

December Cover Story

The Port of Venice participates in the *Bauhaus of the Seas Sails*: why does the project involve Venice and what are the prospects?

Interview with Architect Alessandra Libardo, who leads the project team on behalf of the North Adriatic Sea Port Authority

Funded under the EU's Horizon Europe 2021-2027 programme, the Bauhaus of the Seas Sails (BOSS) project aims to design future ways of living and inhabiting coastal areas, which are key ecosystems for the fight against climate change.

Among the expected outcomes, priority is attached to the creation of sustainable coastal communities that integrate design principles inspired by nature and regenerative practices. Through pilot projects and interdisciplinary prototypes, BOSS intends to trigger a transformation in coastal architecture and urban planning, also using a co-design process to let resilient habitats stand out in an efficient and aesthetically pleasing way. The project goal is to identify more inclusive solutions, capable of strengthening the social fabric and the sense of identity of coastal communities, thus boosting their sense of belonging and commitment.

The project involves 18 partners from 7 European countries, namely: Portugal, Spain, Italy, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.

The *Venetian pilot project* sees the participation of Ca' Foscari University of Venice, the North Adriatic Sea Port Authority (AdSP MAS), the Municipality of Venice and the IUAV University. In October 2023 the team presented an executive plan for the regeneration of the San Basilio-Santa Marta area, near the maritime station, whose main aim is to encourage 'new residents' to reconnect with these areas and the lagoon. That means not only 're-discovering' physical spaces, but also getting to understand tidal cycles, which used to inform the relationship of the inhabitants of Venice with the lagoon before the Mose flood barriers were built.

The project comes in 3 styles or 'drops': '*blu senior*', which aims to bring the elderly community closer to the project areas so as to improve their social inclusion while seizing opportunities for intergenerational dialogue; '*future architecture*', whose purpose is to redefine the way in which the inhabitants of Venice relate to the Lagoon and its tides, both from a spatial and from a socio-cultural point of view; and '*regenerative menu*', which aims to bring new residents closer to Venice's traditional activities, such as fishing, and engage them in events focused on discovering the Lagoon and its typical products.

Architect Alessandra Libardo is the head of AdSP MAS's urban planning unit and leads the BOSS project team for the Authority. Together with Professor Carola Hein from the Delft University of Technology, she gave an interview on the *Future Tidal Architecture drops* that will be developed both in Venice and in Delft (in the area of Grenspark Groot Seaftinghe, near the Scheldt River at the Port of Antwerp) and described the role of the Port of Venice in the BOSS project, with particular reference to the *drop* which sees us more actively involved.

According to Libardo "*Venice has always had a continuous and vital relationship with water, which has performed multiple functions, such as providing protection, sustenance, trade and transport routes, but also recreational space. The lagoon, which has changed configuration several times over the centuries, and its tides are essential and dynamic elements that have shaped Venice's life and culture. Indeed, its ability to adapt and evolve makes Venice an extremely relevant model for the Bauhaus project and the vision it promotes.*"

Why was the port area of San Basilio and Santa Marta chosen to house a demo facility?

"The area has many industrial heritage buildings and a large open space with a variety of intertwined functions linked to port activities, university lecture rooms, public and private offices, exhibition spaces, road

and pedestrian transit and parking areas. There are also two distinctive barriers, namely a segment of the historic customs wall and the security fence, that separate the port from the rest of the city and that have caused a physical and psychological fracture between the city and the lagoon, preventing the port areas from being used and experienced by the citizens. This area also lacks a place where the different communities of users - workers, students and residents – can meet and interact.

There is therefore a need to redesign the area, in particular its open spaces, according to an inclusive, sustainable, aesthetically pleasing and participatory model aimed at promoting a physical and social reconnection between port and urban functions and between the latter and the waterfront, also thanks to the use of blue and green infrastructures."

How will the 'Future Tidal Architecture drop' impact these areas?

"The goal of this drop is to rekindle and reframe the relationship bond between the sea, in particular the tides, and the lives of citizens. In fact, before the Mose barriers came into operation, tidal cycles, the "breaths of the sea", used to have a profound influence on many aspects of the life and habits of people living in Venice. Instead, due to the new barrier system, the new residents will experience weaker dependencies between the tides and their daily activities.

The drop will therefore consider both the socio-cultural and the urban planning perspective as the two domains are closely linked: socio-cultural actions are aimed at transferring the collective memory of tidal cycles to new residents, also by involving elderly people and fishermen communities, as well as the Aquagranda association; urban planning actions focus on redesigning the San Basilio public space in a functional and innovative way making use of the so-called 'tactical urbanism' toolbox to promote reversible and small-scale interventions with recyclable materials and removable structures.

Most importantly, a co-design model will be used, which means that citizens, communities and users will be involved in the process of reshaping the spaces, starting from the collaborative statement of problems, on to the identification of possible opportunities and the development of project options in the area. To this end, surveys, open meetings and workshops with students will be carried out, with the aim of disseminating knowledge on the topic of tides, also through the involvement of scientific and academic communities, so as to restore and reshape the link with the sea."

What role will the Port Authority play in this drop?

Architect Libardo pointed out that AdSP MAS will play an active role in the development of the *drops*, as this activity fits perfectly into the waterfront regeneration project that was launched last year and is intended to revamp the entire property for the purpose of fostering a better dialogue between the port areas and the surrounding urban districts with which they interact either directly or visually.

"The drops will allow us to experiment with hybrid activities and functions between the port and the city. It will be an excellent opportunity to test intervention strategies in practice and to either consolidate or plan anew investments for infrastructure or street furniture. We want to introduce a wide-ranging plan, which, from a conceptual point of view, should eliminate the idea of "port fences" by creating an urban space that can harmoniously accommodate both port and ordinary urban activities".

Libardo concluded by highlighting that the Port Authority intends to use the co-design model to dialogue not only with the other institutions involved, but also with the city community to find sustainable and inclusive solutions that can raise awareness of the sea resource and related activities among new residents encouraging them to 'rediscover' such domains. This is fully in line with the spirit of the BOSS project.



Project Area
San Basilio- Santa Marta



Architect Alessandra Libardo, team leader of the Boss project on behalf of North Adriatic Sea Port Authority, and Prof. Carola Hein, Delft University of Technology