

**AA0000**

**A Project for Vlora**

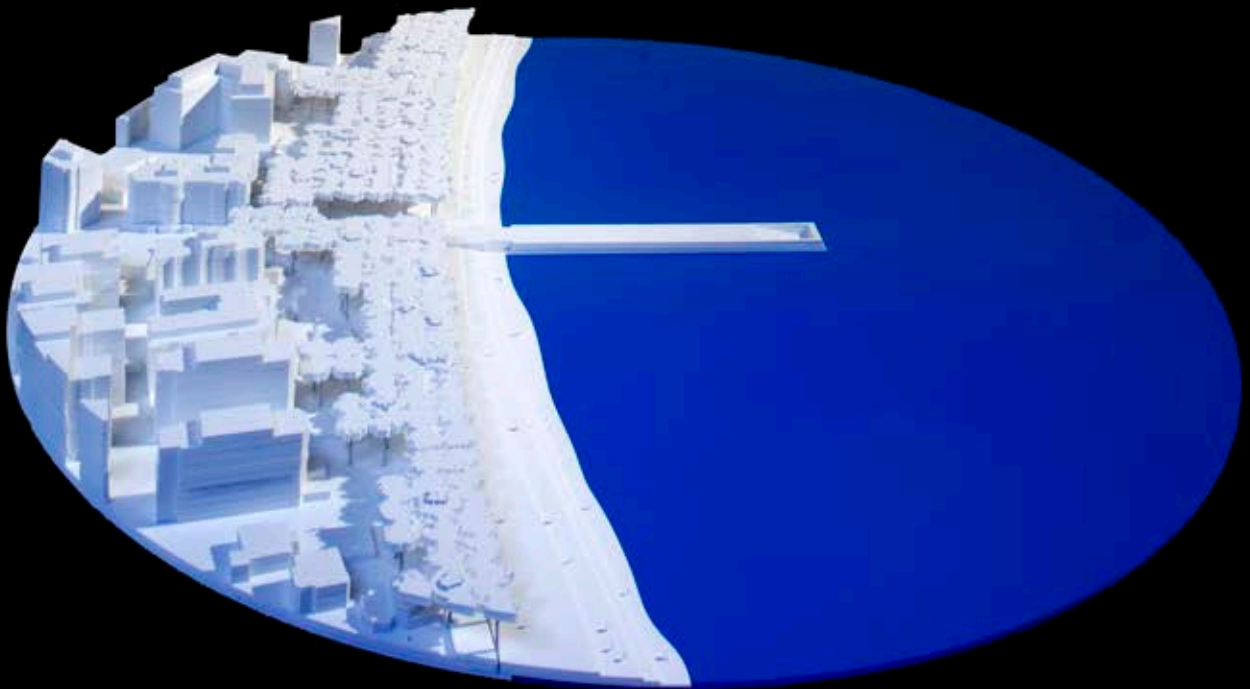


Redefining the Waterfront

*The City of Vlora occupies a prime position on one of the most beautiful settings of the Ionian Coast: it sits in a calm, protected bay and is surrounded by spectacular mountain scenery. It already possesses a very attractive waterfront, which is characterized by its magnificent palm trees.*

*The chief objective of any urban enterprise against this context, would be to reinforce its existing qualities, by giving it a more dignified, unitary presence, and to capitalise on the multilayered potential that the interface between the city and the sea stimulates; at the same time, it would seek to upgrade its existing form and to overhaul its shortcomings by replacing them with new, strategic interventions.*

*The end product of such an enterprise would be to deliver a recognisable, distinctive and representative «front» to this historical Mediterranean City.*



A detail of the Waterfront

# I

## Front

Our proposal puts forward a very simple and feasible intervention that can be implemented in stages. Its main components are:

**a Pineta (a forest of pine trees),  
a pedestrian boulevard that frames the entire waterfront,  
twelve piers.**

The piers are envisioned as a focal landmark for Vlora; moreover, they will contain all the amenities for the beach life while extending an already overcrowded shoreline. The piers are the simplest architecture possible, yet their archetypical power is able not only to attract people, but also to become a distinctive feature for the city of Vlora.

