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Abstract This paper is aimed to explore the role of tourism in reshaping historical cities, particularly into forms of cosmopolitan consumption. New mobility paradigms seem to merge production and consumption patterns of tourists and residents, all influenced by similar gazing and performing places. The iconic case of Venice shows patterns of staged authenticity, reconstructed ethnicity, and economy of subordination. Drivers to visit Venice include experiences in a setting that is densely characterized by cultural heritage; however, the tourist monoculture and cosmopolitan consumption have depleted the original elements of this attraction: traditional places, residents, livelihoods, material and immaterial cultures. Culture markets and international events, architectural and environmental restoration, together with private forms of transport in the fragile lagoon ecosystem, have transformed the historical city and its unique lifestyle into a place for cosmopolitan consumption, involving tourists together with new residents, sometimes integrating wealthy long-term residents in this overall tourism gentrification. Deprived of great part of what is considered to be the old and conservative block of residents, the gentrified residents acquire spaces for their cultural activities and political acts in their ‘saving Venice’ projects. Two gentrifying groups are described in this paper: super rich with their philanthropic associations, and intellectuals. Despite clear differences in their causes and agency, both share common visions over leisurely uses of the lagoon city, artistic production and consumption of its heritage. Sustainability questions could instead propose to start from local memories to reconstruct Venice as a complex urban space with more inclusive sense of place.

Keywords: gentrification, tourism, authentication, cosmopolitan consumption, right to the city, sense of place

1 Orientalism and authenticity as gentrifying modes.

When we think of Venice it is natural to think of a hyper-tourist city (Costa and Martinotti 2003). Massive tourism in Venice is still growing and has reached 23 million visitors in 2012 with great impacts on the city. However, this paper will discuss about specific phenomena in gentrification that have interested Venice as well as other tourist cities, where a periodical presence of small but powerful groups of educated urbanities promote new place experiences in selected neighbourhoods (Gotham 2005, Miro’ 2011, Zukin 2009). While the paper is theoretically based, the analysis is qualitative involving participant observation in the historic city and its lagoon and discourse analysis of books, blogs and other media.

Like other tourist centres, Venice is interested by increasing global mobility of people, beyond holidays' or short business travels' spheres, and in constant condition of move corresponding to chosen cosmopolitan lifestyles, merging tourism gazing and residential practices. In fact, these mobilities have great influence upon the residential spatiality as well, giving value to specific elements, which they recognize and promote through *authentication* processes (MacCannell 1973).

Temporary and recursive mobility is not new, but culturally rooted in the Romanticist era of travels. During the XIX century, they were constitutive of living practices for Western artists and writers in search for oriental inspiring experiences, such as Byron, Chateaubriand, or Goethe among others involved in the *Italian Grand Tour* (Ujma 2003). These were experiences of cosmopolitanism of a *niche* expressing specialized consumptions rarely interacting with those of locals. Specific services were in place to serve their needs, while local residents mostly neglected their presence.

Now with a wider generalization of welfare and easier travel opportunities, the search for status recognition passes through voluntary, often leisurely experience of replacements for many more people. While the previously recalled romantic writers searching for orientalism challenged themselves as pioneer in culturally unexplored areas, the new cosmopolitans establish part of their lives in areas where to follow the aspiration of being part in glamorous bohemian locations. Places are seen for their residential setting and for their consumption offer, rather than for their employment potentials.

Besides the higher numbers of people involved, linked in globalized networks potentially aiming for high social and cultural class self-segregation, there are other characteristics differentiating these postmodern travellers from earlier romantic travellers. What can be observed from a geographical point of view is the caused impact in terms of consuming and reproducing places, together with wider cultural influence over long-term residents.

Still a sort of *orientalism* can be recognized, if we consider Said's (1978) definition as a general patronizing attitude of the cosmopolitan groups towards the societies of their transitional residences, which are seen as static and less developed. More than in other western tourist cities, the orientalist gaze seems to fit well in Venice, for the exotic charm of its landscape with no cars but wooden boats in waterways and a labyrinth of streets with buildings like in a medina.

