

Vlora Waterfront Competition

MP1225
Report

HYPERNATURAL VLORA

VLORA WATERFRONT DESIGN REPORT

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Hypernatural Vlora

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Hypernatural Vlora

The project is developed around the idea of hypernatural. Hypernatural is about artificial environments capable of generating new landscapes, new habitats, sustainable scenarios of radical growth. We consider hypernaturals the interventions whose aims are extremely functional, pragmatic and so exasperated to blend, blur and build new relationships with the environment.

All over the world the production of new territories is increasing, such as the speed with which they are continually processed thanks to technological improvements. Human pressure on the coasts (due to global phenomena such as tourism, transportation of goods, etc) is developed through a growing urban densification and requires infrastructures to connect, control and manage these areas. In this context, it is useful to distinguish between natural and artificial. The continuous production of arguments centered on the dichotomy between these terms only leads to confusion. The concept of hypernatural overcomes this opposition.

In general, one of the main features of coastal systems is the extreme lability of borders. The urbanized territory is actually extended beyond the shoreline and continues, sometimes more and sometimes less showily, even across the sea. Performing a mapping of the elements that compose it, above and below the water level, it is possible to highlight a very complex system infrastructure, communication routes, regulated functional zones. Marine habitats involuntary generated by human intervention.

The extraction platforms for example are the most visible elements, but not the only: observing the sea even under its surface it is possible to detect the presence of networks (geotubes, pipelines, etc.), unloading areas, protection systems such as the submerged barriers, the artificial reefs of tetrapods, etc..

Moreover, the appearance of coasts change over time: the protective structures from erosion alter the solid transport of sand and accumulation points; the beach nourishment intervene to restore the depth of eroded beaches, sometimes increasing the amplitude also for tourism purposes.

This series of "action and reaction" also impacts on marine habitats in sometimes surprising ways. The artificial elements in some situations may encourage biodiversity: platforms, sea barriers, submerged reefs, and also shipwrecks are often colonized by marine flora and fauna that without the presence of these elements wouldn't find a suitable habitat for their existence.

The project for Vlora brings to the extreme this theoretical premise, that derives from research that the working group has carried out for years in the Mediterranean area, and tries to identify in the specificity of the territory a model of evolution of the landscape according to the mechanisms of hybrid synergy between artificial and natural.

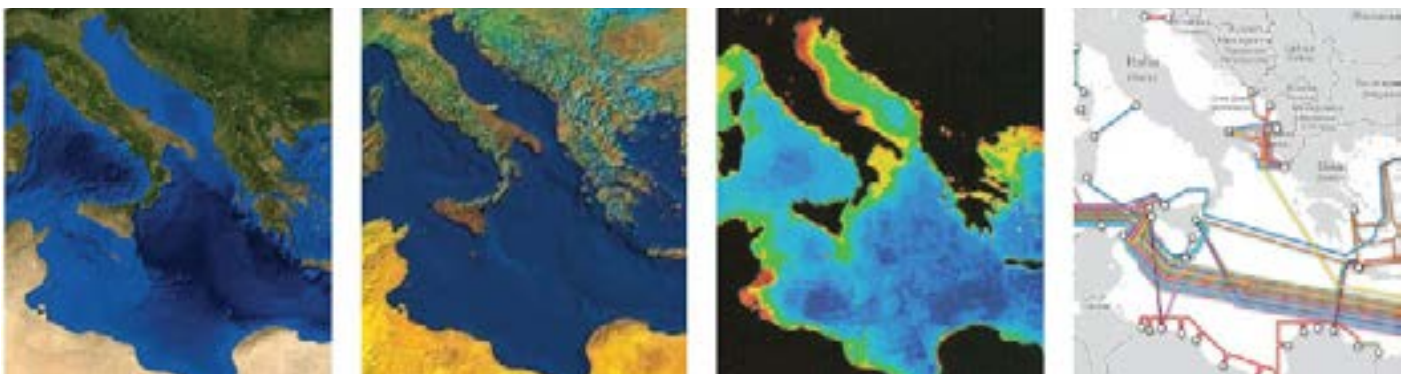
For this reason, the strategic choices that drive the masterplan focus on the idea of hypernatural and on the creation on sea of a unique urban landscape, explanatory of a new approach.

"Hypernatural Vlora" proposes to approach the theme of the waterfront considering it an infrastructure. Thus an infrastructure able to absorb and exploit scenarios variables within a time frame not defined a priori, to build relationships, attract interest, adapt to needs always in evolution.

The redevelopment of the waterfront of Vlora makes it possible to reason about a system on a larger scale. With his history, geography and attractive potential, the city is able to assume a key role in the strategic revitalization of the whole area and to become an advanced example at the international level in terms of balanced growth.

In this context, the waterfront project represents the design of an infrastructure in function of local, regional and macro-regional nets, and at the same time represents the design of a new type of landscape.

It compares and relates itself with the urban reality of the city, and becomes an opportunity to broaden somehow the boundaries, the territorial influence, multiply the fallout over a vast territory. It forces us to rethink the relationship between the urban environment and the marine environment.



Different maps of the Mediterranean basin, from left: satellite map, climatic zones, map of phytoplankton presence, submarine cables map

Purpose

The purpose of the project is to make the waterfront of Vlora an infrastructure that can affect and regulate both at metropolitan and regional scale tourist attractiveness, mobility, and urban growth. Through the concept of hypernatural, the project aims to shape this infrastructure as a permeable interface between land and sea by connecting flows and services. An area in which structural interventions for the coast converge and balance, with the intention of creating a new landscape of public spaces and green areas in between land and sea.

Strategy

Strategically the project works on two main systems:

- one parallel to the coast that deals with mobility, connections and the promenade in relation with the different areas of the city.
- the other perpendicular to the coast, focusing on the extension of public spaces and of green urban spaces towards the sea.

Actions

Unload as much as possible traffic from the coast, especially from the waterfront side.

Strengthen the peripheral infrastructures, encouraging the use of pedestrian, bicycle and public transport route. The peripheral infrastructures are represented by two mobility systems equal in importance: land mobility and seaborne connections. These systems represent a kind of by-pass for tourists and residents during the most crowded season, and an opportunity to build new tourist routes, connecting parts of the territory otherwise inaccessible (island, archaeological sites, beaches of the south coast, etc. .)

In land the objective is to strengthen the axes parallel to the coast and over of the first line of buildings in front of the sea. In this way, allowing even temporarily to pedestrianize the coastal road or to make it less accessible to cars, and fostering a more interesting relation between the seafront and the city in terms commerce, touristic accommodation, residence. The priority is to prevent the

creation of an hard break between the waterfront and the city.

On sea the proposal aims to create a mobility system that exploits the existing docks and, in anticipation, to encourage a mobility system tangential to the coast that can be handled in different ways, such as, for instance, through the creation of a metropolitan coast (running at certain times of the year in relation with tourist flows) or encouraging the creation of enterprises and private operators able to offer a service to tourists and residents. An action that can be implemented in a very short time, as some landings already exist and the operations required are fast and not particularly expensive or complex. It may be a first concrete sign of change for the waterfront.

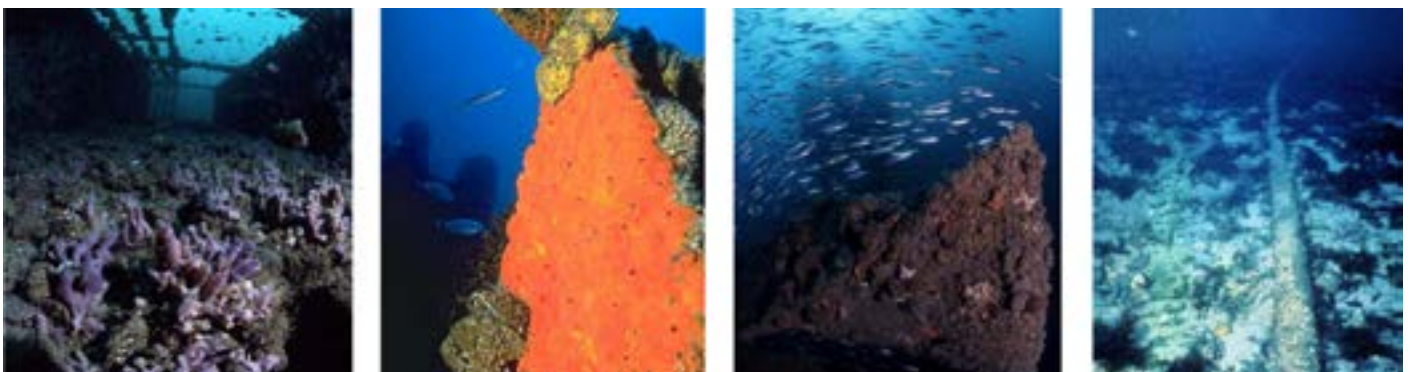
Landing points and connections can be planned across the bay of Vlora and in a variety of locations and ports north and south of the city by involving other municipalities in the initiative.

As regards the public spaces and green, the goal is to make these the means of connection between the network of mobility by land and sea. This intention is reflected in the extension of spaces and green wedges left in the urban plot of the city towards and over the sea.

This operation defines the creation of a number of quays in which the natural element is transformed into a new type of hypernatural landscape according to different configurations in relation to: the type of functions expected on the pier; the seaborne mobility system foreseen for the quay (lightweight undercoast mobility, mooring for pleasure boats, cruise terminal, ferry, etc).