As a first step for the project we propose a pier equipped with a theatre and pool to be built for the summer 2014.



Principle: a landscape of Strips

## II

# Strips

Our proposal consists of a coherent spatial and architectural strategy that enables the development to be built in stages. This strategy resides in the layering of the entire length of the given site into five parallel strips of intervention, which we have designated as:

- 1. Land**
- 2. Linear Forest**
- 3. Boulevard**
- 4. Beach**
- 5. Sea**

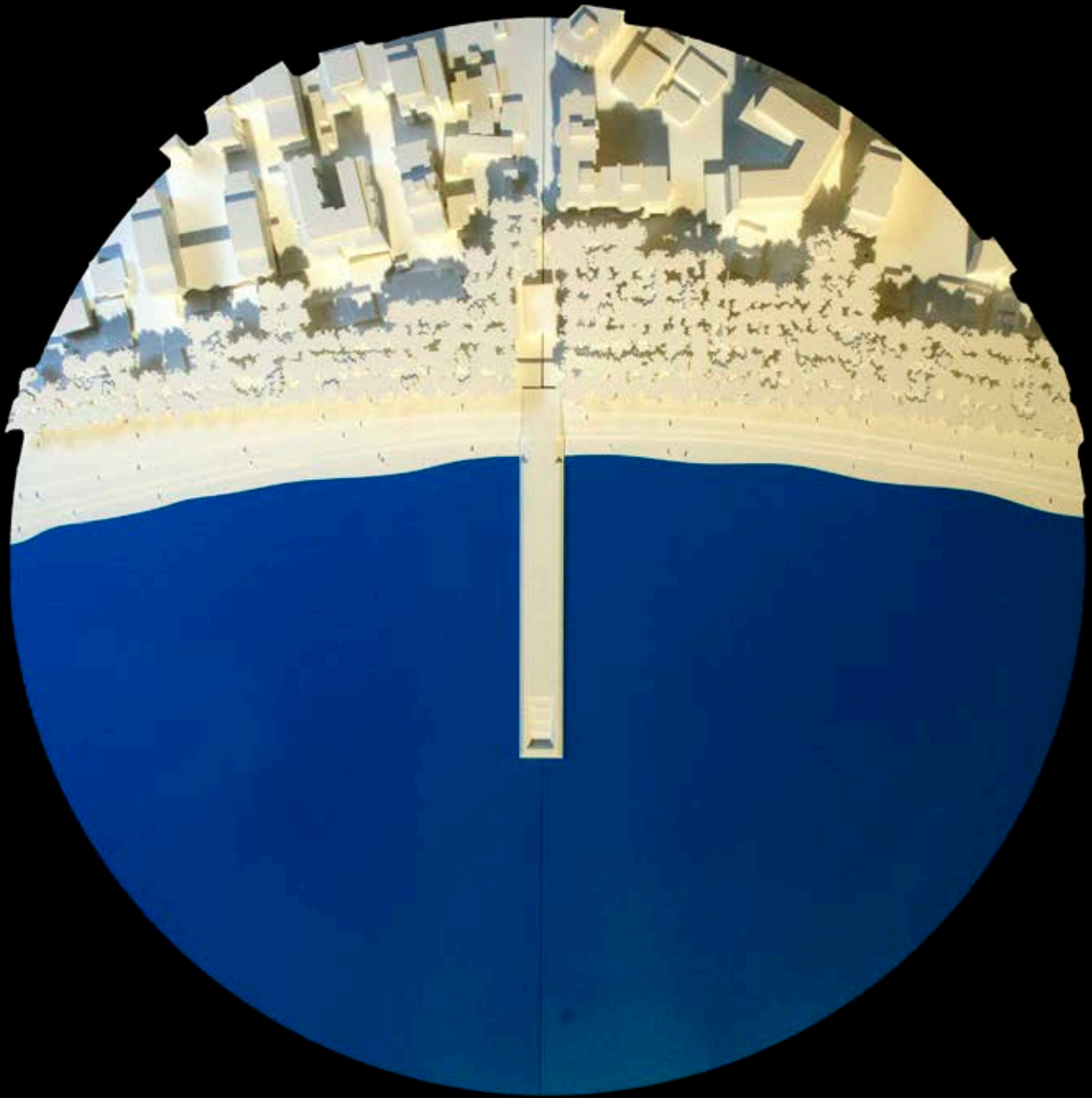
These consist of two distinct sets: two “Outer Strips”, which are part of the existing context, and three fabricated new “Inner Strips”, which are posited as the core of the concept.

