

partecipazione: trajectory and implications of an unbuilt exhibition

Milica Božić

Politecnico di Milano and RMIT University

[0000-0003-2275-5642](tel:0000-0003-2275-5642)

abstract

This essay investigates *Partecipazione*, the exhibition curated by architecture collective AKT based in Vienna and Hermann Czech for the Austrian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale of Architecture, 'The Laboratory of the Future', held in 2023. *Partecipazione* was conceptualised as an interior intervention dividing the pavilion space into two parts—one for the Biennale and one for Venice. The pavilion, connected with the city through the proposed bridge crossing over the wall of Giardini, would host various activities open to the residents of Saint Elena Island. Although *Partecipazione* sought to engage a broader audience and foster community participation, concerns appeared regarding its impact on the pavilions' and Giardini's architectural heritage, leading to the suspension of the proposal in the process. However, curators decided to expose the rejection and exhibit the unfinished interior of the pavilion while, at the same time, shifting the focus to preservation issues present within the institution of the Biennale. Despite remaining unbuilt as initially conceptualised, *Partecipazione* initiated a dialogue about the challenges of architectural preservation in Venice and the Biennale's role in shaping the city.

The essay critically examines *Partecipazione's* trajectory, from the conceptualisation and design to rejection, and considers its broader implications on contemporary architectural and exhibition practice and audiences. The essay will draw on the interview conducted with AKT, which provided valuable information and insights into the curatorial and architectural processes surrounding the exhibition. Through analysing tensions between experimentation and preservation narratives, the essay offers insights into the evolving role of architectural exhibitions as platforms for expanding architectural discourses and practices. It argues that precisely due to remaining unbuilt, *Partecipazione* exemplified the transformative potential of an architectural exhibition to challenge architectural discourses. Finally, this essay aims to contribute to the legacy of *Partecipazione* by examining how its unbuilt nature and incompleteness provoke critical questions about the role of architectural exhibitions, the coexistence of temporary interventions with heritage, and the transformative potential of experimental and open-ended exhibition practices.

keywords

Partecipazione; the Venice Biennale; architectural exhibition; heritage; pavilion

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introduction: on the biennale's relationship with venice

The Venice Biennale is one of the most significant cultural institutions for art and architecture globally. The first Biennale took place in 1895 and has since then continued to grow in size and influence, expanding to incorporate diverse art forms. Today, the Venice Biennale hosts art, architecture, cinema, dance, music, and theatre editions, fostering an immense cultural production that interconnects influential figures and ideas from these fields and draws numerous visitors to Venice. However, the Venice Biennale is also an institution shaped by various political, geopolitical, cultural, economic, and social influences, raising broader questions about the relationship between cultural institutions and the cities they inhabit.

The Giardini Gardens is the central exhibition space of the Biennale precinct. It was created under Napoleon Bonaparte by demolishing a neighbourhood to make space for a public park. As the park was not frequently visited, the Biennale was permitted to use it. Today, the Giardini is home to national pavilions. All pavilions in the Giardini, apart from the French one, belong to their host countries. The Biennale has followed the format of national representations in pavilions since its inauguration in 1895. The pavilions were gradually built from the end of the nineteenth century through the fascist period in Italy in the 1930s and after World War II. Since then, most of the already present pavilions made significant changes to their façades and interiors to remove ornaments from the previous regimes. One by one, most of the pavilions were heritage listed by the Superintendency in Venice due to their extraordinary architectural heritage and cultural and historical significance. Today, the Giardini is a public garden that remains publicly inaccessible, occupied and used exclusively by the Biennale. The Biennale also uses the Arsenale, a former military shipyard, and multiple spaces spread across the city.¹

Throughout the twentieth century, the Venice Biennale transformed Venice into a modern city through the effects of intense cultural activity. The expansion of the Biennale has influenced Venice's urban fabric, transforming public spaces and changing existing buildings' typologies and programmes, resulting in an ambiguous relationship with the city. The Biennale is recognised as an essential institution for cultural production that occurs in a unique setting in Venice, but it also brings immense pressures to the fragile city. This complex situation has been present and addressed at the Venice Biennale of Architecture and is becoming increasingly important. The concerns produced by this dynamic affect exhibitions' content and design, individual and national participation (re)presentations, and the choice of themes.

