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Strategic Choices for Venice

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The Venice has been in the middle of a lot of proposals and initiatives for some time that range from environmental restoration to the transformation of important areas of the ancient centre, from the renewal of the exhibition spaces to the rationalisation of manufacturing areas and communications. Opinions as to how, where and whether to go ahead with these interventions are controversial and they have been responsible for the current situation of status quo in Venice. Various proposals have been put forward to simplify city control regulations to put into action quickly and efficiently in the complicated context. Such methods supported by multimedia tools can afford the participation of the actors and the decision making. Application the Strategic Choice approach for the carrying out of the projects proposed for the metropolitan area of Venice and the use of multimedia tools (visualisation and hypertext) to favour the involvement of the actors are described.

The Strategic Choice Approach in Order to Make More Lifelike the City of Venice

The application of Strategic Choice in Venice has been put into practice by a group so constituted:
(i) The nucleus, constituted by some officers and advisors of the Censis Servizi, that managed the process from the methodological point of view, assuring in the same time the operative continuity;
(ii) a group of about thirty people — representing the cultural and academic world, the entrepreneurs, the local governments, the occupational classes, ... — which participated to the interactive sessions.

The application used the results of the two inquests treated by Censis Servizi which, in successive dates, drafted two questionnaires that have been sent to about 200 subjects, picked out either because deeply acquainted of Venice or involved in the decision making process (politicians, local administrators).

This application of "Strategic Choice" has to be considered as an exercise of planning, almost the general test of a process which, to achieve operative issues, should be managed by the institutions provost to the administration of the city and of the territory.

This exercise has allowed the group of work to:

–focalize the main problems for Venice

–identify and/or suggest for each problem the alternatives solutions (decision areas);

–identify and/or suggest for each problem the alternatives solutions (options);
estimate the reciprocal compatibility of the aforesaid solutions (options graph);
point out the combinations of compatible solutions (decision schemes);
investigate if and how the selection of specific solutions affects the choices in the other areas (action schemes).

The drafting of the action schemes is fundamental in order to point out the strategic options.
According to "Strategic Choice" the strategic feature of an option doesn't depend in fact on its collocation inside a preconceived hierarchy of decisional levels, but rather from the importance that the option hires depending on the links that are established.
An option may then be strategic even if its temporal horizon is restricted and doesn't concern directly the political action.
According to the cyclic nature of "Strategic Choice" all the visible products (list of decision areas, of options, etc.) have been modified in the course of the process so as they mirror the informations generated during the interactive sessions.

The Strategic Choice Approach
"Strategic Choice" is an approach to the practice of decision making and planning. It has been developed through research exposed to the realities of the ways in which people make decisions when confronted with complex problems. "Strategic Choice" starts by rejecting the traditional linear deductive approach to plan making, the survey-analysis-plan algorithm. This approach assumes:
(i) that it is possible to gather all information needed at the start of the plan preparation process;
(ii) that circumstances will not change whilst the plan is being prepared.

The key elements of "Strategic Choice" as an approach to plan making are thus:
(i) seeing planning as a cyclical process
(ii) recognition that planning involves choice
(iii) recognition that choice involves alternatives
(iv) recognition that choice is interconnected and is thus strategic having wide unforeseen consequences
(v) explicit recognition and management of uncertainty

"Strategic Choice" sees planning as a cyclical process in that at any stage in plan preparation it may be necessary to go back, to resurvey, reforecast, etc.
For this reason Strategic Choice does not rely upon the planner having done an exhaustive survey prior to beginning his analysis. As plan making is thus cyclical one can start anywhere in the process, one can put forward a policy without having analysed its possible effects, or having completed a survey.
Having adopted a cyclical approach to plan making, Strategic Choice recognises that any decisions, any actions, involves choice. For this reason it is recognised that the formulation and evaluations of alternatives is an integral part of the planning process.

Having identified alternatives then one must recognise that choice is always strategic, that is, decisions are interconnected and are never taken in isolation.
The interconnections are often not at first sight apparent, and it is only by adopting a cyclical approach to plan preparation that the interconnections can be discerned. Strategic Choice thus attempts to model reality, and does not treat policy choices in isolation.
The final element in the "Strategic Choice" approach to plan making is explicit recognition that certainty never exits. One can never be sure that one knows all the implications and ramifications of any action.

This uncertainty is categorised in three ways:

- Uncertainties about the working Environment:
- Uncertainties about guiding Values:
- Uncertainties about Related decisions

The idea of uncertainty in "Strategic Choice" is normally viewed in relative rather than absolute terms. It is treated as an attribute of particular situations and people rather than something with an objective reality of its own.

The key to a realistic approach lay in the idea of conscious management of uncertainty through time; an idea which was seen as posing a fundamental challenge to the familiar, if sometimes implicit, norms of linearity, objectivity, certainty and comprehensiveness which have traditionally been valued in the design of formal management and planning systems.

