

IATL STRATEGIC PROJECT GRANT
A SUSTAINABLE SERENISSIMA: WATER, FIRE, AND THE FUTURE OF VENICE

FINAL REPORT

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Report Summary:

This report details the activities of the project *A Sustainable Serenissima*, for which an IATL strategic project grant was awarded in AY 2018-2019. The strategic project grant allowed us to pilot an innovative problem-based module at minimal cost to students, involving onsite field-based experiential learning at Warwick in Venice. The project was largely a success and has provided proof of concept for the module and for this model of teaching. The strategic project grant not only allowed us to successfully teach the module, but indeed to establish a network of colleagues in Venice (activists, industry leaders, academics, etc...) who collaborated on the module and are eager to participate again in future. Despite several logistical issues around the location of Warwick in Venice and funding concerns for AY 2019-2020, talks are ongoing regarding ways that the module may be run in subsequent academic years. The written outputs are currently ongoing.

Overview:

This strategic project involved an experimental transdisciplinary pilot module on Venice and Sustainability hosted in Liberal Arts. The module ran in T2 AY 2018-2019 and was convened by Dr. Bryan Brazeau. Drs. Marta Guerriero, Jonathan Clarke, and Jessica Savage also contributed to the module. Prof. Cathia Jenainati as head of school provided strategic support and vision throughout the project.

The module's learning objectives included critical analysis of local sustainable solutions, analysis of future implementation plans, and consideration of the scalability and adaptability of the problem of Venetian sustainability to other global challenges.

This report provides a pedagogic narrative through the module demonstrating the profound impact that interdisciplinary onsite experiential learning had upon the students.

This narrative is followed by an evaluation of the project's goals, a discussion of the project's outputs, and plans for future implementation. A full financial reconciliation is provided in the attached Excel workbook.

PEDAGOGIC NARRATIVE

Pre-Departure

The module began at Warwick in Coventry with an overview of the complex problem of sustainability in Venice and with students exploring the various strands of this problem (economic, ecological, social, historical, cultural). In particular, students struggled to think about what “sustainability” might mean for a site such as Venice, which only exists due to continued human intervention over centuries in diverting rivers from the lagoon and in reinforcing/maintaining the barrier between the lagoon and the sea. Consideration of this difficult problem in group work with active hands-on research also introduced the problem-based learning methodology that would be used throughout the module.

The following three weeks were devoted to optional Italian language learning so that students could have a small sense of the language, preparing them both for their time in Venice and for research activities (as many of the sources students needed to access did not exist in English).

We then ran five sessions exploring various sustainability problems in Venice through the lens of a broad historical and cultural perspective:

- a) **Empire and the Serenissima.** In this session, students explored the problem of sustaining imperial expansion during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries through analysis of various datasets (financial records, taxation revenues, summaries of imported goods) from the period. Other groups focused on a particular Venetian colony (either in the Adriatic or Mediterranean) and explored its importance for specific trade routes and resource exploitation, while also considering how Venice fed, supplied, and maintained this colony.
- b) **Immigration and Identity in Venice (1492-2019).** In this session, students queried the problem of Venetian identity being threatened by an influx of overtourism. Through discussion of this problem, students were led to the question: What was this identity that was under threat and how did it come to be established? Each group of students was tasked with exploring a particular immigrant community in Venice (Jewish, Slavic, German, Turkish) and their contributions to Venetian culture, preparing a short presentation on these groups for their peers. In the second half of this session, students explored contemporary issues of migration in Venice, looking at existing government policy, activism and political resistance in the city, and the case of Pateh Sabally, the Gambian refugee who drowned in the grand canal in 2017.