biennale of architecture and its thematic histories

Over the Biennale's recent history, there have been key shifts in its evolving relationship with Venice and with global architectural discourse. The earliest editions of the Biennale of Architecture were dedicated to Venice and working with its contextual issues through, for example, public competitions for re-conceptualising public spaces in the city. They included *The Presence of the Past* (1980), curated by Italian architect Paolo Portoghesi, *Progetto Venezia* (1985), curated by Italian architect Aldo Rossi, and *5th International Architecture Exhibition* (1991), curated by Francesco Dal Co, Italian historian of architecture. As the Biennale of Architecture expanded, it shifted its focus from the city to global topics. This expansion is evident in the themes of the following editions, such as *Sensing the Future: The Architect as Seismograph* (1996), curated by Hans Hollein, which focused on architecture's speculative and experimental futures. More recently, *Fundamentals* (2014), curated by Rem Koolhaas, included an exhibition titled *Elements* that sought to map out the histories of core architectural elements. Post-COVID-19, the Biennale *How will we live together?* (2021) curated by Hashim Sarkis, was concerned with issues

surrounding different possible ways of co-existing, particularly regarding multiculturalism and human and non-human relationships.²

Even though the Venice Biennale has operated on the system of national participation for years, the formats and themes of exhibitions are constantly changing. Simultaneously, the dynamic between the Biennale and Venice keeps transforming too. Today, the complex and delicate situation of hosting a massive event in the UNESCO-protected city, within heritage-listed Giardini, Arsenale, and other spaces spread across the city, has become exceptionally provocative and more than ever relevant for the Venice Biennale. Despite the Biennale being a place for global discussions, these concerns have forced the re-evaluation of its immediate context and what the institution represents for Venice and Venetians.

This situation raises pressing questions about the balance between preserving the architectural heritage of the pavilions and the cultural heritage of the Biennale, as well as the transgressions of exhibition formats in relation to national, international, and global geopolitics and representations. For instance, the latest edition of the eighteenth International Architecture Exhibition at the Venice Biennale, *The Laboratory of the Future* (2023), curated by Lesley Lokko, a Ghanaian-Scottish academic and novelist, addressed pressing topics of decolonisation and decarbonisation, mainly by focusing on African architects' work. However, several national participants made statements also on the problematic aspect of the Biennale concerning how it communicates with the city. One of the significant contributions on this topic was made by the Austrian Pavilion, curated by AKT, an architecture collective from Vienna, and Hermann Czech, a renowned Austrian architect, titled *Partecipazione* [Fig. 01]. An exhibition of the proposed design for *Partecipazione* featured as part of the Architecture Biennale from May to November 2023, but, interestingly, the originally planned intervention remained unbuilt. This situation not only raised but also amplified the

tensions between preservation and contemporary social, cultural, and political needs for architectural transformations in Venice.



Figure 01.

Clelia Cadamuro, *Divided pavilion* (2023). La Biennale 2023 Press Release. The Austrian Pavilion has been in Giardini Gardens since the early twentieth century, as it was completed in 1934. It was designed by Joseph Hoffman, a well-known Viennese Secession architect, and it was one of his last works. In the photograph from the outside, the unfinished interior intervention involving a plaster wall dividing the pavilion into two parts is visible from the inside. Image used with permission from the AKT Collective.

the trajectory of partecipazione

Partecipazione is the Italian word for participation, an 'act or fact of sharing or partaking in common with another or others; [an] act or state of receiving or having a part of something.'³ It is not a coincidence that the curators of the Austrian Pavilion, AKT and Hermann Czech, opted for an Italian word. Their intention with this gesture was rooted in context-based responsiveness to the previously addressed ambiguous relationship between the institution of the Venice Biennale and the city of Venice. *Partecipazione's* trajectory was a complex process that included two proposals around the issues of connectedness and separateness of the Biennale from the city. Eventually, it ended up exhibiting an unfinished spatial intervention.

Partecipazione was conceptualised as a spatial intervention dividing the pavilion's interior into two sections. The idea was to open a part of it to the residents of Saint Elena, one of the islands of the city of Venice, who could enter the pavilion without buying a ticket and be able to perform or be a part

of various activities that would take place inside the pavilion. The core value of this proposal referred to Henry Lefebvre's *The Right to the City*, focusing on creating 'the places of social wealth such as inner-city infrastructure, places of knowledge, the relevant networks and scenes,' allowing the interrupted flow of life of the city to occupy and take place within the context of an international exhibition and also proclaiming the pavilion itself as a space of participation and connectiveness.⁴ For this essay, the author met with AKT collective to discuss *Partecipazione* and its surrounding circumstances.⁵ From this interview the trajectory of *Partecipazione* developed over three significant propositions: the first proposal to open a new entrance in the Giardini wall to connect the pavilion to the city, the second proposal to construct a temporary bridge over the heritage wall to achieve the same goal, and the third proposal, which transformed the pavilion into a space of institutional critique, exposing the challenges of preservation and participation through an unbuilt exhibit.

