

**FORUM  
FUTURO  
ARSENALE**

# **THE VENETIAN ARSENALE AND THE CITY**



Written and published by Forum Futuro Arsenale

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## **The Venetian Arsenale and the City**

Ideas of Forum Futuro Arsenale

- A. VISION
- B. PROJECTS
- C. PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT
- D. ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY
- E. MANAGEMENT
- F. CONCLUSION

## A. VISION

To think of Venice as an “historic centre” (*centro storico*) dooms the city to extinction. With concerted effort, the mass exodus of Venetian residents can be curtailed, and long-term quality of life in the city ensured.

Since ownership of the Arsenale complex was transferred to Venice municipality from the State in 2012, the Forum Futuro Arsenale (FFA) has identified regeneration of this area as possibly the last chance to forge a healthy future for Venice as a city. So far, isolated from the negative effects of mass tourism that are manifest throughout the rest of Venice, the Arsenale is a large enough area to significantly influence the socio-economic development of the city and yet sufficiently self-contained to be administered with a unified and integrated vision.

According to the following guidelines, the FFA has produced a conceptual framework for development of the compendium:

**Respect** the long-term objectives focused on improving quality of life throughout Venice.

The FFA proposes that the Arsenale administration focuses on a long-term vision of quality of life for Venice *residents*. Thus, whilst tourist-related interests may be considered significant in terms of the local economy, tourism must be positioned at the service of initiatives measured in terms of their contribution to the socio-economic future of the area. As stated in article 1 of the Italian Constitution on cultural heritage, tourism must be considered a means to achieving higher goals: “to preserve the fabric of the national community and of the territory”.

**Maintain** the historical integrity of the compendium.

The Arsenale is cultural heritage that must be protected and restored according to article 9 of the Italian Constitution: “The Republic ... shall safeguard the natural landscape and the historical and artistic heritage of the Nation.” As a collection of monuments of prime historic/artistic heritage, maintenance and restoration of the Arsenale must be a political priority. Original functions and aesthetics of buildings and the area as a whole, its link to the sea, the lagoon, and maritime culture, must be respected.

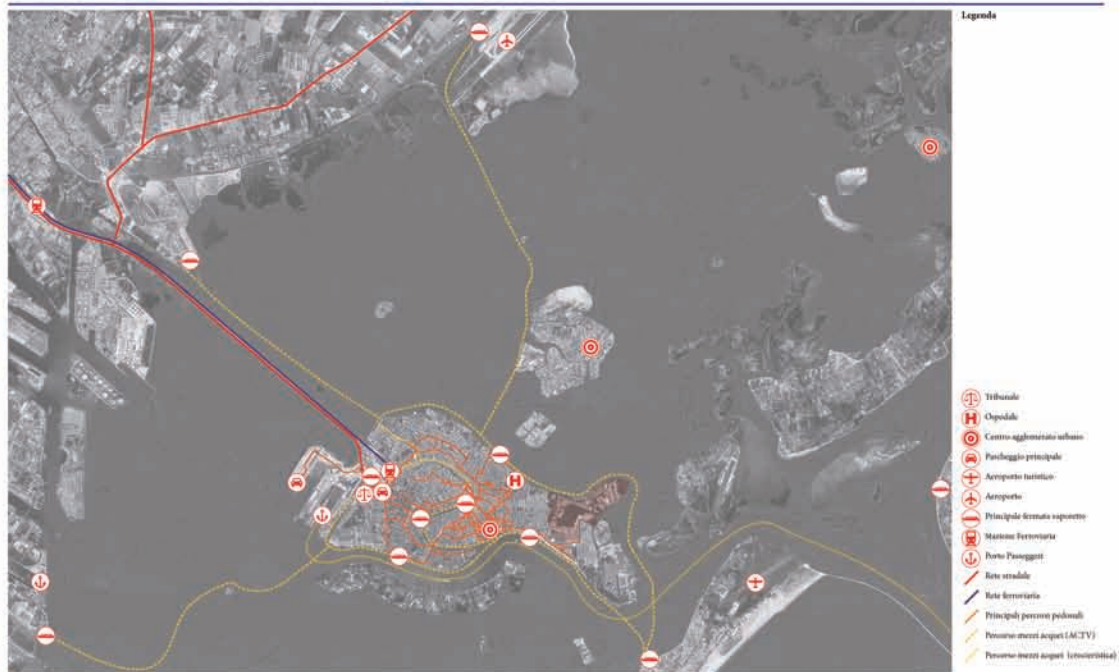
**Foster** the pursuit of traditional productive activities, research and development.

Redevelopment of the Arsenale should provide long-term, high quality jobs for hundreds of workers. Collaboration and synergies between traditional professions (artisans etc.) that emerge will make the Arsenale into a socially and economically interdependent centre for marine and maritime research and development.

**Manage** these plans with a high level of civic participation at all stages.

In an attempt to break with a history of corrupt and unrepresentative administration, the FFA proposes that management of this area be based on community governance. A model for civic participation based on representative stakeholders would allow for conversation between the public and private spheres and so generate a healthy socio-political dynamic throughout the project – from defining objectives, to monitoring interventions, to managing economic inputs and outputs.

**TABLE 1: Territorial Context**



**TABLE 2: Urban Context**



## **B. PROJECTS**

In keeping with these guidelines, the FFA proposes nine projects for regeneration of the Arsenale:

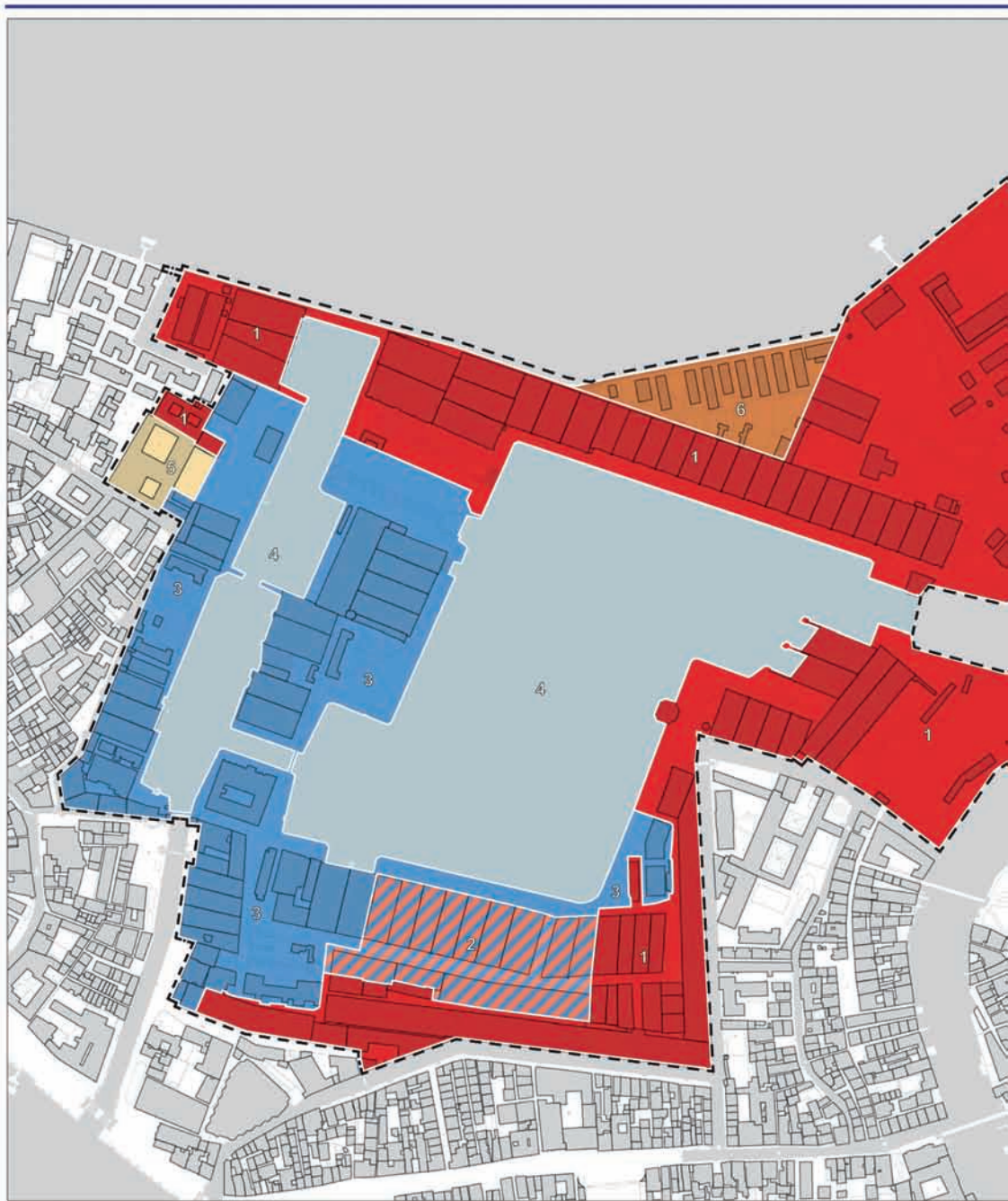
- Traditional Crafts
- Small-Scale Shipyard Activities
- Large-Scale Shipyard Activities
- Historic/Classic Boats
- Marina
- Maritime Museum
- Art Production and Services
- Sport and Leisure
- Accessibility

