

2007-04-01

## Performing tourism in Venice: local residents in focus

Bernadette Quinn

*Technological University Dublin*, [bernadette.quinn@tudublin.ie](mailto:bernadette.quinn@tudublin.ie)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/tfschhmtart>



Part of the [Urban Studies and Planning Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Quinn, Bernadette: Performing tourism in Venice: local residents in focus. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol.34, issue 2, pp. 458-476. doi:10.21427/D7262N

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Hospitality Management and Tourism at ARROW@TU Dublin. It has been accepted for inclusion in Articles by an authorized administrator of ARROW@TU Dublin. For more information, please contact [arrow.admin@tudublin.ie](mailto:arrow.admin@tudublin.ie), [aisling.coyne@tudublin.ie](mailto:aisling.coyne@tudublin.ie).



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 License](#)  
Funder: Technological University Dublin

PERFORMING TOURISM: Venetian Residents in Focus.

Bernadette Quinn

Dublin Institute of Technology, Republic of Ireland

#### Abstract

In contrast to the growing literature on tourist mobility as a performed art, relatively little attention has been paid to resident mobility in tourism places. This paper examines how residents encounter tourists using the concept of tourism as a performance. Drawing on the case of the historic city-centre of Venice, in north-eastern Italy, it explores the spatialities produced through the embodied practices of local movements. The paper found that local residents' movements demonstrated a marked degree of agency. It concludes by arguing that the concept of tourism as performance affords useful insights into how local residents are proactively and intricately involved in reconfiguring relationships and mobilities with and within tourism places.

Keywords: Mobility, Performance, Residents, Agency, Venice.

#### Biosketch:

Dr Bernadette Quinn is a geographer currently lecturing in the tourism department at the Dublin Institute of Technology. Her research interests include tourism and cultural change, festivals and festivity, and culture-related urban regeneration. Her work has been published in such journals as *Urban Studies*, *Social & Cultural Geography* and *Tourism Geographies*. [Bernadette.quinn@dit.ie](mailto:Bernadette.quinn@dit.ie). Dublin Institute of Technology, Cathal Brugha Street, Dublin 1, Ireland.

## INTRODUCTION

Globalisation undoubtedly underpins the centrality of travelling as a contemporary cultural practice. However, what Bauman (2000) describes as 'liquid modernity' is essentially a relational concept as according to Urry (2005), fixity/groundedness is always the counterpart of mobility. Yet it could be argued that this relational dimension is under-emphasised in the literature. As Morley (2000:427) notes, if images of exile, diaspora, time-space compression, migrancy and 'nomadology' abound in contemporary social theory, the concept of home, the obverse of all this hyper-mobility, often remains uninterrogated. This is problematic. As Clifford (1997: 44) notes, dwelling now needs to be reconceived, it is no longer simply the ground from which travelling departs and to which it returns. To cite Lury (1997), what is required is an awareness of the mutual interdependence of the travelling and the dwelling of both people and objects. Understanding this 'mutual interdependence' requires acknowledging that, everywhere, the nature of the local is being reworked by globalisation (Martin 2004). Understanding quite how that happens is a key research endeavour across many disciplines. For Sassen (2003:3), the relationality of globalisation is crucial and studying the global requires inter alia a focus on locally scaled practices and conditions articulated with global dynamics.

This paper focuses on the reworking of the local in tourism contexts. In particular, it focuses on the processes and practices implicit in the resident - tourist encounter. Following Joseph and Kavoori (2001), a fundamental hypothesis is that residents are not simply passive subjects that are acted upon in tourism contexts. Rather, it is argued that local populations who share their places with tourists are active in reconfiguring practices, relationships and mobilities with and within places. The paper illustrates its arguments with insights into how local people negotiate tourists in Venice in Northern Italy, one of the most international of all tourist destinations. Questions as to how the presence of tourists prompts locals to alter their ways of living, adopt deliberate strategies to accommodate tourists or contest the tourist presence in their place, are discussed.

## PRACTICING AND PERFORMING TOURISM PLACES

The task of further understanding the processes and practices involved in tourism encounters can be advanced through the growing literature on practice and performance in tourism. For many researchers, the implications that new mobilities hold for informing practices in tourism places are best analyzed using the concept of tourism as performance (Bærenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen and Urry 2004; Coleman and Crang 2002; Edensor 2001). Coleman and Crang (2002:1), for example, suggest that instead of seeing places as relatively fixed entities, juxtaposed in analytical terms with more dynamic flows of tourists, images and cultures, researchers should conceive of them as being created through performance. According to Bærenholdt et al (2004), spaces should be understood as entities that are

practiced, performed or stabilized, rather than being simply passed through. These authors conceive of places as 'contingently stabilised sources of deeply held meanings and attachments', yet they argue that they must also be seen to be rooted in 'networks that enable particular embodied and material performances to occur' (Bærenholdt et al:140).

Sheller and Urry (2004:1) write in a similar vein, arguing that tourism places are constantly being performed and constitute 'places in play: made and remade by the mobilities and performances of tourists and workers, images and heritage, the latest fashions and newest diseases'. These places 'in play' are said to materialise through the multiple mobilities and various performances that stretch in, through, over and under any apparently distinct locality (Bærenholdt et al 2004:145). Spaces are reproduced in this process, as tourists' movements are not incidental but rather are conscious ways of encountering and experiencing places and people (Haldrup 2004).

Adopting this theoretical stance means that place cannot be considered to exist separately from what happens in place. Places are fluid entities that change depending on the mobilities, performances and encounters ongoing among and between a range of actors at any given time. They are, in effect, multi-layered phenomena, where different types of performances and encounters happen at multiple levels, among and between heterogeneous constituencies. Equally, tourism too is best thought of as a dynamic practice. Crouch (2000) argues that tourism is most usefully conceptualized as a process, an activity that continuously makes and re-makes images, experiences, economies, places, routines and practices. Both of these conceptual positions problematize some of the binary thinking that can be found in the tourism literature. Bærenholdt et al (2004), for example, fundamentally contest the dominant paradigm which assumes a clear distinction between tourists and the destinations that they visit. This, in consequence, represents a critique of the dichotomy between hosts and guests that commonly informs tourism research. Instead, it requires researchers to acknowledge and conceptualize the complexities and heterogeneity present within tourism places.

