

The Right to Speak and to Exist of Heritage Communities

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Abstract Heritage Communities (HCs) often are formed as civic structures in opposition to public decisions which are perceived as dangerous with regard to their quality of life and protection of places that give shape to their identity. This puts them in the uncomfortable position of being perceived as the No-Side. To overcome this situation, many HCs developed over time a more proactive approach. The HCs are now fully aware of not being structures of representation, they do not 'represent' anybody: they are the active citizenship and they claim for a clear political role. Only the shared governance; only the shared decisional power can be considered 'participative' in the full sense of the term.

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Keywords Heritage Community. Participation. Active Citizenship.

The following paper is not the result of a systematic and methodologically strong research. It is rather an attempt to provide an explicit and consistent structure to a number of remarks which raised during various direct relationships with the major Venetian HC. The ideas outlined here always refer to them, also where this is not clearly spelt out.

1 Community and the Construction of Reality

Some time ago, St. Mark's Square has been covered by huge billboards which helped to generate sufficient income to the necessary restoration works of Doge's Palace's facade. In that period, the square was continuously overcrowded by a stifling flow of tourists taking pictures of everything. One day I decided to make a short video revealing an interesting thing: that is a tourist who was taking some pictures from Ponte della Paglia, similarly to many others. He was taking photos of the facade of the National Library of St. Mark's, that was entirely secreted by big posters.

The tourist was photographing the Library as if the billboard was not

there. Others were also taking the same pictures and those of the Bridge of Sighs, at their right, which was veiled for the same reason. In these cases, we clearly see the operation of cultural patterns,¹ namely, those sets of organized and consistent meanings which determine our perception of the world and of ourselves. Venice is beautiful, Venice is unique, Venice is a dream. These are models of meaning which exist in the mind of visitors before they arrive in the city. The active presence of these models is so powerful that it overlaps the visitor's ability to perceive the real environment in which they are. Why should they obsessively take pictures of watches and perfumes? The tourist photographs the 'imaginary Venice' also if he/she cannot see it in any way.

After all, as philosophers have known for centuries, we cannot get a direct perception of the world. We can only perceive the picture of the world that we build through the language and models of perception transmitted by the society in which we live. The result is the tourist arriving in Piazzale Roma with a car and trying to penetrate in the city just because his satellite navigation system tells him that his hotel is two kilometres away, without indicating about canals and strict pedestrian *calli*. The driver can see canals and water, instead of paved roads, with his own eyes but acts according to the representation of the world that his satellite system gives him. This is a perfect example of the power of the narration to create the reality in which we live. Our behaviour and the sense of our life are determined by this continuous social building of meanings. When we talk about community we are talking about persons sharing a specific system of meaning. The HCs defined by the Faro Convention are formed when such a set of shared meanings exist. Often, if not always, this set of sharing meaning in Venice was formed in the face of a threat. The transformation of St. Mark's Square in a huge commercial set, albeit temporary, led a part of the population to perceive a serious threat to their sense of identity and greatly facilitated the emergence of the first Venetian HCs.

Since then, the threats have multiplied, but have also multiplied the organized group of citizens asking for the right to be heard. There's no need for these communities to exist when the goods and the social practices which own cultural and identity value are enhanced and safeguarded by public institution. In these cases, various association and committees which aim to enhance the common CH and do it on a volunteer-based action still exist. But their ability to develop *explicit* cultural models seems to emerge only in case of conflict. In Venice, these conflicts are higher than elsewhere because of the choice, in the last twenty years, of all public bodies to give priority to mass tourism rather than to any other productive

¹ Here we use 'culture' in its anthropological meaning. In general terms, it is a vision of the world shared by a specific population or social group. It is mostly unaware and learned through education.

activity. This led to a dramatic reduction in the population which has already turned Venice into a ghost town, overcrowded by visitors but almost uninhabited and dead from a demographic and civil point of view.

2 Emerging Narrations

Conflicts between cultural models must not be considered as a negative fact as they could disturb an imaginary harmony between rulers and ruled. Their existence should instead be recognized as an engine which pushes citizens to get a move and play an active role in looking after the places in which they live and the part of their tangible or intangible culture which is the foundation of their social identity. Throughout the entire text of the Faro Convention, the need for cooperation between public institutions, civil society organizations and private investors is emphasized. But what if the proposals of HCs are not shared nor supported by the public authority? To legitimate the existence and actions of HCs only in the case of perfect harmony with public policies means to completely de-legitimize them as organizations with their autonomy of thought and action. Nevertheless, it is their ability to elaborate cultural models and public actions that defines their political reliability. The lack of public subjectivity makes HCs to be irrelevant in taking important decisions.

