

Nature Speaks

Listening for Rights of Nature
in Venice and Europe

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Confluence of Europe:
Water Bodies

Curated by
Pietro Consolandi & Amalia Rossi
Wed – Sun 11:00 – 18:00
Free entrance

Ocean Space
Chiesa di San Lorenzo, Venezia
ocean-space.org
www.tba21.org/academy

From Declaration to law: a public Policy Lab for the Rights of the Venetian Lagoon

What is the Declaration of the Rights of the Venice Lagoon?

The **Declaration of the Rights of the Venice Lagoon** is the result of a participatory process designed by IDRA – Iniziativa per i Diritti delle Reti d’Acqua (Initiative for the Rights of Water) and a network of 16 associations, institutions, and informal groups active in the Lagoon basin. Over a year of study, work, and open assemblies, the network has developed a document which identifies 8 fundamental rights for the Lagoon and its basin, including:

- 1. Right to be recognized and represented as a legal person before the law**
- 2. Right to ecological and sociocultural integrity**
- 3. Right to co-exist, co-evolve, and co-create**
- 4. Right to diversity of cohabitation**
- 5. Right to flow and maintenance of healthy water cycles**
- 6. Right to an ecologically and socially just and sustainable economy**
- 7. Right to participatory co-governance**
- 8. Right to adaptation, restoration, reparation, and repair**

The Declaration draws inspiration from the history and culture of the Lagoon, along with legal principles that view the Lagoon as a common good and a form of life with intrinsic value. **It proposes a cultural shift:** nature is not an object, a resource to be exploited, but a subject with rights and legal personality.

What is the value of the Declaration?

Giving voice to the Lagoon

In a human system like jurisprudence, various non-human elements can speak through their legal personality: associations, societies, corporations, and even ships. Why not a living ecosystem?

A declaration of intent

It emphasizes the role of the Lagoon in human life and its intrinsic value, expressing the community’s desire to protect the ecosystem they live with from speculation and exploitation, connecting local ecology to a global movement.

Changing environmental norms

Even before becoming law, the Declaration can enter the normative debate through its signatories, influencing wetland and river contracts.

Political manifesto

It expresses the need to change paradigms and values in politics. The Lagoon and its inhabitants are connected, and the rights of non-human agents must be protected for a future where humans and ecosystems coexist in harmony.

How can it evolve?

The Declaration is just the beginning. To transform it into an **operational law proposal**, we need:

Public discussions: The Declaration can only develop through the participation of citizens and institutions. The project will be open to everyone’s participation; join the citizen assemblies on May 16 and October 10.

Community contributions: The project hosts a Policy Lab, a group of 20 people dedicated to shaping the Declaration into a law proposal. Leave your contributions on the participatory panel!

A popular movement: By reaching as many people as possible, we hope to build a critical mass capable of influencing institutions and **giving the Lagoon legal personality through a bill or a popular legislative initiative**. Leave your contact information in the form on the table if you are interested in joining!

Who is promoting this initiative?

IDRA - Initiative for Water Network Rights is a network that has been promoting the rights of nature in Italy since 2024, including the campaign for Lagoon Rights. The network brings together **citizens, associations, and institutions, including TBA21–Academy and NICHE Centre for Environmental Humanities** (Ca’ Foscari University of Venice), whose contribution has facilitated working sessions and citizens’ assemblies, and enabled the realization of the Nature Speaks project.

The list of the first signatories of the declaration, individuals and institutions, is available online along with the full text and abbreviated versions of the declaration.

How can I participate?

- Leave your comments and ideas on the Policy Lab panel.
- Participate in the public assemblies on **May 16 and October 10**, and in the public program available on the Ocean Space website.
- Get involved by sending an email to idra.acqua@gmail.com