It is thus interesting to scrutinize how these new presences are relevant not only for their specific forms of consumption but also for their space narratives and the very production of new space territorialities. Their influence in Venice is neglected by local leaders compared to the phenomena of mass tourism that obscure other ongoing urban processes; or in some cases, it is welcome as a way to reactivate the city. In Venice, besides a continuous marketing of its spectacular heritage in the city centre, one can recognize a new development turn in peripheral neighbourhoods and lagoon islands, which corresponds to the gazing and performing needs of these new cultural elites. No matter their awareness of the structural problems of Venice

and its lagoon, their interest is to reproduce patterns of staged authenticity, back to an idealized landscape of the city. These transnational presences produce cultural, political, economic impacts and inequalities, in the way their speculative livelihoods contribute in deepening gentrifying forces at the expenses of local ethnicities, although these are closely present in their ideal and narrated landscape. New cosmopolitan identities are created, with new sense of place for Venice; but in reality, poor and low-middle classes of locals have no choice than move out of the city centre, and possibly become daily commuters involved in *servient* economies (Veijola and Valtonen 2007) exploiting the city landscape (Quinn 2007). Tourist gentrification is therefore, a force producing different outcomes: excluding working classes from the right to the city, delocalizing productions and services, and reorganizing the daily commuters' mobility (Lefebvre 1967, Harvey 2008).

On the other side, other social groups take the lead in the evolution of a new *sense of place* for Venice. This geographical concept (Tuan 1977, Massey 2005) does not only pertain to the psychological sphere of the residents, but also implies personal and political engagement. Moreover, globalization and tourism marketization have diversified the category of residents in the historical cities, more and more involved in tourism gentrification processes (Gotham 2015).

Explanations of these new trends cannot be solely seen within the tourism discipline, as new forms of tourism. Instead, we need to refer to *the new mobilities paradigm*, as Sheller and Urry (2006) have named the spatial practices created by globalization and wider generalization of welfare. Social studies need nowadays to focus on issues of movements, in reaction to the *sedentary* theories, which locate "bounded and authentic places or regions or nations as the fundamental basis of human identity and experience and as the basic units of social research" (*ibid.* pp.208-209).

Within this new mobilities paradigm, Duncan (2012) has focused, more specifically, on a sort of *transnationalism* confusing spaces of tourism with places of living, and addressed by new merging visions from tourism, migration and urban studies. An interesting perspective looks at new trends that, instead of turning towards the end of tourism, promote tourism everywhere; or at least, this is what seems to correspond to the current development of Venice.

Urban research intersects this area of study, particularly through the analysis of gentrification. What Rees (2006) has discussed for instance about the super-gentrification in New York, with higher classes' intrusion at the expenses of low-class and middle-class residents, can also be applied to Venice.

The new cosmopolitanism presented in the *Naked City* by Zukin (2009), again speaking of New York, is also relevant here to understand the new lifestyles that are imported and the processes of authentication that give them authority and power over other classes of residents and their forms of life: "Claiming authenticity becomes prevalent at a time when identities are unstable and people are judged by their performance rather than by their history or innate character. Under these conditions, authenticity differentiates a person, a product, or a group from its competitors; it confers an aura of moral superiority, a strategic advantage that each can use

to its own benefit” (p. XII). Not the attachment to history or tradition, then, is what counts, but rather, uniqueness and innovative, creative authenticity that “has a schizoid quality” (*ibid.*) and is made up of bits and pieces of cultural references: fictional qualities for cultural users of the city, who consume its art, food, and images and also its real estate. Thus, authenticity becomes a tool, along with the economic and political power, to control not just the look but also the use of real urban places.

Similar urban developments have occurred in other cities, and particularly in suburbs where residents have imposed rigid landscape policies responding to their desires of aesthetic relations with places, and alleged authenticity’s defence. It is the case, for instance, of the neighbourhoods described in *Paris bourgeois-bohème* by Corbillé (2013), and of Bedford, a suburb 40 km from New York City described by Duncan and Duncan (2010).

