



**HAULUP**

Heritage and  
Architecture of  
Urban Landscape  
under Production

**VENEZIA  
ARSENALE**

edited by  
Margherita Vanore



This volume proposes essays, descriptions, and projects developed both during and following the Erasmus Intensive Program HAULuP, Heritage and Architecture of Urban Landscape under Production, held in Venice in September 2013, organized by the University Iuav of Venice with the participation of the Manchester Metropolitan University (Manchester School of Architecture) and the Universidad de Granada (Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura). The design experience proposes a rereading of the transformations of Venice Arsenale about four fundamental themes, aiming at a new use of the architectural complex by the city.

The proposals are focused on the definition and development of a new accessibility, new urban services, permanent and temporary residences, as well as on the role of the great central basin and the fronts of water.

The essays that precede the descriptions of the place and design themes, aim at developing a comprehensive reading of the Arsenale in relation to the Lagoon of Venice, the story of its transformation, the city and the international scene.

The different contributions recognise some references for the architectural and urban conversion of a place in which Venice reflects itself as "City World", capable of housing exhibitions and events, evoking similar places, cultural references and requesting at the same time a particular care, based on a specific knowledge, where technical approaches and projects can act for the safeguard of its assets only through the appropriate transformation of the alive city.

The whole makes HAULuP an interesting experience along a necessary path of research by design dedicated to urban and landscape regeneration of the historical heritage of the production.





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Università Iuav  
di Venezia

msa Manchester  
School of Architecture



## Heritage and Architecture of Urban Landscape under Production

ERASMUS INTENSIVE PROGRAMME 2013-14

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# Venice, the city and the Arsenale

Stefano Tornieri

Talking about “novum” and renovation<sup>1</sup>, Jean Claire quotes an ancient indian proverb: “Who is not able to explain his past is condemned to live it again”.

Re-cognizing to transform, re-activating for not re-living the same past, are theoretical position that find in the field of requalification of the post-production landscapes their more evident practical application.

The city of Venice, thanks to a slow but continue modification, managed to absorb in its peculiar urban web the spaces destined to the productive activities. These spaces hold properly composition and spatial meanings related to the productive functional needs, as the specific case of the Arsenale. The continue transformation is the main theme through which the Arsenale has been evolved, adapting the spaces for new uses, raising, demolishing, reconstructing itself, opening new waterfronts and building the new. In this way we realize the importance of Venice Arsenale that, according to Egle R. Trincanato, is still missing a comparison with the other European shipyards. A lack that has delayed the perception of the uniqueness of the Arsenale that is understandable only with some proportional comparisons. A uniqueness that is valuable with the extent of the water expansions in relation with the facades or simply a numeric parallel between the whole surfaces. This deep knowledge is a necessary condition for a design reflection about the theme of reuse of the Venice Arsenale, and it doesn't concern only the decision for a new functional destination. Furthermore, the complex analysis of the used constructive technics are not enough to explain it because the Arsenale is composed by spaces that have had a slow morphologic evolution. These spaces are able to adjust their shapes expanding itself while following practical reasons where the idea of efficiency is partially responsible of the silent austerity of the places.

The Arsenale, added Egle R. Trincanato, is “a system full of heroic suggestions (...) suggestions of an open view, and the capacity to foreseen. This is the lost charm, full of history, pursued by who is against a new use. Instead, a common view prefer “the functional silence of the big historical monuments” that lead to think to the Arsenale as a frozen monument.

1 Clair J., 1984. *Critica della modernità*, Umberto Allemandi ed, Torino

On this background, from the seventies, a lot of projects have taken place, but only a few reflected on a new function of the buildings and conceived the idea of a "possible Venice". Who support this idea believes that the project of modification is a producer of consciousness, and in this sense it is avoid the risk of an "hibernated monument" and a conception of the architectural heritage as simply the memory of itself.

Among the projects and the studies for the Arsenale, those that cross over the simple formal and functional redefinition of the spaces are now considered. These are projects that measure themselves with the area of Arsenale going over the shy logic of the "container" and that include in a deep reflection the themes of the urban composition. They derive from the hypothesis that the reactivation of the whole architectural complex passes through a needful dialogue between the Arsenale and the rest of the city.

