#104

CITY-CRAFT AND STATECRAFT:

Architecture and the City in Humanist Urban Culture – the case of Venice

SOPHIA PSARRA
UCL, London, United Kingdom
s.psarra@ucl.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

Architecture is defined by intentional design, while cities are the product of multiple human actions over a long period of time. This seems to confine us between a view of architecture as authored object and a view of the city as authorless socio-economic process. This debate goes back to the separation of architecture from its skill base in building craft that took place in the Renaissance, including its division from the processes by which cities are produced by clients, users, regulatory codes, markets and infrastructures. As a result, architecture is confined in exceptional cases to the status of iconic buildings, or more generally to the status of buildings as economic production. Currently, buildings and cities are appropriated by digital technology and ubiquitous computing as a way of managing the city's assets. Digital technologies integrate designing with making, informational models of buildings with geographic information systems and digital mapping. What had to be separated from city-making practices in order to raise architecture to a different status is increasingly re-integrated through digital infrastructure. As for architecture, traditionally engaged with the design of objects rather than networks or systems, is deprived of relevance in shaping social capital, politically and intellectually sidelined. Focusing on the Piazza San Marco in relationship to the urban fabric of Venice this paper traces the interlocking spheres of self-conscious architecture, the institutional and intellectual resources mobilised by Venetian statecraft and the networked spaces of everyday action. It argues that the scenographic design of the Piazza annexed the urban structure of Venice, historiography and civic rituals to advocate a centralised city of ceremonial processions, exalting the state and the Republic. The intersection of architecture, theatre and the street reduced the complexity of the city into a theatrical set and used perspective to make it synoptically available to the eye. Tracing morphological paradigms of early modernity, this paper unravels the rise of architecture as an elitist practice parallel to the rise of the state, and a theoretical framework for theorising its relationship with the city.

KEYWORDS

Statecraft, architecture, theatre, evolutionary networks, cities, Venice

1. INTRODUCTION: BETWEEN AUTHORED ARCHITECTURE AND THE AUTHORLESS CITY

This paper reflects on the enduring gap between cities as authorless entities that emerge out of multiple actions of people over time and architecture as the outcome of intentional design. A large number of theories and manifestos have been produced in the 20th and 21st century as reactions to architecture's autonomy and capacity to articulate visions about the city. In their participation in UN HABITAT III, a group of urbanists from the London School of Economics[1]

1 Richard Sennett, Saskia Sassen and Richard Burdet

announced their visions for cities as counterpoints to Le Corbusier's urban projects consisting of isolated blocks that break the diverse urban and social fabric. According to the three theorists, Le Corbusier's ideas as expressed in the Charter of Athens have been reviled, but the model of development they established continues to shape cities around the planet. Presenting their vision in a document called 'The Quito Papers', these theorists argue for urban environments that possess the enduring tenets of porosity, complexity, synchronicity, informality and incompleteness (Greenspan 2016).

Ever since Jane Jacobs wrote her attack on modern city planning, architects, planners and urban designers have been criticising modernism in search of alternative models for urban vitality (1961). Concerned with the properties that make a good city, they have contributed to shifting the conversation outside the sphere of architectural discourse and design. At the same time advancements in complex theory and communication technology appropriate urbanity in order to manage the city's assets, a wide spreading economic model of efficiency known as 'smart cities'. This technological and managerial approach sees buildings and urban areas as entities that are 'self-organising', depriving architecture from relevance in shaping social capital. In addition, new methods of design generation using digital technology are taking the appearance of those self-organising processes, which underpinned the growth of the organic city. Both the resurgence of opposition to the Charter of Athens and these technocratic models testify that since the Renaissance we have failed to develop theories and techniques that address the relationship between authored architecture and the authorless city. For architecture to reclaim its scope as social discipline it needs to theorise its relationship with the social, the political and economic processes of context.

If self-organisation and informality represent the latest paradigm shift, defining a revolution in thinking, which tradition is being revolutionised? In this paper, I attempt to resituate architectural knowledge in order to overcome the gap between the above polarizations. Rather than looking at contemporary cities in an unstable form of continuous transformation, I focus on Venice, as encompassing a more stable stratigraphy of spatial organisation. More particularly, I analyse the Piazza and the Basin of San Marco, which in the 16th century encapsulated the transformation of architecture from practical art to liberal art, epitomising the origin of contemporary architecture and urban design. If the designs of the Piazza influenced one of the most significant moments in Western and cities, what are the mechanisms by which this was accomplished? How can the analysis of the Piazza contribute to reframing the discourse about the city as the collective outcome of society and architecture as the deliberate product of design? These are key questions each time architects, urban designers, planners are called to consider aspects of sustainable cities and heritage, particularly in light of contemporary definitions of tangible/intangible heritage based on a more inclusive approach that also involves community values (Psarra 2017a, 2017b).

The purpose of this paper is twofold: first, to visit a key episode in which architecture, the urban landscape and an entire city were conceived together as the means for communicating dominant values of memory, identity, history and as political instruments of control. Second, to revisit the roots of architectural and urban management at a time and context where Western architecture emerges as the legitimised vehicle for urban renovation, redefinition and regeneration of architecture and urban space in modernity. Through an analysis of the Piazza and the way in which it relates to the city as a whole, I argue that in collaboration with their patrons, the 16th century architects Jacopo Sansovino (1486-1570) and Andrea Palladio (1508-1580) used architecture to express the Renaissance ideals of civic unity and urban integration. The Piazza is the space where the Republic apparatus took active 'stage' in founding architecture as a discipline and as political tool. The purpose was to exalt the city-state and distinguish it from the collective and anonymous processes that had produced the organic

urban fabric. The difficulty of architecture to contribute new visions for urban vitality goes back to the scenographic definition of urban space that reduced the complexity the city into a single image. The confluence between architecture, theatre and the street defined the double role of urban space as everyday space and representational theatrical space in Humanist culture. The theatrical model of the square and the street became an instrument of urban control and regulation, for centuries influencing architecture and urban design. Fontana's streets of Rome and Haussmann's boulevards shared this common logic (Vidler 2011).

