

The elements presented above illustrate the concerns expressed by the World Heritage Committee in Doha, regarding:

- «[high tourism pressure on the city of Venice](#)» (Draft Decision, Paragraph 7);
- «[large infrastructure, navigation and construction projects in the Lagoon](#)» (Draft Decision, Paragraph 4);
- «[negative environmental impacts triggered by medium motor boats to high tonnage ships that have progressively caused erosion of the lagoon beds, mud banks and salt marshes](#) » (Draft Decision, Paragraph 6).

We would in particular like to underline that the following request by the World Heritage Committee to the Italian state has not been fulfilled:

- «[Urges the State Party to prohibit the largest ships and tankers to enter the Lagoon](#) » (Draft Decision, Paragraph 7)

Cargo and passenger ships continue to enter the Lagoon. While elsewhere in the world shipping traffic is being moved outside city centres, in Venice plans continue to foresee the cruise ship passenger terminal inside the old city, at the Maritime Station, in contact with the homes of residents and the shoreline of the city.

As we have outlined above, current projects for the port moreover threaten to increase both cargo and passenger traffic in the Lagoon. These projects would involve massive dredging of new and existing channels, with major impacts on the environment of the Lagoon - which is an integral element of the World Heritage Site.

Cargo Port: it is proposed that the largest cargo ships do not enter in the Lagoon but moor at the Offshore Terminal (TOS by its Italian abbreviation). This would mean, however, that smaller cargo ships would continuously tranship cargo from the Offshore Terminal to Marghera through the Lagoon. Thus, the Offshore Terminal would lead to an increase in traffic of about 2000 ships/year.

In 2014, the Ro-Ro Terminal (part of the ‘highway of the sea’) was inaugurated at Fusina, on the inner banks of the Lagoon in front of Venice, creating a logistical station for containers. The moorings are 10 m deep, for which 1 million cubic metres of sediment was excavated.

Another dangerous proposal is for the Padua-Venice ‘*idrovia*’ (waterway), which would connect inland Padua with the Offshore Terminal and with ports of the upper and central Adriatic. More traffic would pass via the Canale dei petroli - and moreover, a new connecting channel would need to be dredged in the Lagoon, through an area that still contains salt marshes.

A further proposal, for a port at Dogaletto-Giare, is currently dormant but we expect it to return as it is linked with the *Idrovia*.

Passenger port. The Port Authority proposed to keep large cruise ships in the Lagoon with the dredging of the *Contorta Channel* from the Canale dei petroli to Venice itself. This would have disastrous effects on hydrodynamics, on pollution and on eutrophication for part of the Lagoon (which moreover would remain segregated, with the risk of anoxic crisis, extensive deaths of fish and miasmas that would arrive in Venice).

The proposal of Venice's new mayor would instead keep the large cruise ships in the Lagoon with the dredging of another major new channel, the *Tresse*. This proposal has not been officially presented, but it would seem to have impacts similar to those of the *Contorta* proposal.

Both projects would require dredging of highly polluted sediments and widening and deepening the already busy Canale dei petroli.

Widening and deepening the Canale dei petroli : In this perspective, the widening and deepening of the Canale dei petroli , which has led to the disappearance of natural features of the central Lagoon, appears already planned. Indeed, it has already been proposed: Venice's Safeguarding Commission in 2013 stopped a project to double the capacity of the Channel, as well as a project in 2014 to create embankments along the Channel (embankments 7.5 km long and 26 m wide, to be built with large rocks, a material currently not permitted under the planning restrictions for the Lagoon in the PALAV described below). Moreover, the width of the Canale dei petroli currently is 60 m - while the proposal to dredge the *Contorta* Channel, which would lead into the Canale dei petroli, is 100 m wide. This indicates the likely but as yet unannounced plan to double the capacity of the Canale dei petroli.

Motor boat traffic in the city and the Lagoon . A recent proposal would have required a GPS in each taxi and transport motor boat - this measure is necessary to control their speed and traffic and thus combat the erosion and damage they cause to the foundations of Venice's palaces and houses. The new mayor, however, has promised the taxi owners that this will not be obligatory.

Another measure to reduce motor boat traffic is the creation of a cargo exchange on the island of Tronchetto.

-«urges the State Party to prioritise the development of a sustainable tourism strategy»

Nothing has been done. A sustainable tourism strategy would need to reverse the current exodus of the city's inhabitants and the disappearance of traditional activities.

Under current trends, Venice will disappear in only a few years, becoming just a mega-hotel.

-«encourages financial institutions and agencies to ensure that Heritage and/or Environmental Impact Assessments are carried out to determine that there are no negative impacts on the OUV, before planning investment in large-scale developments»

The Port Authority as well as the airport continue to make plans without considering their wider impacts, looking only at short-term economic logic.

This is the case for the Port Authority's proposal for the *Contorta* Channel (which it claims, against all logic, would lead to environmental restoration). Moreover, we would like to point out that the Port Authority's project does not fall within territory under its responsibility.