- c) **Venetian Roots and Ecological Sustainability.** In this session, students were tasked to explore and research a particular aspect of Venetian ecology from a historical perspective. Students prepared independent research and then came in and shared their knowledge in small groups by rotating from group to group. Topics explored included: clam farming in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Venice, forestry management in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, fisheries management before and after the fall of the Serenissima (1797), and other topics. In our concluding discussion, students recognised that the problem of ecological sustainability could not be divorced from the profound cultural traditions of living with the lagoon that the Venetians had developed over centuries, and that these traditions could be used to inform approaches to present solutions.
- d) **Airbnb and the Changing Face of the City.** In preparation for our departure for Venice, students explored the complex problem of economic sustainability with relation to Airbnb. In preparation for the session, students read various articles and listened to two podcasts about the problems of Airbnb in New Orleans and Barcelona. In class they explored economic data about Airbnb levels in Venice (via data from Inside Airbnb) and about the changing commercial face of the city (via student-led digital projects such as the Shopp Mapp app developed by the Venice Project Centre at the Worcester Polytechnic Institute).
- e) **Tourism from the Grand Tour to the Grandi Navi.** Having explored the extent and complexity of the problem of tourism in contemporary Venice, students then reflected on the roots of Venetian tourism via a framework provided by Stephanie Hom's *Beautiful Country*. Adapting her conception of "Destination Italy" to "Destination Venice," students discovered the importance of Italy for the Grand Tour, the key role played by Thomas Cook in the nineteenth century in constructing the idea of "tours to Italy," representations of Italy and Venice abroad (such as the Venetian hotel and casino in Las Vegas), some factors that motivate why Italy remains a top tourism destination in the early twenty-first century (desire to recover a lost sense of authenticity, a sense of nostalgia for a non-existent projection of Italian culture), and the key role that tourists can play as semioticians.

Once students had investigated the problems of Venetian sustainability from this variety of social, economic, cultural, and historical perspectives, we then continued the module at Warwick in Venice. Prior to our departure for Venice, students were given a brief in-class class and asked to produce a 1,500-2,000 word industrial reflection, looking at the sustainability (or lack thereof) of a Venetian industry—either contemporary or historical. This assessment helped prepare students for their time in Venice, and allowed them to understand where such industries originated, the sustainability (or lack thereof) of such industries, and the presence of their ongoing legacies in the city.



In preparation for our departure for Venice, students were issued with a detailed Venice handbook that provided a schedule of activities, logistical details, practical considerations, and emergency information (such as the use of Warwick's business travel insurance, the number for the emergency phone which was shared among staff, information on contemporary events such as a cinema festival, and behavioural guidelines for responsible tourism while in Venice). Students were also asked to sign a code of conduct (adapted from the Warwick in Venice History Code of Conduct) and to sign marketing forms regarding any pictures taken during the time in Venice so that these could be used to promote and market the module in future.

In Venice (March 16th–24th)

Students were provided with a preparation day in Venice to complete preparatory readings and to orient themselves around the city. As such, most arrived on Saturday 16th March. Our first meeting with the students took place on the evening of Sunday 17th, where we provided a project briefing during a meal together and introduced the work that students would be doing during the intensive week. We outlined how the week would be centred around the exploration of the wicked problem of Venetian sustainability, and noted that students should try to connect the various strands of learning together with their own critical observations. Again, we re-iterated the problem-based nature of the activities and underlined how the week would be primarily characterised by student-led learning and that we had invited a number of guest speakers for this purpose.

Students were encouraged to discuss the topics of their “Industrial Reflections” with each other, and to share initial impressions and observations on Venetian sustainability that they had made over the course of the preparatory day. Students also discussed how they planned to approach their media project assessment on unsustainable aspects of contemporary Venice while onsite, and were reminded that they should use time outside of class for these projects.

The week in Venice was composed of five days of experiential learning activities. Morning sessions were usually held in the library of Warwick in Venice (which had ordered a number of books relevant to the module) while afternoon sessions took place throughout the city. Students were required to attend all day on Monday and Friday, while they could choose two of the three afternoon activities in which to participate on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Monday 18th March

During the first day, we considered the problem of Venetian infrastructure. In the morning session, students were asked to consider the challenges that rising sea levels pose to Venetian infrastructure and why climate change poses a particular problem for Venice. Students learned about the infrastructure of the city and about the construction of Venetian houses with a salt barrier of Istrian stone to prevent capillary rise of salt and minerals within the brickwork and masonry. They also discovered that as sea levels rise and acqua alta events become more frequent, the water often goes beyond this level, posing a significant threat to the structural integrity of the city. Other students discovered that boats with petrol outboard motors (particularly taxis, but also cruise ships) create a wave-wash effect that hollows out the fragile foundations of the city. Some students discovered that Alilaguna—the company that manages airport boat shuttle service—has begun to use less-damaging electric motors in their small passenger craft.