The paper is structured in four parts. The first part provides a brief description of the Piazza San Marco and the Basin, introducing the history of its transformations and major structures. The second, third and fourth part present the spatial analysis of the Piazza and the Basin in the context of the immediate area and the city of Venice as a whole. The final part provides a model for theorising architecture's capacity to articulate a project for the city.

2. THE RENOVATIO URBIS: THE PIAZZA AND THE BASIN OF SAN MARCO

The marriage between theatre, architecture and the street goes back to the Renaissance at the time when major civic spaces in Italian cities were redesigned. It has its origins in the concept of scenography in the Renaissance, a term invented by Sebastiano Serlio (1475- c. 1554) in his second book of Architecture published in Venice, whose innovations gave Renaissance architects a way to bridge Vitruvius' Roman theatre with architecture (1611). A number of theatres, buildings and squares were built at the time, still influencing the ways in which architecture and urban spaces are being designed. Arranged theatrically, urban piazzas used perspective to unify art, architecture, public space, and make them synchronically accessible to the eye. The physical configuration of the Piazza San Marco was the outcome of a long process of adaptations that had started in the 10th century. Yet, it reached a stage close to its present form in the 16th and 17th centuries through coordinated acts of conscious design. Configured to accommodate performances and processions, the urban transformations in the Piazza were in essence a major project of aggrandisement of the city, superimposing the ideal of a Roman forum on the medieval urban fabric.

Figure 1 - San Marco Aerial

The island of San Marco has a strategic position, controlling the entrance to the Grand Canal and the route towards the littoral islands that separate the lagoon from the Adriatic. Its focal point is the Piazza and the Piazzetta with the Ducal Palace and Basilica of San Marco, the Doge's residence and private chapel (figure 1). The Piazza is enclosed on three sides by the loggia façade of the Procurators of San Marco who had the most prestigious status after the Doge, being elected for life with the task of looking after the Basilica. The Piazzetta forms an extension of the Piazza to the waterfront, flanked by the Palace on the right and Sansovino's Marciana Library on the left side. Until 1846, when the railway line connected Venice with the mainland, the Piazzetta was the formal entrance to the city. When foreign dignitaries and ambassadors would arrive from the lagoon, the first view they would have was from the waterfront looking to the Piazza through the Piazzetta. The two columns at the water's edge (*Porta da Mar* or Columns of Justice) would greet them, bearing symbols of the two patron protectors of Venice. The columns also marked the place where executions of criminals and spectacles would be conducted. The Piazza, the Piazzetta and the entire water expense of the Basin were the heart of ceremonious occasions, from processions to festivals, regattas and mock sea battles, expressing the ritual structure of society and the social order of justice. The entire area was shaped theatrically, staging rituals and public occasions since early times, but in the 16th century its definition as theatre became formalised.

An idea of how the complex looked in early days is through Fra Paolino's map (c. 1346), showing a defensive compound that encloses the palace and the Basilica of San Marco. The original castle-palace was on the water's edge, surrounded by a natural moat of canals, while the Basilica was facing a square, which was just half the length of the present area. At the west end of the square was a canal on the opposite bank of which stood the old church of San Geminiano. The first major transformation leading to the present appearance of the Piazza came in the 1170s with Doge Sebastiano Ziani (1172-1178). Ziani's vision 'was to create a vast *Platea* ...where all citizens would congregate in the form of an ancient forum legitimising his political choices' (Foscari 2014). He doubled the length of the Piazza, created a continuous line of buildings around it for the Procurators created the Piazzetta, placed the two columns on the water's edge and enlarged the Ducal Palace (Fenlon 2010). The next significant changes came in the fourteenth century, with the redevelopment of the Basilica and the Palace (1340). A triumphal arch between the Palace and the Basilica (*Porta della Carta*) was also constructed at that time (c. 1443), forming an official entrance to the Palace's courtyard for foreign dignitaries. Finally, the construction of the Clock Tower (*Torre dell' Orologio*) begun at the north side of the Piazza (1496). The Orologio was the most advanced astronomical clock in existence, celebrating the entry point to the commercial thoroughfare leading to the Rialto. The state of the Piazza at the turn of the fifteenth century can be seen in the famous woodcut of Jacopo de' Barbari (1500), showing the central wing of the Orologio which at the time was under construction.

In the first decades of the sixteenth century, the Venetians intensified their efforts in improving the image of the city in inverse proportion to the declining political power of Venice. Membership in the Great Council (the political body that governed Venice consisting of noble men) became hereditary at the end of the 14th century, halting upward mobility and stabilizing the social structure of Venice into patricians, *citadini* and *popolani* (Romano 1987). With the defeat of the Venetians at the War of the League of the Cambrai (1508-1516), the circumnavigation of Africa (1498), the discovery of America (1492) and the fall of Costantinople (1453), Venice lost its dominance in trading networks, ceasing to innovate as an economic and political power. These changes brought a turn from naval commerce to land ownership in the Veneto, a major geopolitical project that led to innovations in land reclamation, irrigation and cartography, as well as a new building type invented by Palladio, the classical farm-house or villa. The second major project of the Venetian Republic was the investment in public works that saw the aggrandizement of the major civic spaces in the city, such as the remodeling of the Piazza San Marco.