### **1. Traditional Crafts**

According to the Convention for Safeguarding Cultural Heritage (approved 17/10/2003 at the UNESCO General Conference and ratified 27/9/2007 under law 167), knowledge and practices relating to traditional craftsmanship (whether extant or extinct) must be protected and supported. Thus, the tradition of artisanal activities in the Arsenale area – the work of carpenters, blacksmiths, oar and rope makers etc. - must be promoted.

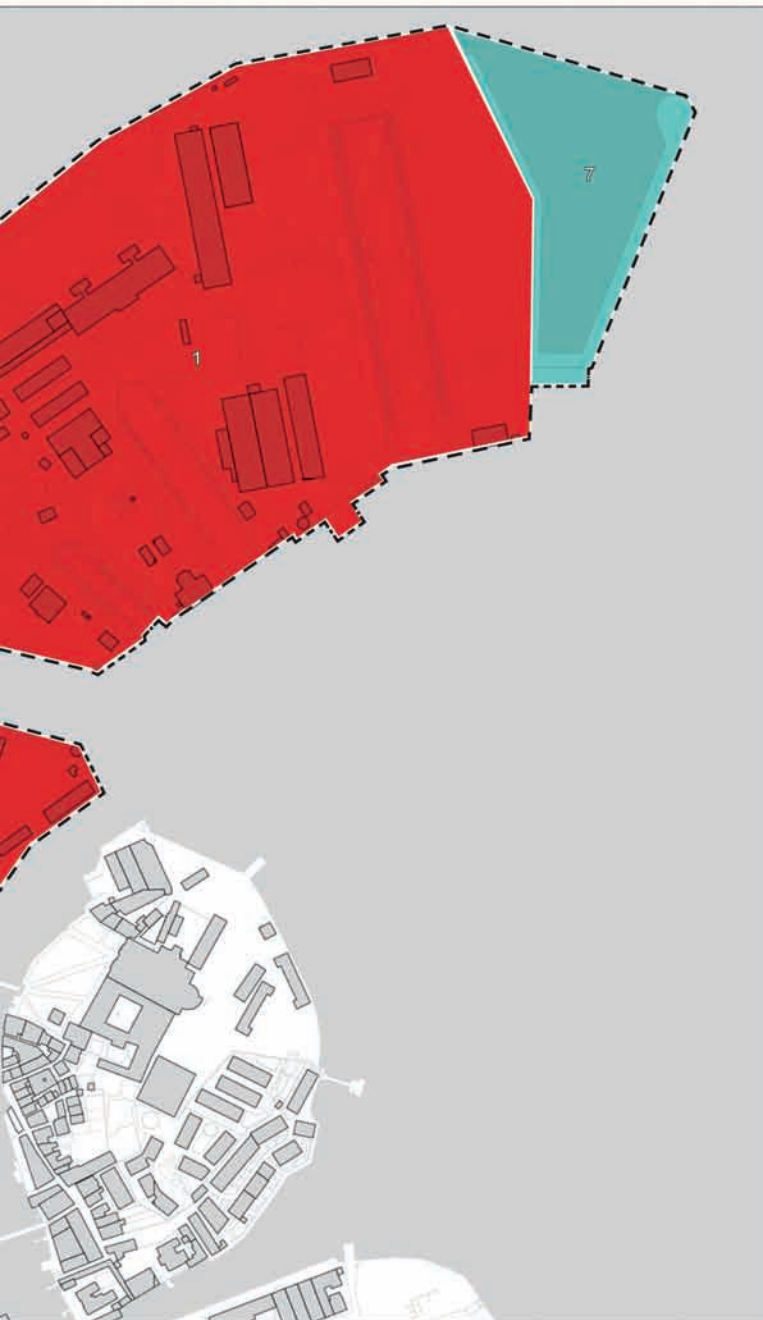
These activities can only be supported on condition of the following:




- the cultural significance of these activities is explained;
- experienced craftsmen are willing to convey expertise to apprentices;
- suitable workspaces are made available at affordable prices;
- collaboration comes from internationally recognized universities and museums.





**TABLE 7: Current ownership**



	Venice Municipality 274.000 sqm
	Venice Municipality but used by the Navy <i>sine die</i>
	Ministry of Defence - Navy 77.000 sqm
	Ministry of Defence - Navy (water body) 117.000 sqm
	Italian State - Historical Artistic Heritage - 5.000 sqm
	Italian State - Transport and Navigation - 10.000 sqm
	Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport - Provveditorato Interregionale OO. PP.
	Arsenale boundary 478.000 sqm (361.000 sqm land 117.000 sqm water)

Scala 1:4000



Archeoclub - El Felze in the *Stradal Campagna* metal workshop 2004



The 19<sup>th</sup> century forges, in the first of *Tese alle Nappe*, Arsenale Nord, photo G.Darai

*Potential pilot project: Reactivation of the nineteenth century forges.*

The original forges are situated in the first of the three *Tese alle Nappe* (presently used as an events venue) and *building 38* (currently a military workshop) on the *Stradal Campagna*. Current activities would have to be relocated from these areas.

Products and services to be developed and sustained here include:

- archaeological restoration/reconstruction of metal objects found on excavations and underwater;
- conservation and maintenance of historic buildings, starting with the Arsenale;
- small scale old and new boat maintenance/construction;
- development of a model of economic sustainability for Venetian arts, crafts and other sectors;
- pilot workshop for the planned maritime centre;
- fashioning of artisanal tools for oar-makers, carpenters, stone carvers etc.;
- collaboration with designers, architects, artists and biennale related services;
- research in collaboration with similar initiatives worldwide.

This revival would attract global attention (awareness-raising, financial support and scholarly interest) to the potential of the Arsenale revival scheme as a whole and the opportunities for new productive activities in Venice. A relatively small financial investment would be required initially and this would guarantee a number of long-term, good quality jobs.

## **2. Small-Scale Shipyard Activities**

Small-scale boat building/maintenance is currently carried-out on the Guidecca and nearby mainland (and dotted around Venice in fewer and fewer locations as businesses close down). Preliminary investigations suggest that many of these boatyards would be interested in collaborating with specialised operations in the Arsenale complex.

The FFA proposes that services and activities for small boats should be developed in partnership with existing local businesses as well as the Maritime Museum, as well as FFA affiliates such as Assonautica Venezia, Arzanà and Nuovo Trionfo.

Potential specialised services include:

- construction/maintenance of small, wood traditional classic rowing/sailing boats;
- reconstruction of historic vessels for cultural and touristic uses (e.g. the “Bucintoro”);
- research, design and construction of innovative vessels, also based on traditional know-how;
- research and teaching concerning marine materials;
- collaboration with the “floating museum” for maintenance of museum vessels;
- collaboration with sport and leisure activities in the area, and beyond.

### **3. Large-Scale Shipyard Activities**

The Bacini (dry docks and adjacent space classified as “industrial area”) of the Arsenale should be used for the maintenance and refitting of larger boats (beyond the capacity of cranes, trailers etc.). The FFA has expressed its disappointment at the recent relocation of the ACTV maintenance facility for water buses from here. Instead, the FFA proposes that this area continue to be used for public service shipyard activities, contingent on the following research:

- market research regarding the boat-refitting sector throughout the Mediterranean;
- investigation into the possibility of agreements with the navy and local shipping companies;
- exploration of potential alliances with blacksmiths, carpenters, electricians, sail-makers etc. also based at the Arsenale.