It should also be taken into account that HCs evolve over time and that the history of these changes is still little known. HCs often are formed as civic structures in opposition to public decisions which are perceived as dangerous to their quality of life and protection of places shaping their identity. This puts them in the uncomfortable position of being perceived as the No-Side. To overcome this situation, many HCs develop over time a more proactive approach. This means being able to overcome several difficulties, because the processing of complex projects requires a certain internal organization, appropriate skills, and a lot of free time. Informal groups of citizens cannot operate with the same level of effectiveness and efficiency of a public office who works full-time with qualified staff and salaried or of private companies.

Despite these difficulties, a few HCs can develop new cultural models. This process is long, difficult, confrontational and requires the creation of a specific language (concepts and stories) capable of 'telling' and describing the city from a different perspective than the tourist-advertising model or the progressive closure of the territory in support of major private investors. Only when this process of cultural innovation is consolidated we become able to perceive reality with new eyes. Or rather, we build a 'reality' that was not so.

A brief example may clarify how these new narrations take shape. Everybody knows about the *gondola*, the typical Venetian boat, but just a few

realize how the *gondola* system works. There are around 650 persons working with gondolas. Not only gondoliers, but also the *squeri* which make them and take care of the maintenance, the artisans which make the details and decorations and the whole touristic system which intensively use them. In fact, the gondola system is a small industry with a considerable spin-off, which has so far prevented his death. As part of the gondola's ICH we must recall the system that regulates the profession of a gondolier. It is undoubtedly a guild which is accessible after a very difficult training process that can be completed successfully only by sons and relatives of gondoliers accustomed from childhood. Guilds have taken a very negative meaning over time, but we must remember that they have worked well for centuries and that their negative connotation comes both from the Fascist period and from the current prevalence of liberal models. Guilds have strengths and weaknesses, but are themselves, an historical organisational model, an expression of ICH.

There is also a typical use of the gondola different from the touristic system: the ferries. The Canal Grande divides the city into two parts, just as the Seine in Paris or the Tiber in Rome, but only three bridges cross it. That is the reason why ferries always have been an economic and appreciated public transport service for residents. It must be marked that Venetians move by feet for employment-related reasons. They don't hang around calmly as tourists do, and they are not *flaneur*. They are in a hurry as everyone, so they walk very fast to reach their destination. Good observers can distinguish between venetians and tourists because venetians keep standing during the crossing: they are not afraid to fall into the water and in this way they do not psychologically interrupt their walk.

In this context gondola ferries plays a key role, as they serve their purpose better than normal public transportation - the *vaporetto* - which cross the canal by its length in regular times. Motor based public transportation service is obviously necessary, but it should not make gondola ferries service disappear, with its tangible (the gondola itself) and intangible (the know-how which is needed to make and use it) CH. On this aspect, we can clearly see the difference within two cultural models which struggle for supremacy.

Gondola ferries cross the canal and intersect *vaporetto* routes. Which is an obstacle to which? It is not a matter to establish who is right, it is a matter of understanding if both narrations got right to public expression. Citizen can choose between two models only if both of them are public, explicit, well analysed and with equal dignity.

Table 1. Two narrations

Motor model	Oars model
Gondola ferries are slow and expensive	Gondola ferries are quick, efficient and highly appreciated by residents.
Gondola ferries hinder the navigation	Gondola ferries work as speed deterrent on normal street: they augment the safety forcing motor boat to reduce their speed.
Gondolas and piers are expensive to maintain	Motor boats are expensive, and oars ferries are more sustainable.
A modern Venice must augment both the number of passengers and the speed of transports.	A modern Venice must improve life's quality of his inhabitants and admit that the development of motor transportation has physical limits which are already reached.
Ferries are an anachronism to be done away once for all.	Ferries produce city-compatible employment, being also a relevant factor of cultural identity.
Public motor boats are polluting and cannot maneuver in tight spaces.	They do not pollute, do not produce dangerous waves, do not damage buildings.
Mariners, commandants and workers are selected and trained as in every public enterprise.	The model of organization and professional development of artisans and gondoliers is itself an intangible heritage.