An ambitious urban renovation *(Renovatio Urbis*) was inaugurated following the appointment of Jacopo Sansovino as state builder (1529) in charge of the entire area of the Piazza complex. Sansovino widened the Piazza and the Piazzetta, improving the position of the Basilica in relation

to the other structures. He completed the *Procuratie Vecchie*, built the Little Loggia *(Logetta*) at the foot of the Campanile, the new government Mint *(Zecca*) facing the Basin just around from the Piazzetta, and begun the Marciana Library. He also proposed a unifying two-storey wing extending from the Library to the church of San Geminiano. This had the impact of turning the Campanile to freestanding monument and giving the Library a north façade on the Piazza. It was Vicenzo Scamozzi (1548-1616) and Baldassare Longhena (1596/97-1682) who completed this part of the project, realizing Sansovino's idea for a wider Piazza and continuous façade around its fabric. The connecting section joining the *Procuratie Nuove* with San Geminiano was eventually demolished under Napoleonic rule in 1807 and replaced by an imperial ballroom.

The Basin had also changed over the 14th and 15th centuries, including the island of the Giudecca which was extended eastwards around 1330, creating a narrow canal between it and the island of San Giorgio, on which foreign dignitaries entered the city from the south. Towards the end of the 16th century Palladio's churches - San Giorgio Maggiore (1565-1611) and the Redentore (1577-1592) - changed the aquatic realm, commanding views to the south. The two churches were completed in the early 17th and late 16th century, respectively. Longhena's centralised church of Santa Maria della Salute (1631) was built next, in the strategic site adjoining the Customs House (*Dogana*) in Dorsoduro. Dominating views at the entrance to the Grand Canal with its towering dome, it added to the constellation of religious buildings that punctuate the Basin.

3. CITY-CRAFT: THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE AND SOCIAL IDENTITY IN VENICE

In contrast to the integrating visions of the Venetian Republic, the origins of Venice were in the archipelago of island communities, which after a long process of land reclamation were joined, collectively forming the compact city as a whole. The analysis of the canal and pedestrian networks (using angular segment analysis) shows that the squares *(campi*) of the islands with their churches, church towers and wellheads are interconnected at all scales (radii) through the pervasive network of betweeness centrality or choice (2012, 2013, 2014) (figure 2). This means that each time islands were joined a bridge was built in close proximity to steps, connecting the canals with the squares and the squares with each other. The pervasive centrality of the *campi* also indicates that they are the nodes in the intersection of Venice's combined network of the pedestrian and canal infrastructure. The squares of Venice were social nuclei of semi-autonomous communities since early times, gradually coalescing to produce the amphibious city. Parish islands contributed as much to the development of local neighbourhoods as to the city as a whole through the patrician class, featuring as leading families in the islands as well as members of the Great Council (Howard 2002, Romano, ibid.).

If the measure of choice reveals that the logic that drove the development of the city was distributed into its many parochial centres, the measure of closeness centrality, or integration, shows that Venice had two major nuclei: the Rialto and the Piazza San Marco (figure 3). The former was the religious and ceremonious core, while the latter was the major trading centre of Venice. We know that the Venetian patricians had not only public office but also trading posts in the Rialto and their warehouse - *palace* (fondaco). The spatial measures of choice and integration therefore, express two powerful dualities in the social fabric: first, the twofold identity of the aristocratic class as merchants-officials of Venice, promoting republicanism within their own class and social hierarchy for the entire society; second, parochial identities of the parish communities, and civic identity through the central administration of the Republic. Venice was the outcome as much of the collective network of squares, canals and streets as of the hierarchical difference of the two urban centres from the rest of the islands. With time, collective social organisation shifted from the island communities and the spontaneous production of space to central administration. This transformation was in effect a superimposition, suppressing the local communities but in ways, which ensured the mitigation of social conflict. With time, legends and myths about the origin of the city were appropriated by Venetian historiography, forging the *Myth of Venice*, a collection of beliefs and official histories that described Venice as the most serene Republic (Muir, 1981).

Figure 2 - Angular choice, pedestrian network (left); canal and pedestrian network (right)