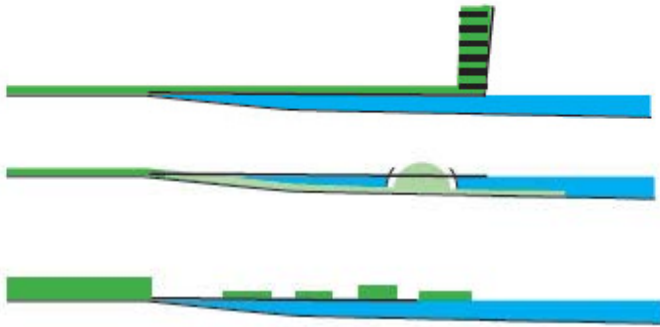
The piers become public spaces, gardens, giving space to the constitution of real hybrid landscapes in which vegetal elements come into contact with the sea, creating unexpected situations (observatory / vertical garden, temporary gardens hanging over the water, underwater areas shaped as marine park, etc).

The promenade is the unifying element and structures the continuity of the waterfront. It gives evidence to the positive impact of the treatment operated under the two systems. In particular, the presence of a reduced



Marine habitats involuntary generated by human intervention.

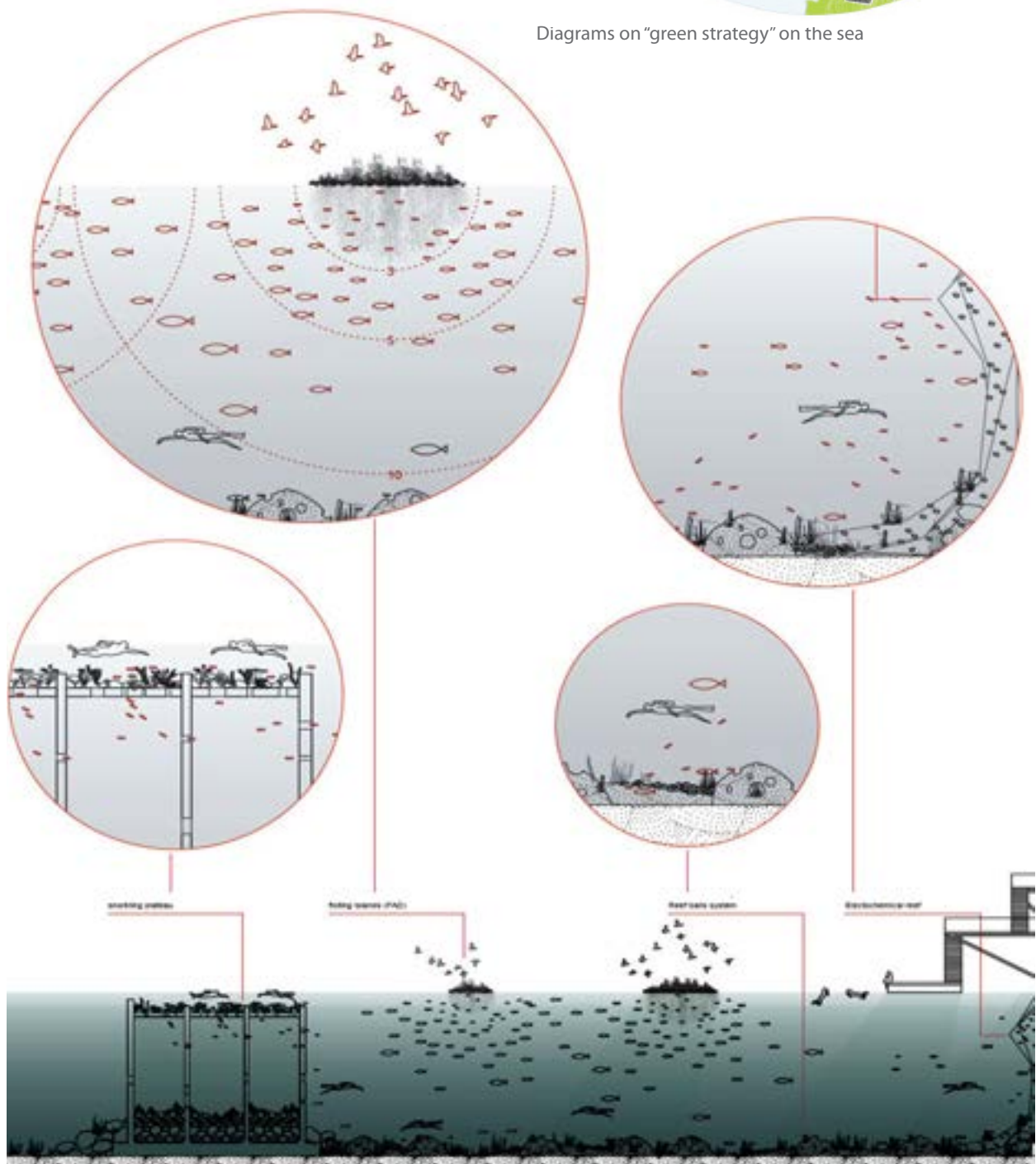
rate of traffic allows to generate public spaces of high-quality and livability. The presence on the docks of different situations from one point to another increase the generation flows and encourages the use of spaces and their transit.



Diagrams on "green strategy" on the sea



Diagrams on "green strategy" on the sea



System assumptions: "marine park" in areas corresponding to the new docks.

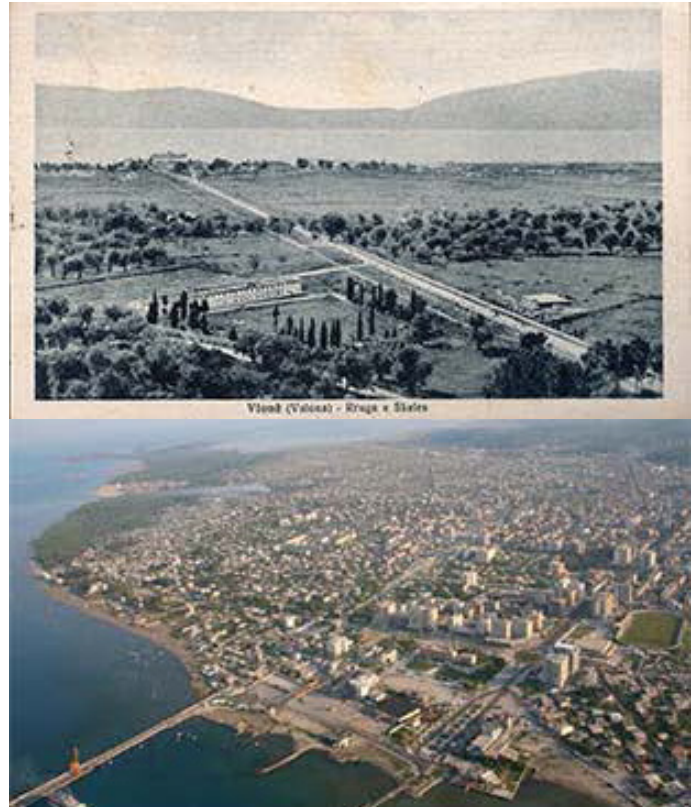
Vlora waterfront

A framework for qualities

Historical background

Vlora is one of the oldest towns in the country and the second largest port city of Albania. Its historical importance lays also on the fact that here was proclaimed the Albanian Declaration of Independence and it has been previously the capital city of Albania. During the Italian invasion in 1914 the city itself laid inland and the harbor area was about 2km south from the city. It is in this period that was built the harbor pier and a 2km Boulevard connecting the city to the harbor of "Skela", the actual historical Boulevard of Vlora. With the construction of the harbor and of the coastal road, and thanks to the favorable geographical position in European cross roads, nestled in the broad bay when the Adriatic meets the Ionian Sea, Vlora became one of the most important economical and touristic cities in Albania.

After the 90-s the urbanization level of the city almost doubled growing towards the sea and changing completely the relation of the city with the sea.



Vlora today

Today, Vlora is one of the major seaport and commercial center, with a significant fishing and industrial sector. The surrounding region produces petroleum, natural gas, bitumen and salt. The city is also the location of important installations of the Albanian Navy.

Vlora has also grown in importance as an agricultural center with very large-scale planting of olive and fruit trees, and as a center of the food processing, oil and bitumen export industries.

In the recent years tourism has become a major industry with many hotels, recreational centers, and vast beaches, but lacking a regulatory plan, Vlora did not develop with a clear vision for the city. Thus, the project of the waterfront can be seen as an occasion to build a clear vision for the future of the city.



EXTRA REGIONAL CONTEXT

Vlora waterfront

The Waterfront Promenade of Vlora and its relation to the city have changed dramatically in the last 23 years mainly due to rapid urbanization and informal development.

Starting from the western part, the ex-Narta spawn towards the Soda Woods, a large low-density informal settlements have invaded the Soda Woods reaching on the east side right next the harbor area. The east limit of these developments is the Trans-Balkan road paral-

lel to the main Boulevard. Along this axis mid-high rise residential buildings are being build, but the rest of the settlement is mainly informal and is lacking of physical and social infrastructures.

Moving towards the east direction, the harbor area hosts several public and private functions; housing, the university building, the famous Independence Museum, custom, etc. Actually, the harbor in direct contact with the city will turn into passenger and touristic port, shifting

the commercial function to the new harbor in the west. East of the harbor, in “Skela”, starts a long avenue with the sea on the right and new high rise developments on the left. This area has some important historic dwellings dated back to the Italian period representing somehow a second historical center of the city, related to the marina development during the Italian period, which considered this part to be the summer residential area for the city. Actually it hosts not only residences but also hotels, cafes and restaurants.

Going further through this main avenue, new residential and touristic services are developed on the left side. Proceeding in this direction, at the “tunnel” area, the coastal line starts breaking into fragments on the rocks. Here is the starting point of the Ionian Riviera.