The first plan on this area was the "piano particolareggiato of the Arsenale/Castello Est" projected between the 1970 and 1974 by a group of designers coordinated by Romano Chirivi (Fig. 1). This is a plan which treats the Arsenale area as an infrastructural hub of international relevance as well as the main urban structure of the oriental part of the city. It was the first project that has underlined the strategic relevance of the Arsenale transforming the public transport line through Rio delle Galeazze to a quick translagoon connection northern with Murano and Tessera Airport, and southern with San Marco, the Giudecca and the Fusina Terminal. In this occasion it was proposed the re-opening of Canale Birià on the north side of the sixteenth-century walls of the Arsenale to "realize the water continuity restoring the original *forma urbis* and the hydraulic situation."<sup>2</sup>

Some of the considerations of Chirivi's plan found the agreement of several choices followed for the project "Venezia città porto" by G. Polesello and G. Fabbri presented at the XV Triennale of 1973. (Fig. 2) The value of this project sets on its ability to refuse limited solutions of restoration but to focus them in a wider vision reached by an articulated reading of the city.

The project report enlightens that the objective of an urban reform of some parts of the city is a "plan" of intervention where single and specific hypothesis make sense. In this perspective the projects are either a synthetic answer to the morphological and functional questions of some parts of the city or even the occasions to show a method of composition based on analogy between figures. This is why the choice of the part of the city that need to be reconfigured, assumes a huge importance. Therefore the two harbour areas of the Arsenale on the east side, the current commercial harbour and the Tronchetto island on the west side, and the whole northern side of the city are the main element of the new relations system between the lagoon and the mainland.

2 Gennaro P, Testi G, (eds), 2010. "Progetto Arsenale, studi e ricerche per l'Arsenale di Venezia". Cluva, Venezia.

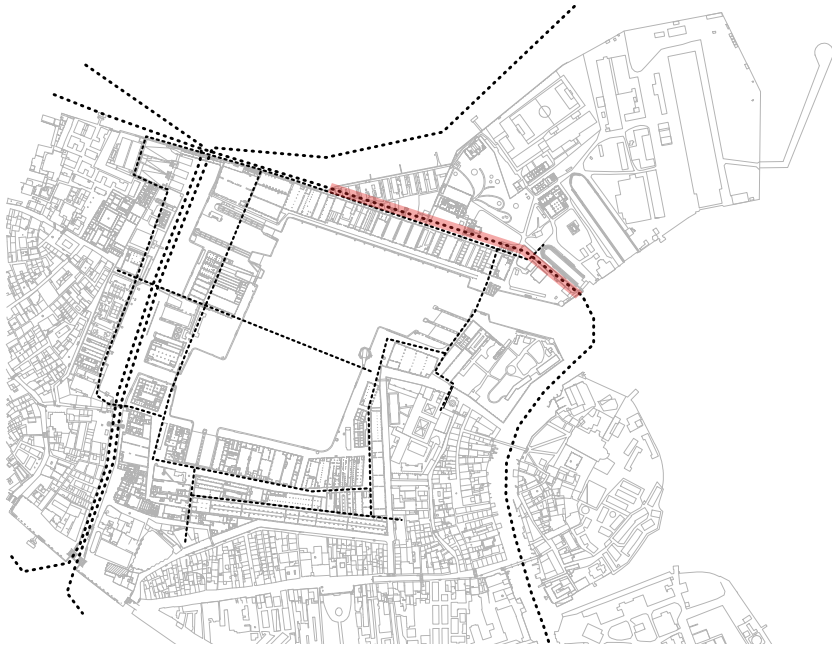


Fig.1 - Extract from the plan by R. Chirivi, water and pedestrian accessibility, 1970-1974  
(from the original plan in Gennaro P, Testi G, edited by, 2010. Progetto Arsenale, studi e ricerche per l'arsenale di Venezia, cluva ed)