Matteo Tamassia, photo G.Penzo, [www.veniceboats.com](http://www.veniceboats.com)

#### **4. Historic/Classic Boats**

Privately owned historic and classic boats still in working condition are increasingly used for educational and entertainment purposes, as well as regattas. 328 vintage sailing yachts as well as an even larger number of motorized vessels gathered in the Mediterranean for the Associazione Italiana Vele d'Epoca 2014. Venice is currently excluded from this circuit of events due to the lack of suitable logistical support.

Development of a specialized training center for historic/classic boat maintenance in the Arsenale would allow Venice to take a share of these lucrative activities together with economic, social and cultural trickle-down effects. In line with demand for maintenance schemes in the Adriatic, collaboration with other proposed boatyard services in the Arsenale would be necessary.

#### **5. Marina**

A natural hub in this area, the Marina should be a welcoming space with support facilities including:

- production and sale of hardware goods, ropes, pulleys, etc.;
- organisation of festivals, trade fairs, educational activities;
- conferences and special events;
- permanent and temporary moorings for historic boats;
- support for lagoon-related activities e.g. the emerging eco-museum, the revitalization of Forte Marghera, Vogalonga, Velalonga, etc.

#### **6. Maritime Museum**

Maritime heritage is best appreciated on water and should be studied and exhibited in that environment where and when possible. Thus, the FFA proposes a floating museum (the first in Venice!) – for demonstrations and lagoon experiences.

The idea is to have a multi-space (distributed) museum with “theme rooms”, where items of the museum collection coexist with ongoing artisanal and research activities, as well as leisure facilities, thus providing an example of an integrated, accessible and permanent use of the compendium by Venetian citizens together with transient visitors.

Management of such a museum should be undertaken in close collaboration with the existing Naval History museum (currently managed by the Civic Museums Foundation of Venice).

Evidence gathered from naval museums around the world reveals the economic viability of this kind of management model. Such a centre would attract research projects and specialist conferences and thereby pull the Arsenale into the global arena for research on maritime culture. There are also synergies with the activities of the Naval Academy at the Arsenale.

## **7. Art Production and Services**

By virtue of the Biennale, the world’s leading artists regularly convene in Venice; the Arsenale is a prime location for this prestigious event. Though the Biennale is certainly valuable to the area, it is also important to foster local creativity. It is through supporting local activities that an environment of exchange between producers, suppliers, researchers and artists can be encouraged. Such collaboration is crucial to the development of more life in Venice.

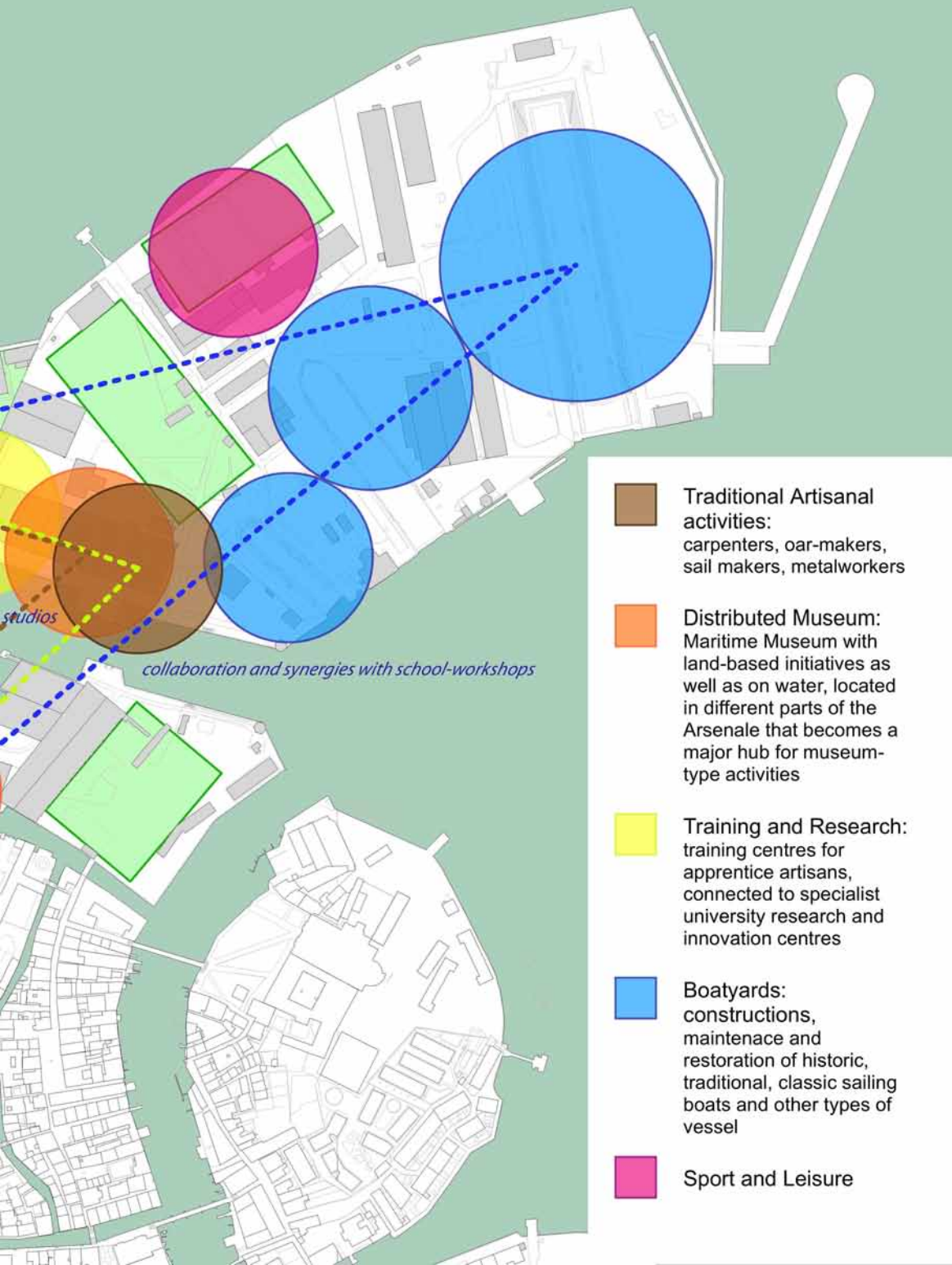
The Accademia delle Belle Arti, the Istituto Statale d’Arte and the Liceo Artistico continually witness emerging talent leave the city in search of studio space not available in Venice (among other things). The FFA proposes that space in the Arsenale be set aside for the support and production of artistic talent including:

- rehearsal and recording rooms for musicians;
- theatre and dance studios;

# PRINCIPAL SECTORS







- video production facilities;
- artisanal workshops;
- year-round exhibitions and events;
- systematic collaboration between the Biennale and local artists and related services.

## **8. Sport and Leisure**

Sporting and leisure activities are key to the health of a city. Potential schemes within the Arsenale could include:

- bars, restaurants, market spaces, urban gardens, play areas;
- field sports;
- sailing and rowing in cooperation with boat clubs throughout the lagoon;
- designated areas on land and water for boat storage/maintenance.

In the case of investment in sailing and rowing, cooperation with boat construction/maintenance in the area would result in economic benefits. The Vogalonga is an important example here. Revival of the event has led to a resurgence of interest in traditional boats and associated professional expertise. Amateur clubs cannot keep up with the ever-growing demand for rowing and sailing races and the consequent construction and maintenance of boats. Developments outlined for the Arsenale could accommodate and support such activities.

The collective presence of artists, artisans, museums and sport centers in the same area would make for a unique centre of education and recreation, allowing for social integration in a neighborhood attractive to both old and new residents.



Il Nuovo Trionfo in the Arsenale 2014, photo G.Darai

## 9. Accessibility

The Arsenale has been historically cut off from the rest of Venetian life by its high walls and segregation of activities within. Since the days of intensive boat building during the Serenissima, the area has been variously used by organisations such as the Navy and Biennale, both continuing a policy of restricted access. Development of the Arsenale in collaboration with a broader range of actors and with the involvement of more Venetian citizens necessitates improved access to the area.

