

FAR FROM GENTRIFICATION AND TOURISTIFICATION?

Residents' perceptions of displacement on Murano Island

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Dario Bertocchi

Ca' Foscari University of Venice <dario.bertocchi@unive.it>

Camilla Ferri

Ca' Foscari University of Venice <camilla.ferri@unive.it>

ABSTRACT: Murano, an island in Venetian Lagoon, is world-renowned for its historical glassmaking industry. In the last decades, similarly to what is happening in central Venice, Murano has seen a significant decrease in its population and a reduction of its traditional activities, both being connected to broader tourism gentrification dynamics. Prompted by this, the authors devised and circulated a wide-ranging questionnaire that aimed to investigate the economic, social, and territorial factors affecting people's quality of life on the island. The questionnaire was completed by almost 15% of Murano's residents and one aspect that it captured was various inhabitants' perceptions of issues concerned with tourism gentrification, which we analysed using Cocola-Gant's (2018) concepts of residential, commercial, and place-based displacement. We found that Muranese residents these dynamics most keenly when they impact their daily life on the island, and they are concerned about the loss of the identity of places they know and live in. We conclude by affirming that this situation is not irreversible, and that policy makers can act to address it.

KEYWORDS: Murano, tourism gentrification displacement; quality of life, Venetian Lagoon

Introduction

Murano is an agglomerate of seven islands that are connected by bridges, located in the north part of the Venetian Lagoon, 1.2 kilometres north-east of central Venice (Figure 1). It has a population of approximately 4,300 on a surface area of c. 1.17 km². In Roman times, before it became renowned for its glass-making industry, Murano was an important seaport, given its strategic position in the Venetian Lagoon. In the 5th, 6th, and 7th centuries, the migration of many people, including rich and noble families, from the mainland escaping Barbarian invasions contributed to its economic growth (Zanetti, 1866). Murano was a politically autonomous island between the 7th and 12th centuries¹ and then again, between the 14th-19th, probably due to its importance in the Lagoon. It was ruled by a *Podestà* (chief magistrate) and had its own laws and a council until Austrian imperial domination in 1815-1886, when it was incorporated into Venice.

A major factor in the history of the island was the decrees the Republic of Venice issued in 1291 and in 1295, which mandated the removal of all glass furnaces from Venice and their

¹ In 1171, it was annexed to Sestiere (district) of Santa Croce in Venice. However, this created social tensions, that resulted in a return to civil independence in 1275.

transfer to Murano. This was undertaken for two reasons: a) to avoid the risk of recurrent fires in Venice and b) to better control glassmakers' technical know-how and the secrets of this art² (Amato, 1997). The concentration of glassmakers in Murano helped the diffusion of techniques and innovative ideas around glass production: the invention of *Cristallo Veneziano*³ and the usage of high-quality ingredients (Amato, 1997) led Murano to gain the monopoly on European glass production and commercialisation. The Murano glassmaking industry experienced the highest point of its success in the 15th and 16th centuries (Zanetti, 1866). In those times, Murano had a population of almost 30,000 inhabitants, sixteen churches and a cathedral, palaces, schools, scientific, artistic and literary academies, botanical gardens, many shops, and two annual and highly popular glass fairs (Zanetti, 1866). Originally, glass was not as exclusively a luxury product as it is today: Muranese furnaces used to produce cups, pitchers, vases, bottles, pearls, and window glass, which were sold internationally. Muranese glassmakers started to produce luxury glass only as a response to the crisis related to the 1630s plague and the spread of Bohemian Glass in Europe between the end of 17th and the beginning of the 18th Century. From this moment onward, thanks to chandeliers, mirrors, and other design objects, Muranese glassmakers became the most renowned producers of luxury glass in Europe.

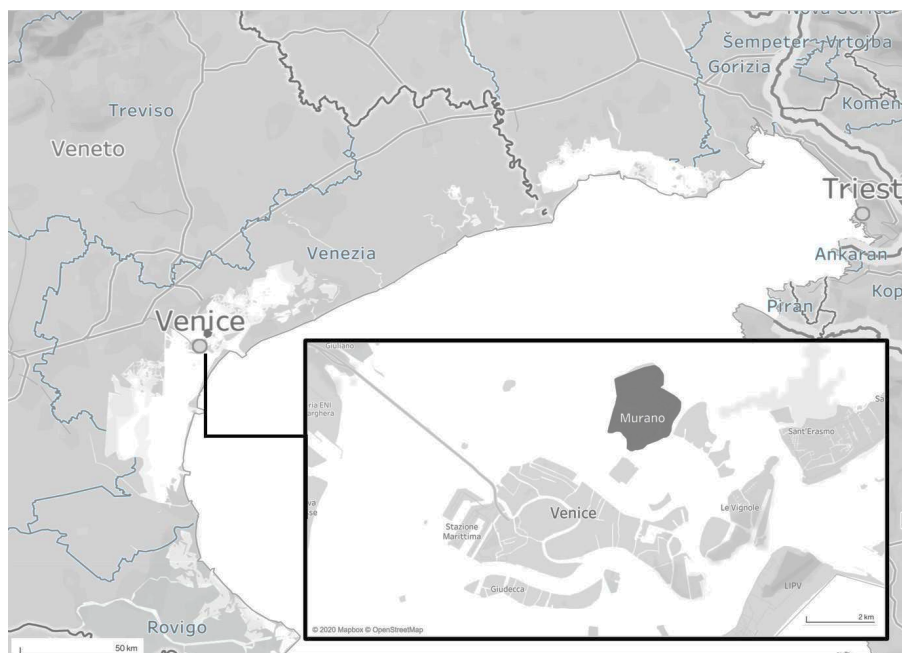


Figure 1 - Murano Island and its position in the Venetian Lagoon.

