, but over eight million actually came to visit the city according to the statistics of the Comune. OECD stated that the greater Venice region welcomed almost forty million visitors in 2010, putting it amongst the most visited tourist destinations in the world.\(^10\) At the same time, the population of the historic centre is constantly decreasing. In 2013, only twenty-three percent, roughly 57 000, of the population that was once as high as 174 808 (1951) are still left (appendix A). In contrast to this, the cheaper residential areas in the nearby, industrialised mainland cities such as Marghera and Mestre, has experienced an enormous growth of inhabitants since the fifties. A shocking

---

\(^8\) Gherardo Ortalli, "The Administration Choices and Difficulties of the City Centre," in A Future for Venice?: Considerations 40 Years after the 1966 Flood (Turin: Umberto Allemandi & Co, 2008), 20.


prognosis predicts that by 2030 the population of Venice itself will be zero. Masses of tourists would have replaced every single Venetian.\textsuperscript{11} Yet, one has to consider that the explosion of mass tourism is arising for the first time in history; therefore, it is hard to predict possible consequences of the growth.\textsuperscript{12}

According to Ashworth and Turnbridge, Venice is a typical tourist-historic city that is resource based and attracts tourism by its own right.\textsuperscript{13} On the one hand, tourism is an important economic factor for the population and it functions as means for the upkeep of its rich cultural heritage. On the other hand, the rising numbers of tourists and the extinction of other industries poses threats to the city, the population of the historic centre and Venice’s very cultural identity. Bandarin and Van Oers describe this as the dual capacity of tourism.\textsuperscript{14}

Looking at these issues one has to keep in mind that there is no such thing as an undifferentiated social or ethnic local community. Furthermore, a highly nuanced construct of power dominates the relationship between tourists and locals.\textsuperscript{15} However, tourism does create pressure and issues for the population. This is due to the enormous number of tourists who alter or destroy the original environment and the traditional way of living.\textsuperscript{16}

In the book “The Historic Urban Landscape” by Bandarin and Van Oers, the authors pose the question of whether cities like Venice can still be regarded as urban heritage at all. Since, technically, it is well preserved as a historical urban area, but both its social organisation and its function have radically changed.\textsuperscript{17} Tourists overwhelm the limited space and make locals feel like they have lost their rights on their own home. An example is that locals move out of the highly touristic areas in Venice because of both a feeling of loss of

\textsuperscript{14} Bandarin and Van Oers, \textit{The Historic Urban Landscape Managing Heritage in an Urban Century}, 102.
\textsuperscript{15} Quinn, “Performing Tourism. Venetian Residents in Focus,” 461.
\textsuperscript{17} Bandarin and Van Oers, \textit{The Historic Urban Landscape Managing Heritage in an Urban Century}, 190.
territory and the economic hardship to maintain a house in the overpriced centre. This fact as well as the increasing residential gentrification, privatisation and loss of social complexity were also mentioned during an interview with the Venetian architectural historian Paola Somma, who states that this is a major ethical problem. While basic services like butchers and facilities like youth centres and other public spaces are missing, the low-quality merchandise market and up-scale shopping possibilities are increasing. In addition, she points out that most of the former affordable apartments have been turned into guesthouses and most ancient palazzi and significant historical buildings have been privatised and turned into luxury hotels. A protest at Saint Mark’s Square in 2008 showed the frustration with these developments (fig. 1).

It can be concluded that multiple causes force Venetians to leave their former home and cultural identity behind. The mentioned factors feed what Russo calls the ‘vicious circle of tourism’; the dynamic can only be interrupted by the implementation of thorough policies and control. If uncontrolled, the vicious circle leads to the decline of allurement of the heritage city. The issue of memory and belonging are also a strong component challenged by the tourism industry. As Venetians themselves describe it, a feeling of community is lacking in many areas. Even tourists realise this, and it affects and will affect the industry negatively. The situation raises questions as to who should participate in the decision-making process, and whose history is commodified and offered for sale just like the Fondaco dei Tedeschi.

---

18 Paola Somma, interview by author, Venice, 21/05/15. Barbara Pastor and Adriano De Vita (Faro Venezia members), interview by author, Venice, 22/05/15. Paola Somma, Benetton, Un ventennio di mecenatismo (Venice: Corte del Fontego editore, 2011), 32.
20 Barbara Pastor and Adriano De Vita (Faro Venezia members), interview by author, Venice, 22/05/15.
3. The Fondaco dei Tedeschi

3.1. Cultural Significance

This analysis of the significance was created by using inter alia the 2008 document “Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance: for the sustainable management of the historic environment” by English Heritage.21 The document suggests assessing the cultural significance of a place through values under four main headings: communal, historical, aesthetic and evidential. The assessment of the cultural significance aims to understand a site and its cultural values in their entirety. The methodology has to be adapted to each case study and does not provide a standardised measurement of significance. Each individual building, in this case the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, has a unique cultural significance. The values of English Heritage are a starting point from where the cultural significance is identified. English Heritage asks that changes and conservation decisions should only be taken when considering the likely impacts on the cultural significance of the fabric.22

A more detailed research regarding the history of the Fondaco was undertaken to support this analysis of significance. This chronological historic research and additional historic sources can be found in the Appendix B.

**Nostro (Our) Fontego dei Tedeschi**

The building is described as Fondaco dei Tedeschi in foreign literature, such as German and English texts. In the Venetian dialect, however, it is called Fontego, which is why this variation of the name appears in official documents, Italian books and newspapers. Throughout history, the existing documents show a strong sense of pride for the Venetians regarding the ownership of the building. The Fondaco dei Tedeschi was first mentioned in a document in the year 1228, simply as “fondaco of the Venetian community, where the Germans stay”. In a document from 1505, shortly after the great fire, the fact that the Fondaco belongs to the community is highlighted by being named “our Fondaco dei Tedeschi” and it is stated that it should be restored fast and beautifully. This ownership is emphasised again in the title of Brunetti and Dazzi’s book about the history of the building “Il Fondaco Nostro dei Tedeschi” – our Fondaco dei Tedeschi – from 1941. Fersuoch chose a similar title “Nostro Fontego dei Tedeschi” in her latest work about the structure, which was published only this year. It seems as if the sense of ownership and pride related to the Fondaco dei Tedeschi survived nearly eight hundred years and persists today despite the fact that the building does not actually belong to the Venetians anymore.

This is due to several factors. The Fondaco dei Tedeschi with its central location in the World Heritage Site plays an important role in the everyday life of the residents. The site forms part of the distinctive urban development and layout of the water-based city. The

---


building’s connection with the present commercial area as well as its historical connection to the Venetian-German trade creates a collective memory surrounding the former main business endeavours of the city. The building is a symbol of the heyday of the Venetian Republic and its maritime trading activities, which are still glorified and commemorated through many Venetian holidays and traditional festivities. It is also a symbol of intercultural communication and exchange between Venice and the North. In addition, the building was a point of public reference and service to the population, beloved and frequented by Venetians during its most recent utilisation as headquarter of the Italian Post.25

Shaping the History of a Merchant Empire

The current built fabric of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, which was completed after a fire in 1508, can be useful in accessing the history of the Republic of Venice as a maritime superpower and beyond.26

The concept of the Fondaco was a vital part of the economic and social organisation of the city as centre of trade between the East and Europe. Only two buildings called Fondaco still exist in the city today – the Fondaco dei Tedeschi and the Fondaco dei Turchi – making the site a rare historic source.27 The present building illustrates a link between the past of Venice as a commercial metropolis and the current layout of the Rialto Area and the rest of the city (fig. 2). Throughout history, the site was associated with many influential and well-known figures and formed the centre of the German-Venetian trade. For example, it housed

27 The expression that describe this institution, fontego or fondaco, comes from the Arabic word fonduk, which stands in etymologic relation to a Greek expression meaning “all containing” or “all receiving”. This word was used to describe the quarters of the Western merchants in the seaport towns of the East. The Venetians adapted this concept when they built their own Fondaco for the Germans – tedeschi means Germans in Italian. Henry Simonsfeld, *Der Fondaco Dei Tedeschi in Venedig Und Die Deutsch-Venetianischen Handelsbeziehungen*, Vol. 2. (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1887), 3-4.
the merchant family Tucher from Nuremberg, who are repeatedly mentioned in original documents.28 The most famous guest staying at the Fondaco, however, was certainly the German artist Albrecht Dürer – also from Nuremberg.29

During its more recent history, the building saw several changes of use and the state of the fabric declined gradually (fig. 3). It faded together with the power and glory of the Venetian Republic. Nevertheless, it was associated with influential moments in Venice’s history. The building was first occupied and converted by Napoleon’s troops and later reused by the Austrians. Witnessing the fascist regime taking over the city, the Fondaco was completely renovated (fig. 4). After this thorough renovation in the 1930s, it has housed the head office of the Italian Post since 1939. The building formed a part of the daily life of the residents, until it was sold in 2008.30

**Introducing Renaissance**

Since the Fondaco has undergone various interventions, the building shows different layers of structural development. The building’s composition is truly Renaissance in its planning and appearance. This can be seen, for instance, in the diminishing story heights. It is therefore one of the first buildings in Venice designed in the Renaissance style (fig. 5).31 The pillars in the courtyard support a uniform space that evolves harmonically through cross vaults from the first floor to the fourth floor (fig. 6). It is a thoughtfully composed structure, based on exact mathematic and abstract thoughts, yet, it keeps the general dimensions of the

---

31 Lidia Fersuoch, Nostro Fontego dei Tedeschi (Venice: Corte del Fontego editore, 2015), 21.
previous medieval structure.\footnote{Antonini, Fondaco dei Tedeschi: La Fabbrica Realizzata. Relazione Storica. Il Fondaco dei Tedeschi.}

Completely enclosed on all four sides, reminiscent of a defence structure, it is appropriately constructed for the purpose of controlling trade and merchants. The only ornaments one can still see today besides the minimal architectural decoration are several high reliefs, a big wall clock that was installed in 1571 and a stone wellhead.\footnote{Antonini, Fondaco dei Tedeschi: Inquadramento Cronologico e Storico. Relazione Storica. Il Fondaco dei Tedeschi.} Therefore, the design of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi appears very plain in the modern day. Frescoes by Titian and Giorgione originally covered the external walls. Fragments of these works with a unique artistic value have been saved and can be seen in the Ca’ d’Oro and the Accademia Galleries (fig. 7 & 8).\footnote{Debora Howard, The Architectural History of Venice (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 58.} According to Ennio Concina in his book on Fondacos, the choice of architectural style reflects the new concept of a program of severe public architecture in Venice that was established with the Fondaco.\footnote{Ennio Concina, Fondaci: Architettura, Arte, E Mercatura Tra Levante, Venezia, E Alemagna, (Venezia: Marsilio, 1997), 180-181.} The building has features that specifically identify it as a place of commerce and trade. The side facing the Grand Canal is the most prominent façade with the spacious fife bay central loggia at water level for unloading goods and arriving merchants (fig. 9). A line of merlons, which are pierced by circles and ornamentally crowned by stone balls, tops the roofline. The courtyard was formerly open. The present skylight was not added until the nineteenth century. In addition, the courtyard is also one of the largest to be found within the city.

Testimony of the Past

Set within the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, the structure offers the opportunity to gain evidence of past human activities. The grounds of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi are significant because they retain materials, planned elements, and constructed features that bear witness to the continuous human usage from the early Middle Ages,
through the thriving period of the Renaissance, to the use as a public building, and finally the current day. Archaeological surveys show that there are traces and materials providing a significant documentation about previously existing structures on the same site (fig. 10). Evidence of this early occupation is possibly preserved archaeologically in specific areas of the building. These can be of high interest in understanding the usage and daily life of people that inhabited the area. During the archaeological survey undertaken in 2009, traces of a pre-existent pathway were found, leading through the grounds of the building. In addition, the Fondaco has a significant evidential value because of its layout, the location and associated features. These all provide evidence of the history of German-Venetian trade and illustrate the evolution of an institutional design as well as changes in the economic, political and social developments over an extensive period of time.

**Conclusion**

Examining the four values, it can be concluded that the building because of its rich history, mere size, and central location, has an extraordinary cultural significance for Venice’s heritage landscape and its inhabitants. The strong sense of pride and ownership as well as the significance as a social reference point for the local population indicate that the structure has an unusual communal value, which forms the greatest part of its cultural significance. Historically, the building formed an important part of the great naval and trading machinery of the Venetian Republic. The structure specifically symbolises the connection between Venice and the Northern countries. Moreover, the Fondaco dei Tedeschi has a unique architectural formal language within the cityscape, as one of the first Renaissance buildings, which shows its high aesthetic significance. The Fondaco also

---

possesses evidential value and can be significant in understanding previous uses of the site and many important institutions that shaped the history of Venice.

Fig. 2: Raphael Custos’s print Domus Germanorum Emporica Venetiis from 1616 illustrates daily procedures in the Fondaco’s courtyard.

Fig. 3: The Fondaco before the renovation.

