

VLORA WATERFRONT COMPETITION

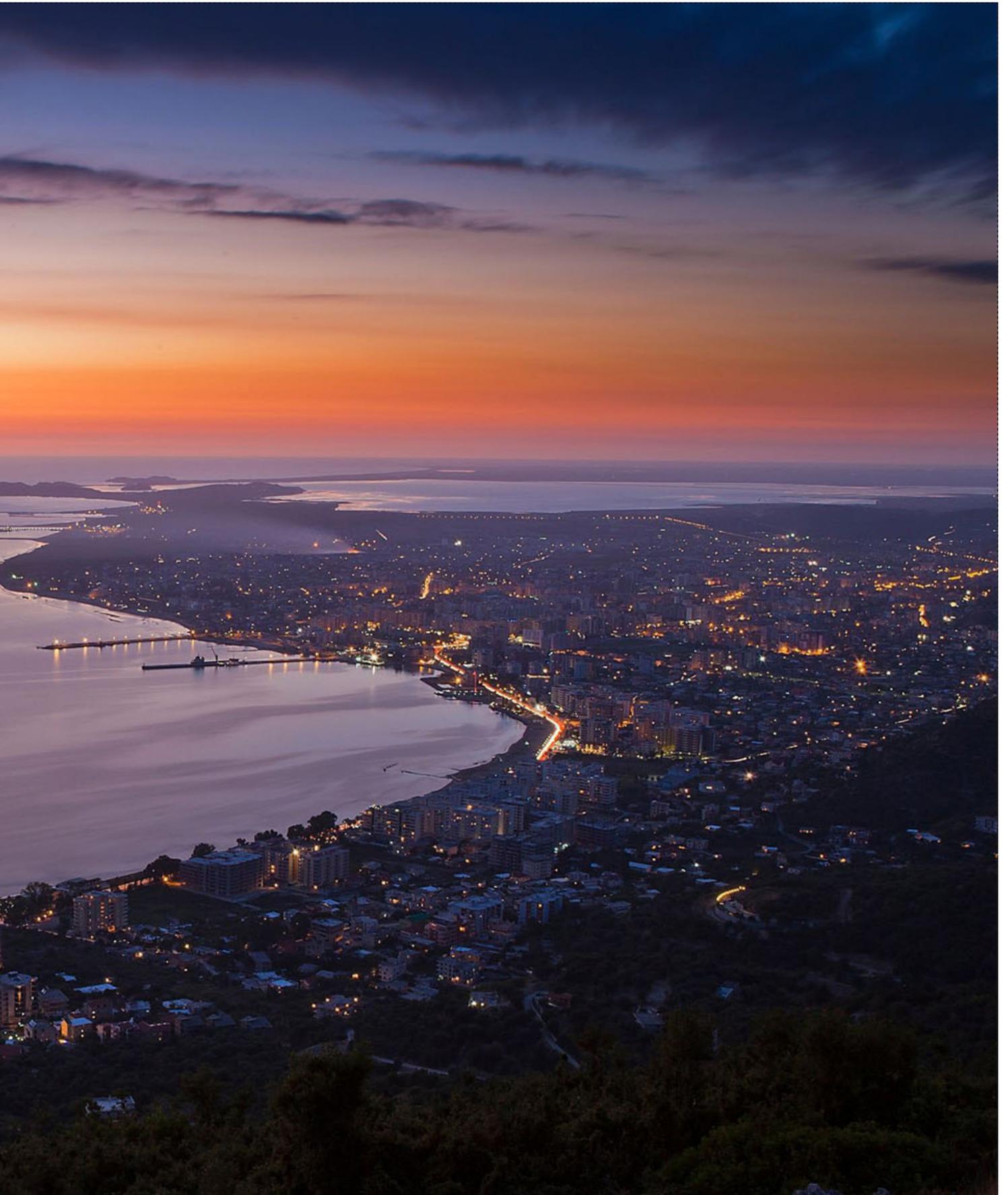
IA8888
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VLORA WATERFRONT POTENTIALS





THE BEAUTY IS ALREADY THERE

The Vlorë waterfront competition is a first of many opportunities to rethink the figure, the program and the design of the major future public space of the city. The picture above showing Vlorë at night represents the current condition, the picturesque beauty of the topographical setting facing west and offering the most beautiful sunsets. However, the coast line is dark and strangely free of all those signs of public use known and appreciated in all the exciting cities with a similar waterfront on the Mediterranean sea. The development of the waterfront will be a long process of many small steps but it will transform the existing situation into something which smells like a vibrant summer night on one of the new piers of Vlorë.