More in line with the temporality of the residence, typical of super- or tourist gentrification, McWatters (2009) has also introduced the very intriguing concept of *landscape nomadism*, involving the idea of people repacking when in need to find their utopian landscape elsewhere. Like for Zukin, it is important here to base the motivations for staying upon ideas of preservation of the alleged authenticity, which make them oppose to the additional growth of tourism in the areas where they have decided to base their various residences. Quite often, in fact, these mobile elites express their cosmopolitanism by gathering in different locations in the world, where they have properties: in Paris, London, Venice, New York, Montecarlo or in luxury *riads* of Marrakech (Martin 2013). Within these *world cities* (Pacione 2005, Ashworth and Page 2011) they select specific neighbourhoods. Their *authenticity* ideas involve a romanticized image of landscape: a mix of natural paradise and social utopia formed by social status, exclusivity and elitism. However, while the concept of landscape nomadism is important to explain the temporary phase of one’s move and the importance of this new type of mobility in one’s life experience, it does not clarify the strong impacts it has on places and their identities.

These *new mobilities* can be ascribed to the tourism zone, as in the same way, they use gazing and performing to exercise power (Urry 2002, Coles and Church 2007, Larsen and Urry 2011). The *new mobilities* do not challenge, but on the contrary, further increase the ‘touristicization’ of the city, intended as commodification of surely marketable material and immaterial cultures and lifestyles. These are groups of recursive visitors, owning second or multiple homes and acting under the influence of a tourist gaze which they apply also in their new residential spaces. The capillarity of their intrusive presence is seduced by the idea of pioneering ‘unbeaten tracks’. Their elitist and critical look makes them culturally and politically strong and more influent towards the longer-term residents; and more so than other short-term tourists, who have superficial relations with the city and are rather manipulated by market operators. Instead, these mobile class members are influent as their gazing and performing styles get transposed to the locals, who are themselves flattered by their attention and weakened by their cultural hegemony.

For permanent residents, living in the city is constantly conceptualized as practices are referred to mental models of living in this special city; but at the same time, distinctive living pattern that were common only few

decades ago, start to be out of use and forgotten. One example is the everyday use of boats for internal city mobility and transportation of goods that is nowadays challenged by the absence of mooring rights, since the few available spaces are rigidly assigned to a few; this allows people to circulate but not to stop, and makes boats useful for touring but not as ordinary means of transport. Because of an international attention *vis-à-vis* to the practical residential challenges, staying in Venice becomes less natural than it used to be; and on the contrary, because of structural conditions that constantly challenge their living downtown, for a great number of residents it requires daily confirmations and hard choices, and seems to be more and more a matter of resistance and defence of idealized identities, also passing through continuous sharing of international causes for specific safeguarding issues, e.g. against the large cruise ship access or the motorboats waves (*moto ondosso*) causing erosion to the city foundations. However, while these causes mainly involve the protection of physical environmental and heritage capitals, they rarely address less recognizable local economies, cultures, traditional knowledge or public services, such as e.g. ensuring basic commerce, securitizing fishing rights, protecting creative glass productions, creating children playgrounds and spaces for elderly, supporting disabled residents, other vulnerable migrants, and so forth. Who has remained to fight for these? As a matter of fact, the right to the city has been denied for a large majority, as proved by the demographic trends showing a loss of more than 120,000 inhabitants over the last 50 years, bringing their number down to 55,000 in 2016. The generational breakup impedes the transmission of traditional knowledge in Venice. The *new residents* flow is a niche phenomenon and does not fill the gap in quantitative terms, but nonetheless contributes to its new *urbanicity* character. Questioning about the consequences of this gentrification phenomenon helps demonstrating that it is far less liberal than it pretends to be, and that, on the contrary, that it exercises a powerful pressure towards the limitation of the city life and a support of planning in line with the tourist monoculture.

2 New residents and their reflected powers over Venice.

More and more, wealthy outsiders move into Venice, where they say they can live peacefully and with their respect of privacy in a seducing urban context. To quote Zukin (2011), we imagine that also in the Venice landscape they let their own experiences being “seduced by appearances” (p. 21). Venice is no more a local city with old traditions and intimate character, but more and more a world city with cosmopolitan identity.

