BrIAS Workshop

Food production, redistribution, and consumption in the Venetian Lagoon between Antiquity and the Contemporary Era

Organisers: Dr. Mauro Rizzetto & Prof. Dr. ir. Frits Heinrich

Maartje van Gelder

Rita Vianello

Luca Pes

David Gentilcore

Silvia Garavello

Vito Prillo

10:00-17:30 CET | Friday 24 March 2023| ULB-Campus Plaine, Salle Solvay & TEAMS

ULB BrIAS VUB

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March 24th 2023, 10.00 – 17.30 CET

Physical location:	Salle Solvay, Building NO, 5th Floor, ULB Campus La Plaine
Online:	Microsoft Teams through this LINK
Organizers:	Dr. Mauro Rizzetto & Prof. Dr. ir. Frits Heinrich
10.00 – 10.15	*Welcome & Introduction to BrIAS.* **Frits Heinrich** Vrije Universiteit Brussel / BrIAS Program Director
10.15 – 10.40	*Animal food resources in the Venetian Lagoon during Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.* **Silvia Garavello, Mauro Rizzetto** Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy
10.40 – 11.05	*Fruits of the lagoon: cultivation in the Lagoon of Venice*. **Alessandra Forti** Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy
11.05 – 11.30	*Beyond the lagoon: the management and consumption of animals in Northern Italy and in the Northern Adriatic Sea between the 5th and 10th centuries AD*. **Mirko Fecchio** University of Padua, Italy
11.30 – 11.55	*Cured or missing fish? Ichthyological exploitation in north-eastern Italy between the Roman and the Late Medieval period.* **Vito Prillo** University of Padua, Italy
11.55 – 13.30	***Lunch Break***
13.30 – 13.55	*Blue growth: lessons from history and the Venetian Lagoon*. **Bryony A. Caswell** University of Hull, UK
13.55 – 14.20	*Climate change in the Venetian Lagoon and new forms of food acculturation. The local challenge of small-scale fishing in the Anthropocene*. **Rita Vianello** Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy
14.20 – 14.55	*Bringing water to a thirsty lagoon: the watermen (*Acquaroli*) of Venice.* **David Gentilcore** Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy
14.55 – 15.15	***Coffee Break***
15.15 – 15.40	*Daily bread in Early Modern Venice. Grain supply, cyclical famine, and the moral economy of bread in a time of climate crisis.* **Maartje van Gelder** University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands
15.40 – 16.05	Terraferma*, lagoon and sea. The invention of the Venetian cuisine*. **Luca Pes** Venice International University, Italy
16.05 – 16.30	*The table in Venice between the 12th and 15th centuries: objects, identity, environment.* **Margherita Ferri** Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy
16.30 – 17.30	***Final Discussion***

Abstracts

Animal food resources in the Venetian Lagoon during Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.
Silvia Garavello, Mauro Rizzetto
Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy
Archaeozoology, through the study of faunal remains found in archaeological contexts, addresses the study of human-animal relationships and can inform on many aspects of the life of past communities. In this work, we aim to focus on a selection of studies conducted on faunal samples from the Late Antique and medieval periods in the Venetian Lagoon, to observe and interpret differences and similarities in farming practices and food choices among different historical phases, settlement types, and environments. To this end, we will compare the evidence so far available from the Roman city of *Altinum*, the Late Antique *mansio* and medieval phase from Jesolo, the early medieval settlement at San Pietro di Castello, and the later medieval monastery of San Giacomo in Paludo.

Fruits of the lagoon: cultivation in the Lagoon of Venice.
Alessandra Forti
Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy
Archaeobotany is increasingly providing important knowledge about the Venetian Lagoon in the past. The carpological remains of some medieval archaeological sites indicate the presence of many horticultural and fruit species. Some of them, although having a limited impact on food production and diet, testify to a land use that no longer exists, except in a few limited cases. Of all the species attested to by archaeological excavations, it seems that only one continues to be cultivated in various areas of the city, the grapevine (*Vitis vinifera* L.), while the others disappeared or are currently present in a few gardens scattered on marginal islands in the lagoon. The aim of this contribution is to highlight which seeds and fruits were cultivated in medieval Venice, the land use and the persistence of certain species.