Fig. 4 (on the right): Ground floor plan of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi. Red indicates walls built before 1836, yellow shows demolished walls and green points out walls that have been added since.
Fig. 5: Façade facing the Grand Canal, around 1982.

Fig. 6: Inner courtyard of the Fondaco with galleries and skylight.

Fig. 7: Visual reconstruction of Titian’s frescoes on the facade of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi.
Fig. 8: Titian’s Justice (Judith), 1508-09, detached fresco from Fondaco dei Tedeschi. Exhibited today in the Galleria Franchetti alla Ca d'Oro, Venice.

Fig. 10 (on the right): Jacopo de Barbari’s Map of Venice from 1500 shows the Fondaco before the great fire and reconstruction (1505-1508).

Fig. 9: Facade of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi with central loggia seen from the Grand Canal.
3.2. Planned Transformation and Possible Impacts

Sale to the Benetton Family

After having served as the headquarters of the Italian Post for around seventy years, the building was sold to the company Edizione Property Srl for a relatively low price in 2008. Edizione Property Srl belongs to the enterprise of the Benetton family, which has already made major investments in the city – to such an extent that “Benettown” became a label for the city of Venice. In exchange for six million euros, the Comune of Venice decided to support the change of use from public to commercial. Only a few spaces, such as the courtyard remain available for public use for ten days per year. Rem Koolhaas, who was commissioned to design the new shopping centre, presented his project for the Fondaco during the Architecture Biennale 2010 in Venice. Construction began in 2014 and is set to be concluded by June 2016, as confirmed this year by the Duty Free Shop Group. The French luxury retailer will take over the management of the building.

Preliminary Project

Two important project drafts exist. The first preliminary one was revised after two years of heated discussions between the opponents, the administration, and Benetton. Both plans are presented briefly in order to facilitate the understanding of the public discussion. The website of Koolhaas’ architectural firm OMA has not been updated on the Fondaco since 2010 and it still presents parts of the draft of the first project. However, the idea behind the concept and the justifications for specific interventions can be regarded as applicable also for the final project. OMA’s website states, “the latest evolution of the Fondaco will

37 Fersuoch, Nostro Fontego dei Tedeschi, 21.
38 Somma, Benettown. Un ventennio di mecenatismo.
39 Calabi and Morachiello, Il Fontego dei Tedeschi, 30-31.
40 Fersuoch, Nostro Fontego dei Tedeschi, 23.
reactivate the building [as] a thriving contemporary trading post … . In tandem with the department store, the renovation will create three major areas of commerce-free public space.”42 These areas are the rooftop terrace, the galleries and the courtyard. As a highlight of the transformation, parts of the roof were set to be converted into an enormous roof terrace with a unique view of Venice’s skyline, “leaving the building's profile intact while unlocking potential for the Fondaco dei Tedeschi as a major destination and vantage point for tourists and Venetians alike” (fig. 11).43 Furthermore, OMA assures that “the courtyard will become a major public hub” and while new entrances will be installed, the existing shortcuts used by locals will be retained.44 The escalator connecting the courtyard and galleries can be lifted up, “freeing the courtyard for a program of public events as part of cultural masterplan: film screenings, performances, meetings.”45 (fig. 12 & 13)

The project brief also claims that seventy-five percent of the original structure will remain untouched and only rare interventions in the 1930s structure will allow enlargement of rooms, while more important historic elements like the corner rooms, will be preserved. Other elements, lost for centuries, are to be reinstated. It is planned that frescoes will once again decorate the walls of the galleries in a contemporary design (fig. 14).46

OMA’s vision is to resurrect the traditional relation between art and commerce, a classically Venetian combination, according to the architects. This will ensure the “tradition of vitality and adaptation”.47 The brief concludes with the statement, “Venice will acquire a landmark that will become a shared civic facility and a crucial element in the cultural fabric

43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
of the city.”48 This preliminary project has faced a great amount of protest from within the city of Venice and therefore, has undergone several changes, as will be discussed later on.

Final Project

In December 2012, the superintendent of the Sopraintendenza in Venice, Renata Codello, approved a revised final project.49 The updated project included a change regarding the very intrusive and extensive roof terrace. Instead, a smaller terrace that is set more centrally above the existing roof will be installed. The escalators will be placed within the built fabric instead of the courtyard as it was previously proposed. The extra mezzanine level, constructed from steel, which is to be inserted underneath the glass skylight, is still part of the project (fig. 15 & 16). A new entrance in the corner area facing the Goldoni Statue in the adjacent San Bartolomeo Square will be created (fig. 17). In addition, a large circular hole will pierce the wall across two levels to accentuate the inserted escalators (fig. 18 & 19). Due to the weight of the new roof structure, it is necessary to insert several new foundations and reinforcements into the ground (fig. 20).50 Retail areas will occupy the vast majority of the spaces on the four main floors. However, counting the courtyard, the galleries underneath the arcades, the extra mezzanine level, and the roof terrace as public space, OMA concludes that there is going to be 5080 m² of commercially and 1809 m² of publicly used space (fig. 21 & 22).

Impact on Building

The OMA-Benetton intervention is likely to have both positive and negative impacts on the building, the urban context, and the residents and visitors. The project is currently described as “extension, change of use and restoration” on a sign attached to the scaffolding

48 Ibid.
49 Fersuoch, Nostro Fontego dei Tedeschi, 26.
50 Ibid., 28.
on the Grand Canal façade (fig. 23 & 24). A positive effect of the works is that many previously neglected parts of the building will undergo maintenance and there will be repair works in the process of the intervention. In addition, a reuse for the Fondaco has been found after several years of vacancy and finally the full capacity of the building will be utilised once again.51

However, the most significant change to the built fabric is the installation of the unsympathetic roof terrace and the glass-steel level underneath. This is a structure never seen in the historic city of Venice before and extremely atypical for the local architecture and urban landscape, which is characterised by angles and narrow walkways instead of panoramic views.52 The architect Barbara Pastor confirms that every professional involved in construction in the city knows that roofs in Venice are not to be touched.53 Due to the new roof terrace, the building is likely to become a novelty attraction and favourite spot for tourists, which will possibly lead to congestion and overcrowded spaces within the building. Since more glass is going to be inserted for the mezzanine level, a change of lighting for the whole building will occur.54 The primary resource of light before the intervention was the skylight above the courtyard, which will then have less of a translucency, especially when the level will be crowded with spectators. The newly designed entrance at the corner negates the building’s appearance as a closed structure, which was a significant architectural feature since the construction in the sixteenth century. Finally, the enormous hole piercing the wall alongside the escalators disrupts the perfect symmetry of the courtyard galleries, which is typical for Renaissance buildings.55

51 As the headquarters of the Italian Post, the space was underused. Paola Somma, interview by author, Venice, 21/05/15.
52 Fersuoch, Nostro Fontego dei Tedeschi, 23.
53 Barbara Pastor and Adriano De Vita (Faro Venezia members), interview by author, Venice, 22/05/15.
54 Fersuoch, Nostro Fontego dei Tedeschi, 32.
55 Ibid., 27.
Impact on Area and Community

The strongest impact of the whole development on the community was the change of use from public to private. The building used to belong to the Venetian Republic. It remained in public hands for over five hundred years, and was a beloved point of social encounter and public reference, visited mainly by Venetian inhabitants and not by tourists. OMA and Benetton keep emphasising the fact that there will be a mixed use of private and public nature. This idea can also currently be seen on a sign on the main façade of the building, where it says “for commercial and public community use”. Despite all these promises and designations of public spaces in the project draft, it seems highly unlikely that the average Venetian will have his after work chat on the roof terrace of the Fondaco together with a crowd of tourists. The inner courtyard may be used for shortcuts or walkthroughs, but coffee shop tables and chairs will also occupy it. The areas designated as public spaces by the developers can be seen as spaces that are open to the public rather than actual public spaces, since they are not solely intended for community activities or the public but are mainly for the customer. One could argue that the store will bring a unique attraction and shopping facilities to the Rialto Area. However, the only existing department store in Venice so far is actually beside the new shopping mall (fig. 25). This store, called Coin, offers clothing and cosmetics from major brands over four floors. In addition, there are further stores close to the San Bartolomeo Square, such as a Benetton and a Disney Store. Yet, the new shopping facility will probably bring even more people to the Rialto Area and Bridge.

As architectural historian Somma explains, Koolhaas includes the Rialto Bridge in his concept and uses it for his project as an entrance to attract clients. She stated that it will no longer be possible to take the vaporetto from the stations at Rialto, which are major public transport junctions already and crowded with inhabitants and tourists. Somma concludes

56 Vaporetto is the term for the public transport, the waterbus, in Venice. Bernadette Quinn concludes from a survey conducted in 2002 with Venetian residents on congestions in the city that “The Rialto (the bridge and
that with the shopping mall the developers privatise not only a building but also a piece of the city.\textsuperscript{57}

Fig. 11: OMA’s visualisation of the rooftop terrace as proposed in the preliminary plan.

Fig. 12: Model with escalators in the courtyard from the first proposal.

Fig. 13 (on the right): Movable escalator frees courtyard when lifted up.

\textsuperscript{57} Paola Somma, interview by author, Venice, 21/05/15.
Fig. 14: Creative visualisation: OMA’s modern interpretation of frescoes.

Fig. 15: OMA cross section showing final roof terrace design to waterfront on the left.

Fig. 16: Cross section showing roof terrace and distribution of escalators.
Fig. 17: San Bartolomeo Square in May 2015. Location of new future entrance to the shopping mall.

Fig. 18 (on the right): Escalators with circular hole in the centre of wall.

Fig. 19: Cross section showing design of the hole and escalators.
Fig. 20: New foundations that will be inserted.

Fig. 21 (on the right): OMA’s distribution of uses on ground floor: red = public, blue = commercial.

Fig. 22: Distribution of uses, beginning with ground floor on the bottom right continuing to the left. (Ground floor, mezzanine level, first floor, second floor, third floor, inserted steel mezzanine level, roof terrace) red = public, other colours = commercial, circulation, offices and mixed use.
Fig. 23: Scaffolding on the Grand Canal façade in May 2015.

Fig. 24: Sign on scaffolding, Fondaco dei Tedeschi, saying “Extension, change of use and restoration of the building complex called ‘Fontego dei Tedeschi’, for commercial and community use”.

Fig. 25: Department store Coin adjacent to the Fondaco dei Tedeschi (construction site is visible to the left), May 2015.
3.3. Reactions, Discussion and Protest

Great is our inability to grasp that there are also immeasurable values under the stars, things without a prize. That not only the city made out of walls, houses and churches exists; but an invisible city, that those walls and houses and churches (and, in Venice, bridges and water) cannot function without. 58

Although the fate of the Fondaco has been firmly decided, the discussion had a crucial impact on public interest in heritage. It was also important in clarifying the problems that the community encounters when new developments occur within the city. The brief description of the project and the analysis of the possible impacts on the building, the area and the community show that the new development touches some sensitive issues. These led to a wider public discussion and protests involving the community of the city and several heritage groups. Alberto Vitucci wrote in a newspaper article from February 2012:

There are occasions, sometimes unexpected ones, in which an entire town – even if very impoverished in its social structure and tested by speculative “assaults” for years – awakens suddenly. This is the case with the project for the new Fontego dei Tedeschi … . An increasing number of committees, associations, intellectuals, representatives of the society, the politics and culture take a stand in this matter, which has by now become a symbol. 59

Even before the Fondaco discussion became this symbol for a strong public opinion, a public debate was organised by the community group, 40xVenezia, on the future of the building. The event was held in November 2008, prior to the release of any plans for a

58 Salvatore Settis, “Quanto vale Venezia,” in Se Venezia Muore (Turin: Giulio Enaudi editore, 2014, E-reader version). “Tanta è la nostra incapacità di cogliere che vi sono sotto le stelle anche valori non quantificabili, cose senza prezzo. Che non esiste solo la città delle mura e delle case e delle chiese; ma una città invisibile, che di quelle mura e case e chiese (e, a Venezia, ponti e acque) non può fare a meno.” Translated by author.

shopping mall, when the future of the Fondaco still seemed undetermined. Several Venetians active in community groups, scholars and Codello, the head of the Sopraintendenza at the time, were invited to speak. The latter proclaimed that the Fondaco has a value and interest for the whole community and therefore, the means to make a compromise between public and private interest must be found. She further stated “… proposals that conduct a reduction of quality, and value, diminution of historic and artistic elements cannot be considered.”

After Koolhaas’ plans had been revealed and it became clear where the future of the building was heading, the debate focused on issues that have been discussed already such as the question of whether the new use and design features such as the roof terrace are actually appropriate for the Fondaco dei Tedeschi. Moreover and most importantly, the change of use from public to private was debated.

In an article with the title “Megastore with view onto Rialto: The project that divides Venice” in La Repubblica from February 2012, the art historian Salvatore Settis compares Koolhaas’ project with a cruise ship being planted into the heart of the city. This is a very harsh judgement considering cruise ships are the most discussed debate topic between the tourism industry and environmentally concerned opponents. Koolhaas himself however, defends the new project as a revival of the renaissance empire:” It is not a tourist trap … . It is not a parasite, but an urban system that offers an assembly of differentiated activities that respond to the daily requirements of the city.”