The first design proposal introduced the idea of opening up the existing but covered door in the wall of the Giardini behind the Austrian Pavilion to create a new, decentralised entrance into the pavilion. This move would allow direct access into the pavilion's backyard to the city, where the residents would be able to walk in and out [Fig. 02]. Therefore, the Austrian pavilion was initially supposed to be realised as follows: the entrance hallway would have split the pavilion into two parts: 'One half for the Biennale, one half for Venice' [Fig. 03].⁶ This first proposal was intended to allow the external life of the city to leak inside the pavilion and give access to the activities taking place there. In the words of AKT, this is where 'the neighbourhood becomes tangible in the pavilion,' 'the residents of the city and the Biennale visitors see and hear each other,' and the gesture represents 'an opening of the Biennale, not by spreading to the city, but by reversing this spatial practice.'⁷ The idea behind such an intervention was to provide a space for the residents of Saint Elena Island to gather, discuss, create, and create a



Figure 02.

AKT & Hermann Czech, Giardini wall (2022). La Biennale 2023 Press Release. The place on the Giardini wall that was supposed to be opened to connect the pavilion with the city. Image used with permission from the AKT Collective.



Figure 03.

Theresa Wey, Model photo (2022). La Biennale 2023 Press Release. The first proposal: the red area represents part of the pavilion that would have been open to the residents of Venice free of charge, while the white part would have stayed a part of the Biennale exhibition. Image used with permission from the AKT Collective.

physical interior and exterior space for reconciliation and re-connection of the Biennale with the city of Venice and its residents. AKT's website stated that:

"Participation" was already one of the critical demands of the first architecture exhibitions at the Biennale in the 1970s, as was the demand that they address Venice's political, social and spatial realities. The aim was to ensure that the constantly growing large-scale exhibition played an economic and preservative role for the city of Venice and its people.⁸

However, the curators presumed this proposal was rejected in preliminary negotiations with the Biennale and the Superintendency—the office responsible for preserving Venice's architectural and cultural heritage—given the fact that the wall of Giardini is a heritage-listed element. The curators were advised to rent additional space in the city to host the planned activities or sell tickets for Venetians. Since the curators were not interested in this idea, they started working on a second exhibition proposal.

The second proposal moved away from going through the wall to avoid the complications around the heritage elements of the Giardini. It introduced the idea of building a temporary bridge structure, going over the wall of Giardini without touching it, to achieve the same outcome of letting the people of Venice access the pavilion freely [Fig. 04]. This proposal still contained a dividing wall between the parts belonging to the institution of the Biennale and the city. It would have exhibited previously conducted research along with various Venice organisations that expose the city's social and preservation housing issues. It would have contained a temporary amphitheatre and a meeting space in the publicly accessible area.

The second proposal was submitted to the Biennale and Superintendency in January 2023. In April, just before the opening of the eighteenth International Architectural Exhibition, this proposal was also rejected. In the interview, AKT revealed that the Superintendency delivered the decision and explained that the proposal was still threatening the heritage of the pavilion and the wall of Giardini. However, according to AKT, their primary concern lay in establishing a precedent, which could continue in following editions of the Biennale and potentially threaten its well-established structure.

The curators eventually realised their project could not be built and had to consider alternatives for the outcome of this process. With this unexpected turn of events, they finally decided to introduce a third proposal to expose their rejection, and to have their

