



Università  
Ca' Foscari  
Venezia

Corso di Laurea  
Magistrale

in Economia e Gestione delle Arti  
e delle attività culturali  
*curriculum Economics and Administration  
of Arts and culture*  
LM - 76

Tesi di Laurea

**M9: A NEW CASE OF URBAN REGENERATION**  
**History and people's perception**

**Relatrice**

Ch. Prof. Maria Lusiani

**Laureanda**

Alessia Sarto

Matricola 975869

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Per te.

Per noi.

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## INTRODUCTION

Cultural policy is the branch of public policy concerned with the administration of culture and it is carried out at all levels of government, from supranational bodies such as the United Nations to local and neighbourhood levels. But studies have demonstrated that the prime site of cultural policy development in the past thirty years or more has been the city.

In particular, attention has been set in suburbs and small cities, giving the fact that previously only big cities were important for policy makers.

Now they realized that it is through the connection of suburbs and big cities that it is possible to create a true identity for citizens based on traditions and cultural activities that could be lost. In addition, it is important to connect the city with its neighbourhoods and surroundings, in order to make it feel as one: this in particular is part of M9 project's plan.

M9 is a project of urban regeneration realized in the city centre of Mestre, in the municipality of Venice, by the will of *Fondazione di Venezia* since they wanted to enrich the city centre and to make sure that Mestre was no longer seen as a centre to avoid but one to live.

Mission of the project is to create a pole capable of becoming a cultural reference point for the city and the metropolitan area, but also a driving force for economic and social growth of its territory.

For this reason, M9 counts of a district and of an innovative museum known as M9 – Museum of the twentieth Century, which tells the history occurred in that century through eight sections regarding different topics, such as the demographic development, technology, habits and lifestyles, urban changes, institutional evolution, and so on.

This thesis analyses the history of the M9 project, how it is structured and divided.

For the narration some writings published by the Foundation itself are taken into account, in particular the planning documents concerning the project.

In addition, people can find the description some articles of local newspapers that presented the origins of M9 until the opening of the museum in 2018.

The second part will present the activities realized and managed in the locations of M9, both district and museum. It is important to underline that M9 is organized as an entity with three souls: District, Museum and Venice Foundation, and all these take part to the realizations of activities and events.

The narration will provide an indicative number of initiatives per year, starting from 2021, realized by M9 District – M9D, *Fondazione M9 – FM9*, and *Fondazione di Venezia*.

The initiatives within M9 are many and varied, but are people aware of these? Do people know M9, in the first place?

These are the questions this thesis tries to answer and to do this it was administered an anonymous questionnaire to some people via social.

In particular, the questionnaire sought to investigate the general knowledge about the existence of M9 making a distinction of residence of origin and, in the case of Veneto, of the metropolitan city, in order to understand if people who live near Mestre are aware of the project.

The questionnaire continues asking if they had ever been in M9 and what they thought about the museum and what it could do to be more attractive.

# 1. URBAN REGENERATION

## 1.1 An Introduction: Urban cultural policy

In a broad sense, the expression cultural policy summarizes all the initiatives promoted in the artistic, religious, educational and scientific fields and in the fields of media and leisure. Although both state and religious patronage of “artistic activities” has a long history, debates about the culture of cultural policy are of somewhat more recent derivation, in particular after World War II, when States started establishing their own Ministries for Culture.

As said, cultural policy is the branch of public policy concerned with the administration of culture, and it is a process in which different actors take part: for example government ministers and other elected politicians, civil servants and consultants or academics, but also the so called “street-level bureaucrats” who are often charged with actually delivering policy on the ground like a museum curator. It is important to understand cultural policy as a real policy, which means as the outworking of ideas that take some sort of form, and as something that is assumed to produce effects in the cultural field.<sup>1</sup>

Cultural policy is carried out at all levels of government, from supranational bodies such as the United Nations to local and neighbourhood levels. But studies had demonstrated that the prime site of cultural policy development in the past thirty years or more has been the city.<sup>2</sup>

More recently the attention is set to suburbs, small towns and rural areas too. Through the enhancement of only big city centres, policymakers missed the opportunity to take into

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<sup>1</sup> Bell, D. & Oakley, K., “Cultural Policy”, 2021 Routledge – pg. 72

<sup>2</sup> Bell, D. & Oakley, K., “Cultural Policy”, 2021 Routledge – pg. 76



consideration many communities and too many kinds of cultural activity, where popular traditions are stronger.

Because of these differences, cities are the sites of conflict in cultural terms: debates over identity, land and expression are often played out with particular ferocity on the urban stage.

The main reason for the centrality of the cities is explained in Peter Hall's 1998 tome *Cities in Civilisation*, where he tried to find the connection between cities, human creativity and innovation.

The analysis states that cities are the motors of creativity and innovation because they are open to new ideas, open to immigrants and, more important, open to different ways of life.<sup>3</sup> In this fervent atmosphere full of new cultures is possible and easier for citizens to be more creative through taking inspiration from other perspectives rather than stay in their own thoughts and habits.

Another reason is connected with the location of infrastructures. In the cities people can find the traditional places of the cultural heritage, such as churches, theatres, palaces, ancient buildings, but also all these "support" infrastructures, like shops, cafés, public parks, and so on. All elements that make the city attractive and liveable.

Cities have become more important to policy overall and, at the same time, culture has become important to the idea of cities and the way in which they show themselves. Cultural sectors are driven of cultural investments both from a social and economic perspective. While improving the quality of life and social sustainability, they create jobs' opportunities and make cities more attractive to outside investors, mobile workers and tourists. In this sense, cities became hubs for culture also as a result of policies for education, transport, palling and building, or private initiatives.

Research and studies have shown some interventions that are common in urban cultural policymaking, sometimes they could be combined.

1. Cultural quarters, clusters or districts:

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<sup>3</sup> Hall, P., "Cities in Civilisation", 1998

We can identify a cluster as the collocation of interconnected business, suppliers and relevant institutions; the tendency to collocate it within a few city streets is driven by the need for cultural producers to swap ideas and socialise. In some cities there are reputational effects where they have become associated with certain scenes and this can lead people interested in a cultural practice to the cities;

2. City competition and mega-events:

A city can compete with other cities in different topics, such as culture, design literature, ..., through an application that can lead to the nomination of “Capital of Culture”, for example. This is a way to influence and redirect policies and resources.

Mega-events are seen as opportunities of “culture as displays”, an example is EXPOs;

3. The “creative city”

The definition was coined because of the necessity to put attention to the role of culture in ameliorating the social problems of a city as a way to boost its economic prospects.

The need to address social fragmentation, fear and alienation in urban communities and develop what could be regarded as a distinctive sense of place was thus part of the original creative city script;

4. Flagship building and “regeneration”

With this term, people mean those initiatives whose aim is to promote social inclusivity and efficiency and to resolve social and economic problems afflicting a particular urban area.

The idea is to create an iconic building, like a museum, to bring “high” culture to the city.

All these actions lead to some consequences both intended and unintended.

The will of cultural policymakers is to combine cultural experience with other consumption activities in order to attract tourism and preserve, but also reattract, middle class residents. Another topic is the liveability of cities, thanks to the creation and preservation of green areas, pedestrian areas, and also places that allow more social inclusion and community cohesion through the participation in cultural activities.

These cultural initiatives can lead to an economic development too.

The main risk is to create gentrification, inequality and social discrimination, also through the raise of land and housing prices and displacing existing artistic subcultures or low income communities. In this context job insecurity is also a problem, especially in the creative class which is characterized by precarious jobs and unemployment.

Another unintended consequence is to give more importance to certain types of cultural consumption while neglecting others.

Cities are where cultural policies become visible to people<sup>4</sup> and they are in charge for a great role as a laboratory for innovative cultural policy.

## **1.2 Definition of Urban regeneration**

When talking about “Urban regeneration” is important to bring together different elements: a declining industrial city, huge public investment, a globally famous architect, an iconic building and an association with high culture and urban revitalisation.<sup>5</sup>

The term urban regeneration refers to the recovery and redevelopment programs of the real estate and urban-scale spaces aimed at guaranteeing the quality of living both from an environmental and social point of view, also with regard to urban areas and the degraded ones.

It is an integrated process aimed at promoting innovation and it is functional to improving the liveability of urban environments, encouraging the development of relations and a sense of community, through the presence and strengthening of socio cultural activities. Another important aim is to eliminate degradation and increase the city’s attractiveness thanks to quality, sustainability and technological innovation.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Bell, D. & Oakley, K., “Cultural Policy”, 2021 Routledge – pg. 101

<sup>5</sup> Bell, D. & Oakley, K., “Cultural Policy”, 2021 Routledge – pg. 81

<sup>6</sup> ANCE (National Association of Builders), “*Decalogo per la rigenerazione urbana*”, 2022

Urban regeneration interventions, through appropriate phases short, medium and long term storms and by active participation of inhabitants and local actors, the reuse and redevelopment of the built heritage, the reorganisation of urban planning, including through the recovery and re-functionalisation of degraded areas; or decommissioning, integration and enrichment of functions especially in underused areas, as well as through construction and management of equipment, infrastructure, spaces services and the recovery or enhancement of existing ones.

Focus of the urban regeneration, doing a summary, is to make cities sustainable and more human-scale, counteracting the frantic and indiscriminate use of building land. With the constant disappearance of building areas, the idea of recovering as much as possible already existing spaces and areas began to spread. For this reason, architects, engineers and designers have chosen to give priority to greater rationality in construction and encouraging urban regeneration actions, especially in the most degraded peripheral areas. Upgrading an area or regenerating it is therefore a way to improve the quality of life of citizens.

Urban regeneration is a process that has no predefined rules and must adapt to the specific case.

An important factor in a program of urban regeneration is certainly the involvement of social actors. In fact, regeneration does not mean just the physical spatial transformation of a specific territory, but it has to contribute to the improvement of the social and environmental context. In order to do so, the project has to involve both building actors, such as architects, political actors, engineers and the social components, such as those of the associative type.

The beginning of the concept of “urban regeneration” is set during the end of the XIX century, specifically when United Kingdom started some works of restoration following the Industrial Revolution: industrialization had created a certain inequality among English citizens and to cope with the very bad living conditions, the government tried to create projects of what we call now regeneration.

The real spark for these types of projects was after the Second World War because of the reconstruction of buildings destroyed and in a state of decay.

The redevelopment and reuse and therefore the regeneration of abandoned areas became the dominant theme of urban transformation during the 80s thanks to large projects on areas with a huge potential for re-functionalization.

During these years, a new impulse of regeneration has been recorded. But this time it was more oriented to the realization of timely and limited interventions to revitalization social and economic fabric of residential settlements, where there was a strong demand for services, security, social integration, environmental quality and, more generally, liveability.

Even today, the urban regeneration of urban areas is a widespread technique and used between developed and developing countries. It is often implemented on the occasion of events of world importance that are based in these nations to give new life to entire neighbourhoods.

Urban regeneration interventions have therefore contributed to increasing the focus on new issues, such as economic, environmental and social sustainability of the operations on the territory that support the growth of a city more ecological and inclusive.

Culture can play a crucial role in urban regeneration, as it creates a sense of belonging and shared identity among the inhabitants of the city.

Culture can be used to redevelop both public and private spaces, transforming disused areas into places of encounter and cultural exchange. It can also promote innovation and creativity by encouraging the use of new technologies and the adoption of sustainable strategies for urban development. Culture can also contribute to social cohesion, improving the quality of life of the inhabitants through the organization of cultural events, exhibitions and events involving the community.

Both art and culture have been extensively used in public policy as instruments of physical and economic regeneration of declining cities, and the two are often associated in a relationship of mutual dependence.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Cameron, S and Coafee J., “Art, gentrification and regeneration: from artist to pioneer to public arts”, *European Journal of Housing Policy*, 2005, pg. 46

In particular for urban regeneration is fundamental the public consumption of art, usually through the creation of physical infrastructure for art, such as galleries, museums or concert halls.

The intended consequences of the Urban regeneration are clear: to give new life to the existing city through the physical requalification of buildings or areas in decline, improving citizens' living and working conditions, and restoring areas to the population in order to create a better social cohesion.