Compared to other migrants, the new cosmopolitan presences are not silent. New mobile citizens share their thoughts about Venice and their discovery of *new self* in internet blogs and other mass media. Magazines present the lifestyle in the hidden, *non-tourist* but *private* city with ‘charming residences, walled gardens, off-guide restaurants, disappearing artisans, and secret museums’ (Zambon 2012:69). Often, while declaring their love for the city and its traditions, these new residents happen to even blame previous inhabitants for what they judge as cultural disinterest, political laziness, corruption etc. Blogs posted by foreign residents (e.g. <http://thevenicexperience.blogspot.fi>, <http://iamnotmakingthisup.net>) sharing opinions on quality of living in Venice and urban dysfunctionality, are well followed also by locals who consider these voices as *super-partes*

and neutral. Fictional books, like the Brunetti saga based in Venice written by Donna Leon, an American author living in the lagoon city since the 80ies (www.donnaleon.net), do confirm these ideas of a charming city in contrast to the capabilities of its human capital; however in this case, while the large world-wide popularity of the books has become an added driver for international tourist arrivals, these stories are unknown by the majority of the local residents. They are not translated into Italian, nor is the German TV- series, based on the books, proposed by any Italian channel, for a veto posed by the writer who prefers a quiet living in her Venice neighbourhood. Besides these and other publications using Venice as a romantic and decadent scene, other voices are publicly raised through the media, showing concern for a city that seems to die under endogenous forces. Some campaigns are local but also advocated in English, so to gather the *new Venetians* and other international forces in the city's causes.

However, not all *new Venetians* are the same. Yet, there are distinctive patterns of living the city. Two types with distinctive interests over the city and interactions with either globalized or local networks, can be recognized.

2.1 Super-rich gentrification

“In front of the continuous Venetian exodus (...) a new wave of persons has arrived in Venice, to stay, love her and live her (...) They are themselves Venetians, by right (...) those that have arrived for their choice, are even more Venetians than those born in Venice” (Falomo and Pivato 2012:8).

In their book “Venetians by choice”, Falomo and Pivato (2012) have collected 18 interviews to a particular class of new settlers, which reveal an elitist rather than democratic vision of the right to the city. The introduction contains a blame addressed to the *old Venetians*: *“And why – and this is the question that I have in my heart – many desire Venice and make all their possible to possess her, while those who were born there, and have got this happy destiny, now abandon her, do not care of her (...) do not want her anymore?”* (pp. 7-8) Not only these words reveal a gendered relation between the city as a feminine body and the new residents, acting through a sort of masculinity possession power; they also express a divide between the new residents and ‘the others’, the original residents, in most cases from low and middle-classes, without even questioning the reasons behind an exodus that is caused by the lack of working options, insufficient residential services and high cost of living. In contrast, one of the new *ideal Venetians*, for the writers, is the well-known designer Philippe Starck, whose aesthetic relation with the *ideal* landscapes of the Northern lagoon is represented by its lonely wanders using his private boat; or Michel Thoulouze, founder of Canal Plus and now a fine winemaker in St. Erasmo; or even the President of the Biennale foundation, despite he was lodging in luxury hotel rooms and moving by water taxis: typically tourist services, rather than residential ones. Their financial and globalised cultural positioning entitles them to perform in ways that obscure more traditional knowledges situated in the lagoon. More into the city, but still outside the overcrowded St. Mark complex, other old neighbourhoods appear glamourized by the new bohemians: for instance, the former poor, industrial (now recuperated and gentrified) island of Giudecca. The idea of this previously insane neighbourhood increases the authenticity

value of Giudecca, in a way that may remind of Harlem's rejuvenation and estate speculation of the past decade. Instead of letting the city change on the basis of local productive economies and the needs of the working population, there is much more powerful interest to preserve a spectacular image of the historical heritage, which whatever change would only harm.