The following actions are necessary:

- open access for residents;
- creation of thoroughfares across the complex (North-South and East-West) ;
- launch of a multi-site Maritime Museum to create a series of demonstration attractions;
- development of communal green spaces;
- creating new jobs linked to access management;
- entertainment and services provided by local associations.

## C. PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

Potential areas for project development are specified below with activities designated according to five phases of development, further broken down into steps (allowing for parallel implementation):

### Phase 1:

- *Galeazze west*: artisanal workspaces
- *Tese alle Nappe*: space for training of artisans; research labs
- *Tese S.Cristoforo*: first area of the multi-site museum (dedicated to the Arsenale and traditional Venetian boats)
- *Small dry dock*: area for refitting small classic boats/yachts

- *Former submariners lodging*: affordable housing and temporary accommodation
- *Access points*: Celestia entrance, Bicycle Bridge and Giardino delle Vergini.

### **Phase 2:**

- *Squeri dell'Arsenale Nuovo and Magazzini del Ferro al Sine Die*: other areas of the multi-site museum; boat refitting areas; social hubs
- *Isolotto alla Celestia with Capannoni dei profughi Giuliani*: more artisanal workspaces
- *Tesa 96-97-98, 99,100*: classic boats warehouses
- *Tese 107,108*: research studios, to support artisanal crafts and museum
- *Tese 111, 112, 113*: shared spaces for artists and artisans, artistic production service and temporary exhibitions
- *Officina delle navi and Magazzini della Canapa*: opening of a new access point; restoration of water connections between the Porta Nuova tower and the coal warehouses (*Tese del Carbone*).

### **Phase 3:**

- *Galezze est*: further artisanal workspaces
- *Armstrong crane*: expansion of the multi-site museum
- *Officina meccanica and Officina congegnatori al Sine Die*: area for artisans (such as forges) and rope makers
- *Medium-size dry dock*: area for refitting large classic boats/yachts

### **Phase 4:**

- *Large dry dock*: area for refitting large boats.
- *Naval library and study center*: collaboration with Navy Institute for maritime research
- *Squeri dell'Arsenale Nuovo*: shared use of the old water docks for historic boats
- *Between Campazzo and the Bell Tower*: restoration of canals

### **Phase 5:**

- *Open dock (site of demolished Isolotto)*: further areas for multi-site museum in form of floating, moveable pavilions, linked by bridges
- *Banchina Artiglierie bridge*: restore access.

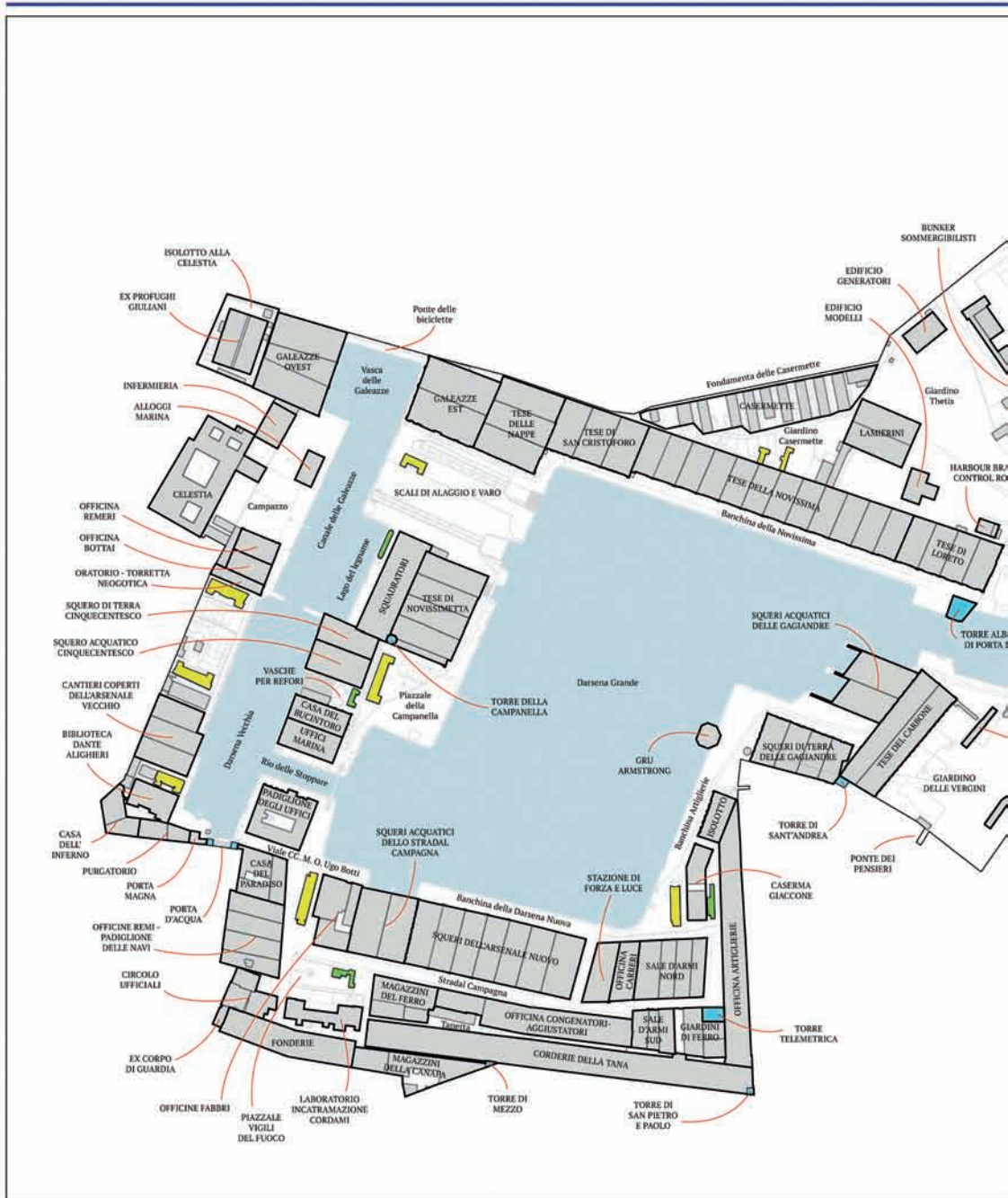
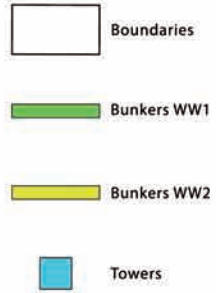
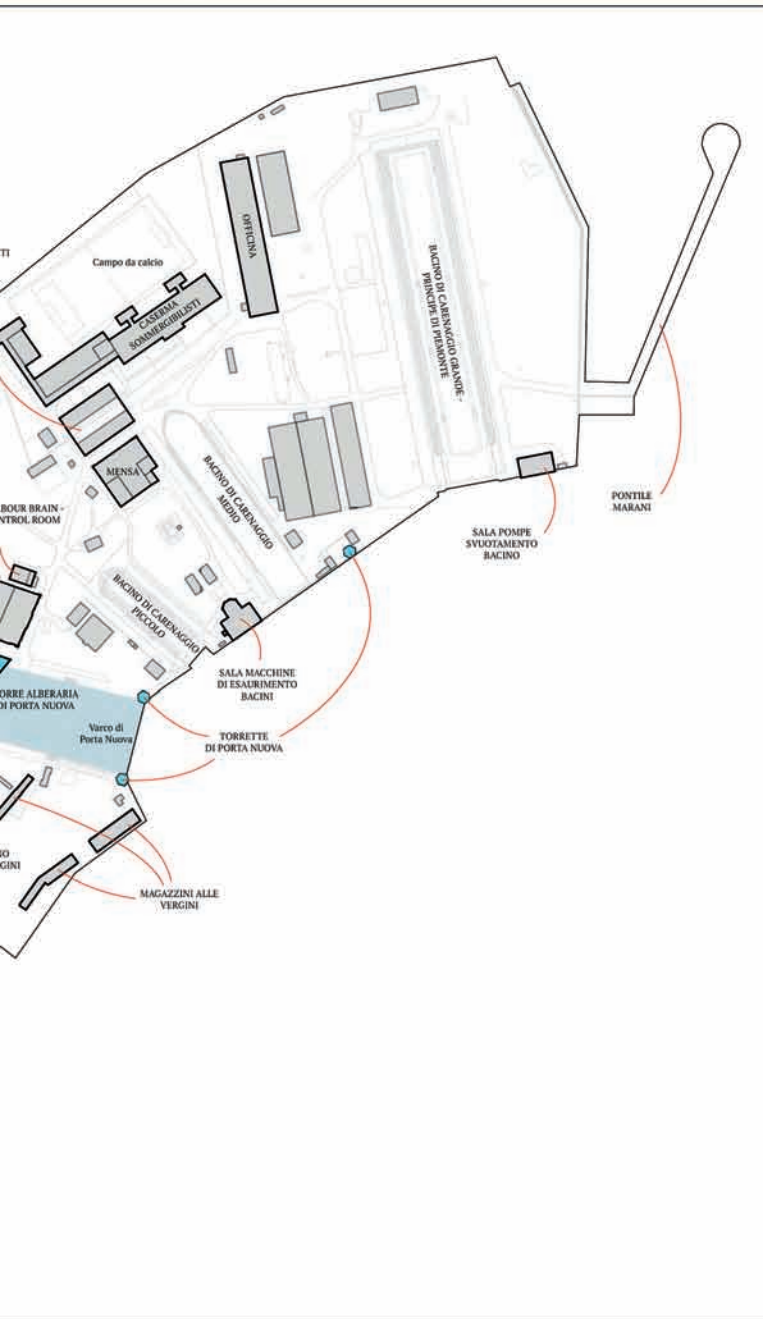