The mobility paradigm emerging within the tourism literature has highlighted how complexities of networking, encountering and exchanging are central in explaining the continuous shaping and reshaping of place. Yet, the literature to date has often preferred to problematize complexity by focusing on tourists alone. Both Sheller and Urry (2004) and Bærenholdt et al (2004) acknowledge that the performances of 'hosts' contribute to the dynamism of place. However, they simultaneously stress the special importance of 'guests'. A key argument here is that local residents are equally implicated in the performance processes ongoing in tourism places every day. If tourism performance is to be appropriately conceptualized, then understanding how locals are implicated in complex ways of encountering, negotiating, controlling and contesting the presence of tourists is as important as understanding the roles played by tourists. This paper thus follows Mordue (2005) in suggesting that

considering how locals encode and enact performances that compare and compete with tourists occupying the same space constitutes a fresh and important analytical approach.

### *Analyzing local performances*

Residents have been of major interest to tourism researchers studying tourism contexts. The literature on resident attitudes to tourism, for example, has been described by McGehee and Andereck (2004) as one of the most systematic and well-studied areas of tourism. It is strongly theorized, drawing in a majority of cases on social exchange theory, and very well advanced in its task of explaining how and why residents favor/disapprove of tourism development. The literature conceptualizing residents' active engagement with tourists or with tourism development processes, is less extensive but growing. A predominant trend within this literature has been a move away from the "earlier formulations of 'hosts' and 'guests' that assumed that 'us' and 'them' were clearly differentiated in tourist encounters" (Abrams and Waldren 1997:5). Recent research (Waldren 1997, Mordue 2005) emphasizes how the heterogeneity of resident groups is a major source of complexity and argues that the label 'local' does not represent an undifferentiated social or ethnic community. Rather, it is shown to be associated with highly nuanced relations of power in ways that disrupt simplistic resident / tourist dualisms.

Tucker's (1997) work in Göreme, Turkey, for example, discusses how local people, in representing both themselves and their place to visitors, variously accept, resist and control tourists' engagement with their lives. Elsewhere, Joseph and Kavoori's (2001) research on hosts discusses how discourses of resistance to tourism are used by locals to adapt to tourism-driven cultural change in a Hindu pilgrimage centre in Pushkar, India. While these studies are conceived without reference to performance as such, they clearly detail how oppositional practices to tourism in particular places assume many of the attributes of political theatre. In the latter case, the authors describe how forms of rhetoric drawing on social tensions, religious beliefs and political ideals enable community residents to vent their grievances about the tourism industry through such practices as writing slogans on walls and condemning the government for failing to act appropriately (Joseph and Kavoori 2004:7). These actions enable the local population to continue to partake in tourism while simultaneously appearing to be markedly opposed to the cultural changes being wrought in the process. There is an obvious ambiguity in the agency consciously enacted by the locals in this study which hints at the complexities at issue in tourism encounters. The question of ambiguity also arises in Ridler's (2004) work on the Ferragosto celebrations in the Italian Alps. He clearly describes how locals engage in the celebrations as a way of 'articulating who they are ... not only with regard to a tourist audience, but in relation to locally contested senses of place and selfhood' (2004:3). He concludes by suggesting that public performances for tourism may have as much to do with publicly differentiating individual and collective senses of

identity in the local arena as with communicating with tourist audiences. The idea of local agency again comes through in Tucker (1997) when she demonstrates how local people, particularly local entrepreneurs, are able to 'condition' tourism in Göreme in their own way. Empirically-grounded studies such as these support Meethan's (2001) argument that localized forms of knowledge are informed by interaction processes comprising both internal and external dynamics. They further support Cheong and Miller's (2000) theoretical position that local populations can exercise considerable power over tourism development by either endorsing it or resisting it, or by 'controlling the behavior of tourists in subtle but effective ways (2000:382).

### *The case of Venice*

Venice, located in north-eastern Italy, is a useful site for analysis in this regard. Venice's place in the European tourist imagination is unrivalled. As Cosgrove (2003) suggests, it has long been a focal point in the evolution of Europe's heritage landscape. The city is recorded as having had official tour guides since 1204 and as early as the 15th century official guides were to be found at key city sites, interpreting and charging money for foreign tourists. By this time, guided tours of a number of sites in the city, including the Arsenale, the glass-making works at Murano and the Doge's palace were also available (Burke 1987:188). Until the 17th, the practice of receiving tourists, displaying the city's wonderful heritage and consolidating an international reputation as a city unparalleled for its beauty, its pleasures and its majesty was very much a consequence of the city's great power as a trading and manufacturing centre. By the mid 17th this began to change and gradually, the city's economic dominance, founded on trade and manufacturing, started to fade. According to McNeill (1974:24), Venice's urban economy from then on came to depend very largely on the city's role as 'a pleasure ground'. According to Zanetto (1986), tourism has been a central part of Venetian culture and society since at least the 18th century. Initially, it functioned as a 'must see' destination for the aristocracy making their European Grand Tour and its role, as such, is well documented (Cosgrove 2003; Redford 1996).