Authenticity ideas are based on some iconic images of the city, out of the massive tourism trails: lagoon landscapes with little traffic of traditional boats; few islands with rare gardens; empty narrow streets where to wander; warm social relations with the remaining local residents, casual meetings in the street, invitations for *ombre e cicheti* (wine and appetizers); traditional professions, outdoor markets, small shops etc. Rare presences there are seen as making the authentic sense of place for the new Venetians, and they are valued for their possibility to enjoy an exclusive consumption of the city.

One objection against this *old authentic Venice* vision is the lack of memory and the ill-correspondence to specific historical periods. During the golden era of the Venice republic, the traffic was quite heavy in canals and the lagoons, as portrayed for instance in some famous Canaletto paintings. Even more recently, until just a few decades ago, the lagoon was more intensively exploited for fish farming and picking; it was not just an empty mirror of the sky, but a productive space, filled with wooden poles, nests and boats. Streets were not that empty either and had more open stalls for manufacturers and sellers. Venice was indeed more inhabited and lively that nowadays.

However, not all new super-rich residents claim they live in isolation; some of them instead use their social relations with *old* Venetians, as a proof of their genuine care for Venice. For instance, the actress Emma Thompson stated in an interview, in English, how much she felt having *earned* Venice, since she got local friends (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zm68ZJLp8V8>). One question is, how many do really relate to Venetians beyond their provision of services to them (like Starck's fishermen from Burano), or security (like Elton John getting introduced to the neighbours in his condo) or gatekeeping to cultural happenings? And which language do they use?

A few super-rich are also engaged in philanthropy, particularly in causes for restoration of historical buildings. Frances Clarke, founder of the committee Venice in Peril, was nominated Venetian of the year 2006. Other US philanthropists formed various foundations, e.g. Save Venice (<http://www.savevenice.org>) active since 1971 in preserving works of art and architecture; however, web coverage of their charity events reveal a strange combination of charity and dispossession, for the exclusive use that donors can make of these rehabilitated spaces. Buildings become stages for luxury parties gathering affluent members of international networks; and the idea of Venice as a year-round carnival stage is also present. These rehabilitations, combined with other important acquisitions of buildings and islands by corporations through purchases or long-terms tenancies, further contribute to the shrinking of public goods. After rehabilitation, they all conflate into the tourist and leisure economies, seemingly the only rentable uses nowadays. Restored heritage can eventually host art exhibitions (e.g. the Prada Foundation in Ca' Corner della Regina) or the lagoon environment.

These acquisitions by individual or corporate capital also contribute to changes in place identity. Specific projects over places are reflected into narratives that also change memories, also through new toponymy. Recently, the Marriott has started branding its resort in Sacca Sessola island by renaming it as *Isola delle Rose* (Roses' islands), supposedly more attractive for its customers' targets and with no respect for its identity and history.

For causes that fit rather well in their ideal, frozen landscapism, capitalist gentrifiers have also established alliances with other associations. Would the lagoon become endangered, it is hard to believe they would still maintain a close linkage with it; and most probably, for these landscape nomads it would be the *time to repack* (McWatters 2009).

2.2 Intellectual gentrification

Other evident presences in the city are those of artists, academics, intellectuals and other cultural elites who have moved into Venice to enjoy its active cultural and international environment, so peculiar for a small-sized city. Compared to the super-rich, these groups show clearer political interest and participate in collective projects for the city, with a new sense of community and responsibility (Popke 2003) over Venice. Coalitions around specific claims, particularly against the sale off of buildings or islands from the public authorities to the private sector, make them quite lively actors and position them closer to some progressive components of the city. These sales are quite common nowadays to fill deficits in public budgets and more and more involve goods and areas that are important for residents. A recent example is the wide participation in a competitive bid to purchase the island of Poveglia thanks to crowdfunding organized by a local association (<http://www.povegliapertutti.org>) with the aim to preserve it for public use and to counteract the restriction of common goods; other coalitions are formed around similar causes, e.g. to rescue the historical building Villa Herion in Giudecca or St Andrea island from privatization. Participation in local causes is a strong place attractor, enforcing integration and sense of place. This type of activism goes through social networks and cultural associations aggregating a rather homogenous class of intellectuals and attracting sympathizing foreigners, however with minor participation of people born in Venice and practically no representation of local working classes.