Policymakers have to be careful too since regeneration has some unintended effects too. These renewal programmes are very controversial because they often result in alienating low-income population groups and minorities in areas affected by redevelopment; given rise to the effect of gentrification, which is a social, economic and cultural phenomenon whereby a city district, inhabited by the working class and generally low-income classes, turns into the area of choice for the richest middle class.

### **1.3 Urban regeneration in Italy**

As said, the second half of the XX century was crucial for urban regeneration in lots of countries.

In particular, in Italy researches had underlined three phases around this topic.<sup>8</sup>

The first phase has been set during the '70s, when people tried to take back some unused places of the city centres based on Italian pride. Another topic is the necessity to give new life to old factories, which place was no more in the city but in the suburbs.

The second one is during the '90s. During these years two laws were which have been the starting point for all the regulations about the topic of urban regeneration: 179/92, as known as "Rules for public housing", and 493/93, called "Provisions for the acceleration of investment and support for employment and for the simplification of construction procedures". Focus of the two was to begin new experiments in order to integrate new complex programs with objectives of development and sustainability.

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<sup>8</sup><https://www.iemest.eu/life-safety-and-security/images/Doc/ARTICOLI/2018/Messina%2043/Messina01.pdf>

The last phase is still ongoing: the mission now is to give more concrete answers to critical and widespread issues, supporting social inclusion through the promotion of urban spaces and facilitating access to services and innovation.

In more recent times, it was written the decree law 32/2019, usually called decree “*Sblocca cantieri*”, which is about urgent provisions for the relaunch of public contracts’ sector, for the acceleration of infrastructure and of urban regeneration.

In Italy there are different projects of urban regeneration:

Some articles<sup>9</sup> mention eight cities as examples of regeneration:

1. Cosenza and the “Regeneration City” project
2. Padova, where a castle used as prison is going to become a cultural centre
3. Lecce and the Agostiani’s complex
4. Novara, where a barracks was rebuilt to become a place for youth aggregation
5. Pesaro and the “*Decumano Carbon Free*” project
6. Volterra, where a prison became a theatre
7. Livorno and the works of thermal bath of *Corallo*
8. Bari, which used street art as regeneration of San Paolo neighbours

The Italian government gives freedom to the regions about how to regulate and supervise projects of urban regeneration.

In the specific case of Veneto region, in 2017 it was written a law regarding measures to limit land consumption. Through the articles, people could notice the importance given to the requalification and reuse of places in order to promote beauty, energy efficiency and wellbeing. The urban regeneration described has to be promoted both for entire districts or important parts of the Venetian cities.

In continuity to these objectives, in 2019 it was approved a law aimed at improving the quality of life of people within the city and the reorganization of urban spaces and to facilitate the urban regeneration of Venetian cities and the re-naturalization of agricultural

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/citta-scena-8-progetti-rigenerazione-urbana-nome-crescita-socio-culturale-AEiHvGUB;>

<https://www.tuttogreen.it/rigenerazione-urbana/>

areas. Regional law 14/2019 is known with the name of “Veneto 2050”. The objectives are to encourage the use of elements of redevelopment of the existing building stock, especially through the use of renewable energy sources and the creation of models of circular economy.

The objectives promoted by the two regional laws are not limited to the discipline of urban and building interventions, but they set themselves the much more ambitious objective of triggering a process of cultural change.<sup>10</sup>

One example of urban regeneration in Veneto is M9, located in the city centre of Mestre, Municipality of Venice.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.regione.veneto.it/web/ambiente-e-territorio/veneto-2050>



## 2. M9: A PROJECT OF URBAN REGENERATION

### 2.1 Urbanization in Venice and M9

The process of urbanization of Veneto, and in particular of the territories connected with Venice, began in Roman times and was consolidated during the Medieval Age.

The economic development was a slow path to walk, until the XX century, when it was decided to build a new industrial port in Marghera, part of the Municipality of Venice. The project was a triumph and in few years it became an impressive industrial area, establishing itself as a decisive pole of Italian industrialisation.

The process overwhelmed the small towns around, too. The Venetian cities became a construction site without control and regulations and many buildings were built almost everywhere.

As the years went by, the buildings emptied of people and of purposes, leaving the towns with unusable places.

Taking into consideration the case of Mestre, it became the largest and most populated side of Venice, with a settlement of houses with few services and poor of quality; roads were intricate too.

Over the years the discontent has grown and four referendums have been called since Mestre inhabitants wanted to separate from *Venezia isola*, as they Venetian call it to make a distinction with *Venezia terraferma*, since lots of investments were only for the island and not for the mainland.

It was during the '70s that ideas of reconstruction and requalification were taken into consideration. Mestre was seen as an unfinished work, full of potential and opportunities to exploit.

Works made to change the city were endless: starting from the construction and upgrading of the railway, passing through the editing of the roads' networks and all the connected services, and ending with an increasing attention to culture.

It is in this context that, thanks to the initiative of the foundation of Venice, emerges the project to build in the city centre of Mestre a new museum structure. The location is strategic since the new cultural centre takes place near Ferretto Square and the Cathedral, which means in the very core of the city. This initiative is the starting point of a project of urban regeneration: the challenge for M9 is to enrich not a specific block, where the Museum and district are set, but to enrich all the city centre, giving life to long term processes of engagement and quality of life improvement.

## **2.2 The project**

M9 is a project born from *Fondazione di Venezia* (Venice Foundation), a banking foundation, which mission is to improve and promote relations between institutions, business and groups of people in order to encourage a dialogue for resources and projects.

M9 is a model of urban regeneration in which architectural quality shapes and blends with a cultural project unprecedented at national level, where spaces recovered to the citizenship revive thanks to events and become an opportunity to experience new paradigms of trade and new forms of service designed to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants.

Mission of the project is to create a pole capable of becoming a cultural reference point for the city and the metropolitan area, but also a driving force for economic and social growth of its territory.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2009, it was signed the Programme Agreement between the institutional partners of the project: the Ministry of Culture, Veneto Region and the Municipality of Venice. The agreement establishes the start of work for the construction of the museum.

In order to do so, in 2010 it was launched an international competition for the design of the area selected, which was won by the German architecture studio Sauerbruch Hutton. The architects created new connections through pedestrian paths and crossings, drawn new squares for sociality and established relationships between existing spaces. These

ones were precluded to citizenship for a long period and through this project they wanted to give them back to people.

All the walkways were designed as a single paved surface: the aim was to link parts of the city that had previously been disjointed.

Even though the will is to make M9 a unique and recognizable place, people and visitors are aware of the hierarchy of the buildings thanks to the different shapes, dimensions and colours.

The design was really important for Matthias Sauerbruch and Louisa Hutton , M9 designers, since they wanted to create a connection with the virtual experience of the museum and its aspect.

The colour scheme of the exteriors is the result of a study about the different “reds” present in the city, in order to better insert the new structure in the surroundings without overwhelming it.

The punt importance also in the materials used and they are of different types: from multi-coloured ceramic tiles to raw concrete, from smooth wooden floors to leather-covered handrails.

With the surfaces they wanted to create visual impact connected with the rays of sun through using the architecture as a canvas on which play the ever changing shades and intensity of daylight<sup>11</sup>.

All this to create a certain awareness in the visitors about the importance of the sun.



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<sup>11</sup> Taken from the catalogue of M9 – Museum of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, curated by Cesare De Michelis, Marsilio, pg. 49

Fundamental for the project is to make M9 a sustainable district, too. The design was made by evaluating practices of energy savings and optimisation of water resources. They decide to use raw materials with a low environment impact but with new energy producing technologies: there are 276 photovoltaic panels and a geothermal field with 63 probes at a depth of 110 metres which produce 100% of the heating and 40% of the air conditioning required for all the district.<sup>12</sup>

In March 2021 was created “M9 Zero Impact”, a Greentech project which aim is to make M9 completely zero impact for the environment and the biggest Italian museum to reach this goal.

Focus of “M9 Zero Impact” is the expansion of the district’s photovoltaic system, in order to bring the power from 80 to 270 kW and to reduce carbon dioxide emissions of a volume equal to that absorbed by a forest of more than 15,000 trees<sup>13</sup>: the will is create a way to give to the museum the energy needed without create a damage or big environmental impact on the city.

Another focus is improving the microclimate of the Mestre’s urban centre and they find two solutions connected with the Cloister: its cover was made of steel and polyester/PVC sheets in order to protect the floor from the direct solar radiation that would cause it to overheat, and together with the new building “green roof”, they allow to contain the effect "heat island" within a densely constructed area to achieve the objective proposed.

M9 is a wide-ranging project developed in a block called “M9 District”, which finds its core in the “Museum of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century”, and it consists of spaces used for both culture and business, all these at the service of citizens.

### **2.2.1 M9 – Museum of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

The Museum of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has two big main objectives: giving the opportunity to the history of the XX Century to become a true common heritage and showing Mestre as an important cultural point, able to give life to the city.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.m9museum.it/il-distretto/progetto/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.m9museum.it/il-distretto/progetto/>

M9 belongs to a new generation of museums and it is the first fully multimedia museum in Italy; in addition it fills a gap in the museum system of the country: it is a place where visitors can find the collective history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the story of Italian citizens through its modern origins.



The narration in the museum is developed through eight sections<sup>14</sup> distributed in two floors; there is not a single path, which means that every visitor can decide where to start, what to look at, what topics to explore:

1. The way we were and are  
In this part, demographic and anthropometric data are provided
2. The Italian way of life  
The section takes into consideration the habits and lifestyles of Italian citizens during the 20<sup>th</sup> century
3. The race for progress  
The role played by technology in everyday life
4. Money, money, money  
1900s are years in which Italy was able to leave poverty behind and grow in goods and services provided

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.m9museum.it/en/museum/>

5. Take a look around

This section presents the changes in the landscapes and urban settlements

6. Res publica

This part narrates the collective events and phenomena that shaped the political and institutional evolution

7. Forging the Italian identity

The task after the Unification was to unify the State through the promotion of education in order to spread a national culture

8. The Italian identity

Expression of the Italian genius is presented

### **2.2.2 M9 District**

M9 District includes a series of new public spaces that connect to roads, alleys, courtyards and squares already existing. Cesare De Michelis describes this action with the following sentence: “it all began by acquiring a property and then another one, up to conquer an entire block of about one hectare, deciding then to destroy the most degraded buildings to make room for a new building”.<sup>15</sup>

The museum district offers to the citizens the opportunity to find restaurants, offices and cultural initiatives in just one block.

The District is at the service of the population, since lots of locations can be booked for events, such as conferences and conventions, or for anniversary celebrations of associations or companies, but also for theatrical or musical performances.

Auditorium “Cesare De Michelis” is on the ground floor of the Museum, next to the entrance: it contains 188 seats and it is the ideal place for film screenings, conferences, concerts and theatre performances, also thanks to a professional control booth in which technicians monitor the sound, video and lightning, but also the recording or steaming of the events.

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<sup>15</sup> Taken from the catalogue of M9 – Museum of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, curated by Cesare De Michelis, Marsilio, pg. 34

Inside the museum, people can find the bookshop: it contains a continuously updated selection of catalogues, books, limited editions and design objects.

Other locations in the museum are M9Lab, with its 50 seats, and M9Cube, that can accommodate up to 75 people: both of them are equipped with technical equipment such as projectors and computers. People can book the museum's Foyer too: usually as a space for a buffet at the end of the event or for press conferences and other initiatives with less than 70 people.

In front of the museum it is located a building: in the first floor there are the administrative offices, while at the ground one people can find two spots: Marina Bastianello gallery, that is a space dedicated to contemporary art, which attends all the leading Italian and international trade shows and works, while the second one previously was the Venice FC Store but it was closed in October since they moved in another location, the place is opened for agreements and new opportunities.

Next to these buildings Corte Legrenzi find place, with its bars and restaurants.

“*Corte dei Matti*” is also part of the district: it is a convivial and welcoming space, where cocktails, culture and music intertwine.

The last building that is located near the museum is called “M9 Children”. The space is designed to accommodate schools and families for structured activities dedicated to children aged 4 – 13.

Another important point of the district is the Cloister, which was rebuilt from the *Convento Santa Maria delle Grazie*, a former convent dating the 16<sup>th</sup> Century; it is a unique place whose charming architecture has been preserved thanks to a conservative restoration project, in addition the Cloister has been fitted with an innovative steel roof structure with a polyester/PVC covering to protect it from the elements.

