

VENICE ROLE MODEL FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE PROTECTION

“In this third millennium, facing global changes, we are committed to defending the city against risk of disasters, not only for the safety of citizens, but also to preserve our cultural heritage, and to make it available to humankind in a sustainable and durable way”

Giorgio Orsoni, Mayor of Venice



The Mayor of Venice, Mr. Giorgio Orsoni, receives the “Role Model City” Certificate from the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, Ms Asha-Rose Migiro and the President of ICLEI, Mr. David Cadman, during the Third Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (Geneva, May 2011). The campaign has been followed with the partnership of CO-RILA (Consortium for Managing Research Activities).

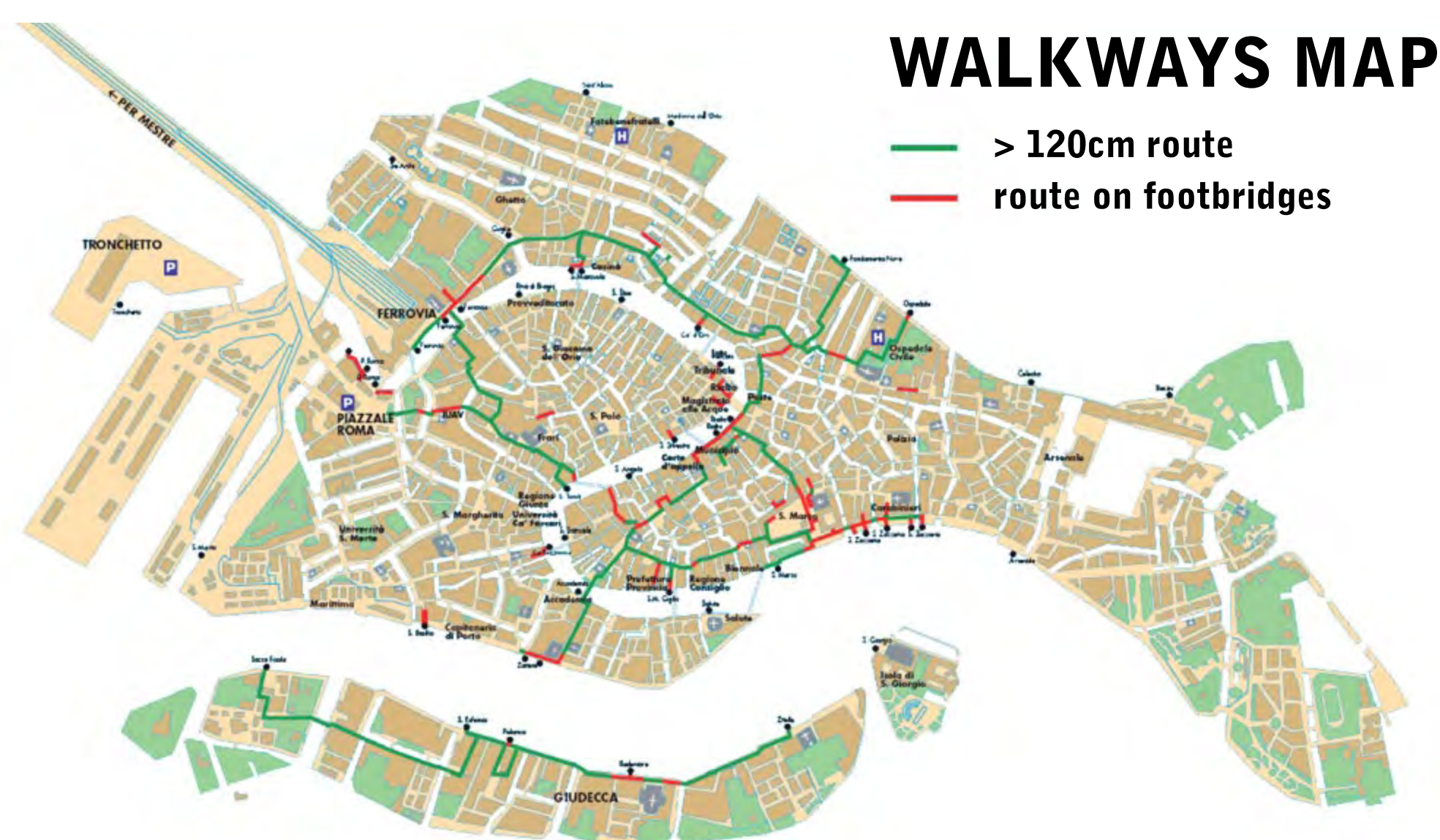
The resilience of Venice relies mainly on Venetians, whose habits and good practices permit a quasi-normal life even in case of medium-high floods. People are used to protecting their own valuable goods from water and have learnt how to guarantee the functioning of their electronic systems. The municipality activates the alert system in case of flooding tides, and ensures services such as broadwalks and public water transport, allowing citizens to take the necessary measures and to be prepared. It is the result of a long experience of adaptation and the demonstration of a sustainable relationship between man and environment which is the prerequisite for the resilience of a city.

Of course Venice needs additional measures for the “adaptation” of their citizens to floods. Despite the fact that human lives are not at risk, our cultural heritage is still threatened by floods and fire risks. Regular maintenance of canals and walls, large-scale interventions like the raising of pavements or the restoration of the ancient “sea walls”, and advanced infrastructures such as the MOSE (the mobile tidal barrier system which allows the closure of the lagoon inlets in case of high tides) are the main examples of investments that are being made in risk reduction thanks to both national and local funds.



CITY-TO-CITY COLLABORATIONS

One of the strengths of the Making Cities Resilient campaign is to allow learning processes from city to city. A network structure, instead of a hierarchical pyramid, makes it easier to promote spontaneous collaboration among cities. This has been the case for the cities of Venice (Italy) and Byblos (Lebanon).



Further information about the walkways, alternative public transport routes, city areas subjected to flooding, altimetrical map of the city, and the colour code of tidal forecast are also available to the public.

WORKSHOP: PROTECTION OF VENICE AND BYBLOS AGAINST MARITIME RISKS – 28/29 JUNE 2011, BYBLOS (LEBANON)

An exchange visit was organized the 28th and 29th of June in Byblos aiming at finding solutions to safeguard Byblos against maritime dangers, learning from Venice. Both cities are part of the UNESCO World Heritage list, have a local economy related to tourism and port activities, and present similar water-related risks. Culture is not often considered when dealing with risk reduction, nevertheless it is an important part of risk management for cities that consider the cultural heritage an essential asset of their development.

The venetian example demonstrates how important the coordination between the different ministries and local authorities is and it highlights that structural and non-structural measures should be integrated in a comprehensive and holistic plan, based on appropriate scientific knowledge, able to integrate different disciplines, while the local administration should be the “glue” that put together the scientific community, the public sector, the citizens and the enterprises.