As we can see in table 1 the two narrations are mostly counterpoised. This opposition is an expression of two distinct cultural patterns which – as usual in cultural confrontation – struggle to delegitimize each other. The specific case of the gondola is just one example among others which invest the entire conception of the city:

- in the last decades, Venice was seen as a city that needed to modernize. People were talking about rapid transports, lagoon subway, major works, tourism as only resource and progressive leaving of residents.
- the arising one is the one who see Venice as the city of the future, not as a residual of the past. Venice as an autonomous water-city and not the old town of something else. It needs to be enhanced for its specific features because these features are able to grant a better quality of life compared to a normal land-city.

The first narration is still largely prevailing and strengthened during the last twenty years, while the latter is slowly developing and acquires more consensus day by day. In this process, the HCs play a relevant role as they work as a sort of civil vanguard, potential to be able to give voice to that diverse part of the citizenship which we use to call *active citizenship*. But to play this role it is mandatory that HCs can acquire a formal right to speak as political bodies.

3 The Symbolic Status of HCs

A HC is not only a group of people taking care of a place that is precious to them, keeping an eye on the past in a future perspective. Usually it is made by people who share a common objective: it is a purpose and work group. These groups do not always turn into a community in the strict sense. They will always be weak communities, not as the 'blood and soil' ones or the ones founded on a religious faith. Unlike the ethnic communities, the HCs are formed by persons who choose to be part of them (Zagato 2015, 159). But it is true that also there exist strong communities which present the same characteristic of voluntary membership, as for monastic orders. What also characterize strong communities is their procedures of access and the resulting type of membership. To become monks, it is needed to renounce to personal identity (the name, the vests, taking an oath). The same is often for special military forces in which, in addition, harassment practices serve as initiation rituals. To be effective, these practices need *be kept in secret*, as their secrecy strengthens the community bonds. Nothing of what said can be traced in HCs, and therefore they can be called communities only in a very improper sense, even if the term is by now in general use and we will keep using it.

Usually, in HCs, people know each other, but it is uncommon that they hook up outside the work meetings and not all the personal relationship can be described as good. A social group can describe itself as a community only if it is able to elaborate his own culture, namely, a world view which is recognizable, shared and transmitted. The gondoliers' HC has these features. It is easily recognizable because has elaborated a set of ideas, meanings and practices consistent with each other. It is widely accepted among professionals of the gondola and also among citizens, albeit to a lesser degree. It is transmitted because the group has developed a specific set of practices to teach the knowledge and techniques related to the gondola. These criteria can also be used to formally recognize the existence of a HC and distinguish it from other types of social groups.

But that is still not enough. An HC exists inside a broader social context and it is necessarily involved in a communication process within it. Its visibility and public relevance depends mainly on his capacity of communicating his internal culture to the wider social context. It is a matter of assuming the right to speak publicly. In Venice, HC are multiplying in a spontaneous and chaotic manner but rarely they have achieved a degree of stability and organization sufficient to effectively manage the public communication processes. In fact, these processes require a good command of media, languages and sophisticated techniques that are heritage of qualified communication's professionals. But even before considering these difficulties it is important to remember a few basic principles of public communication.

The intentional and organized communication is always addressed to someone and for a purpose. In the case of HCs three are the main subjects of the communication: *the political power, the citizenship and the other HCs*. HCs communicate with public administrations, using various channels, to promote ideas and projects that can influence government's decision. They are not always considered because of their small dimension, not really representative, too numerous and not coordinated. Usually, political decision makers listen (only to a limited extent) the so-called 'trade associations', that is to say the enterprises, the syndicates, the hoteliers, retailers, but since active citizenship is not organized as a lobby, it is not listened and receives no institutional legitimacy. To overcome these difficulties some civic organizations, not just HCs, are turning to direct communication with the citizens. This can be possible especially thanks to the social channels that the web has made available to everyone and that are used in two ways: to discuss specific topics and to organize public meetings and events of various kinds.