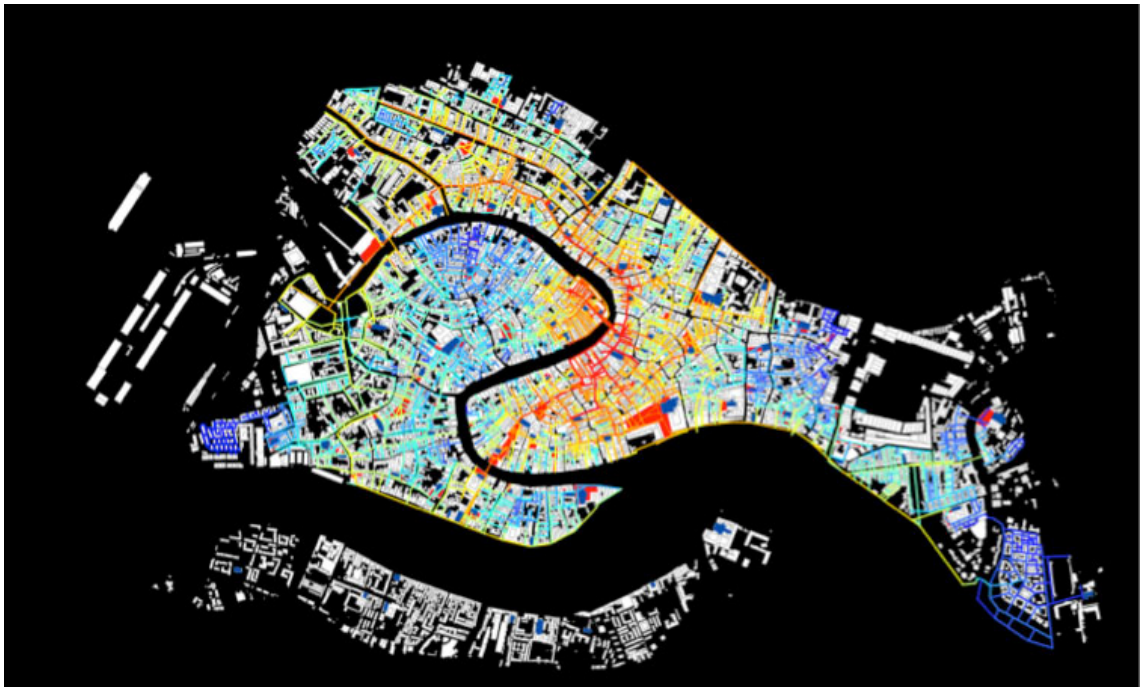

Figure 3 - Venice Integration, pedestrian network

4. STATECRAFT: THE MAP OF JACOPO DE' BARBARI AND THE PIAZZA SAN MARCO

Before examining how the urban transformations in the 16th century changed the spatial structure of the Piazza, it is necessary to explore how its spaces and monuments were viewed at the time. A vivid representation is Jacopo de' Barbari's woodcut, one of the earliest demonstrations of Venice's Myth, synthesising political ideology with the urban fabric (figure 4). Printed to the scale of a mural, the woodcut depicts Venice framed by the lagoon as a triumphant metropolis. Constructing a moralising portrait of the city, de' Barbari's map was part of the tradition of Mappae Mundi (medieval world maps) produced in the 15th century by Venetian cartographers. Two diagonal lines established by the wind rays emanating from the eight gods that circle the city organise the print, intersecting at the top of the Campanile in the Piazza. Between the diagonals and the vertical axes, the print establishes an axis mundi (a world pillar) placing the Piazza, the Rialto and the urban streets that connect them (the Merceria) at the 'centre' of the city, and the city at the centre of an ideal cosmology. The Venetians and visitors that knew Venice would be able from the symbolic geometry and the physical facts of the topography to perceive the pedestrian route between the two hubs as the urban spine of the city. Jacopo's image translated the empirical city to a transcendental mythical city of imperial achievement and republican ideology. Being both factual and fictional, the print raises the fundamental problem of deconstructing Venice's Myth into its constituents - spatial

relationships and ideology – in order to understand its internal conflicts. How did the symbolic instruments of Venetian identity relate to the city's spatial geography, social and cultural institutions? This question is explored by looking at two filters: first the spatial organisation of the Piazza and the Basin in relation to the city as a whole; second, at popular myths local traditions and civic rituals.

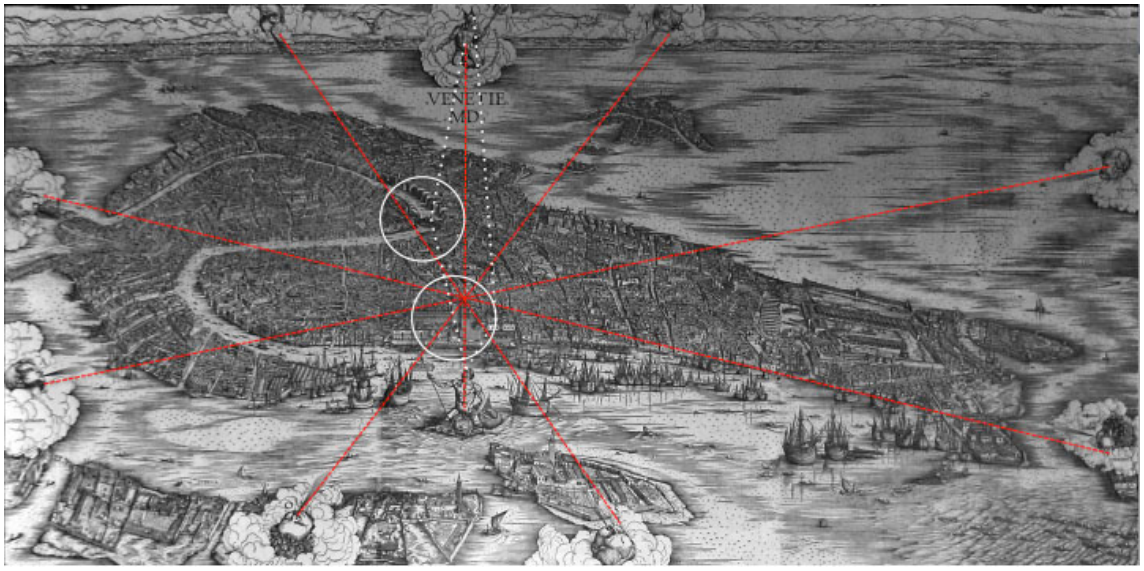

Figure 4 - Jacopo de' Barbari view of Venice, c. 1500.

The choice values of the pedestrian network of the city reveal that the Piazza and the Piazzetta are criss-crossed with lines, connecting them with the squares of the neighbouring islands. Two strong lines, one traveling through the Merceria, and the other through the Calle dei Specchieri connect the complex, through the *campi* of San Salvador and San Lio with the commercial district of Rialto (figure 2). The combined pedestrian-water structure shows a similar pattern, although emphasis in terms of choice values shifts from the pedestrian elements to the canal infrastructure (figure 2).