Around it people can find showcases different in dimensions that can host events, meetings or other initiatives; for example one is taken by “LAMB” that is a new experimental space, which aims to be a real laboratory dedicated to artistic research, especially contemporary.



At the top floors there are lots of spaces dedicated to business and meetings, called “Business Center”, and to the topic of innovation: HiVe-M9 is a multifunctional innovation hub created to enhance the territory through the promotion of entrepreneurship and employment steps serving as a reference point for young researchers, start-ups and entrepreneurs of tech-world.

“Business Center” is an innovative workplace, designed to meet the most diverse needs of multinationals and companies; it offers offices for private use, furnished and equipped with advanced technology tools, as well as meeting and co-working areas, training rooms and common break spaces. In there, people can decide to book M9Loft with its 50 chairs with their own little writing desk, or M9Meet, which is a meeting room with technological equipment that can hold up to 40 participants.

The museum district is not only proposed as the retrospective documentation of the history of the city of Mestre lived by previous generations: it also offers itself as a living laboratory for a city to come.



### 2.3 M9 through Venice Foundation's planning documents

First planning document present in the website of the Venice Foundation was published in 2016 and covers years from 2016 to 2018.

The first part, called "general introduction", explains that this document is a natural progression of planning document 2013-2015, especially regarding institutional activities; among these is cited M9 which is represented as a central element of identity characterization..

Readers discover here that the fourth part of the document is dedicated to the organization, in particular, a reorganization project of the "Foundation Group" is presented that involves, in addition to the Structure of the Body, also that of the instrumental entities called to manage the various phases of the project, namely the instrumental company Polymnia and the Venice Foundation 2000 for M9. This will be called *Fondazione Venezia 2000 per M9 – FM9*.<sup>16</sup>

The second part of the documents deals with programmes wanted and planned by the Foundation.

First point discussed is M9, since it is more representative and relevant programme for achieving the objectives that the Foundation has set.

During these three years the Cultural centre and the retail area will be completed and activated in order to be used by the population. In addition, governance and operativity of the dedicated instrumental ones dedicated to the development of the intervention will be defined.

The long-term objective is that the project should not commit more than 25% of the resources dedicated to the activities of the Foundation.

The main idea of the foundation is also to create a link between all their initiatives and those for M9, such as collaboration with the Venetian Universities or cultural institutions

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<sup>16</sup> Piano Pluriennale 2016-2018, pag.7

<https://www.fondazionedivenezia.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/06/c55a7f3e2bb9cc07f3094bb1eb93b985eb96fe07.pdf>

in the area; all these will provide the basis for the possible planning of initiatives aimed at the realization of the cultural program M9.

Important to underline is also that M9 is inserted among the necessary strategic areas, i.e. a short list of essential activities according to the foundation: “the continuation of the activities of requalification and recovery of the urban area of Mestre implemented through the development of cultural and commercial activities related to the new M9 space, that will affect the entire Metropolitan City”<sup>17</sup>.

At the beginning of the fourth part of the document, a particularly important role is assigned to M9, both on the strategic and the economic and financial level.

From an organizational perspective, Venice Foundation operates indirectly through the instrumental company Polymnia Venezia Srl - Polymnia, and through the instrumental institution *Fondazione Venezia 2000* for M9 – FM9. The two units are operating arms and can operate independently.

The two instrumental entities are entrusted, under the supervision and coordination of the Venice Foundation, two distinct but interdependent and integrated phases of the Programme: FM9 is entrusted exclusively with the cultural management of the museum and the organization of the museum activity, while Polymnia has to deal with the creation, management and marketing of the real estate.

In 2017 was approved another multi-annual plan, in particular from year 2017 to 2019. The document’s premise places the foundation within a macroeconomic scenario particularly difficult and full of unknowns because of the world banking situation. Then continues with the description of financial problems related to the territory that the foundation intends to reduce, moreover they want also to respond to the European offer to create "cities of the future", or places of advanced social development; platforms for democracy, cultural dialogue and diversity; green places of ecological and environmental regeneration; poles of attraction and growth engine economic. In this context the work of the Foundation to create M9 fits perfectly, and ahead of modern perspective.

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<sup>17</sup> Piano Pluriennale 2016-2018, pag.19  
<https://www.fondazionedivenezia.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/06/c55a7f3e2bb9cc07f3094bb1eb93b985eb96fe07.pdf>

Third part tells about the institutional activity in three different fields: education and training, scientific and technological research, than art, activities and cultural heritage. The sector with the largest number of shares is the third one, since investments in the M9 Museum's infrastructure are located here and then distributed again to other sectors once the works are completed and it will be financially self-sufficient.

in this part it has also been described work plans for the management and programming of M9 by the two aforementioned bodies.

Regarding the job description of Polymnia, the foundation has assumed a time horizon of 8 months: by 2018 it has to finish the real estate, from 2019 to 2021 the management starting phase, in order to reach by 2024 the full operational regime.

Polymnia has to work on assumptions on museum revenue too. Revenue will be divided between permanent exhibition and temporary exhibition, that will have to be more and more at full capacity. In addition it will have to count revenue from the location of both Museum and District, such as Auditorium, Bookshop and restaurants.

For FM9 the productive resources are quantified based on the institutional functions entrusted to the instrumental entity; the assumption is that the cost structure of FM9 remains almost constant over time.

In line with the objectives defined and the statutory mission of the Foundation, it is considered the multiannual plan should provide for a clear and effective intervention of the programming that minimizes the impact of the M9 project in terms of absorption of resources allocated to institutional activity and at the same time supports a more balanced allocation between the sectors priority.<sup>18</sup>

The part concerning the institutional activity presented in the Multiannual Plan for years 2018 to 2020 stresses once again the three areas in which the Foundation operates and that M9 belongs to art sector, activities and cultural heritage but it will be reclassified later once the transitional phase is over.

With this document it was taken the decision to define for the three-year period a limit of financial resources to be allocated to institutional activities, as it is expected a possible extension of the time frame for M9 to become financially self-sufficient.

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<sup>18</sup> Piano Pluriennale 2017-2019, pag.32 <https://www.fondazionedivenezia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/c0231d7c2423327bde5ba7f4fe145dcc9cd29829.pdf>

The plan anticipates that, regarding the forecasts of the precedence document, the situation of M9 turns out profoundly innovated.<sup>19</sup>

The most significant updates concerned the organizational structure of the project that has returned to a dual system, where Venice Foundation plays the role of elaborator of cultural lines, client of the project and financier, while Polymnia will be called upon from December 2018 to manage it as a whole. In this context is no longer present FM9.

Once again, a document of multi-annual plans underlines the enormous impact that M9 has in terms of resources allocated to the institutional activities, which are too much higher than the ones given to the other sectors and projects. While recognising the importance of the project, the Foundation wants to commit itself to allocate in a more balanced way the available resources, limiting M9 impact within reasonable proportions. The conclusion is that the level of resources to be allocated to other institutional activities will depend on the performance of M9's business plan.

Venice Foundation wants to renew the business plan of M9 project asking to Polymnia to intervene in some defined directions: adaptation of the procedural system for Polymnia's expenditure and investment commitments that responds to the needs of completion in the project within the timeframe, containment of the governance and management costs related to the entire M9 project, taking into account that, by 2018, the Director of the Museum must also be nominated, and eventually a reduction in the costs of running the museum from 2019, thanks to the collection of sponsorships for temporary exhibitions, and the commercial exploitation of the district spaces.

The last multi-year plan available in the website is the one that takes into consideration the three years, from 2019 to 2021.

The allocation of resources presented in the document is still affected by the imbalance induced by the concentration of the disbursement resources of the institution in support of the launch of M9 Centre under the unitary sectoral classification of art, activities and Cultural Heritage.

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<sup>19</sup> Piano Pluriennale 2018-2020, pag.29 <https://www.fondazionedivenezia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/97077811e51ebd0bfe532613398c1d6dc641fad0.pdf>

In early December 2018, M9 - Museum of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was officially inaugurated, and with it all the pieces of the district. Year 2019 is therefore the start-up year of the project, full of opportunities but not free from operational and financial risks that must be managed in an appropriate and timely manner.

For the management of the new cultural centre has been chosen a dual model where interact in symbiotic synergy two organizational articulations of the Venice Foundation: a subject for profit, which is the instrumental company Polymnia Venezia Srl, who became M9 District – M9D, for the management and commercial enhancement of the entire property and a non-profit entity, the M9 Foundation – FM9, for the overall management of the Museum and all cultural and promotional activities of the area.<sup>20</sup>

In the *Polo M9* are simultaneously present both M9D and FM9 with different activities and job descriptions.

The museum foundation was established in the form of a participatory foundation with the aim of strengthening the network of strategic relations with leading cultural institutions and education and training agencies representative of the territory. Around M9 gravitates the action of the Foundation in the strict sense, which takes care of the strategic planning and programming and institutional communication, both instrumental and participatory entities of the institution that in various ways contribute to its management.

The plans drawn up allow us to understand the genesis of the M9 project and how it was lived within the Foundation, but having as last document one approved in 2019 does not allow us to thoroughly analyse the development of the project itself.

In particular it is fundamental to read documents about the first three years that are always the most critical and key ones for updates and trimmings.

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<sup>20</sup> Piano Pluriennale 2019-2021, pag.30 [https://www.fondazionedivenezia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Piano-Pluriennale\\_2019-2021\\_definitivo.pdf](https://www.fondazionedivenezia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Piano-Pluriennale_2019-2021_definitivo.pdf)

### 3. M9'S ORIGINS IN NEWSPAPERS

Like any project, the beginning of it is welcomed with cheerful tones but also of controversy and this is the case of M9 that is not always evaluated positively by journalists or citizens.

The analysis takes into consideration different local newspapers telling the development of the project. It is possible only to use this type of newspaper since at the international level there is little information about the district and even regarding the museum, in particular two articles were made.

In May 2018 “The Times” titled an article “War on the Grand Canal: Venice versus the starchitects” to describe the situation between the Architecture Biennale in Venice and the construction of M9 in Mestre. In fact, the architects of the studio who made M9 were invited to the biennial and the project was here presented once again.

In 2020 the English newspaper “The Guardian” published an article for the section that gives to the readers some travel tips, in particular they suggest 12 of the best city museums in Europe.<sup>21</sup>

Through the list of European museums readers can find M9 too.

The little description wants to focus on what makes M9 different from the rest of the Italian museums, or is the only museum that features on recent history and not on the oldest one, such as medieval period. Another point of the description regards the interactive displays used to tell the social, economic and political changes of the peninsula.

At the end the author invites to visit M9 – Museum of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century because it tells and shows an Italy unknown to most.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2020/jan/10/best-city-museums-in-europe-art-culture-city-breaks>

### 3.1 *Il Giornale delle Fondazioni* – The Journal of the Foundations

*Il Giornale delle Fondazioni* is an online journal created in May 2011. Mission of the authors and the director is to create a place of constant information and deepening of the evolution of public-private cooperation and governance models in the cultural sector.

Starting from January 2015, the focus is more about cultural innovation, through the culture of practices and policies. This new direction is dictated also by the new publisher, that is Venice Foundation.

The Journal of the Foundations is addressed to a vertical community of 30,000 professionals in the Italian cultural and creative industry at the top of institutional philanthropy that invests in the sector, or of realities arising from the evolution of governance in asset management.<sup>22</sup>

The online journal wrote an article in 2011 about M9 describing it through the title as “a new cultural hub for direct engagement: urban regeneration in Venice-Mestre”<sup>23</sup>

The article starts with a description of the objectives of Venice Foundation about improving the quality of life through social and cultural promotion: M9 project represents the greatest commitment made in the last six years by the Foundation, which is now able to engage in more structured and complex initiatives.

The article continues praising the Foundation and its collaborations with other bodies, such as Venetian universities. *Fondazione di Venezia*, according to the article, aims to exploit the economic potential of its territory, for example collaborating with the public administration on initiatives such as the Strategic Plan and the participation of Venice at Shanghai EXPO 2010 or supporting Venice’s candidacy as 2019 European Capital of Culture.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.ilgiornaledellefondazioni.com/>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.ilgiornaledellefondazioni.com/content/m9-un-nuovo-polo-culturale-l%E2%80%99impegno-diretto-la-rigenerazione-urbana-di-veneziamestre>

Following this reasoning, the Foundation created the M9 to give to the *terraferma* “a space with an international breath and vocation in which to represent, study and reflect on modernity and contemporaneity”<sup>24</sup>.