60 Shaul Bassi et al., Collona quaderni 40xVenezia. Il Fontego dei Tedeschi, ed. Vicenzo Casali (Venice: Studio LT2, 2009), 16.
61 Ibid., 16. “Non potranno essere prese in considerazione tutte quelle proposte che comporteranno sottrazione di qualità, riduzione del valore, diminuzione degli elementi storici e artistici.” Translated by author.
63 Fersuoch, Nostro Fontego dei Tedeschi, 31. “non è una trappola per turisti (…) Non è un parassita, ma un dispositivo urbano che offre un insieme differenziato di attività che rispondono alle esigenze quotidiane della città.” Translated by author.
residents, it seems to be a rather daring assumption that they would need a luxury shopping mall. In an interview from 2012 titled “If the future of Venice ends with the Fondaco” the Venetian psychoanalyst and social urban enthusiast Antonio Semi explains his viewpoint on the Fondaco matter. He states that most Venetians only became aware of the historic significance of the Fondaco after it was sold to Benetton, since Venetians are accustomed to being surrounded by historic structures when they wander around their city. However, the Fondaco was considered “our [the Venetian’s] palazzo. A palazzo of the city” when it still used to be a post office.\textsuperscript{64} Semi considers the argument of the supporters (that there is no historic value in the fabric anymore because of the 30s renovation) very weak since many palazzi were restored around that time. He states that the argument was only brought up after the protest against the project became stronger. Furthermore, he finds that the discussion is not actually about the design or changes within the building, it is really about the change of use.\textsuperscript{65}

**Change of Use and Final Decision**

Before the change of use, the Fondaco was protected and put under restrictions to only be used as a public building by the urban development and special law of Venice.\textsuperscript{66} According to these laws, there can only be limited changes to the built fabric and no changes at all to the volumes of the building, to the relations of the context, the gross usable surface and number of levels. In addition, the present state of the building has to be conserved and not further modified.\textsuperscript{67} In an article published in one of the main local newspapers *la Nuova Venezia*, in October 2011, the mayor at that time, Giorgio Orsoni, still gave the impression that the Fondaco would stay under similar protection. “The Fondaco will be maintained for

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{66} Original Italian terms for those laws: *piano regolatore* and *legge speciale.*
\item \textsuperscript{67} Fersuoch, *Nostro Fontego dei Tedeschi*, 21.
\end{itemize}
public use,” he is reported to have repeated for months, whilst he was in constant dialogue with the new owners.\textsuperscript{68} The Benetton Group was putting pressure on the government to find an agreement over the destination of use, threatening to back out of the project otherwise. Benetton suggested donating six million euros to the city in exchange for a change of use from public to private. In the same article, the community group 40xVenezia and municipal councillors are quoted as stressing the point that it is obligatory to maintain a public standard for the building.\textsuperscript{69} Six million euros seems like minimal compensation in comparison to what the residents of the city lost and what kind of income the building will create for the new owner and management of the building. Some things do not have a price, as Settis says in his book “Se Venezia Muore”. Moreover, in his above-mentioned article in \textit{La Repubblica}; he states six million is not a large amount if they are sufficient to circumvent laws.\textsuperscript{70}

“The rules are not for sale” is the title of another article by Vitucci in which he requested that instead of letting the lawyers do the work, the entrepreneurs would have to reconsider their plans and be forced to recognise that the city deserves respect, even if it is lacking in public funds.\textsuperscript{71} After having come to an agreement with the Benetton Group by the end of 2011, one year after claiming that the Fondaco has to remain public, the mayor Orsoni responded sharply to accusations in defence of the project. He reassured the public that the administration does not want to destroy the city and has heard enough of those accusations. He also said that the public, naming Settis, would not understand the negotiations or know what the exact conditions were anyway. Orsoni described the trade as an urbanistic exchange and explained that judging the design issues was in the hands of the


\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.


Sopraintendenza and the City Council who are responsible for confirming authorisations for construction. Furthermore, the mayor stressed the fact, just like OMA in their brief, that a large part of the building will remain open to public use. Regarding the roof terrace, he stated “Well, of course it would be a novelty for Venice. However, if you thought about a great architect like Rem Koolhaas, it cannot be such a bizarre idea.”

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the head of the Sopraintendenza authorised the second revised project in December 2012. The authorisation was based on the same arguments as Orsoni’s approval and Koolhaas’ intervention: the restoration of the building in the 30s leaves only very few original materials to be conserved. Not even the appeal, initiated by Italia Nostra, to the director of the technical-scientific committee of the regional heritage department, Ugo Soragni, could change the course of events. Although, he judged in May 2012 that the design contained too many oversized components, which the law cannot approve. These included the escalators and the roof terrace. Some of the features had to be changed, as can be seen from the final project. However, Fersuoch, the president of Italia Nostra Venice, criticises the fact that the authorisation of the final project was conducted without the awareness of the public or the approval of the regional officer. After a heated meeting in March 2013, the City Council also approved the agreement between Benetton and the Comune, negotiated by Orsoni. Adriano De Vita, a member of the heritage group Faro Venezia, explains that this change of use enraged everyone. The political candidate Susanna Böhme-Kuby describes the Fondaco as a catastrophe in relation

---


74 Fersuoch, Nostro Fontego dei Tedeschi, 26.

75 Ibid., 25.

76 Ibid., 27.

77 Ibid., 22.

78 Barbara Pastor and Adriano De Vita (Faro Venezia members), interview by author, Venice, 22/05/15.
to the big sell out of Venetian and even Italian heritage taking place in order to close budget deficits.\textsuperscript{79} “For once a large palazzo will not become a hotel”, finds Gilberto Benetton, the head of the family company.\textsuperscript{80} Even though this is true, it will probably only be a small consolation for many opponents, especially since detailed proposals for alternative uses existed, as elaborated on by groups of residents. This will be discussed later in this study.

3.4. Evaluation and Comparison

The Fondaco dei Tedeschi is a dominant and unique architectural structure with an outstanding cultural significance in the heart of the city. The building lost a considerable amount of its original structural features, internal special subdivisions, and interior design elements in the course of the 1930s renovations and formation of office spaces. However, the establishment of the post offices also became an important part of the recent history of the building and its communal value. As seen in the analysis of cultural significance, it nevertheless possesses strong cultural values and bears the memory of the past. As a post office, the building was well integrated in the area and kept its historic status as an important public institution within the network of the city. The location and the size of the building posed the opportunity to realise the establishment of various institutions that could have been beneficial for the social life of the city. An institution actually meant for public use, such as a community hub would have been in line with the cultural significance of the building.

Nevertheless, the size of the building also requires a very high cost of conversion and maintenance. As discussed, this is inter alia one of the reasons for the privatisation, which led to the plans of the conversion into a shopping mall. Currently, the building stands in

\textsuperscript{79} Paola Somma, interview by author, Venice, 21/05/15. Barbara Pastor and Adriano De Vita (Faro Venezia members), interview by author, Venice, 22/05/15. Susanna Böhme-Kuby, interview by author, Venice 25/05/15.

between the past as a public institution and the future as a shopping facility and it is not yet fully clear how the new use will fit within the city and how it will work with the building. The renovation and alteration works being currently undertaken in order to adapt the building into a commercial facility pose opportunities as well as potential threats to the structure and its cultural significance. The case of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi brought up many interesting issues regarding conservation and reuse of historic buildings in Venice.

**Authenticity and Integrity of the future Facility**

Contributing to the integrity of the new project is that once again, the entire capacity of the building will be used and all the space will be taken advantage of. The character of the building, however, will be affected by the architectural interventions, such as the roof terrace. In addition, the change of use may profoundly alter the perception of the structure for future generations of inhabitants and visitors, in terms of both its significance and the perception of it as cultural heritage. It will be regarded as a modern shopping paradise, set within the highly touristic Rialto Area instead of a time-honoured institution in service for the Venetian community.

Many visitors, professionals and even Venetians might consider the new design to be good architecture and an interesting modern intervention. In addition, the final proposal is also less intrusive than the first one and several compromises were made after the Italia Nostra appeal pressured the decision makers. Yet, several changes interrupt the clear Renaissance style of the building and change its aesthetic value significantly.

In examining the authenticity of the new use on must admit that, on the one hand, the building will be used in a commercial context once again, which was its original intention. On the other hand, the new commercial use has an entirely different context from the historic use as a quarter for the German merchants.\(^81\) In fact, the only areas of the building that

---

\(^81\) Paola Somma, interview by author, Venice, 21/05/15.
actually housed shops were outside on the ground floor, where Venetians had their small selling spaces.\textsuperscript{82} Other than that, the building was entirely sealed off and not even the Germans could come and go as they pleased. Therefore, the argument that the new use will revitalise the historic purpose does not prove to be entirely valid. The purpose was control of trade and foreign merchants; with the change of use from public to private, the Venetian community has lost control.

In addition, it seems indisputable that the purpose of the conversion to a luxury shopping mall is less to create a civic facility in the cultural fabric of the city – as the architects and the entrepreneurs claim – but to attract rich tourists and gain the highest possible profit. Considering the low number of inhabitants, Koolhaas’ claims that the new shopping mall will respond to the necessities of daily life in the city seems irrelevant. Moreover, the change of use in exchange for a considerably small amount of money casts a shadow on the project. A significant piece of heritage has been sold – sold like any other commodity in a clearance sale. Orsoni, who negotiated the arrangement with the Benetton Group, and his administration were taken out of office and persecuted for the involvement in a corruption scandal in the summer of last year.\textsuperscript{83} Considering this, the accusations made by the opponents that laws were changed with the power of money, in the case of the Fondaco, become even more relevant. Several problems with the complexity of regulations in Venice regarding heritage management and city development appear to exist.

The discussion throughout the diverse sections of the population showed that a strong interest and will to participate in debates regarding the shaping of the city arose, even though various experts around the world have already given up on the community of Venice as a social structure. Nevertheless, this motivation to get involved into developments concerning

\textsuperscript{82} Calabi and Morachiello, \textit{Il Fontego dei Tedeschi}, 27.

urban heritage has to be managed in a better way. A cooperation and mutual understanding between the administration and the community should be established in order to avoid public fights and frustration as in the case of the Fondaco. When mayor Orsoni defends himself by saying that the public does not understand what is going on, it clearly indicates that the administration has to become more transparent in order to enable public understanding and productive participation.

Comparison of Public Reaction and Outcome in the Case of the Old Royal High School

Public protest and campaigning caused by the drastic change of historic buildings like the one of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi also happen in other cities and countries. Different approaches and diverse public and administrative structures lead to differing outcomes. In order to understand similarities, but more significantly, differences in outcomes, a case in Scotland will be considered. However, it is important to keep in mind that Scotland has a different legal system and culture. In addition, a strong tradition of public participation in planning and heritage questions exists, as the presence of well-established organisations such as the Cockburn Society and the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland (AHSS) illustrate.

A similar case to the Fondaco divided the media and the public this year in Edinburgh concerning plans for the Old Royal High School. The building is a neoclassical structure situated on Calton Hill close to the centre of the city, constructed in the nineteenth century (fig. 26 & 27). It was constructed as the city's Royal High School and in the 1970s was proposed as the seat of an anticipated Scottish Assembly, therefore it is also known as the New Parliament House. The building with its prominence in the townscape, size and significance for Edinburgh, can be compared to the Fondaco dei Tedeschi in Venice. The Edinburgh Council, the building’s owner, has already been trying for several years to
find someone to redevelop the site.\textsuperscript{37} There have been further proposals to develop a luxury hotel on the site in the beginning of this year. The Council would have received ten million pounds as a one-off payment for the lease, which lasts 125 years. The design proposal featured modern extensions to the sides of the building (fig. 28). The plans had been shown publicly in a legally required exhibition.\textsuperscript{85}

Similar to the shopping mall proposal in Venice, this plan enraged many inhabitants, and campaigners immediately requested to keep the A-listed building in public hands. Alternative proposals included an art gallery, a museum and a music school. Filmmaker Murray Grigor, for example, compared the project to “selling off Stirling Castle. I just can’t see how it can go ahead. There is such strong feeling about this now.”\textsuperscript{86} Likewise, conservation and planning monitoring organisations such as the Cockburn Association and AHSS opposed the plans, and even the government agency Historic Scotland voiced criticism. AHSS had organised a public meeting in February. During the packed assembly, a series of experts discussed the early hotel proposals. Their speeches also clearly reflected the wish to keep the building in public hands and find a more appropriate use in agreement with the citizens of Edinburgh.\textsuperscript{87} Although even the opponents of the hotel plans feared that the development would go ahead against the protest, the story took a turn in April. With the financial support of the art philanthropist Carol Colburn Grigor and further donations, Edinburgh’s St Mary’s Music School suggests converting the building into a music school for their own use.\textsuperscript{88} Outlined ideas have already been discussed with the council and more

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
detailed plans of the proposal are supposed to be handed in by the end of this year. If these plans were to be realised, the building would serve its original purpose as an educational institution and possibly satisfy Edinburgh’s citizens and the local heritage organisations. As of now, the Old Royal High School debate seems to be a positive example of community engagement in terms of achieving a set aim. The approach to organising community involvement and the willingness and openness of the City Council to cooperate and rethink their plans resulted in a constructive proposal.