After the break, students were given an activity whereby they needed to go out into the city and make observations about aspects of Venetian infrastructure and the pressures it faced (whether from tourism, climate change, or other factors). Students were given 45 minutes to go out in pairs and to share at least two different photos. For this activity, we used Twitter and had a Twitterfall projection on the screen in the library. As students tweeted their pictures and captions, they began to appear on the screen. Once all students returned, we were able to go through their observations with students leading the discussion. Some students noticed capillary rise of salt deposits above the line of Istrian stone on certain buildings, while others noted overflowing rubbish bins, or graffiti denouncing cruise ships and the “Disneyfication” of Venice. We concluded our discussion by thinking about ways that these infrastructural pressures might be addressed.

In the afternoon session on Monday, we had organised a local charitable society (Arzaná) to take students out in historical gondole to examine Venetian infrastructure from the water, but unfortunately the weather did not cooperate. Instead, they invited us to their Squero (boatyard) where students learned about another key element of Venetian infrastructure: the gondola. Arzaná restores historic boats using traditional methods and the students were exposed to a variety of tools and techniques used to build gondole, along with a discussion around the cultural sustainability of the craft. Being able to spend time with the members of the Arzaná society, many of whom were native Venetians, permitted students to ask a variety of questions about the problems of overtourism and about how contemporary gondole drivers cope with the traffic from motorboats. We concluded our afternoon session with a brief discussion regarding the intersection of Venetian cultural traditions with contemporary concerns regarding the sustainability of existing infrastructure. Photos of this activity are included below.



Figure 1: Students learning about gondole with Arzaná.



Figure 3: Student holding a traditional gondola-building implement.



Figure 2: Students discussing overtourism with Arzaná members.

Tuesday, 19th March

Each day from Tuesday-Friday, we began with a brief recapitulation of what had been learned the previous day and a reflective discussion focusing on how students' ideas both of Venice and of Venetian sustainability were changing. Tuesday's sessions were focused around population flows in Venice and the Veneto and structured around a particular graffiti phrase that had been gaining traction in Barcelona, Venice, and other heavily touristed cities: "Refugees Welcome. Tourists go home." The first guest speaker we had was Dr. Francesco della Puppa (Ca' Foscari) who works on migration in Northern Italy and on Venice in particular.

This discussion and dialogue was followed with a panel discussion on tourism and community resistance in Venice. The participants of this panel included the activist Tommaso Cacciari, the founder and spokesperson for *No Grandi Navi*—the protest movement against cruise ships in Venice, and Alberto Madricardo, founder of PER Venezia Consapevole, an organisation that seeks to rebuild a community ethos in Venice through a network of local artists, thinkers, students, and playwrights. Both panelists spoke only in Italian; Drs. Bryan Brazeau and Marta Guerriero served as interpreters. We felt that this panel was successful despite the linguistic barrier as students were engaged with a wide variety of questions and comments on the problems of cruise ships and tourism, their relative economic benefits and disadvantages, and the profound pressures they place on the city's culture and physical infrastructure. Moreover, although live interpretation made the activity somewhat more complex, it helped expose students to the importance of multilingualism, demonstrating that a wide variety of information and perspectives exist beyond the English language, and provided an authentic dialogue with key figures fighting for Venetian sustainability.



Figure 4: Students discussing pathways of sustaining Venetian communities with Alberto Madricardo and Tommaso Cacciari.