TABLE 5: Arsenale historic place names



## PHASE 1

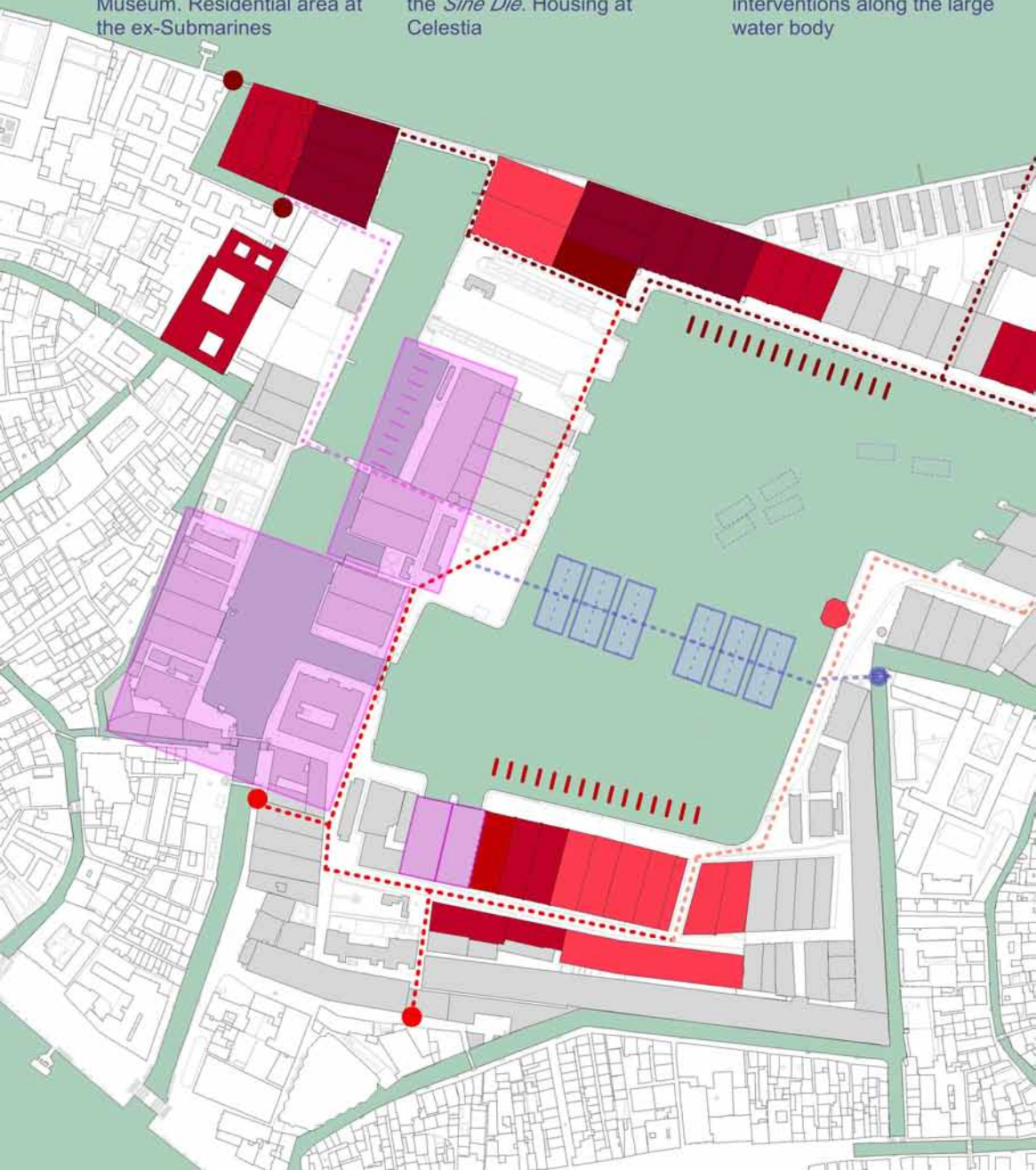
Initial productive centres for artisanal activities and boat building. Occupation of the small water body. First nucleus of the Distributed Museum. Residential area at the ex-Submarines

## PHASE 2

In the northern part, laboratories for research and experimentation and for traditional activities. Initial museum-related nuclei at the *Sine Die*. Housing at Celestia

## PHASE 3

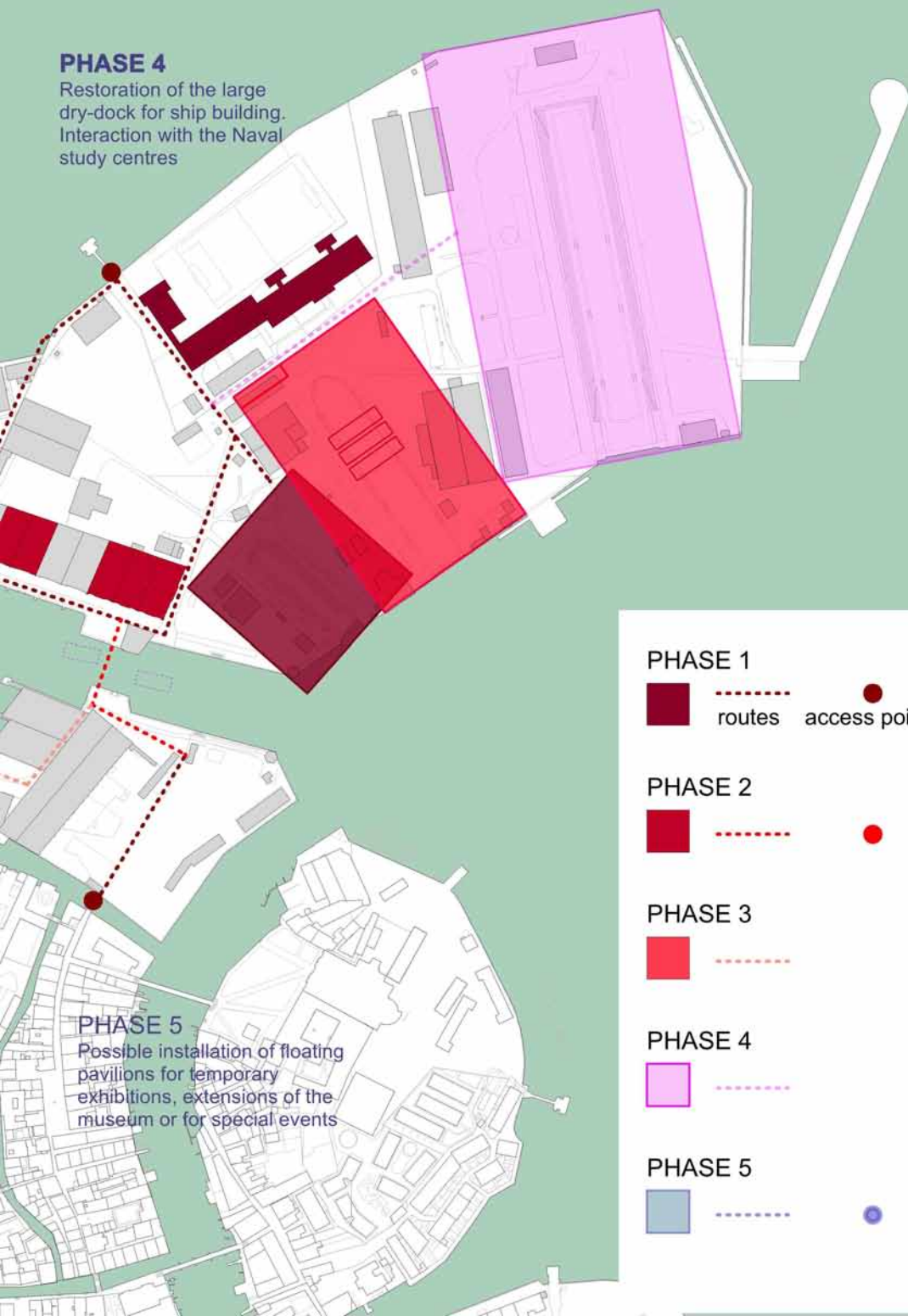
Completion of the *Sine Die* reclamation, restoration of the Armstrong Crane and the medium-sized dry-dock. Completion of accessibility interventions along the large water body