Beyond the lagoon: the management and consumption of animals in Northern Italy and in the Northern Adriatic sea between the 5th and 10th centuries AD.
Mirko Fecchio
University of Padua, Italy
Lifestyle and changes in economic and food production strategies in the post-classical era were strongly influenced by environmental and climatic transformations. Multidisciplinary approaches toarchaeological research, applied to the understanding of the material record, are revolutionizing the methods and perspectives, stimulating new research questions. The zooarchaeological analysis is essential to understand the environment, the economy, and animal management in Antiquity. This discipline fits perfectly into these lines of research by providing a fundamental contribution to our knowledge of meat consumption and, more generally, of diet. A complex and strongly regionalized framework is being exposed, which substantially differs from the information suggested by the written sources. This talk will provide an overview of animal management in Northern Italy through the analysis of ten different sites (urban, rural, and *castra*) dated between the 5th and 10th centuries AD, controlled by the Lombards during the early Middle Ages. Finally, through the comparison of zooarchaeological data, it will be possible to highlight differences in animal management between coastal sites in the Adriatic sea (Rab, Torcello, and Comacchio) and the hinterland, taking into account possible historical, social and environmental implications.

Cured or missing fish? Ichthyological exploitation in north-eastern Italy between the Roman and the Late Medieval period.
Vito Prillo
University of Padua, Italy
The exploitation of both freshwater and sea fish has always been a crucial aspect of human dietary habits. This is particularly clear in certain areas, such as the Po Valley in Northern Italy, given the abundance of rivers and lakes and the proximity to the Adriatic Sea. However, fish bones – which represent the primary product of fishing – are very small and fragile, and thus rarely preserved in the archaeological record of this area, especially for the Roman and Medieval periods. Therefore, to demonstrate the importance of fishing in this chronological framework, we must rely on different types of data, namely written sources, and different archaeological data, such as fishing equipment (hooks, net weights, harpoons). Furthermore,

in order to recognize differences in the strategies of fish exploitation and to investigate the trade in fish resources, a comparison between the coastal and inland settlements in the Po Valley is also drawn.

Blue growth: lessons from history and the Venetian Lagoon.
Bryony Caswell
University of Hull, UK
'Blue growth' aims to promote the growth of ocean economies whilst holistically managing marine socio-ecological systems, and is a rapidly emerging concept often promoted as being a novel way forward for managing our ocean economies. However, we will demonstrate that historical analogies exist from multiple locations and time periods, which can provide insights for contemporary planning and implementation of blue growth. Using case studies based on expert knowledge, we identified 20 historical fisheries or aquaculture examples from 13 countries, spanning the last 40–800 years, that we contend embody blue growth concepts. This is the first time, to our knowledge, that blue growth has been investigated across such broad spatial and temporal scales. We found that these past societies managed to balance exploitation with equitable access, ecological integrity, and/or economic growth for varying periods of time. Four main trajectories existed that led to the success or failure of blue growth. Success was linked to equitable rather than open access, innovation, and management that was responsive, holistic, and based on scientific knowledge and monitoring. The inability to achieve or maintain blue growth resulted from failures to address limits to industry growth and/or anticipate the impacts of adverse extrinsic events and drivers, the prioritisation of short-term gains over long-term sustainability, and loss of supporting systems. We will describe the lessons learned and recommendations derived from the historical case studies, that we believe provide opportunities to improve understanding and implementation of contemporary blue growth agendas. In particular, I will highlight the Venetian Lagoon case study as an example of many of the properties of blue growth that we seek to achieve today.