The more skilled in this field can get attention, if they may mobilize a high number of persons. If this success the HC may become relevant during elections and - for this reason - they get more attention. But the HCs totally differ from the electoral committees and it would be simplistic to consider them in this way. The models of life quality, care and enhancement of the tangible and intangible CH that HCs gradually develop are certainly of a political nature, but also exceed and overpass the usual forms of representation. Many HCs statutes declare it apolitical group and in day-to-day work attach the utmost importance in avoiding any kind of affiliation to traditional parties. HCs are slowly developing cultural models that - if sufficiently explicated, disseminated and shared - can turn into new citizenship rights, specific policy choices, new models of democracy. HCs are not *representative* organization, like political parties. They are *active democracy* bodies and need a *continuous democracy system*.

This process is also slow because of the excessive abundance of civic committees and associations, many of which consist of a small group of friends, and sometimes of a single person. Only in the territory of the Venetian lagoon, civic organizations that can be considered as a HC in a broad sense are more than 600. If a mayor wants to meet them one by one it would take about two years.

The only way HCs have to get a significant public role is to get the ability to create networks of actors capable of coherent, synergistic and coordinated activities. To create networks of relationships and shared projects, however, is a very expensive business in terms of time and money and requires non-trivial skills. In the Venice area, only a few cases have

achieved this objective. One is the Istituto Italiano dei Castelli² that triggered an extensive network of collaborations and initiatives in the annual *Patto Città Consapevole* (Conscious City Covenant).³ Once we clarified the main recipients of the communication activities we can also identify their purposes. These may be listed in order of priority and complexity, from the simplest: 1) Specific projects; 2) Participation in political choices; 3) Citizenship rights; 4) New models of democracy.

Most communication activities are related to the operational needs of the HC. Since these are groups of volunteers, their motivation is activated in the highest degree in the face of concrete objectives to be achieved in a short time. The concreteness of the task to be achieved is an important factor of aggregation as opposed to more theoretical discussions about 'principles' which tend to produce tensions and divisions. The demand for participation in political choices is connected to these operational priorities because the cooperation with the public authorities is necessary to achieve most of the goals that the HCs. When this type of collaboration is not possible because of the divergent choices of the administration, HCs feel aware of having no public role. The sense of helplessness stimulates the desire to obtain it. A further evolution is brought about when the communities begin to reflect on models of democracy rights. It is however very rare that explicit formulation of these issues reaches an adequate level of articulation because an HC is not a research centre, but an operating group. A more detailed reflection on citizenship rights, however, is necessary because in fact HCs propose, through their work, notable innovations on these issues.

The HCs are fully aware of not being structures of representation, as are political parties, trade unions, business associations. In fact, they do not *represent* the active citizenship: HCs *are* the active citizenship. The demand that is emerging gradually, but steadily become clear, is that active citizenship has a real and effective role in the management of heritage and cultural policies.

Without being fully aware, the HCs support *de facto* participatory democracy as an emerging form of democracy, which is proposed as integrative compared to the usual model of representative democracy (hierarchi-

2 Istituto Italiano dei Castelli is a cultural non-profit association founded in 1964 to promote knowledge, preservation and enhancement of the fortified buildings.

3 Patto Città Consapevole, Network of Venetian Associations. In its program, among other things, it states: "La cultura come produzione della coscienza sociale dei processi reali" (Culture as the production of social consciousness of the real processes). The Pact stresses the need of a "constant and pervasive cultural development involving citizens". The construction of an ethically aware citizenship, informed, and protagonist "is the condition without which democracy remains an empty word". The process does not happen spontaneously, but "is the result of converging strategies politics, administration and civil society".

cal). This self-awareness development process is slow, quite confused, and is not obvious. The right to public speech of the HC is by now only provided on a very theoretical level, indeed. It is very limited and often openly denied.

For example, the current mayor of Venice has centralized all the communication activities of the Municipality around himself, he denies the right to publish comments on institutional web channels and others that express the slightest dissent, closed the press office and hired a specialist in communication of his confidence that remunerates with personal funds. In similar cases, any direct communication channel between the community and the administration of the capital city is closed. These difficulties, however, tend to increase the level of awareness on the importance of HC to improve their ability to publicly communicate their ideas and their actions.

In any case, the weak theoretical elaboration on the role and on the knowledge of HCs can be recognized in certain confusion on the concepts and language used in real situations of internal comparison. Basic concepts such as enhancement, common good, participation, active citizenship, heritage, culture and similar are used with extremely vague significance: people use them, but each one gives it a different meaning. This means that these concepts are still outside of the common sense and remain confined to the narrow range of specialists.