## PHASE 4

Restoration of the large dry-dock for ship building.  
Interaction with the Naval study centres



## SITES AND ACTIVITIES

Traditional artisanal activities - carpenters, oar makers, *calafati*, metalworkers - for the reconstruction of historic vessels.

The reconstructions are boatyard-schools, for handing down skills and know-how.

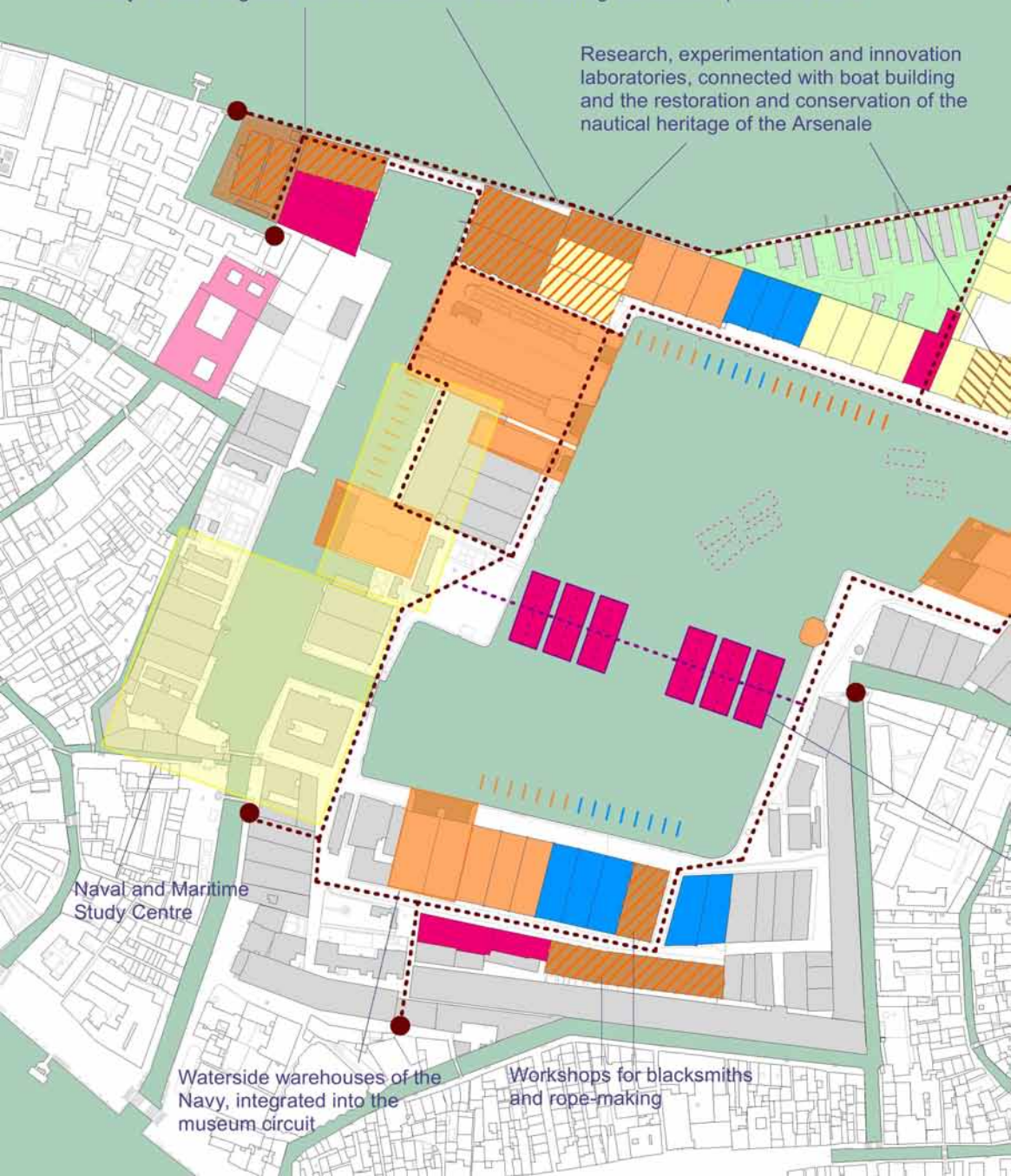
They will be integrated into the museum itineraries during the relevant phases of work

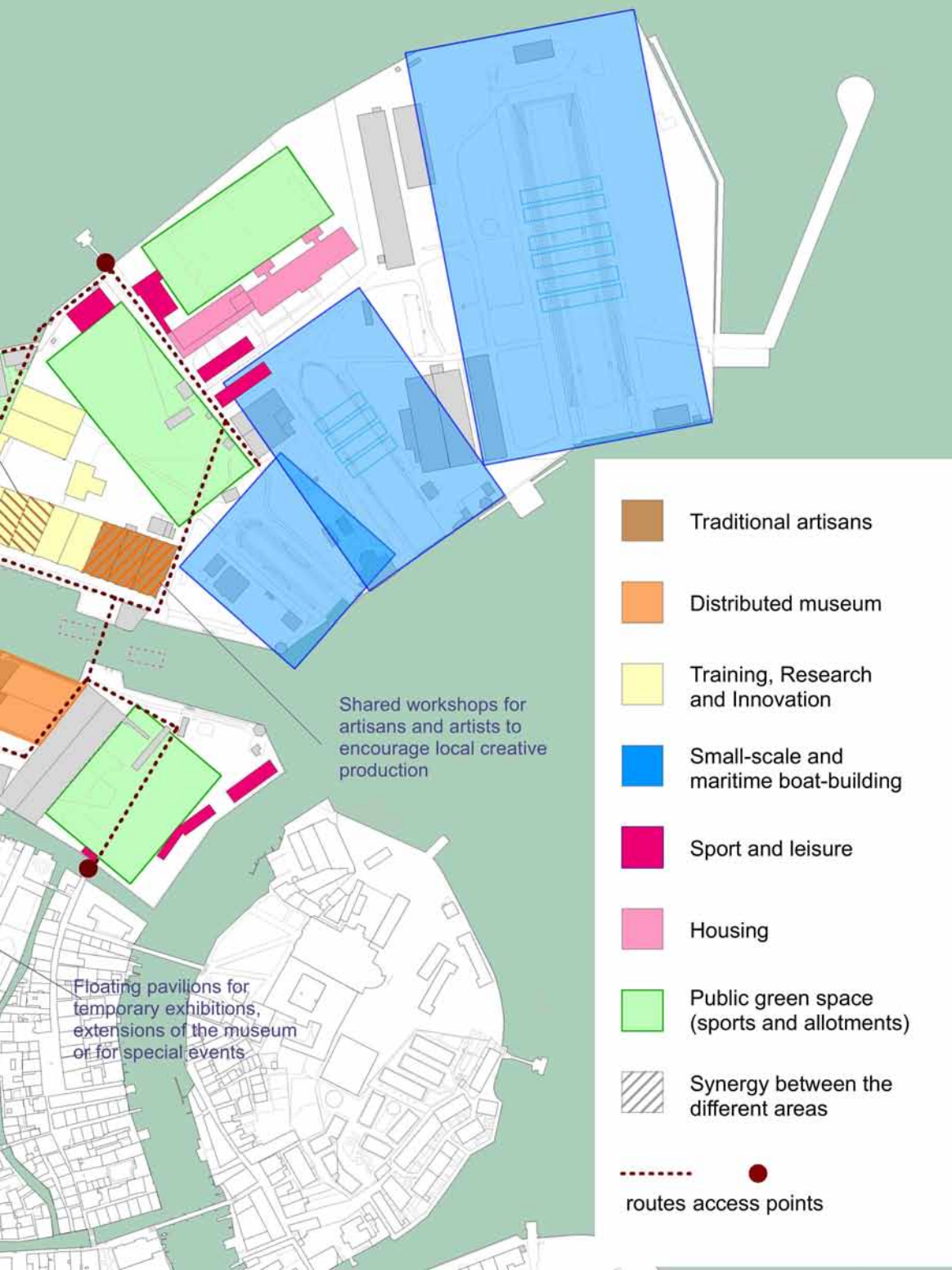
Research, experimentation and innovation laboratories, connected with boat building and the restoration and conservation of the nautical heritage of the Arsenale