² Glass masters were restricted in that they could not move from the Lagoon without a special permit and they could be sentenced to death if they revealed their glassmaking secrets abroad. On the other hand, they enjoyed a high social status and privileges, which incentivised them to move to Murano Island and made their sons continue the glassmaking tradition (Amato, 1997).

³ i.e. crystalline glass, which was the first transparent glass in the world. This was invented by glass master Angelo Barovier. It was exceptionally workable, which helped in developing new, creative possibilities for Muranese glass masters, as for example the first reflective mirrors (Amato, 1997).

Classical designs and ancient techniques were adopted till the beginning of the 20th Century,⁴ when some new furnaces started collaborating with artists and designers to produce more modern objects. Today, Murano's glass production is fully geared toward luxury products – such as jewels, chandeliers, vases, sculptures – that can combine classical techniques with modern designs. Glassmaking is still the main economic function of the island (Di Monte, 2011), but the industry is experiencing a prolonged crisis. This crisis is mainly caused by infrastructural limits, high costs of production, lack of generational turnover, and competition with low-cost imitation products from Asian producers. This, in turn, affects the entire territory because of employment problems and related residential issues (Anch'io Progetto Murano, 2012). However, modern glass production has gradually recovered with tourism consumption. Artistic glass production turned into a real tourist attraction, and Murano has become a destination complementary to Venice. Indeed, for many tourists departing from Venice, a visit to Murano is often part of a wider day trip that includes other islands in the northern lagoon such as Burano and Torcello. The industry and the entire island economy has responded by widening its commercial and hospitality offerings. Shops selling all kinds of glass objects are spread throughout the main streets of the island, and glass art galleries and many furnaces are open for tourists for demonstrations and possible purchases. The number of accommodation options has increased, mostly thanks to the establishment of small hotels and Airbnb listings, but also through the conversion of historical glass furnaces into accommodation spaces (Anch'io Progetto Murano, 2012). These dynamics equate, on a smaller scale, those of close-by Venice.

Venice has been – and still is – considered a tourism destination par excellence (Cosgrove, 2003; Quinn, 2007). In 2017, the historical city centre of Venice received 3,155,548 tourist arrivals and 7,862,292 tourist overnights (Città di Venezia, 2017). To this number one must add day trippers: people visiting Venice without an overnight stay. They are not statistically represented but are high impact tourism presence in the city (Van der Borg, Costa, and Gotti, 1996; Russo, 2002). In response to such a huge tourist demand, the tourism industry adjusted through an extensive growth of the accommodation sector of the city, both in terms of traditional hotels and newer forms of accommodation such as B&Bs and Airbnb listings (see, for example, Visentin and Bertocchi, 2019). The food and beverage industry and tourist-oriented commercial retail sector also increased (Zanini, Lando, and Bellio, 2008). Corresponding to these trends, the residential population has dramatically decreased by 11% in the ten years between 2007 and 2017 (Città di Venezia, nd). Similarly, in Murano, the number of tourist beds is growing and the population decreased by 10% in 2007-2017 (ibid).

On the one hand, Murano distinguishes itself by being the only remaining active industrial centre in the Venetian Lagoon. Its long history and current industrial activity have created a distinct cultural identity founded on artistic glassmaking. On the other hand, the island is part of the wider 'water city' composed of Venice and its Lagoon, with which it shares not only the natural setting but also some dual-faceted socioeconomic dynamics: increasing tourist flows, notwithstanding the current crisis period, but also depopulation, few employment opportunities, and the increase in rental and real estate prices (Anch'io Progetto Murano, 2012).

Growing mass tourist flows, the related conversion of the economy of the city into a so-called "tourism monoculture" (Minoia, 2017), and the negative effects of these dynamics on the residential population have been variously analysed in literature in different territorial

⁴ Modern designs were introduced after the first Venice Art Biennale in 1895 and then consolidated from the 1920s on.

contexts by framing them as 'overtourism' impacts (D'Eramo, 2017; Peeters et al, 2018; Koens, Postma, and Papp, 2019) or as touristification and gentrification displacement (Cocola-Gant, 2018). Given the evidence for these phenomena in the city, Venice has often been the object of these studies (Quinn, 2007; Minoia, 2017; Seraphin, Sheeran and Pilato, 2018; Bertocchi and Visentin, 2019; Visentin and Bertocchi, 2019; Cristiano and Gonella, 2020).

Murano and other Venetian Lagoon 'satellite' islands have been understudied in such analyses, although they may be part of the same phenomena or are at least impacted by them, as is the case for more peripheral neighbourhoods of tourist destinations (e.g., Cocola-Gant, 2015, for Barcelona). Studying tourism gentrification on small islands could be even more relevant because of the limited nature of these territories' surfaces, a characteristic that can make spatial transformations and tensions more evident. In this regard, drawing from Cocola-Gant's (2018) definition of tourism gentrification displacement, we focus on residents' perception of tourism gentrification issues on the island of Murano. The case of Murano is interesting because, as aforementioned, the island is located near Venice, one of the most emblematic cases of an overtourism destination, and shares some of these dynamics with it. However, it is also, in some ways, detached from it, both historically and geographically. This is why understanding residents' perceptions of touristification and gentrification issues may shed light on the ways in which these dynamics spread from the 'core' of tourist destinations to more peripheral areas. Hence the question, what are Muranese inhabitants' perception of tourist gentrification-related displacement?

We aim at answering this by drawing on a questionnaire on life-quality perceptions administered to a sample of 15% of the Muranese population in September 2018. Before delving more deeply into the results and their contribution to answering our research question, in the next section we briefly sketch some theoretical perspectives on touristification and gentrification. Within this literature, we argue that the concept of displacement (Cocola-Gant, 2018) is of particular relevance to our project. Hence, after defining it, we briefly explain how it could be used to look at Venice's situation by referring to some previous studies before applying it to our case study on Murano Island.