In addition, the Airport authority has a plan to increase its own traffic, in part by moving air traffic to Venice from Treviso, where that city has refused further increases. The proposal, agreed with the mayor of Venice, would include a second runway, a citadel of hotels, shopping areas and offices in Tessera, on land not under the Airport's responsibility but intended for services to citizens, in particular a terminal to link Tessera with the Venice and the islands of the Lagoon.

Thus, these two authorities, only concessionaires, have become planners of public territory.

- «Encourages furthermore the State Party to continue with the assessment of the hydrology and geo-mechanics functioning of the Venice Lagoon and its whole drainage basin » (Draft Decision, Paragraph 10);

- « invites the State Party to establish a strong coordination among all stakeholders concerned to ensure the hydro-geological balances of the Venice Lagoon » (Draft Decision, Paragraph 10).

On the contrary, as shown up, infrastructure projects that threaten the hydro-geological balances of the Lagoon continue.

The Venice Water Authority (Magistrato alle Acque), the government's former office in Venice, instead of being strengthened and made autonomous from the private *Consorzio Venezia Nuova* (New Venice Consortium) was in June 2014 dissolved by Prime Minister Renzi following the Mose Scandal.

We would also like to draw attention to the Mose project, which threatens the hydro-geological balances of the Lagoon. The Mose will not, however, start operations in 2016 as planned. The scandal has highlighted the way that the project was intimately linked with corruption: other solutions with lower impacts and lower costs were possible.

The restoration of the Lagoon's hydraulic balance, which everyone claims to support (even the Port Authority), in actual fact depends on the most powerful interests.

The Lagoon, an integral part of the World Heritage Site, continues to become a marine bay and an extended port.

For all these reasons, the Outstanding Universal Value of the site is in grave danger and is already in part lost. UNESCO's intervention is vital to save the Outstanding Universal Value of Venice and its Lagoon, and for this we call for the site to be included in the Danger List. In our view, the state of conservation of the site and the threats it currently faces meet the criteria for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, in line with Paragraph 179 of the *Operational Guidelines*. In particular, criterion iv ("serious deterioration of urban or rural space, or the natural environment") and v ("significant loss of historical authenticity") along with "ascertained danger".

If UNESCO does not take a clear and authoritative decision, the government, Port, Airport and city are likely to put in place their projects.

By including the site of the List of World Heritage in Danger, UNESCO would bring to bear an instrument to induce a better management of the site, including:

1. Application of the legislation protecting the Lagoon

Three special laws for Venice call for the restoration of the Lagoon's balance, as described above.

The 1992 law put into force the "General plan of interventions" ("Piano generale degli interventi") approved in 1991 by the national government's committee. This general plan foresees, notably, a reduction in the depth of the Canale dei petroli (also set out in the "Morphological Plan of the Lagoon of the Venice Water Authority", "Piano Morfologico della Laguna del Magistrato alle Acque", and again unanimously confirmed in the "Salvaguardia", the Safeguard Committee that emits binding judgements on all building projects and land use changes within the Lagoon's perimeter).

The PALAV (Area plan for the Lagoon of Venice, "Piano d'area della Laguna di Venezia") also sets requirements and restrictions for different parts of the Lagoon.

As can be seen, a plan already exists to recover the morphology and the functions of the Lagoon but it has remained unimplemented, due to economic interests.

It is necessary to complete the Morphological Plan promised for over 10 years.

2. Reversal of current tourism trends

Tourism is cannibalising the city and leading to its disappearance: a long-term initiative is needed to change the city's economy. The first action should be support to residence and productive activities in Venice, through a new special law. Tax incentives and other support are needed to those who rent or sell to residents and to companies and individuals that set up non-tourism activities in Venice. The city's urban plan needs to be changed to impede the easy change of homes into tourism facilities. Controls are needed on the so-called B&Bs, which need better regulation.

At the same time, it is necessary to put in place a programme to manage the huge flows of tourists - starting with organized groups.

3. Resolving the problem of cruise ships

The dredging of new shipping channels is not authorised by current legislation and would be fatal for the Lagoon. Thus, the proposals of the Port Authority - whether the *Contorta* Channel or the new *Tresse* Channel plan - are against the law and unacceptable. The *Contorta* Channel has already been declared illegitimate by the administrative courts.

For Italia Nostra, cruise ships are not compatible with Venice and the Lagoon. Our proposal is to have them berth instead at Trieste, whose port has the appropriate depth. This idea was even suggested by the current Minister for Cultural Heritage and Activities, Dario Franceschini.

We should note that two other proposals would take cruise ships outside of the city and the Lagoon, one for a 'advance port' in Cavallino, the other, much sustainable, for a really

floating port attached to an island created by the Mose project. We feel that a proper comparison among these different proposals is needed, as requested by a motion of the Italian Senate (on 6 February 2014), keeping in mind the necessary goal of moving cruise ship traffic out of the Lagoon and far from Venice.

We call on the Committee to take a strong position, even if it means disagreement with the Italian and local governments, in order to provide strong protection for Venice and its Lagoon and to ensure that this site can be transmitted to future generations as a true heritage of all humanity.