The main avenue, lacking other alternative infrastructure, serves actually as the main road for the city and also the only national axis that connects with the south Riviera. Due to the traffic, particularly during the touristic season, it becomes a serious barrier for the seaside.

Thus, one of the main issues of the waterfront project was how to reduce the traffic and to develop a human connection between the city and the sea.

A framework for qualities

Given the current situation, one of the most important strategies of the master plan, as mentioned before, is the reinforcement of the interaction between the city and the sea. The main avenue is conceived as a service road for the Vlorë bay. The national traffic along the Ionian Riviera is by-passed in the ring road of Kanina, while most of the city traffic is thought to pass in a parallel ring road. This would free the main avenue and will turn it into a 3km boulevard along the shoreline serving the waterfront area, but will also reinforce the interaction of the inner city with his sea. This is considered to be one of the most important strategic objectives.

Strategic objectives

- Public squares in the waterfront. Expand public access to the waterfront and open the city towards the sea. The waterfront is seen as an occasion for the city to interact with the sea. Through water it is possible to enhance or emphasize the identity and quality of urban life, enlivening the waterfront with a range of attractive uses integrated with adjacent upland communities and important public activities.
- Open port. Reorganize the touristic and passages port and convert the harbor into a public space for the city, connecting it linearly through the historical boulevard to the city center.



REGIONAL CONTEXT

- New Urban District / BID: Waterfront as occasion for the redevelopment and regeneration of parts of the city, in order to fulfilling the city's aspiration of opening itself up towards the sea. Existing urban morphology will be identified and new proposals for the transformation of it will be designed by means of adaptation and modification, replacement or the creation of entirely new types.
- New Transportation Mode. Provide connections along the bay with both land and waterways. Sets out the improvement of the entire transport system for all modes

and identify measures to improve accessibility and to mitigate the impact of the growing amount of private cars.

- Blue and green strategy for the waterfront: Ensure a sustainable development of the waterfront addressing all aspects of open space development: natural landscape, parks, street and squares. Extend the natural system in the shoreline and make it part of a city green network. Shape the cost line in relation to activities that take place to the waterfront in order to obtain more interaction with the sea.

In conclusion, all the positive effects of the waterfront development such as the influence to rehabilitate and regenerate built environments, landscape projects, support for a local system of parks and other public spaces; links with the inland; collective spaces mixed with private uses, show how to contrast the commercialization growth and to stimulate a more sustainable and cultivated tourism.

We can resume in few points why the waterfront has become a crucial issue for the urban and strategic planning of Vlora:

- It represents a system connecting the natural environment and the urban space thus urging the urban project and the strategic planning to assume environmental topics as a source and a cue instead of a constraint;
- it represents a public open space that leads an important role in the rehabilitation of over-crowded tourist cities and to establish the public use of littorals;
- it is one of the most important marketing factor for the revival and promotion of tourism.

Master plan

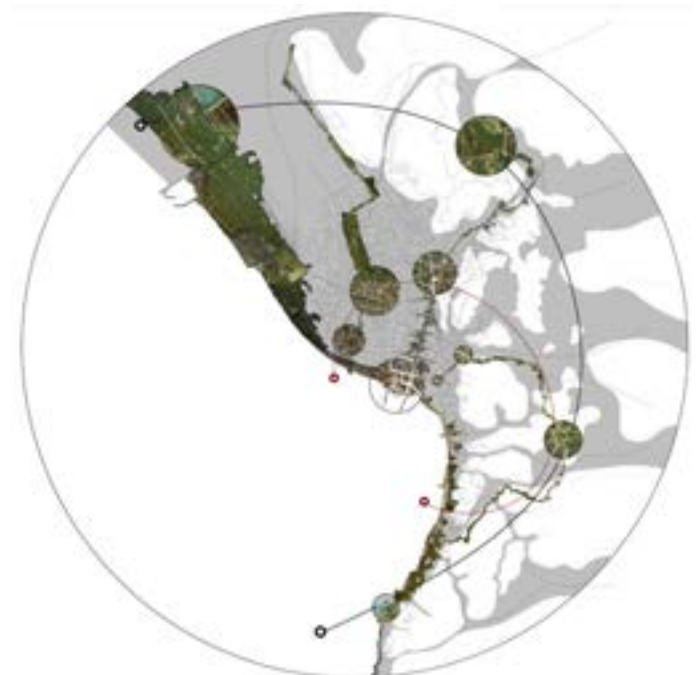
Overview

The main concept of the master plan is to flow the city into the waterfront and create a unique cultural platform with recreational and entertainment facilities serving the city, its people and tourists with new dimension, meaning and scale of development.

The city waterfront should be envisaged as a city's identity on its waterfront. Particularly in the "Skela" part and in the harbor, it assumes mostly public function, while the rest remains more natural, with services for tourism. On this concept is created a vision based on a net of natural elements, on a dialogue with the main built matrix of the city, longitudinal land and water connections, reinforced cross-roads to the sea and the longitudinal continuity of the waterfront.



EXTRA REGIONAL CONTEXT



NEW STRATEGIC PORTRAIT FOR VLORA

Vision

1. The green system

The natural green system is an important element of the vision. Green is considered as a way to stop the further uncontrolled urbanization, as a tool to connect different parts of the city, to reshape and heal the landscape from the recent aggressive sprawling, to raise the life quality of the residents beside the overall image of a place. Green is part of the waterfront park and is used as an outdoor space for events, sport or just as a natural green that allows continuity between the sea and the hinterland.

This proposal works on this topic, extends it and tries to control it as a system that comes from the hills and from the main green areas in the city and penetrates in the waterfront through the existing urban fabric.

According to this vision the “Soda” woods will be extended in the area of the old beach, integrating the existing structures with the pine wood and providing a natural park to the old city beach.

The second system of green areas starts from the ex-airport area, which we propose in our vision to be a “Central Park” for Vlora, and includes a number of green areas along the new green West Boulevard proposed. It will end up in a public square in the central part of the old beach, and will be integrated with the transversal system of pine woods parallel to the seashore.

The third green system is represented by small city parks and public squares along the historical boulevard which are connected through the continue sign of the vegetation in the boulevard itself. This system ended up towards the harbor area bringing green city spaces near the sea.

Another important green system starts from the hills on

the east and descends slowly in towards the sea. In some points like in the marina area it constitutes important areas near the promenade, areas that can be restored and extended towards the sea. In this way along the seashore promenade, important parks in relation to the hinterland will be provided, which not only will design the promenade itself but will also reinforce the relation with the city and the hills.

2. The built system

The built system is the most prevailing element of Vlora. This is a logical conclusion that can be traced for most of the cities worldwide as they are commonly identified with the built part. Our observations are more related to the character of this environment and to the relation that it creates with the other elements of the city. It's exactly through this links that quality is provided in urban contexts, and it's also what Vlora misses a heavy built city or just unwisely built in some other cases. A built environment informally exploding and imploding that doesn't communicate with the existing patterns that are definitively there or with the people's needs, that doesn't put itself in dialogue even with the main matrix of this place, the reason of the very existence of the city, the sea. The last twenty years of economical and political transition fueled informal that spontaneous developments that have left Vlora shapeless without a clear identity.

Our vision starts by reading the features of the urban fabric. According to this analysis, Vlora is seen as composed of four main bodies, characterized by their patterns: the organic patterns of the informal settlements in the area in between the pinewood, old beach and the train station; the regular grid of the planned city, in between the harbor and the northern historical urban core; the radial grid that diagonally cuts the city in its north east direction; the fourth part developing in the narrow stripe in between the hills and the waterfront.

These four parts of Vlora are reflected in the waterfront proposal that changes its character by the influence of what is happening behind, connecting the city and the sea in an organic way.

In this sense it is possible to define a specific strategy for each of the build areas.

Starting from the “Soda” woods our vision is to create a BID transforming the current informal settlements, providing a new vibrant environment and at the same time secure incomes for further investments. Then, the regular grid of the planned historical city will be integrated better with the harbor area, maintaining his original character. On the south bay, the stripe along the coast should be developed through policies of urban regeneration.



GREEN SYSTEM VISION

3. The main crossroads to the sea

The main crossroads to the sea are actually considered as boundaries or transitory lines in between the different urban environments, which often trace important axis within the city or design buffer areas where the passage from the different parts of the city occurs, will impact the waterfront not continuing as urban cuts, but designing some main spots that will be translated in public space and will be signed through some of the new land-marks that will compose the new waterfront. In particular, in the west limit of the Old beach, in the dock area in continuity with the historical boulevard, in the Marina dock and in the pier that marks the border of the Adriatic Sea with the Ionian Sea.

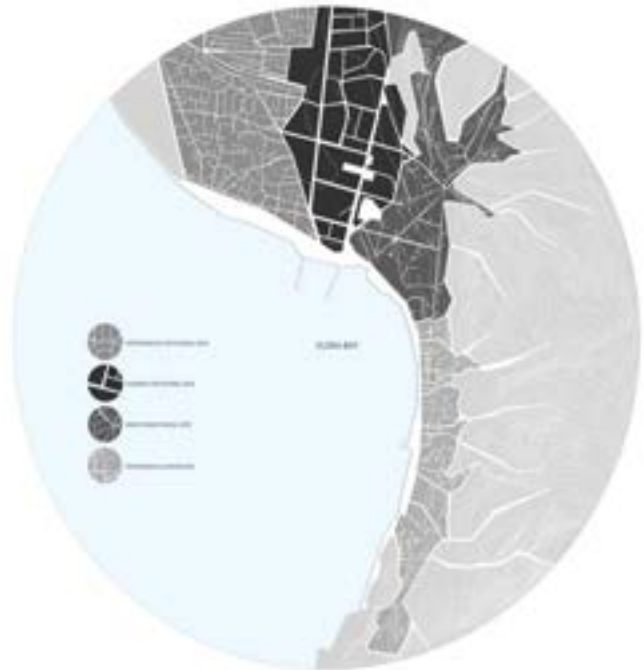
4. Circulation system

Circulation is one the most relevant systems, functionally wise, crucial in order to avoid congestions in the inner circulation of the city, especially during summer. Vlora has already some characteristic axis: transversal ones, like the main boulevard and the trans-Balkan road parallel to each other culminating next to the sea; and the partial longitudinal road, a continuation of the main axis that follows the coast toward the southern exit of the urban area.