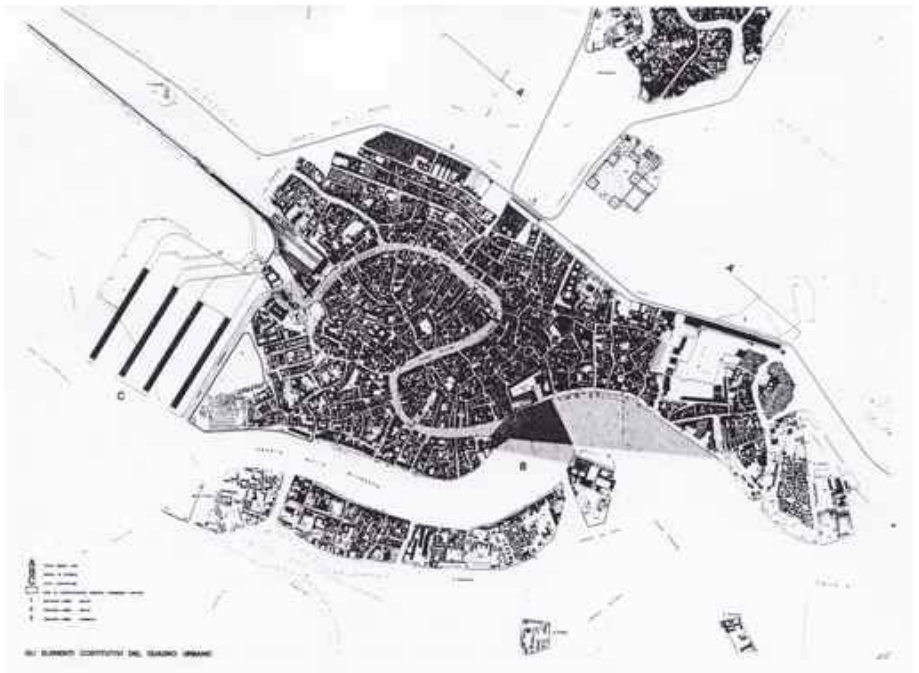


Fig. 2 - Venezia città porto, G. Fabbri, G. Polesello, 1973  
(in Fabbri G, Polesello G, 1973, Venezia città porto, Controspazio n.6/1973)

On the north side of the Arsenale, similarly to the Chirivi's project, the reopening of the Birià Canal is expected thus releasing the east part from to the connection with the graving-dock peninsula. Proceeding to the west side, opposite to the Fondamenta Nuove and the Sacca della Misericordia, the access gate to the island of the north lagoon is identified. In the functional program the insertion of some residential volumes facing on the north edge assumes a particular meaning. The volumes, rhythmically repeated, take the shape as an interruption of the minor venetian urban fabric. The strong acknowledgment of the urban episodes identified by the project is underlined by a planned formal simplification of the volumes that finds its reason on the measure and the comparison with the dimension of the Arsenale and its architectures. The Squadratori building, the long volume of the Corderie and the surrounding wall dimension are examined as urban elements able to generate parts of the city strongly recognizable. In this way we can read the insistence on the importance of the north edge, here detected as a board potentially able to "invert the functional and social marginalization process consequent of the current urban order".<sup>3</sup>

Between the 1982 and 1984 the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia in collaboration with the University of Genova, developed a complex and interdisciplinary research on the problem of the Arsenale. The research, coordinated by Valeriano Pastor<sup>4</sup> and known as "Progetto Arsenale" collects studies in different fields as surveys, technical and physical analysis, technology of the construction, problems of restoration and design. The research works that dealt more on the design aspects are those directed by Augusto Romano Burelli and Luciano Semerani, by Romano Chirivi and Vittorio Gregotti.

The project by A. R. Burelli and L. Semerani (Fig. 3) explores the theme of a new east-west permeability identifying on this positioning a straight axis supported by the Squadratori building, considered the fulcrum of the intervention for the exceptionality of its architecture. The solution purposed works both on the construction of a system of new relations inside the Arsenale and on the necessary relations on the outside. The composition axis is designed to construct spaces different from each other.