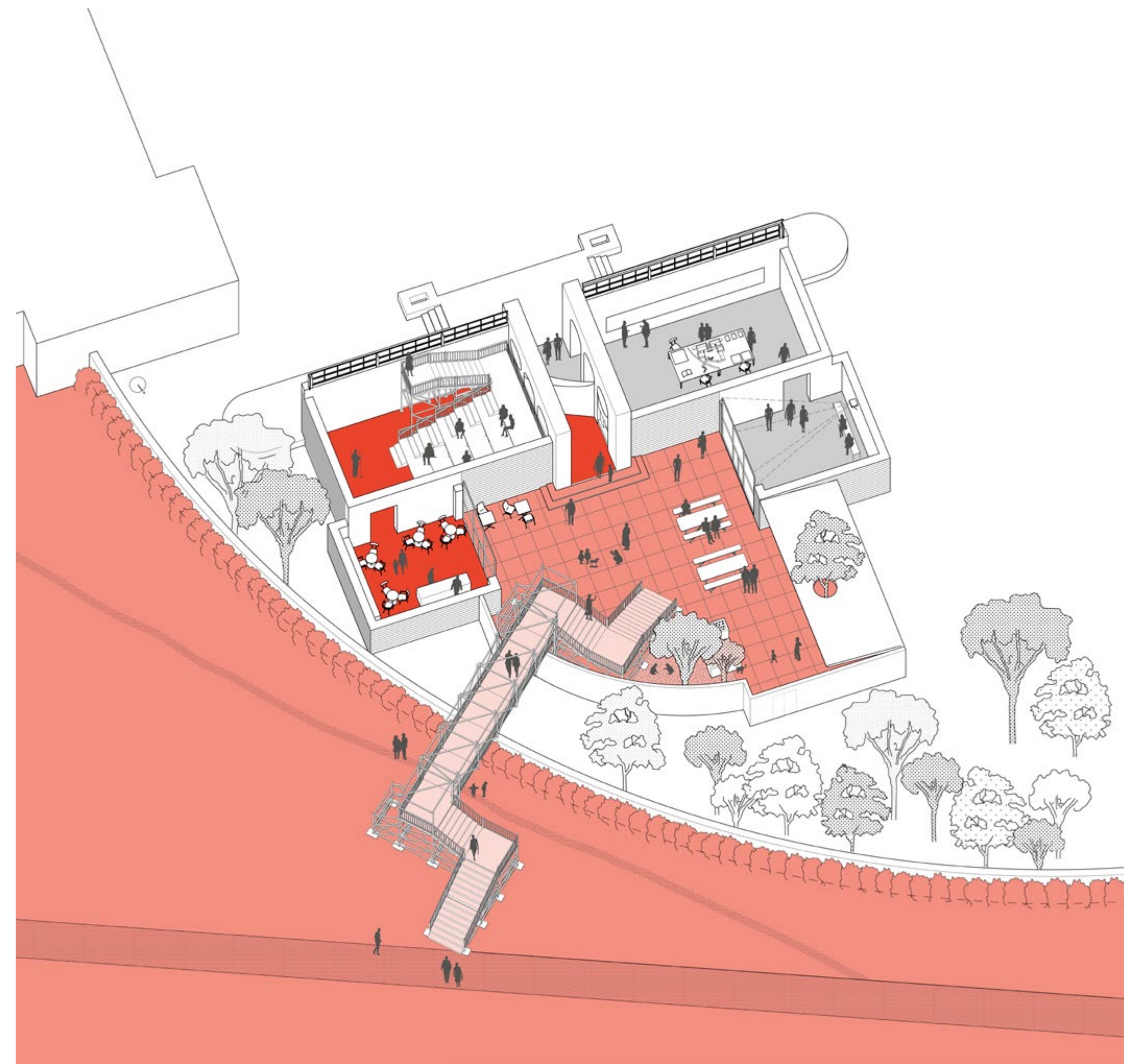


Figure 04.

AKT & Hermann Czech, Axonometric image (2023). La Biennale 2023 Press Release. The second proposal: axonometric drawing of the pavilion. Instead of going through the wall, the second idea included going over the wall with a temporary bridge structure. Image used with permission from the AKT Collective.



Figure 05.

Clelia Cadamuro, Installation view (2023). La Biennale 2023 Press Release. This image depicts what was finally realised as an exhibition for the Biennale following the rejection of the original proposal. From the ceiling is a crossed-over Partecipazione sign, symbolising the current impossible conditions for participation. In the back, the wall dividing the pavilion was left unfinished. Research on preservation issues of Biennale present within the institution was exposed on the central table and the walls to the left and right. Image used with permission from the AKT Collective.

pavilion remain unfinished to initiate a dialogue about the challenges of architectural preservation in Venice and the Biennale's role in shaping the city. The interior walls that were in the process of being painted were left unfinished. The main room

exhibited the exhibition's trajectory, including the proposal, with the physical model and drawings of the planned intervention. On the main room's walls, one could see extensive research on the problematic preservation aspects of the central Biennale spaces, the Giardini and the Arsenale, and their relationship with the city. There were also maps showing the expansion of the Biennale spaces within Venice. The pavilion seemed like an interrupted construction site, with a half-built bridge, amphitheatre, and material leftovers in the rear courtyard [Figs. 05, 06, and 07].