This system of transversal and longitudinal axis is recalled and improved. The present longitudinal road is connected with the other coastal part, parallel to the "old beach" area, and transformed in a complex route connecting the two extremes of the city and our waterfront area, through pedestrian promenade, bike paths and innovative public transport means.

A new parallel axis is partly created and partly built by improving existing ones in order to create a by-pass attracting the traffic and allowing a faster passage through the city without interfering in the waterfront. Another longitudinal axis than can help partially this traffic direction is also the new road on the hill side passing through Kanina. But it is the transversal system that has a real physical impact on the waterfront; connections are increased in number and capacity. The transversal axis will allow a faster connection between the inner city and the waterfront by stitching them together.

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BUILT SYSTEM VISION



MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE URBAN AREA



THE MAIN CROSSROADS TO THE SEA VISION

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In the beach area some small bayside parking areas will be provided near the bathing establishments to facilitate private transport. On the other hand, an appropriate public transports system will ensure connections along the bay both on land and water. The water transport will guarantee station to the main piers of the bay: the Soda pier, the harbor, the marina pier, the aquatic centre and the "Uji i Ftohtë" a traditional stop for the tourists. There will also be provided pedestrian and bicycle facilities along the shoreline to promote alternative modes of transportation and livable promenade.



CIRCULATION SYSTEM VISION

5. The continue waterfront

The continue waterfront will be an intersection of many layers: the green system; the different built environments and their borders; circulation especially in its transversal directions.

The coastline will become a continuous system with different characterizations. Residents and tourists will experience the new waterfront and find themselves inside evolving and dynamic environments: a new park, extension of the pinewood, will be created in between the seashore and the built part.

The residential area next to it will be enriched in services and quality; "the harbor" will become part of the city, the first pier will serve the international ferry connection while the other will become the extension of the urban main boulevard. Service as the new terminal or the sea museum will be part of a wider variety offered in the area; following in the south "the promenade" will appear as a sequence of squares, piers, green public spaces equipped with bars and restaurants, including the touristic poet; "the new beach" area preserves its functional



CIRCULATION SYSTEM/ CITY SCALE

character but earns new image.

Bathing facilities, pools, a new large promenade and an extend beach are the elements that will transform this part in a beating part of the city; last in sequence is “the rocks” area, which remains more natural.

In conclusion the waterfront is conceived as a continuous system, even though it is divided into 6 (six) main sections, according to the character given.



CIRCULATION SYSTEM/ CITY SCALE

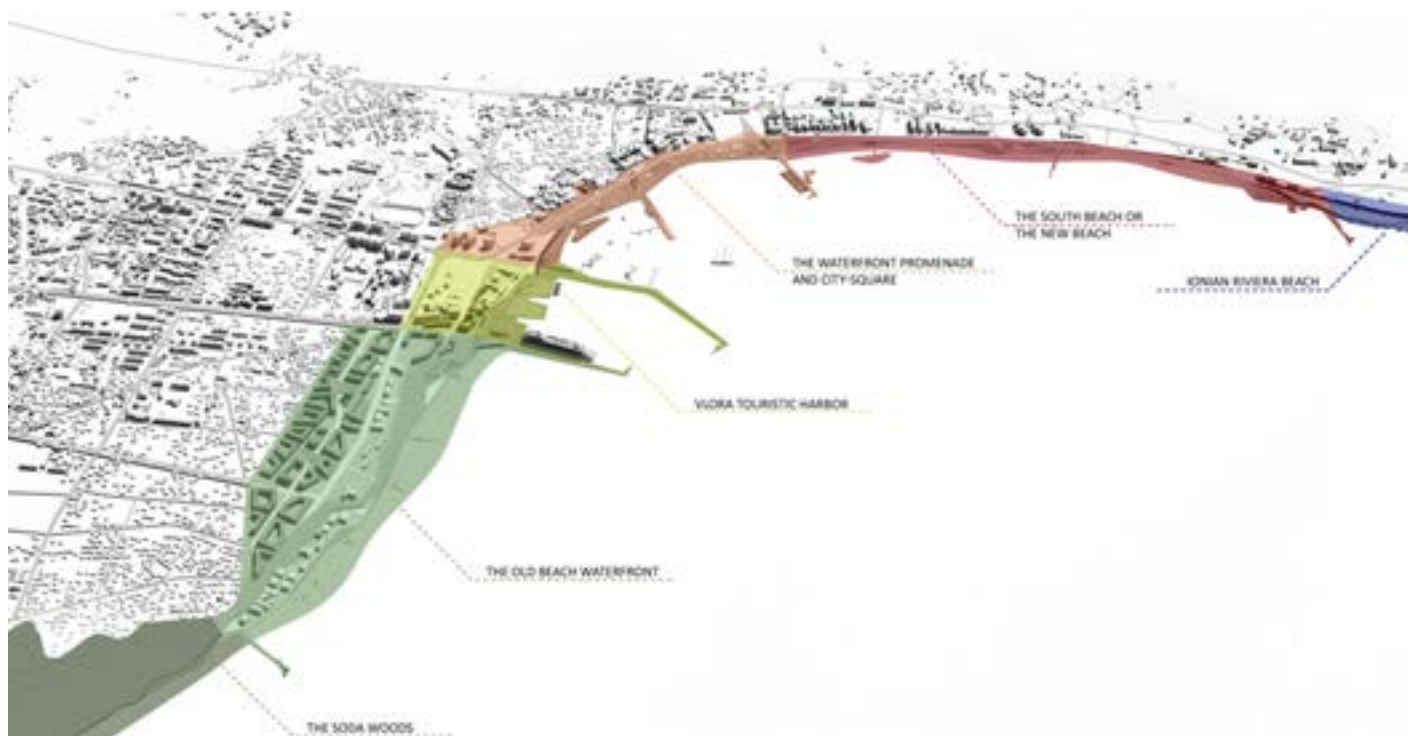
A walk through the area

Six sections of the waterfront view

The master plan works mainly according to the preceding vision in 6 different sections of interventions, which are linked together as part of an ambitious overall vision of recovering the city's access to the sea. It is through a series of projects and interventions on different scales and within different contents which always set up transversal relations with the city.



CONTINUE WATERFRONT VISION



6 SECTIONS OF THE WATERFRONT



BIRD VIEW OF THE DEIGN PROJECT OF THE VLOAR WATERFRONT

The first section: Soda Woods

The extension of “Soda” Woods

The “Soda” Woods has been one of the most important natural environments of Vlorë. It was historically known as the city lung and actually it’s at risk because of deforestation and informal settlements invading the green area.

Our strategy is to reinforce the concept of pine woods extending it in the area of the old beach in order to create an organic interface between the city and the sea and to bring shadow to the sunny beach. It is conceived as a shore park integrated with pedestrian and bicycle roads, public spaces and sport areas and serves also visually to mitigate the effect of the build environment proposed on the bottom, merging the natural and the build system.

The second section: Old Beach waterfront

The Old Beach waterfront

On our proposal the old beach section will be mainly preserved in his function of a beach area but recreational spaces and leisure activities will be provided in order to create a new landscaped area where beachgoers can enjoy a picnic, passive recreation or sport activities. Pedestrian and cycle roads that will pass through the area, but also public land and water transport will rapidly connect the Old Beach to the rest of the bay as part of the whole.

The waterfront project is also one of the important generators of the urban fabric. Given a huge low-density and low quality of formal and informal settlements the



THE SODA WOOD AND THE OLD BEACH

aim of the intervention will be that of regeneration and new development of parts of this area.

The main interventions will be: The extension of "Soda" Woods, the creation of the West BID, the extension of the waterfront boulevard up to the new harbor, the improvement and appropriate equipment of the old beach area.

The creation of the west BID

Due to the waterfront project, the value of the area will increase and this will generate a gradual improvement and densification. The informal area of the ex-Narta swamp starting from the boulevard will be transformed through a process of gentrification into a BID neighborhood, the new image of Vlora. It will be a mid-high density business and residential district.

The new development is thought to be organized on both side of a new pedestrian boulevard, which constitutes the main public spine of the area. It is also articulated with a sequence of important public squares on the crossroads with the transversal axes that lead to the sea. Other small public squares are located in the external areas of the blocks, connecting visually with each other. This allows the continuity of public space and generates energy within the area. A series of recreational spaces and services like shops, cafes, restaurants will occupy the ground floors.

The blocks are thought to be linear structures which open in correspondence to the road system and continue with the same logic through the road net designing the large blocks confined by the roads. They reach the maximum high in the central part, in correspondence to the public spine and become lower on both sides by securing a better integration with the surrounding. Particularly in the southern part, the blocks become lower and merge better with the green stain of the pine woods in the waterfront. Their design has also a strong environmental design input which will be explained later on. Of course the development of this new centrality will also counterbalance the development towards the waterfront but at the same time will also give more value to the Trans Balkanian way which actually would have become underutilized due to the removal of the transport of goods from the port.