4 The Conditions for a Public Speech

The right to public speech of the HCs is fully implemented only when some essential conditions are given. Adequate resources are needed. The communication takes time to be processed, it requires appropriate technical skills such as: the management of informatics tools, the production of printed texts and video-making. Social media are easily usable by everyone, but their use often takes the form of an 'internal' communication channel for the community itself, and not appropriate for articulated, open reflections. In some cases, you need permission to communicate, especially in institutional settings, in conferences, in the sessions of municipal councils. All these conditions are weak and unstable for HCs, which therefore have a substantially reduced right to public speak. There are growing opportunities of communication but there is no right in its fullest sense. It is much more an apparent freedom regulated by a *concession* informal scheme, as is for the prince towards his subjects. A substantial evolution for HCs would implicate changing to a regime of *right to existence and public action*.

It is well known to people involved in communication that (Watzlawick, deAvila, Helmich 1967, 72-4) it is not just the 'what' that matters; rather, it is a matter of 'who'. To give an example, if a qualified researcher is inter-

viewed on television about something falling outside his area of expertise, most of the time he can say anything, even nonsense, with the assurance of an attentive audience. On the contrary, a stranger saying intelligent and well documented things will be hardly listened with the same grade of attention, and he probably will not have access to the television media. HCs are in the latter situation.

Slavoj Žižek, in his *Reading Lacan*, presents a further example of how the status of 'who' makes the communication can determine the credibility of the words said. He points out that in the legal field the words of the judge are effective because uttered by a person who occupies a definite place in the symbolic order of the institutions and this is true even if the judge, as a person, was a crook: "I know that things are as I see them, that the person in front of me is a corrupt weakling, but nonetheless I treat him with respect. In fact, he wears the insignia of a judge, so that when he speaks it is the law itself speaking through him". And again: "A corrupt priest who preaches the virtue can be a hypocrite, but if people assign to his words the authority of the Church, may be pushed to do good" (Žižek 2009, 54).

We must pay close attention to these last observations. Formal systems of public recognition of the HCs would open a *symbolic trap* that could prove fatal for them, rather than favour them. There are many and well-known cases of organizations with solidarity purposes that only after having gained this symbolic status can get access to funding and tax breaks that would have been inaccessible if acting as for profit companies. By this I don't suggest that forms of institutionalization of the HCs would be negative in themselves, but that the rules for this formal recognition are absolutely critical and must be built with the highest possible degree of awareness.

An attempt to legitimize the word and the existence of HCs, giving them a proper symbolic status, was done in 2004 with the proposal of the Venice Charter on Value of CH for the Venetian community.⁴ Art. 3 reads:

Encourage, following the Marseilles example, the birth of Heritage Commissions as a public space for dialogue and exchange among HCs, citizens' associations, institutions and cultural organizations, in order to generate synergies and participatory processes in the development of local and transnational cultural policies and activities.

The Charter was proposed by a group of institutions and local communities with the support of the CoE, Venice office. But the initiative didn't receive any response from the city administration.

4 Adopted at Forte Marghera (Venice), on 7 May 2014. Available at <https://farovenetia.org/convenzione-di-faro/carta-di-venezia> (2017-12-15).

The Heritage Commissions could play a very positive role in strengthening 'the right to life and speak' of the community, but to achieve this object an explicit system of accreditation is needed. Also these commissions may have at least one specific operational purpose which, as the Venice Charter specifies, could be the following (art. 5(b)):

it would also like to create an index for the identification and mapping of the elements of hereditary interest from the communities themselves local, as a practical means of 'cultural democracy' is understood to be safeguarded and valued, with attention to social, economic and professional backgrounds, places that have a special value for the local community and whose memory, still alive, must be passed down to the future generations

5 Good Practices

HCs evolve in time by developing different organisational models. The scarcity of available resources and the almost complete absence of public legitimacy force them to develop peculiar tools to achieve results. The vast majority of publications related to the issue of participation focuses on the ways public authorities can organize systematic consultation's means. Often one has the impression that authorities want to force the almost passive citizenship to become active.