---

Fig. 26: The Royal High School, Regent Road, Edinburgh, built 1825-29.
Photograph from 1895.

Fig. 27: Old Royal High School in front of Calton Hill, 2010.

Fig. 28: An artist’s impression of how the proposed hotel building may have looked.
4. Increased Awareness and Successful Community Engagement

The Venetian heritage campaigner De Vita explains that the community of Venice was quite inactive before the Fondaco dei Tedeschi discussion arose; now they are one of the most active people involved, in his opinion.\textsuperscript{90} Community initiatives are certainly not something completely new. Groups concerned with tourism, environmental issues and the cruise ship debate exist. In addition, there are a few established heritage organisations such as Italia Nostra, which tries to control private projects within the city for over fifty years. However, as a positive outcome, the affair has revived the desire of the wider community to participate in urban and heritage matters. This chapter will examine the ways in which the case of the Fondaco created not only protest, but a new interest in urban development and proactive proposals for heritage sites from within the community.

4.1. Alternative Proposals for the Fondaco

The Fondaco will become a commercial facility and the discussion between the community, the administration and entrepreneurs regarding alternatives was not fruitful. However, several proposals for a different future for the building were made by community initiatives prior to the final decision.\textsuperscript{91} Two examples will be presented briefly here.

Fondaco: In the Centre of the City, in the Centre of the World

In 2009, when plans for the shopping mall had not yet been articulated, the community group 40xVenezia published a leaflet regarding the future of the building. This leaflet, covering almost thirty pages, contained a very detailed proposal for the use of the structure. The amount of work that went into the text and the design illustrates the extraordinary concern the group had regarding the built heritage. The front page explains

\textsuperscript{90} Barbara Pastor and Adriano De Vita (Faro Venezia members), interview by author, Venice, 22/05/15.
\textsuperscript{91} Other proposals, such as turning the building into a hotel had also been made by entrepreneurs.
that 40xVenezia considers the Fondaco, in the centre of the city, in the centre of the world, as an irreplaceable part of the Venetian cultural heritage. Therefore, the association wanted to offer the administration and developers various considerations regarding the future of the building.92

The main idea presented in the booklet is to embrace both the intrinsic architectural value as well as the community-associated significance. Since the Fondaco historically was a place of commerce, a space for foreigners, and a communication and service hub for the Venetians, a mixed use was proposed addressing these aspects. This would have turned the Fondaco into a “Fontego of the Civilisations”: a place of intercultural exchange that also promotes intangible heritage.93 The mixed use would give space for developments of the private sector as well as for the public use. It was proposed that this cultural centre would cover three sections: education, commerce and city-related themes. The proposed education section for example includes services for residents, a nursery for local children as well as the children of visitors, and it is supposed to be a place of multicultural learning. The commercial area promotes innovative traditions in thematic sections, and includes local products such as glass, lace and fabrics, and different products from around the world. The urban centre provides a space for conferences, presentations and debates. In addition, a museum on ethnography and material culture is presented.94

Another Fondaco

Three years after the booklet by 40xVenezia was published and the destiny of the Fondaco had already been decided on, four Venetian professionals published a book on the case of the Fondaco. The title of the book translates to “Another Fondaco. Stories of the City.” and contains considerations regarding theoretical alternatives to the megastore and

92 Bassi et al., Collona quaderni 40xVenezia. Il Fontego dei Tedeschi, ed. Vicenzo Casali, 1.
93 Ibid., 22-23. “Fontego Delle Civiltà.” Translated by author.
94Ibid., 22-24.
philosophical impulses on Venice’s urban and social development mainly directed at the city’s population (fig. 29). The aim of the publication is to illustrate and critically consider the general evolution of the city and its society in recent years using the Fondaco as the main example. The proposals for the site are more theoretical, yet, very similar to the suggestions of 40xVenezia. The alternative Fondaco would have been a space for the community to gather, communicate, and assemble. The use would have to be compatible with the architecture and the building would need to be accessible for everybody. At the same time the structure should house a variety of services and create original opportunities and social encounters.

Both proposals prove to contribute constructively to the idea of an alternative use of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi. The favoured option would have been to use the building mainly for public use, which includes assembly space and exhibition areas. The suggestions would have emphasized the strong communal value of the building and focused on the upkeep of its cultural significance for the population, as well as for visitors.

---

96 Ibid., 9.
97 Ibid., 44-47.
Fig. 29: Title page of “Another Fondaco. Stories of the City.” 2012.
4.2. New Community Initiatives

Since the beginning of the debate about the Fondaco dei Tedeschi in 2008, various new community groups were formed. Some of these focus on heritage, others on social matters, which are indirectly linked to heritage questions.\textsuperscript{98} One of those groups is the previously mentioned 40xVenezia association. This group, whose name translates to ‘forty for Venice’ was a community group formed in the year of the Fondaco was sold. 40xVenezia consisted of Venetian residents in their forties. Their aim was to promote a complex vision for the city’s future, respecting the artistic and historic heritage of the city, as well as supporting sustainable tourism.\textsuperscript{99} Besides the project of the Fondaco they worked on proposals for the tourism industry and public transport, to mention a few examples.\textsuperscript{100} Another example of a recently formed community group is Faro Venezia, which has been active since 2008 and was founded formally in 2012. Its formation and growth were closely linked with the events around the Fondaco dei Tedeschi. The philosophy of the group is based on the Faro Convention which promotes the value of cultural heritage for society. Membership is open to anyone who is interested.\textsuperscript{101} So far, members include architects, lawyers and other mature professionals. The director of the group, De Vita explained in an interview, that the group certainly does not want to condemn changes. On the contrary, their aim is to be proactive and enhance community activities. Their group’s current focus is on the project of the Arsenale, which is a joint project of many associations and groups, called Forum Futuro Arsenale.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{98} Barbara Pastor and Adriano De Vita (Faro Venezia members), interview by author, Venice, 22/05/15.
\textsuperscript{100} 40xVenezia, \textit{Comunicato n. 50, 40xVenezia si scioglie}, (Venice: Ateneo Venezia, 2013).
\textsuperscript{101} www.farovenezia.org, accessed 17.07.15.
\textsuperscript{102} Barbara Pastor and Adriano De Vita (Faro Venezia members), interview by author, Venice, 22/05/15.
The group’s motives are to initiate a requalification, enhancement and use of the Arsenale that is beneficial for the entire Venetian society. Around forty organisations are interested and joined the network Forum Futuro Arsenale\textsuperscript{103} in order to participate.\textsuperscript{104} The groups and associations that joined the Forum are extremely diverse and in addition to Faro Venezia include inter alia Italia Nostra, the Cultural Association Venice for Art, Culture and Tourism, as well as a Gondola association.\textsuperscript{105} The Arsenale is an enormous area with vast potential. It was constructed as the shipbuilding yard for the Venetian fleet and it is located in the Eastern part of the city (fig. 30). The Ministry of Defence still owns parts of it that function as a naval base.\textsuperscript{106} In addition, certain areas of the Arsenale host the Art and Architecture Biennale, accommodate University rooms and other public facilities (fig. 31).

In order to enable this joint project, the Comune of Venice has bought a large section of the structure in 2013 (fig. 32).\textsuperscript{107} The ideas for the future of the Arsenale are comparable to the community proposals for the Fondaco. Forum Futuro Arsenale suggest a mixed use and the realisation of various ideas, such as the promotion of traditional craft and artisan jobs.\textsuperscript{108} The plan is to realise the ideas through a collaboration between the public and private sector.\textsuperscript{109} So far, the Forum has launched several open days, in order to engage the population and the idea seems to be well received.\textsuperscript{110} The implementation is merely a question of funds.

Reactions to Immediate Threats

In recent years, several individual cases of heritage initiatives have attracted wider attention in Venice and resulted in a positive outcome. The case of the island of Poveglia,
located within the lagoon, presents a good example of successful community involvement. In 2014, the entrepreneur Luigi Brugnaro, who was elected mayor of Venice this year, attempted to acquire the island for around half a million euros. Considering the size and the potential of the island this was not an appropriate offer.\footnote{Susanna Böhme-Kuby, interview by author, Venice 25/05/15.} In a dialogue with a resident of Venice, it became obvious that the abandoned island has an idealistic value for Venetians. The place still remains ‘untouched’ and is visited especially by young people in their free time to enjoy barbecues, go fishing, and take a swim.\footnote{Venetian resident, dialogue with author, Venice 23/05/15.} In a spontaneous campaign over 3000 residents and lovers of the city combined their assets to bid against the entrepreneur. The initiative called “Poveglia for everybody” has stopped the sale for now.\footnote{Lizzy Davis, “Venetians fight to save historical, ‘haunted’ island from luxury developers,” \textit{Guardian}, 22/04/15, accessed 18/07/15, www.theguardian.com.}

A similar example is the rescue initiative for the Villa Heriot on Guidecca. The sale of this historic structure that houses several educational institutions, like the International University of Art, has also been stopped after strong protests under the motto “Venice is not a hotel” as well as investigations of the locals (fig. 33).\footnote{Vera Mantengoli, “Un migliaio di persone in festa per salvare Villa Hériot,” \textit{La Nuova Venezia}, 15/12/14, accessed 18/07/15, www.nuovavenezia.gelocal.it.} Villa Heriot was to be sold and turned into a luxury hotel, but it turned out that regulations had been disregarded and therefore actions were put on hold. This is because the buildings were gifted to the city under the condition that it was to be kept public property.\footnote{Susanna Böhme-Kuby, interview by author, Venice 25/05/15.}
Fig. 30: Entrance to the Area of the Arsenale, 2015.

Fig. 31 (on the right): Inside of the Arsenale, Art Biennale 2015.

Fig. 32: The Comune of Venice has bought the red marked area of the Arsenale in 2013.

Fig. 33 (on the right): Protesting community in front of Villa Heriot in 2014. “We do not give away all that.” The banner in the background reads, “Villa Heriot is not for sale”.
4.3. A Fight against Windmills?

The case of the Fondaco influenced the engagement of the local population in matters of heritage. It fostered the expression of different ideas, diverse ways of thinking, and the formation of community groups, all while strengthening the will of the Venetians to participate in initiatives. However, the positive outcomes of what happened to the Fondaco, and to other structures that are considered cultural heritage by the locals, are so far mostly theoretical concepts. This is in reference to the plans for the Arsenale and the rejected ones for the Fondaco. The previously mentioned book, “Another Fontego”, claims to propose ways of how participation can be improved, but only gives very vague and abstract ideas. One of the problems in Venice – and Italy in general – is that there is no official institution of public participation, as the members of Faro Venezia explained in an interview.116 The government does not foresee direct engagement of the community, unlike for example in Scotland where community groups are well-established and the planning process is more transparent, as could be seen from the case in Edinburgh.

The population in Venice seems to be totally excluded from the decision-making process, which is one of the reasons why the public character of the city gets lost.117 Private and public interests in Italy have always created a bitter clash when it comes to heritage matters, states Giorgio Gianighian.118 The recently founded group 40xVenezia has parted already as a result of a growing frustration with the administration in 2013. They explained that their proposals were mostly ignored or disregarded by the administration when developments became more precise.119 Even one of the few well-established organisations, Italia Nostra, struggles at times, despite being active nationwide with the aim of “stopping

116 Barbara Pastor and Adriano De Vita (Faro Venezia members), interview by author, Venice, 22/05/15.
117 Susanna Böhme-Kuby, interview by author, Venice 25/05/15.
119 40xVenezia, Comunicato n. 50, 40xVenezia si scioglie, (Venice: Ateneo Venezia, 2013).
the process of destruction”. Böhme-Kuby wrote that although Italia Nostra achieved a lot in the past fifty years, most of the time their work resembles a fight against windmills. So what is needed to enhance community involvement in order to function properly and formally in Venice?

5. Recommendations

A person-orientated, opposed to an object-oriented, way of working, entailing a participatory culture, is an increasing topic in the discourse of heritage management and preservation. The practical implementation however, is – not only in Venice – a more difficult matter. One of the biggest problems is the differing interests of the various stakeholders, such as the local authorities, the local community, the tourism industry and entrepreneurs. Therefore, as Jones explains in his essay on public engagement, “successful participation requires that people are involved in a mutual interaction between the authorities and all interested parties at an early stage, with all parties presenting their ideas, concerns and arguments …” This was not the case during the Fondaco debate. The following section will make recommendations, which could enhance the community’s engagement on both the administrative and the public side, in order to enhance the process. Since the subject receives increasing interest, several studies and books exist, which have helped to formulate these recommendations in conjunction with the conducted interviews and observations.