The “inner strips” trace a precise line that defines the position of all subsequent interventions, and they are:

A the Pineta: a linear “Potemkin” forest that separates the city from the beach and contains both existing structures and new potential program.

B a pedestrian boulevard that connects and makes the entire coast easily accessible,

C a sequence of piers that extend the bathing area and contain leisure facilities.





The strategy of the strips exemplifies our approach to the crucial issue of landscape. We view landscape less as an obsessive manicure of flowers and plant species, and more as the archetypical gesture of tracing lines and boundaries that define the form of a place. The image proposed is thus manifested not through traditional architectural features such as buildings, but through the simple lines that separate the built from the non-built, the inside from the outside, and that divide nature from the artificial.

This strategy, will give the freedom to the municipal authorities to elaborate and vary their individual, seasonal and other planting and gardening arrangements.



The Pineta, the Piers, the Sea

# III

## Pineta

A fundamental component of our proposal is the Pineta: the Pineta is a forest of Maritime pine trees, stretching across the entire site. It contains existing and future development and at the same time defines the edge of the city to the waterfront. The section of the forest varies, according to the changing conditions that it encounters along the way; it can be a thin line merely separating the beach from the city, or it can be a wide canopy where programs are absorbed and sometimes hiding in the wood.

Above all, the forest is conceived as an urban megaform, an immense hypostyle room that allows new programs and occupations to happen without invading the beach. The peculiar configuration of pines, allows for either permanent or temporary structures that can be gathered in the generous space underneath the Pineta - which will emerge as a monumental and open-ended room.



Shadowy and Sunny

## IV

# Boulevard

The pedestrian boulevard is both limit and threshold: between the beach/sea on the one hand, and the pine forest on the other. The boulevard, 4.5 Km long , and 11 meters wide, consists of

a pedestrian and  
a bicycle path, plus  
a small road for public shuttles

It is built in concrete and paved with local stone.

Its edges are lined with a continuous sequence of pine trees; these are envisioned as columns that support a green canopy over the boulevard. Against the sunny atmosphere of the beach, the boulevard is imagined as a vast shadowy arcade, an endless oasis. All the facilities related to the beach, such as fountains, showers, benches and small kiosks, are assembled here, and become an integral part of the architecture of the boulevard.

The boulevard is designed as an easy curve, along the whole length of the given site, embodying and framing the gulf of Vlora; it acts as a vantage point from which all the elements, existing and proposed, become visible and legible as an unitary, cohesive composition.