The final exhibition sought to highlight the architectural and social issues surrounding the Biennale–Venice relationship through extensive research, offering an institutional critique. The *Partecipazione* website explained:

What is in the focus of AKT & Hermann Czech's architectural intervention is the issue of the power of disposition over space in a city whose land is limited, and thus the issue of social sustainability of the world's most important architecture exhibition in the context of the old town of Venice.⁹

By leaving parts of the pavilion incomplete and displaying the rejected proposals, the curators transformed the pavilion into a tangible reflection of the Biennale's impact in the city of Venice. This act of turning the unbuilt into an exhibition not only questioned the Biennale's spatial and institutional practices but also invited a dialogue about Venice's urban challenges. This layered approach emphasised the urgent need for the Biennale to rethink its relationship with the city and its residents. The conceptual depth of this new approach was explained by Hermann Czech when reflecting that *Partecipazione* was 'no longer a mere building that houses exhibits, an exhibition structure containing information about the notion of division, of "participation", the pavilion becomes an exhibit in itself that represents division.'¹⁰



Figure 06.

Clelia Cadamuro, Courtyard with the planned connection (2023). La Biennale 2023 Press Release. The half-built bridge structure. Image used with permission from the AKT Collective.

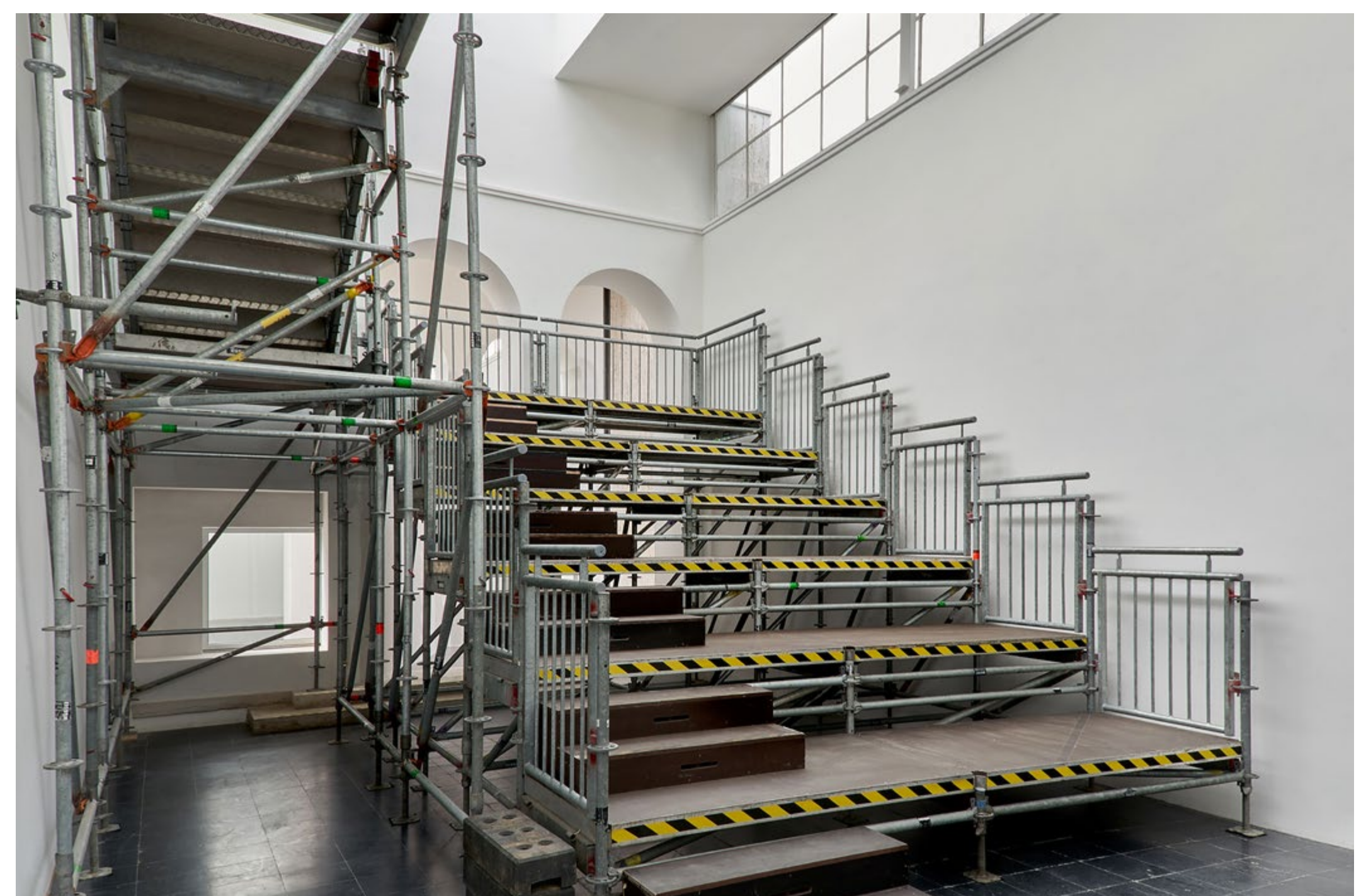


Figure 07.

Clelia Cadamuro, Assembly room (2023). La Biennale 2023 Press Release. The amphitheatre was supposed to host events organised by the residents of Saint Elena Island. Image used with permission from the AKT Collective.

As the programmes could not be hosted in the pavilion, additional events in Italian and English were held around the city of Venice. The programme included daily guided curators' tours through the city, several workshops titled *The Transformation of European Historical Shipyards and Arsenals Workshop*, public meetings (*Politiche per la casa: Viena e Venezia a confronto*), public discussions (*Venezia—La Biennale*), exhibition finissage (*Model case Venezia*), an exhibition *Model case Venezia*, and a city walk by C.U.R.A.—Castello 2.0. The programming aimed to connect the visitors and the Venetians and to thematise the urgent social issues regarding the housing crisis in Venice.