120 Gianighian, “Italy”, in Policy and Law in Heritage Conservation, 199.
5.1. Public Administration

One of the difficulties community engagement encounters is political instability, which has dominated the local scene of the Municipality of Venice for years. As the political candidate Böhme-Kuby explains, Venice is not lacking rules but control bodies and the compliances with laws.\textsuperscript{124} Community participation could be one way to control the operations of the administration. However, this does not mean that it should replace the administration, which the local authorities may fear.\textsuperscript{125} The elective democracy of Venice does not foresee that there is an active engagement of the population outside of the election phase.\textsuperscript{126} Therefore, a first step towards successful engagement of the population is the recognition of interdependence.\textsuperscript{127} Public administration should become aware that community participation could be beneficial for their work. It is important for them to understand how locals are involved in the complex ways of concurrently controlling, fostering and contesting tourism and heritage preservation.\textsuperscript{128} Promoting public engagement therefore, is critical for effective management of heritage tourism and conservation, which is in the interest of all parties involved.\textsuperscript{129}

Community engagement could help raising the quality of living for the inhabitants and make the city more attractive for the tourists at the same time. The local authority should recognise public participation as an actual urban tool and a potential positive influence on the development of the city. In addition, the responsible administration should look out for the long-term vision and not only for one election period.

\textsuperscript{124} Susanna Böhme-Kuby, interview by author, Venice 25/05/15. Paola Somma, interview by author, Venice, 21/05/15.
\textsuperscript{126} Adriano De Vita and Barbara Pastor, email contact with author, 20/07/15.
\textsuperscript{128} Quinn, “Performing Tourism. Venetian Residents in Focus,” 459.
The next step would be for authorities to ensure that the local population is informed about development processes, potential opportunities to participate and potential positive and negative effects on their lives. This way, conflicts can be detected and possibly resolved at an early stage, preventing messy public arguments between the stakeholders and negative publicity as in the case of the Fondaco. It is necessary to establish channels of communication. Information concerning urban developments and local heritage could be conveyed to the public online on the portal of the Comune to encourage a positive dialogue. Currently, an online “portal of transparency” exists on the website of the Comune. It informs about important decisions made by the local government, but only after they have been determined. Building on the basis of what the Comune has already introduced, a section that publishes building applications and the plans for major projects could be added. If it included comment function, this would facilitate interaction between people and officials and help ensure transparency. The community groups could also be kept up to date through emails to their chairmen. For major projects it would be helpful if the developers would prepare a small exhibition for the public in order to present their project from their own viewpoint. This is practice in Scotland and enables the public to develop an informed and objective opinion.

The body of the Sopraintendenza finds itself confronted with differing opinions of the local authorities, the public and other stakeholders on a daily basis. As a result, the work of the Sopraintendenza is not always appreciated and it is often seen as unnecessary bureaucracy. It appears that there should be better communication between the Comune and the Sopraintendenza, as well as with the public in order to contest this sensation. Furthermore, collaboration and more mutual respect should be encouraged from all sides.

130 Ibid., 147.
132 Gianighian, “Italy”, in Policy and Law in Heritage Conservation, 198.
The local authority and the Sopraintendenza should not only provide information but also actively come forward to the community groups and maybe act as a mute observer during central meetings.

Moreover, conducting awareness-raising campaigns can enhance the participation.\textsuperscript{133} Another way to improve the safeguarding of heritage and developments within the city would be to consult the community before any proposals by the private sector are made. Surveys on the general situation and current state of the city conducted with residents could enable the administration to understand issues, potentials and needs.

Successful community engagement also requires the perception that responsible bodies will implement decisions that were taken in cooperation.\textsuperscript{134} The local authority should enable leadership and provide feedback for the citizens and other stakeholders – regardless of whether it is of a positive or negative nature.\textsuperscript{135} A lack of implementation, feedback or recognition leads to frustration within the community groups and therefore, the active population. An example of that would be 40xVenezia, which resigned because of this exact problem.

5.2. Enhancing Community Involvement

As demonstrated in the previous chapter there are several smaller groups and initiatives that were formed in the aftermath of the Fondaco case. One of the larger groups is Forum Futuro Arsenale, although this group is only concerned with one project. In talking to an established association in Edinburgh, the AHSS, which was mentioned in the Old Royal High School example, it became clear that single focus groups were often unsuccessful in Scotland. That is because these groups have to start from scratch and only

\textsuperscript{133} Jones, “The European Landscape Convention and the Question of Public Participation,” 616.
\textsuperscript{134} Jamal and Getz, “Collaboration Theory and Community Tourism Planning,” 197.
\textsuperscript{135} MacMillan, “Auditing citizen engagement in heritage planning: The views of citizens,” 100.
have little influence on decision-making. In order to strengthen these individual formations and their aims in Venice, all the different groups and interested citizens should speak and discuss matters together. A general meeting or conference in a public arena could initiate this wider communication and exchange of ideas between groups. A neutral mediator should accompany the discussion to assist in solving disputes and guiding the proceedings.

It has to be kept in mind that even the local community is not homogeneous and that the different groups represent different ideas. Starting from the jointly held meeting the groups could expand the idea of Forum Futuro Arsenale, which entails various groups already, upon the whole city and form a sort of umbrella organisation. This umbrella organisation then can develop long-term strategies. It should include all the stakeholders, meaning also representatives of the local administration, the Sopraintendenza and the Venice tourism agency. This is especially important, since tourism plays such a significant role in heritage matters and in the lives of the local population. The organisation should then formulate a vision statement in order to bring focus and set common goals. This will ensure that the power is distributed fairly among several stakeholders. The umbrella organisation should then appoint representatives from various groups to form a kind of grand committee or citizen’s heritage panel to represent the group when they should be consulted by the administration or want to bring forth their own proposals. This committee can be further developed in the future and possibly take over other roles, like distributing funding for selected projects.

The umbrella organisation should also have a meeting space on neutral ground, similar to a community hub, which was proposed by 40xVenezia for parts of the Fondaco. It would certainly be possible to include such a space in a future Arsenale project. Until then

---

136 Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland (AHSS) members in dialogue with the author, 15/07/15.
138 Ibid., 192.
the University or one of the hotels could possibly offer a space. Regular monthly open meetings could assist in keeping the discussion alive and productive.

In order to be able to fund institutions like a community hub it is important to get the local businesses involved. After all the aim should be to work for the greater good, and towards the benefit of the entire community. This requires funds, skills and time. Therefore, volunteers are needed, as well as professionals for guidance. A possible volunteer resource could also be the educational sector, which did not come up during my research on site. Venice has several Universities offering courses in heritage management, tourism and conservation. Certainly, the students would be interested in volunteering for the community engagement projects, gaining experience while offering their skills and time in exchange. Another way of funding projects is civic crowd funding, as it happened in the case of Poveglia, where many people each invested a little money and raised a huge amount of funds. Moreover, the individual groups as well as the head organisation should foster the involvement of people and education opportunities. Offering open seminars with specialists from Venice or international professionals would engage the members and possibly attract new ones.139 These seminars could introduce the participants to a certain conservation technique, or a local handcraft, which is also promoted by the Forum Futuro Arsenale project.

Another powerful way to reach people is the mass media. This was addressed during the interviews for this research as a positive way of reaching the wider community. For several of the groups, social media was the main platform for engagement. Online sources can create an active approach for community involvement and interaction with all stakeholders. This could lead to a better preservation and a new concept of shared heritage

Finally, all the groups should establish clear and simple rules and an agenda for direction setting. Within the main group as well as the subgroups, it is important to look at alternatives and discuss various options before selecting an appropriate solution or directions. It should be the central aim to arrive at a shared strategy through consensus. Tasks have to be assigned and monitored by the chairmen of the organisations, who also need to ensure that collaborative decisions are compliant.

These recommendations can be helpful in order to achieve an interactive and proactive participation with cooperative analysis and developments of plans. The joint responsibility between residents and the administration should ensure that urban change is positive, and that the interests of all stakeholders are respected. In this way, Venice can perhaps once again become a city that residents appreciate, with an environment that is shaped in accordance with the people’s vision, but that tourists can enjoy as well.

6. Conclusion

Venice is caught up in the ‘vicious circle’ of tourism. Its population decreases and the number of hotels are constantly rising. Even tourists observe that the city has almost lost its soul – its cultural heritage. The lure of Venice is declining. The new shopping mall in the Fondaco dei Tedeschi is built to appeal to visitors, but it is clear that many locals do not appreciate it. It seems that instead of investing in innovative ideas coming from the community, which would enhance the uniqueness of Venice, the owner of the Fondaco and the Comune di Venezia chose to take the easier and more profitable route. A shopping mall in a building with such a rich cultural significance will certainly create a commercial facility

---

in an extraordinary setting, but essentially, it will not be much different from shopping malls in any other city in the world. The only difference is the fact that the construction of such a luxury mall is completely out of proportion, considering the number of inhabitants and the needs of the population. The mall is aimed at the growing tourism industry. Many factors of the building design and the change of use have enraged Venetians throughout the city. The protest achieved that several changes in the design had to be made. How the actual transformation will affect the building and the environment remains to be seen. It may turn out to be a fascinating piece of modern architecture intervening with an antique structure. Whether the new use is appropriate for the building and the city is highly debatable, as this work and many public voices suggest. In addition, the change of use will alter the perception and interaction of the locals with the building. Even though the developers claim that large parts of the buildings will be public, the reference point and place of daily communication for many Venetians will be lost. The crowd attracted by the shopping centre will also add to the congestion and traffic problems in the Rialto Area. The anger expressed by the citizens of Venice and their protest about the decision could not completely ward off the intervention.

However, this fight was not completely lost. It has a lasting influence on the engagement of the residents. This transformation in Venice is certainly not the only incident related to heritage that enraged the Venetian population, especially since changes and developments in Venice always run into questions of conservation.

Nevertheless, through the analysis it becomes clear that this drastic intervention in the heart of the city awoke many residents from years of indifference and spearheaded a dynamic discourse. Their newfound will power led to further engagement. The formed initiatives might have a constructive influence on the future of Venice’s heritage and they can function as a control body. The case of the Fondaco was not only about the building itself, but as others have stated previously, it became a symbol. The loss of the fight over
“our Fondaco”, as the Venetians call it, should not be considered a defeat. Sometimes a moment of crisis has to occur and sacrifices must be made in order to motivate people and generate a positive outcome. Therefore, the project can function as symbol that brought up numerous new ideas and original thinking within the community. It might be a sign of hope for the future, especially if even more positive examples of heritage safeguarding will follow. The case study of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi contributes to the understanding of the relation between urban developments and local community participation in the tourist-historic city of Venice. Research findings should raise awareness for the importance of local participation and the increasing interest of the local population.

In addition, this thesis aims to help the improvement of policies and management approaches to facilitate effective local engagement. The main conclusion of the analysis of the current community engagement suggests that both sides – the community itself as well as the administration – have to be more open minded about collaboration and compromise. A framework to enhance public engagement and unleash the potential of the community is needed. In order to make public involvement a successful enterprise, the active community has to find a way of combining their aims and establishing official channels of communication with all the other stakeholders. Agreements that will allow collaboration and the implementation of joint decisions have to be found.

In reaction to the great floods in 1966, UNESCO declared, “Venice is a moral obligation on the international community”.\textsuperscript{142} The rest of the world seemed more concerned with the city than the actual inhabitants did. After more than forty years, it seems as if the community of Venetians are finally more and more actively involved in shaping the destiny of their city. The case of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi kindled unprecedented passion over the cultural and urban heritage within the community. In this way, not only can the physical

\textsuperscript{142} Ashworth and Tunbridge, The Tourist-historic City, 18.
heritage be conserved, but the values, traditions, and the way of living may find a way into the future without being replaced by the biggest city-based tourism industry in the world. While it used to be an obligation on the international community, Venice has shifted to become a moral obligation for its own community and government. Huge battles still have to be fought in order to save the visible and invisible city of Venice. Hopefully the local community can assist the governing bodies in proving “that in the world we live in there is room for diversity of urban models, cultures and lifestyles; and that what was created in Venice is entitled of being in the world, not only today but also tomorrow.”

Future study should be conducted to compare and further explore the relationships between community participation in decision-making and tourism development in Venice. The way heritage groups used to function – or malfunction – and the changes that are taking place at the moment are to be analysed more in depth. Additionally, other Italian tourist-historic cities with a similar significance, such as Florence or Siena can serve as a comparison. These studies will enhance the understanding of the importance of community participation in heritage tourism cities and contribute to its improvement. The research should lead to a more effective approach in public participation regarding heritage protection, tourism and community strengthening in Italy. In addition, the research should be expanded onto other tourist-historic cities in the world that face similar problems and do not yet have an established public engagement system.