The waterfront development as a whole is tightly linked to the future of the two main infrastructures: The port and the road to the south of Albania. The project proposal reflects that specific reality of Vlorë by implementing a mix of small and large scale interventions, which function just as well individually as they fit together. Practical and low-cost activities are coupled with much more ambitious and expensive ones allowing Vlorë to grow at its own pace. The project is a framework for future urban growth, a solid structure where development can take place at a rate defined by economic and social conditions.

TRAFFIC WILL LEAVE THE SHORE MAKE IT PUBLIC

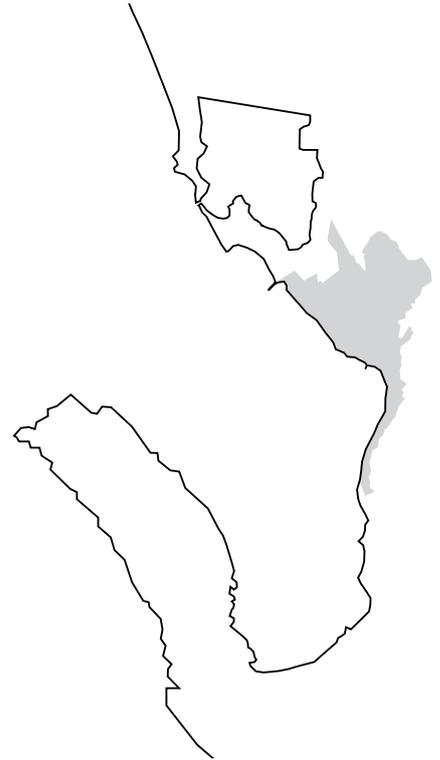
Transit traffic to the south of the country will be diverted and the port will change. These infrastructural elements did not only pollute the shore, but they defined it in the very center of the city. The transformation of the shore from a transit space for others into a public space for local public life is the most significant and radical change of Vlorë in the last decades and should be done in the softest possible way. The waterfront has to transform back into a hub for the citizens of Vlorë, by shying away from the image of the Southern Gate, and transforming in an extended oasis for the locals and tourists. The project therefore adapts a set of principles and elements to the specificities of each part of the waterfront. It preserves what is beautiful and ameliorates what is less attractive. A multitude of small, realistic and practical interventions will fill in the programmatic void left behind by the port and the road to organically change the city.

The Bay of Vlorë is located where the Adriatic meets the Ionian Sea. The scenic properties of the bay of Vlorë with Sazan island as a focal point during sunsets are very rare and remind of Naples and Capri, Marseille and Chateau d'If, or San Francisco and Alcatraz. Nevertheless the city encounters the challenge of redefining its importance in the Mediterranean context. Places with less scenic potential in Greece, Italy and Montenegro have outpaced Vlorë in developing their touristic and commercial assets and settling themselves as ports of international importance. To establish the waterfront as main public space of Vlorë is the most important step to profit from the so far not fully used scenic potential - Not only for tourism, but for the public life of the community as well.



WATER IS A CAPITAL - TREAT IT SO

Water should be treated like an important capital belonging to the city. The waterfront and multiple beaches in the heart of Vlora should be regenerated and brought forth as an important spine of local development. Water should be treated like an important capital belonging to the city. Specific attention should be paid to the informal sewage that punctuates the waterfront continually from the old beach to the tunnel. Consideration has to be refocused not only on the local potential of the waterfront but also to the sea's economic potential in tandem with the luxury of Vlora's location in the Mediterranean. Water holds immense potential to be used as an important design element; it is a constant feature of this project: from the natural filtering of sewage to the ecological floating island. The aim is to create a loop which continually cleans the ecosystem while at the same time developing its eco-potential further and allowing secondary design interventions to supplement and emphasize this natural gift that belongs to the citizens of Vlora.