Naval and Maritime Study Centre

Waterside warehouses of the Navy, integrated into the museum circuit

Workshops for blacksmiths and rope-making





Traditional artisanal activities - carpenters, oar makers, calafati, metalworkers - for the reconstruction of historic vessels. The reconstructions are boatyard-schools, for handing down skills and know-how. They will be integrated into the museum itineraries during the relevant phases of work

Research, experimentation and innovation laboratories, connected with boat building and the restoration and conservation of the nautical heritage of the Arsehole

Shared workshops for artisans and artists to encourage local creative production

Workshops for blacksmiths and rope-making

Traditional artisans

Distributed museum

Training, Research and Innovation

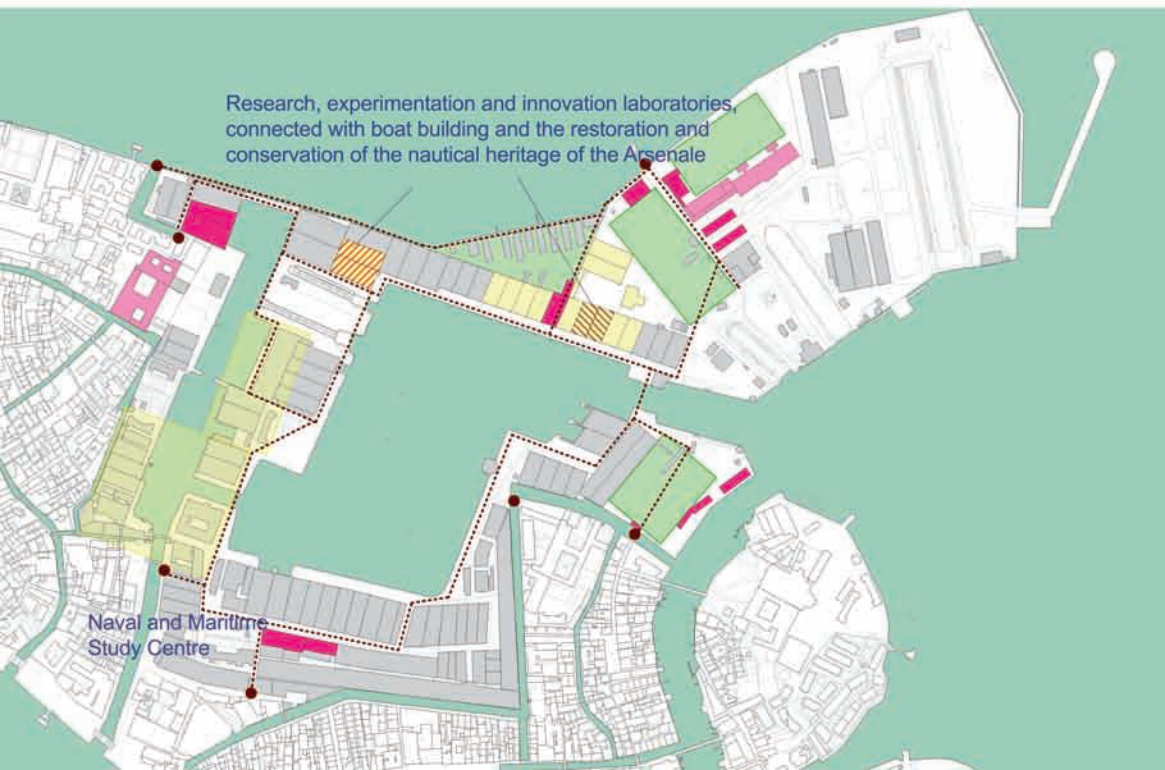
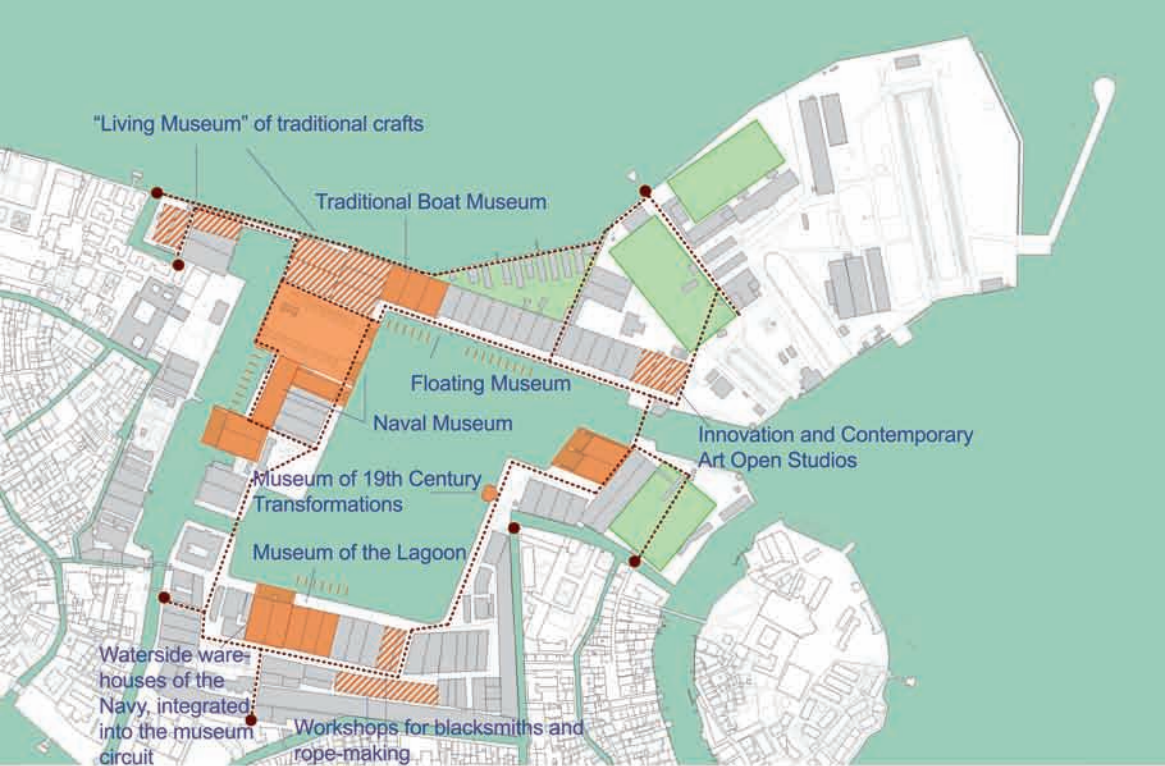
Small-scale and maritime boat-building

Historic and Classic Boats

Dry Docks for maintenance, classic boats and larger vessels

Maritime Centre





## **D. ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY**

The scheme presented by FFA poses an array of projects with diverse investment profiles, to be assessed according to both short and long-term goals and with the help of novel quantification systems. With careful consideration of these complexities, a strong set of assessment criteria must be developed for evaluating the viability of the various schemes on continuous basis.

