



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Venice Office
Regional Bureau for Science
and Culture in Europe



VIU
Venice
International
University

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

International Conference on

THE FUTURE OF VENICE AND ITS LAGOON IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL CHANGE



Organized by

UNESCO Venice Office

in collaboration with

Venice International University (VIU)

Island of San Servolo (Venice). 13-15 November 2011

Scientific Programme

This International Conference titled “The Future of Venice and its Lagoon in the Context of Global Change” will host key lectures and pave the way for discussions and debates related to the scientific, cultural and socio-economic challenges faced by Venice and its Lagoon. The Conference will focus on evaluating the current situation of Venice and its Lagoon and to develop a “shared vision” for its future. Such a vision is intended to help guide sound decision-making and further enable the sustainable management of coastal and lagoon urban systems and such unique World Heritage site.

The Conference conclusions will inspire other World Heritage sites and cities, in particular those in the South-East European and the Mediterranean Region, to use the Venice experience as a role model. The Conference will be preceded by 4 preparatory workshops that reflect the main themes of discussion for the Conference:

- [From Global to Regional: Local Sea Level Rise Scenarios - Focus on the Mediterranean Sea and the Adriatic Sea \(22-23 November 2010\)](#)
- [The Ecological Implications of Climate Change on the Venice Lagoon \(26-27 May 2011\)](#)
- [Culture and Development: from Restoration to Revitalization? \(20-21 June 2011\)](#)
- [Impact of Global Change to Socioeconomic Development \(19-20 September 2011\)](#)

The reports of the preparatory workshops will serve as a basis for the Conference discussion.

Objectives

The urban ecosystem of Venice and its Lagoon is among the most studied urban and environmental systems in the world. However, many experts recognize that there is still a need to make the available knowledge more accessible to stakeholders and to the public in general, as well as to be easily applied in the decision-making processes. Acting as neutral broker and facilitator, UNESCO Venice Office has mobilized expertise in the interdisciplinary fields of science and culture. Through the above-mentioned preparatory workshops, the main Conference’s aims are:

- Raising awareness on the cultural, socio and economic impacts of global change on Venice and its lagoon and other urban eco-systems;
- Providing local authorities with sound scientific knowledge, information and tools for the sustainable management of Venice and the Lagoon;
- Contributing to the elaboration of holistic and interdisciplinary approaches for the development of urban eco-systems affected by global change;
- Creating better visibility of Venice and its Lagoon as well as other World Heritages sites and Biosphere Reserves as possible models for sustainable development worldwide.
- Identifying prospective scenarios for the future(s) of Venice and recommendations for its cultural, social and economic development.



Patronage

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Province of Venice

Municipality of Venice

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With the support of

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Organization

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Preliminary Programme

Day 1 – Sunday, 13 November 2011

10:00 – 11:00 Registration of participants

11:00 – 13:00 **Introductory Session / Welcome**
(Open to the public)

Welcoming addresses

Representatives UNESCO
Ministries
Veneto Region
Province of Venice
Municipality of Venice

Key Note Speeches

13:00 14:00 *Lunch*

14:00 16:00 **Opening plenary session: Challenges of Global Changes in a Local Context**

Key Note Speeches

18:00 – 20:00 **UNESCO Venice Office Benefit Concert: Music to Soothe a Savage Planet** (Teatro la Fenice)

20:00 – 22:00 **Reception**

Day 2 – Monday, 14 November 2011

09:30 – 11:00 **Key Note Speeches**

ADG/SC
ADG/CLT

Key lectures

11:00 – 11:30 *Coffee Break*

11:30 – 13:00 **Simultaneous sessions (3)**



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Session 1

Responses of the urban ecosystem to the challenges of climate change

One of the key impacts of climate change identified for Venice and its Lagoon, as well as for the Adriatic Sea at large, is a dramatic increase of the sea level within the current century. In order to avoid potential disasters caused by “high water”, the Italian authorities have authorized the construction of an underwater barrier system, referred to as the MOSE Project. This system should help Venice and its Lagoon avoid extreme flooding and high waters as soon as 2014. The continued existence of Venice and the preservation of its cultural heritage are highly connected to the *aqua alta* flooding phenomenon; however, other natural hazards as well as this artificial barrier will result in considerable changes within the Lagoon eco-system, all of which are highly unpredictable. Furthermore, the impact of the industrial and agricultural activities, as well as hydrological changes in the surrounding area increases the uncertainty of the future quality of the Lagoon’s ecosystem. A better understanding of the vulnerability of Lagoon, based on the climate change scenarios at local level as well as the ecosystem response to global change mechanisms, could help to better define the limits and opportunities of the development of Venice and of the proposed plan for a Regional City. The knowledge of these interactions within an urban Lagoon eco-system will enhance the chances for a series of coastal cities worldwide to be better prepared for natural hazards and a changed environment.

Session 2

Impact of global change on socio-economic development

The socio-economic development of Venice has recently reached a critical level, requiring strategic decisions be soon taken in order to avoid the slow deterioration of the city’s cultural heritage and society. The development and changes in the city’s population, transportation, industry, trade, services, tourism, agriculture, and fisheries in the Lagoon, as well as in the surrounding area, are all densely interlinked – balancing these aspects is essential for preserving the quality of life for residents and for protecting the environment. Facing global change mechanisms means the socio-economic system must adapt within this highly vulnerable and complex ecosystem context. The Port of Venice, the Marghera industrial site, the Vega Science Park and the Arsenale are “mega” enterprises within the context of a planned “city region” concept, which could easily overload the current carrying capacities of the cultural and natural heritage of Venice and the Lagoon. Science is called upon to shed light onto how to best manage and adapt to these global change trends, and to provide a source of guidance for the local decision-making processes necessary for safeguarding Venice and its Lagoon.

Session 3

“Culture and development: from restoration to revitalization?”

Culture plays a vital role in harnessing creativity for economic and social development. Cultural innovation also contributes to a city’s social fabric, and helps to strengthen a sense of shared identity. While addressing transversal global issues (tourism, governance, creativity, restoration, revitalization), this session would like to shed some light on the possible future(s) of the City of Venice, in particular concerning the restoration of Venice (how to better impact economic, social and human development), the enhancement of sustainable and quality tourism (how to promote cultural assets and resources in a historic city), the revitalization of a living heritage (how to sustain the dynamics of intangible cultural heritage) and the making of a creative city (building a dynamic and innovative cultural sector). Important urban rehabilitation projects offer today a new opportunity to question the main social and cultural purposes of historical preservation in a historic city like Venice. Meanwhile, the growing concern with regards to the ever declining resident population and the current trends of mass tourism, poses an unprecedented range of questions for the enhancement of sustainable cultural practices and the possible emergence of a “creative city”. Despite a very fragile human and social fabric, can Venice gain and maintain a competitive edge in the global cultural arena?



13:00 – 14:30 *Lunch Break*

14:30 – 16:00 **Continuation of the 3 simultaneous sessions**

16:00 – 16:30 *Coffee Break*

16:30 – 18:00 **Continuation of the 3 simultaneous sessions**

Day 3 – Tuesday, 15 November 2011

09:30 – 11:00 **Session on Lagoon Cities Worldwide**

11:00 – 11:30 *Coffee Break*

11:30 – 13:00 Session on **UNESCO Designated Sites**

13:00 – 14:30 *Lunch Break*

14:30 – 16:00 **Report on Parallel Sessions in Plenary and Discussion on Report**
Rapporteurs present reports

16:30 – 17:30 **Concluding Session**
General conclusions of the conference. Press conference

Working language

The working language will be **English**.

Venue

San Servolo, Aula Magna

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