By the mid 19th century Venice had become for most people a tourist city (Cosgrove 1982:46). Early in the post war period, tourist flows into Venice began assuming unprecedented proportions. In 1952 more than 500, 000 tourists spent 1.2 million bed-nights in the historic city-centre of Venice. By the mid 1990s, the city was hosting 7 - 8 million arrivals (Montanari and Muscara 1995). Crucially, however, by the mid 1990s, the number of tourists staying in the city was being far outstripped by the presence of excursionists. By 1999, arrivals had reached 12 million or approximately 100,000 each day during the peak season and by 2002, it was estimated that of the total tourist population, some 80% were day-trippers (Van der Borg 2002). These figures represent an exceeding of the city's tourism carrying capacity by some two million tourists annually (Van der Borg, 2002). Over time, the ratio of tourists to

residents in the historic centre has risen from 6.46 in 1951 to 45.53 in 1995. If excursionists are taken into account, the latter figure increases to 89.4 for 1995 (Van der Borg and Russo 1997). As these authors show, this ratio far exceeds that experienced in other leading European cities such as Bruges, Salzburg, Florence or Oxford. The unique geography of the historic city-centre, a 700 hectares clustering of islands in the lagoon, further adds to the complexity of the situation. Vehicular movement is restricted to water. Large water-craft navigate the canals that dissect and surround the land mass, while smaller craft transport people and goods along and across the numerous smaller rios. Otherwise, movement is pedestrian.

#### Figure 1

There is now ample evidence to argue that tourism in effect, has taken over the historical city of Venice. Demographic statistics point to the persistent hemorrhaging of the city's population since the 1950s (Costa and van der Borg 1993; Montanari and Muscara 1995; Van der Borg and Russo 1997), as people have moved onto the mainland, consequent on the overwhelming predominance of tourism and its 'crowding out' effect on the local economy (Russo 2002; Zanetto 1986, 1998). Rising house costs, the difficulties of finding employment outside of tourism and depreciation in the quality of life because of congestion and over-crowding in public spaces, transport and other services, have meant that 100,000 have moved from the historic city-centre to the mainland part of the city (Zanetto 1986). In 1950, the population of the historic city centre stood at 184,000. By 2000 it was less than 70,000. The historic city's population continues to decline at a rate of some 0.5% per annum (Russo 2002).

Not only has the city's population contracted sharply, it has also lost a good deal of its social complexity, becoming increasingly skewed towards older, socially elite cohorts. The average age of the city-centre population is close to 50 years, some 10 years higher than that in the mainland part of the city. Similarly, the socio-economic status of the city centre population is higher and more homogeneous than that of its mainland counterpart (Zanetto 1998). The demographic, social and economic changes evidenced in available statistics have prompted researchers to conclude that the historic city-centre of Venice has in fact been overwhelmed by tourism and that it is now malfunctioning in the extreme.

When Turco and Zanetto (1983) surveyed Venetians about the problems facing the city, they found that the problems posed by the presence of tourists were perceived to be more onerous than the risk the city faced from periodic flooding. Later in the 1980s, Zanetto (1986) posited local residents vying for space in the public domain and on the city's transport networks. Since then, tourist arrivals, and particularly, excursionist arrivals have surged (Costa and Manente 1996, van der Borg and Russo 1997). Russo (2002) notes that the overnight tourist: resident ratio can reach a peak of 50:1 in the historic core. When excursionists are included, this ratio increases to 175:1. Faced with tourists who consider it

appropriate to wear bathing attire in the city, to picnic on the steps of churches and to block pedestrian routes to get a good photograph, the Venetian feels that he/she has become part of a minority culture or folklore group, living in a sort of Disneyland (Cosgrove 2003; Zanetto 1986:120).

Not surprisingly, the city is said to have developed a love-hate relationship with tourism, with two groups in continual conflict: one living off tourism, the other in spite of it (Costa and van der Borg 1988). Surprisingly, only a relatively small number of those employed in Venice earn their living from tourism (De Rita 1993, Van der Borg and Costa 1997). Equally surprising is the fact that little if any work has been undertaken on local perspectives on tourism encounters (interview with Mara Manente, Centro Internazionale di Studi sull'Economia Turistica, 2002).

While the extremes in the situation make it tempting to concur with the interpretation outlined above, the new mobility paradigm discussed earlier prompts some re-analysis. This new paradigm contests the distinction drawn between tourists and the destinations that they visit (Bærenholdt et al 2004), arguing instead that what is at issue is a complex relationality of places and peoples connected through diverse performances. If this is the case, then Venice as a place becomes inseparable from its tourism function. Given Venice's centuries old engagement with tourism, this is profoundly the case. Those Venetians, who reside in the historic centre, by definition, reside in ways that inherently embody encounters with tourists. To live in Venice is to live with tourists. Living with tourists, according to the work of Bærenholdt (2004), Coleman and Crang (2002), Crouch (2000), Edensor (2001) and others is about performing a series of roles, sometimes multiple roles simultaneously, depending on varying contexts. The empirical case reported below seeks to identify and analyze these performing roles by examining how local residents perform encounters with tourists 'on the ground'.

### *Study Methods*

The data for this study were gathered over a period of 9 months in 2001 - 2002. Most of the data presented here were gathered through a survey of local residents of the historic city-centre of Venice undertaken in February 2002. A total of 158 local residents, who live in Venice on a year-round basis were surveyed in public places using a structured questionnaire that employed a combination of brief, close-ended questions and more probing, open-ended questions. The former were designed to gather relatively simple, factual information. The latter were designed to allow respondents to detail and elaborate their views, and to explain and comment on their mobility and lifestyle patterns. In a majority of cases, respondents availed of the opportunity to talk in detail, often giving lengthy answers to questions. In consequence, the survey, which took approximately 20-30 minutes to administer, produced rich qualitative data. Comments and responses from respondents are quoted in detail in the following sections of the paper. The survey used a stratified random sample to represent the age and

gender distribution of the historic-centre population. The surveys were administered in residential districts throughout the city at times that stretched from week-days to week-ends and from mornings through to early evenings. They were administered by native Italian speakers, all of whom were MSc students registered on a tourism programme at the University of Venice.

Further data was gathered through a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with a range of tourism academics, local authority officials, tourism board personnel and tourism policy-makers in the city, identified through purposive sampling.