143 Settis, “Venezia, una macchina per pensare,” in Se Venezia Muore. “Che nel mondo in cui viviamo c’è posto per la diversità di modelli urbani, di culture, di stili di vita; e che quello elaborato a Venezia ha diritto di cittadinanza, di stare al mondo non solo oggi ma anche domani.” Translated by author.
7. Bibliography


### Appendix A: Statistics

#### MOVEMENT OF TOURISTS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF VENICE  
(overnight stays and day visitors)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>HISTORIC</th>
<th>CENTRE</th>
<th>LIDO OF VENICE</th>
<th>MESTRE-MARGHERA</th>
<th>LIT. DEL</th>
<th>CAVALLINO</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ARRIVALS</td>
<td>PRESENT</td>
<td>ARRIVALS</td>
<td>PRESENT</td>
<td>ARRIVALS</td>
<td>PRESENT</td>
<td>ARRIVALS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>382.760</td>
<td>985.085</td>
<td>43.719</td>
<td>346.708</td>
<td>31.019</td>
<td>58.038</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>456.871</td>
<td>1,097.366</td>
<td>48.184</td>
<td>297.974</td>
<td>38.513</td>
<td>80.557</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>475.614</td>
<td>1,128.699</td>
<td>57.956</td>
<td>330.914</td>
<td>49.148</td>
<td>99.415</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>526.803</td>
<td>1,209.733</td>
<td>66.718</td>
<td>335.032</td>
<td>57.515</td>
<td>125.320</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>741.475</td>
<td>1,714.792</td>
<td>77.506</td>
<td>386.569</td>
<td>253.474</td>
<td>453.050</td>
<td>91.987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>946.127</td>
<td>1,940.239</td>
<td>83.687</td>
<td>366.575</td>
<td>451.690</td>
<td>776.309</td>
<td>182.603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1,335.968</td>
<td>2,846.007</td>
<td>162.828</td>
<td>449.053</td>
<td>703.824</td>
<td>1,219.691</td>
<td>294.444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>1,291.878</td>
<td>2,768.655</td>
<td>164.529</td>
<td>417.804</td>
<td>712.605</td>
<td>1,231.443</td>
<td>329.071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1,118.419</td>
<td>2,457.695</td>
<td>133.314</td>
<td>354.780</td>
<td>635.494</td>
<td>1,157.802</td>
<td>348.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>1,058.956</td>
<td>2,324.636</td>
<td>134.854</td>
<td>361.346</td>
<td>678.674</td>
<td>1,211.587</td>
<td>392.675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1,250.649</td>
<td>2,760.068</td>
<td>161.856</td>
<td>392.806</td>
<td>802.236</td>
<td>1,502.755</td>
<td>353.623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1,111.456</td>
<td>2,508.595</td>
<td>120.926</td>
<td>332.810</td>
<td>704.451</td>
<td>1,430.169</td>
<td>406.965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1,208.946</td>
<td>2,680.179</td>
<td>123.896</td>
<td>337.072</td>
<td>694.321</td>
<td>1,372.603</td>
<td>412.681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1,274.205</td>
<td>2,872.298</td>
<td>130.793</td>
<td>353.920</td>
<td>699.597</td>
<td>1,339.213</td>
<td>449.718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>1,482.502</td>
<td>3,444.938</td>
<td>215.785</td>
<td>519.757</td>
<td>952.080</td>
<td>1,745.531</td>
<td>575.082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1,451.447</td>
<td>3,459.323</td>
<td>203.353</td>
<td>530.860</td>
<td>951.907</td>
<td>1,735.611</td>
<td>586.945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1,503.913</td>
<td>3,562.728</td>
<td>220.948</td>
<td>574.622</td>
<td>1,023.753</td>
<td>1,771.886</td>
<td>2,748.614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1,554.874</td>
<td>3,728.713</td>
<td>224.071</td>
<td>596.896</td>
<td>1,034.933</td>
<td>1,961.171</td>
<td>2,813.878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>1,482.861</td>
<td>3,587.434</td>
<td>192.093</td>
<td>515.374</td>
<td>1,047.697</td>
<td>1,930.517</td>
<td>2,721.656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1,546.867</td>
<td>3,829.285</td>
<td>182.327</td>
<td>527.598</td>
<td>1,019.539</td>
<td>1,855.529</td>
<td>2,748.733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1,746.591</td>
<td>4,435.241</td>
<td>179.473</td>
<td>536.537</td>
<td>1,092.545</td>
<td>1,958.295</td>
<td>3,018.609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1,902.478</td>
<td>4,925.182</td>
<td>180.041</td>
<td>519.613</td>
<td>1,155.104</td>
<td>2,225.638</td>
<td>3,237.623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2,029.575</td>
<td>5,387.695</td>
<td>192.970</td>
<td>572.469</td>
<td>1,273.615</td>
<td>2,284.990</td>
<td>3,496.160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2,165.656</td>
<td>5,875.370</td>
<td>188.378</td>
<td>565.862</td>
<td>1,272.819</td>
<td>2,401.642</td>
<td>3,626.853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2,075.085</td>
<td>5,676.553</td>
<td>181.961</td>
<td>517.078</td>
<td>1,176.729</td>
<td>2,293.908</td>
<td>3,433.775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2,096.593</td>
<td>5,727.324</td>
<td>165.899</td>
<td>493.859</td>
<td>1,142.623</td>
<td>2,224.728</td>
<td>3,405.115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fonte dati: Azienda di Promozione Turistica - Venezia*

*Elaborazioni: Servizio Statistica e Ricerca - Comune di Venezia*

Statistics on Movement of Tourists in the Municipality of Venice.  
(www.comune.venezia.it, accessed 18/06/2015)
## Residents in the Municipality of Venice (1951 = 100)

### Historic Centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Residents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>128,787</td>
<td>73.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>163,559</td>
<td>93.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>163,849</td>
<td>93.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Urban Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Residents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>19,457</td>
<td>44.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>32,826</td>
<td>74.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>34,520</td>
<td>78.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Mainland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Residents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>16,356</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>53,937</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>65,658</td>
<td>67.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Total

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Residents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>164,600</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>250,322</td>
<td>79.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>264,027</td>
<td>83.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Yearly Data from Here

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Residents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>201,077</td>
<td>212.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>208,297</td>
<td>213.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>213,152</td>
<td>217.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Anni Censuari

- 1951 = 100

(1) Anni censuari

(2) Il valore complessivo del Comune è comprensivo dei "senza fissa dimora"

(3) Al netto della popolazione del Comune di Cavallino-Treporti costituitosi in data 02.04.1999

Demographics on Residents in the Municipality of Venice. (www.comune.venezia.it, accessed 18/06/2015)

---

### Mainland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Residents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>108,426</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>49,702</td>
<td>112.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>161,035</td>
<td>166.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Historic Centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Residents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>108,426</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>49,702</td>
<td>112.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>161,035</td>
<td>166.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demographics on Residents in the Municipality of Venice. (www.comune.venezia.it, accessed 18/06/2015)
Appendix B: Historic Research on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi

Relations between Venice and the North

Although the Alps divide Northern countries like Germany from Italy and Venice, many merchants and artists were travelling the long and harsh way already since the Middle Ages. They had built up connections between Venice and many other places.¹⁴⁴ Venice was not only favoured because of its own production of goods but mainly because of its link to the East and Byzantium that offered more rare and exotic goods.¹⁴⁵ Thanks to the travellers who journeyed to these areas, the social, political, and economic was prospering between the important lagoon city of Venice and the North. Treaties by the participants controlled the trades as early as the eighth century.¹⁴⁶ While there is little documented evidence of the trade between Venice and Germany before the thirteenth century, it can be assumed that Venice was in touch with southern Germany by the ninth century.¹⁴⁷ Venice was one of the largest metropolitan centres in Europe and deeply involved with all kinds of exchange, not only between North and South, but also between the East and West, and therefore it can give us many examples of commercial, political and artistic interchange.¹⁴⁸

Origins of an Institution

The commercial interchange between Venice and the North started with the trade of wares on mainland fairs, in cities such as Pavia and Ferrara, where both merchants from the North and Venice were present.¹⁴⁹ The evidence of a direct trade between Germany and Venice can be found from the late twelfth century on, which is also when the Fondaco dei Tedeschi was founded.¹⁵⁰ The expression that describes this institution, fontego or fondaco, comes from the Arabic word fonduk, which stands in etymologic relation to a Greek expression meaning “all containing” or “all receiving”. In the Arabic world, a fonduk is associated with various institutions, such as a warehouse, a shop or an inn.¹⁵¹ This word was used to describe the

¹⁴⁴ When referencing the North, it refers to today’s Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium as they were the capitals of commercial activities during the Renaissance.
¹⁴⁶ Ibid.
¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 245.
¹⁵⁰ Ibid. Fontego dei Tedeschi literally means the Fontego of the Germans.
quarters of the Western merchants in the seaport towns of the East. The Venetians themselves had the privilege of using two fondus in the town of Alexandria for example. They then adapted this concept when they built their own Fondaco for the Germans – tedeschi means Germans in Italian - at the beginning of the twelfth century in Venice. There is also a Fondaco dei Turchi in the city, which was used to host the merchants from the East. The main purpose of the introduction of this institution was to improve the control over foreign trading activities. These were growing stronger, especially since Venice controlled the trade with the Eastern countries. The merchants coming from Germany to Venice lived in the Fondaco dei Tedeschi ever since, where their activities had to be concentrated, and where they had to follow strict rules set up by the Venetian government. That is because in comparison to merchant quarters in London or the Champagne fairs, the fondus in the East and the Fondaco dei Tedeschi in Venice was not property of the merchants, but was owned and controlled by the city. However, rather than simply a restriction, it was a privilege for every merchant coming to Venice to be able to use the facilities of the Fondaco and to purchase all kinds of European and exotic products.

The Medieval Fontego

The history of the Fondaco in Venice is marked by destruction and reconstruction. It can generally be divided into two main phases: the medieval phase and the phase after the great fire in 1505. Yet the function of the building remained the same for the most part of history and German merchants occupied it continuously until Napoleon arrived in 1806. The Fondaco dei Tedeschi first was mentioned by name in a document in the year 1228, simply as “fondaco of the Venetian community, where the Germans stay”.

152 Ibid., 4.
155 Bernard and Brown, Renaissance Venice and the North. Crosscurrents in the time of Dürer, Bellini and Titian, 45.
157 Bernard and Brown, Renaissance Venice and the North. Crosscurrents in the time of Dürer, Bellini and Titian, 45.
Domenico Morosini between 1148 and 1156. The location adjacent to the Rialto Bridge had strategically advantages, since the Rialto Area was the principal trading area of the city. With the construction of the wooden Rialto Bridge, it was also a connection between the two main squares: Rialto and San Marco. Already during the Middle Ages the Fondaco dei Tedeschi attracted the most important merchant families from the North, to sell their products and most of all acquire the precious goods that Venice had to offer. One of these merchant families, mentioned repeatedly, were the Tucher family from Nuremberg. Arriving as a merchant from outside of the Venetian Republic, the Venetian government was strict about where the merchants were allowed to go. An example of these authoritarian rules is the arrival of the merchant: the boat driver or barcharuolo was the first servant of the Fondaco that the merchants encountered. He had orders to bring the merchants directly to the Fondaco and nowhere else. At that time, a conglomeration of two-storey buildings, surrounded by a wall, provided the merchants with a place to sleep, eat and offer their goods. The merchants mostly spent several weeks or months in Venice. The products that were acquired in the highest quantity by Germans were spices, gold and silk. These facts are known today, because every action was well documented by the Venetians that managed the Fondaco.