The article then explained why they chose to use an alphanumeric code as name of the project.

“M” stands for museum, for multimedia and multi-sensory, but also for Mestre and metropolis, while the number “9” represents the twentieth century.

While reading this, people can understand that the project will cover an area of about 9,000 square meters, located right in the heart of Mestre. M9 will count on a Museum, designed by the architecture studio Sauerbruch Hutton, on a former Seventeenth-Century convents that will host commercial and cultural activities, and its cloister that will become a covered square.

The writer ends the article with a phrase symbol of this urban regeneration project: “M9 will therefore not be a traditional museum, but a real centre of cultural production”.

The framework described pays tribute to the Foundation and its project, praising its objectives and the structure that will take the district.

It is an objective article that does not denote personal opinions about M9, but only a description.

Few months later, the newspaper published another article about M9, this time to write down the answer of the Foundation regarding controversy on the opening of the pole and its costs.

It starts with a statement made by the mayor of Venice at the time, Giorgio Orsoni, who during a public meeting presented his fears about the future sustainability of the museum and its costs: “let’s not lull ourselves in an idea that we might never see”<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.ilgiornaledellefondazioni.com/content/m9-un-nuovo-polo-culturale-l%E2%80%99impegno-diretto-la-rigenerazione-urbana-di-veneziamestre>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.ilgiornaledellefondazioni.com/content/%C2%ABm9-va-avanti-e-vogliamo-spiegarlo%C2%BB>



At the end the answer of the Councillor Panciera tries to calm the situation, confirming the availability of the municipal council to become a liveable city, with an economic potential to be exploited.

The focus of the article is to emphasize the ability of the Foundation and the will of not to stop in front of the controversies, not even the ones made by the mayor.

In addition, the writer uses the last sentence of the previous article to strengthen and defend the project. This time people can understand which side the newspaper is taking, also because at the end of the article, the author urges the mayor to consider Mestre as an independent cultural centre and not an area of low-cost hotels<sup>26</sup>.

In January 2012, The newspaper of the Foundations wrote down an article describing the meeting between Mayor Giorgio Orsoni and the promoters of M9, i.e. president of Venice Foundation Giuliano Segre, architects Matthias Sauerbruch and Louisa Hutton, and Plinio Danieli, member of the Foundation's instrumental body Polymnia Society.

The architectural project, the Museum of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the financial plan for its realization and its cultural line were discussed during the meeting.

In last sentences people may notice that the project is in delay because of the controversies, which have prevented the creation of an agreement with the Municipality for building tenders.

The author expresses a desire urging everyone to act and end the controversies<sup>27</sup>.

The article written in March 2013 wants to focus on the importance of the project, which was also recognized by MIBAC – the Italian Ministry of Culture, through the writing of a memorandum of understanding.

The memorandum was signed in Rome by the minister Lorenzo Ornaghi and president of Venice Foundation Giuliano Segre.

One of the objective of the agreement is to “undertake interventions and activities to enhance the value of one of the main museums of the future in Italy giving strategic value

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.ilgiornaledellefondazioni.com/content/%C2%ABm9-va-avanti-e-vogliamo-spiegarlo%C2%BB>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.ilgiornaledellefondazioni.com/content/m9-verso-lapertura-dei-cantieri>

to all the initiatives aimed at promoting knowledge of the M9 project throughout the country”<sup>28</sup>.

As reported in the article, Giuliano Segre explains that the memorandum is fundamental for M9 since it provides for a collaboration with the Ministry through periodic checks and specific collaborative arrangements. In addition, the plan includes the realization of cultural activities connected with the idea of “contemporary creativity”.

The author wants to focus on the good work done by the Foundation, emphasizing its ability to reach the Ministry and sign a memorandum useful to be known nationally, but also worldwide, since he ends the article with the following sentence: “*M9 porta la periferia al centro di una trasformazione urbanistica e sociale in cui Venezia, tra Europa ed Oriente, diventa crocevia «Mondiale» delle idee della contemporaneità*<sup>29</sup>.” - M9 brings the periphery to the centre of an urban and social transformation in which Venice, between Europe and the East, becomes the «World» crossroads of contemporary ideas.

During the same year, in June, Venice Foundation provides some data reported in a new article of the journal: an investment of 100 million euros for the purchase of the area, 35 million euros the cost of the European call to realize the work, 8875 the occupied mq, 1,5 million euros the difference between the revenues and the costs for the annual management.<sup>30</sup> All the costs will be covered by the Foundation, as Giuliano Segre said during an interview, illustrating why they will be able to reach the goal.

He also explains the technological impact of the district, in particular of the museum where the experience will be virtual, multimedia and interactive, and not material as a common museum.

The article provides the timing of the project too: the works will begin in early 2014 and will last 28 months. From the end of 2015 onwards there will be the openings of the various pieces of M9 Area.

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.ilgiornaledellefondazioni.com/content/m9-1-mibac>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.ilgiornaledellefondazioni.com/content/m9-1-mibac>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.ilgiornaledellefondazioni.com/content/m9-si-parte>

People can find news about the development of the project in this journal few years later than the previously article, precisely in May 2016.

Right in the first lines, readers discover that the end of the works is scheduled for the year 2017.

The article tells about the last presentation of M9 project to new mayor of Venice, Luigi Brugnaro, and to Culture Commission during the city council's meeting.

Three topics are described: the project, the museum and data.

Giuliano Segre explained letter "M" in M9, which stands for Mestre, Marghera, Museum and Metropolis. And because of the importance of the project for the city, a Mission related investment – MRI, has been created in order to economically sustain the mission of the Foundation and which name is "*Fondazione Venezia 2000 per M9*".

He also describes M9 project in its entirety, i.e. Museum and district. For the museum, the objective is to start collaboration with Rai or LUCE Institute to provide the expositions with real imagines of the twentieth Century, to be as true as possible to reality and narrate real information.

M9 Project Manager Guido Guerzoni, shows a video to illustrate the second topic, in particular the location that will be part, such as the Auditorium, permanent and temporary exhibition. Guerzoni than explains that the museum will be a journey between past, present and future: "the museum's mission is to promote knowledge of the past, understanding the present and confidence in the future"<sup>31</sup>.

The last topic presents targets and numbers. The museum will be for families and schools and the Foundation counts to have, during the first year, 100.000 visitors for the permanent exhibition and 80.000 for the temporary one, to achieve 250.000 visitors per year in three years.

For the images and information in the museum, 400 archives images have been recorded and 42 experts have been working for four years at the historical contents.

The project has been told with great hope and perspective, and they tried to justify the amount of money and time, since they are behind schedule, through providing big data and collaboration, such as the experts and LUCE's.

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.ilgiornaledellefondazioni.com/content/m9-pi%C3%B9-che-un-museo-un-viaggio-nel-tempo>

The Foundation is really enthusiastic about the project and they want to share it to the citizens through the city Council.

At the end of year 2016, the journal informs the citizens that restoration of the façade of the former military district of via Poerio has been completed. The work has been followed by architect Francesco Magnani, who is responsible for relations with the Superintendence of Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape for the Municipality of Venice and Lagoon.

The article explains the procedures used during the restoration of the former religious complex of the Sixteenth century, converted into barracks with the Napoleonic laws of 1806 and finally in military district. And now officially converted in a cultural space.

In April 2017, Venice Foundation showed to the press the progress of the works through a private visit. Thanks to the subtitle, is understandable that M9 – Museum of the Twentieth Century will open to the public the first day of December 2018.

According to *Il Giornale delle Fondazioni*, in May 2018 was published an international call to look for the future Museum's Director. This figure will be selected according to general requirements, such as having held managerial functions for at least three years in public and private museums, both national or international ones, having gained experience in curatorial, editorial, television and in the organization of cultural activities. In addition, the Director should be in possession of a particular professional, cultural and scientific specialization obtained through university and postgraduate education, scientific publications and concrete experiences in the museum context.

Through an interview of project manager Guerzoni, the author gives more details about the call.

The candidate must have a master's degree, but the course or class is not specify; Guerzoni answered that they prefer to not assign a specific curriculum, "since the museum will have a permanent collection on the history of the Italian twentieth century but not a prevalent theme among the 8 planned sections"<sup>32</sup>. The author underlines this role as "hybrid" because of trans-versatility and versatility of the Director they are looking for.

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.ilgiornaledellefondazioni.com/content/museo-di-nuova-generazione-cerca-direttore-%C2%ABibrido%C2%BB>

Fundamental for the Foundation is to find a profile that brings together managerial skills and scientific-curatorial nature, since he or she will be the promoter of continuous renewal of contents in accordance with a museum that is innovative and for citizenship.

One of the questions is specific to first temporary exhibition, the one that will inaugurate the third floor and that will be the last act of the current project manager. Guerzoni explains that the exhibition will be a photographic one, that that will bring together great masters and great authors of the Italian landscape with the themes told in the sections of the permanent collection.

The question and answer that ends the article is about the progress of the work: they are finishing the façade with polychrome ceramic tiles and the internal set-up will be complete within the 15 of August. The great opening is set December the 1<sup>st</sup> and until then technicians will do some simulations to make sure everything works as planned.

“A shell of polychrome ceramic tiles surrounds the exterior of the M9. Inside, the history of the Italian twentieth century”<sup>33</sup>, these are the starting words of the article about the opening of M9 – Museums of the Twentieth Century, which continues with the description of the museum.

On the first floor, visitors can find the social, demographic, cultural (for customs and lifestyles), technological and economic changes from the Unity to today, and they are portrayed on large semi-circular screens.

On the second floor: the great transformations of landscapes and urban settlements, the stages of our history (an immersive arena reproduces political speeches and large square demonstrations with the presence of a hologram) of our national identity also through stereotypes.

The author explains that visitors will need a minimum of four hours to see and try all the multimedia contents; moreover she warns that it will be necessary to return to visit it because some installations may change, as required by the nature of the project.

In conclusion, she writes down some answers of the Director Marco Biscione, who agrees with the fact that this is a museum that has to continue to rethink itself. And in order to

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.ilgiornaledellefondazioni.com/content/venezia-%C3%A8-la-storia-mestre-%C3%A8-il-%E2%80%998900>

succeed, the Museum has to economically sustain itself through tickets, collateral events and rentals of the commercial part of the district.

M9 is a big machine that must put the pieces together to work well and to achieve the goal set as a urban regeneration project.

Mestre is a difficult city to live in, both for residents and tourists, and the will is still to dedicate many spaces to citizenship to create cultural and associative events. The District wanted to become a meeting space for different people and use the Museum as a catalyst. The appearance of the structure intrigues people who stop to observe more closely and enter the museum, often leaving it with a positive memory of the experience lived.

This is the wish of the new Director and of all the team that worked on the realization of M9.

Most of the time, *Il Giornale delle Fondazioni* reports the project in an objective way, outlining the mission and objectives to achieve it, as well as providing data and useful information for citizens. While other times, some authors provide the reader with their clear opinion, which is that M9 is a necessary urban regeneration project and that the Venice Foundation is working well to bring it to completion.

### **3.2 *Il Gazzettino***

*Il Gazzettino* is an Italian daily local newspaper and it represents the main newspaper in the Northeast Italy, since it was founded and still based in Mestre.

It informs readers about the news of the provinces of Veneto Region, excluding Verona, and some of Friuli ones, such as Pordenone and Udine.

In 2016, the newspaper published an article warning the population about the possibility of an unsuccess of M9, the fault is the resignation of Polymnia's CEO Plinio Danieli.

Some local associations are in favour of M9 and they want the project to be carried out, since "a waiver of the cultural operation would be unacceptable"<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> [https://www.ilgazzettino.it/nordest/venezia/incertezze\\_futuro\\_museo\\_mestre-1667483.html?refresh\\_ce](https://www.ilgazzettino.it/nordest/venezia/incertezze_futuro_museo_mestre-1667483.html?refresh_ce)

These have created an open document to pressure the Venice Foundation, showing their support and of all the inhabitants of Mestre.

The Foundation ensures that the project is not in question, and that the work will be completed.