Tourism gentrification and the concept of 'displacement'

Gentrification is a global process with diverse causes and characteristics. It is connected with globalisation and manifests itself as a form of new urban colonialism (Atkinson and Bridge, 2004). It involves not only residential rehabilitation but also a deep economic, social, and spatial restructuring of urban space and its dynamics (Smith and Williams, 2013). Although gentrification is a popular theme in academic research these days, very little work has been produced on the growth and establishment of this phenomenon on islands. However, the process is not new to island communities (Clark, Johnson, Lundholm and Malmberg, 2007). Atkinson and Bridge (2004) have explained that gentrification spreads geographically and involves big cities, neighbourhoods, rural territories, historical centres, and islands; hence, both urban and non-urban contexts. In line with our research aims, we decided not to concentrate on the origins of the gentrification phenomenon, as being derived from colonialism or neoliberal urban development (Glass, 1964; Gouldner, 1976; Smith, 1987; Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Díaz-Parra, 2018), but rather to focus more on those aspects of gentrification related to territorial development, social and cultural changes, and residents' perceptions and worries connected to gentrification processes that accompany the development of tourism. Indeed, some of the most well-known cases of gentrification in cities and urban contexts, at least on the European continent, concern neighbourhoods of

big cities or towns that are also popular tourism destinations. In these contexts, players within the gentrification process are not only the new residential class, constituting a new identity for the area of settlement, but also tourists, who share the same urban space with residents but have different motivations, desires, and ways of experiencing the city. According to several researchers who focused on detecting various kinds of tourist development effects (Butler, 1980; Butler, 1999; Urry, 2002; Gotham, 2005; Jover and Diaz-Parra, 2020), tourism is strongly embedded in the gentrification process. For example, Gravari-Barbas and Guinand (2017: 3) argue that “local actors, local inhabitants and as well as tourists themselves, contribute to gentrification phenomena.” Indeed, gentrified areas could even represent one of the tourist attractions of a destination, zones for tourist accommodation facilities, places for tourism activity development, and areas for new investment (Bridge, 2007). Cocola-Gant (2018: 2) suggests that “the attraction of visitors accelerates the pressure of gentrification as the intensification of land use pushes up the value of commercial and residential properties.” This is a form of local tourism development (Logan and Molotch, 2007) that is particularly relevant in non-urban economies that rely on tourism as a force of growth and rejuvenation. Tourism and gentrification often reinforce each other: tourism facilitates the development of amenities and services that also emerge during gentrification, for example restaurants, trendy hotels, stores, or art galleries (Terhorst, van de Ven and Deben, 2003).

Therefore, we refer to these kinds of phenomena using the expression ‘tourism gentrification’. Tourism gentrification implies a wide mutation of the territory structure and everyday dynamics, in which residents can lose their primary role of city users and perceive a loss of quality of life and of the city’s livability. In this way, touristified destinations are perceived more as places to visit than as cities to live in, and residents’ well-being is moved to the background in favour of visitors’ satisfaction. One of the most well-known consequences of the phenomenon of tourism gentrification is the expulsion of lower-income inhabitants due to an increase in property values in those areas (Porter and Shaw, 2013). This form of displacement is what Cocola-Gant (2018) describes as “residential displacement”: tourism-related developments affect price levels in the house market and consequently force residents to move away from their neighbourhoods. Recently, this situation has been boosted due to the diffusion of short-term holiday rentals (e.g. Airbnb) that produce a substantial conversion of properties from housing for residents into accommodation for tourists. Beyond the aforementioned effects on the residential real estate market, tourism gentrification also impacts the commercial system, and hence the facilities and everyday functions of the gentrified areas. This happens when private and public services and local stores geared toward residents are crowded out by tourism facilities and tourist-focused shops (e.g. souvenir shops, international luxury brands, take-aways and fast-food). This phenomenon is what Cocola-Gant (2018) describes as “commercial displacement”. This process has sociospatial consequences and involves a loss of urban-cultural identity.

Tourism gentrification also produces another effect on the destination, as residents are forced to compete with tourists in their everyday performances in their life spaces (Mordue, 2005; Quinn, 2007). This situation creates tensions and controversies at the territorial level between tourists and residents, as well as social movements (Russo, 2002; Cavallo, 2016). This phenomenon is what Cocola-Gant (2018: 289) calls “place-based displacement”, arguing that “gentrification creates a new social and cultural context in which the indigenous residents feel a sense of dispossession from the places they inhabit or ‘loss of place’” (ibid: 289) (also see Marcuse, 1985; Davidson, 2008; Davidson, 2009; Davidson and Lees, 2010). This remains to be empirically investigated in depth. Even if residents are not directly displaced from their houses, as occurs during “residential displacement”, their everyday life is made more difficult

due to crowding, pollution, and the disappearance of meeting places and entertainment opportunities caused by the prevalence of tourist-focused activities in the areas in which they live. Hence, this lowers their life-quality perception (Cocola-Gant, 2018). According to the same author (as well as to our knowledge) tourism gentrification studies have barely touched on the topic of place-based displacement from the perspective of residents' perception (for a notable exception, see Quinn, 2007). However, even if this kind of displacement can be seen as a consequence of commercial displacement and, in some ways, as connected to residential displacement, we argue that place-based displacement is a deeper sociospatial dynamic that needs more attention, especially by focusing on citizens' perceptions of tourism gentrification issues.