A LOT OF NEW SPACE - START WITH DIVERSITY

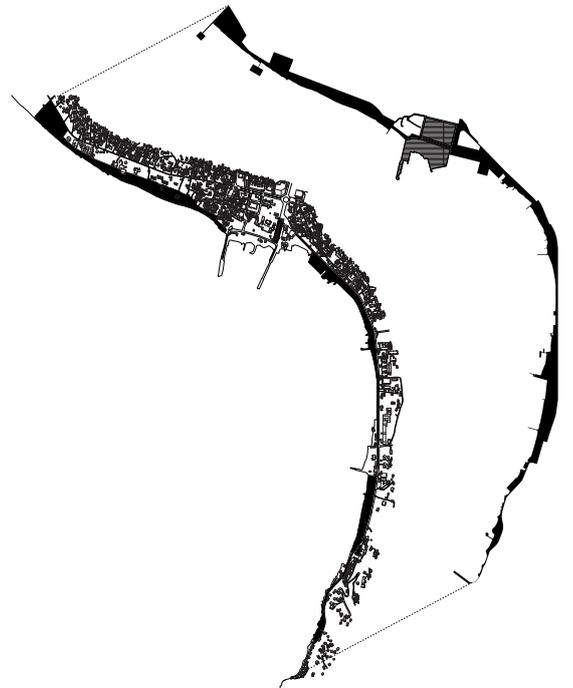
Free from traffic and with an improved water quality due to new kind of sewage systems public space in Vlora will multiply and exceed the need and financial potential of the community. The project therefore proposes to use the existing diversity of as many found objects and morphological characteristics as possible instead of trying to implement a continuous redesign of the waterfront. The most simple and effective way to create a vibrant diversity at the shore must take into account what already exists. The proposed project does not put its focus on what should and will be added to the shore, but on the importance of reprogramming and enhancing the functionality of existing buildings as well as of the more or less public spaces. Once the shore will be perceived and used as the most important public space of the city, its design will continue to evolve and get more and more specific as well as more refined.



PROJECT STRATEGIES

DEFINING THE FIGURE OF PUBLIC SPACE

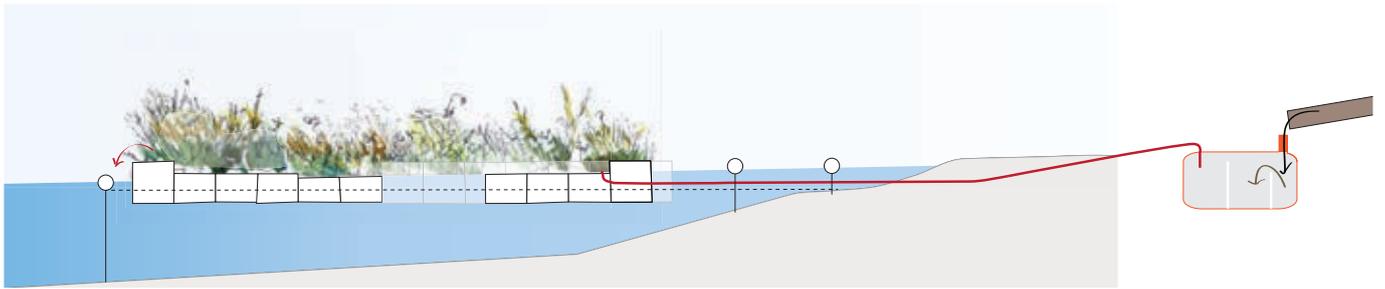
The public space of Vlora will double once the national road is pushed back and triple if the full area of the harbor is considered. This dramatic change of size and functionality will need to be assisted with a high level of clarity in design. The whole waterfront should form a continuous space without any dead ends. As in many similar sized coastal cities the waterfront of Vlora is a purely functional strip. There are better beaches close by, so why would one care about the waterfront? Zones such as the Old Beach are deeply instilled in the conscience of the citizens of Vlora with a specific name and program. The objective is to maintain these connotations while aiming at intensifying the current program and fully exploiting the area's potential. The result is a combination of the modern vernacular with a revitalization and renewal effort which conserves the local feel of the city. Furthermore waterfront development can help the revitalization of these streets themselves and transform them into continuations of a vibrant urban spine.



ENHANCE ACCESSIBILITY AND NODES OF ACTIVITY

There is no expectation nor any desire to convert the whole waterfront into a fully pedestrian street since the immense space would need a minimal amount of pedestrian density to become a successful public space. The waterfront is envisioned as an agglomeration of activity nodes that attract people along the coast. In order to achieve punctuated density throughout the 5km waterfront an intervention of planned diversity is envisioned. An efficient bus or tram service, limited parking times, and appealing bike lanes in-between the palm trees would encourage locals to leave their cars at home and partake in the ecological renovation of Vlora. The meeting point between the city and the sea continually morphs based on the topography and the program, each part of the coastline naturally responding to the needs of the city. The way the urban territory responds to the sea, also designs how people will interpret these landscapes. We want this variety of landscapes to each become a new opportunity at how we perceive and experience the impressive view of the sea, the peninsula of Karaburun and the island of Sazan.