It is not only the museum to arouse concern in citizens, but also the district and in particular the former convent and its cloister in *via Poerio*, since the idea is to use them for commercial spaces.

The article starts analysing the difficulties experienced daily by shopkeepers in the centre of Mestre and probably is what can occur with M9 too.

Venice Foundation has never hidden some difficulties linked to the problematic commercial context of Mestre, but during a meeting of the General Council of the Foundation it was said that there are many contracts pending to occupy the spaces: “Eighty companies were met, twenty negotiations were started, while there are nine companies with which the negotiation is being improved”<sup>35</sup>.

The idea is to close contracts by July 2018 so that the spaces can be occupied a few months before the Museum’s opening.

Another topic discussed in the article, and which gives the name of the article itself, is to take part to the social rebirth of Mestre engaging as much as possible to the city and its transformation. That’s why the Foundation finds fundamental that the museum opens in the evenings too, in order to intercept tourists who stay overnight in Mestre and to give a positive meeting point to the city’s people.

In the current year and while analysing the details of the article, it is necessary to say that lots of commercial spaces are empty but with the forecast of being filled again or for the first time.

Another clarification concerns the evening opening: the Museum closes at 18.00 from Wednesday to Friday, and at 19.00 during the weekend. There may be evening events, but

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[https://www.ilgazzettino.it/nordest/venezia/mestre\\_notti\\_m9\\_sara\\_aperto\\_anche\\_di\\_ser\\_a-3649945.html?refresh\\_ce](https://www.ilgazzettino.it/nordest/venezia/mestre_notti_m9_sara_aperto_anche_di_ser_a-3649945.html?refresh_ce)

these do not always include visits to the museum, on the contrary, very often the museum exposition of the first and second floor is turned off.

An article written in April 2018 announces the opening of parts of M9, in particular the ones of the former convent.

Matthias Sauerbruch by the Sauerbruch Hutton studio in Berlin, the designer of the museum, spoke at the opening making both a wish and a warning for the future of the museum: “A great urban regeneration project, now it is all in the hands of the curators who must have the sensitivity to choose themes suitable for the city and especially for young people”<sup>36</sup>.

To be honest, the title announces the opening of M9, i.e. the first museum of the twentieth century to be completely multimedia. And also in the little description in the first lines, readers understand that M9 is the museum and it is located in Poerio street.

This information is incorrect since the museum will open the first of December in *via Giovanni Pascoli*, while Poerio is the street of the Cloister and the spaces created in the former convent. In addition, M9 is the name of all the area of intervention, which contains the museum’s building.

This mistake arises from the difficulty that there has always been to describe the M9 project and to choose similar names that can confuse visitors. Still today the dividing line is not drawn and well understood.

### **3.3 *La Nuova di Venezia e Mestre***

Also known as “*La Nuova Venezia*”, it is a regional daily newspaper based in Venice. It follows the news of the metropolitan city of Venice and the local chronicle is divided according to the most populous areas of the province.

The first article about M9 in this journal takes into consideration the sustainability mission of the project.

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[https://www.ilgazzettino.it/nordest/venezia/m9\\_mestre\\_museo-3665260.html?refresh\\_ce](https://www.ilgazzettino.it/nordest/venezia/m9_mestre_museo-3665260.html?refresh_ce)



As Guido Guerzoni explained, the sustainability of the emerging museum has taken on several aspects.<sup>37</sup> The first mentioned is a urban sustainability, which means using and renovating existing buildings, creating new squares and meeting places for the inhabitants; in addition, the space not only counts of a museum but several locations that can be used by citizens.

The key point is the environmental sustainability. Thanks to compact volumes, thermal insulation, areas with natural shade, green and reflective cover they reached minimization of the thermal load. Other ecological measures included photovoltaic systems, rainwater recovery and LED lighting

They also minimized the energy demand for the building through an innovative geothermal field for the management of heating and refrigeration, natural ventilation systems.

These precautions have allowed M9 to obtain the Leed certification, which rewards the optimization of the relationship between building and environment.

The last aspect concerns culture: M9's goal is to enhance the Italian history of the Twentieth century, with photographs, audio-visual materials, sound sources, thanks to the use of innovative and interactive technologies.

The article of December 2017 states "M9 Museum, the countdown begins"<sup>38</sup>, since the date for the opening of the museum is in December 2018 as announced by Valerio Zingarelli, Polymnia Venezia CEO.

While waiting for the museum, they decided to open other areas of M9, such as the cloister of the former convent which will host a large commercial space.

At the end, the author points out the financial investment of the project, which mission is relaunch the centre of Mestre focusing on culture and technology worthy of a smart city: the investment is of 110 million euros.

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[https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2017/10/28/news/polo\\_unico\\_nel\\_suo\\_genere\\_il\\_segreto\\_e\\_la\\_sostenibilita-8432816/](https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2017/10/28/news/polo_unico_nel_suo_genere_il_segreto_e_la_sostenibilita-8432816/)

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[https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2017/12/15/news/museo\\_m9\\_inizia\\_il\\_countdown-8442081/](https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2017/12/15/news/museo_m9_inizia_il_countdown-8442081/)

The journal states in an article of the same period that M9 is looking for the “wow effect” through virtual, augmented and immersive reality. They want to make culture and history more attractive to people.

The author writes that it will take time “to convince the sceptical, who are not few, and the many who have not yet understood the cultural proposal of M9”<sup>39</sup>. And he tries to explain it through a description of the electronic tools that will be present in the museum and how people will use them: “Oculus” headsets as a way to discover how the kitchens where in those years, touch screen table to know food and what they eat in that period, videos modified with 3D to make you be part of a historical event.

He also explains the eight sections: on the first floor economy, society, consumption and lifestyles, technological sciences, while on the second floor city and landscape, politics, identity, culture and media.

It is the first article that describes the museum project specifying its contents. What the article reveals is that the author believes in M9 and wants to make sure that others can understand the project join him with enthusiasm.

Giuliano Segre wrote an article telling that in 2005 he published a collection in the newspaper dedicated to Mestre and its museum<sup>40</sup>.

The starting point is the negative answer of the mayor Cacciari in 2005 about the possibility of create a museum dedicated to the history of Mestre, while local association saw an opportunity.

It is in this period that it was asked to Venice Foundation to intervene and decide to change the point of view: not a museum about Mestre, but a museum in Mestre.

The project was twofold by capturing both elements: the high cultural contribution of an innovative museum product and the widespread social service, obtained with an intervention of urban regeneration.

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<sup>39</sup> <https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2017/12/16/news/m9-multimediale-punta-all-effetto-wow-1.16246500>

<sup>40</sup>

[https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2017/12/22/news/vocazione\\_metropolitana\\_m9\\_fara\\_la\\_storia-8443127/](https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2017/12/22/news/vocazione_metropolitana_m9_fara_la_storia-8443127/)

According to Segre, M9 is destined to enter history silencing polemics and mumbling, as he himself writes.

The text adds a new perspective compared to what has always been said about M9 narrating its true origin and the fact that it was born from a demand of citizens and not only from the will of the Venice Foundation. The discourse is in line with a project of urban regeneration since people decide to intervene in a problem stated and that is close to the heart of the citizenship.

In December 2017, M9 Cloister was officially opened to the citizens with the installation of "flying bells" by Felice Limosani, a composition formed by swings and bells designed to entertain both children and adults.

Data presented in the article said that, after ten days more than 28 thousand people had visited the Cloister and guess to reach 30 thousand visitors before the end of the year.<sup>41</sup>

The cloister will be open to the public until January 6, 2018, because the structure have to be closed again to finish the last works, since in October, according to the chrono program of Polymnia, there will be the opening of the commercial space on the two restored floors of the former district.

The author presents another topic, which is the decision to change the name of the project from M9 Mestre to M9 Venice, which gave rise to numerous controversies and protests; in particular, a group of citizens belonging to different associations of the city, from Mestre Mia to the Autonomy Committee but also individual residents and professionals, have decided to organize a public event to emphasize that it is essential to pass the project as something specific to the city of Mestre.

The first thing to consider is the choice to change the project's name, and then back off and just call it "M9" without any reference to a particular city.

The choice of joining the word "Venice" can be seen as a pure marketing poly in order to draw the attention of as many people as possible. Usually, tourists do not know the

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[https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2017/12/27/news/gia\\_in\\_28\\_mila\\_tra\\_1\\_e\\_altalene\\_del\\_chiostro\\_di\\_m9-8443656/](https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2017/12/27/news/gia_in_28_mila_tra_1_e_altalene_del_chiostro_di_m9-8443656/)

difference between island and mainland but consider only one city that is Venice island with its typical *calli* and *sestieri*, which does not represent Mestre.

In addition, this decision goes against the great urban regeneration project designed and structured specifically for the city of Mestre, which is part of Venice but not the same thing and the two of them are not interchangeable.

In another article is described the about-face and is reported what is written in the social pages of M9: “From today the name of this Facebook page is M9. In these days we have listened to your comments and those of many people of Mestre and the metropolitan area. What does not change is the spirit that animates M9, a project that wants to contribute to the revival and development of Mestre and that we want to achieve in tune with those who live and reside in the territory”<sup>42</sup>.

The other subject presented in the article bodes well for the project given the large participation of the citizens, and fundamental is to realize that that days were the first moment in which people were able to occupy an area that until recently was closed to all, and touch already with hand the change that the Foundation project wants to bring to the city.

In January 2018, Polymnia published a call to involve citizens in the birth of the M9 – Museum of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The project is to make the citizens of Mestre and the metropolitan city protagonists of one of the multimedia installations of the museum: the inhabitants, from zero to one hundred years, will lend their faces to the characters, identified as representative by the scientific curators of the museum, to interpret 120 Italians type.<sup>43</sup>

This installation belongs to the section dedicated to the demographic transformation of the Italian population, where three large group portraits will tell the changes of the population: persons registered in 1901 will be compared with the ones of 1961 and 2011

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<sup>42</sup>

[https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2018/01/04/news/il\\_museo\\_sui\\_social\\_si\\_chiamera\\_solamente\\_m9-8445139/](https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2018/01/04/news/il_museo_sui_social_si_chiamera_solamente_m9-8445139/)

<sup>43</sup>

[https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2018/01/05/news/cast\\_per\\_120\\_cittadin\\_i\\_m9\\_cerca\\_comparse\\_per\\_un\\_maxi\\_ritratto-8445129/](https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2018/01/05/news/cast_per_120_cittadin_i_m9_cerca_comparse_per_un_maxi_ritratto-8445129/)

with information based on age, gender, family groups, regional distribution and professions. Thanks to an immersive and digital installation, a member of each family group will virtually speak to visitors while his figure is brought to the foreground.

The article tells that, people who are interested have to send an email specifying the personal data, such as name, surname, age, height, profession and telephone reference – in order to be called back. The aim is to understand how people have changed over the years, from a physical point of view since one young people showed many more years than today because they started to do arduous works in a very young age, but also from a professional point of view to show how work has changed and at what age people find their first job or can retire.

The idea of Polymnia was a good one and many citizens of the Municipality of Venice have proposed themselves for the role giving the opportunity to the scientific sector to develop the project with a lot of data in hand: in only six days 203 people proposed themselves.

A first analysis recorded 108 female candidates compared to 95 male; the most numerous requests came from high school and university and people of the central age group of the population.

From the point of view of the professions, more than 30 applications were received from students and as many from employees, over a dozen from pensioners and teachers or teachers, but architects, workers, managers and entrepreneurs, traders, salesmen, financial consultants, accountants, social workers, tour guides, electricians, restorers and even some unemployed.<sup>44</sup>

The interesting thing about this virtual portrait is that these people see themselves each time they visit the museum creating a kind of affection and feeling of belonging and in turn are enthusiastically recognized by other visitors, that can see a “friendly face” or with which they can identify making the installation even more likely.