The distribution of the measure of integration in figure 3 shows that the Rialto, the Piazza and a group of streets connecting these two hubs define a deformed wheel that links the heart of the city with its periphery extending in opposite directions. This is a common characteristic in cities, easing movement from the outside to the central streets and squares, facilitating trade and large-scale communication (Hillier and Hanson, 1984). While the property of integration reveals the strength of San Marco and the Rialto in the context of the city as a whole, the measure of choice shows that the Piazza and the two squares on either side of the Rialto have the highest values in comparison to all other campi in the city. The Piazza and the Piazzetta are highly accessible spaces, channelling movement from everywhere to everywhere else, as well as attracting movement from every place to the heart of the urban complex.

How did Sansovino respond to these properties of the city? This is explored through the visibility structure of the Piazza complex separately from the organisation of the surrounding fabric. The results show that in Sansovino's scheme visual integration spread from the space in front of the Basilica to the entire layout (figure 5). Improving the visual connections between the Piazza and the Piazzetta, Sansovino expressed the union of religious and political life. This union is also communicated through two strong diagonal links connecting the Palace and the Basilica with the western part of the Piazza, its more secular side. Sansovino's efforts to unify existing elements into the new scheme therefore, demonstrate a concern for integration between the aesthetic treatment of buildings, such as the continuous loggia and the placement of archways at the intersection of important axes, and the urban fabric.

This is strikingly revealed when we look at the Piazza in the context of the neighbouring islands. A powerful axial link, clearly distinguished by strong red colour, emerges from the Merceria through the central archway of the Orologio, thrusting diagonally forward to the Columns of Justice. The line asserts the north-south pattern of integration that joins the Piazza and the Rialto (figure 4). The consonance between the properties of the Piazza and the properties of the city as a whole shows the strong role of the Piazza and this particular axial link across all scales of the analysis. The significance of this link in the life of the Venetians is evident in the fact that in the 15th century they felt the need to give a ceremonial entrance to the commercial thoroughfare by building the Orologio.

In Jacopo's woodcut this axis has geometric definition (figure 4). In the Piazza it has architectural definition through significant buildings and their iconographic programme, such as the Orologio, the Loggeta, the Porta della Carta and the two Columns of Justice. Emerging from the collective unconscious efforts that built Venice over time, the Merceria line helped to articulate the self-conscious relationship between architecture, the city and the viewer. Sansovino seized the urban properties of Venice and used classical architecture to powerfully express the city-state and the Republic. It is this interweaving of the urban structure crafted by many hands with the architectural structure, made by fewer hands, that defines the intersection of Humanist architecture with the city and urban design.

5. STAGECRAFT: BRINGING THE IDEAL INTO THE URBAN FABRIC OF THE REAL

A look at the Piazetta from the water reveals the close relationship with the Tragic scene of Serlio (figure 6). Serlio interpreted the three typical scenes of antiquity described by Vitruvius as elaborate exercises of urban perspective: the Tragic scene which was defined by palace facades of elegant characteristics, corresponding to the administrative use of space; the Comic scene consisting of irregular buildings, related to the everyday use of space; and the Satyric scene associated with the disordered uncultivated nature. The correspondence of the Piazza with the Tragic scene is evident in Sansovino's efforts to clear away the shacks of butchers, cheese and salami sellers who had infested the area (Howard 1975). Closely associated with this was a decree that eliminated the slaughtering of the pigs and bulls by the crowds during carnival, replacing popular elements with more noble entertainments such as comedies, ballets, and pageants (Muir, ibid.). The intention of the authorities was to magnify the Piazza for state ceremonies, elevating it from Comic scene - characterising the streets linking the Piazza with the Rialto - to Tragic setting.

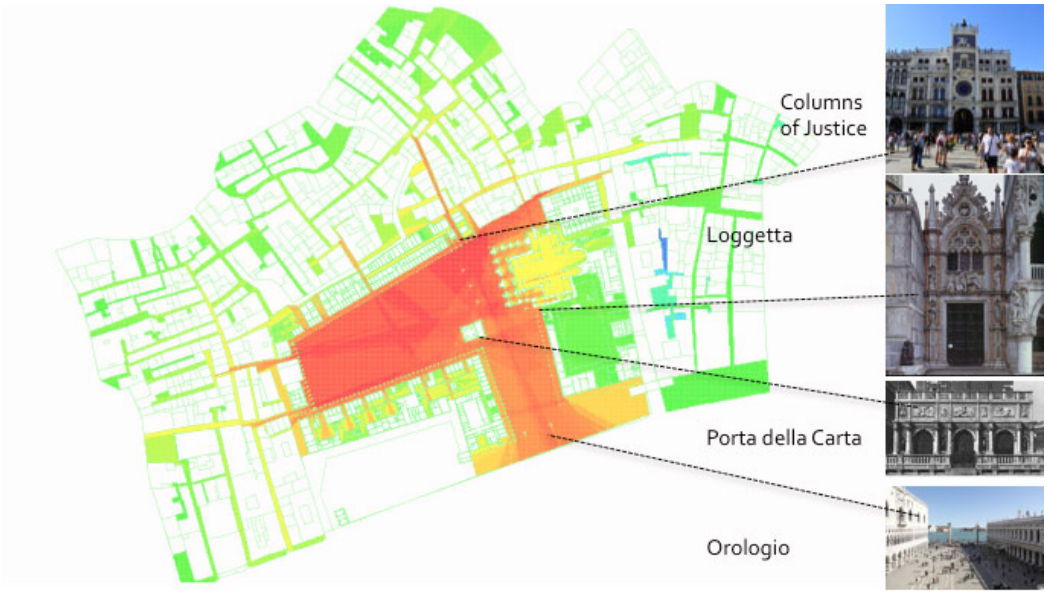

Figure 5 - San Marco 15th century (top left); San Marco 15th century in urban context (top right); San Marco 16th century in urban context (bottom)