These consultations are very complex to manage and are suitable to some sort of distortion and manipulative practices. It is a matter of

taking the maximum care of the equity of parts, which requires exact, sudden and complete information, possibly in forms of clear and understandable documents. (Allegretti 2010, 37)

A good overall picture of the experiences in this fields is available in Bobbio (research commissioned by the Trento Province in 2007). One of the most interesting results of this research consists in evidencing that the consultation practices organized by public administrations have a 'assimilatory' nature, because they tends to foster a compromise between different positions, by devaluing the differences and confirming decisions already taken (Bobbio, Pomatto 2007, 6-7) The alternative that emerged from the research promotes the clear explication of the differences and incompatibilities that arise between different groups of citizens. In this way, political choices become clear instead of clouding the vision. The various groups maintain their identity and elected officials are obliged to

declare publicly their choices.⁵ The alternative is to pay more attention to participatory practices that are directly promoted 'from below' in an autonomous way (Allegretti 2010, 37).

These practices are numerous but little known because of their non-institutional nature and because they have sparse and poor access to public speech contexts. In order to understand how they evolve and how they produce results a researcher should experience their day to day activities for a long period of time. To interview some people or occasionally examine the documents they produce could not be enough. Despite these difficulties, it is not difficult to find interesting practices. In Venice, you can identify some HCs that have developed more than others these practices. Some of these HCs are:

Poveglia per tutti:⁶ it aims to manage the deserted island of Poveglia that belongs to the State property. It has garnered widespread affiliation and has many members. He has developed a set of proposals for the management of the island but it has had no response from the public authorities. Its statute is very innovative because it provides for the establishment of organizations and specific practices to guarantee the internal participation in decision-making processes.

Forum Futuro Arsenal:⁷ it aims to foster management of the entire complex, respecting its historical significance and its productive vocation connected to the sea. The Forum has developed a number of proposals to achieve this goal but did not get any attention or cooperation from the mayor and city council. The organisational structure of the Forum is interesting because it is built as a network of all HCs (more than thirty) engaged in the Arsenal.

Gruppo 25 aprile:⁸ it is a very large group whose success depends on a strong and well-managed network of communications' activity (it is very active on Facebook, but as a closed group) that organizes spectacular public events to attract the attention also of the international press. It is a political group in the ground but it concretely operates as a community asset to reach specific objectives. The group works through smaller working groups acting as a HC. One of these, for

5 The social movements that are fighting for participation are often reluctant to an open confrontation or discussion in relation to positions they consider antithetical to their own, not without good reason, because they are afraid of being forced to soften their antagonist charge. As one activist stated: "we do not want to reach a common thread [with our opponents]. We want the talks to remain divided [...] So we prefer to speak of participation [rather than] resolution and we want that there are winners and losers. Yes we want just that" (Bobbio, Pomatto 2007, 31).

6 <http://www.povegliapertutti.org/> (2017-12-15).

7 <https://farovenetia.org/progetto-arsenale/> (2017-12-15).

8 <https://gruppo25aprile.org/> (2017-12-15).

example, is trying to ‘take over’ an old abandoned lighthouse in the lagoon to run it independently.

Fortificazioni Veneziane:⁹ the community deals with the re-use, restoration and enhancement of the ancient Venetian defence system (fortresses, barracks, powder magazines, islands) with subsidiary management of local HCs. It acts as ‘focal point’ for the co-ordination of various local activities that could improve the network of services to citizens. Recently it has engaged active independent groups of young people interested in this specific type of building. The young people are bringing new energy and ideas to the group’s work. The relationship between new HCs and historical organizations for the protection of tangible CH of the *Fortificazioni Veneziane* is an interesting example of cooperation, whose development deserves to be analysed deeply.

These very different experiences lead to the idea that HCs are not all the same. This impression of homogeneity, often described in the literature, simply shows the lack of real knowledge by the authors of those texts of how these communities act. A good practice should indeed be reproducible by others and serve as a basis for a legislative intervention. This is the way to activate an *institutional learning circuit* capable of running on systemic and ongoing basis. Note also that a good practice is not necessarily a successful practice. Even the failed experiences can be important sources of learning.

6 Conditions for the Civic Participation

Since long time, sociologists have been working to understand the dynamics and processes of civic participation, and it is not easy to summarize the evolution of this investigation. Nevertheless, two fundamental outcomes can be identified. The first refers to a limited participation and focuses on a theme or a specific goal; the second refers to a continuous participation, to the possibility of ‘taking part’ in the activities of a group regardless of the possibility of compromising on decisions by which it is governed (Turra 2005, 10). Other relevant distinctions concern the difference between lobbying and civic participation: the first is designed to promote the interests of a small group, the second aims to promote the wider interests of the community (Mannarini 2009, 5-6). But often, if not always, these studies seem to assume that the participatory activities start or should be guided by ‘from the top’. Yet a summary but very effective analysis of the various possible

9 <https://www.facebook.com/FortificazioniVeneziane/> (2017-12-15).

forms of participation is outlined in the famous ‘ladder’ of the American sociologist Sherry Arnstein published for the first time in 1969 (216-124).