The optional afternoon activity was a visit to the Fondazione Giorgio Cini archive on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore. Upon arriving on the island, students were able to see the physical damage to the stones caused by cruise ships that Tommaso Cacciari had detailed that morning. The afternoon session was devoted to innovative reuse of urban space with the Fondazione Cini as a case study. Students learned about the history of the Fondazione Cini—a cultural research institute founded after the second world war—and about the efforts of Vittorio Cini to not only renovate the former Benedictine abbey that was on the island, but also to recover the wooden furnishings of the Longhena reading room. This room had been designed by Baldassare Longhena in the seventeenth century with rich wooden furnishings that were removed after Napoleon’s troops invaded Venice in 1797 and used the room as an armoury. Cini was able to track down the furnishings to local schools in the area, restoring the room to its original seventeenth-century splendour. This room contrasts greatly with the “Manica Lunga”, a long room in the former dormitory of the monks. This room was renovated and redesigned by the Italian architect Michele de Lucchi and opened to the public in 2010. The reframing and reuse of these spaces, along with their contrasting visions of restoration prompted an engaging discussion about how to preserve Venice’s heritage buildings while also adapting them to modern needs and uses.

This discussion formed the basis of the activity we held in the Fototeca. Among the collections of the Fondazione Cini is a rich photographic archive with photos of Venice from the late 19th century through to the 1970s. Students were given instructions for consulting archival documents and then tasked with researching how Venice had changed in the twentieth century. Students were surprised to discover images of the collapse of the bell tower in San Marco, of the immense flood in 1966, and even of the Squero of the Arzaná where we had been the previous day. The activity allowed students to not only have first-hand exposure to archival materials, but also to follow their own interests through independent research. Students recognized that one of the threats to Venetian sustainability was indeed the preconceptions that tourists impose upon it as a city “frozen in time,” without recognizing the dynamic and changing history of the city throughout the twentieth century. Several students used photos that they found in the archive in their group presentations upon our return to Coventry. The day concluded with a walk to the Molino Stucky on Giudecca (formerly a large flour mill now converted to a luxury hotel) as we continued conversations about reinventing and reusing urban infrastructure.



Figures 5-6: Students conducting archival research at the Fondazione Cini.



Wednesday, 20th March

This day was devoted to changing industries in Venice and activities were led by Dr. Marta Guerriero. We recapitulated the transformations of urban infrastructure that we explored on Tuesday. In the initial discussion, students raised the problem of whether sustainability and preservation should be equated, and how the dense concentration of historical buildings in Venice makes urban renewal and modernisation much more difficult than in other cities. Students also questioned the different usage of such spaces and their intended audiences (i.e. is converting an old flour mill to a luxury hotel for tourists ultimately sustainable?). Some students commented that while Venetian sustainability had appeared to be a simple goal at the outset, it now appeared to be contradictory and a site of competing and conflicting interests. This provided an excellent framework to discuss sustainability and Venetian industries.

Our first guest speaker was Massimo Zanutto, the director of energy recycling for Gruppo Veritas, the company tasked with waste management and recycling in Venice. Students discussed with him how waste management functions in the city and were surprised to learn that Venice is a European leader in recycling and in energy production from incinerated and compacted waste. Students also inquired about the pressures placed by tourists on the existing infrastructure and on waste collection. Due to unpredictable and increasing flows of tourism, Venetian waste management was not able to cope with the additional waste generated by tourists, which frequently ended up in landfills rather than being recycled as was the waste of local residents. On a more positive note, students also learned about Veritas' initiatives for transforming used cooking oil into biodiesel and using it to power the vaporetti (the boat buses that serve the archipelago). Again, with this speaker, both Drs. Brazeau and Guerriero served as live interpreters for the students.

Our discussion of energy provided the students with a useful framework for considering the development of petrochemical industries in the industrial area of Porto Marghera (a part of Venice that is often ignored and overlooked). Our next guest speaker was Dr. Gilda Zazzara (Ca' Foscari) who discussed the role of social labour movements in Marghera and what she has termed "blue-collar environmentalism" whereby workers in chemical and petrochemical industries lobbied for more sustainable policies in light of ecological disasters. Students discussed with her the key role that such industries played in twentieth-century Venice, and many were surprised to discover that a) many of the waste products of industries in Marghera were often dumped directly into the lagoon and b) that Venetian sustainability could be explored through the lens of social class (i.e. "blue-collar environmentalism" champions safe and ecological sustainability for residents and workers in petrochemical industries rather than "white-collar environmentalism" which often focuses on the aestheticisation of the natural environment).