To realise the exhibition and the accompanying programmes, the curators cooperated with several Venice-based organisations such as Biennale Urbana, Ocio (Osservatorio Civico sulla casa e la residenza), Forum Futuro Arsenale, and We are Here Venice (WahV), which, in the end, made it a collaborative and participatory project.¹¹ The *Partecipazione* team also produced a book and a website, gathering together the research on the exhibition's topics. Because of the inability to perform the exhibition as planned, the whole process gained significant media attention, with the curators being interviewed and published on platforms such as *e-flux* and KoozArch.¹² Despite this positive attention, the dissatisfaction the curators felt with the inability for the exhibition to go ahead as originally planned led to them joining forces with other pavilions, forming a group called Biennale Pavilions, which calls upon re-thinking the national boundaries in Biennale, physically and conceptually.

After the exhibition, a resident of Saint Elena Island visited AKT's design studio in Venice and shared in an interview how much their work meant in helping the residents feel recognised and valued. In AKT's words:

The beautiful thing about it is how it was perceived. The activities in the neighbourhood of Saint Elena that we wanted to engage with were self-organised. Over six months, more than seventy events occurred, from small gatherings to chess tournaments. One of the participants even travelled to Vienna when we had the closing event. The idea of the project was accepted and shared by the people living there. The exhibition had a long-lasting effect on the city. And that's golden.¹³

This insight shows that what *Partecipazione* did, particularly in terms of surrounding activities, was acknowledged and deeply appreciated by the residents of Venice. The long-lasting effect of the exhibition eventually lay in breaking down the

division between what happens behind the wall of Giardini and in the city through programming and acknowledging the Venetians' voices by providing space and time for their practices.

implications of an unbuilt exhibition

Partecipazione remained unbuilt and exhibited unfinished, opening discussions on the broader cultural, political, social, and other issues surrounding the Venice Biennale. *Partecipazione's* trajectory and the processes surrounding its realisation shifted the understanding of the relationship between temporary interventions of architectural exhibitions and the preservation of architectural heritage. Further, *Partecipazione* eventually opened up several vital issues concerning the role of architectural exhibitions, the thinking of how temporary spatial interventions and preservation of the architectural heritage can coexist, and, finally, implications for future exhibition practices.