The Tragic theatrical function of the Piazza is also evidenced in the concentration of many rituals in this space. In medieval Venice ritual was the result of popular mythopeoesis, and was organized by the parish islands. In the 16th century, with state intervention, parochial rituals were decreased in number, and the island communities were suppressed so that attention would turn to civic rituals in the Piazza San Marco.

Civic ritual acquired official organization by the state and became hierarchical – with the Doge at the centre, the confraternities and guilds marching at the front of the Doge and the patricians following behind him, reflecting in this way the hierarchical structure of society. Theatre, architecture and political administration coalesced at the expense of the anonymous spontaneous production of the city. The emergence of architecture as liberal art coincides with theatrical civic ritual and the official historiography by the Venetian Humanists who contributed to the Myth of Venice as the most serene Republic. From that moment architecture and the city were no longer part of the same continuum, developing along paths that remain paradoxically distinct as well as interrelated.

Figure 6 - Serlio Tragic scene (left); The Piazzetta seen through the water

6. THE BASIN OF SAN MARCO: PALLADIO AND THE AQUATIC SCENOGRAPHY OF THE BAY

Palladio's churches in Venice's southern islands were built at the end of the 16th century, completing through geometrical alignments and frontal relationships the transformation of the Piazza and the bay into an aquatic theatre (figure 8). In the *Four Books of Architecture* Palladio writes that temples should face important public buildings, rivers and watery expanses (1570). His church of San Giorgio Maggiore faces the Piazzetta and is struck by the extension of the Merceria line that links with the Rialto (figure 7). If the Piazzetta was the 'eyes of the Republic' the Rialto was its 'viscera' (Tafuri 1995). We encounter here de' Barbari's axis extending from the interior of the city to the island of San Giorgio and notionally beyond where the lagoon meets the Adriatic, uniting everyday places with cosmological relationships and sacred geography, such as the inside and outside, the city and the sea, commerce and the empire, civic identity and collective parochial identity, city-craft and statecraft, or the anonymous production of the city by many hands and the conscious appropriation of ritual by patricians that were exalting the state and the Republic.

In the festivity of the Redentore in 3 of May 1577 as well as in all the subsequent annual rituals of Christ the Saviour in the third Sunday of July, the Venetians cross the bay through a temporary causeway of boats that stretch from the Piazzetta to the Giudecca. Seen from distance across the water, churches in the early days of the Venetian archipelago would offer sure anchorage for sailors, under the protection of the parish saint. Founded on maritime enterprise, Venice's islands had old associations with navigational practices, guided by churches that were sacralizing its waters through *loci sancti*. Toponymy bears witness to this process, as Venice's *campi* are named after their saints, while portolan maps linking rose compasses with navigational lines must have expressed for early Venetians a water-borne network of sacred sites.

Palladio and his patrician mentors, such as Daniele Barbaro (1514-1570), were thinking according to cosmological references, seeking connections between ecclesiastical architecture, the city, mathematics and cosmological structures, a common in architectural theory at the time. Following Neoplatonic theories of cosmological harmony, they saw architecture and the city as representational diagrams of cosmological expression translated into civic integration. When Venice's islands joined, the waterborne network of squares and churches was ritually connected through processions, transforming streets and canals into *viae sacrae*, as exemplified by the network of choice (Muir, ibid.). The geometric coordination of religious buildings in the Piazza and the Basin captures the grafting of navigational and ritual spatial networks of medieval Christian origin onto Republican ideology and Humanistic cosmology, as exemplified by Renaissance classical monuments and churches.

These ideas found expression in close relationship with theatre. Temporary theatrical structures such as the *Teatri del Mondo* (theatres of the world) alluded to the union between celestial and terrestrial spheres with representations of planets and zodiac circles in their ceilings. A few years before the construction of Palladio's churches, in 1560, Alvise Cornaro proposed his plan for transforming the Basin to a theatre and ideal garden. His proposition included a floating Roman theatre, a fountain with water from the rivers of the Veneto and an island-hill with an open loggia at its summit. His theatre prefigures Palladio's Teatro Olimpico and had its roots in the tradition of the *Teatri del Mondo*. Cornaro imagined it as a place of spectacle and as a spectacle in itself, explaining that all the elements of the project could be seen synchronically from the greatest theatre of the Serenissima, which was the Piazzetta (Tafuri, ibid.). The second project that had an influence on the to San Marco through the Merceria and from the Piazzetta).