Displacements in Venice according to literature on overtourism

In the last few decades, various studies have investigated displacement processes – even if not identified as such – by referring to the emblematic case of Venice, hence connecting these processes to overtourism. First, several authors (Zanetto 1986; van der Borg and Costa, 1993; Montanari and Muscarà, 1995; Van der Borg and Russo, 1997; Russo 2002; Bertocchi et al., 2020) have brought attention to residential displacement, arguing that tourism has taken over the historical city of Venice (Quinn, 2007) and showing depopulation trends and crowding-out effects due to rising housing costs, difficulties of finding employment outside tourism, and changes in the commercial urban texture. Second, the extremely high global tourist demand for Venice has also caused an expansion of retail facilities, restaurants and bars (Zanini, Lando, and Bellio, 2008; Bertocchi and Visentin, 2019; Salerno, 2020), and new forms of entertainment, contributing to the 'museification' of cultural offerings (e.g. dress-up concerts outside the carnival period). This displacement of local stores and activities meant for Venetian people results in an increasing tourism 'monoculture', in which commercial infrastructure is mainly based on amenities for visitors. Third, other studies on Venice (Russo, 2002; Quinn, 2007; Cavallo, 2016) have highlighted the conflictual relationship between tourists and residents, showing a deterioration of the latter's quality of life, especially due to the sharing of the same places (public spaces but also transport and other services) that are often affected by congestion and overcrowding. This situation forced residents to change their relationship with the city, their behaviour, and their very lives (Quinn, 2007). This points to some strong signs of place-based displacement. As previously mentioned, Murano shares some similar traits with Venice regarding mass tourism. But can we say that Murano's residents are living and feeling the same kind of displacement? How is their perception of residential, commercial, and place-based displacement? An answer to this question may enlarge our understanding of tourism gentrification processes affecting non-urban spaces, in particular islands, contributing to case studies of what Phillips (2004: 6) described as "other geographies of gentrification."

Data collection

This study originates from an initiative launched by Murano's cultural association, *La Voce di Murano*, in 2018. Originally, *La Voce di Murano* was the local newspaper and was printed daily on the island from 1867 to 1979. At the beginning of 2018, a group of young inhabitants of Murano decided to found a cultural association with the same name, which is directed at publishing a historical reprint of the newspaper combined with some recent news about culture, sport, and local curiosities on a monthly basis. Apart from republishing the newspaper, both on paper and online, this group aims at promoting and developing activities, events, and projects geared toward the island of Murano and its inhabitants in

order to safeguard and improve services for the citizenry and the quality of life of the community as well as spread knowledge about local social and artistic assets.

In September 2018, as a first step toward attaining better addressing and contextualising its projects and actions, the association created a questionnaire entitled ‘*Vivere e lavorare a Murano, cosa ne pensi?*’ (‘Living and working in Murano, what do you think about it?’). The survey, designed by the association’s members, contained questions about public transport quality and problems, environmental quality, satisfaction with different public and private services for citizens and the educational, cultural, and recreational offer on the island, the real estate situation, and citizens’ concerns about problems and threats possibly affecting the islands in the near future. The questionnaire was widely disseminated in three ways: online on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, door-to-door, and in the September edition of the newspaper *La Voce di Murano*. It was addressed to all people living and/or working on Murano from 18 years old. However, the sample that was finally collected contained only respondents who declared that they lived on Murano. Once it was filled in, paper copies were returned to newsstands, drugstores, supermarkets, and greengrocers. This kind of questionnaire distribution, both online and offline, allowed the association to collect 579 responses in the month of September 2018. The newspaper’s editor-in-chief asked for the collaboration of one the first named author in order to obtain scientific support in extracting value from the questionnaire. First, before distribution, he designed the online questionnaire through Google Forms; next, he dealt with data entry of data from the collected paper copies. Furthermore, he took part in the presentation of results during an event in Murano’s Theatre in December 2018.

The sample

The sample used for the present data analysis was cleaned, which was necessary because of missing data for the statistical unit, and was reduced in order to better adapt the proportions of gender and age distributions of the sample with the real characteristics (of age and gender) of the population, which are visible in Tables 1 and 2.

Age classes	Residents	Observations	% Residents	% Observations	% Difference
15-29	623	93	16.2	17.3	-1.1
30-44	574	101	14.9	18.8	-3.9
45-59	1,029	133	26.8	24.8	2.0
60-74	898	126	23.4	23.5	-0.1
75-89	625	37	16.3	6.9	9.4
90+	96	5	2.5	0.9	1.6
Total	3,845	537			

Table 1 - Comparison between sample and real population in Murano (age) (source: Comune di Venezia, 2017).

	Residents	Observations	% Residents	% Observations	% Difference
Female	2,300	312	53.6	56.8	-3.3
Male	1,994	237	46.4	43.2	3.3
Total	4,294	549			

Table 2 - Comparison between sample and real population in Murano (gender) (source: Comune di Venezia, 2017).

Considering the 579 questionnaires collected, the sample represents 15% of the population (over 18 years old) in Murano, while the ‘cleaned’ sample represents 13.5% of the total population. Therefore, the sample has the following characteristics: the gender and age distribution mostly represents the population of Murano, hence there is a small prevalence of women and the majority of respondents is middle-aged (between 45 and 74 years old), followed by younger people (from 18⁵ to 44 years old). The sample is composed mainly of married or co-habiting people (with or without children, in the same percentage), followed by singles without children. Only a small percentage of respondents are widowed or single without children. As for the economic/financial situation, most people answered that their situation was “fine,” followed by “good.” A small part of the sample finds that they have a “difficult” or “very difficult” financial situation. Very few declared having a “very well-fixed” situation. As for employment, the majority of interviewed people (24.76%) did not work in Murano, while 22.05% were retired people. Among the respondents who declared working in Murano (46%), a good number (14.70%) worked in glass production, and a lower number in glass-selling activities. Another small percentage of respondents were housewives or students. As for the level of education of the people interviewed, most (40.81%) had a high school diploma, followed by those who had middle school and those who had a degree (or a superior degree) from a university.