As a result of this reduced social representation, new projects in recuperated places involve design products, art exhibition and city gardening, creating new interests for leisurely use of spaces, including boating and cultural industries rather than other productive uses, and again linked to global and tourist markets. Thus, apart from minor cases, in general monuments' restoration is again seen as a form of protection, immobility and exhibit, rather than inclusion in public structures for e.g. vocational, educational or recreational needs of elderly, youth and disadvantaged groups. Romantic ideas about the city correspond to strong idealization of believed past conditions, and disincentive urban plans supporting working residents' needs. Rehabilitation projects do not attempt to restore local production processes, either traditional or innovative, but remain related to the appearance of a frozen, spectacular and historical heritage city, that any change would only harm.

Instead, globalization of economies and consumptions and the myopia of local rulers, who have failed to take care of the traditional professions and livelihoods, have caused disappearance of local productions and even of the basic small retails, substituted by expensive boutiques and a capillary presence of supermarket chains. These consumption places are more adapted for customers of any origin, as they do not require particular linguistic or cultural interaction with local sellers as pre-packed goods are easily available on shelves.

Again, lower social classes are forgotten, both in terms of political representation and livelihoods' protection. Fishing and handcraft have lost their place in the Venice lagoon and city centre, especially for structural reasons that are beyond the responsibilities of the new urbanities; but these problems would therefore need to be addressed by specific protection and social movements' claims, as locals' spatial knowledge and sense of place is getting lost. However, unfortunately the importance to save their presence and weak economy assets is probably underestimated, and too seldom recalled.

The new residents' interest to preserve the environmental safety of the lagoon is instead more effective, as their environmentalism mostly appears *neutral* towards other political causes regarding the inner society. Protests against the *moto ondosso* and pollution produced by tourist ferries endangering the traditional sailing or against the big ships crossing the Canale della Giudecca are highly relevant and immediately understood by the new residents. They do not challenge but, again, fit rather well in their ideal landscape.

So, despite clear differences with the super-rich residents, these types of networks still belong to the tourism gentrification processes. The memory of past uses of the city space guides their authentication of places and new forms of living. They share visions, albeit politically different, over leisurely rather than productive, uses of the urban and lagoon spaces, enjoying the lifestyle of a rather homogenous urbanity.

3 Reshaping Venice as a city beyond utopic landscapes

Is Venice depicted as a true home? Housing is hardly affordable by low and middle classes, and this is a fundamental reason for the progressive suburbanization of Venice that has brought people and activities out of the historical city. The new inhabitants, basically more affluent, are clearly not fast tourists and claim deep relations with the city and its inhabitants (although most of the time these are daily commuters). However, mostly these presences do not re-energize labour markets beyond the tourism economies and are even indifferent to the functioning of public residential services such as schools, community centres or social supports.

Is the historic city of Venice a world city? Areas that were used as factories, residences, associations' homes, monasteries, etc. have become spaces for arts, design, social gatherings, branded shopping, restaurants and wine bars, to keep alive the circuit of the new residents and their consumption interests. As mentioned before, Venice presents a lot of commonality with other gentrified cities, e.g. New York (Newman and Wyly 2006)

and other world cities, because it is stronger in its global links than as a gateway for the surrounding region; but at the same time, its vitality is too exclusively flattened on tourism, leisure and art consumption services. This extreme specificity challenges the very nature of Venice as a city, according to Ashworth and Page's (2011) definition based on multifunctionality and tourists' invisibility. Settis (2014) also describe Venice as a dying city. He recalls the need to maintain a social and anthropological diversity and particularly its *civic capital*: "rooted in long-term mechanisms of intergenerational transmission (...) it includes the notion of 'civic culture', a collective sense of values, rights and social memory having cultural, political and economic dimension" (p. 107). Moreover, for Settis "the right to the city shall be linked to the social function of property (...) and job right (...) strictly united by juridical, ethical, economic and functional links (p.109).