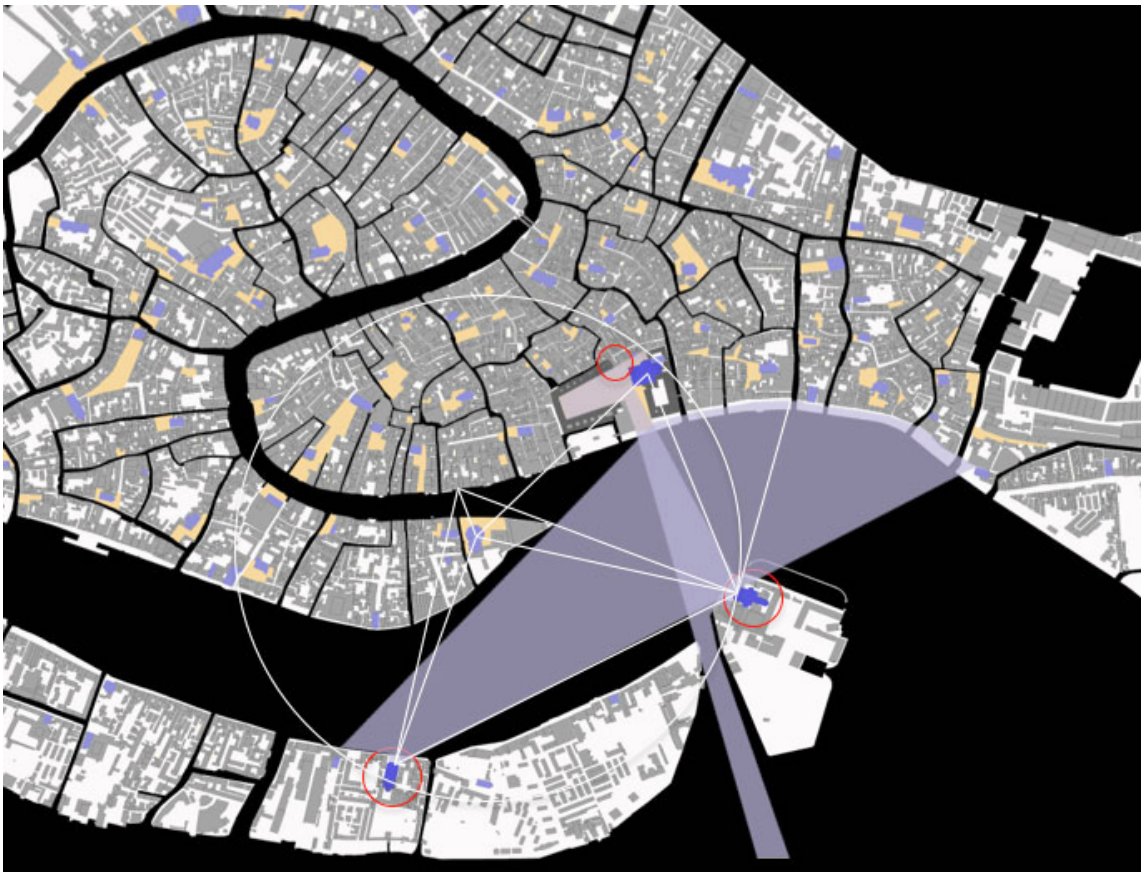

Figure 7 - The Basin of San Marco, geometrical relationships and isovists in purple (from the entrance to San Marco through the Merceria and from the Piazzetta).

Figure 8 - View of San Giorgio Maggiore from the Merceria

asin was Gulio Camillo's theatre. In this work Camillo described a wooden structure constructed as a Vitruvian amphitheatre. The observer stood on the stage and looked at a semi-circular structure of seven tiers marked with images and boxes. The structure was intended to represent 'the universe, expanding from First Causes through the stages of creation', and enabling complete memory of all the knowledge that was available at the time (Cosgrove, 1993: 242).

Vitruvius' Roman theatre consisted of four isosceles triangles centering on the orchestra (figure 10). Seated in the network of this spatial geometry, the audience was part of cosmological perspectival representation. The same principles were used in Teatro Olimpico by Palladio (figure 9). Vitruvius, Serlio, Cornaro and Camillo's theatres came together in the scenographic treatment of the Piazza and the Basin, revealing conscious construction of the city as public theatre, and representational mythical world.

These projects have autonomous theoretical and aesthetic interest, but in this paper the emphasis is in explaining how they have influenced the view of architecture and the city as scenographic aesthetic phenomena, rather than as complex entities of evolutionary adaptation. The Venetian patricians and architects were operating in a different intellectual, socio-economic and political context. Yet, the theoretical heritage they left us remains unexamined in terms of the relationship of architecture and the city. The transformation of the Piazza and the Basin annexed the urban network as a field of popular mythology ritual geography and everyday practice, separating the aristocratic definition of the city as city-state from the collective formation of the city as everyday life. If architecture as liberal art was defined by conscious knowledge, it was equally defined by the elite mechanisms of the society it served. Both architecture and ritual became tools through which the city's complexity was simplified, ordered and classified to project the image of a perfect society top-down.

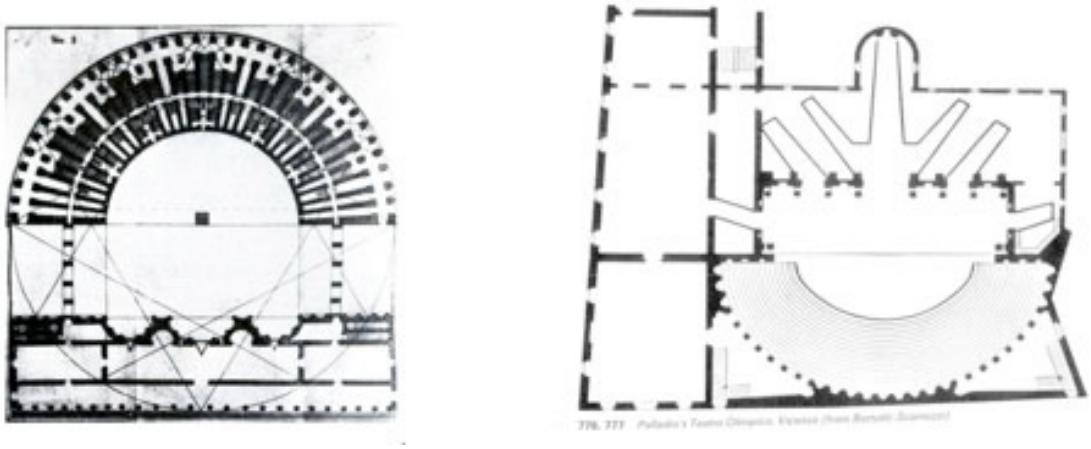

Figure 9 - Vitruvius Roman theatre (left); Palladio's Teatro Olimpico (right)