Abilinus Teutonicus was the German architect, who was hired to plan this first Fondaco dei Tedeschi by the Venetian Government. Possibly, it was not a completely new structure but the expansion of previous built fabric on site. In the literature, the Fondaco was generally described as a mixture of buildings combined on one site. Simonsfeld states that it was a rich, small, two storey high building, surrounded by a wall. A fire in April 1318 destroyed this first Fondaco. The council decided to rebuild and enlarge the building quickly. Details of Jacopo de Barbari’s Map from 1500 give an impression of how this second

---

163 Hoffman, “The Fondaco Dei Tedeschi,” 246. The Fontego did not only house merchants from Germany, although its name would suggest so. With the growing trade market also merchants from Switzerland, Hungary and Poland resided in the building.
164 Ibid., 250.
165 Ibid., 251
167 Ibid., n.p.
168 Simonsfeld, Der Fondaco Dei Tedeschi in Venedig Und Die Deutsch-Venetianischen Handelsbeziehungen, 9.
building might have looked before it was destroyed a second time by fire. The work shows the area of Rialto around 1500, when the bridge was still a wooden structure.\footnote{The Rialto Bridge was reopened in stone in the year 1591.} According to de Barbari’s map, the Fondaco was a large and complex construction in different planes, which mainly consisted of two buildings surrounding two courtyards. It had similar dimensions in comparison to the building that remains on the site today. This second medieval structure burned down to the grounds because of a huge fire in the night from the 27th to the 28th January 1505.\footnote{Simonsfeld, Der Fondaco Dei Tedeschi in Venedig Und Die Deutsch-Venetianischen Handelsbeziehungen, 107.}

**After the Fire: The new Fondaco and a New Style**

The reconstruction was an urgent matter for the Venetian Republic as the trade with the North, especially with Germany, was a very important element for their economy. Therefore, the decision to rebuild the Fondaco on the city’s expanse was taken by the council already the day after the fire. In addition, land was bought to even extend the complex.\footnote{Antonini, Fondaco dei Tedeschi: Inquadramento Cronologico e Storico. Relazione Storica. Il Fondaco dei Tedeschi, n.p.} It was decided that ‘our Fondaco dei Tedeschi’ – meaning of the Venetian community - should be restored fast and beautifully.\footnote{Simonsfeld, Der Fondaco Dei Tedeschi in Venedig Und Die Deutsch-Venetianischen Handelsbeziehungen, Vol. 2., 107.} Among the proposals that where submitted were several important architects of the time, as Fra Giocondo, Scarpagnino, Spavento and one less known architect a certain Gerolamo Tedesco. Around June of the same year, the senate finally approved the model of Gerolamo Tedesco.\footnote{Simonsfeld, Der Fondaco Dei Tedeschi in Venedig Und Die Deutsch-Venetianischen Handelsbeziehungen, Vol. 1., 345.} The choice fell onto a simple and plain kind of architecture that was not decorated repeatedly with flamboyant pieces of carved marble.\footnote{Ibid., n.p.} According to Ennio Concina and his book Fondaci, the choice of architectural style and the fact that frescoes were chosen as ornamentation reflects the new concept of a program of severe public architecture that was established with this Fondaco.\footnote{Antonini, Fondaco dei Tedeschi: Instituzione e Construzione della fabbrica medievale. Relazione Storica. Il Fondaco dei Tedeschi, n.p.} The architects Giorgio Spavento and Antonio Abbondi, called lo Scarpagnino, supervised the construction.\footnote{Ennio Concina, Fondaci: Architettura, Arte, E Mercatura Tra Levante, Venezia, E Alemagna, (Venezia: Marsilio, 1997), 180-181.} The works on the site were executed extremely quick, so that the building
The Fondaco dei Tedeschi was almost completed in 1507 as the inscription on the portal to the Calle del Fontego proudly states: that is the sixth year of Loredan’s tenure of the throne of St. Marco. In 1508 a final mass and benediction was held in the central courtyard.\footnote{Ibid., n.p.} The Fondaco dei Tedeschi with circa two hundred rooms and 11000 m² is until now one of the largest buildings in Venice. It is not surprising that Sansovino called it “a little city” in itself in his book on Venice in the year 1561. The commercial activities grew even stronger over time and are all well documented as Simonsfeld demonstrates in his two Volumes on the German-Venetian trade.\footnote{Henry Simonsfeld, Der Fondaco Dei Tedeschi in Venedig Und Die Deutsch-Venetianischen Handelsbeziehungen, Vol. 2. (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1887), 107. “una piccolo città”. Translated by author.} One of the most famous person to have housed in the Fondaco is probably the artist Albrecht Dürer from Nuremberg, while he was working on several pieces of art around 1506.\footnote{Ibid., 132.} The merchants that rented on of the rooms had to follow strict rules also regarding the maintenance of the building’s beauty. If they wanted to add elements to their rooms, as for example wrought iron grating to windows, it had to be in keeping with the size and looks of the ones that had already been installed previously.\footnote{Antonini, Fondaco dei Tedeschi: La Fabbrica Realizzata. Relazione Storica. Il Fondaco dei Tedeschi, n.p.}

**The Building**

The design of this new Fondaco is simple and plain. Originally, it was covered with frescoes by Titian and Giorgione. These are almost completely lost, only traces of colour can be found today. Fragments of several frescoes have been saved and can be seen in the Ca’ d’Oro and the Accademia Galleries.\footnote{Debora Howard, The Architectural History of Venice (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 58.} The structure was not clad in expensive marble but wholly constructed of ‘raw’ istrian quarry stone.\footnote{Simonfled, Der Fondaco Dei Tedeschi in Venedig Und Die Deutsch-Venetianischen Handelsbeziehungen, Vol. 2., 109. Istrian stone was imported from the coast of Dalmatia. The author Francesco Sansovino had mentioned the special qualities of istrian stone in his city guide ‘Veneta, città nobilissima’ in 1581. He described the stone as excellent building material. ‘It is white and similar to marble, but hard and firm, the kind that withstands frost and heat for a long time.’ Based on these qualities, it is predestined for utilisation in the Venetian climate. The stone is often confused with marble; however, it is actually a limestone. Richard Goy, Stadt in der Lagune. Leben und Bauen in Venedig (Munich: Knesebeck, 1998), 46.} The four-storey building consists of four wings that form a square around an inner courtyard. It appears to be an almost castle like structure built for defence. The site is surrounded on two sides by a canal, one of which is the Grand Canal and the smaller second one is the Rio del Fontego. The side facing the Grand Canal is the most prominent façade with the spacious fife bay central loggia at the water level for unloading goods and arriving merchants. The ground floor furthermore, housed the facilities...
for the Venetian housekeeper, shops to the outside for Venetian salesmen and storage spaces. There were three upper floors for lodgings, around eighty chambers to be rented, and other facilities for the foreign community.\footnote{Simonsfeld, Der Fondaco Dei Tedeschi in Venedig Und Die Deutsch-Venetianischen Handelsbeziehungen, Vol. 2., 110.} The main halls were situated on the first floor; the summer and the winter hall, the latter of which provided heating. Both halls have long balconies fenced with colonettes overlooking the Grand Canal. The piano nobile has pairs of round arched windows. Rising above we can find two more floors with paired windows, these are square-headed which was quite unusual in monumental buildings on the Grand Canal.

The building is truly renaissance in its planning and appearance, for example the diminishing story heights are following strictly Alberti’s principles in De Re Aedificatoria. In addition, the building lacks the typical centralised composition, consisting of three parts, of the traditional Venetian palazzo. The Fondaco belongs therefore to one of the first buildings in Venice designed in the Renaissance style.\footnote{Antonini, Fondaco dei Tedeschi: Inquadramento Cronologico e Storico. Relazione Storica. Il Fondaco dei Tedeschi, n.p.} Originally, the Fondaco also had two little towers at the two outer corners that rose one story above the general roofline and several chimneys. A line of merlons, which are pierced by circles and ornamentally crowned by stone balls, tops the roofline.

The courtyard was formerly open to the sky and was only closed by a roof in the nineteenth century. Just like the outside appearance, the courtyard is also kept simple without decoration or carvings. Besides the cloisters in the city, only the Doge’s Palace has a larger courtyard. The piers of the columns are rectangular, their capitals only indicated by mouldings and the arches they carry are also simple and unelaborated. The only ornaments nowadays besides the minimal architectural decoration are a big wall clock, installed in 1571 and a stone wellhead.\footnote{Antonini, Ex Fondaco Nuovo dei Tedeschi: La Fabbrica nel XIX-XX. Relazione Storica. Il Fondaco dei Tedeschi, n.p.}

Documents of the middle of the eighteenth century mention that the state of the building was declining and maintenance issues especially with the shops on the ground floor occurred. Repairs of the walls had to be executed.\footnote{Antonini, Ex Fondaco Nuovo dei Tedeschi: La Fabbrica nel XIX-XX. Relazione Storica. Il Fondaco dei Tedeschi, n.p.}

**From Napoleon’s Occupation to Post Office**

In 1806, when Napoleon arrived in Venice, the Fondaco shared its destiny with many other

---

\footref{Simonsfeld, Der Fondaco Dei Tedeschi in Venedig Und Die Deutsch-Venetianischen Handelsbeziehungen, Vol. 2., 110.}
\footref{Antonini, Fondaco dei Tedeschi: Inquadramento Cronologico e Storico. Relazione Storica. Il Fondaco dei Tedeschi, n.p.}
\footref{Antonini, Fondaco dei Tedeschi: Inquadramento Cronologico e Storico. Relazione Storica. Il Fondaco dei Tedeschi, n.p.}
\footref{Antonini, Ex Fondaco Nuovo dei Tedeschi: La Fabbrica nel XIX-XX. Relazione Storica. Il Fondaco dei Tedeschi, n.p.}
buildings in the city and was occupied and reused. It served as a customs house and later under the rule of the Austrian empire as military and administrative seat. An episode of changes and alterations began, which was necessary to adapt the Fondaco to its new uses.\textsuperscript{187} It appears that the occupants however valued the importance of the built fabric. Since the building required some maintenance, several repair projects were executed during that time. For example in 1821 the staircase to the Canal Grande was fixed.\textsuperscript{188} Most of the spaces in upper floors were converted into offices by 1835.\textsuperscript{189} The two small towers at the Grand Canal façade were removed the following year.\textsuperscript{190} So far, no other radical interventions changed the original disposition of the building, yet new passageways were opened, old doors shut and new floor covering was installed. More severe interventions of restoration were taken into consideration in the 1870s. In order to stabilise the cracking walls, it was discussed whether to insert robust iron bars vertically into the building. Actions were taken to stop the ongoing decay of the final rendering and paint. Wooden elements that posed a security problem were substituted. The instability of the giant merlons and problems with the roof were also addressed.\textsuperscript{191} However, the built fabric was also damaged through insertions of partition walls and opening of other walls. A risk to the stability of the whole structure was especially posed by the installation of the enormous skylight covering the courtyard in 1898, a combination of glass and iron. The Commission for the Conservation of Monument Venice, asked for permission to restore the building in 1908, which was granted. After the First World War in 1925, the building was acquired by the administration of the post and telegraphy of Italy, which made it the seat of a proper public service. The restoration works began soon after between 1929 and 1938. Many of the heavy traditional materials such as the materials of walls, floors, roof trusses and vaults were substituted with lighter materials, mainly concrete.\textsuperscript{192} The load bearing walls and wooden beams were supported by reinforced concrete structures from the base to the roof of the building. A glass canopy replaced the heavy skylight structure of the previous century. In addition, new services were installed by 1938.\textsuperscript{193}

\textsuperscript{187} Lidia Fersuoch, Nostro Fontego dei Tedeschi (Venice: Corte del Fontego editore, 2015), 15.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., n.p.
\textsuperscript{190} Donatella Calabi and Paolo Morachiello, Il Fontego dei Tedeschi (Venice: Corte del Fontego editore, 2012), 28.
\textsuperscript{192} Lidia Fersuoch, Nostro Fontego dei Tedeschi (Venice: Corte del Fontego editore, 2015), 19.
\textsuperscript{193} Calabi and Morachiello, Il Fontego dei Tedeschi, 29-30.
The inauguration of the new Post Office was held in July 1939, in the presence of the minister and other high ranked Venetian citizens.\textsuperscript{194}

**End of an Era and New Beginning**

The building was used as the headquarters of the Italian Post for around seventy years until it was sold to the company Edizione Property for a relatively low price in 2008.\textsuperscript{195} This company belongs to the family enterprise Benetton. In exchange of six million euros, the City Council of Venice decided to support the change of use from public to commercial building. Only a few spaces, such as the courtyard remains available for public use for a number of days per year.\textsuperscript{196} Rem Koolhaas who is commissioned to design the new shopping centre, presented his project for the Fondaco during the Architecture Biennale 2010 in Venice.\textsuperscript{197} Constructions have begun in 2014 and are supposed to conclude in 2016.\textsuperscript{198}

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{195} Fersuoch, *Nostro Fontego dei Tedeschi*, 21.
\textsuperscript{196} Calabi and Morachiello, *Il Fontego dei Tedeschi*, 30-31.
\textsuperscript{197} Fersuoch, *Nostro Fontego dei Tedeschi*, 23.
Bibliography


Appendix C: Interviews

Interview with two members of Faro Venezia and Forum Futuro Arsenale: architect Barbara Pastor and psychologist/ teacher Adriano De Vita, 22/05/15, Venice

