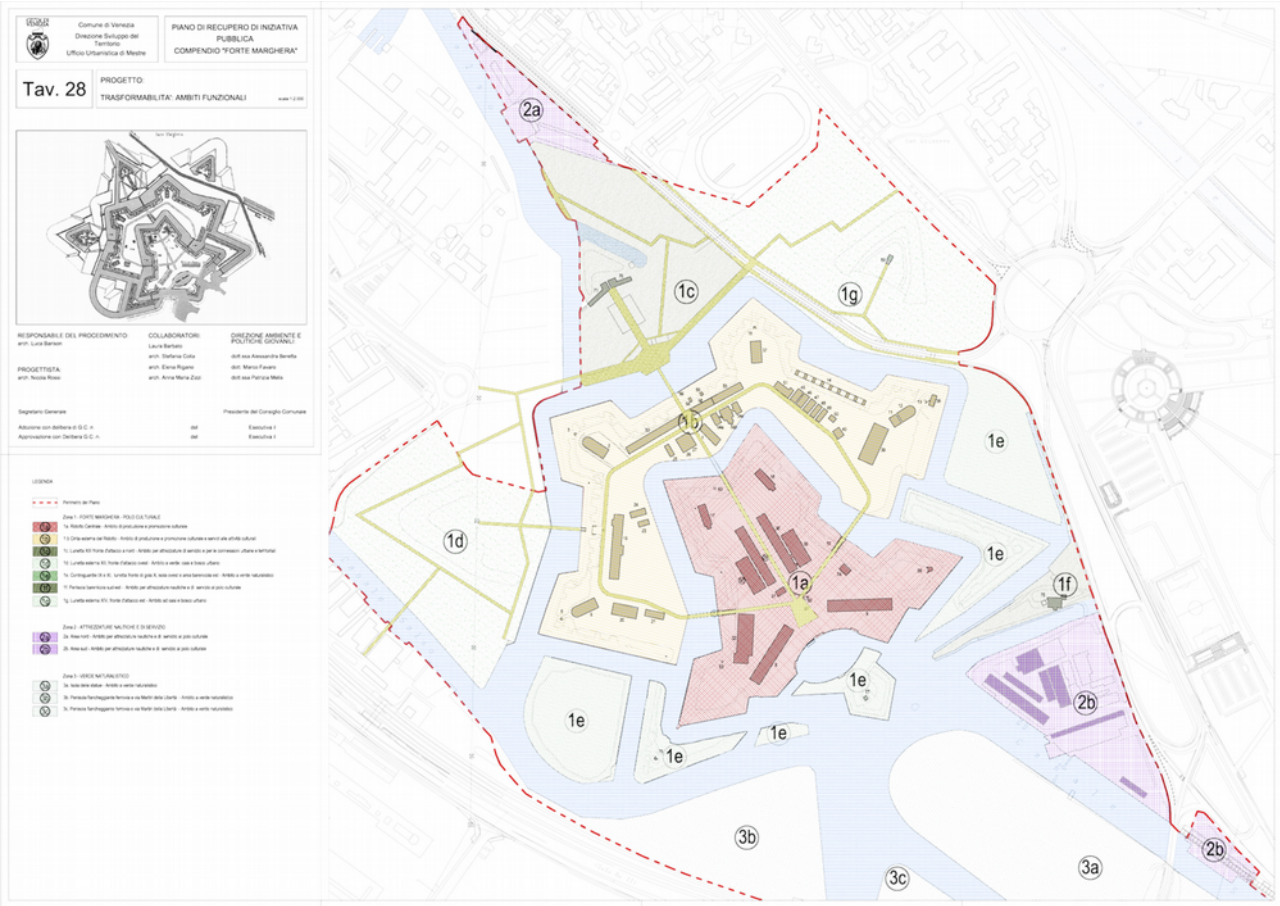
FORTE MARGHERA Citadel of Creativity

Introduction

Forte Marghera is a star shaped fortification, the natural meeting point between Venice and the mainland. Full of historical significance and unique environment, it offers opportunities for artistic productions, shows and promotion of culture of the lagoon. Forte Marghera is also the base for visiting the historic Venetian defense system, which has more than one hundred sites distributed throughout the area.
Natural oasis, monument, crossroads between mainland and the lagoon, Forte Marghera is a fundamental element for the development of the entire area and its cultural identity.

Forte Marghera has been left by the army in the 90s, and has entered slowly into abandonment and decay until its taken over by Marco Polo System after 2004.
After years of experimental re-uses for several functions, his cultural production vocation, tourism attraction and his value for the surrounding areas is now clear. The site is now a symbolic place of the Venetian territory aiming at becoming a crucial center of the city cultural life.
According to a survey conducted in 2015, 83% of recent visitors were between 18 and 35 years old and 90% lived in Veneto. 28% were students and they came with friends, for the cultural events, the spectacles, the restaurants, the art exhibitions and also to relax on the lawns along the canals. They mostly intended to come again.
The site needs a series of structural interventions, of variable intensity, designed to making the spaces safe and fully usable and accessible.
Forte Marghera is included included in the World Heritage Site of Venice and Its Lagoon, which is monitored through its own management plan.
Urban planning already gives the site a cultural new use. For its complexity in terms of extension, territorial impact and restoration, Forte Marghera needs to be treated specifically through a long term management plan.
Approved Urban Recovery Plan
On March 28th, 2013 the Council of the City of Venice approved a Recovery Plan for the Forte Marghera area, developed, after a deep analysis, by the City of Venice technical structures in collaboration with the Venice Superintendence for Cultural Heritage and Marco Polo System.
The Plan provides for the creation of a pole for cultural promotion and production, oriented towards the preservation of the identity of the site, the protection and development of the heritage, with reference to architectural and environmental components, and placed inside a large and significant urban park, rich of services, in continuity with the nearby Park of San Giuliano.
The new functions, the intended use of the areas, the actual condition of buildings and green areas, the guidelines for the restoration are reported in detail.

(In following images some relevant indications from the plan)



Plan perimeter

- Zone 1 – Forte Marghera cultural center

1a Central island - cultural promotion and exhibitions
1b External island - cultural production and services
1c Lunette north – oais and urban woods
1d Lunette west - oais and urban woods
1e Counterguard – naturalistic area
1f South-east peninsula - cultural and nautical services
1g Lunette east - oais and urban woods

- Zone 2 – nautical and services facilities

2a North area - nautical and cultural services facilities
2b South area - nautical and cultural services facilities

- Zone 3 – Naturalistic and green

3a Island "Delle Statue" - natural green
3b South peninsula - natural green
3c South peninsula - natural green

Intervention Category	N. of buildings	Gross floor area (GFA) m²	GFA%	intervention cost €/m²	€ Total cost
1	19	3.925	18,69%	3.000	11.775.000
2	13	7.904	37,64%	1.700	13.436.800
3	16	2.545	12,12%	1.700	4.326.500
4	10	4.493	21,40%	1.700	7.638.100
5	23	2.132	10,15%	2.000	4.264.000
Total	**79**	**20.999**	**100,00%**		**41.440.400**

Urbanization excluded (estimated about 13 millions euro).

Management model

The public use and the public ownership of the fortress gives to the management the main duty of create benefits for the community.
The only way to preserve and improve the heritage cultural value create at the same time the conditions for its maintenance economic sustainability is combining the exploitation of the real estate, the heritage value and the cultural animation of the creative productions and the production of free cultural and social benefits.
In this framework, a positive interdependence between service and goods production and the dissemination of the cultural value is very relevant.
Creative activities are managed by organizations operating in sectors subject to copyright exploitation, including audiovisual production, advertising and communication, publishing, software and arts.
In Europe, the creativity is considered as a fundamental asset for the technological development and innovation, also recognized as a major factor of growth in the near future: in 2007, the European Commission has identified the creative sector as strategic for the Lisbon objectives achieving. In 2010 published a document for its strengthening and for the priorities definition and support COM (2010) 183, "Green Paper - Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries").
The establishing of this kind of productions in the fortress must be managed following a site specific model, Heritage preservation oriented. The conservation of the peculiar heritage characteristics can be an asset and an added value for the creative productions. The appreciation of this opportunities provided by the site should match with the estimation of the price for rent or use a property.
Other added values come from the visibility of the fortress and its international relations, when a well managed monument image improved by an international and networking, can be associated to the cultural production organizations.
The management of the fortress is then leaded by the Research and Development Center for the Fortified Heritage. In continuity with the experience currently underway, the management and development activities of Forte Marghera and its Brand "Citadel of creativity", will be: promotion of the site and its cultural value; marketing management of the fort including the exploitation of indoor and outdoor spaces; development of partnerships and international networks; participation in tenders of European programs; elaboration of projects financed by other public or private bodies.
Actually the fortress and the Center are managed by Marco Polo System, a European Economic Interest Grouping created in 2000 by the City of Venice and the Union of the municipalities of Greece created to study and develop the fortified heritage. It organized event and activities in Forte Marghera since 2004 and is in charge of its management since 2007. In 2008 the fortress was permanently opened to the public, after more than two hundred years of complete closure. In last years the economic balance was mainly covered by commercial incomes and EU projects activities, tending to the self financing.
In next future a new body can be created, with the specific mission of the fortress management, in continuity with MPS. In any case, the management will be in charge of the maximization of the social, cultural and economic result in according to the guidelines approved by the local government as policymaker and owner decision, how in the following decision flow:

City and City Government
(owner and policy maker)
define the mission

discussion with the Stakeholders
(governance)

Direction
define the implementation plan

Staff
activities **implementation***, relationship with final users
feedback

Direction
results assessment
proposals of planning review

discussion with the Stakeholders
(governance)

City
review approval

implementation*

Functions:
planning – research – promotion – preservation – funding – networking

Economic activities:
short time buildings or green areas rent (events, exhibitions, parties)
short time (a year) water spaces rent
long time buildings rent (standard commercial contracts or longer concessions)
project development (funded by public sector or other)
publishing
consulting

Social goals: ensure the public use of the site, improve his role in urban development.

Cultural goals: increase the cultural value of the heritage and its regeneration with history knowledge research and dissemination, and with new cultural productions.

Economic goals: obtain the funding for the achievement of what described above and for the site renewal operations, with the combination of different cultural and real estate exploitation.

Services and goods

Matching the spaces features and value with the new uses, the different kind of possible lease and incomes with the expenditure, is the main management challenge.

The physical complexity of the site and the different values in there, need a complex exploitation strategy. There are different buildings typologies, with different potential uses and value. To achieve the Citadel of Creativity there are different function needed: Cultural production, services, exhibition space, offices, warehouses, workshops, restaurants etc.. The main cultural activity areas are already defined: fortified heritage development, arts and creativity production and promotion, local traditions and environment and traditional boats.

The management have care of the general conduction of the development, the specific activities are managed by the spaces users, then selected considering how their cultural and economic proposals fit with the management plan.

Activities:
research and knowledge improvement
publications and knowledge dissemination
buildings and open spaces renting for
- exhibitions and entertainment
- creative industries
- traditional craftsman
- restoration and accommodation services
- sustainable and traditional mobility

directly accomplished by the management or in partnership with external organizations

Main Objectives
- The main goal is increasing the symbolic value of Forte Marghera, transforming it in a regional brand recognized as well as easily recognizable.
- Making Forte Marghera the cornerstone of the city creativity, which would give hospitality to diverse expressive languages and observe and analyze the internal dynamics and the logics of action of one of the most promising economic sectors of the recent years.
- Making Forte Marghera a place where, beyond producing and enjoying culture, the themes related to the valorization of sites which present similarities with Forte Marghera will be examined in depth, and where will be sketched the orientations of the local cultural policies for the forthcoming years.
- Promoting cultural tourism and traditional wine and food: exalting local typicalness, organic farming, Km 0 distribution, and the rediscovery of local farming and traditions.
- Promoting the restoration, preservation, maintenance and protection of cultural and environmental heritage.
- Promoting the enhancement of the cultural and environmental heritage of an area, including its cultural-urban landscape.
- Helping develop the sustainable development of an area.