In fact, the tourist gentrification of Venice cannot only be seen as an outcome of coincident will expressed by wealthy bourgeoisies. As pointed out by Gotham (2005), we cannot only assume that demand-side factors left alone drive the process, but we need also to consider the production-side perspective and recognize the role of the local institutions in the tourist gentrification process. Political willingness of the local government would be determinant in guaranteeing protection and reactivation of place-based cultures and livelihoods, against corporative interests and the tourist consumption loop. However, as a matter of fact, Venice has lacked a real governance of the city development. The latest administrations have mostly valued Venice as an economic profitable resource rather than a complex living environment; not only they have overlooked the impacts of big events like the Carnival and Biennale festivals, of the cruise ships going to the Venice Terminal and of other mega infrastructures, but they do not show active role in residence rights in the historic centre. As said, rehabilitation has advanced in form of occasional, mostly privately funded projects targeting the physical capital while the social components have been marginalized. The vacuum of regulations in favour of traditional activities has increased the vulnerability of resident groups and their livelihoods. Instead, during the past two decades free market principles have been followed dogmatically by local administrations. The liberalization of retails has modified completely the commerce in the city and caused the closure of a pre-existing network of small shops, manufacturers and workshops. New regulations of fishing and fish markets contributed to an irreversible decline of most traditional, family-run cooperatives; while liberalization of B&B and the failed control of illegal hospitality have eroded the real housing offer. The internationalization of the housing market has made housing impossible to afford for most wages.



Fig. 1. *“What happened to the character that had been positioned in the stone niche? Where are the residents? If saving Venice only means to preserve that piece of wall, we would have failed”* (<http://gruppo25aprile.org/2015/02/>)

More recently, a few residents have started showing resistance to this process of depletion of traditional knowledge and livelihoods. Exercises of place memories have taken place, recalling past traditions and uses of public spaces with old pictures, music and movies shared in Facebook, theatre performances, interviews to old people in newspapers, etc. New civic networks have also been created with a more advanced interest to intervene in the urban political discourse, letting local voices to fill the governance gap and asking for more determined protection of housing rights. One example is the Gruppo 25 Aprile, a civic platform for Venice and its lagoon constituted in 2014, in which active residents reclaim the centrality of the right to the city in the governance discourse for Venice: “Like native indians in America (in the 19th century) we now risk being forced out of our environment (...) Forced out of the lagoon, to live on the other side of the bridge (the mainland)” (<http://gruppo25aprile.org/for-our-many-foreign-friends/>). This idea of an emptying city is well represented through the metaphor of the empty niche in a wall of Venice (Fig.1), for the group asks the city rulers to engage more to preserve all urban components of the city, through more inclusive residential, employment and social service policies, and through proactive support to endangered cultures and livelihoods. Venice needs to be reshaped to regain social complexity and inclusiveness and go back to being a city. Basic commerce, fishing rights, artisan business, creative productions, knowledge centres, city gardens, playgrounds, spaces for elderly and migrant groups: who would not like to repopulate Venice if these conditions are met, despite the tourists?

4 Conclusions

Is it too late to recuperate the soul and nature of Venice as a place to live? How can a true re-appropriation of the right to the city occur despite mass tourism and the new cosmopolitan gentrifiers imposing their lifestyles? As Massey (2005) put it, no city can claim having unique sense of place or single essential identity but necessarily reflects plurality of dynamic identities that are socially produced, negotiated and represented. Representation and recognition of the right to the city for of all social and ethnic components are thus fundamental, including long-term residents who still maintain local memories and attachment, together with the new residents. Venice is perhaps more fragile than other cities, but shares common experiences with other historical centres in Europe, like Barcelona and Berlin, where social movements have been created moving from anti-tourist resentments into constructive urban preservation projects with residents' protection aims. Analysing these cases together may open new research ideas on cosmopolitan urban assemblages that can both feed critical urban theories and help finding elements for inclusive governance, aiming to more socially just and ecologically sound urbanism.

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