The optional activity on Wednesday afternoon featured another encounter with a guest speaker, Prof. Roberto Pastres of Ca' Foscari. As students had already studied aspects of clam farming in the lagoon and read some of his work in Coventry, the opportunity to meet with him and to explore the problem of ecological sustainability in the lagoon today was an important opportunity. Students discussed with him how the ecology of the lagoon had shifted in the past fifty years and the dangers that overtourism, heavy industry in Marghera, and cruise ships pose to the plants and animals that make up Venetian lagunar biome. This discussion helped students acquire key ecological concepts that they would use on Friday during the day-long trip out in the lagoon.

As an additional enrichment activity in the evening, students were invited to the book launch of *La Venezia Che Vorrei*; a collection featuring essays, short stories, photographs, and illustrations by local Venetian artists and intellectuals. All of the contributors were responding to the question “What would you envision for the future of Venice? What kind of Venice would you like to see?” The book launch was held in an atelier that specialised in letterpress and handmade printing along with hosting events that celebrated local artists. Students were able to meet and interact with local residents while listening to staged readings and live music. This event not only permitted students to gain a deeper understanding of Venice as a multifaceted and dynamic city, but it also permitted them to see that some of the cultural traditions under threat were quite contemporary.

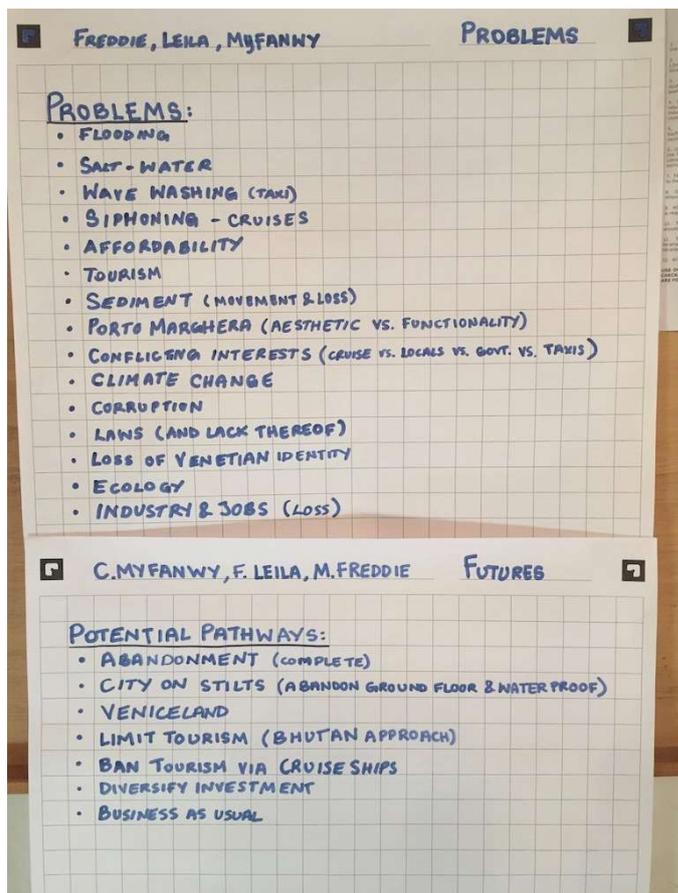


Figure 7: Students at the presentation of "La Venezia Che Vorrei"

Thursday, 21st March

The morning session on Thursday, began with a recapitulation of the previous day's activities. Students who attended the cultural enrichment activity shared their experiences with their peers. Dr. Jonathan Clarke then led the students in a discussion of the impacts that climate change and rising sea levels might have on Venice and other coastal cities, along with detailing a few resilience strategies that such cities have developed. He then led the students in an activity whereby they imagined various sustainable pathways for Venice. Working in groups, students had large sheets of paper where they listed the many sustainability problems Venice faced, and then worked together to come up with a feasible solution. Students were able to access a number of books that had been ordered for the module in the Warwick in Venice library and were able to conduct independent research.