An important issue regarding the development of a BID

is also the fact of generating higher incomes for the local government due to higher taxes which can permit further investments and development of the Vlora waterfront.

The extension of the Waterfront Boulevard (the West Boulevard)

The west boulevard is part of the whole system of the waterfront boulevard which avails of two lanes of cars and two lanes of public transport. This means for the area not a barrier, but infrastructure facilities and transversal connections towards the sea. Bus stations placed in focal areas like the Custom, the center of the old beach and the final pier of the old beach, improve and create a new rapid longitudinal connection along the bay.

The improvement of old beach area

The intervention in the old beach area is very conservative regarding the existing structures. On our idea, some of the public structures like the Ex-pioneer Camp or the beach Cabins should be maintained and reused. The Ex-pioneer Camp is thought to be a health care Centre being favored even by the presence of the pine woods, while the beach Cabins can be restructured and used for touristic activities.

The character of this area is given by low density structures integrated with green space, leisure activities and touristic facilities. These structures are connected through a pedestrian/bicycle promenade along which other small services, sport and beach facilities are provided.

This promenade lies parallel to the sea, continues till the public space in correspondence to the final pier and then enters "The soda" Woods assuming a more natural design. In the section of the old Beach it assumes different width according to the spaces that are placed nearby: sometimes is just a road, sometimes expand in a public square; sometimes incorporate receptive services and leisure activities, that serve not only for the beach, but also for the flowing fluxes that comes from the hinter part.



SECTION ON THE OLD BEACH AND NEW BID PROPOSED

While this part of the old beach is almost maintained in its original structure, new developments are planned in the residential area near the harbor. Old houses will enter in a redevelopment process and mid-density mix-use buildings are planned. This new residential and touristic developments will be the entry to the new BID area.

This sector of the master plan is thought to be signed by an important vertical landmark in the pier that encloses the old beach on the North West, where is placed also the first water station for the bay.

Third section: Vlora harbor The harbor

The harbor area is the central section of the waterfront in relation to the city and constitutes the final part of the historical boulevard.

Because of shifting commercial activities from the port, the actual harbor is considered to be used only for passengers, fishing and also as a public space. This means that only a small part of the harbor needs to be closed and controlled: the passenger's terminal and the custom. The rest can be open and host different activities and functions like the university, the Museum of Independence, ect.

The area which is close to the city is planned to be completed with residential and commercial buildings linked in terms of design with the old beach new develop-

ments (BID).

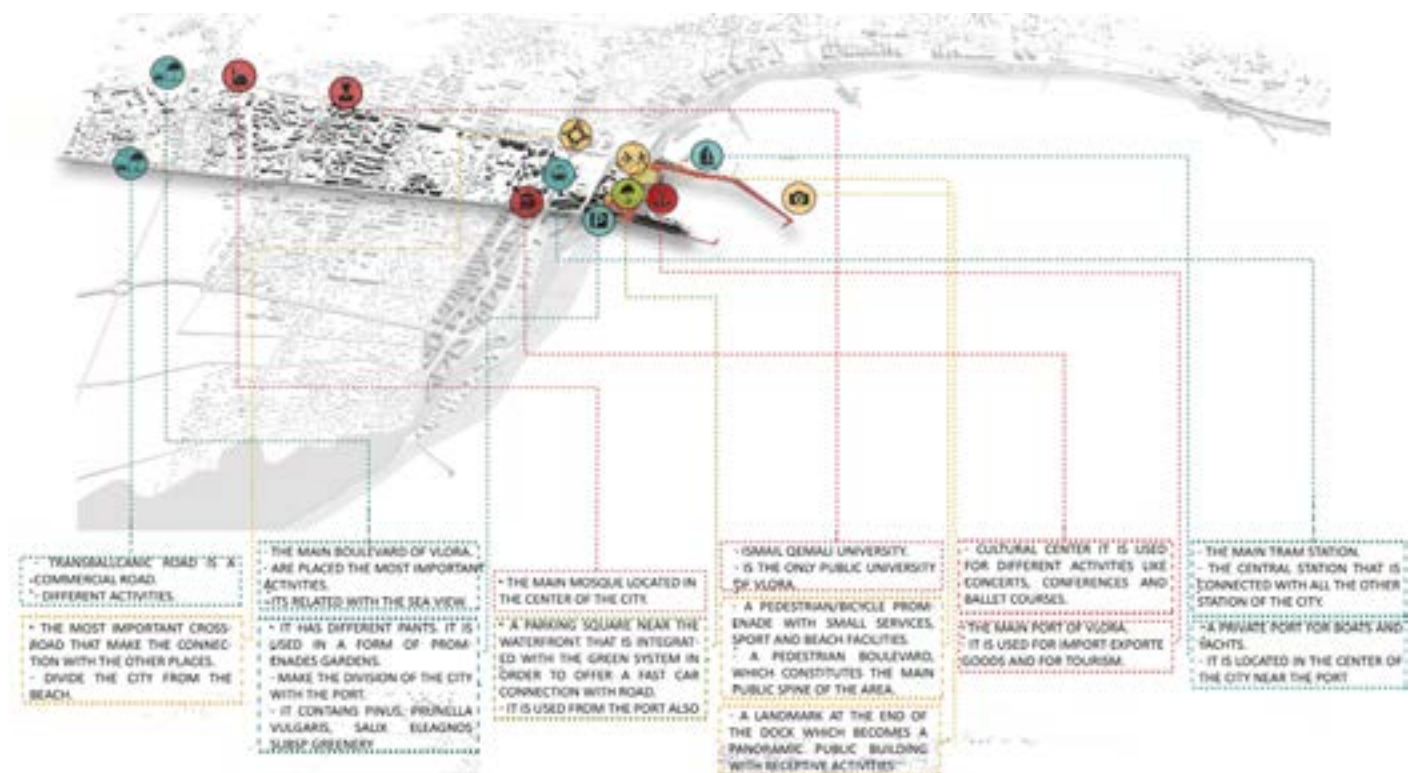
Here is placed also an important land and water station for public transport, which is thought to be in direct continuity with the historical boulevard. The boulevard is extended into the sea ending with a vertical landmark as a symbol of the projection into the future, acting also as a balcony and a new belvedere for Vlora.

The passengers terminal

The passenger's terminal is placed in the west dock as prosecution of the Trans-Balkan road. At the entrance, a huge parking area is provided for the terminal and a new passenger terminal is planned to be built in the same axis. This area is thought to be concentrated in the west dock, but at the same time as an integral part of the larger system of the waterfront being connected through a pedestrian and bicycle road.

The passengers terminal

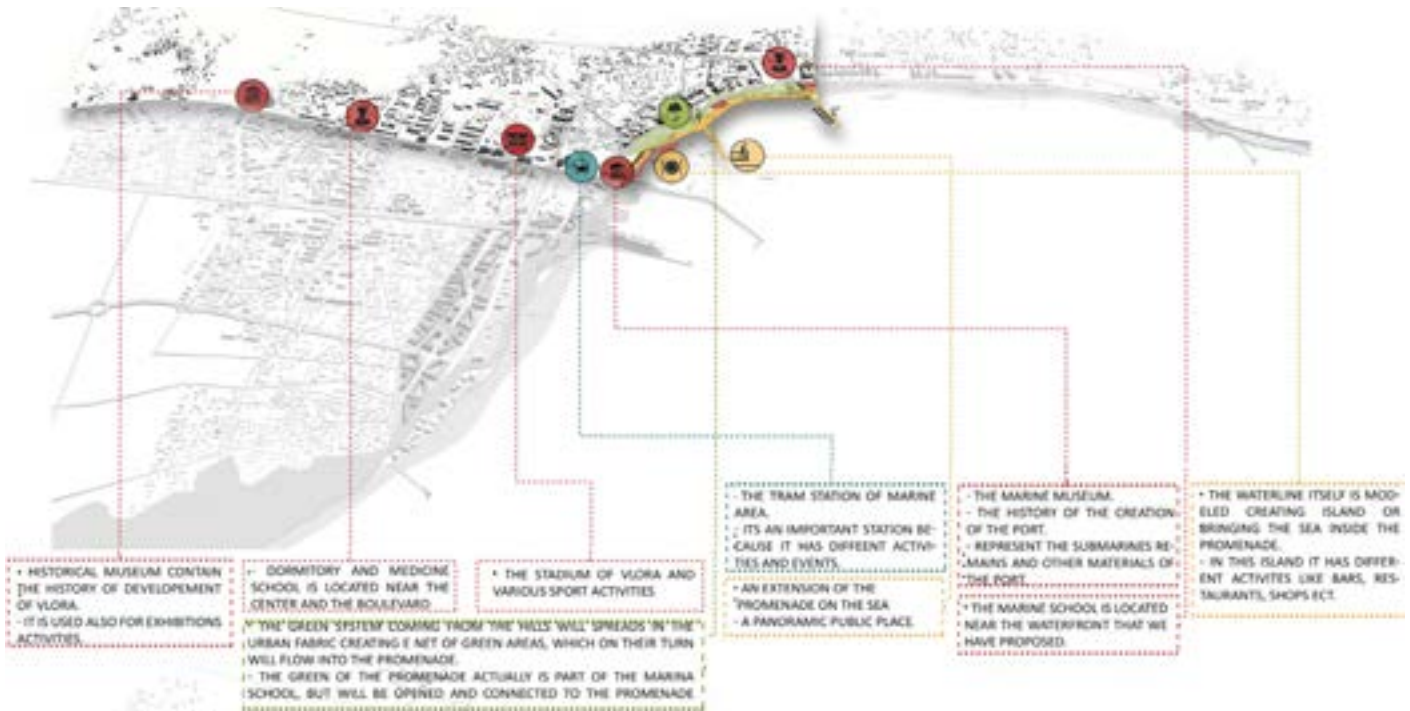
The east dock is conceived as a public promenade in continuity with the main boulevard. Along this axe is also placed the Marina museum and a series of green areas which mediate the relation of the city with the water and create a central public space. This ends up with a landmark at the end of the dock which becomes also a panoramic public building with receptive activities.