Given the central position adopted in this paper, i.e. that residents are not simply passive subjects who are acted upon in tourism contexts, but instead are active performers engaged in reconfiguring practices, relationships and mobilities, it is important to acknowledge the performative nature of the survey interviewing process so central to this study. The knowledge produced through this research must recognize the ability of each respondent to exercise control over both the quality and the quantity of the information shared. Undoubtedly this has been the case in this study. Some respondents were relatively more forthcoming, animated, cautious, or interested than others. Some were relatively more conscious of performing the role of 'resident' in a city which happens to be one of the most visited cities in the world. Recognizing this fact is demanded by the theoretical underpinnings of this type of research. So too is acknowledging that the study's findings must be interpreted in this light.

It is also important to acknowledge the unavoidable possibility that what interviewees say they do may be different to what they actually do. Much of the knowledge purportedly produced here is about people's mobilities, but more accurately, it is about people's reported mobilities. This is a methodological problem that is difficult to overcome, but it is at least important to assert awareness of its existence and to interpret the findings in similar vein.

### *Performing encounters with tourists*

The first part of the survey questioned respondents on their involvement with tourism. Almost 28% of the sample described themselves as being economically dependent on tourism. Eleven per cent was in continuous and direct contact with tourists and dependent on tourism for a living. The remaining 17% were in regular and direct contact with tourists and derived some income from tourists. This proportion of the sample included people directly employed in tourism, but also those employed in closely related supply sectors as well as business and property owners. A further 62% of respondents claimed to have no relationship with tourists other than to encounter them around the city. The remaining 10% described themselves as owning businesses that had no contact with tourists. It seems surprising to report that 62% of residents claim to have no economic relationship with tourism in a city so closely associated with

the industry. Yet, it is in line with findings from earlier research (De Rita 1993, Van der Borg, and Costa 1997), both of whom also note that only a relatively small number of those in Venice actually earn their living from it.

Three questions were used to probe if and how the presence of tourists in the city influenced residents' lifestyles. The first was a close-ended question that simply posed the question: does the presence of tourists in the city influence your lifestyle? Clearly, for the 28% economically involved in the industry, tourism plays a major role in their lives. When asked whether the presence of tourists in the city influences their lifestyles, almost identical figures, 70.6% and 70.4% of those dependent and partially dependent on tourism said yes. Somewhat surprisingly, the responses of residents not economically involved in tourism differed little. Some 62.5% of non-tourism business owners said that their lifestyle was affected, as did 68.8% of those who claimed to have no economic dependency on tourism. Thus, the degree of economic dependency on tourism does not seem to greatly influence the extent to which the presence of tourists affects residents' lifestyles. Rather it seems that for a majority of residents, regular encounters with visitors are multiple and frequent. It is interesting to note that this finding contrasts with the study's findings on residents' attitudes to tourism. Reported in detail at a later stage in the paper, the survey findings revealed that attitudes to tourism did vary markedly relative to respondents' economic dependency on tourism.

The general question as to how the presence of tourists in the city influenced residents' lifestyles was then investigated further through an open-ended question which asked respondents to elaborate what they meant when they said that the presence of tourists did/did not influence their lifestyle. It was then further explored through a number of more specific questions designed to identify how tourism affects how residents 'live' in the city.

Just over 89 respondents elaborated on what it meant to say that the presence of tourists influenced their lifestyle through open-ended responses. The types of influences identified in the responses were grouped into the following categories: time-space mobility, general comfort/ease of living with tourists, and income and employment. It was individual mobility in both time and space that was most affected. Sixty nine respondents explained how their mobility was consistently compromised because of the tourist presence. These constraints were experienced in the public transport system and in public spaces more generally. Repeatedly, respondents said that they could not use the vaporetti (the boats which comprise the city's water-based public transport system) because they were 'always full of tourists', 'over-crowded' and subject to delays because of the tourist pressure on the system. People spoke of 'being late for work because the vaporetti are always full and you have to wait for the next one', and of 'having to take an earlier one to get to work on time'. By way of response, respondents tended to confine their usage of the vaporetti to certain times, or to avoid public transport altogether

and to walk instead. Moving through the city on foot, however, is similarly problematic. Respondents spoke of consistently having to try to avoid the areas crowded with tourists. They considered that that 'it was necessary to avoid certain zones', that it was important to 'know alternative routes' and to 'look for short cuts'. Certain areas within the city were acknowledged as being 'no go areas'. Several people spoke about trying to avoid the 'historic centre' in general, while others singled out specific areas as ones that are best avoided. The Rialto (the bridge and the area), Piazza San Marco, the Strada Nova and Salute were labeled as particularly problematic. If locals must go to Piazza San Marco, for example, then they tend not to pass by the Rialto, but instead to take alternative routes, for example, via Piazza San Margherita.

#### Table 1

Respondents found that it was becoming 'more difficult to avoid the tourists'. This was problematic because it slowed local people down. As one respondent put it, 'Venetians must adopt the rhythm of tourists'. There was a strong sense in which locals felt themselves to have little control over the time it takes them to get from place to place within the city. Respondents frequently spoke of being forced to slow down, of being forced to take longer than they would wish to move around the city. Having to walk because of congestion on the vaporetti /traghetti made journey times longer. Negotiating tourists on the streets and pathways meant that locals had to 'walk zig-zag', weaving in and out of tourist groups in a way that slowed them down. They spoke of always having to take secondary streets, of having to take longer and round-about pedestrian routes in order to avoid the crowds. Some respondents spoke about waiting to decide on the best routes to take, once they saw how busy the vaporetti/streets were.

The findings emerging through respondents' elaborated responses were reinforced in the answers produced through the more direct questions. As Table 2 below shows, over half of respondents (56.3%) said that the presence of tourists influenced the routes they chose to move around the city. Close to one quarter said that tourists influenced the timing of their movements and the frequency with which they went to certain areas. While there was an indication that residents' effort to time their movements relative to the tourist presence varied by season, this was not very evident. In the open-ended responses, for example, some respondents highlighted two peak periods, the summer season and the carnival period as being particularly problematic. However, there was a sense that the business of negotiating tourists in space was a constant endeavor.