The City, the Pineta, the Beach and a Pier

## V

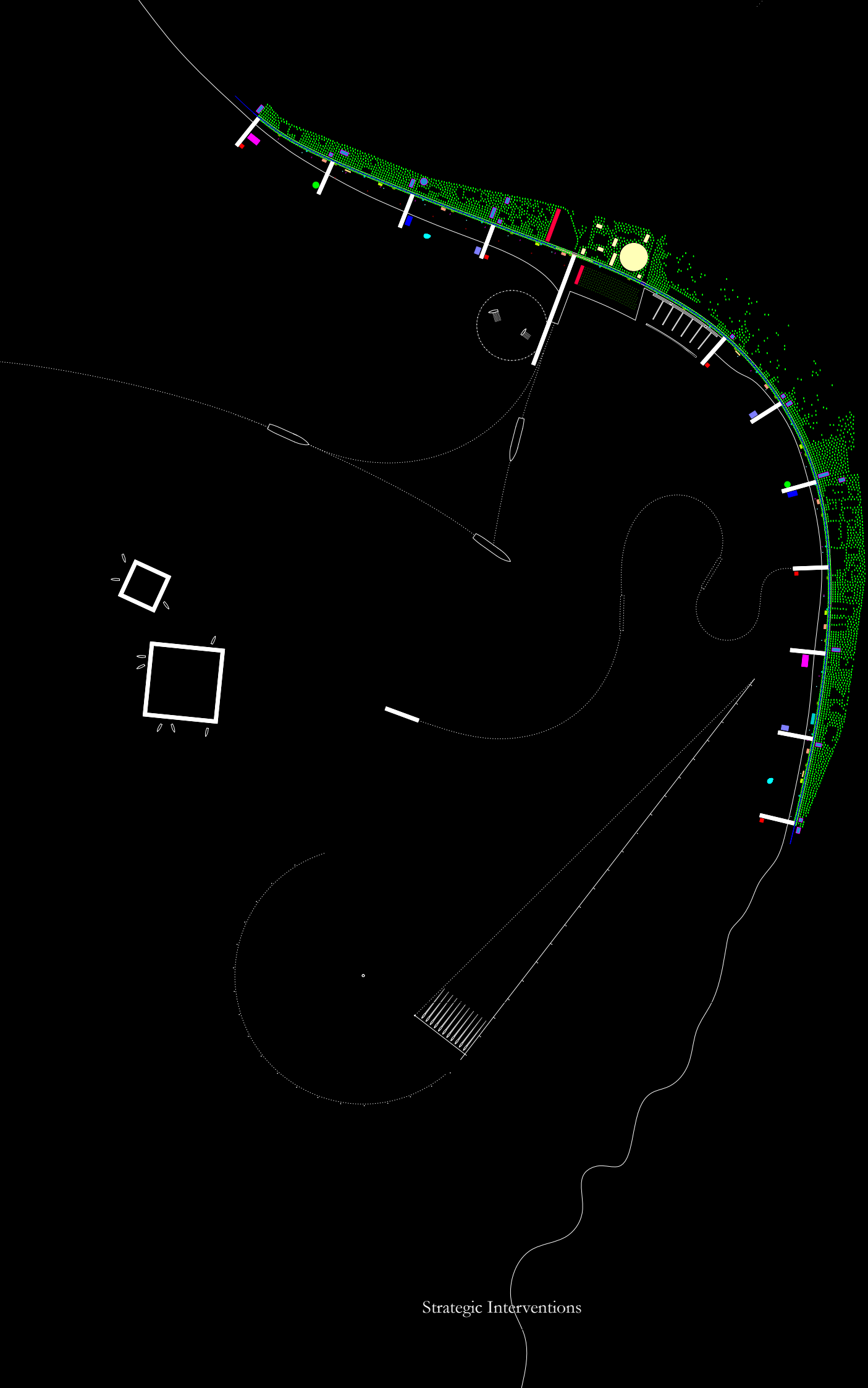
### Piers

Along the length of the city's waterfront, we have inserted a series of piers, that cut across the beach, and extend far out into the sea: they are, town, boulevard and beach extensions, which, reccurring at 370 metre intervals, establish an urban rhythm for the entire new City Front; this rhythm reinforces the concept's view of the proposal as unitary project, and, at the same time, becomes an analogical embodiment of the sea, echo of the waves: indeed, rhythm, from the Greek «ρυθμός», a word whose etymological origins stem from the verb “ρέω”, to flow, or the nouns “ρούς” and “ροή”, or flow, is a word that mirrors the rhythmical flux of the waves, the morphology of the sea.

The piers are the markers of this elemental rhythm and establish the grammar of the project.

As regular templates that intersect the boulevard, the piers extend the beach and make it bigger, allowing for more people to indulge in the luxuries of the Mediterranean's everlasting summer; they are urban condensers.