VLORA HARBOR AREA

Fourth section

The waterfront promenade and city-square



THE WATERPRONT PROMENADE AND CITY SQUARE AREA

This section constitutes the area between the central harbor and the Marina Bay. It represents a kind of urban façade of the city in the sea and creates a new urban identity becoming a key factor for the promotion of a touristic city like Vlora.

That's why it is important, specially in this section, the interaction with the city. In this part of the promenade

the hinter city has a traditional radial structure, given by the orientation of the water channel.

This grid in our concept will be rediscovered by proposed axes perpendicular to the sea and enforced by the creation of a touristic port, a square in the main junctions that connect this axes to the ring road and ends towards the sea with an island.



VIEW OF THE SPATIAL MONUMENT FROM THE MAIN PIER



VIEW ON THE EVENT SQUARE

The same logic is applied for the green area. The green system coming from the hills will spread in the urban fabric creating a net of green areas, which on their turn will flow into the promenade. The main green near the promenade actually is part of the Marina School, but on our proposal it should be opened and connected to the promenade park.

This interaction is enforced on both sides of the boulevard by a strong connection of the green system provided between the Marina Pier and the Park of the School of Marina, and is best represented in the tension of the sealine.

The sealine itself is modeled creating islands or bringing the sea inside the promenade, according to an idea of a living and transforming organism. All this energy would turn back to the city regenerating and completing the urban area backwards.

The city promenade and the city square

The city promenade is a new area of attraction offering mixed activities available to both tourists and residents. The main objectives of this development proposal are to strengthen the commercial and recreational activities which reflect social and culture identity of the place.

The core of this area is the city square hosting different type of recreational activities like playground for children, with an open and transformable character while the promenade is a continuous pedestrian/bicycle space parallel to the sea that in this particular area follows the free design of the coast line incorporating the island and the piers, and hosting along the section receptive structures serving the area.

Green open spaces and parks are integrated along the



BIRD VIEW OF THE WATERFRONT PROMENDE AND CITY-SQUARE



MASTERPLAN OF THE WATERFRONT PROMENDE AND CITY-SQUARE

promenade and are designed in relation to the green areas on the other side of the boulevard. These are part of the green system descending from the hinterland. The three piers in the city promenade are thought to hold the touristic port, which is thought to face the promenade and create a particular atmosphere along the promenade.

The marina pier

The marina pier, which represent a reference point for the bay is an old pier in service of the Marina Academy. In our project this structure will be upgraded and integrated with the Marina Academy green area and with the promenade through a large public square for events, and a series of new service buildings.



MASTERPLAN OF THE WATERFRONT PROMENDE AND CITY-SQUARE



RE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREAS NEXT TO THE PROMENADE



CITY PROMENADE VIEW

Redeveloped city waterfront

The potential of city renewal is applied in a pilot area in the southern part of the city of Vlora, close to the coastline and to the Navy school. This area actually has two main types of buildings: multi-store buildings and small private houses.

The intervention that we propose will be accomplished through the regeneration program. We propose 3 blocks in the area considering also the possibilities offered by the existing situation. To solve the problems of congestion we propose to provide the internal block with infrastructure, open several corridors that will allow the con-

nection of the coast with the interior space in that area. What is important to note is that by this redevelopment and densification process where all inhabitants act as stakeholders, it becomes possible to have an adequate compensation and also increase public spaces such as: greenery, parking, parks for children and sports territories that can be used from residents.

The spaces proposed are intended to increase the quality of life for residents and the value of existing buildings and new buildings.

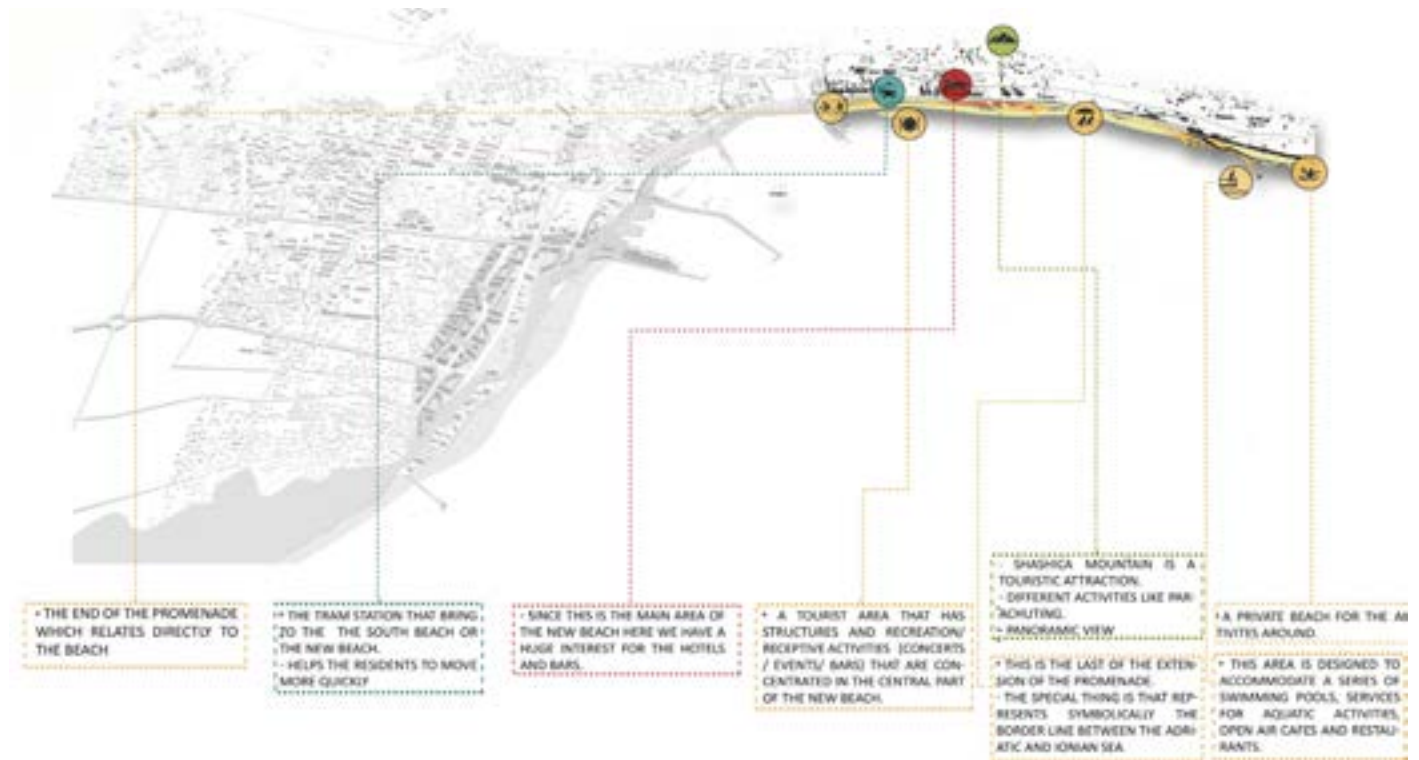


SECTION ON THE AMPHITHEATER SQUARE



The fifth section

The south Beach or the new beach



THE SOUTH BEACH AREA

The new beach shoreline will be developed with imported sand and breakwaters because continue erosion has constantly damaged the adjacent paved promenade and removed most of the imported sand leaving a base of pea gravel along most of the beach.

Adjacent to the beach there is a large continuous promenade developing on the seaside a few small bathing structures. Other facilities and recreation/receptive activities (concerts / events) are concentrated in the central part of the new beach that end into the sea with a touristic pier while in the eastern part of the beach another pier signs the border line between the Adriatic and the Ionian sea and is reinforced adding an aquatic center.

Along the promenade green areas are designed in continuity with the green system descending from the hills and small parking spaces integrated with trees offer a fast car connection from the main road. Rest areas are also provided along the promenade integrated in the overall design.

Regeneration of Vlora East

Being a significant project for the waterfront transformation, the master plan has the responsibility for injecting a process of regeneration of its immediate context. We propose improvement of the public space at the edges of the site, towards the existing urban structures, creating green areas, parking spaces near the small ring road, and gradual improvement of the low quality built structure.

Aquatic center

The aquatic center represents symbolically the border line between the Adriatic and Ionian Sea. It is signed also with a landmark that rises up at the bottom of the pier. This area is designed to accommodate a series of swimming pools carved into the site between the sea and the main road, services for aquatic activities, open air cafes and restaurants, a parking area, occupying an area under the level of the main road, so that the landscape impact is minimal.

The sixth section: Rocks

The Ionian Riviera bears some very particular natural features which are thought to be preserved and protected, though interventions are really light and small. The only interventions planned here should be some light bathing structures serving the beach and a final pier signing the continuity of the traditional "Uji i ftohtë" (Cold water) resting place and serving as a station for the water transport and various boats.

Greenery and the ecological biodiversity of the Waterfront

Historical green species of the promenade

The largest landscape area of the promenade is dominated by short grasses, few native shrubs like *Nerium oleander* sp, Palm trees (*Phoenix canariensis*) brought from overseas and planted during the communism period for a decorative purpose, and very few native trees like the Pine tree (*Pinus nigra*) and the Sycamore tree (*Platanus occidentalis*). Most of the existing trees are an old expansion of the protected landscape of Narta and Soda woods that once was spread throughout the promenade. The forest is still considered to be the only natural core of the region which is also part of the protected landscape of Narta.