#### Table 2

The findings in Table 2 above, however, highlight a difference in how respondents consider themselves to be relatively constrained by day and by night. When asked whether the presence of tourists influenced where they concentrated their day-time and their night-time activities, more people considered their day-time activities to be more strongly influenced. This response reflects the overwhelming predominance of excursionists in the Venice visitor profile. Excursionists typically create pressure on central zones and on key transport hubs at particular times. Venice's historic centre at night-time can be a curiously deserted place, even during peak times such as carnival. It is not surprising, therefore, that just 12% of local residents felt constrained in their night-time mobility. This is because most of the city's visitors have left the city by that time.

### *Living with tourists*

As the above discussion shows, the tourist presence demands that residents continuously engage with the spaces in their city creatively. City spaces are not static, unchanging entities that can be taken for granted. No less than tourists, residents' movements in the city are not incidental. The findings demonstrate a strong sense in which residents' mobility unfolds in tandem with that of tourists. Residents move in certain ways, at certain times and at a certain pace because of the tourist presence. This was the case for a majority of respondents and it was little influenced by their actual involvement in the industry.

More generally, moving beyond mobility-related performances, respondents' reporting of this situation communicated a general sense of dissatisfaction with the tourist presence in the city. This is not only because 'too many tourists means you can't move' but also because, from the perspective of many residents, 'tourists don't respect Venetians'. Inconvenience, frustration, impatience and irritation were terms that could be used to describe the general tone that pervaded survey responses. 'Irritating', in particular, was a key word because often there was a sense of being overwhelmed by tourists and of being disregarded and disrespected by the 'tourist invasion'. Minca and Oakes (2006) engagingly describe how easy it is for tourists to feel that this city was built for them, and that everyone in Venice is performing some sort of tourism-related role. However, listening to residents, what becomes apparent is that thousands of residents also endeavor to carry out regular, daily life activities in the course of their routine 'home' life. In doing so, they don't want to be photographed chatting to their neighbor, or delayed carrying home their shopping. Yet this happens regularly, as tourists amble slowly along gazing all the while, obstructing narrow passageways to stand and consult their maps, stopping to take photographs not only of the main churches and piazza, but of the bustling local markets, the tiny rios with people's laundry hanging overhead, the food supplies being ferried along the canal etc. For some of the survey respondents this sort of tourist behavior was viewed as inappropriate and was interpreted to mean 'there's a lack of respect for those who live here'.

All of this causes a certain sense of unease and discomfort about sharing space with tourists in Venice. Yet, several respondents pointed out that all tourists were not perceived equally and that certain types of tourists and tourist behaviors were infinitely preferable to others. 'Excursionists' and 'mass tourism' were considered negatively in this regard. These were the real cause for concern. 'There are different types of tourism (in Venice). I can deal with the Film Festival and the Biennale, but I don't like mass tourism'; it's not tourism, it's only excursionists, they stay for a while and that's it! 'Venice shouldn't have mass tourism because it destroys the city'. 'The city should select its tourists'. In spite of the irritation, there was little sense of hostility, rather a pragmatic resignation. 'I try to live with them', in the words of one respondent. Indeed, for a minority, the presence of tourists was enthusiastically welcomed because it invigorated the declining and predominantly elderly population of the city. Encounters with tourists were deliberately sought after because they give the opportunity for new social interaction. 'I go to the places where tourists can be found to get to know new girls' 'I go to the tourist areas to get to know some new people'.

Two survey questions specifically asked respondents to consider the main benefits and the main costs of tourism. Respondents were first given a table containing a list of indicative benefits and costs and were then asked to identify what they considered to be the five main benefits and the five main costs of tourism in Venice. Table 3 below outlines the findings. Clearly, economic issues dominated people's minds. Economic indicators ranked highest with respect to both costs and benefits. In respect of the benefits, Venetians credit tourism with the ability to generate employment, to increase demand for locally produced artisan products and to improve per capita income in a general sense. However, economic outcomes also predominated in respect of the main costs. Most frequently, respondents blamed tourism for increasing the price of goods and service, for elevating property prices and for generating waste. All of these are highly tangible, measurable costs. Thus, while residents are alert to the economic gains to be made from tourism, they are also very strongly aware of the obvious economic costs involved.

### Table 3

Conversely, specific cultural benefits were perceived by roughly one third of the sample, who selected improved cultural service provision and the preservation of historic buildings and monuments as key benefits. More generally, however, while more than a quarter of the sample (27.8%) identified a broader cultural benefit in the enrichment of local culture through contact with outsiders, there was little sense that tourism in Venice is perceived to contribute to residents' quality of life. Relatively few respondents accredited tourism with improving the quality of service provision either in transport,

recreation or more generally in public service contexts. Meanwhile just 4.4% of the sample actually chose to identify 'improves the quality of life' as a benefit of tourism. In contrast, several of the costs identified related to quality of life issues. Almost 51% of the sample attributed the creation of waste to the presence of tourists. A further 67.7% related over-crowding and congestion to tourism while 21.7% indicated that one of the major costs of tourism was that it created resentment or negative feelings towards tourists.

Respondents were also asked to consider whether it was the benefits or the costs of tourism that weighed most heavily. Specifically, they were asked to indicate which of the following sentences they considered to be most accurate. As Table 4 below indicates, just over 16% chose to indicate that there was an acceptable balance between the costs and the benefits. The remainder of the sample was almost evenly divided in considering it to be costs or benefits that weighed heaviest.

