This paper examines different ways in which 'old age', vecchiezza, was defined in charitable contexts in seventeenth-century Venice, focusing on non-elite men. First, different ways of identifying old age and a number of models of institutional aged care for Venice’s working population are identified. The second part of the paper takes as a case study the Arte dei Compravendi pesce. This arte was established to provide a means of income for elderly fishermen, and was answerable to the Giustizia Vecchia. An age threshold of sixty, later reduced to fifty, was a key requirement for entry into the arte. A close analysis of legislation, suppliche, and applications for membership demonstrates that despite the introduction of certificates of baptism as a legal requirement for membership, across the century collective memory and shared ways of knowing remained the primary means for members to identify others’ age: as for other aspects of identity, neighbourhood was crucial to concepts of ageing. Finally, the paper zooms out to explore broader attitudes towards old age and ageing in the neighbourhoods where fishermen and fishmongers predominated.

Charitable Associations and Healthcare Provisions in Early Modern Venice

Defining Male Old Age Between Hospital, Arte and Neighbourhood in Seventeenth-Century Venice

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