With late urban development this trees and shrubs where replaced by buildings and road infrastructure, and very few shrubs and grasses have managed to survive urbanism.

Vegetation by zoning



1. The old Beach waterfront: Pine Tree, Citronella (*Cymbopogon nardus*, *Citronella winterianus*), marigolds, catnip, horsemint, and ageratum.



Part of our strategy is the recuperation of the ecological biodiversity of promenade through ecological sustainability, cost efficiency, less maintenance work and reinforce the natural local identity.

Ecological sustainability

The capacity of the ecosystems within the promenade would be maintained together with their essential functions and processes to retain their biodiversity in full measure over the long-term. This would be achieved by replanting native, endemic and naturalized species of flora and as a result the fauna would follow right after. This process would spread in five areas of the promenade.

2. Vlora Touristic harbor: (*Pinus*, *Prunella vulgaris*, *Salix eleagnos* subsp).



3. The waterfront promenade and city-square: (Pinus Peuce), (Phoenix canariensis).



4. The south Beach and the Ionian Riviera: (*Alnus glutinosa*),(*Ceratonia*),(*Pinus Peuce*)



Eco-friendly strategies

Bioclimatic characteristics of the site

The position of Vlora's waterfront is very favourable in terms of climatic conditions considering its proximity with the sea to the West and the fact that it is surrounded by hills to the south and north. Moreover the natural shape of the coastal line, that from Vlore, proceeding towards the S, SW forms the Karaburun peninsula that encloses the waterfront, naturally protects the area from strong sea currents. This area is characterized by moderate heat and humidity in summer, which makes it an area suitable for outdoor activities during summer. The predominant wind direction in winter is NE (Grecale) a strong wind of the central and west Mediterranean areas, mainly blowing during the cold seasons bringing fine or showery weather. The negative effect of this cold winter wind is mitigated because the wind intensity and speed are moderated by the presence of the mountains and the anthropized territory of the city. In summer, the predominant wind comes from the sea, NW (Maestro), and blows when the pressure is low over the Balkans. It produces a fresh breeze, seldom strong, accompanied by fine weather. The cool air that reaches the coastline creates a very favourable microclimate for outdoor leisure and sports activities. The presence of the pinewood to the north of the site is considered an important natural asset that has positive influence on local climatic conditions, on the preservation of biodiversity and on the prevention of coastal erosion. With these considerations in mind the project's connotations prove to be feasible both from an executive and environmental point of view. In fact the project's intention is to introduce the new infrastructures and buildings while preserving the site's intrinsic natural, geo-morphological characteristics.

Environmental requalification

The waterfront of Vlore is rich with natural, geological and hydrological resources: sandy beaches, swamplands and lagoons, streams and pinewood forest, rocky cliffs and hills. But all these resources resent from the erosion

and the deterioration caused by natural (wind, sea currents) and human actions (deforestation, anthropization etc.). To rehabilitate some of these deteriorated areas the main strategy is to reestablish natural landscape and touristic characteristics, operating according to a multidisciplinary approach and directing the rehabilitation towards the maximum respect of the original condition of the existing ecosystems.

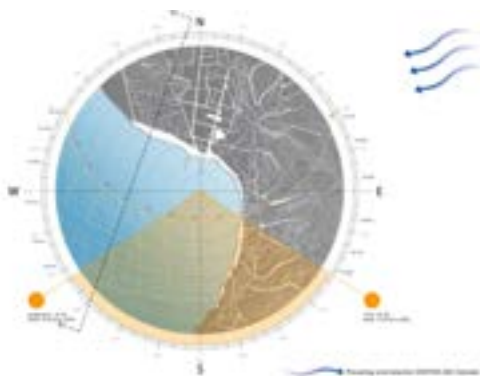
Environmental Compatibility and Technological solutions

The high value of the site from an environmental and naturalistic point of view calls for a low impact intervention that, through the proposed design solutions, improves the local microclimatic conditions while ensuring the preservation of natural green areas and then geological and hydrological patrimony. This will be obtained by adding new green areas, implementing sustainable mobility, adopting strategies for harvesting clean and renewable energy (renewable energy sources) and using environmentally friendly materials to endure the suppression of polluting substances, which could compromise the water of the sea and the canals, the soil and the air.

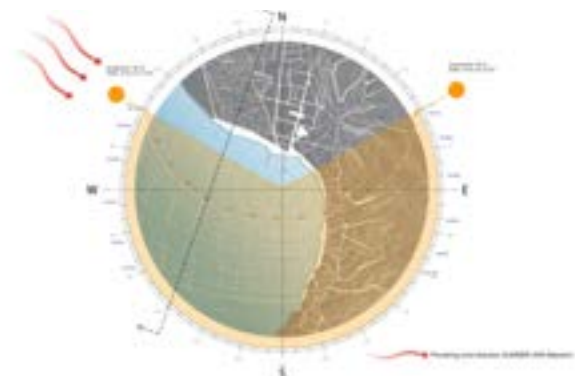
Energy eco-efficiency – alternative energy sources

Hybrid systems that use renewable energy available on site associated with traditional energy production systems represent the most suitable energetic strategy for the site.

The criteria used for the site plan arrangement and for the architectural definition of the program were based on the maximum valorisation of the local context environmental conditions to maintain the psychic and physical wellbeing of the inhabitants (indoor and out-



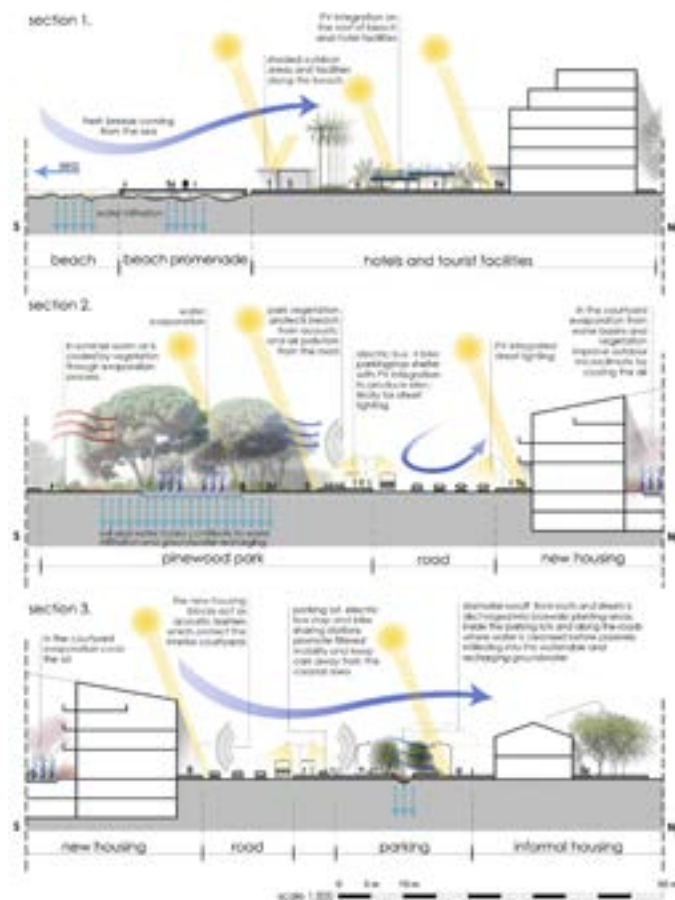
VLORA. SOLAR EXPOSURE AND VENTILATION /WINTER



VLORA. SOLAR EXPOSURE AND VENTILATION/ SUMMER

door environmental comfort) following the microclimatic and biophysical characteristics of the area and the eco efficiency of the built spaces (green building, innovative systems and power plants for energy savings and the usage of clean energy). This kind of approach, foresees the application of the following architectural, technological and infrastructural systems:

- “Passive” systems for buildings’ energetic eco efficiency: favouring natural ventilation; implementing passive heating and cooling techniques; guaranteeing access of natural light and preventing overheating in summer with shading devices.
- “Active” systems for buildings’ energetic eco efficiency: solar thermal and photovoltaic systems.



Technological solutions and materials

From the point of view of the environmental compatibility particular attention was paid towards the choice of ecologically compatible materials, the increase of permeable surfaces to prevent water runoff and the choice of local plants and trees to preserve and, in some cases, re-establish the biodiversity present in the area.

The main materials used for the buildings along the beach, the piers and the beach facilities are wood (biological material) and glass. Moreover wood constrictions are light, easy to assemble and reusable/recyclable, and most of the beach infrastructures are composed by platforms laid on top of the existing natural landscape without modifying the hydro geological and morphological layout/structure of the territory.

