On Thin Ice.
The Survival of a Contested Practice.

Date: Thursday, 12 April – 2 pm
Venue: Seminar Room, Department of Economics and Management
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Abstract
How can contested practices be maintain when carriers have no jurisdiction and are considered as villain by all others? By reconstructing the framing activity and actions deployed by different collective actors – social movements, politicians, externals, the port, and the cruising industry –, we inductively derive the mechanisms by which the latter two actors are able to maintain a practice, in spite of the harsh public contestation. We illustrate the struggle that revolves around the issue of the ‘grandi navi,’ i.e., the cruise ships, whose arrival in an environment that receives special National and International protection, such as Venice and its Lagoon, is contested, for it could lead to their destruction. Our focus lays on the work made by actors to influence decision makers’ mind on the nature of the practice, on what is worth of protection, and ultimately their decisions. Specifically, we show four mechanisms of resistance deployed by the port and the cruising industry. (1) Staying in the pocket, with which actors consistently and exclusively debate the advantages of their own position. (2) Making threats credible, which refers to the partial enactment of threats to make tangible the effects of a loss. (3) Making concessions and showing goodwill, which are temporary frame alignments, whereby the actor acknowledges someone else’s worldview and backs it by acting voluntarily. (4) Helping the decision maker in need that refers to activities deployed by an actor to help the decision maker accomplish her tasks, when she lacks resources to do so. We show how such mechanisms constrain the liberty of decision makers and favor the maintenance of the contested practice.

The paper is co-authored with Giuseppe Delmestri and Mia Raynard.