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[https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2018/01/11/news/giovani\\_e\\_anziani\\_per\\_m9\\_ora\\_si\\_cercano\\_settantenni-8446292/](https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2018/01/11/news/giovani_e_anziani_per_m9_ora_si_cercano_settantenni-8446292/)

An article published at the end of February 2018 reveals some details about the timing of the works of the museum. Specifically, on 31 March they plan to complete the construction of the buildings, so as to start on 1 April with the preparations of the new museum, than to the polychrome tiles that will cover the outside of the building with a laying planned from March and July; everything must end by September.<sup>45</sup>

The agencies that take part of the project have decided that it is necessary to make a test of all the spaces before the great opening previewed for December the 1<sup>st</sup>, as a way to identify any malfunctions, errors or shortcomings and intervene with the workers in time to respect the timing. For this reason, the test, which is called “business simulation”, will be between September the 1<sup>st</sup> and November the 15<sup>th</sup>; an external agency will recruit hundreds of people who will have to try everything between Museum and Cloister, with its future commercial space.

In March 2018 the space dedicated to children from 4 to 8 years and from 9 to 12 years was inaugurated: “M-Children” counts several rooms for workshops for both schools and private, other dedicated to interactive games or videos.

Chairman of the Culture Committee of the Municipality Giorgia Pea describes the space as something colourful and attractive, emphasizing that the educational space is the demonstration that culture can be fun and engaging for both children and visitors<sup>46</sup>.

The didactic building presented in the article was among the first spaces of the centre to be inaugurated, following only the Cloister.

Opening a space dedicated to children means opening up to many more occasions: one could be schools which can attend workshops, another ones are parents who bring the children to a place that the little ones want to visit, often also involving grandparents, and in this way they touch different age groups too.

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[https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2018/02/22/news/museo\\_m9\\_avanti\\_tutta\\_a\\_marzo\\_anche\\_le\\_piastrelle-8453651/](https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2018/02/22/news/museo_m9_avanti_tutta_a_marzo_anche_le_piastrelle-8453651/)

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[https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2018/03/29/news/m9\\_primi\\_passi\\_con\\_i\\_bambini-8460446/](https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2018/03/29/news/m9_primi_passi_con_i_bambini-8460446/)

This type of initiative has proved now to be very important for the museum, since it can count among the most frequent visitors minors and age group 35-50 and over 65.

An article written at the of May informs the readers that M9 begins to take shape, especially with regard to commercial area contracts.<sup>47</sup>

It is never declared who will be part of this area, there are only assumptions about the fields, such as restaurants, wine, clothing, sport and new working methods. What is sure is that they want to create an innovation retail centre, which is not an alternative to the traditional store, but has to be seen as a complement and addition to present new frontiers, and the main aim is to make companies interact with customers.

Polymnia CEO Valerio Zingarelli is enthusiastic about the perspective of the commercial area and the contracts they are about to finish signing, but the same time recalls the importance of the museum for the M9 project and all its visitors.

In July 2018 the first director was selected: in the article Marco Biscione explains why he chose to apply and what he wish for M9.

What excited him are the exceptional contents, since it is the first museum to face the Twentieth century not only in a historical-artistic key; exceptional also for the objectives, M9 wants to make a contribution to the cultural, economic and urban regeneration of the community.<sup>48</sup>

He wants to take inspiration from two examples of urban regeneration: Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao that changed the nature of the city, and his city, Turin, which in the 2000s, reacted to deindustrialization though investing in museums and culture.

The article continues with an insight in the budget, saying that M9 costs to Venice Foundation 110 million euros. The budget previews an annual cost of management of 4 million and the declared objective is to reach the 200 thousand visitors in 2019.

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[https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2018/05/27/news/il\\_museo\\_m9\\_prende\\_forma\\_negozi\\_contratti\\_conclusi-8470990/](https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2018/05/27/news/il_museo_m9_prende_forma_negozi_contratti_conclusi-8470990/)

48

[https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2018/07/28/news/museo\\_m9\\_la\\_sfida\\_multimediale\\_e\\_senza\\_oggetti\\_ma\\_rappresenta\\_il\\_futuro-8479667/](https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2018/07/28/news/museo_m9_la_sfida_multimediale_e_senza_oggetti_ma_rappresenta_il_futuro-8479667/)

Starting from this point, July 2018, people will no longer talk about Polymnia but of M9 District, which is the current name of the part that deals with the initiatives of the whole district; important to say that M9 District does not have the management of the museum.

An article of the museum's inauguration day confirms, between many other authorities, the presence of the mayor of the City of Venice Luigi Brugnaro, the president of the Senate Maria Elisabetta Casellati, and the minister of Culture Alberto Bonisoli who, during its speech defined the concept of urban regeneration: "to do something new, contemporary, based on what we already have."<sup>49</sup>

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[https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2018/12/01/news/apre\\_m9\\_di\\_mestre\\_e\\_inizia\\_il\\_viaggio\\_nel\\_secolo\\_breve-8496631/](https://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/venezia/cronaca/2018/12/01/news/apre_m9_di_mestre_e_inizia_il_viaggio_nel_secolo_breve-8496631/)



#### 4. EVENTS AND INITIATIVES IN M9 THROUGH THE YEARS

M9 is organized as an entity with three souls: District, Museum and Venice Foundation. All these take part to the realizations of activities and events in the places of both district and museum.

The majority of the events are held in the museum's room, which are the Auditorium called after Cesare De Michelis, a room of 50 seats known as M9 Lab and also the Foyer of the museum. Sometimes people can use another location, especially for laboratories, called M9 Cube.

The ones that are not held in the museum building are hosted in the Cloister or in the district's showcases.

M9 District, which will be called from now on M9D, is responsible for all the activities organized in the district, starting from the contracts in order to occupy the blank spaces – such as the showcases in the Cloister or the one at the down floor of the building next to the museum, or manage the events organized by companies, associations and also Municipality.

*Fondazione* M9, or FM9, follows all the activities concerning the museum: public programs, innovation contents, bookshop's presentations and the laboratories for kids in M9Kids.

Venice Foundation uses some places of M9 for their own initiatives, usually connected to the field of education and citizenship aid.

Considering the work done by all the three souls, M9 presents every year a list that reaches between one hundred and two hundred initiatives per year.

A clarification must to be made, which is that the next information about events are going to consider the years of post-pandemic, starting from 2021; in fact before Covid-19, M9 counts only a year of initiatives: 2019 was the first year of opening to the public and initiatives were not that much because of it; then with 2020 the development of new initiatives saw a stop, and only in 2021 these started to increase year after year.

Please note: the reported data is an approximation that is very close to reality but are not the precise numbers.

#### 4.1 2021

In 2021 the events and initiatives organized by all three entities were about 130, and sometimes they lasted more than a day coming to cover more than 250 days through all the year.

This data is possible since little temporary exhibitions and festivals lasted more than three days.

FM9 organized three temporary exhibitions during this year.

In March 19 it was inaugurated an exhibition named "*Foresta M9. Un paesaggio di idee, comunità e futuro*" - Forest M9. A landscape of ideas, communities and future, that would last until May 23.

It is an installation of about 600 tree species that underlines the relationship between the Venetian territory to its woods.

Another meaning that the curator wanted to attribute to the exhibition is the feeling of rebirth after a long and hard lockdown that kept closed the museum and its spaces.

"*Foresta M9*" is also an opportunity to introduce M9 Zero Impact, the Greentech project that aims to make M9 the largest Italian museum with zero energy impact.

The second exhibition developed along the corridors of the museum and presented the architectural changes that occurred in the Venetian territory during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

The exhibition "*Le sfide di Venezia. L'architettura e la città nel Novecento*" - The challenges of Venice. The architecture and the city in the twentieth century, was produced by M9 on the occasion of the celebrations for the 1600 years of Venice.

The exhibition presents over 80 works divided into 6 sections:

1. Venice beyond Venice: the international dimension, the Biennale, the seaside town;
2. Venice beyond Venice: the territorial dimension
3. The international dimension after World War II

4. The end of the expansive model, starting from the '70s
5. After 1980, Venice as an international laboratory for architecture in the new residential dimension
6. Venice, international laboratory for architecture: new cultural equipment

Third and last exhibition is also related to architecture, in particular it is monographic exhibition dedicated to the thirty-year activity of the architecture studio Sauerbruch Hutton.

At the museum third floor, “Draw love build” presented 60 models and more than 100 architectural drawings. They documented some of the most relevant works of the studio, selected to highlight common themes that run through the various projects, including the creative exploration of the post-industrial city and in particular its marginal areas, the development of integrated concepts for a more sustainable built environment, the creation of surprising and sensory spaces.

Lots of the initiative organized by FM9 were connected with these exhibitions.

In this year, not many companies have asked for M9 spaces for their private events and it was possible for M9D to host so about 50 events.

In 2021 Venice Foundation organized less than ten little initiatives between the walls of the museum.

<b><i>Fondazione M9</i></b>	<b>M9 District</b>	<b>Venice Foundation</b>
3 temporary exhibitions	50 corporate events	>10 initiatives education oriented
Events connected to the exhibitions		

## 4.2 2022

In 2022 the number of events were around 230, and again, the days used for the events are a greater number than the initiatives reaching to occupy almost all the year, with its 300 days: festivals began to become more frequent and lasted for many more days.

FM9 realized about 110 events for the Museum, in all count the days of events are about 110.

The majority took place in the Auditorium dedicated to Cesare De Michelis, while a small part saw the Cloister as a location: these are the festivals that are held in May and September, in a favourable climate for outdoors events and in a space able to attract even passers-by.

Part of the initiatives of the M9 Foundation takes inspiration from the temporary exhibitions in progress by creating cycles of meetings dedicated. In this year there were two of them: “*Alberi*” and “*Gusto! Gli italiani a tavola*” – Taste! Italians and Food.

The first exhibition held from March 11 to August 10 tells the story of Italy through drawings of trees made by illustrator Guido Scarabottolo. The pictures with the drawings were hung along the corridors of the museum to invite the viewer to create links between the permanent and the temporary exhibition.

The second temporary exhibition was held from March 25 to October 23 in the museum’s third floor., and it is the first part of a three-year programme which aims to tell the relationship between Italians and food, starting from 1970s to 2050s in order to rediscover the paradigm of Italian history and its development in the field of taste, food and conviviality.

The third floor became a laboratory where people could explore the topics through workshops, guided tours, talks, conferences, and tastings too.

M9 District manages a little less than half of the events that take place within the museum and district spaces, in particular these are about 100.

Organizers of these events are companies, associations and orders, can be of architects or doctors, but also universities and professionals of a specific field.

This type of customers very often uses an outdoor space such as the Cloister, for example for material displays, and the events hosted here are about a quarter of the total.

M9D is responsible for event management and supports the organizers in the organizing steps, such as site inspection and granting of spaces, as well as requests to the municipality in case of use of the cloister; often it becomes promoter of the museum and advice to customers of guided tours of both permanent and temporary exhibitions.

In addition, M9D often also supports FM9 in the management of some initiatives, such as festivals.

The events organized by the Venice Foundation are a small part and often occur only in the museum, and 2022 counts less than twenty initiatives.

This year’s events start a series of workshops dedicated to education, the main focus of the Foundation.

Note that in 2022 many events were managed in spaces of the Foundation itself, that was based in Venice island.

<b>Fondazione M9</b>	<b>M9 District</b>	<b>Venice Foundation</b>
2 temporary exhibitions	100 corporate events and associations	20 initiatives
110 events		

### 4.3 2023

Data of 2023 takes into consideration events from January to October, and counts of nearly 170 initiatives: it is important to consider that the months with a higher number of events are March, November and December, two of them are missing from the list.

The days spent for events are about 260 in these ten months and they took place in different M9 location: most of the events were hosted inside the rooms of the museum, while a little part took place in the Cloister.

Third floor of the museum hosted one temporary exhibition during 2023.

“*Rivoluzione Vedova*” was inaugurated the 5<sup>th</sup> of May and was extended until January the 7<sup>th</sup> 2024, instead of ending in late November as scheduled.

The exhibition was conceived and designed by *Fondazione* Emilio and Annabianca Vedova together with *Fondazione* M9; the works on display were of Emilio Vedova, a Venetian artist, in particular he was a painter and engraver. This artist was chosen for its political commitment, as better describes Gabriella Belli, curator of the exhibitions in the following lines: “History as the breath and lungs of his art, marching in unison with his battles for civil rights, with his pacifism, against the ideological duplicity and the violence of dictatorships, his pressing for change, his defence of Venice, for due care of its ancient monuments, and much besides. Vedova is a contemporary who still inspires us.”<sup>50</sup>

This kind of exhibition was an innovation for M9 – Museum of the 20<sup>th</sup> century since it was the first time for contemporary art and its aim is to launch a cycle of biennial exhibitions dedicated to protagonists of the history of art, with relevant civil commitment. Connected to this exhibition, FM9 organized a public program that counted many events open to citizenship and held in the auditorium “Cesare De Michelis”.