During the activity, students commented that part of the problem was political will and inertia. Others noted how many of these problems—overtourism, rising sea levels, political corruption, pollution from heavy industry, gentrification and the destruction of local communities, struggling with the problem of how to adapt to modernity while maintaining traditions of cultural heritage—were not only facing Venice, but indeed were global challenges that intersected on a local level in the problem of Venice. After 45 minutes of discussion students presented their posters to the class and had a rich discussion together.



Figures 8-10: Students articulating existing problems and potential future pathways with Dr. Jonathan Clarke.

In the afternoon, students visited the control room of the MOSE dam project; an immense public works project that will be erecting multiple mobile barriers to the lagoon in order to help prevent the rising levels of acqua alta due to climate change. Students watched an instructional video and had an engaging discussion with the director of the press office for the Consorzio Venezia Nuova (the company tasked with building the dam). Students had prepared for this visit by reading articles about the political corruption around the project, and about the project's existing faults (such as the substitution of a lower grade of metal for the dam hinges which had begun to rust). This activity taught students not only to think critically about public works projects to address challenges of climate change, but also engaged them in critical evaluation of press releases and of "informative" films put forward by organisations attempting to broadcast a particular narrative.

The day concluded with a walking tour of the Arsenale, the former Venetian shipyard. This activity helped students deepen their understanding of the reuse and repurposing of existing urban infrastructure. While the Arsenale had once been home to thousands of workers who laboured tirelessly on the Serenissima's fleet, today it remains home to the Italian navy and is often used as an exhibition space for the Venice Biennale.

Friday, 22nd March

The morning session began with an overview and discussion of what we had seen the previous day. Students commented on how complex the situation in Venice appeared to be, and about the difficulty of tracing sustainable pathways. Others were interested in the rhetoric that underlay CVN's presentation of the MOSE project, wondering whether the expensive public works project would be worthwhile, given the accelerating rise of sea levels.

Dr. Jessica Savage then prepared the group for our excursion in the lagoon. She drew on the ecological concepts introduced by Prof. Pastres on Wednesday afternoon and used the salt marsh plant charts to help students identify species of plants that they would encounter in the mud flats and salt marshes. We then met up with our boat and guide for the day. The company we used, Slow Venice, is a tour company that specialises in ecological tours of the lagoon. Students were brought out on a traditional Venetian flat-bottomed boat (Bragozzo) to see aspects of the lagoon that are somewhat off the traditional tourist path. The tour also came with a local guide who provided the students with a wealth of information regarding the lagoon's ecosystem and environmental history. As the boat moved through the lagoon, the guide also provided students with information about each of the islands and how Venetians traditionally made use of them (i.e. using one as a plague hospital, another as quarantine for incoming ships, yet another as an armoury, etc...). Learning about the uses of these islands further enriched students' understanding of how Venice had a long and intimate relationship with sustainable practices and how Venetians had established a

certain equilibrium with the lagoon—a tradition that is severely under threat in present-day Venice.

We began in Lio Piccolo, a small farming village in the Northern Lagoon with a network of manmade channels for fish farming. Students were able to apply the knowledge they had gained of the Venetian history of fisheries regulations and fish stock management in the discussion around these neglected fish farms, many of which had been transformed into grounds for duck hunting tours. Students were also able to see firsthand how the Venetian lagoon sustained its population through local agriculture and the cultivation of local plants, such as the Carciofo di Sant’Erasmus.

The second stop during the trip was the small fishing island of Burano. Here, students learned about traditional fishing practices in the lagoon, and were surprised to see how much tourism had taken over the traditional island. Students also learned about the tradition of lacemaking in Burano and its intimate ties to the fishing industry. In our discussions, students discovered that much like traditional fishing activities in the lagoon, lacemaking has also been threatened by overtourism with an influx of factory-made, low-cost counterfeit replicas of Burano lace being imported from Asia.