In this evaluation, it is important to distinguish initial costs from ongoing costs. Development of preliminary infrastructure (both in terms of physical structures and support services) demands the largest investment, whilst routine funding for cultural/social initiatives would be small. Investment requirements will fluctuate, also in terms of private/public.

As well as investment in the infrastructure of the Arsenale scheme as a whole, some ongoing support and incentive schemes will be needed for companies in the area. Funds required for this are relatively small and should be made available by long-term private investors and regional programmes.

In terms of public funding, it is important that government resources are carefully controlled and offer balanced support at different levels (architecture, education, employment etc.).

Another important break with the past proposed by FFA is a closer coupling between investment in building infrastructure (restoration, utilities, network services etc) and the transfer of productive activities to fill the spaces. This in turn needs to be coordinated with accessibility and other uses of space in the surrounding area.

## **E. MANAGEMENT**

### ***Community Participation***

Numerous local organizations are actively engaged in Venice, impelled by the critical need to influence the way public space and common goods are managed by the city administration and their agents. The Faro Convention captures the essence of these groups using the term *community asset*: “a group of people who together recognize value in specific aspects of cultural heritage and who want, within the framework of public action, to maintain them and keep them for future generations” (article 2b).

Despite a wealth of knowledge and expertise in these groups, the transition from protest-driven actions to constructive execution of ideas is not straightforward. In particular, resistance of local government to this type of input stalls progress. Venice’s local administration is primarily focused on consulting with economic interest groups and is notably reluctant to interact with community groups. It is vital that the latter are formally and systematically acknowledged as legitimate stakeholders in local management. In order to achieve this, innovative statute formulations (such as a definition of the “common good” - not yet part of the Italian Civil Code) and organizational models (such as the FFA) must be accommodated.

This is despite the fact that Capo VI of the Statute of the Comune di Venezia states clearly that Venice Municipality recognizes and values non-governmental associations and supports public participation in local administration. Procedures to improve transparency have been outlined and various committees have been set up in order to carry out referendums and petitions. These are useful tools for dealing with exceptional situations, but they are easily biased in favour of economic results and are unsuitable for on-going, systematic public participation.

Venice, due to the scale, variety and dynamism of existing “heritage communities”, could become a test bed of national and international significance regarding innovative civic participation practices, and the FFA’s project for the redevelopment of the Arsenale is an exemplary pilot program.

### ***Flexible Implementation***

Precisely planned mega-projects have been disappointing countless times. Manifold examples show that extra costs, legal complications, widespread corruption and clashes with citizens arise from such approaches. An alternative strategy must be implemented. The FFA suggests that the Arsenale redevelopment be carried out in multiple phases, but according to a single overriding vision. Four major stages are evident: planning, management, execution, and evaluation. It is essential that the local community, in collaboration with various local governmental departments, be given an immersive role in each of these phases.

### *The Case of the Comune di Chieri*

A major contribution can come from previous experience in other cities. In Chieri (Piedmont), municipal regulations have been adopted for public participation in the government of the town. These regulations formally recognize the institutional role of the “heritage community” and the community’s commitment to the “common good”. The precise “goods” that are “common” are pinpointed and the “autonomous subjectivity” of associated groups identified. This is a trial only recently implemented but nevertheless it would be a relevant reference point in the management of the proposed Arsenale project.



### *Foundation for Participation*

A suitable management structure for the Arsenale could be a Foundation for Participation (FdP). This is a new organizational form, not yet fully tested. It goes beyond the limits of traditional foundations and specifically includes the local community in an institutional role. An FdP combines characteristics of traditional foundations (allowing holdings by public and private structures for instance) with those of non-profit associations (not-for-profit and unalterable). Importantly, an FdP must function as an intermediary between the State and market sectors - in line with the principle of horizontal subsidiarity, as set out in article 118 of the Constitution.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation of the Arsenale redevelopment must be coherent with the aims of the project. It is particularly critical to avoid using purely profit based economic indicators. In recent years, alternative indicators to GDP have been extensively discussed and various resultant welfare models implemented. In Italy for instance, the BES (Benessere Equo Sostenibile) is a popular model that uses 12 dimensions and 134 indicators, including measurements of social and environmental wellbeing/sustainability. Comparable criteria must be chosen (via transparent and participative means) for the monitoring/evaluation of the Arsenale to allow for interactions and adjustments to the methodology.

Four fundamental objectives might be considered here:

- employment;
- culture, training and artistic development;
- innovation and research;
- quality of life.

Each of the nine projects proposed for the regeneration of the Arsenale should be considered within these four areas, evaluated with a weighting

(0-4) in a table as below. On this basis, results can be evaluated according to forecasts accountable to the city, via the governing body.

Project	Employment	Culture, training, arts	Innovation and research	Quality of Life
Traditional Crafts	●●●●	●●●	●	●●
Small-Scale Shipyard Activities	●●●●	●●	●●	●
Large-Scale Shipyard Activities	●●●●		●●	
Historic/Classic boats	●●●	●●	●●	●●
Marina	●●	●●●●	●●●	●●
Maritime Museum	●●	●●●●	●●	●●●
Art Production and Services	●●	●●●●	●●	●●●
Sport and Leisure	●	●●	●	●●●●
Accessibility	●●	●		●●●●

### ***Ecological Sustainability***

Maximization of energy efficiency and use of local products and suppliers should be at the centre of any planned intervention in the Arsenale area in order minimize environmental impact. Further measures, such as the

use of non-polluting motorboat engines and the introduction of recycling centres, should also be considered.

#### *Ecologically designed open spaces*

Open, communal spaces (for outdoor activities and services) are central to the FFA's vision of the Arsenale redevelopment in terms of aesthetic, social and microclimatic inter-relations.

#### *Ecologically designed covered areas*

Construction of walls, insulation and illumination must be optimized through use of environmentally compatible materials and techniques – removing the need for high-energy consumption systems.

#### *Energy self sufficiency and plant systems*

Optimized systems of renewable energy could allow independence from fossil fuels, reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and optimize energy efficiency. In order to achieve maximum productivity (with minimal damage to the building structures), a renewable energy plant should be constructed on site and design-commissioned "totems" (photovoltaic masts, columns for phyto-treatment of wastewaters, rainwater collection tanks, wind towers, vertical and horizontal geothermal systems) placed in open spaces throughout the north east part of the compendium.

## **F. CONCLUSION**

Venice is at a critical threshold. Behind the illusion created by huge crowds of visitors, the resident population is falling at a dramatic rate, non-tourism related economic activities are dying, and basic services (healthcare, education etc.) are at risk. Redevelopment of the Arsenale area, in the interest of Venetian residents, may be the last chance to forge a future for this city.



"Arsenale Aperto Alla Città" 2014, photo M.Scibilia



Lugsail Regatta, Arsenale 2014, photo G.Darai

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**NOTES:**

## What is the Forum Futuro Arsenale?

*Forum Futuro Arsenale is a "Heritage Community" according to the terms of the Faro Convention established by the Council of Europe in 2005. It began as an alliance of independent experts and over 30 community groups and associations in October 2012, during the delicate phase of political negotiations when ownership of the Arsenale compendium passed from the State to the Comune di Venezia.*

*People and groups joined together because of their shared determination to participate actively in the regeneration process and to ensure the protection of this important tangible and intangible Venetian heritage.*

*Their engagement involves investigation, research, discussion, debate, awareness raising, stimulation of participative processes and making their expertise and knowledge available to the local administration and other relevant stakeholders.*

*Among Forum members there are professional and amateur rowers, sailors, university professors, lawyers, engineers, architects, artisans, sociologists, art historians, other professionals, residents of neighbouring Castello and other individuals driven by their love for Venice.*

*In 2016, the umbrella group transformed itself into a non-profit cultural association, of the same name. Most of the original FFA participants became members of the new association and it has the same objectives and commitment to ensuring that developments in the Arsenale genuinely stimulate the redevelopment and revitalisation of the city.*

Cover photo M.Scibilia