Climate change in the Venetian Lagoon and new forms of food acculturation. The local challenge of small-scale fishing in the Anthropocene.
Rita Vianello
Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy
The Venetian Lagoon is characterized by an essentially aquatic and insular type of life. It is an intense symbiotic relationship between humans, water, and other non-human inhabitants. This hybrid dimension is particularly present among fishermen, who perceive the lagoon as a domesticated space, an extension of the emerged lands. In the peculiar lagoon environment, which consists of water and land inter-penetrating each other, Venice has had to find adequate strategies to stock up on food since its foundation. The lagoon takes on the dimension of the 'countryside'. Today the lagoon environment is changing due to climate change but not only. The age-old balances established by humans are changing and new species are making their appearance. All of this requires new knowledge and skills if the fishermen want to continue to make a profitable and successful fishing. Today, new foods begin to appear in the city's fish markets and new food tastes spread. These new processes demonstrate how food is above all a cultural process influenced by the environment.

Bringing water to a thirsty lagoon: the watermen (*Acquaroli*) of Venice.
David Gentilcore
Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy
Venice, one of the largest and most economically vibrant of early modern cities, was uniquely dependent on rainwater capture for all of its freshwater needs, which fed thousands of underground cisterns (known as 'wells'). This was supplemented by bargeloads of fresh water brought across the lagoon from the River Brenta and poured into the cisterns. From the fourteenth century through to the early twentieth this was undertaken by the city's watermen, known as *acquaroli*, tasked with transporting the water in flat-bottomed barges, known as burchi. Their guild, founded in 1471, was also one of the last to be suppressed under post-Napoleonic reforms, and when the system for supplying fresh water was put out to tender under Austrian rule, in the early nineteenth century, it was the chief officer of the former guild who won the contract, with the guild masters as his employees. The paper will look at the vital function performed by the *acquaroli* over this extended period, their social origins and status, and guild organisation.

Daily bread in Early Modern Venice. Grain supply, cyclical famine, and the moral economy of bread in a time of climate crisis.

Maartje van Gelder
University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Well before widespread industrialization set in, Earth's climate was never stable. Natural forces triggered climate changes that had profound consequences for societies around the world. During the Little Ice Age – one of the best-studied periods of historical climate change – fluctuations in solar activity and volcanic eruptions caused a lowering of average temperatures, which in turn caused ecological, social, economic, and political upheaval, particularly in the Mediterranean region. The climatic conditions worsened between the late sixteenth century and the late seventeenth century. During this period, droughts and cold winters caused famine in Mediterranean cities and rural areas alike. Although contemporaries themselves may not have grasped the long-term consequences of these changes, cities and states needed to adapt to these changing conditions. For instance, it is against this backdrop that Northern ships with Northern grain arrived in the late 16th century, changing the foodscape of early modern Venice. This paper will focus on the impact of the Little Ice Age on Venetian food supplies, food policies, and system of provisioning, while also attempting to chart the responses, including food riots, from urban residents.

Terraferma*, lagoon and sea. The invention of the Venetian cuisine.*

Luca Pes
Venice International University, Italy

The first book that we know of, that explicitly attempts to define Venetian Cuisine by listing and describing food recipes, was published in 1908. Analysing the many cookbooks with the same intent, which have been published since, it is possible to trace an evolution of the ideas of local cuisine: from simple to grand; from weakly reputed to recognizable and distinct; from street and home food based to restaurant based; from meat to fish centred. These changes must be examined in the context of broader changes in food consumption, domestic culinary habits, function of recipe books, evolution of tourism and action of local authorities. They, however, also reflect patterns of local food production and a redefinition of the city, in the age of globalization and of the Anthropocene, where the predominant imaginary sees it distinct and often in opposition to the *Terraferma*, planted in the Lagoon and projected in the Adriatic.

The table in Venice between the 12th and 15th centuries: objects, identity, environment.

Margherita Ferri
Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy

The paper focuses on food consumption in Venice between the 12th and 15th centuries through the study of ceramic and glass vessels. Ceramic forms from well-dated contexts define market areas during the period considered, as well as the role of imports and local production as possible identity markers in the lagoon environment. In the second part of the paper, changing vessel forms between the 14th and 15th centuries illustrate changing eating habits and cooking techniques. Textual sources, pictorial evidence and wider socio-economic developments are used to hypothesise whether eating was individual or collective, secular or religious.