At the same time these piers, can be construed as metaphysical elements that execute architecture's primordial purpose, that is, engender an incisive confrontation between nature (the sea) and the artificial (the city): and the waterfront is precisely the place where this confrontation can be had.





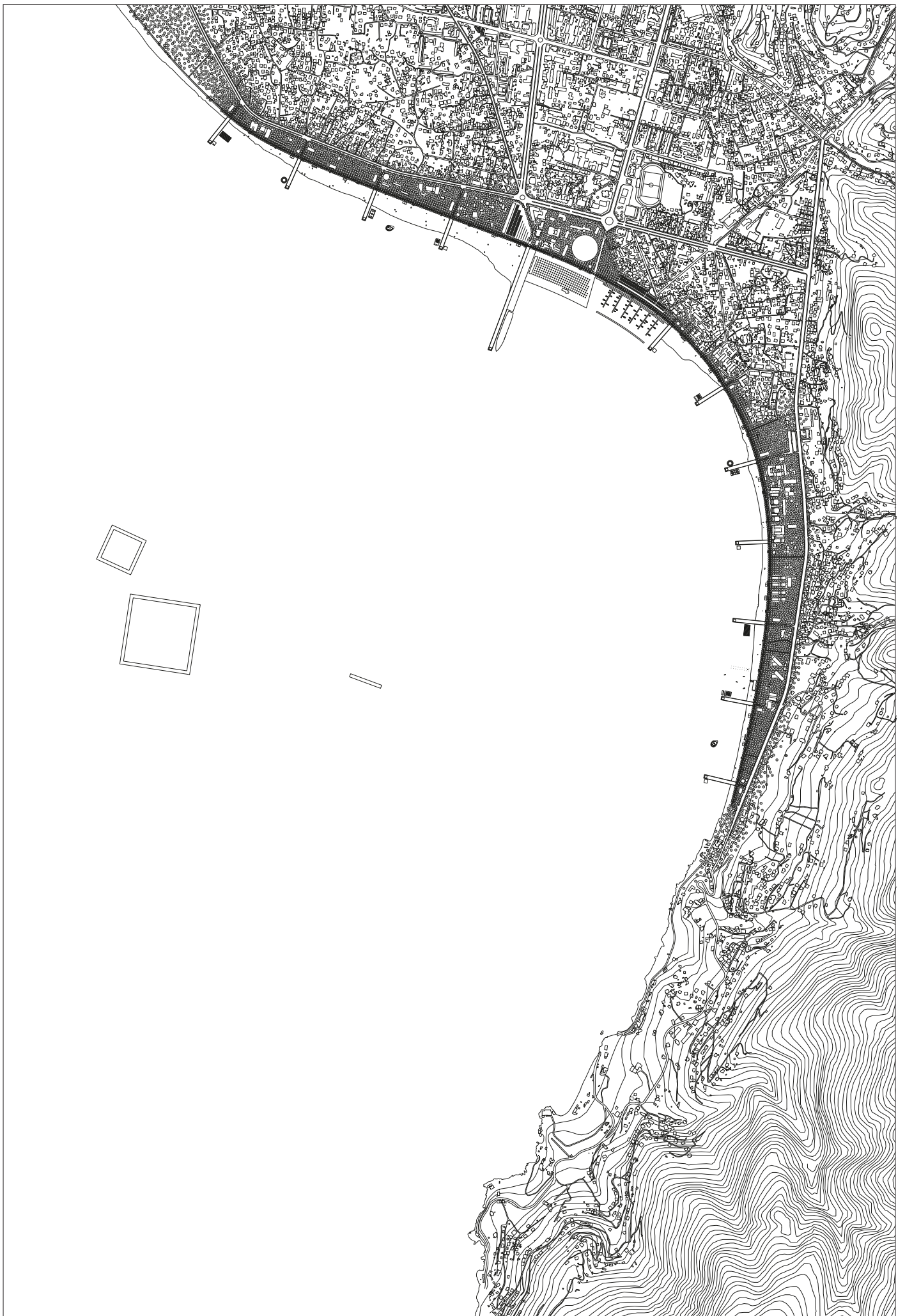
## VI

### «Confetti-Programs»

Once the rhythm of the waterfront is established, a number of different program elements is introduced, that appear as if scattered like confetti. However, the placement of the “confetti” follows the same logic as that of the piers. Each program occurs at set, but different distance intervals (see relevant diagrams).