The final stop during the trip was the island of Sant’Erasmus. This large island is known as the “garden of Venice” as it contains a great deal of arable farmland, used to grow grains and vegetables to feed the population of the city. Students walked along a former railway track laid by the Austrian army during their occupation of the city, following the defeat of Napoleon. Discussions returned to the theme of reusing and repurposing existing infrastructure, which had been explored throughout the week. The guide brought us to a beach on the south side of the island. This vantagepoint allowed students to see the Lido inlet of the MOSE dam project, enriching what they had learned the previous day. Dr. Savage led an activity with marine life on the beach, encouraging the students to find particular species and leading them to think critically about how climate change would affect the marine life of the lagoon.



Figures 11-12: Students learning about Marine Ecology with guide from Slow Venice and Dr. Jessica Savage

The final activity once we returned to the city of Venice was a lagoon-to-table meal at *Osteria i promessi sposi*. Student groups each prepared a brief discussion regarding a traditional Venetian dish made from local ingredients and were encouraged to think critically about sustainable practices. Throughout the meal, each group spoke about the dishes as they were served. In our discussions, students discovered that some traditional Venetian dishes could no longer be made with marine life from the lagoon (clam farming, for instance had moved down to Rovigo), while others reflected on how certain dishes represented the cosmopolitan nature of Venetian identity. One example was sarde in saor, a traditional dish of fried sardines marinated in a sweet and sour mixture, served with raisins and pine nuts; the dish—although traditionally Venetian—represents the influences of the Ottoman empire and the legacy of the historical Jewish community in Venice. The meal concluded with a discussion of new ways to think about the problem of Venetian sustainability with a reflection on what was learned throughout the week onsite. Students spent the Saturday conducting independent work on their media projects, returning to Coventry on Sunday, 24th March.

Post-Return

Following our return to Coventry, we held two final sessions in Term 3 where students were given the opportunity to discuss the topics for their final essay and policy proposal. Students also presented their media projects. We concluded with a reflective discussion about what they had learned in the module and revisited some of the initial problems we saw in the first session, which students were now able to approach with nuance, and an appreciation for complexity.

Final assessments:

- **Media projects:** Students used their time in Venice productively. Some students used archival materials they found in the Fondazione Cini as a way of framing a discussion of sustainability issues in Venice. Others explored the differences between the reality of contemporary Venice and the representations of Venice abroad in the minds of tourists (comparing with “little Venice in London”). Still others conducted a series of interviews with local craftsmen to explore how traditional industries and trades were being affected by the shifting economic landscape of Venice in favour of tourism. The latter video is available for viewing and students have given their permission for it to be shared with IATL.
- **Written project (Policy Proposal/ Research Paper):** Student-selected paper topics included a critical evaluation of human interventions on hydrological features (comparing the MOSE dam project to interventions in and around New Orleans), a research paper on the role of local Venetians in both resisting and abetting increases in tourism, a policy proposal on retaining Venetian identity through new commercial zoning



laws, and a paper on workers' rights and labour movements in Porto Marghera.

PROJECT EVALUATION

The project was designed to encourage inter and transdisciplinary through onsite, experiential, and problem-based learning. The students all fulfilled the learning objectives. The onsite learning activities in Venice offered by the strategic grant offered the following opportunities:

- Students were able to participate in onsite activities with minimal cost.
- The intensive learning experience in Venice helped students understand complexity of inter-connected problems through direct learning activities.
- Students able to conduct independent research (both at Fondazione Cini Fototeca and for Group Media projects).
- Students were able to meet, interact with, and ask questions of local residents, activists, industry leaders.

Feedback on the module was very strong. Students noted the importance of experiential learning both for their understanding of the material and for the fulfilment of assessment learning objectives. Comments from feedback included:

- “The week in Venice made everything come together”
- “The knowledge I gained from studying Venice is applicable on a global scale.”
- “The week in Venice inspired us to be critical and inquisitive of the world.”
- “The variety of assessment types ensured everyone had an opportunity to use their different strengths”
- “When walking through Venice, I was proud seeing what I had learned in the industrial reflection.”
- “The media project allowed me to connect to the city in multiple ways and I very much enjoyed having direct contact with Venetians, which gave me a completely different view on the city.”