Included into the two extremes, that open two new access, there is a big building-bridge able to accommodate an high link between the east-west fronts of the basin. The eastern entrance, on rio delle Vergini, connects the complex to the extreme East of Venice with the San Pietro di Castello island while the West entrance defines a connection with the architecture of San Francesco della Vigna.

3 Project report by G. Fabbri e G. Polesello in *Controspazio* n.6/1973

4 Valeriano Pastor (main coordinator). The other research groups were coordinated by Augusto Romano Burelli and Luciano Semerani, Andrea Buti, Giuseppe Creazza and Franco Laner, Romeo Ballardini and Mario Dalla Costa, Romano Chirivi, Vittorio Gregotti, Giorgio Piccinato, Arnaldo Cecchini, Edoardo Benvenuto.

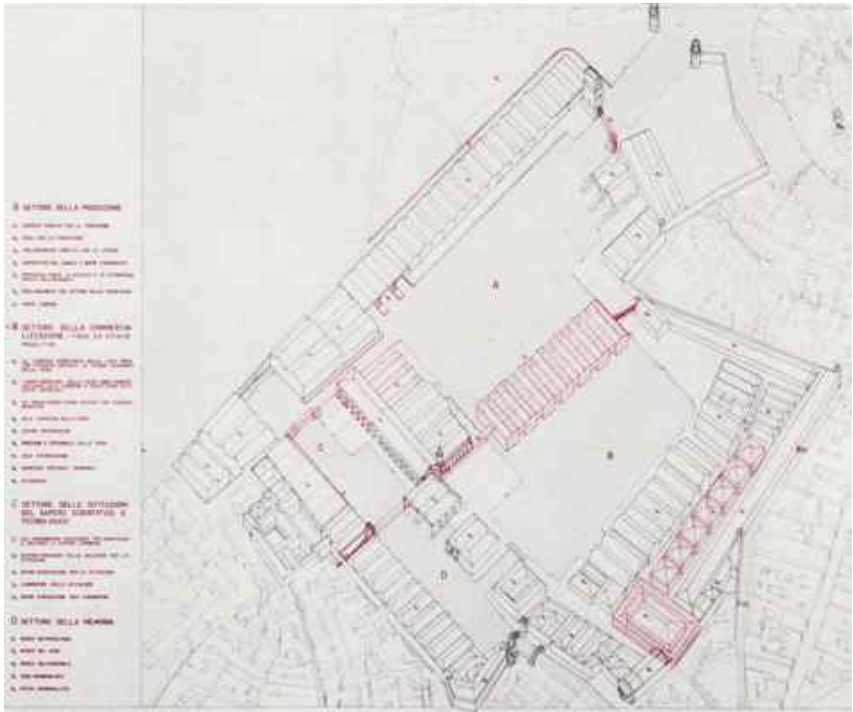


Fig. 3 - Pietro Carnelutti, L'Arsenale riordinato, structure of the projects' standard, 1984-1987  
 (in Gennaro P., Testi G., edited by, 2010. Progetto Arsenale, studi e ricerche per l'arsenale di Venezia, cluva ed)