- The Fondaco was a very beloved building. In the centre. Frequented a lot because it was the post office.
- A group of people was formed to an organisation in 2009, through the internet; they made a proposal to form a type of city centre. A “Fontego di Europa”. They are called 40xVenezia. Professionals and so on around the age of 40.
- They decided to do something about the bad situation in Venice for the inhabitants. But they had no money.
- Back then, the people were not very active, but now they are one of the most active ones. The Venetians want to participate in everything.
- That is a thing that was born with the Fontego. Before the Fontego that did not exist.
- In order to use the Fontego as commercial building it was necessary to change the use and this made everyone angry.
- Also because the six million that the city got in return are not a lot. The residents started protesting. Actually the people wanted their space for public use within the building.
- If you have no money, you have to respect the law. If you have money, the law changes. It is enough that you pay.
- The post was a fundamental institution in the city. Like a pharmacy, doctor etc.
- In a city of 200 000 it was fundamental. Now it is different.
- Rem Koolhaas the starchitect provokes and he does not need the permissions as every other architect in the city. He made proposals that are very uncommon. Normally the Sopraintendenza would not allow such things. Roofs are off limit in Venice. If we architects in Venice want to change a window we have to fill out a lot of bureaucracy but with a lot power you can do what you want.
- They said that the roof terrace will be for everybody but we know it is not going to be like that. It will have a bar and will only be for guests.
- Everyone protested when he proposed the roof terrace. You don’t touch the roofs.
• The Sopraintendenza ordered that the escalators cannot be in the courtyard but they have to be within the building. This is even more disruptive to the structure because it is in the built fabric.
• It is not even a real project of Rem Koolhaas anymore that way. If he does it at anyway. Let him do what he wants.
• But now everyone may want a roof terrace. Since there is one at the Grand Canal now.
• The Sopraintendenza acts very subjective within their possibilities. Usually they are very defensive and in order to be on the safe side they usually say no to everything. But with an international star its different.
• Ca Corner della Regina was sold to the Fondazione Prada. Before that it used to be very important as the archive for the Biennale until the 90s. It was a unique collection. Those things were not to be find anywhere else. Now it’s an art foundation, but it is not anymore as public as it was.
• All those Palazzi that used to be public institutions are not there anymore.
• The post wanted to sell the Fondaco to the City Council. But it never happened.
• Then there was the project of Francesco San Vitto.
• Even with no money the Council could have taken the money from a bank and rent out one of the floors for commercial use. And use the rest for public use. From the rent they could have paid the mortgage.
• But the Council wanted to be free of the burden of the building. There was not yet the urge of the Venetians to get involved. The major will do it… The inhabitants only went to the votes and then did nothing for five years. But participating means getting involved everyday. The administration is not used to this though. A monument is always part of the city.
• There is no institution of participation here.
• How can community involvement work? The government does not foresee the participation of the inhabitants directly. In an official way.
• There should be a real institution of participating. A presence of inhabitants for important decisions. But the problem is that One group also does not represent the whole city. So how can it be done? There are always passive residents.
• The positive aspects that can be seen is the work places. However, Venice is a resource like oil. Sooner or later we will run out of it.
There is no real city anymore with a feeling of community. Even the tourists realise that and do not appreciate this fact.

More tourism more money? It is a problem of resources. The changes within the city are dramatic and rapid. Every year the problem of tourists get worse.

It is difficult to keep up the shape of all the cultural goods of the city.

Koolhaas did not think about the building with his project. Severe interventions, stairs etc. He did not think about how his design will be installed. There is a different way of constructing in Venice. And some things do not work with the materials that are at the site. It is not like I say that I do not want modernity in Venice. But you have to understand the structure.

Arsenale

Around 40 organisations are interested to get involved with this project. (The sailing association, groups for children, and formed a network called Forum Futuro Arsenale.

Italia Nostra is the Greenpeace of heritage society. They critique and condemn every changes.

We want to promote activity and productivity.

The project should incorporate the culture of the maritime significance of the Arsenale.

Promote artisanship and crafts. Also different crafts. This can save a lot of traditional knowledge and also money.

A centre of education.

Also promotion of mobility and international exchange in terms of crafts.

Should be a collaboration between the public and private sector.

Funded by Europe? It is hard to find financial support for such a project.

The people that work with us are all professionals that have to work during the week. We plan this all in our free time besides our jobs.

Venice is a city where one could live very well. Everything is close and reachable.

Ten years ago, all services were still within the city.

Today 90 000 workers commute every day from Mestre because of the tourism industry.

Other ideas of work diminished.
This causes a loss of identity

Email correspondence with Adriano De Vita 20/07/15

C'è alcuna comunicazione fra i gruppi come Faro Venezia o Forum Futuro Venezia con la Comune o la Soprintendenza? E quale sono i mezzi di comunicazione?

Si, ci sono vari canali di comunicazione tra le associazioni, il Comune, le università e altre istituzioni. Si tratta però di contatti informali. A volte si collabora per organizzare un evento o una mostra, oppure si chiede un incontro per discutere una delibera o un progetto che solleva qualche dubbio. Altre volte si tratta di conflitti aperti, come nel caso del Fontego, quando le decisioni del sindaco sono state duramente contestate dalle principali associazioni cittadine.

Tieni conto che le associazioni (o comunità patrimoniali, se preferisci) funzionano come corpi intermedi tra la pubblica amministrazione e la cittadinanza. La loro credibilità dipende da quanto sono bravi a comunicare e “attivare” la cittadinanza.

Non esiste però un luogo istituzionale e stabile per un dialogo formale tra istituzioni e cittadinanza.

Ora si sta discutendo molto del fatto che la democrazia elettiva (detta anche rappresentativa o deliberativa) non prevede che la cittadinanza possa agire come soggetto attivo al di fuori del periodo delle elezioni. Le richieste di attivare strumenti stabili di democrazia partecipativa si fanno sempre più forti. Finora queste richiesta sono rimaste sostanzialmente inascoltate.

C'è interesse dal parte della Comune di lavorare con la comunità e i residenti?

Molto poco. La cittadinanza viene vista sostanzialmente come un soggetto passivo che deve accettare le decisioni prese degli organi di governo legittimati dalle elezioni. L'idea che i cittadini possano contribuire regolarmente al formarsi delle decisioni in modo continuativo si sta diffondendo, ma per ora questo si realizza raramente e solo sulla base della “buona volontà” di qualche assessore. Non è un obbligo e meno ancora una pratica istituzionale.

C'era un sviluppo in queste cose dal caso del Fondaco?

La rinuncia al Fontego ha suscitato forti proteste e da allora sono nate numerose associazioni di cittadini che chiedono di partecipare attivamente alla cura della città. Questo risveglio
della cittadinanza è nato dal problema del Fontego. Prima non esisteva questa forte domanda di partecipazione.

Ora le cose si stanno evolvendo: si comincia a parlare di patrimonio culturale (materiale e immateriale) come bene comune, cioè come una cosa fuori mercato. Non più come una questione di proprietà pubblica o privata, ma appunto “comune”.

Su questo però siamo appena agli inizi.

Interview with political candidate Susanna Böhme-Kuby, 25/05/15, Venice

- I am campaigning for Felice Casson
- The case of the Fondaco is a catastrophe; it is part of the big sell-out of Venetian and even Italian heritage.
- In order to close the budget deficits of the city, to keep city running.
- Privatization of public goods. The pressure of international speculations on the city is enormous.
- The Fondaco is line with these developments
- It lost its public character through sale. Change of use was bought by “tips” from Benetton
- The building has a huge increase in value. It was so stupid from the administration.
- There was the thought about introducing a ticket for the city in order to make more money for the city. But even the taxes that the tourists paid were used for absurd investments and not for improvement of the situation
- The population is totally excluded of the decision making
- Also economically
- The public character of the city gets lost
- Casson wants to establish new Master Plan for the city with a new special legislation. Which is important for the city. It has to be stopped that every new elected government only thinks until the end of their legislation. The future has to be considered.
- Italia Nostra could only make changes to the decisions at the Fondaco through legal action. The first proposal of Koolhaas was dismissed, with the red elevators in the courtyard and a terrace out to the Canal Grande in front of the water entrance,
- Not even the Casino in Venice is able to make money anymore
• The fondaco made the people more active, but there were always active people in Venice, like Italia Nostra, which started after the flood in 1966. There are many organisations for the MOSE and the big cruise ships.

• There are many active people but on the other hand there are also a lot of people that are deaf and ignore what happens. They just want to make money.

• Many bed & breakfasts are not paying taxes and therefore there is no revenue for the city.

• This is not a problem of legislation in Italy but a problem of control. Usually there are even too many laws that contradict each other. There have to be controlling bodies on every level.

• The case of the island of Poveglia is a good example of community involvement. The entrepreneur Luigi Bugnaro, who is also running as major, wanted to buy the island for 500 000 Euro.

• Over 3000 residents and lovers of the city joined their money together to bid against him. The price was not appropriate for this whole island. For now the sale is stopped.

• Also the sale of Villa Heriott at the Guidecca was stopped

• It was to be sold for 10 million shortly before Easter but it turned out that regulations had been disregarded and therefore it was put on hold. The city inherited the villas from private people and they were to be kept public property. They are beautiful and could be the next dream hotel.

• But the attacks are still coming

• We are not against modernisation. That is not true. But there should be no ‘false’ modernisation that is only there for making money.

• All the old Venetians are leaving. Thirty years ago, everything was still very different.

• Something like a limitation of secondary residences in Venice, as in Switzerland for example where you can only have 20 percent of secondary residences in a city, so that rich people from out of town cannot just buy a nice holiday home in Venice that easily that they can rent out to tourists.

• I hope that with the new election something can change. The problem is that there are many small parties that are not of the same opinion. There are a lot of personal issues coming into the political discussions.
It is the plan to create a “metropolitan city” including 30 cities from here to Padova, within the next fifty years with new infrastructure etc

Renata Codello who approved the Fondaco project also had outrageous opinions on the big cruise ships in Venice

Interview architectural historian and former professor at IUAV Venice, Paola Somma

21/05/15, Venice

Answers to interview questions:

Question nr. 1

• Money.
• The city did not sell the building; Benetton bought the building from the post. It was private before. However, the city can chose what it is used for.
• And the Sopraintendenza is responsible to review the application of the project and not the use of it.
• Now they claim that the new use is still public, since it will create workplaces.

Question nr. 7

• The cultural part is that the courtyard of the building can be used for public occasions on 10 days a year.

Question nr. 2

• Spaces for the youth of Venice
• A library
• Maybe also some institution for tourists, but different.
• There are no public spaces in Venice left

Question nr. 4

• When it was still used as Italian post, the space was underused since it is so huge. The post was on the ground floor and the offices above.
• The first idea from Benetton was to convert the Fondaco into a hotel.
• Happened with so many Palazzos. They are all hotels now.
• All organisations in the city used to be in those Palazzos once. And now they are hotels.

Question nr. 3

• The context of the building being commercial was very different now and then.
• With all the merchants in the building, that is nothing like a shopping mall
When taking this argument, one plays with etiquettes. No one explains the type of commercial activities and how they used to be five hundred years ago.

This building used to be part of the whole commercial structure of the city, together with the Fondaco dei Turchi.

These new international shops have nothing to do with Venice. (me: Trade was as unique as the building itself)

Question nr. 5
- Rem Koolhaas is a starchitect. He claimed on a conference in the city on the new project that the context is not important. He does not care. Commercial is commercial.
- He said the building has no importance because there have been so many changes to it already anyway.
- But it is not important who is the architect. An Italian architect would not have been different.
- The destiny of Venice was decided by the end of the 90s when capitalism took over everything
- The people just come here because of the beauty.

Question nr. 12
- This case is unique in the city. Until now, it was always Palazzos that were converted.
- The building is already unique because of its typology.
- Also it has such an important entrance with the Rialto Bridge
- Koolhaas includes this bridge and uses it for his project to attract the clients
- It will not be possible to take the vaporetto anymore from the station. It is already so crowded now.
- This will create a problem of public transport. They privatise a piece of the city with that.

Question nr. 15
- Everyone wants to substitute the inhabitants that we have with inhabitants that can spend more money. They also only want rich tourists. It is an ethical problem.
- There is a climate in the city that tries to defend itself from poverty.
- They close all the schools. All that is left are some old people.
- The poor people that come here to work live in Mestre, they are basically slaves. That is the model of this city.
- Although there are so many tourists, there is a deficit in the city’s finance. The tourists are many day tourists that don’t leave tax money.
- The survival of the city lies in the hand of the power of money.

Interview Questions
1. Quali fattori ha preso in considerazione la Comune nel decidere cosa fare del Fontego?
2. Quali altri idee sono state considerate?
3. Come in origine la struttura verrà utilizzata per uno scopo commerciale. Secondo la vostra opinione, in quali aspetti è questa attività commerciale appropriata e ne conserva il valore storico della struttura?
4. Quando il Fontego era utilizzata come sede principale per la posta, era un spazio ben usato? E frequentato dei veneziani?
5. Secondo lei, è importante che l’architetto ha una conoscenza del luogo del progetto? (Perché?)
6. Quali sono gli aspetti più positivo/negativo del design del nuovo Fontego dei Tedeschi?
7. Ci sarà un ‘area di cultura’ nel edificio dopo la trasformazione. Che ne pensa dell’idea?
8. Vantaggi/Svantaggi del progetto per l’economia veneziana:
9. Vantaggi/Svantaggi del progetto per i residenti di Venezia:
10. Secondo la vostra opinione quale sarebbe stata una migliore alternativa per l’utilizzo del Fontego?
11. Quale sarà l’impatto sull’area di Rialto? (Negativo o positivo)
12. Ci sono simili esempi a Venezia con un meglio concetto secondo lei?
13. Secondo lei, in quali modi può Venezia esser mantenuta in vita indipendentemente dell’attività turistica?
14. Secondo la vostra opinione ha preso in considerazione la Comune di Venezia il benessere dei residenti di Venezia nel decidere del Fontego e altri progetti simili?
15. Ci sono progetti per attirare più abitanti a Venezia e avversare l’abbassamento dei residenti?