The dataset that was derived from the questionnaire was cleaned as aforementioned. It contains 518 sample observations and 79 variables. Most are ordinal: some are on a scale from 1 to 10 (where 1 is very few and 10 a lot), others on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is very bad and 5 is very good). We performed descriptive statistics for all variables, then decided to focus on the analysis of those variables that would best describe and shed light on the phenomenon of tourist-related gentrification and displacement perceptions and hence would best answer our research question. We also performed other, more advanced statistical analysis (e.g. autocorrelation matrix). We employed Tableau Software for data analysis and data visualisation.

Displacement perception of Murano residents

As aforementioned, the starting point of our discussion about tourism gentrification in Murano concerns what CoCola-Gant (2018) identifies as displacement, meaning a series of negative externalities affecting a place’s inhabitants that results from touristification and gentrification. Rather than analysing physical and urban changes related to residential,

⁵ According to the Statistical Office of Venice Municipality, this category comprises 15-19 year olds; however, the survey was addressed only to people 18 years or older.

commercial, and place-based displacement through the adoption of more traditional longitudinal quantitative studies about real estate markets or commercial systems, we shifted our focus to the perception that Muranese inhabitants have of their life quality, the problems they feel they have in relation to tourism gentrification, and the shortcomings they feel their island has in terms of services and facilities. Hence, we understand these as their perceptions about the three forms of displacement (Cocola-Gant, 2018), which we treat separately in the following sections.

Perception of residential displacement

Residential displacement entails the expulsion of residents from their homes due to an increase in prices on the housing market. We found traits of the perception of this situation in three questions in the survey: those regarding housing markets, rental opportunities, and price levels. People currently living in a rental home were asked the reasons for their choice. Almost two-thirds of the sample (63%) responded that the choice to live in rented accommodation was because of the high sale prices of apartments on Murano Island, while 15% of respondents said they were looking for a house to buy. The other 23% was not considering staying in Murano in the long run. The difficulty of renting a house on the island was a common perception. The average score of this question was 6.5 out of 10, a value that increases to 7.2 out of 10 when considering those respondents who currently do not own a house. On the other hand, buying a house was perceived to be less difficult than finding one to rent (with an average score of 5.4 out of 10), but it seemed more difficult for couples or singles – who valued this with a higher score – and residents who also work on the island, especially as glass sellers. The age classes that perceived buying a house as particularly difficult were young people aged 18 to 29 years and elderly over 90 years old (they scored this question 6 out of 10 on average).

Even though the majority of respondents argued that finding a house in Murano is not easy, most (74%) also declared that they would advise potential residents to buy a house on the island (giving a score higher than or similar to 6 out of 10). This suggestion is probably not directly connected to the perception of the housing market situation but to other reasons, partly regarding other successively analysed aspects of life in Murano and partly located outside of what was investigated through the questionnaire.

Perception of commercial displacement

Cocola-Gant's (2018) definition of commercial displacement further develops the concept of displacement connected to the housing market and focuses on changes in the nature and uses of the territory – in our case Murano Island – that can provoke a sense of exclusion and a deterioration of residents' quality of life. This happens because commercial displacement crowds out commercial activities geared toward residents. These activities are turned into spaces of entertainment and consumption for visitors.

We decided to embrace a wider definition of commercial displacement by encompassing both private and public services in it, beyond merely commercial activities. With public services, we mean basic city facilities connected to health, administrative offices, and postal services. With private services, we refer to food consumption-related activities (restaurants and bars), stores (newspaper and tobacco, delis and supermarkets, and clothes), and

recreational activities (music, cinema, museums, social activities, and sports facilities). Figure 2 shows what Murano residents perceive to be good quality and what they perceive as being deficient or inadequate for their daily life and needs. They were asked to evaluate these services on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 referred to very low quality, 3 to a service being sufficient, and 5 to a service being of excellent quality. Eight services on a total of 13 public and private facilities were considered to be insufficient. Only sports facilities were appreciated as recreational activities for residents, while newspaper/tobacco stores, supermarkets, and restaurants were the most positively evaluated aspects in the commercial field. Health-related services received an average score over 3 out of 5.

Recreational and cultural activities and facilities for residents – especially museums, music activities, cinemas, and clothing stores – were among the worst evaluated aspects on the island. This scenario shows that the Muranese do not have many entertainment options for their free time (as previously also stated in Anch’io Progetto Murano, 2012); hence, they are probably forced to move away from the island to find a satisfactory recreational offer. Another significant aspect of Murano Island is the very low value assigned to registry and municipal offices (1.7 out of 5 points). This suggests a bad level of public management of the island, which forces residents leave Murano for administrative affairs and issues.

Even though we are unable to show whether there was actual displacement of resident-related activities and their transformation into tourist-related activities, these results show that there was a strong perception of a series of shortages within the commercial and recreational offer on Murano Island, which may cause a decrease in inhabitants’ quality of life. Residential well-being seems to have been forgotten, probably due to depopulation and/or major attention for a tourist audience.

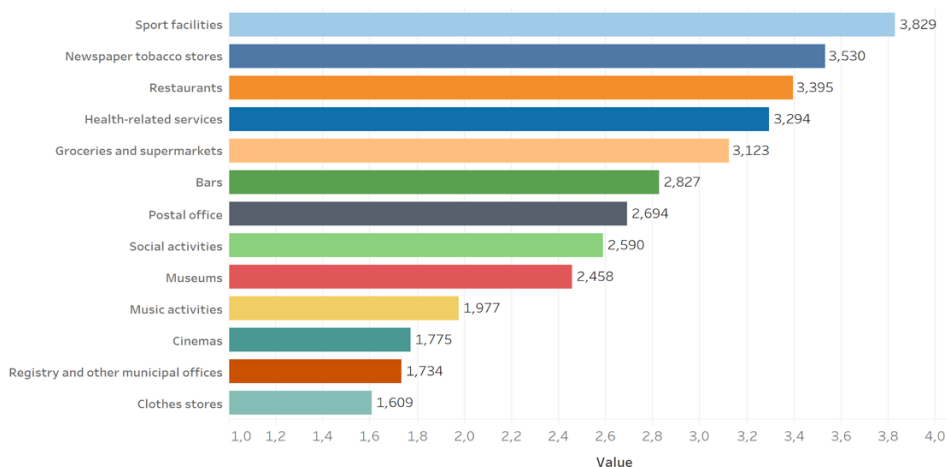


Figure 2 - Commercial displacement perception of city facilities and services.