Partecipazione oscillated between working with and against the city in different ways, questioning various temporalities of the long-term historic urban fabric and short-term exhibition. Zooming out to the general thinking about exhibitions and unbuiltness, the essential value of *Partecipazione* might be, in the words of the Professor of Art History and Visual Studies at the University of Oslo, Aron Vinegar, in 'preserving potentiality'.¹⁴ This relates to the opening of the Biennale to become a portal for new spatial and temporal experiences rather than preserving the same model it has been operating on for more than a century. Preserving potentiality is about endorsing the tension between the old and the new and thinking about different ways of experimental preservation that welcome the potential, the chaos, and the in-between. In that sense, the pavilion space or an exhibition can be used to address urgent matters through a temporary action, making the invisible visible, letting unbuiltness and incompleteness happen, and influencing ideas in particular contexts in unexpected and open-ended ways.

Reflecting on the role of *Partecipazione* and architectural exhibitions more broadly leads to questioning the relative roles of exhibitions and architecture. In the book *Architecture on Display: On the History of the Venice Biennale of Architecture*, Aaron Levy and William Menking notice that all Venice Architecture Biennale curators agree on 'the impossibility of creating exhibitions on architecture.'¹⁵ However Mario Ballesteros, Mexican design curator and instigator, for instance, finds that in relation to architecture, 'An exhibition opens up new questions that [we] weren't able to address initially.'¹⁶ Mirko Zardini, an Italian architect, former Director, and member of the Board of Trustees of the Canadian Centre for Architecture, agrees there is value to exhibitions and describes how an architectural exhibition 'is not only a place for the classification, conservation, and presentation of objects and documents but is also a place of production and a generator of activities.'¹⁷ Although these views point to the complexities surrounding displaying architecture, they also open the debate on exhibitions' open-ended and experimental nature. Curators of architectural exhibitions are challenged to re-invent and re-think the content, display, and curatorial approaches to transmit the message to the audience clearly and innovatively. Suppose the power of architectural exhibitions lies in their short life span and event character, then what happens when an exhibition is unfinished, unbuilt, and incomplete? How does this affect their ability to create a statement or provocation, problematise the occupying ideas of the practice, and impact the potential for reflection on open questions facing the profession? To address these questions, it is important to closely consider the implications of *Partecipazione* further.

The temporary nature of an unbuilt gesture like *Partecipazione*, for instance, holds particular significance concerning new ways of working with heritage and conservation practices in the built environment. After the eighteenth Biennale of Architecture finished in November 2023, as it usually happens, the Austrian pavilion, like all the other national pavilions, was brought back to its 'original'

state and adapted for the next edition of the Biennale of Art that took place from May until November 2024. However, by highlighting aspects of preservation and heritage, *Partecipazione* foregrounded the tension between exhibitions' experimental, short lifespan and the tendency to preserve architectural and cultural values in urban contexts. It showed us that it is impossible to return to the 'original state', as the pavilion's condition before and after the interventions can never be exactly the same. The materials will change, and the perception of the space will change. In this sense, the unbuilt nature of *Partecipazione* allowed it to act as a spatial and temporal portal, providing new experiences of the existing spaces and challenging existing approaches to protecting architecture's history.

Beyond its temporariness, the incompleteness of the *Partecipazione* exhibition equally challenged common preconceptions on display formats and curatorial intent. By remaining incomplete, it invited individual interpretations of what the pavilion could have been, leaving us with endless possibilities. For example, the half-built bridge structure emerged because of the impossibility of opening up the entrance inside the wall of Giardini. George Simmel compares a bridge and a door in his essay *Bridge and Door*: 'Whereas the bridge, as the line stretched between two points, prescribes unconditional security and direction, life flows out of the door from the limitation of isolated, separate existence into the limitlessness of all possible directions.'¹⁸ In that sense, the door-bridge-half-bridge relations symbolised the limitless possibilities that could have been introduced into the pavilion but never will, and this impossibility becomes materialised in incompleteness.

Because of these temporal and incomplete qualities, *Partecipazione* was able to transform in real-time, shaped by different audiences and shifting meanings, without a clear sense of its outcome. By walking into the unfinished pavilion, the audiences were prompted to question why it looks as it does, leading to other important questions and encouraging audiences to see the architectural

exhibition not as a space of representation but of experimentation and as a mode of architectural and interior design practice.