Table 4

When residents were re-grouped in respect of economic dependency on tourism, the sample became more diversified. Those economically dependent on tourism were much more likely to indicate that the benefits outweighed the costs (62.5%), as opposed to vice versa (18.8%). Among those with no reliance on tourism the equivalent figures were 33.3% and 51.1%. In terms of practicing tourist encounters, however, there was little significant difference between different groups of respondents either in terms of age, length of residency, location of residence within the city-centre, or even economic dependency. This suggests that the extraordinary presence of tourists in the city is pervasive in the extent to which it conditions city living in Venice. In real and pragmatic ways, tourism creates a series of challenges that the resident must continuously and actively seek to overcome. These challenges were felt at the level of the individual, in economic as well as socio-cultural terms. In elaborating what it meant to say that the presence of tourists influenced their lifestyle, a small number of respondents mentioned that tourism was their livelihood and their source of income. However, other respondents spoke about how tourism 'increases the cost of living', that 'the prices in the places frequented by tourists are too high' and that 'it only benefits those who work in tourism'. Added to this were the considerable difficulties (already discussed) encountered in negotiating the tourist presence getting to and from work.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has been exploring what it means to say that tourism places are dynamic entities, continuously being 'performed' by groups of actors. It follows Bærenholdt et al (2004) in arguing that tourist activities are not separate from the places that happen contingently to be visited. The implication is that places change depending on the weight of the tourist presence, and on where and when it is most felt. Once engaged in tourism processes, places, and the spaces within them, are in a constant state of flux. An initial stimulus for the paper was the fact that thus far, it seemed that residents had received little attention in discussions on how tourism places are performed.

A key finding has been that mobilities, and the spaces and route ways within which they unfold, are consciously constructed not only by tourists but also by locals. Haldrup (2004) approaches tourist mobility as a performed art, and explores the spatialities produced through the embodied practices of tourist movements. What became obvious here is that local mobility in tourism contexts is also a performed art, and one that is performed contrapuntally with tourists. The process of living with tourists in Venice demands considerable energy as residents are forced to re-interpret and negotiate the space in their city creatively. For much of the time, for example, it may not be possible to take the 'obvious', straight-forward pathway to work. Similarly, it may not be possible to take a vaporetto at an 'obvious' time. Instead, Venetians must be one step ahead, anticipating the crowds, planning their movements for certain times and thinking about alternate, short-cut or 'round-about' ways of getting to their destination. Effective local mobility, in the context of such a heavy tourist presence requires a conscious engagement with the possibilities afforded by the water and land spaces of the city and there is considerable effort involved. The degree of conscious effort involved came across very strongly in the responses of those Venetians who are no longer able to cope with the tourist presence. These responses tended to come from the older respondents, a few of whom said 'I rarely leave my house and when I do I just go to the same few streets', 'I avoid the historic centre and the vaporetti. I don't move from the house' or 'the crowds make me ill'. However, other younger respondents also spoke of 'seeking out areas less frequented by tourists in order to be left in peace' and of only going out to eat and drink in local peripheries, as opposed to, city - centre places. Sometimes, the task of battling it out for space with tourists becomes too much and locals simply avoid the places where they anticipate a strong tourist presence.

Thus, these are city spaces that cannot be taken for granted. New spatialities are reproduced continuously depending on the weight of tourist presence. Local residents spoke about deciding upon how to travel to work once they could see how many tourists were around, and of changing plans at the last minute depending on how busy they found certain exhibitions/galleries. Local residents, with their intimate knowledge of the city, draw upon a store of diverse and dynamic ways in which to move

around, as and when the need arises. Negotiating space is a major challenge. There is a sense in which the presence of tourists forces the Venetian to become intimately familiar with the intricate geography of the city with its myriad of alley-ways, side streets, canals and bridges. It is an understanding of the possibilities afforded by the spaces of the city that constitutes the Venetians' trump card. Their knowledge of the city's hidden, peripheral, background spaces is the key advantage that the local has over the tourist. It is a critical strategy in coping with living with tourists.

It is notable that residents' behavior in negotiating the tourist presence did not seem to be influenced by their relationship with tourism. This is in contrast to their attitudes, which in line with existing research findings tended to be strongly influenced by their degree of economic dependence on tourism. As already discussed, extensive attention has been paid to the latter, and yet conclusions drawn in that regard may be of little value in furthering understanding of the former, which has received less focus to date.

A key finding has been that mobilities among locals and tourists are closely inter-dependent. Some locals, not necessarily defined by factors of age, gender or economic status, consciously move towards tourists, seeking to move in the same time-space, hoping for new encounters to enliven regular social interaction. However, more commonly, residents try to move away from tourists. Tourists travel along particular pathways and cluster in particular zones. In response, locals seek out alternative pathways and try to avoid certain zones. Tourists move at a leisurely pace, and because of their numbers, force locals to adapt to their rhythm, whenever they share the same space.

One implication of this is that the local mobilities identified through these survey findings implicitly create opportunities for tourist mobility. In seeking out the laneways and alley-ways, side streets and marginal route ways in order to promote their own mobility, residents effectively 'empty out' certain spaces for tourists. These spaces include the vaporetti, the main piazza especially Piazza San Marco, and a number of key pedestrian arteries e.g. from Piazza San Marco to the Rialto. This process of 'stepping aside' permits tourists to enter, circulate in their own time, experience a sense of the city and leave. One overarching interpretation of this pattern is to argue that tourists displace residents, that the tourist presence impacts negatively upon residents, and that the latter are discommoded and constrained in how they move around the city.

Pursuing the position that conceives of the tourist place as a performed reality, however, facilitates an alternative interpretation. From this position, it could be argued that the patterns of mobility adopted and practiced by residents constitute a strategy that effectively, yet very subtly, controls the tourist presence in the city. As Cheong and Miller (2000:85) suggest, 'the power of the local gaze on tourists can lead tourists to quickly understand where they might go and what they might do'. In Venice, while

the action of moving aside to allow tourists dominate certain spaces creates an opportunity for tourist mobility, it simultaneously has the effect of encouraging tourists to remain confined within these spaces. Those central pedestrian and water-way arteries, the main tourist attractions and the large piazza become extremely busy and very frustrating for residents to negotiate. However, elsewhere, in the myriad of route ways adjacent to these central zones, residents can move with relative ease. It is argued here that the established pattern which sees tourists stay in Venice for short periods only, mainly in central spaces, and see only a handful of iconic attractions, is, in fact, critical in making it possible for locals to co-dwell with tourists.