Perception of place-based displacement

Place-based displacement is a situation of conflict between residents and tourists that derives from the necessity of sharing the same spaces. One of the main spaces and moments of collision is public transportation (in particular, water buses), as also underlined by Quinn’s research on Venetian residents (2007) and Anch’io Progetto Murano (2012). Here,

interviewees affirmed that they tried to avoid using water buses due to tourist overcrowding or that they tended to confine their usage of public transportation to certain times. This solution was not always practicable for Murano’s residents, especially for those who worked outside the island (46% of the sample) and needed to reach Venice’s historical centre, the railway station, or the bus station to go to the mainland, which can be done by boat only. Their perception of public transportation’s critical issues that emerged from our questionnaire confirm the trends highlighted by Quinn (2007), in particular in terms of the lines to and from the bus and train stations, which are the ones widely used by residents. Besides overcrowding, residents also complained about the absence of practical solutions to face this problem, such as the lack of priority gates distinguishing residents from visitors at water bus stops, which are present in parts of Venice city centre. As clearly visible in Figure 3, critical issues in public transportation are a first perception of place-based displacement deriving from touristification in Murano.

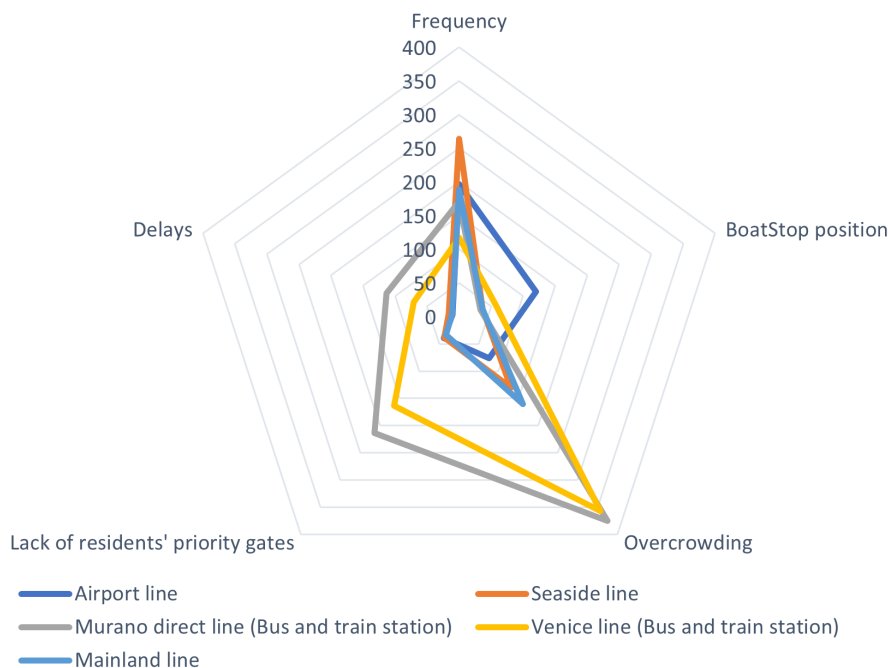


Figure 3 - Public transportation’s critical issues.

However, there are also other, deeper forms of place-based displacement occurring in Murano, which are more related to a diagnosis of a ‘loss of place’. The concept of ‘loss of place’ refers to changes in the use of some island areas that produce various kinds of pressures for residents: economic and affordability problems, cultural and lifestyle pressures, and privatisation of public space. These indirect displacement pressures (Cocola-Gant, 2015, developed from Marcuse, 1985) are identifiable in residents’ perceptions of a critical issue or concern. The economic and affordability problems refer to residents’ perceptions of rising costs of rent and homes and of the growth of the number of short-term tourism rentals, which caused both an increase in house prices and a shortage of rental homes. Cultural and lifestyle pressures refer to residents’ concerns about the lack of health-related services, cultural activities, residential activities, and island depopulation. The privatisation of public spaces refers to the critical issues that result from the closure of glass furnaces, the increase

in abandoned places, and the opening of new hotels (conversion from public to private buildings). More generally, place-based displacement pressures are also expressed in concerns about excessive and mismanaged tourism flows.

There were several critical issues pointing to place-based displacement (and residents’ related sense of dispossession of the places they inhabit) (Figure 4), which in our questionnaire were evaluated on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 referred to ‘not critical at all’ and 4 meant ‘very worried’. The issues felt the most were those concerning island depopulation, excessive tourism flows or their mismanagement, and the closures of glass furnaces. The latter testifies to the slow but continuous process of the loss of one of the most important cultural and identity assets of Murano.