Table 2. Arnstein’s ladder on civic participation (modified)

Control	Real participation
Delegated power	
Partnership	
Pacification	Apparent participation(<i>tokenism</i>)
Consultation	
Information	
Therapy	Denied Participation
Manipulation	
Repression	

Arnstein accurately describes the concrete cases that exemplify the steps of the scale, which makes it very easy to compare current experiences with those of community groups she studied more than forty years ago. The latter comparison underlines that there are no big differences. If the demand for more civic participation seems always present in the body of Western societies and even has been growing, the real participation or participatory modes have not spread and implemented much. Also, the original scale lacks the step ‘repression’ (in Tab. 2 the step has been added: this is the only difference). This lack is quite strange because repressive activities are increasingly frequent and sometimes violent. Just focus on the No-TAV’s affair in Piedmont or the continuous complaints of the Venetian Port Authority against the No-Big-Ships group. But of relevance is also the story of Roberta Chirolì, graduated in cultural anthropology at the University Ca’ Foscari who was condemned before a court and sentenced to two months in jail - sentence then suspended - because of her final dissertation on the No-TAV movement (Rossi 2016). Despite having committed no violence or damage to property or people, the conviction was based on the idea of ‘moral participation’ in the No-TAV movement activities. The proof was the repeated use of the pronoun ‘we’ in her thesis. Another student, under investigation for the same reason, was however acquitted because in her dissertation she used the pronoun ‘they/them’, with no moral participation.

If this judicial approach would be followed by other judges, any anthropological (a sociological) good research on issues of ‘hot’ political relevance would become *per se* illicit.

A useful contribution to the development of our investigation is emerging from the program *Participatory governance of CH*, which has been running as a sub-sector (one of five) of the ambitious project, *Voices of Europe*, funded by the EU in 2015, and still ongoing. The program aims to guarantee

a fruitful dialogue between civil society and the European Commission (European Commission 2015). The programs' points out again that not any kind of public participation in the field of CH can be considered as *participative governance*. Citizens can participate in educational projects, entertainment activities, also in consultation processes, but so far they are not involved in a participative governance. Only shared governance and shared decision-making practices can be considered 'participative' in a proper sense.

In other words, only the last points in the Arnstein's ladder on civic participation (control exercised by the citizens, delegated power and partnership) can be considered as an expression of participative governance.

Of relevance are the results of a brainstorming session on the "participative governance of CH" program, held in Florence in July of 2015. The participants emphasized that *real participation* (the first three steps of the Arnstein's ladder) implies a real transfer of power by the public authorities to active citizenship organizations. Without these real power-sharing activities, the management and safeguarding of community's assets/goods are interesting and even useful, but remain essentially marginal and modest, too. In the course of the brainstorming session, a number of useful criteria defining the conditions that allow a true shared responsibility has also emerged. Here is a briefly account:

- Confidence;
- Ethic and respect;
- Political willing (no tokenism);
- Professional and social willing;
- An appropriate legislative framework;
- Transparency and access to information;
- Education/Formation for every person involved;
- Funds to promote real participation.

7 Conclusions

The world of HCs is in fast and continuous evolution. The original idea that seemed to relegate them to structures with a scope limited to the conservation and enhancement of cultural and traditional practices, largely associated with folklore, does not work anymore. These are organized groups of citizens who want to be relevant in the active management of CH, both tangible and intangible, working directly with the public institutions. This collaboration, however, is not always possible. Since HCs are increasingly able to process articulated ideas and proposals, their claim to have a right to speech in the public debate has increased. This right is an integral part of the growing demand to have a consultative role recognized by the institutions in the context of participatory democracy practices. The evolution of ideas and innovative practices tried out by the various HCs

are still poorly understood. This lack of understanding should be filled because these practices are bearers of profound instances of renewal in the management of the CH, in the forms of civic participation and in the organisational forms of active citizenship groups.

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