Acknowledging the validity of this argument would, however, problematize prevailing approaches to managing tourism in the city. It has long been recognized that the temporal and spatial concentration of tourists, mostly excursionists, in the central spaces of the city is hugely problematic from a management perspective (Van der Borg & Russo 1997, Russo 2002). In recent times, a key local authority response (Il Comune di Venezia) has been the introduction of a management tool called the 'Venice Card'. Introduced in 2002, the Venice Card aims to disperse tourists throughout the historic centre and to convert day-trips into overnight stays. Were it to succeed, it would mean that tourists would then begin to invade those 'off-the beaten track' spaces and marginal route ways that are so critical in residents' strategies of co-dwelling with tourists. At present, while some residents highlighted two peak seasons (Carnival in February and summer time), tourism in the city is increasingly aseasonal. In 2002, seven 'traditional events', officially supported and marketed by the City Comune were spread over eight months of the year. These begin with the Carnival in February, continue with the Rowing Season that begins in April and lasts until September, and ends with the Festa della Madonna della Salute in November. Thus, as there is little temporal respite from the business of performing in the tourist city, residents rely on creating their own distinctive local spatialities. Were these to be disrupted, how then would residents negotiate the tourist presence?

Conceiving of the tourism place as a performed reality raises further issues. From a tourist perspective, for example, the performed dimension of the place being experienced means that while tourists may perceive themselves to be experiencing the real Venice, complete with 'real' Venetians, in all likelihood, the majority of encounters in central city spaces are tourist-tourist encounters. The challenge involved in taking a photograph in Venice that does not contain an image of another tourist taking a photograph attests to this likelihood. While tourists clearly encounter many Venetians, a majority of the locals encountered, with the exception of those passing through en route to elsewhere, are in all likelihood performing some sort of obvious hospitality, transport or other tourism service role. An awareness of this raises a series of questions for tourist experiences of place.

At this point, the question arises as to the extent to which the 'Venice effect' is at play in this analysis. Is this study sample too atypical because of the city at issue? Would similar sorts of conclusions be drawn from studies of residents in other cities less defined by their historically rooted relationship with tourists? Undoubtedly Venice is 'special'. It was, as Fontini Brown (1997:9) suggested, a tourist attraction long before the term was ever invented. It is impossible to speak of Venice without speaking of tourism. People living in the historic city-centre live, virtually on a year-round basis, with tourism. It has been described as a theme park (Minca and Oakes:3). In this context, the specific particularities of the city would seem to limit the possibility of drawing generalizations from this study, and that is the position taken here. Further research in other cities is needed.

To conclude, this paper argues that using the concept of tourism as performance offers insightful perspectives into the processes and practices involved in tourism encounters. This is the case not only with respect to how tourists encounter and perform in space but equally in respect of how local residents create new mobilities and new spatialities as they negotiate and learn to co-dwell with the tourist presence. Local residents are much more than passive subjects that are acted upon by tourists and tourism-driven forces. They have autonomy, and are proactively and intricately involved in reconfiguring relationships and mobilities with and within place. Acknowledging this creates a series of research questions in respect of both conceptualizing and managing local-tourist encounters, and in terms of conceptualizing both locals' and tourists' experiences of tourism places.

#### *Acknowledgements*

The author gratefully acknowledges the advice and support of Jan van der Borg at the University of Venice and Mara Manente and her colleagues at CISET, University of Venice. She also acknowledges the Dublin Institute of Technology for the seed funding that enabled this research be conducted. Finally, the author thanks Kevin Griffin at the DIT for his help in preparing the map.

## REFERENCES

Abrams, S. and J. Waldren

1997 Introduction. *In* Tourists and Tourism: Identifying with People and Places, S. Abram, J. Waldren and D.V. L. Macleod, eds., pp.1 - 11. Oxford: Berg.

Bauman, Z.

2000 Liquid Modernity. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bærenholdt, J.; M. Haldrup; J. Larsen and J. Urry

2004 Performing Tourist Places. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Burke, P.

1987 The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy: Essays on Perception and Communication. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cheong, S. and S. Miller

2000 Power and Tourism: a Foucauldian Observation. *Annals of Tourism Research* 27: 371-390.

Clifford, J.

1997 Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Coleman, S. and M. Crang, Eds.

2002 Tourism: Between Place and Performance. New York: Berghahn.

Cosgrove, D.

1982 The Myth and the Stones of Venice: an Historical Geography of a Symbolic Landscape. *Journal of Historical Geography* 8: 145-169.

2003 Heritage and history: a Venetian geography lesson. *In Rethinking Heritage, Culture and politics in Europe*, R. S. Peckham, eds., pp. 113-123. London: I. B. Taurus.

Costa, P. and Manente, M.

1996 Monitoring Excursionist Flows: The Case of Venice. *Quaderni Ciset* 13/96. Venice: Centro Internazionale di Studi sull'Economia Turistica.

Costa, P. and J. Van der Borg

1988 Un Modello Lineare per la Programmazione del Turismo: sulla Capacita Massima di Accoglienza Turistica del Centro Storico di Venezia. *C.O.S.E.E. Informazioni* 32-33: 21-26.

1993 The Management of Tourism in Cities of Art. *Quaderni Ciset* 2/93. Venice: Centro Internazionale di Studi sull'Economia Turistica.

Crouch, D.

2000 Places Around us: Embodied Lay Geographies in Leisure and Tourism. *Leisure Studies* 19: 63-76.

De Rita, G.

1993 Una Città Speciale: Rapporto su Venezia. Venice: Marsilio.

Edensor, T.

2000 Staging tourism: Tourists as Performers. *Annals of Tourism Research* 27: 322-344.

2001 Performing tourism, staging tourism. (Re)producing tourist space and practice. *Tourist Studies* 1: 59-81.

Fontini Brown, P.

1997 *The Renaissance in Venice: A World Apart*. London: George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd.

Haldrup, M.

2004 Laid-back mobilities: Second-Home Holidays in Time and Space. *Tourism Geographies* 6: 434-454.

Joseph, C. A. and A. P. Kavoori

2001 Mediated Resistance. Tourism and the Host Community. *Annals of Tourism Research* 28: 998-1009.

Lury, C.

