Abstract
The emphasis set by Unesco on the authenticity of a site to be a necessary requirement, draws attention to the “materials and substance” of architecture. Material authenticity attains the central position it deserves as a target of the project, at the same time as a reference point to enhance the cultural meaning of cities like Venice.

Such an assumption shows the strategic role of some detailed fields like the Medieval exposed brickwork. Venice owes its peculiar historical surfaces to the expertise of its resident artisans and the results of a centuries-old selection of materials and refined processing and finish techniques improving their endurance, as well as connoting either the single buildings and the established image of the city itself.

A careful analytical setting is due to preserve them properly: a process of recognition along with systematic monitoring of their behaviour over time is needed in order to activate maintenance works that avert the replacement of entire sections. Furthermore, the project has often to deal with the fragmentation of these old and eroded surfaces. Even so, their preservation is worth the effort as they are still proving their resistance, while recent masonries and coatings cause irreversible alterations to the facades, as well as to the image of the whole city, also having a limited duration when compared to the centuries-old still surviving plasters, because of chemical and physical incompatibility with the existing masonries.

This is the reason a taking-care approach is particularly appropriate in Venice, as it would allow to maintain, and possibly to integrate the existing brickwork and plasters, instead of resorting to systematic surface replacements. Hence the importance of fostering local artisans, because they are the repositories of traditional skills that are now at risk of being lost forever due to a difficult economic & social situation which is leading to insufficient opportunities for skills to transfer across the generations.

The study days provide an international scope in discussing about craftsmanship, traditional skills and trained voluntary work. This gives us the chance to shed light on the operational and cultural contribution of artisans to celebrate building traditions and inspire technical and compatible innovations.

Thus the topic can be a test bed for any taking-care prospect involving Venice as a whole, whose method can be applied to any historical centre, in Italy and abroad.