7. CONCLUSION

In the squares, the canals and the alleys of Venice, the Venetians were celebrating their city as the foundational place of their society. The city of Venice was the outcome of evolutionary urban development, mythopoesis, symbolism and ritual. Along with its gradual construction the city was also developing its history and mythological foundations based of ritual processions. Ritual was dramatizing the creation of Venice, uniting streets, architecture, myth and informal theatre in a coherent structure of space and place. The Venetian Humanists connected an inchoate collection of beliefs into official historiography writing about the political and mythological interpretation of the city, but did not describe the ritual processes, obviously knowing that people, immersed in the city customs since they were born did not need detailed descriptions (Zimmerman 1997). Having internalized the spatial and ritual structure of society, the Venetians had no need for verbal records. The space of the city was a matter of everyday practice and memory, rather than writing and speaking, which characterized the development of architecture as discipline separate from the artisanal traditions. Urban space was related to movement, theatrical performance and their sequence. Its significance was defined based on spatial practice and not specific instructions, such as go to this place, follow this route, pass through this place, or perform such and such activities and ritual actions (ibid.).

In the 16th century the city as spatial, ritual and mythological construction that follows from collective spontaneous processes was appropriated by official historiography architecture and civic ritual. It has remained since then in the blind spot of conscious design rooted in the schenographic aesthetic understanding of space that leaves the signature of an author (or a limited set of authors). Space and spatial practice do not have means for being represented, recorded and transcribed. What cannot be recorded cannot be transmitted, gradually leading to the rift between architecture and the city, representation and spatial practice (figure 10). Losing the capacity to unite the two realms, we are constantly missing the possibility to influence and enrich them through conscious comparative thought of the architectural kind. In response to the visions expressed in the Quito Papers, or research using space syntax, which equally separates architecture from the city and splits it into an aesthetic and social practice (Psarra 2009), the example of Venice explains that the values of informality, porosity and synchronicity can be attainable only when we grasp the need for a theory and a method for describing the relationship between architecture, design, urban planning and their history. We need to understand them not as static notions that are separate from each other, but as interrelated ones that are also fluid, shifting through time.

REFERENCES

Cosgrove, D. (1993), The Palladian Landscape: Geographical Change and its Cultural Representations in Sixteenth Century Italy, Leicester, London: Leicester University Press.

Greenspan, E. (2016), 'Top-Down, Bottom-Up Urban Design', The New Yorker, Retrieved 05 February 2017, 2017, from http://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/top-down-bottom-up-urban-design.

Foscari, G. (2014) *Elements of Venice*, Lars Müller Publishers

Hillier, B. and Hanson, J. (1984) The Social Logic of Space, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Howard , B. (2002) The Architectural History of Venice, New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Howard, B. (1975), Jacopo Sansovino: Architecture and Patronage in Renaissance Venice, New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Jacobs, J. (1961), The Death and Life of Great American Cities – The Failure of Town Planning, New York: Penguin Books

Muir, E. (1981) *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*, Princeton: Princeton University Press

Psarra, S. (2017) *The Venice Variations: An Essay on the Architectural Imagination* (forthcoming).

Psarra, S. (2017). 'City-craft and Statecraft: bottom-up and top-down definitions of architecture and urban landscape - the case of Venice in the 16th century', Palaiologou, F. Fouseki, P. (eds). *Proceedings of Historic Urban Landscape Forum*, Bartlett School of Architecture

Psarra, S., (2009), 'The Ghost of Conceived Space – What Kind of Work Does or Should Space Syntax Perform for Architecture', *The Journal of Space Syntax*, Issue 1, 17-29, also in *Proceedings of the International Space Syntax Symposium VII*, School of Architecture and the Built Environment KTH, Stockholm, Sweden.

Psarra, S. (2014) 'Beyond Analytical Knowledge – intersections of generation and explanation', Istanbul Technical University ITU Journal of Faculty of Architecture, A/Z, also Psarra, S. (2013) 'Beyond Analytical Knowledge - intersections of generation and explanation – The International Space Syntax Symposium IX, Sejong University, Seoul Korea.

Psarra, S. (2012) 'A Shapeless Hospital, A Floating Theatre and an Island with a Hill: the invisible architecture of Venice', Keynote Paper', The International Space Syntax Symposium VIII, Santiago, Chile, http://www.sss8.cl/media/upload/paginas/seccion/K016_1.pdf.

Romano, D. (1987) *Patricians and Popolani* – the Social Foundations of the Venetian Renaissance State, Baltimore, London: John Hopkins University Press

Vidler, A. (2011) The Scenes of the Street and Other Essays, New York: The Monacelli Press

Tafuri, M. (1995) *Venice and the Renaissance*, Cambridge Mass: The MIT Press

Zimmerman, J. (1999), 'The City as Practice: Urban Topography, Pictorial Construction and Liminality in Venetian Painting', 1495-1595, PhD Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin.