

CAPANNI, THE IMPOSSIBLE VIEW





Canaletto - *Il ritorno del Bucintoro nel Molo il giorno dell'Ascensione*, 1730

I. RESILIENCE COLLATERAL SPACES

Voids and shared values - Lido, Venice.

“...The ability of a social or ecological system to absorb disturbances while retaining the same basic structure and ways of functioning, the capacity for self-organisation, and the capacity to adapt to stress and change.” (IPCC Synthesis Report, 2007)

In the current architectural debate there are several, often misleading or generic, interpretation of the word resilience. What is often unexplored is the understanding of the active/passive subject of resilience itself.

In Venice every year is celebrated one of the most magnificent and scenographic acknowledgment of venetian resilience's main actor, its 550 km² lagoon. Started around 1000 A.D. with the Doge sailing to the Adriatic sea and throwing a ring into the water “I wed thee, O Sea, in token of true and lasting dominion”, it's a tradition that bounds the city and sea, defining the uniqueness and ambiguity of Venice's main public spaces: coasts, water squares, *canali*, *rii* and *fondamenta*.

Venice has a liquid but at the same *über* controlled urban structure. The *acqua alta* phenomena is confronted with resilient strategies, often referred in scientific literature as a case study of a successful “business as usual” approaches. The city is flooded, people wears rubber boots, the municipality mounts wood decks. The city goes on, spaces keep the same functions they have when they are dry.

Au contraire, the most outposted coast of Venice, the Lido, is somewhat a terrain vague¹, a space that fully embodies the 16th Biennale of Architecture theme – Freespace.

Fully infrastructured, think to the Mose and the recurrent *vaporetto* connecting to the city, the Lido “*generously focuses on the quality of the space itself ... providing free and additional spatial gifts to those who use it addressing the unspoken wishes of strangers ... emphasizing nature's free gifts of light, natural and man-made resources*”.

The Lido, and specifically its most southern section the Alberoni, can be “*a space for opportunity, un-programmed and free for uses not yet conceived ... encompassing freedom to imagine, the free space of time and memory, binding past, present and future² together, building on inherited cultural layers, weaving the archaic with the contemporary*”.

The site chosen for the Pavilion is the less structured urban space of Venice, an enormous infrastructure that remotely allows the city's resilient approach to floods.

¹ The Lido, effectively a border between Venice and the Adriatic sea, is hosting the Film Festival with its glamorous and sparkling presence, but for the rest of the year is a free zone, without tourism and for Venetians to enjoy the sea in its *fané* and decadent atmosphere. It's programmed as a dam, but the space itself is free for any use and function.

² The idea of future encompassed by Venice in general and specifically by the shelters in the Lido, described later in this document, is profoundly Kantian and Leibnizian, where as every stone of the city is never *alike* another one, so mutant constructions on the shore embody in their transformations a present that relates to unforeseeable futures as much as to undefined pasts.



Murazzi , Photo by Filippo Romano, 2013

2. A SHORT TALE

At the edge of the swimming areas, by Egon Ustino.

Imagine this island immersed for months in the silence of the mist, cut off from the world during the winter, and suddenly summer starts, and thousands of people arrive, ferried here non-stop by the *vaporetti*, slogging, in a rather slovenly fashion, towards the sea.

Mothers with buckets and spades and cool bags, children on supersonic scooters, slowly moving old people on their way to play cards under a beach umbrella and beautiful girls who don't give you a second glance.

It had been normal, since I was small, to go to the beach with my mother, always at the Consorzio, whose huts were all green and which had the best mint-flavoured ice-lollies on the Lido. At the age of fifteen, however, I deserted it for the first time. In reality even before then my friends and I had tended to stray outside the bounds of the bathing establishment, in order to underline our independence, and instead of sitting by the sea, and watch the old people wetting their stomachs slightly before entering the water, we preferred to hang out on the benches on the edge of the road, smoking cigarettes and talking about things we didn't understand.

One day, just before going through the gate of that idyllic and timeless world, I ran off.

I discovered that the island concealed a multitude of splendid places, some of them secret, others simply ignored, and over the following summers I got to know them and love them for their simplicity.

We rode around on bicycles, from the little park of El Pecador to the one behind the Palazzo del Cinema, from the Bunker to the tramp's hut, until we arrived at the Murazzi, with their silent seawalls and dilapidated sheds. There was a secret refuge, inside an abandoned building near the WWF oasis at the Alberoni.

To enter it, you had to dial in a password on an old-style telephone placed on the seat of a toilet, and then climb up a thick rope of sheets that hung from a window. The last time I went there, it had been completely destroyed, vandalized by some local kids.

At the Consorzio everyone knew me. They knew my mother, my relatives, the marks I got at school, the girls I liked, and even if I had forgotten to flush the toilet in the bathroom.

At the Murazzi on the other hand, it was always calm, the sun beat down strongly and the seawalls were dotted with nudists with their tits exposed to the wind and their nipples standing straight up.

On that expanse of stone, you could do more or less what you wanted. It was a free zone in which everything was permitted, and we didn't feel judged by anyone.

Somebody had built huts, out of bits of wood found here and there among the dykes, and had played at being an architect and designer, constructing chairs, tables and stairs, and they were artists too, for here and there you could make out the trunks of big trees, positioned as if on pedestals and showing off the strangest and most contorted forms.

We didn't know who had built those huts, they were always empty. Perhaps we came there at the wrong time. But we always tried to treat those unsteady structures with respect. We often made bonfires, which over time got bigger and bigger, until they turned into parties with DJs and bands playing live.

I remember going for a swim at four in the morning while a heavy metal group played vigorously and the moon lit up the sea. Sometimes I at least was overcome by a strange anxiety, and felt that the builders of the huts were watching me. I imagined they were hiding in the far-off bushes, looking at us with rancour because we had occupied their creations.

Another place where we liked to hide out from the rest of the world was the Bunker, as we called it. There were a lot of bunkers on the Lido, but that one was ours and deserved the title of King of all the bunkers, unique and glorious. Unlike the Murazzi, where the atmosphere was, and still is, rather like a desert, at least on the side that faced onto the sea, the Bunker was immersed in vegetation: arriving from a distance, following paths paved with cobblestones, struggling with the bikes, we could only see the top, reaching up heavily among the plants, amidst the bushes and strange vegetation that I think exists only on the Lido. It was strange to sit there, on top of that military construction, and talk about freedom, the future and little ways of making the world a better place. We had given that place a completely different air, a totally new aura with respect to what it had been created for.

Then one day, all of a sudden, loud noises interrupted our dreams and drove away all the strange birds, they too species exclusive to the Lido, I believe.

Zang, Tumb, Tumb. They sounded like the noises of war.

Work had started on the Mose, the enormous barrier which they had been pestering us about for years, the Mose for which you had to go onto the streets to protest otherwise you didn't love your city, because it was a waste of money, because the project, because the gates, because because because...

The Mose had never meant anything to us, we had never shown any interest in politics and in power games, perhaps because we were arrogant in our belief that we had understood their total selfishness, and the unchanging nature of the system based upon them.

We lived projected into a future of fantasy, on the roof of the Bunker. We spent whole days up there doing nothing, but now the loud noises of construction had disturbed our dreams forever.

The first day of sunshine we went to check on our Bunker, but it had disappeared. It had been invaded, swallowed up by the construction site. It had become part of enemy territory and it was no longer possible to get to it.

In Venice everyone hated the Mose, even before the work started, but when all is said and done, it had done nothing to them. From us, on the contrary, it had stolen a piece of our adolescence. After that day, we saw each other less and less often, hanging out in different places. The magic spell had been broken, or perhaps we had grown up, I don't know which.

The next summer marked the decline of our friendship. The group that had been so close-knit slowly disbanded.

Many people are waiting for the work to be finished, so that they can finally see this great project in operation.

The first thing I'm going to do, when their construction machinery goes back wherever it came from, is go to the Bunker to see if the signs we had left are still visible on the hard shell of that fortress.

Murazzi, Photo by Filippo Romano, 2013



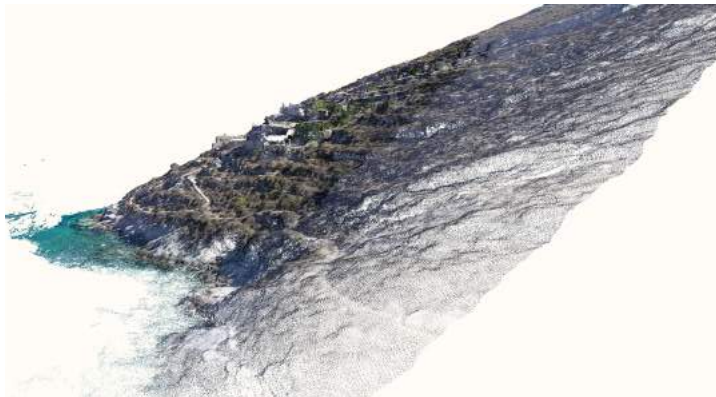
3. RESILIENCE TABLEAU VIVANT

Alberoni, in the Lido, is a border, an urban void and an extraordinary collector of Mediterranean landscapes, arriving by the sea in Venice. The long sea wall, a 950-year-old drosscape¹ that was a Crusades basecamp and its now incorporated by the Mose project, sits at the very end of the Adriatic sea, reached by waters that have a historical and physical link with Montenegro.

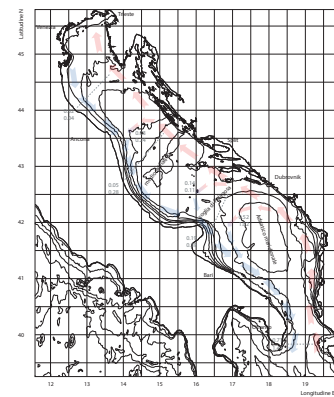
Trunks, leaves, lifelines, barrels, fish boxes, ropes... lifebelt, slippers, planks, palms... drums, tablets, trees... wastes²?

A terrain vague collecting wandering objects, prepared to give birth to unintentional landscapes³. With meticulous care and ethical sense, the capanni (shelters) are built every year, with different degrees of obsessiveness. Only wood. Only ropes. Only natural ropes. Only joints. Only jointed trunks. Every year new rules are defined, considering “*dynamic interactions and potential transformability and adaptability as basic components of resilience*”.

Every year the capanni are burnt and destroyed at the end of the season. The materials stay there, and will be re-used. Resilience is on stage.



Point cloud file



Adriatic sea currents

³ The breakwater on the Lido is a manmade structure that allows Venice to survive and that provides at the same time an infinite amount of possible informal uses. Alan Berger's definition of drosscape as a byproduct of urbanization, both generated by human and natural processes, is embodied in the existence itself of the Lido, as a combination of islands artificially extended in the centuries to create a huge infrastructure and as a natural reserve for the inhabitants of the city.

⁴ Waste has a Latin root “vastus” shared with the term vast: the combination of these two words in relation to seas is especially meaningful considering that, according to the National Geographic, in 2015 we had 5.25 trillion wastes floating in the Oceans.

⁵ The beaches where the shelters are built are unintentionally generated by piers used to keep the sand in place along the coast of the Lido structure.

4. PROPOSAL FOR THE MONTENEGRIN PAVILION, 16TH VENICE BIENNALE

Digital resilient shelters

Room 1 and 2 of Palazzo Malipiero will host an explanation of the project and context, organized on two reading tracks, one quick and concise on the walls, and one denser and more structured in the room's corners.

A large and mutating projection of the shelters will be shown in room 3. Using laser scanners mounted on ground poles and drones or kites, a series of *capanni* (shelters) built from remnants transported by Adriatic sea currents, will be mapped and projected as point cloud files, a digital version of analogic architectures.

In the courtyard of the Palazzo one of the shelters will be dissected and rebuilt as a kit of exposed resilience.

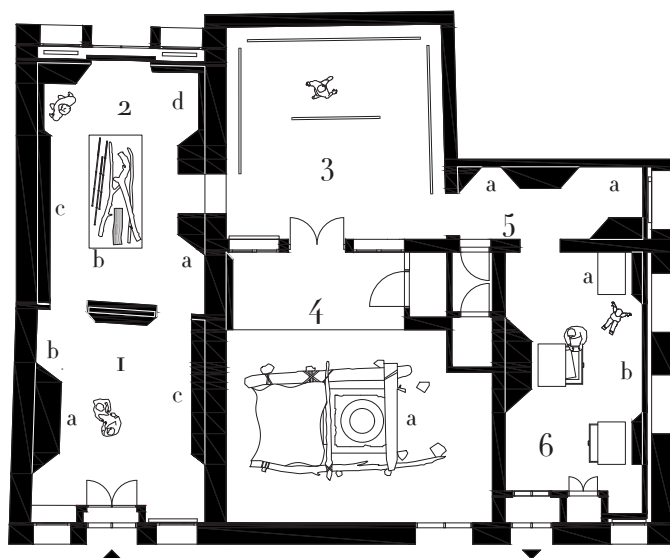
Plans and sections of the *capanni* will be available for printing as posters of the Montenegrin Pavilion in room 4. Scaled kits of wastes will be used by visitors and kids to construct smaller versions of the shelters.

The soundtrack of the exhibition will be a live reproduction aired from the Alberoni site, a unique day in a life, with noises of the nature and voices of the random inhabitants that colonizes the shelters and the beach.

A website of the project will be online for the duration of the Biennale and in the future, keeping track of the results of the "Digital resilient shelters" research.

MATERIALS AND BUDGET

DESCRIPTION	UNIT	COST
Mapping	-	3000
Exhibition concept and design	-	1500
Project management	-	1000
Dry walls	80 sm	3200
Wall painting	80 sm	750
Lighting rental	16	1500
Projectors rental	3	2400
Screens	3	900
Drawers	3	1200
Graphics	50	1700
Audio rental	4	800
Transportation expenses	-	3000
Dismounting	-	2000
Transferring Montenegro	-	800
Travel costs	-	750
Accommodation	-	500
TOTAL		25000



- Room 1 - entrance
 a. project title and main graphics
 b. glossary corner
 c. project description
- Room 2 - project room
 a. glossary corner
 b. 1:1 shelter kit
 c. project description
 d. glossary corner
- Room 3 - scanned shelters video projections
- Room 4 - courtyard
 a. 1:1 built shelter
- Room 5 - Montenegro, Venice, and Adriatic sea
 a. glossary corner
- Room 6 - archive
 a. shelter posters drawers
 b. posters