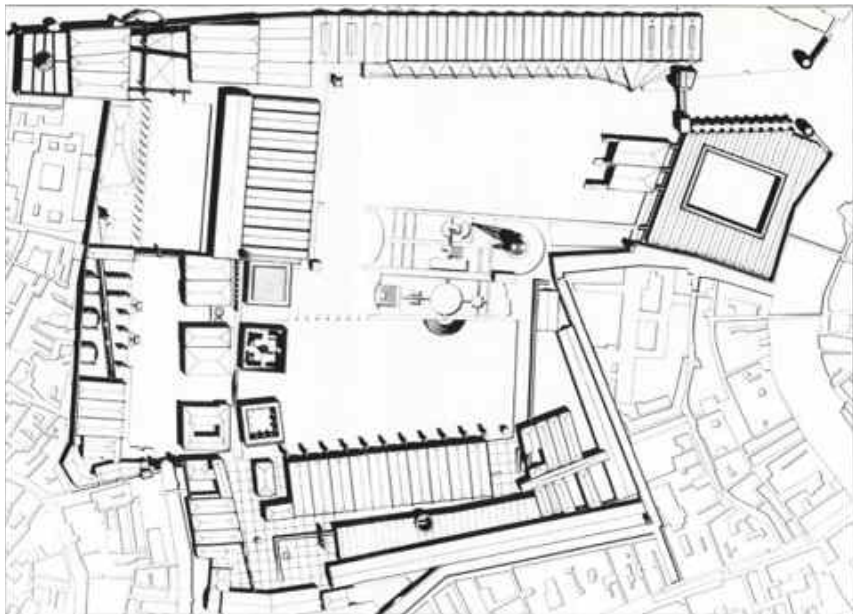


Fig. 4 - Luciano Semerani, general plan, 1987  
 (in Gennaro P., edited by, 1987. L'Arsenale riordinato. Nuovi progetti per Venezia, Arsenale editrice.)

Another important study, based on some aspects of the research described previously, is the project coordinated by L. Semerani<sup>5</sup> and presented in the Triennale di Milano in the 1987. The experience known as "Arsenale riordinato" is composed by a collection of some hypothesis born combining the architectural project with others disciplines that conditioned the development of different themes. A huge work of analysis and redraw of the artefacts allowed a deep interpretation of the buildings pointing out their complexity from different points of view.

The study of the development of the Arsenale, combined with philological studies on the artefacts, permitted to the designers to comprehend a rule, a hidden structure, an original criteria that opens the reflection to a possible modification. It is the first example of a deep re-scanning of the architectures that links the constructive aspects with the awareness that its single artefacts can build a composition matrix on which it is possible to set up a project of re-establishment of the Arsenale. From this point of view the overall plan of the projects points out the attention reserved to the accessibility system as one of the main important element for the reactivation of the whole complex. (Fig. 4) The opening of the Birià Canal prefigured by the Chirivi's project, is proposed once more as a necessary action to allow the use the tesse's fronts, while the reopening of the Darsene di San Cristoforo would directly connect the big basin with the north lagoon.

Another important theme on which some recent projects<sup>6</sup> (realized and in phase of realization) reflected, is the construction of a connection bridge between the banks of Porta Nuova. This intervention would represent the only pedestrian link along the north-south axis. The permeability on this axis is important for the boat connection, make possible by the navigability of the Canale delle Galeazze and by the adjustment of the water gate on the north side border of the Arsenale. The increase and the redefinition of a new pedestrian permeability of the area has been given by the identification of new openings on the boundary wall. In many cases the walls of the Arsenale represent both the limit of the area and the structural element of the productive building, such as the case of the Corderie, therefore it is hard or quite impossible opening entrances. The project defined by Semerani insists on reading the northern boundary wall as the occasion to open a loggia and insert some walkways and path taking advantage of the capacity of some elements to invert their own urban role.

These works, although kept on paper, underline that a project of re-conversion should be able to build a complex system of relations with the existing conditions that goes over the geometric limits of the area to recover. Instead the current state of things shows that it had always avoided the

<sup>5</sup> the complete list of the designer is: Luciano Semerani, Augusto Romano Burelli, Boris Podrecca, Vojteh Ravnikar, Karl Josef Schattner, Branko Siladin, Jiri Suchomel, Oswald Zoeggeler.

<sup>6</sup> we are referring at the project by MAP studio for the restoration of Torre di Porta Nuova and the project for the mobile bridge for the big basin by Nuvolab.

application of a strategic plan for the reconfiguration of the whole Arsenale keeping far from a new idea of Venice.

This condition was prefigured also by Bellavitis in his study about the urban history of Arsenale when underlined that the only projects launched considered the Arsenale as an urban sector provided with its well defined perimeter.

It is today still evident that preferring the logic of the "container", only those projects that solve the recovery issue probably will be carried out, avoiding the primary and necessary theme of the relation between the Arsenale and the City.

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## **Margherita Vanore**

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*on the cover: Venice Arsenale, Tower of Porta Nuova,  
an interior view from the new ramps (renovation  
project by MaP studio)  
photo by Umberto Ferro*

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