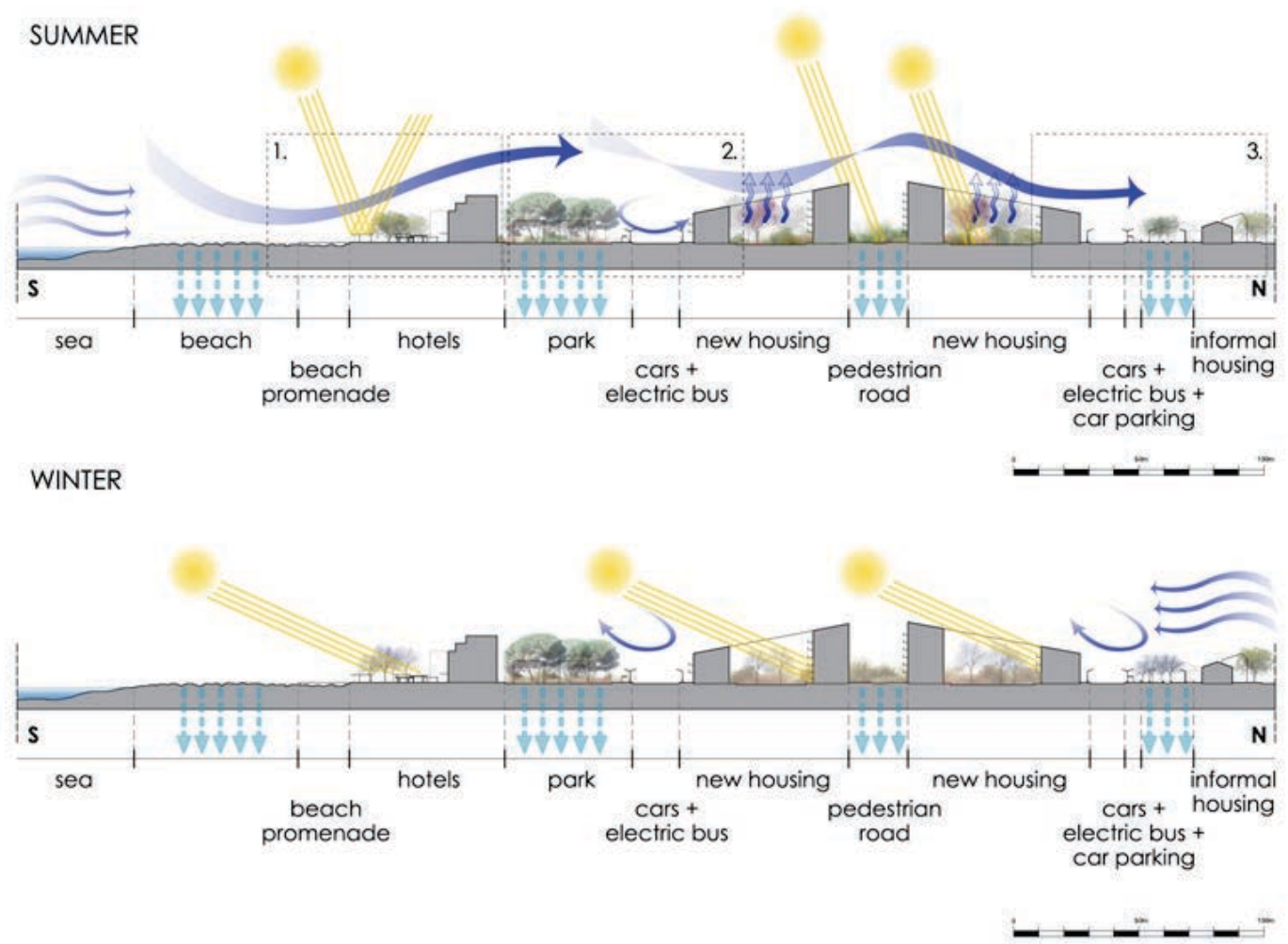
To reduce as much as possible pervious paving, which affects the percentage of water runoff and can lead to erosion, the new parking spaces along the coast will be realised with permeable paving surfaces, which guarantee natural rainwater infiltration into the soil. Moreover porous paving grids allow natural grass or gravel surfaces and give adjacent trees the rooting space they need to grow to full size, as they admit vital air and water to the roots. In order to prevent the oil and gas leakage from the cars from polluting the soil, bio-filtration, infiltration, and storage systems will be integrated to the paving system.

To mitigate the visual and acoustic impact of the coastal road infrastructure and therefore protect the beach, the limit between the beach area and the road will be filtered by trees and wooden screens. While canopies and shaded promenades will not only improve the microclimatic conditions of outdoor spaces by protecting from direct solar radiation in summer and from rain in winter, but they will also offer new surfaces that can integrate solar panels for hot water production and photovoltaic ones for the production of renewable and clean electricity. The energy produced by the solar panels will be used also for public street lighting, which will be designed in full compliance with the requirements for the safeguard of the existing natural landscape and fauna and adopting strategies aimed at preventing light pollution.

The choice to concentrate the touristic, cultural, lei

Sustainable mobility

As far as mobility goes the project offers many sustainable alternatives to ecologically unsustainable private means of transpiration (cars), offering a network of pedestrian, bike and electric and boat public transportation routes that operate on the concept of filtered mobility: new parking lots and bike sharing and parking facilities introduced at each new functional pocket: pedestrian/bike routes and electric bus and boat stops that connect these parking lots to the major attraction points of the coast and reconnect them back to the rest of the city, promoting and facilitating the use of ecologically friendly means of transportation.



BIOCLIMATICAL SECTIONS ON THE WEST BEACH AREA

Schedule for Phases of execution of the project

The first area that should be implemented is the main waterfront square standing next to the port. This is considered to be the main entertainment area, offering a large, flexible space for various activities.

Public-Private investment model

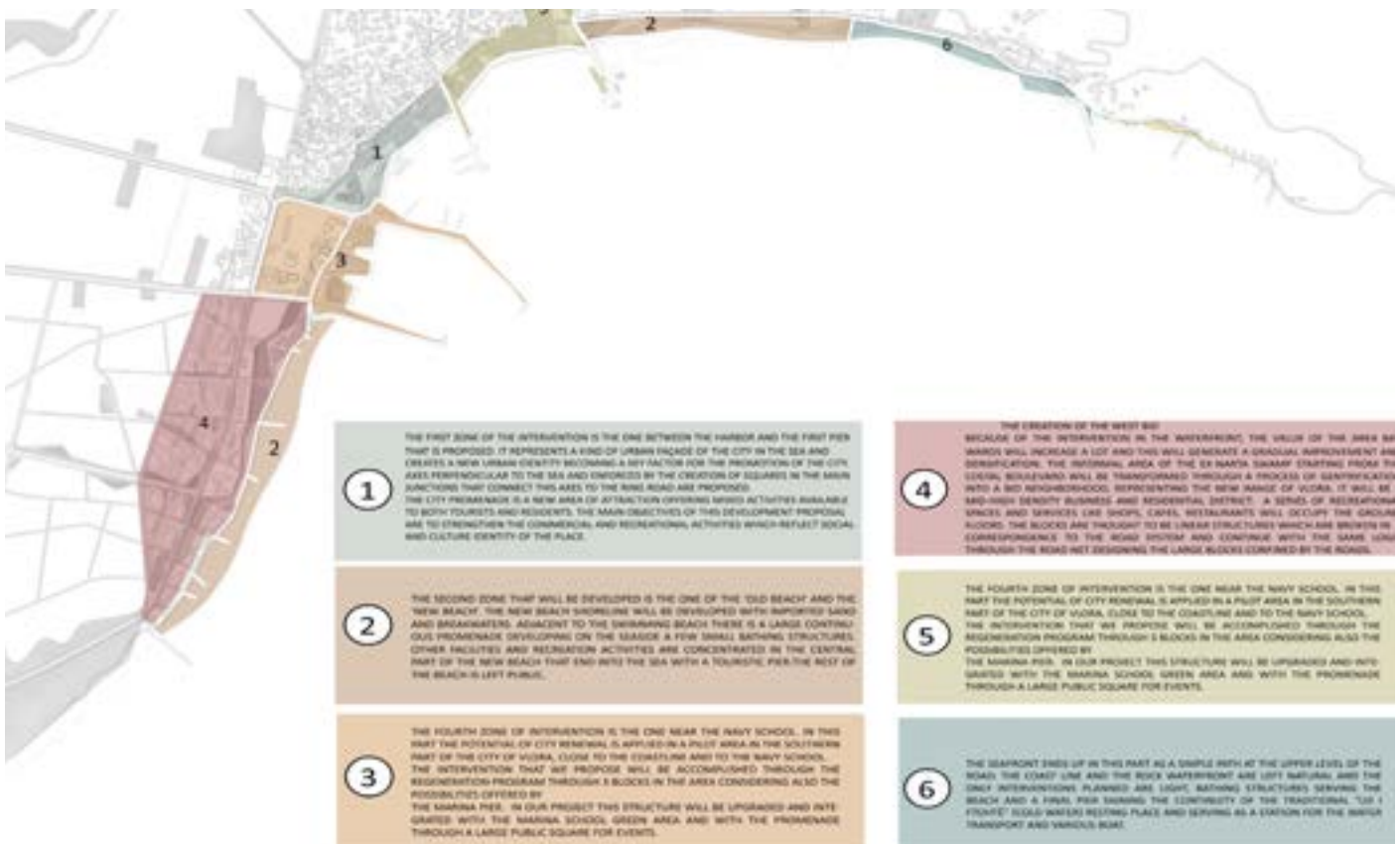
We propose engaging in the required investments project through a so-called 'value capturing' approach. This implies that an integrated plan is drafted in which the costs and benefits of all relevant stakeholders are mapped and benefits and costs for all of them are identified, both for the short and for the long term. A spatial plan in which the symbiotic potential of the contributions of these stakeholders is utilized to the full is what it takes to make value-oriented planning work. Our strat-

egy on paying back of the project of the waterfront is related to the BID development on the west side of the city. Being built on an informal area near by the city centre and the port, the value of the investment would be very high and the local government would receive from taxation sufficient revenues to cover expenses of the project and also further investments.

Collaborative governance

The collaborative governance model should comprise a seamless institutional arrangement that (1) matches the wishes of all district and can obtain their consent and (2) involves the private sector in such a way that the high initial public investment costs are recouped in the long run.

We recommend a model with an overarching authority with planning and decision-making power, funding discretion which includes the establishment of a developmental enterprise that can take on the role of entrepreneur and investor for the area.



SCHEDULE FOR PHASES OF EXECUTION OF THE PROJECT