In developing further the view of planning as a process of strategic choice, it is helpful to see to process within any "cloud" as continually shifting between different and complementary "modes" of decision-making activity. This modes are (Fig.1):

![Figure 1](image-url)
**shaping** of problems mode within which judgements about the possible connection between one field of choice and another can have a crucial role to play;

**designing** or formulation of possible courses of action in response to those problems;

**comparing** possible course of action in the light of some view of what their consequences might be;

**choosing** actions progressively through time.

**Shaping Mode**
Starting with the shaping mode a complex and ill-defined decision problem can be structured in terms of a set of decision areas, some pairs of which are directly interconnected through decision links. This leads to a picture of a relationships among decision areas, referred to a decision graph, within which a choice of problem focus can be made.

**Designing Mode**
In the designing mode, a representative set of decision options is identified within each decision area, and option bars are specified wherever it is assumed that pairs of options draw from different decision areas are mutually incompatible. The resulting option graph can be seen as a form of map, indicating which combinations of pairs of options are available within the current problem focus. The corresponding set of feasible decision schemes can now be developed by arranging the decision areas in some chosen sequence and then moving systematically through all possible branches in the resulting tree-like pattern.

**Comparing Mode**
Moving on the comparing mode, comparison areas are formulated for comparing alternative options or schemes, and within these relative assessments are made, representing judgements as to what their consequences might be. Such assessments can be balanced against each other through advantage comparisons between pairs of selected alternatives allowing values judgements and feelings of uncertainty to be expressed in a common decision-centred framework. Wherever there any many schemes available, the use of simplified numerical or other scales within some comparison areas becomes important as means of choosing a limited working short list.

**Choosing Mode**
In the work of the choosing mode, sources of doubt are expressed in the form of uncertainty areas, leading toward the identification of exploratory options whereby some of these doubts might be addressed. Timing considerations are now introduced, leading to the consideration of the action in some but not necessarily all decision areas. Such proposals can be brought together with explorations in response to uncertainty, and arrangements relating to deferred decisions, within the framework of a commitment package, designed as an incremental step in a continuing process of decision-making through time.

**The Decision Areas and the Decision Graph**
In accordance with the customs of "Strategic Choice" each decision area is described by a brief interrogative locution that illustrates its meaning.

Each locution is forestalled by a label- three letters follow by a question mark- which may be used in order to appoint the decision area at each step of the process.

- **IST?** Which order institutional and legal-administrative for Venice?
- **AMB?** How attend in order to enhance the environmental conditions of the lagoon?
- **MAN?** Which funds and procedures of common servicing of the city which take into account the peculiarity of the problems of Venice?
- **ABT?** Which foreground areas of intervention for a Venice "city to live"?
- **DIR?** Which emplacements for the directional activities, academic activities, and for the tertiary roles with a metropolitan disposition?
- **PRO?** Which provisions and options in order to locate the productive activities (craftsmanship and small industry)?
Which interventions in order to conflict and/or recover the negative effects of the tourist monoculture?

How favor the presence of the tertiary and cultural activities?

Which activity in the unemployed areas of the Arsenal?

Which interventions in order to enhance the urban communications?

Which upcoming order for the industrial area of Marghera?

Which intervention for the realignment of the system longshoreman?

Which interventions for the rebuilding of the "testa di ponte" constituted by the maritime, by the area of Roma square and by the areas north to the station?

Which interventions of serviceable transformation for S.Marco square?

Which new roles for the Stucky Mill?

Which activity in the area of the Cassa di Colmata "A"?

The decision graph in Fig.2 shows the areas and the decision links. The graph also shows the problem foci: the three clusters of decision areas which the group of work assumed to be temporarily parted in order to proceed in a more deep examination of the same areas and of their mutual relationships.

Options and Options Graph
An option represents the potential solution of a problem (decision area).
For each decision area it has been edited a special card in which the options located or suggested by the group of work have been described, together with some common observations.
We analyze with full particulars the options of the DIR? and TES? areas which, as we will see afterwards, will be broadly considerable in the process. The question of the "direzionalità" represents for Venice an important aim in order to develop alternative activities as compared to the tourism. The question it's not only to be responsible for to the demand of diversifying the mix of roles within the city, but also to anticipate initiatives able to encourage an advanced image of Venice and, together, to assist the venetian residents, not only for the middle-low incomes, but also appealing new inhabitants with a middle income.

In order to the "direzionalità" we pointed out two hypothesis:

- The first involves the modification of the single axle Venice- Mestre;
- The second assumes, besides the ditto axle, the creation of the new Arsenale-Murano-Tessera axle.

The Venezia-Mestre axle, foregone on the preliminary plan to the P.R.G about Venice, is characterized through the presence of directional activity, commercial and of service, and also through the activities of research and academic.

