

Stories of the Lagoon and the City

Donatella Calabi

The history of Venice is the result of a transition “dal dolce al salso, dalla terra alla laguna, dalla laguna al mare” (from the sweet to the salt, from the land to the lagoon, from the lagoon to the sea”. Venice was bilt on water as thought it was a city on land. It was permeated by water in a continuous, sometimes difficult but always skillfully leveraged relationship.in precarious balance between the land and the sea.

The co-existence of fishing, hunting, and agriculture (the cultivation of all kindsof fruits and vegetables, vineyards and herbs) in the lagoon habitat has both permitted and promoteds Venice’s development.

But the city’s relationship with the water and lagoon territory was not determined by the ‘economic’ exploitation of its natural elements alone. The relationships between the city and water were also informed by litewrary, artistic and architectural perspectives and by the development of complex management strategies.

An exhibition to be held in the Ducal Palace, opening the 28th of July 2015, at the same time of the EXPO Milan 2015 (feeding the planet), will provide a useful opportunity to compare how the Republic of Venice once responded to questions that still remain open today on a global scale.

The exhibition proposes a new reflection on the production, regulation at consumption of water and food intra *insularum* and in continous relationship with the city and the mainland. The rich cartographic, literary and artistic documentation proposed makes it possible to reconstruct the complex panorama of food production and the relationship with the water in an insular context that, in the variable equilibrium of the lagoon, is always suscetptible to change.

It will illustrate the flows of some products (vegetables, wine, fish, meat, salt), local farming, and the role of the water from across the lagoon.

The historical maps and iconographic sources delineate the role of the waterways as a circulation network. The history of the lagoon settlements was inextricably bound to economic development: the network of monastries, military garrisons, hospitals and cloisters was particularly decisive in organizing the space and optimizing food resources.