Hence, what Muranese inhabitants were most worried about was the deterioration of residents’ well-being due to a loss of everyday activities and a transformation of the social context of the island, rather than some spatial conflict between visitors and tourists. Indeed, the growth of the number of tourist accommodations (new hotels and short-term rentals) was perceived as one of the least critical aspects, showing that tourism pressure on residents’ daily life was not as unacceptable as in other tourism destinations, such as those where local anti-tourism movements appear (Hughes, 2018, for the case of Barcelona; Żemła, 2020, for European cities). Overall, this analysis highlights that place-based displacement was not very strongly recognised by residents, who seemed to be more worried about commercial displacement, creating an island less pleasant to live on with weaknesses regarding recreational and cultural activities, abandoned spaces, factories, and residential daily services. We argue that criticism of tourism is probably related to the massive ‘hit-and-run’ flows of day visitors that congest the entire island during particular moments of the year only (Spring, Summer and Autumn weekends or holidays), visiting the island merely because they are attracted by glassmaking and glass stores. The ‘hit-and-run’ visits also affect close-by Venice (see e.g., Russo and Sans, 2009) and hence is strengthened in the northern Lagoon islands as well.⁶

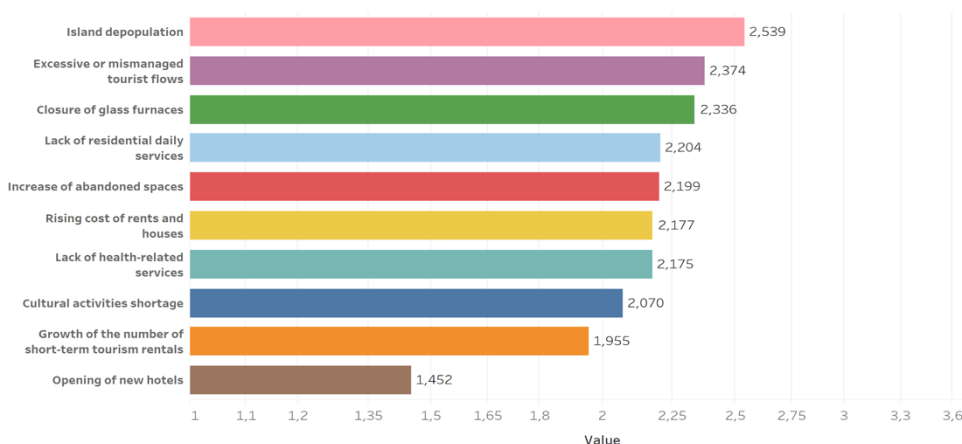


Figure 4 - Place-based displacement perception.

⁶ As a confirmation of this trend, for example, we can point out that among TripAdvisor’s “Things to do” in Venice, the “Half-day visit to Murano, Burano, Torcello” is the most reviewed (TripAdvisor, 2021).

Overall perception and worries

Despite the numerous criticalities referring to the three kinds of displacement that constrain residents’ quality of life, Muranese residents are mostly happy to live on their island. As a matter of fact, they evaluated their quality of life as more than sufficient, with a score of 6.6 out of 10. The sets of indirect pressures that feed the three kinds of displacement cannot be seen as independent forces but are mutually reinforcing elements that constrain the daily life of residents and reinforce tourism gentrification processes. This interdependency of forces is analysed through a correlation matrix, in which all displacement sub-issues are associated with each other. This enables us to overcome the boundaries of the three kinds of displacement and understand the overall island perception. Data have been normalised in terms of values and are in the same order (a higher score corresponds to a higher rate of difficulties, a greater perception of the problem, and a lower quality of private and public services). The results are presented on a scale from -1 (blue colour) to +1 (brown colour), where a positive value (and a darker colour) represents a larger correlation between two intersections of variables. This analysis (shown in Figure 5) solidly highlights the correlation between the two thematic clusters described as commercial (upper left corner and middle of the image) and place-based displacement (bottom right corner). The dark square in the middle of the figure is notable, emphasising the necessity to develop recreational activities for residents (music, museums, and cinema), which would make the island attractive to potential residents or current citizens.



Figure 5 - overall Murano residents’ perception correlation matrix.

When variables are positively correlated outside the two clusters as well, we can confirm that residents consider these issues to be cross-sectional and more important to liveability on the island and overall well-being. This is the case with topics regarding housing market criticalities (expressed through the difficulty of buying or renting a house) and those regarding the potential loss of Murano identity (expressed in the closure of glass furnaces or the abandonment of spaces, and the overall drop in private and public services).

Conclusions

The research and analyses presented in this article are aimed at understanding residents' perceptions of touristification and gentrification issues, expressed in terms of displacements on Murano. We briefly illustrated the inner characteristics of Murano by referring to the historical entanglement of this island with the art of glassmaking and to its administrative independence from Venice. Then, we moved our focus to the current social and economic situation of the island, underlining the possible emergence of touristification and gentrification traits, connected with the wider presence of these phenomena in close-by Venice city centre. Within the stream of literature studying gentrification in connection to tourism development, we particularly focused on the concepts of residential, commercial, and place-based displacement theorised by CoCola-Gant (2018). Although these kinds of effects have been variously studied in Venice (Costa and van der Borg, 1993; Quinn, 2007; Zanini, Lando, and Bellio, 2008; Russo and Sans, 2009; Cavallo 2016; Bertocchi and Visentin, 2019), this is not the case for other Venetian Lagoon islands. Furthermore, still missing was a more qualitative rather than a mere quantitative exploration of these issues among island residents. Hence, we used a widely disseminated questionnaire about life quality involving almost 15% of Murano's residents to delve into inhabitants' perceptions of residential, commercial, and place-based displacement on the island.

Residential and commercial displacement are among the most common and most studied tourism gentrification effects. In our study, we found that residential displacement was evident in citizens' perception of the difficulty of finding a house to rent or buy – in this case, mostly because of high house prices – thus confirming that residents in Murano can feel what is happening on a larger scale in Venice and other touristified territories.

We also found that commercial displacement in Murano is relevant, evident in a widespread and strong perception about the lack of public and private services and recreational activities for inhabitants. These aspects were felt to be the most problematic ones, negatively affecting Muranese people's well-being. However, we acknowledge that tourism-related gentrification may be just one of the causes of this issue felt by residents. As a matter of fact, the lack of commercial and recreational activities may be worsened by Murano's insularity and its progressive depopulation. On the one hand, depopulation may have caused the transfer of residential services and facilities to the mainland (e.g. municipal or medical services); on the other side, insularity may have discouraged the establishment of private commercial businesses or recreational activities, for which the island's inhabitants must depend on close-by Venice. Furthermore, residents have complained for a long time about the lack of cultural activities on the island (see, e.g. Anch'io Progetto Murano, 2012) and have pointed to the necessity of creating a multi-functional centre or extending usage of the Glass Museum, which at the moment is a tourist attraction with a symbolic meaning for residents

(custodianship of the island's arts and craft tradition), but not a practical one⁷ (e.g. by providing educational activities for young students or families, research, laboratories).