The project set for itself five main goals:

- 1)** To provide students with a unique interdisciplinary learning experience that helps them develop and contextualise their own frameworks for solving contemporary global challenges.
 - 2)** To provide a model for the development of innovative transdisciplinary experiential modules that bring together the humanities, sciences, and social sciences.
 - 3)** To explore which types of assessments are best suited to interdisciplinary modules (in-class test, research essay, media production, presentation), and how these might best be aligned across divergent disciplinary practices and testing standards.
 - 4)** For the pilot module to serve as a proof of concept in order to integrate the module into our regular offering in the School of Cross-Faculty Studies.
 - 5)** For the project to research and produce three written outputs. 
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Goals #1, 2, 3, and 4 were all achieved during the project. The use of problem-based learning coupled with experiential activities permitted the students to approach the complex topic of Venetian sustainability from a variety of disciplines. These activities not only enriched their understanding of Venice as a case study, but also provided a model for thinking about future sustainability challenges. The onsite activities combined all three of the traditional pillars of sustainability (social, ecological, economic), but also added a new lens of historical and cultural depth, permitting students to discover that contemporary situations do not exist in isolation, and that sustainability also intersects with local cultural traditions.

Regarding goal #3, students appreciated the diversity of assessment in the module. In particular, the completion of the industrial reflection prior to arrival in Venice was helpful in preparing students to gain a richer and more nuanced understanding of the city prior to arrival. The media project allowed students to explore the city on their own and to crystallise their observations around a particular sustainability problem facing Venice. The research essay/policy proposal was discussed above. It allowed students to explore a particular facet of what they had learned in Venice in greater depth; a number of students chose to approach a topic from a variety of complementary disciplines rather than seeing it only through the lens of one particular approach.

Goal 4 was achieved and the School for Cross Faculty Studies is currently exploring the possibility of additional field-based teaching using the model developed by this project should funding become available. The future of this



particular module will be discussed below in “Future Implementation Plans.”
Goal 5 will be discussed on the next page in the “outputs” section.

OUTPUTS

The project aimed to produce three written outputs:

5a) a formal research article co-authored by staff members and one or two students on the module; the article will consider the module as a test-case for transdisciplinary problem-based learning, with a specific focus on transdisciplinary assessment types and strategies for providing effective feedback in this context.

5b) A set of internal recommendations on how to effectively design and deliver interdisciplinary dual-site modules for UG students (with ideas on how to scale such modules to different sites, such as Warwick's upcoming European campus in Brussels)

5c) A set of internal recommendations to be submitted to the Venice Academic Advisory Boards concerning the usage of Warwick's palazzo in Venice for short periods (1-3 weeks) as embedded within modules delivered at Warwick. These recommendations will include an outline of how the needs and requirements of short-term usage differ significantly from term-length usage (as per the current model). These recommendations would aim to increase usage of the palazzo in vacant periods and find creative ways to integrate its usage into Warwick's Coventry-based modules.

These outputs are ongoing and are in various stages:

A) The article is in a very early draft stage. A potential student co-author has been identified. It is hoped that the article will be completed and submitted by December 2019.

B) This guidance document is currently in the draft stage. Early aspects of it and of the module were presented at the Warwick Education Forum (previously Teaching Fellows Forum) in June 2019. Feedback received was quite positive.

C) For the moment, the Venice Academic Advisory Committee has been temporarily suspended while logistical issues are resolved regarding the location of Warwick in Venice. Once these are resolved, and the board is holding regular meetings again, these internal recommendations will be drafted and presented for discussion at the VAAC.

PLANS FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

For the moment, the module will not be offered in AY 2019-2020 for the following two reasons.

- 1) Logistical issues currently surrounding the site of Warwick in Venice mean that it is currently not possible to anticipate where the new site will be located or the cost of the new facilities. It is hoped that once these issues are resolved we can negotiate a rate for the rental and usage of the facilities similar to what was paid for this project.
- 2) Due to previously unforeseen financial constraints, the Liberal Arts department is currently unable to fund the module in AY 2019-2020. The department hopes to be able to run the module as part of our regular offering in subsequent academic years.