M9D managed the majority of the events held both in the district and museum. In particular during the months under consideration, there has been an increase in social associations that have preferred to carry out their meetings and initiatives in the Cloister and its spaces.

The events here are comanaged by the company and by M9 District, which follows the realization of the events during the day. Most of the times, the initiatives presented lasted a full day.

Starting from the half of 2023, Venice Foundation held more events in M9 since its offices were moved in Mestre too.

The initiatives were mostly focused on education and aimed at schools.

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<sup>50</sup> <https://www.m9museum.it/en/exhibitions/rivoluzione-vedova/>

<b>Fondazione M9</b>	<b>M9 District</b>	<b>Venice Foundation</b>
1 temporary exhibition	Events corporate	Initiatives education oriented
Events connected to the temporary exhibition	Events with institutions and associations	

### 4.3.1 M9 Birthday

As said, the museum was inaugurated the first day of December of 2018, that means that in 2023 all the entities of M9 have worked for its 5<sup>th</sup> birthday.

It was developed a weekend full of activities, for all kind of visitors: children with families, students and young adults, elderly and adults.

During Saturday and Sunday, which means 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2023, the entrance ticket to the museum was completely free for everyone.

In addition, people could book guided tours of the permanent exhibition: exception guides of those two days were the historians of M9. While the guides who would accompany the curious in the temporary exhibition were different: in the mornings and all Saturday you could discover the exhibition “*Rivoluzione Vedova*” with the guidance of students and students of the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice, while on Sunday afternoon visitors had the opportunity to be guided though the exhibition by Professor Daniele Fraccaro, who is Professor of Pedagogy and Teaching of Art at the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice.

Two guests guided visitors in the museum thanks to a personal reading of the century: on Saturday with Mara Rumiz, Project Development Manager for Emergency, and on Sunday with Mario Lupano, Professor of History of Architecture at the IUAV University of Venice.

The two days of celebrating were not only dedicated to visiting the museum, but also to bring people in M9 through workshops and conferences.

For example, an initiative allowed visitors to discover the historic buildings and urban interventions of M9 district with the guide of the architect Gianfranco Vecchiato.

M9 Edu has promoted a laboratory suitable for children from 8 to 11 years interested in the world of STEAM, and another one for children from 6 to 9 years interested in art and creativity, starting from Vedova's exhibition.

The Auditorium "Cesare De Michelis" hosted two screenings followed by conversations with the directors. One was the film "*Homo Urbanus Venetianus*" by Ila Beka and Louise Lemoine, which developed the relationship between humans and urban context; the second documentary is called "*Lagunaria*", directed by Giovanni Pellegrini, it was about the phenomenon of high water in Venice.

During the afternoons people could enjoy music too. Students of the Venetian Conservatory "Benedetto Marcello" have played music of the twentieth century in some corridors of the museum.

Lastly, to celebrate the birthday of M9 it was also proposed a DJ set in the Cloister on the evening of Saturday.

#### **4.3.2 *Vivi M9***

On November the 15<sup>th</sup> a press conference was held in the Museum to promote a new project called *Vivi M9*, or development plan of the District.

The project aims to continue the job of regeneration giving still more space to the citizenship creating five different thematic areas inside of the district in order to allow a greater integration and participation. These areas are meeting, culture, relationship, catering and leisure, arranged in clear spots within the district: culture is already present and it is the museum's space, leisure will be a new area, people will find food in the centre of the district, meeting point will be the Cloister, while relationship will be in the space behind the museum.

First, the project wants to create new access routes making M9 even more visible and accessible. It starts from the demolition of the building known as "Meucci", the two-storey building next to the post office building, which will create a new passage with *Piazzale Donatori di Sangue*. With the demolition of the building, the District not only opens further to the city but expands with new surface that will be available for recreational activities, designed especially for children. This will be the leisure space.



The renovation works also concern the Cloister, crossed by a diagonal path with a contrasting floor and the installation of seats and flower boxes in order to underline its vocation as a place of encounter and aggregation, also in continuity with the events and festivals that the Cloister hosts regularly.

It will be, finally, a District greener thanks to the presence of potted plants and climbers, and a series of planters and trees to create an avenue, airy and colourful.

During the press conference, the plan has been introduced by Michele Bugliesi, president of the Venice Foundation, who described *Vivi M9* as an important stage in the development of the District that continues to grow in coherence with the objectives given, which means to promote the area as a place of aggregation and social activation.

He explained that just from the title people could easily understand the initiative: to make the museum and the district more alive as it should be, able to become a real and important meeting point for the citizenship, until than they attracted people only because of the events: “M9 has not yet become a natural place where people walk, meet and spend time together, whether they are children or families.”<sup>51</sup>

In this development plan is summarized the will of the Venice Foundation to create a place of aggregation and inclusion through the regeneration and reconstruction of the area.

The intense activities are already started. The Meucci building has already been demolished and the plants and trees have already found a place within the district.



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<sup>51</sup> Michele Bugliesi during the press conference for the project *Vivi M9*, from @m9museum stories

## 5. HOW M9 IS PERCEIVED

After presenting the history of M9 and the activities carried out and coordinated in the spaces of the project, it is important to define what people think about it, given the goal of creating a point of aggregation.

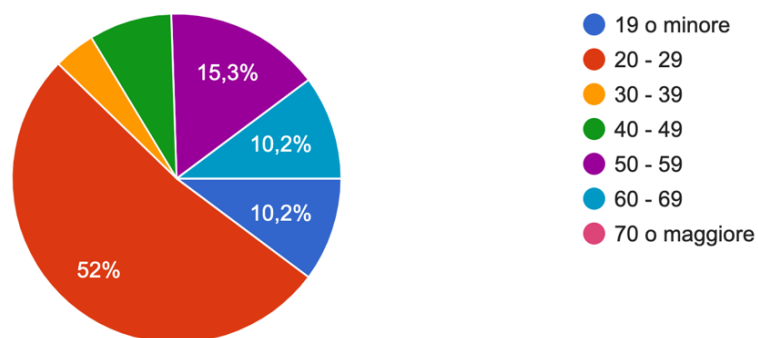
### 5.1 Questionnaire via Google Form

In order to do this, I created a survey that I shared on my social profile and via word of mouth. It will follow the questions and answers of the respondents, who first of all had to indicate their age group, profession and residence.

the purpose of the questionnaire was first to understand if and how many people knew M9, and in the second place to identify who among them then visited the spaces. People were then asked what they liked about M9, if they would recommend it and what they would change.

The form got 98 answers.

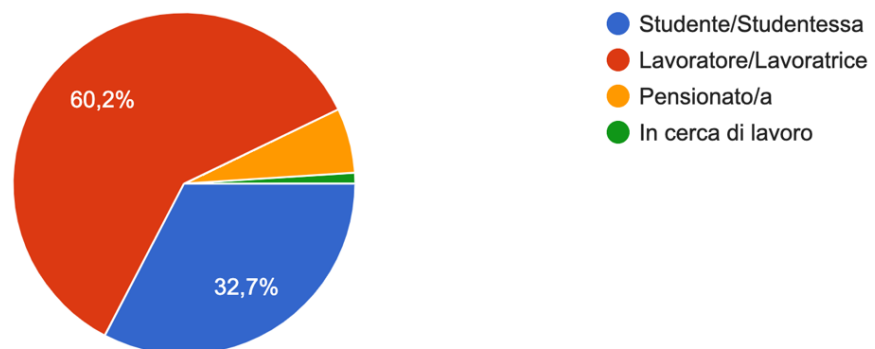
Respondents were asked to indicate their age group and, as the graph shows, most people are between 20 and 29 years old, immediately followed by the 50 and 59, 60 and 69, and by minors.



Even though the age group that goes for the greatest is that between the 20 and the 29 years, many of these are already workers, thus arriving to identify a very high percentage of workers.

Partly due to the underage group, the number of students still has a high percentage among the respondents.

This data is very important. Usually the workers do not have much free time, especially time to visit an interactive museum like M9 and walk in its district. This is in fact one of the registrations used by those who know M9 but there has never been there.



A question was then asked to see how many of the people concerned were interested in culture. The simple question was "What do you do in your free time?" and respondents were invited to mark one or more choices among those proposed or add other.

The item "visit museums" has not received much feedback, in fact only 20,6% of respondents have chosen this as an activity they prefer to do in their free time, among the choices proposed was the one with the least number of votes.

Despite this, a large number of respondents expressed a preference for reading (38,1 %) and visiting historic cities (37,1%).

Another factor I wanted to determine with this survey was the knowledge of M9 based on the city of residence.

The question was indeed whether the inhabitants of the Veneto region, especially the residences of the metropolitan city of Venice, were aware of this project. That's why the

majority of the respondents were from Veneto, while only a small component were from outside Veneto: Emilia Romagna, Friuli Venezia Giulia and Trentino Alto Adige.

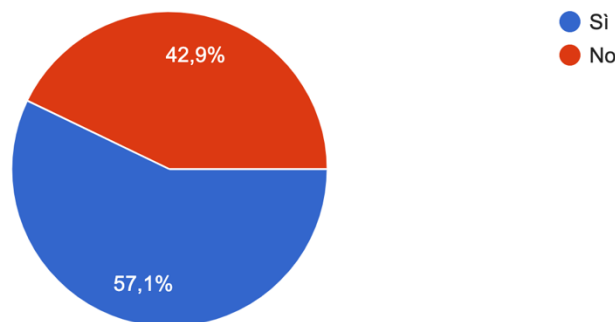
Regarding the metropolitan city of origin, 90,5 % are from Venice; the other percentages are 5,3 % Treviso and 4,2 % from Padua.

The first part just described focused on general information.

The second part instead went to investigate the number of respondents who knew M9 and about those who had visited it.

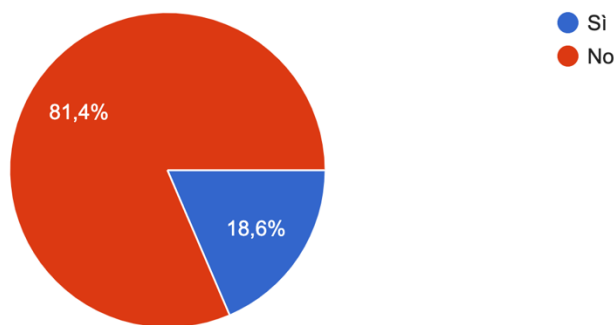
Based on the answer to the first question, respondents had to answer different questions. Those who knew and had visited M9 had to refer to their personal experience, while the respondents who had not visited M9 were asked for motivation and to suggest initiatives that could approach or entice them to visit the location.

Thanks to the graph, it's easy to see that there are not many more people who know M9 than those who have never heard of it. Always keeping in mind that most of the respondents do not live very far from Mestre.



Although most of the respondents are aware of the existence of M9, there are very few who have visited it.

Considering the 56 people who stated in the previous answer to know M9, only 18 were in Mestre to visit it, whether it was museum or district; even though the majority visited only the museum.



### **People who visited M9**

People were then asked why they were in M9 and if they visited it alone or with others, rather family or friends.

Only two persons admitted to have visited it alone, while the others were with friends, family or because of school trips.

The answers are little detailed but thanks to some we can understand that some have decided to visit M9 thanks to the events here realized. In particular the answers and initiatives are the following:

- festivals sponsored by M9
- concerts
- for a conference of topics addressed in universities

People were then asked to write what they found interesting and what they liked most during their visit.

Regarding the organization of the museum, visitors appreciated that it is a technological and interactive one.

In particular, one visitor appreciated the reconstructions in different historical periods of the same theme, for examples kitchens, clothing, retirement, and the interactive part for children too.

Other respondents appreciated the structure and the idea of the museum, that is an investment for the block and the city; the structure has been defined “wide, new,

welcoming”. In addition, there was a response of appreciation about the color nuances of the building.

An answer focused on the idea of M9’ structure and plan in general: “it seemed to me a multifunctional center and venue for events and activities of various kinds”.

Secondly, they were asked to indicate what they did not like about M9 and the museum. People believe the walls are too dark and often the volume is too high.