What is less investigated in the literature and still needs further conceptualisation is the dynamics of place-based displacement (Cocola-Gant, 2018). Our study contributed to shedding light on this phenomenon not only by looking, on the surface, at conflicts over physical space – such as those related to public transportation issues including overcrowding or a lack of access for residents only – but also by investigating people's concerns and worries about their territory in more depth. These concerns are indirect and subtle signals of a 'loss of place', such as depopulation, the closure of furnaces, and the mismanagement of excessive tourist flows.

The overall picture shows a correlation between various issues related to the three kinds of displacement, confirming their perception by Murano's residents. It also highlights some transversal concerns, which are more strongly perceived beyond the three kinds of displacement: the disappearance of public and private services, the difficulty of finding a house, and the progressive loss of identity due to the closure of furnaces, the abandonment of unused spaces, and the progressive depopulation of the island. These issues are a sort of *file rouge* among residential, commercial, and place-based displacements, which points to the interconnectedness of tourism gentrification effects and the necessity of not forgetting the larger picture of these phenomena. Furthermore, this larger glance allowed us to understand that Muranese people's main worries are related to aspects of their daily life on the island, rather than to more indirect effects of tourism gentrification such as the increase in the number of hotels or short-term tourism rentals.

Comparing the two realities of Murano and Venice, we argue that there are some similarities between the two of them – most of all in terms of residential and commercial displacement – but also that Murano is not as seriously affected by tourism gentrification as Venice, most of all in terms of place-based displacement dynamics. It seems that Murano's insularity has produced, with time, a double effect. On the one hand, it has enabled the protection of the territory from stronger gentrification impacts happening in Venice (e.g. the conversion of residential housing into tourist accommodation, or serious tensions between residents and tourists), which seems to be perceived, if at all, on a smaller scale. On the other hand, the insularity has made the territory poorer: first, in terms of inhabitants, and second, as a consequence, in terms of facilities, services, recreational activities, and job opportunities. However, we claim that this is not an irreversible trend.

First, tensions between tourists and residents and related touristification and gentrification phenomena, mainly caused by the specific hit-and-run visitor behaviour on the island, may be contained by the promotion of a more responsible, educated, and conscious form of tourism on the island, based on a slower and deeper experience of encountering the territory (including the Lagoon environment) and the art of glassmaking. This is what arose from citizens' consultations that occurred on the occasion of Anchio Progetto Murano's 2012 survey: the Muranese considered tourism an important part of their economy, but they acknowledged the risk of 'tourism monoculture' of the type that has affected Venice. They were willing to re-plan the island tourist signage system as well as create a cultural centre for the promotion of an alternative form of tourism, also considering the Lagoon environment. Lately, some tentative plans have been conceived in this direction. A relevant artisanal trade

⁷ As a confirmation of this feeling, our questionnaire's respondents rated museum-related services negatively.

association, for example, has promoted some tourist itineraries to discover the lagoon islands and their particular arts and crafts more deeply and slowly (Venice Original Travel, nd). Also, since 2017, the municipality, together with Venice City Museums and some cultural institutions, has been organising the Venice Glass Week, aimed at celebrating, supporting, and promoting the art of glassmaking through various initiatives in Murano and Venice. These examples and our findings show that tourism gentrification has not reached unbearable levels, allowing us to argue that these forms of tourism more connected to the glass manufacturing tradition can be still practiced, also considering that “island communities are spared many of the negative impacts of being at the frontline of the meeting of cultural and mass tourism” (Grydehøj and Casagrande, 2020: 56).

Second, connecting to this last point, the study proves that tourism gentrification also highly impacts inhabitants' daily life quality, and these impacts are more evident when they occur on small 'satellite' islands that are close to but distanced from the city centre (such as on Murano compared to Venice). Regarding the particular dimension of islands, some answers from the literature could apply to the Murano context. We can refer to what Grydehøj and Casagrande (2020) suggest for the Venetian Lagoon about improving connectivity between islands and the mainland to reduce the real or perceived disconnectedness of Murano itself and facilitate centre-periphery relationships. More input is provided by Gillies (2014), who suggests two crucial aspects: education as a clear factor in out-migration and the search for a job that extends this movement. Employment opportunities on islands are significant for the future of those who do return after education for work reasons. In general, the lack of employment is a critical issue to take into consideration regarding islands' depopulation. Finally, Casagrande (2016) suggests a focus on the rigidity of islands due to too strong policies related to conservation and preservation of the islands' identities without paying attention to the real economic, social, and cultural needs of the inhabitants. In this context, Casagrande (2016: 133) underlines that island communities “often require creative and unconventional policies in order to survive.” This could take the form of a statute of autonomy from the municipality of Venice, enabling Murano to design custom regulations for its unique environment and social context.

A key action required to face the challenges related to depopulation and tourism uncontrolled growth is to intervene through local policies in order to make small islands such as Murano attractive for people by creating jobs, incentivising the presence of public and private services and recreational spaces, and reinforcing public transportation facilities. In particular, Murano needs not only a major safeguard of its glass production, but also the creation of new jobs beyond glass production and commerce and, accordingly, a more affordable housing market and new local services tailored to the people. This will stem phenomena such as residential and commercial displacement and may help in strengthening the island's identity and sense of place, which we saw as a fundamental aspect impacting people's well-being on the island.

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