Partecipazione enabled thinking around how preserving architectural heritage and (con)temporary architectural interventions can coexist. In Eurocentric heritage and conservation practices, for instance, preserving architectural heritage focuses on maintaining its material integrity for as long as possible.¹⁹ In other cultures, for example, in West Bengal, preserving can mean changing every season, painting with a new colour, and giving a significant building a new life or function.²⁰ For years, preserving pavilions at the Biennale in a particular state has fitted the Eurocentric understanding of preservation. It supports the Biennale's history and legacy, which is a crucial part of its branding and reputation. However, *Partecipazione* proposes that pavilions at the Venice Biennale might also be preserved by allowing them to transform through interventions that shift established narratives and, in that way, create new conversations and relationships with the city, which, in the long run, will be essential for the Biennale to prevail. Suppose the curators of the Austrian pavilion had been able to proceed with their initial idea and temporarily transform it. Perhaps that would demonstrate the adaptability of heritage and potentially, in that way, ensure its longevity through ongoing engagement, participation, and discourse. Could it also foster new perspectives on preservation, especially within the complex context of the Biennale and the social, cultural, and housing issues facing the city of Venice?

It is important to note that *Partecipazione* and the Austrian Pavilion were not alone in focusing on the ideas around the flexibility of a cultural institution and its relationship with the city of Venice at the latest edition of the Biennale of Architecture. Similar gestures were made by the Swiss Pavilion, titled *Neighbours*, and curated by artists Karin Sander and Philip Ursprung. They removed a wall separating their pavilion from the Venezuelan pavilion and proposed a combined floor plan mid-way through

the renovation of both buildings. The German pavilion, titled *Open for Maintenance* and curated by ARCH+ and the Büro Juliane Greb collective, started its intervention from the fifty-ninth International Art Exhibition intervention of Maria Eichhorn. Titled *Relocating a Structure*, parts of the walls and floor were removed to explore the pavilion's history. The German, Swiss, and Austrian Pavilions all discussed the issues of the Biennale's heritage in relation to the city by centring on processes of unbuilding. Through interventions that removed existing structures they intended to undo existing narratives of national independence and equally explore ideas of preserving potentiality by using acts of unbuilt to provoke open-ended interpretation.

conclusion

The unbuilt *Partecipazione* opens a broader dialogue about the evolving relationship between architectural exhibitions and preserving architectural heritage. By leaving the pavilion incomplete, *Partecipazione* offered an open-ended experience that challenged the notion of architectural exhibitions. The tension between the permanence of architectural heritage and the temporality of exhibition interventions becomes a central theme, not only questioning the role of the Biennale within Venice's historical fabric but also posing important questions about what heritage preservation truly means in a contemporary context.

The fragmented nature of the pavilion highlights the importance of the possibilities that remain open when an exhibition is left unfinished. Furthermore, the discussions arising from *Partecipazione* resonate beyond the exhibition space, intersecting with broader cultural, political, and social debates in Venice. The exhibition also touched upon the future of the institution of the Venice Biennale, suggesting that perhaps true preservation involves allowing these spaces to evolve over time. *Partecipazione* challenged the nature of architectural exhibitions by highlighting the power of incompleteness to inspire new ways of thinking. Through its open-ended approach, it proposed that the act of leaving

an exhibition unfinished can be a catalyst for further inquiry, bringing new perspectives on how temporary interventions can coexist with heritage. In doing so, *Partecipazione* provided a platform for extra-disciplinary explorations at the intersections of architecture, interior design, and heritage.

Ultimately, *Partecipazione* opened the questions that relate to the relationship of the Biennale with the city of Venice, the structure and *modus operandi* of the Biennale as an institution, and how transgressing exhibition formats can communicate with heritage spaces. Most importantly, and precisely due to remaining unbuilt, *Partecipazione* managed to bring together various audiences and actors around issues much broader than the exhibition itself, finally initiating a powerful political, social, and cultural statement that is yet to be reflected in the pavilions at the Biennale and in the city of Venice [Fig. 08].



Figure 08.

Clelia Cadamuro, the part between the walls to be bridged (2023). La Biennale 2023 Press Release. *Partecipazione: the unbuilt exhibition*. Image used with permission from the AKT Collective.

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author biography

Milica Božić is an architect, researcher, and curator from Belgrade. She is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie PhD Fellow at Politecnico di Milano and RMIT University. Her research and practice explore architectural exhibitions and temporary spatial/temporal interventions that open experimental and open-ended heritage encounters.

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