- Improving the level of education of an area, with consequent enhancement of the cultural production and consumption.

Already running in the fortress

- Documentation center for the fortified heritage
- Museum of Traditional Boats M.I.T. (Museo delle Imbarcazioni Tradizionali) Center for the recovery and enhancement of the traditional sailing heritage. This field of
- operations started in 2010 thanks to a partnership with local associations involved in repairing traditional boats and organizing regattas as well as raising awareness among visitors
- Venice Fine Art Academy workshop- Restaurants and a refreshment area along the canal
- Guest house for the project partners
- Other minor and complementary commercial activities
- Historic Military Museum (Museo Storico Militare)
- Spaces for associations
- Art exhibitions
- Music and theatre seasons

Next steps

The first expected action is the defining of the definitive management structure of the fortress and its long term development strategy. Other actions are already funded, planned or in the planning phase.

The Documentation Center for the fortified heritage is going to be improved and transformed in “International Study Centre for the Promotion of the Historic Fortified Heritage” (conservation, planning, management and promotion), a goal of AdriFort project and the European Development and Cohesion Fund. It will collect the theoretical experiences and practices in the field of conservation and management of fortified sites, as already experienced at an international level by Marco Polo System, the City of Venice and the Veneto Region. The Center will host or organize post-graduate Educational Courses highly professionalizing dedicated to the themes of conservation of architectural and landscape heritage.

A Study Center is going to be realized, with the support of Veneto Region Insside the Traditional Boats Museum and the cooperation of the local network of institutions, associations and craftsman. The aim is to improve the production and formation in the craftsmanship sector.

A Eco&Heritage Art Center will be create soon, in collaboration with international partners interested in having in Venice an infrastructural and managerial support for art projects and exhibitions linked to climate change awareness, green economy and historic heritage preservation. (This project was detected as the most interesting project for the visitors aged from 26 to 35). In last ten years Forte Marghera has been an appreciated exhibition space. The new Center will give a fresh boost to the historic fortified heritage. The aim is to create an international network of Contemporary Art

Centers which will focus on heritage preservation and environmental issues.
Will be provided services of Entrepreneurial Support for creative businesses, services of job search specifically designed for creative professions, services of internationalization for the Venetian creative industry, in addition to an observatory of creativity in which will be collected data and informations related to the local creativity system, in order to analyze and develop them with the purpose of study and research.

The City government planned new collaborations with universities and national and international research centers: the Foundation Teatro La Fenice Venezia will use the buildings n°29,30, 32 and the Venice Academy of Fine Arts will seize the buildings n° 35 and 36, where will be carried out a didactic activity aimed at around 600 students.

Marco Polo System is also planning a wide and varied range of events, services and products with a high creative content capable of attracting a touristic flow highly specialized and alternative to mass tourism.

A parking service and a repair shop for traditional boats only will be an enlargement o the Traditional Boats Museum activities and a funding source.

The fort will need to provide an accommodation offer in order to intercept the internal demand coming from the educational and cultural activities welcomed in the Fort, articulated in different levels of quality of service, to respond to the different requirements of students, professionals, academics and tourists.
More restaurant services are needed as well, attracting other economic actors and enlarging the quality of the offered services.

Last but very important topic is transport. Actually the public service is inadequate: 70% of the Fort visitors come with their car because they consider that public buses are not frequent enough. Public
service improvement should be planned together with a new bridge connecting the fortress with the other side of the “Canal Salso” (and the west part of the city) and policies for the development of eco-friendly vehicles like bikes, van-shuttle, rowing boats.