The Arsenale-Murano-Tessera axle takes the connotation prevailing of axle productive and of exhibition center and spots as structural knots the poles of the Arsenal, of Murano and Tessera.

The decision area of TES? points out a central knot on the choices that affects the order of the historical center of Venezia and constitutes a controversial problem that since years has not found a due solution.

Once that has ben identified the options, the group of work has taken the necessary steps in order to point out the relations belonging to options of different decision areas. The graph of Fig.3 shows the all the incompatibilities between pairs of different options. In the graph arcs represent the incompatibilities: a continual arc points out certain incompatibility, while an hatched arc points out a doubtful one.

Decision Schemes: Analysis of the Third Focus
Public administrators and private entrepreneurs have also demonstrated by recent times a broad interest in order to the related problems to the retrieval and to the functional reorganization of some areas of the city and to the rationalization of the system of the urban communications. The group of work of Strategic
Choice, having recognized the importance and the urgency of these problems, has retained of to proceed first of all to the analysis of the third focus.

The options Graph of the third focus (Fig.4) has been drawn directly by the graph of Fig.3 eliminating all the areas outside the focus in question, with the only exception of POR?

The graph of the options has been used in order to build the decision schemes. In our case it has been preferred to represent the schemes by a chart hybrid that consents of visualize trough compact shape a very high number of decision schemes (Fig.5.)

In order to make more easy the reading and the interpretation, the decision schemes have been drawn also on maps. The Fig 6 shows one decision scheme.

**Actions Schemes**

The group of work has developed as an example three action schemes that refers to the wholeness of decision area. The chosen of the options to bond has not been put into practice by criterions of urgency, but rather in order to explore the implications of some selections relatively to the decision areas TUR?, AMB?, and ARS?, assumed as foreground choices.

In order to define an action scheme we have to effect the foreground choices selecting the more urgent and or important decision areas and bonding a specific option in each selected area.

In order to develop the schemes we refered only to the bonds of certain incompatibility.

In the first scheme (Fig.7) we considered foreground choices:

1. (1) the option of the area TUR?
   that points out the regularization of the tourist flows by a informatic net connected with the more greater tour operator of the world as main intervention in order to eliminate the negative consequences of the tourism.

2. (2) the option of the area AMB?
   that concerns numerous interventions for the environmental safeguard to be realized in a single programmatic sphere (defense from the tides and uncontamination

3. (3) the option of the area ARS?
   that points out the realization of a complex mix of functions in the areas unused of the Arsenal.

   The others two schemes have been developed bonding in the area ARS?

   We analyze in detail the first action scheme (Fig.7).

   The only absolute structural certain tie concerns the hypothesis of maintenance of the traffic goods to the Maritime, that is incompatible both with the interventions of environmental safeguard and, for functional motives, with the axle tertiary directional Venezia-Mestre.

   Three absolute consequent ties by the foreground selections are in the schemes. And they are a straight consequence of the chosen to realize a complex mix of functions in the area of the Arsenal.

   This choice is incompatible with the one that points out the modification of the axle tertiary directional Venezia-Mestre, which excludes the area of the Arsenal from the system of the "direzionalità" and thus the opportunity of locate in its inland the functions indicated.

   Through the analysis of the conditioned ties, done trough of the option graph (fig.3), we deduced:

   -the hypothesis of transferring the traffic goods to Marghera Harbor and of creating at the same time a harbor container to the Cassa di Colmata A is incompatible.
-the maintenance even only partial of the traffic goods to the Maritime is not compatible with the reconversion of the Maritime itself.

-the option which, together with the reconversion of the Maritime, characterizes the area of Roma Square-S.Basilio as place delegated to the solution of the problems of expansion and of modification of the university is not finally compatible with the chosen of use the Stucky Mill as new University Campus.

**Comparison Areas, Advantage Comparison and Explorative Actions**

The bonds of incompatibility of the options impose a structure to the potential choices of the decision makers. The decision and action schemes are different representations of this structure. While the decision schemes describe the wholeness of the possible choices.

Strategic Choice points out the use of other conceptual tools in order to narrow the field of the possible choices and in order to discriminate between immediate choices and choices to differ.

Between these a particular importance is given to the comparison areas and the advantage comparison. These allow to compare the decision and action schemes in terms of feasibility and effectiveness, and also the exploratory options, which are devised in order to reduce the uncertainties of the about these options, their bonds and the comparison areas.

**References**


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Questo schema è la rappresentazione visiva delle scelte di identificazione dell'area dell'immagazzinamento su cui basare la gestione di ciascuna delle varie scelte inerenti la gestione delle risorse idriche.

Quella che segue è un'area che comprende un'ampia gamma di opzioni per la gestione delle risorse idriche. Ciascuna delle opzioni è identificata con un codice composto da due lettere e un numero.

Lezioni di gestione per la gestione delle risorse idriche.

Figura 7
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