Another response highlighted the need to update the data of the various installations “in order to have a comparison with the present, given that very often the data arrive until 2016”.

The problem according to two answers is the location because it is “not very reachable”. I find interesting and useful to point out that most of the answers do not consider it necessary to change anything since people enjoyed the one presented and the methods of presentation.

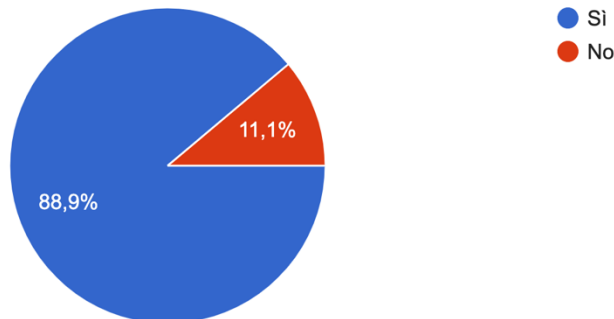
Then, it was asked to specify if they would recommend someone to visit M9 and why. Most of them would recommend M9 and would return to visit it firsthand; the reasons are instead the following:

- “An ideal place to get closer to the history of the twentieth century Italian, of which at school we face only the first half”
- “Beautiful space to spread culture”
- “Very nice for children and also for adults, interesting and addictive”
- “I recommend it because there is a lot of information about the twentieth century in a more modern and revolutionary than the usual way”
- “Absolutely yes, it is just the example of a well-thought and well-developed museum, interactive, attractive to every age group, even for those who do not love or do not know history”
- “It is very beautiful, it conveys the story in a nice and interesting way”

Other comments are then linked to the beauty of the structure and the fact that it is new and modern museum.

### Tornerebbe a visitare M9?

18 risposte



Finally, people had to provide some suggestions to answer the question: “What could M9 do to make itself known and attract people of your age group?”

The majority suggests to focus on the marketing action and publicize the museum more, both online and offline. For example with small videos/advertisements to run in the platforms and ads on YouTube.

Others have focused on the theme of events, suggesting some specifically: events also related to local products, given the location within an area with bars and restaurants, but also cultural events for young people; another suggests to host neighborhood festivals or screen world/European matches.

There are suggestions for the location too, in particular to enhance the urban area to make it pleasant to attend safely.

### **People who did not visited M9**

First question to be answered by those who never visited M9 is why they never did it.

The majority of those who responded stressed another time the fact that they did not know the museum or M9 as a project of urban regeneration.

Many have pointed out that they have not yet had occasion or that they have not found the time to visit it.

Others have said they always hear little about it and for this reason they are not very tempted to discover it, and also that they don't often know about the events managed and

organized in M9. Another part recently became aware of the museum and the district and still have not planned a visit.

Some people have stated that they are more interested in classical museums and that M9 – Museum of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century is not among the first museums they would like to visit.

A respondent admitted that he always intends to go there but then visits other places farther from his city.

Their last question was made to discover initiatives and opportunities that would entice users to visit M9.

Many answers focused on events, both on those who could be organized and on the fact of their promotion:

- “Probably with initiatives organized with universities, or conferences with interesting guests and able to approach the young public. All planned and advertised so you can easily get to know the event”
- “Citizens’ events of various kinds (meetings with authors, festivals...) that entice people to travel. Not a single offer for one event, but create more attractions in the surrounding area”
- “Organization of some events with important personalities on interesting topics, for example the transformation of institutions over time”
- “An aperitif, a social event”
- “Proposing some visit/ school trip or promoting some advertising maybe even as surveys like these”
- “Events of a certain type based perhaps on different cultures”
- “Events that allow the aggregation of young people”
- “Inform more about the events that are being done”

According to some answers, the exhibitions should be of artists known by people, could be contemporary photographers or painters. And connected with social and/or historical issues too.

Others stated that the reduced or free ticket in some cases would attract more people to visit M9, and the visits should be done also during the evening to facilitate workers and students.



Non-visitors also highlight the need for more advertising, especially through social and Ads; for example “by using social media you could do a more widespread advertising in order to get to more people and then through words of mouth”.

## **5.2 Interview with users and nonusers**

After a questionnaire addressed to several people, I identified four people who correspond to residents of the Metropolitan city of Venice and students, two who visited M9 and two who have never been there.

They were asked to answer three questions:

1. What do you know about M9 or what did you know before you visited it?
2. What do you think of M9 as an urban regeneration project?
3. What do you recommend to M9?

The first interviewed is a resident, in particular she lives in Musile di Piave and has never visited M9.

She is aware of the existence of M9 and its aim to develop and enrich the city centre of Mestre through the concept of urban regeneration, but she never got to visit it or in any case she did not show too much interest in planning a trip.

She also answered the first question saying that M9 – Museum of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century is the first interactive museum in Italy and that tells the Italian history of the 1900s.

On the purpose of regenerating the city, she thinks that M9 is a beautiful and necessary project for the neighbourhoods. Thanks to the cultural activities that the entities are developing, it will be possible to give new life to a place destined to degradation.

Everyone knows Mestre for the bad reputation and maybe this project could help it to revalue the city, she adds.

The interviewee knows M9 thanks to a friend who told her about the museum, otherwise she would not have been able to answer the questions of this interview. For this reason, she believes that M9 should focus more on advertising in order to be known by many other people, also of different age groups.

She recommends M9 to use different platforms to make people know the project and attract more visitors: advertising on social networks but also on newspapers and billboards.

She also suggests to create a collaboration with the municipal administration to give greater visibility to the museum.

The second interviewed is a nonuser too.

He is a university student who heard about M9 during a lecture on urban regeneration.

The only thing he knew about M9 is just that, together with the fact that it is a museum of history, but he had no idea that in the museum so many aspects of life in the twentieth century were told and it is not just “pure” history.

The concept of urban regeneration is a very present theme in recent years and he believes that it was time that even in Italy it was taken more into account, especially in a city like Mestre that is seen only as a way to pass and reach Venice.

He now lives in Mestre because of University and believes that urban regeneration projects are needed in the city.

Not sure he would visit M9, although he has to admit that the student discount might be an incentive not to be underestimated. He would therefore suggest to continue with initiatives such as discounts, and that it might be interesting to provide evening openings with events for young people.

He recommends to make a close collaboration with the universities of Veneto too.

Third interviewed lives in the Metropolitan city of Venice and has visited M9 in December 2023 for the first time.

Before visiting the museum, he only was aware of its existence but had no clue about the contents and the structure or the idea beyond the project. He only knew the name and the fact that was a museum in Mestre and that’s what hit him: why a museum in Mestre?

Soon he found the answer to his question and believes that creating a museum to regenerate a degraded city is very important.

He says that is crucial for cities to create and develop cultural project, especially the ones with a bad reputation as Mestre.

Clearly, M9 is a good starting point since it brought more tourists and cultural initiatives in the city but it has to be careful and keep an eye on the goals.

He recommends to promote its initiatives, since they are interesting and open to everyone. In addition, could be interesting to create more engage with schools through some presentations in classrooms in order to go “beyond the museum walls” and reach as many kids as possible, since education is the basis of changes.

This interviewed recommends some initiatives too. It could be a good idea to create some events connected with historical periods, for examples concerts of tribute bands or DJ sets playing songs of the second half of the twentieth century.

The fourth interviewed is a university student, who visited M9 in 2022 with some friends. She discovered the existence of M9 thanks to a story published by an acquaintance on a social network and, intrigued by the images she found, decided to visit it.

Before visiting M9, she knew that it was an entirely technological and interactive museum that presents the history of the 20th century; moreover, the exhibition does not only analyse the century from a historical-political point of view but also from a socio-cultural one and this is what has attracted her the most.

During the description of his experience, she says that she is aware of the importance and impact that such a project has in a city like Mestre. She thinks that there is a lot of potential in the structure and activities M9 proposes but she argues that this is not fully exploited: “M9 is a nice dimension and project capable of hosting many activities and people but there are few who attend and this is a shame”.

She would like to suggest to increase publicity and visibility on all channels, especially social networks in order to attract younger people.

About this she says that she often found herself in a situation to explain to her friends what M9 was since they did not know it and that she always promotes the possibility that the students have to visit the museum at a reduced price.

## CONCLUSION

A project can be defined as urban regeneration when some elements are fundamental in its structure.

The great objective of the project must be, in fact, to regenerate a city with a degraded background caused by an industrial past in decline.

In order to do so, a huge investment has to be done both economic, social and of infrastructure: the city has to change look in order to attract more people.

The solution of urban regeneration projects is to exploit well-known architects of international renown and ask them to create magnificent buildings that give curiosity and amazement in the inhabitants before and in tourists later.

M9 project embraces all these elements.

Mestre was part of a large industrialization project that had a stop in the second half of the '900 and since then many buildings have remained unused and empty of purposes.

In addition, Mestre is known to most as a place of degradation and crime.

From the study of the city and its needs, as well as the requests of the inhabitants, was born the idea of structuring a project that aimed to give new life to the city of Mestre.

It was important for the inhabitants that the city was not known only for its bad reputation or considered just as a city of passage to visit Venice.

In order to give new life and reputation to the city, Venice Foundation and its collaborators created a district which core is an interactive museum about the twentieth century.

Venice Foundation has opened a call for international architects to work on the museum's project, aiming precisely at the famous "stararchitects".

The winners of the competition have created a magnificent structure in the city center that intrigues passers-by. In fact many do not understand what is the structure and curious enter to ask for information and often ends up deciding to visit the museum at that time or later.

Colors will immediately draw attention, then they will focus on the structure itself and only later notice the inscription "museum", often not even that they are watching the

building so different from the rest of the city center. The architects themselves have declared that the building can be defined as unique, but the colors are the same as the city of Mestre and it is this point that allows the project to adapt even better to the needs and demands of the inhabitants.

But the initiative was at first welcomed with several critics and with a lot of hesitation from the *Mestrini* and not.

Starting from the origins, people had not a clear idea about how the project was going to develop and only noticed the problems that might have arisen. Among these, it is the topic of trying to regenerate a “difficult” place that needed a lot of investments, economics too. At the same time, citizens were aware that a change was needed and they were willing to wait to see the final result.

Their expectation has been rewarded with many events and initiatives.

*Fondazione M9*, M9 District and Venice Foundation, the three souls of M9, managed every year an interesting number of initiatives for adults, children and families.

Initiatives ranging from conferences, book presentations, workshops for schools and children. But also the possibility to book locations for private events, birthdays parties and exhibitions

Also the third floor designed for temporary exhibition is rich in programming, but sometimes people are not aware of it.

The list of activities is quite long and according to the data they cover just less of 365 days, this means that on average events could cover every day of a calendar year.

Question of the thesis was whether people knew the initiatives promoted by M9 and, according to researches here presented, the problem is that people are not aware of them. This because in the first place there are not many people who know M9 or who have never heard of it

After five years since the museum opening, too many people still do not know M9, neither the project nor the spaces.

It is plausible that a large reservoir of people do not know or have never visited M9, but this becomes a significant problem when these are residents of the metropolitan city of Venice, or people who live about half an hour from Mestre.

The main cause of this ignorance declared by the residents themselves is the lack of information, since they never heard about M9.

They suggest to make as many promotional activity as possible using even different platforms in order to reach more users: an account on social media works only if people already know M9 and it cannot be use as marketing, but only as a way to create engaging with users and keep them informed, as well as the solution of newsletter.

People need to find out about M9 through advertising, billboards or collaborations with different entities, such as municipality, university and region; it has to invest in marketing, both online and offline.

Once discovered and accepted M9, people complain however the lack of initiatives, referred to both special events and temporary exhibitions.

Only by using the site people can be aware of how many activities are done in the spaces of M9, also divided according to age groups or involving different associations or common interests.

In conclusion, M9 is a good project both for the city and for the people, and an interesting opportunity to rediscover our history, but it has to do a better job in the awareness phase first and the attractive one then. And in developing events that really reach people's interests and all the age groups too.

Only by doing so, M9 will be able to become a real cultural and essential point for the city and for people, since the real challenge for the project is to enrich not just a specific block, but all the city centre too: M9 if really wants to become a project of urban regeneration has to start giving life to long term processes of engagement and improve quality of life.

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