1997 The Objects of Travel. *In* Touring Cultures C. Rojek & J. Urry, eds., pp.75-95. London: Routledge.

Martin, R.

2004 Geography: Making a Difference in a Globalizing World. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 29: 147-152.

McGehee, N. G. and K. L. Andereck

2004 Factors Predicting Rural Residents' Support of Tourism. *Journal of Travel Research* 43: 131-140.

McNeill, W. H.

1974 Venice: The Hinge of Europe 1081-1797. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Meethan, K.

2001 Tourism in Global Society. Place, Culture, Consumption. New York: Palgrave.

Minca, C. and T. Oakes

2006 Introduction. *In* Travels in paradox: Remapping Tourism, Minca, C. and T. Oakes, eds., pp.1-21. Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.

Montanari, A. and Muscara, C.

1995 Evaluating Tourism Flows in Historic Cities: the Case of Venice. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 86: 80-87.

Mordue, T.

2005 Tourism, Performance and Social Exclusion in "Olde York". *Annals of Tourism Research* 32: 179-198.

Morley, D.

2000 Belongings: Place, Space and Identity in a Mediated World. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 4: 425-448.

Redford, B.

1996 Venice and the Grand Tour. New Haven: New York University Press.

Ridler, K.

2002 'Cose Paesane': Tourist Performances and Contested Localities in the Italian Alps, *In Tourism: Between Place and Performance*, S. Coleman, and M. Crang eds., pp. 92-107. New York: Berghahn.

Russo, A. P.

2002 The "Vicious Circle of Tourism Development in Heritage Cities". *Annals of Tourism research* 29: 165-182.

Sassen, S.

2003 Globalization or Denationalization? *Review of International Political Economy* 10: 1-22.

Sheller, M. and Urry, J.

2004 *Tourism Mobilities: Places to Play, Places in Play*. London: Routledge.

Tucker, H.

1997 The Ideal Village: Interactions through Tourism in Central Anatolia. *In Tourists and Tourism: Identifying with People and Places*, S. Abram, J. Waldren and D.V. L. Macleod, eds., pp.107 - 128. Oxford: Berg.

Turco, A. and Zanetto, G.

1983 Environnement, Perception, Action: le Cas de Venise. *Revue d'Économie Régionale et Urbaine* 3: 395-405.

Urry, J.

1994 Cultural Change and Contemporary Tourism. *Leisure Studies* 13: 233-238.

2000 *Sociology beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*. London: Routledge.

Van der Borg, J.

2002 *Managing Tourism in Heritage Cities: Case of the Venice Card*. Paper presented at the Tourist Historic City: Sharing Culture for the Future conference, 17-20 March, Bruges, Belgium.

Van der Borg, J. and A. Russo

1997 Un Sistema di Indicatori per lo Sviluppo Turistico Sostenibile a Venezia. Rapporto di Ricerca 06.97.

Waldren, J.

1997 We are not Tourists: we live here. *In* Tourists and Tourism: Identifying with People and Places, S. Abram, J. Waldren and D.V. L. Macleod, eds., pp.51 - 70. Oxford: Berg.

Zanetto, G.

1986 Une ville touristique et ses habitants: le cas de Venise. *Loisir et Société / Leisure and Society* 9: 117 - 124.

1998 La Città d'Arte come Risora non Riproducibile: Turismo Sostenibile a Venezia. Studi in Onore di Mario Pinna 2, L'Ambiente e le Attività dell'uomo.

**Table 1. Residents' time-space mobility**

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Residents' responses</b>
<u>Public transport becomes:</u>	
Overcrowded and congested	Avoid public transport and walk
Inefficient because of delays	Use public transport creatively (take a variety of 'round-about' routes to reach a destination)
Only usable at certain times	Confine usage to certain times
<u>Public piazzas, streets, laneways, bridges become:</u>	
Blocked by the physical presence of tourists	'Zig-zag' through the crowds
Blocked by the behavior of tourists	Avoid central spaces and main streets, skirt around the peripheries
Key arteries (mainly bridges) impassible	Take short cuts and alternate routes (side-streets, become 'round-about' circuits, etc.

**Table 2. Tourists' Influence on residents' mobility within the city**

<b>Influence</b>	<b>Yes (%)</b>	<b>No (%)</b>
Does the presence of tourists influence:		
the routes you choose to move around the city?	56.3	43.7
the frequency with which you go to certain parts of the city?	26.6	73.4
the timing of your movements around the city?	23.4	76.6
the parts of the city in which you tend to concentrate your day-time activities?	20.9	79.1
the parts of the city in which you tend to concentrate your night-time activities?	12.0	88.0

**Table 3. Local perspectives on the main benefits and costs of tourism**

<b>The main benefits of tourism (N=158) %</b>		<b>The main costs of tourism (N=158) %</b>	
Increases employment opportunities	69.6	Increases price of goods and services	70.3
Increases demand for local artisanal products	46.8	Causes over-crowding/congestion	67.7
Improves cultural service provision	34.2	Increases the costs of property	55.7
Improves per capita income in general	31.0	Creates waste	50.6
Preserves historic buildings and monuments	31.0	Creates resentment / negative feelings towards tourists	21.5
Improves transport infrastructure	11.4	Transforms the city into a museum/playground	17.1
Enriches local culture through contact with outsiders	27.8	Detracts from the enjoyment of living in Venice	13.9
Improves the quality of public services	8.2	Decreases opportunities for shopping	10.1
Increases provision of public recreational spaces	5.7	Makes it difficult to go to museums / theatres, etc.	8.2
Improves quality of life	4.4	Discourages people from bringing their children into the city-centre	8.2

Table 4. Benefits and costs in comparative perspective

Statement (N=158)	% in agreement
1. The benefits of tourism outweigh the costs	41.5
2. The costs of tourism outweigh the benefits	29.3
3. The costs outweigh the benefits but there is no alternative	12.9
4. There's an acceptable balance between the costs and the benefits	16.3