figure 1



figure 2

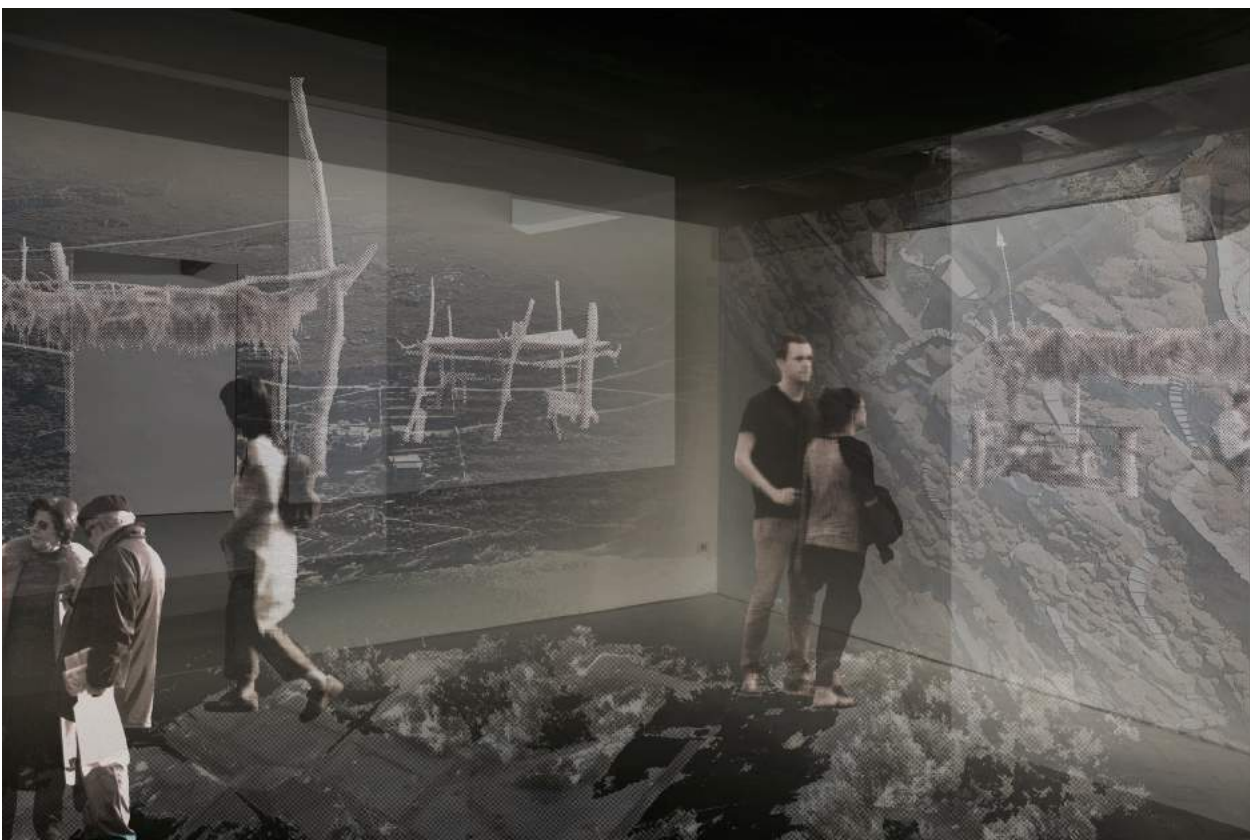


figure 3



figure 4

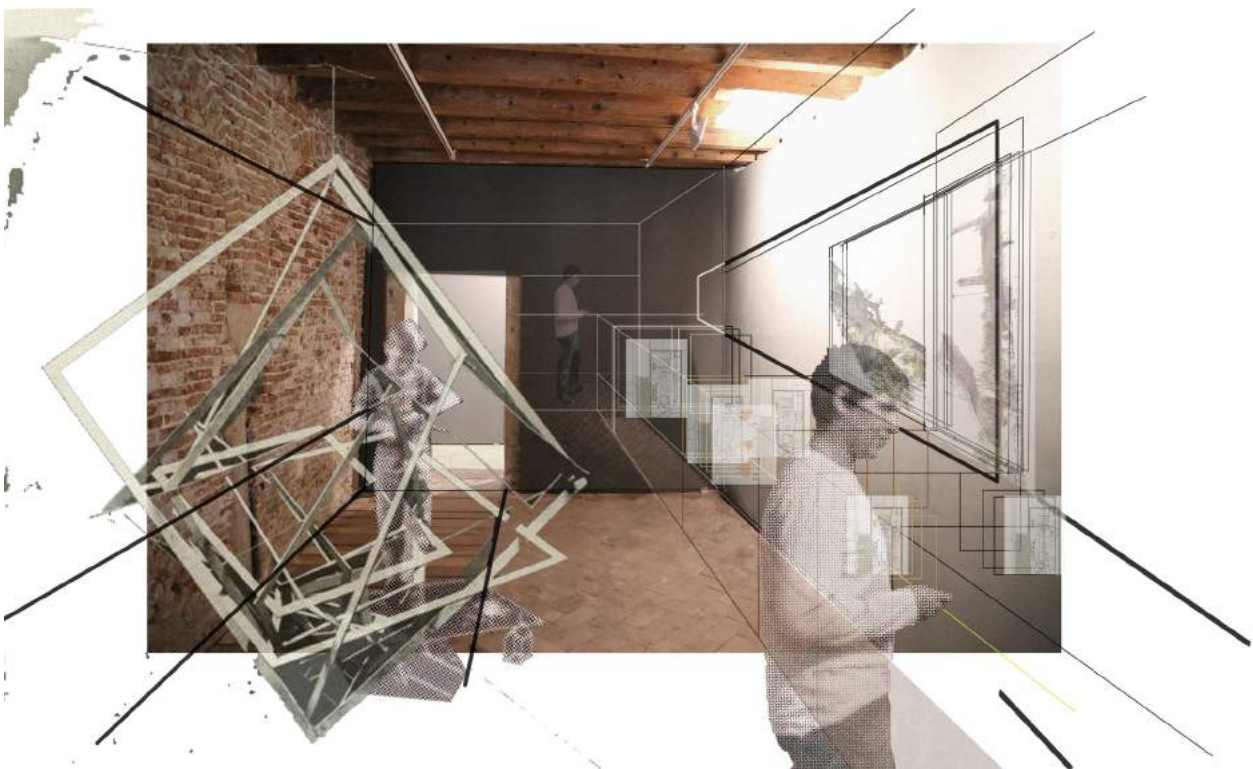


figure 5