The logic of the confetti is reminiscent of the Roman road system, which was defined by a linear choreography of the different elements such as milestones and the “*mutationes*”. The goal of these elements was not only to serve the road, but also to make it become the measure of the landscape around.

Here lies the crux of our project: while the proposed structure allows for incremental and even fragmented development to happen, it also frames this for development within a coherent order, and a choreography made of recurring elements.



## Conclusions

This is a project of boundaries and not a 'Masterplan' of the traditional type: it is a project of limits and thresholds that triggers the construction of a landscape, allowing for the municipality's own contributions, within the rigor of its set order.

It seeks to highlight and complement the existing waterfront's qualities and to substitute any shortfalls or other blemishes with a complex but unitary intervention, commensurate with the dignity that the city's inhabitants would expect: a project that would bestow to the historical city of Vlora a distinctive and representative landmark.

Moreover, it is a *Public Intervention*: it is an infrastructural proposal, a public investment, which, while allowing for the private sector to enter and elaborate, provides the frame and ordering systems within which such elaborations can take place.

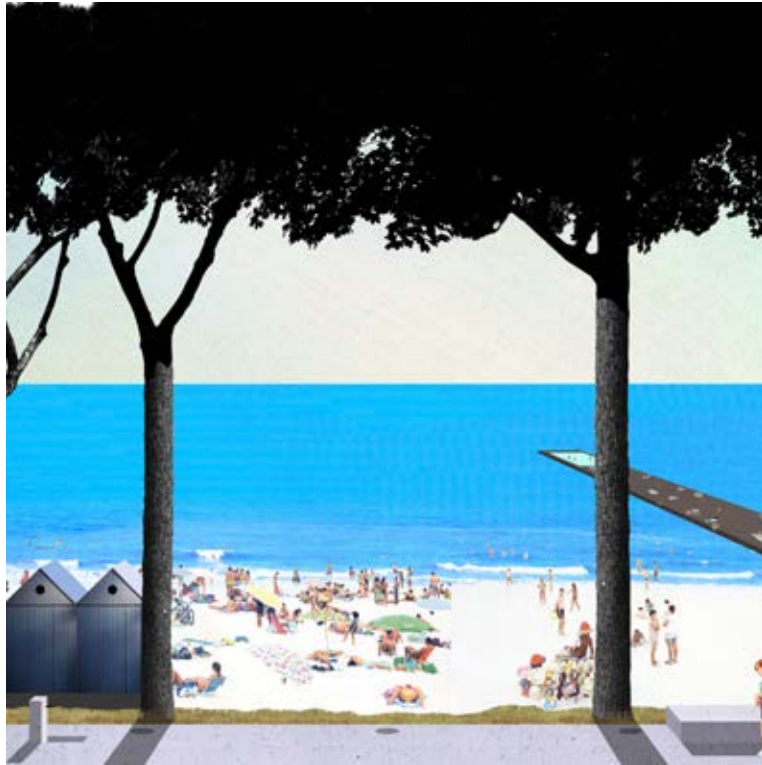
Our fundamental concern is to propose something that is easy to build and to maintain: no complicated structures, that look extraordinary in renderings but end up hideous when realized because they demand exceptional building skills and high maintenance. The boulevard, the "pineta", and, especially the piers are easy to build and once they are there they will require minimum maintenance. We propose an architecture that is cheap, but which, precisely for this reason, has the dignity that Vlora's citizen would expect, an architecture that is *there* before being something and even afterwards: hard, inalterable, loyal, reliable, humble yet magnificent, precisely because of this.











The Pineta, the Beach, the Piers and the Sea



The Piers activate the Sea