WATER RESTORATION

Unregulated effluent spillage is an issue that one encounters throughout the Vlora Waterfront. It needs to be dealt with as soon as possible in order to improve the conditions of the water as well as attract locals and tourists who would be distressed by the current situation. The optimum solutions to improve the water quality of the seaside is to install a big manifold along the coast which collects effluent from all sewer pipes currently discharging at the beach. The effluent would then be directly pumped to the city water treatment plant. Because of the length of that manifold it will be necessary to install different pumping stations – with submersed effluent pumps and move all the flow to the depuration station. In order to reduce the amount of water to be treated is also necessary to keep a separate net for rain water so as to avoid mixing it into the sewer manifold. To prevent contamination of floating rubbish it will be necessary to install different grates at the

rain water piping network which would remove plastics and other objects carried by rain water during strong rains. In addition, a specialized cleaning boat should collect the floating rubbish near the beach and a tractor with special beach cleaning equipment should work during the night to remove any rubbish from the sand. Since this is a permanent and costly solution the following alternatives are proposed which might serve as temporary interventions to improve the water condition.



GREEN PIERS

Wetland areas can be created on floating piers. Using standard equipment to build modular floating piers, this proposition uses the assembling of modules sized 50cm x 50cm x 40cm and able to hold 350kg/m² as a support for an artificial freshwater pond. A waterproof membrane will be used to keep fresh water on top of the pier. Because of wave action, the pier will be moving and freshwater and aquatic plants should be fixed with a special hose used as substrate and diffusing pipe at the same time (as in the section). Treated water can then flow directly into the sea.

WETLAND DEPURATION SYSTEM

In order to realize tertiary treatment with aquatic freshwater plants it will be necessary to build a large pond, properly waterproofed with a membrane and keep an inundated space to grow aquatic plants. Treated water can flow directly into the sea or into a drainage well build in the sand. This solution can create a nice landscape similar to a natural wetland area, and possibly become very attractive for different local and migratory bird species, which will create a more natural atmosphere around the area.

REGULATION OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE

A non-exhaustive series of principles that are used throughout the planning process blur the line between design, regulation and authority intervention. These principles should be used as the possibilities of a formula that aims at regenerating public space. Reusing existing buildings that can be saved, integrating the informal morphologies present in parts of the coast, or better waste and sewage management are descriptive of the concepts described in this section. These principles can help the city of Vlora independently however they particularly fit well with the main proposed ideas of this project.

INTEGRATION OF INFORMAL MORPHOLOGIES

Since a particular section of the Old beach is occupied by informal houses, integration and public services should be created in order to include and formalize these morphologies into the general planning of the Waterfront. This area being so close to the center offers multiple opportunities for its development. This area should be preserved mainly for the citizens of Vlora, however being so close to the center it might become an attractive spot for visitors.

UNUSED BUILDINGS AS PUBLIC PROPERTY

The approach of the project to the coast of Vlora is that of a landscape including built and natural form. Some buildings need to be demolished in order to set an example of how informality will be dealt with in the future however, there should be a culture of reappropriation and a shift of perspective on buildings that could be used in the context of the waterfront by changing their visual and programmatic status quo. This is not just an economical way of reinterpreting the built form and perusing space for program, but also a different form of cultural attitude that has been completely absent from any intervention in the Albanian building and planning industry.

MODIFYING OF EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

By diversifying the modes of transportation, the waterfront can become an important secondary axis for travel in the city. The existing infrastructure either offers no circulation (the Old beach), or it offers a strictly automobile-oriented street (watergardens to the tunnel). The aim is to completely change this by diversifying the circulation possibilities.

ESTABLISHING NEW MODES OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

There are many ways to make the 5km coast accessible and easily reachable publicly. A tram line for the Waterfront would give a service of transportation throughout the Waterfront that can be especially appreciated in the touristic Season when density and heat in the promenade can be disturbing. Another interesting option would be water-taxis which could connect the whole length of the coast through a number of water taxi-stations. These taxis could extend their routes to the whole length of the Vlorë region, catering to all the smaller hotels and private beaches that punctuate the coast from the city to Orikum.

DESIGNATE PLOTS FOR PARKING GARAGES

People that are using their personal cars should be divided in two categories: residents and visitors. Residents would be guaranteed continued access to their apartments while visitors would have to abide by stricter traffic regulations in the waterfront area.

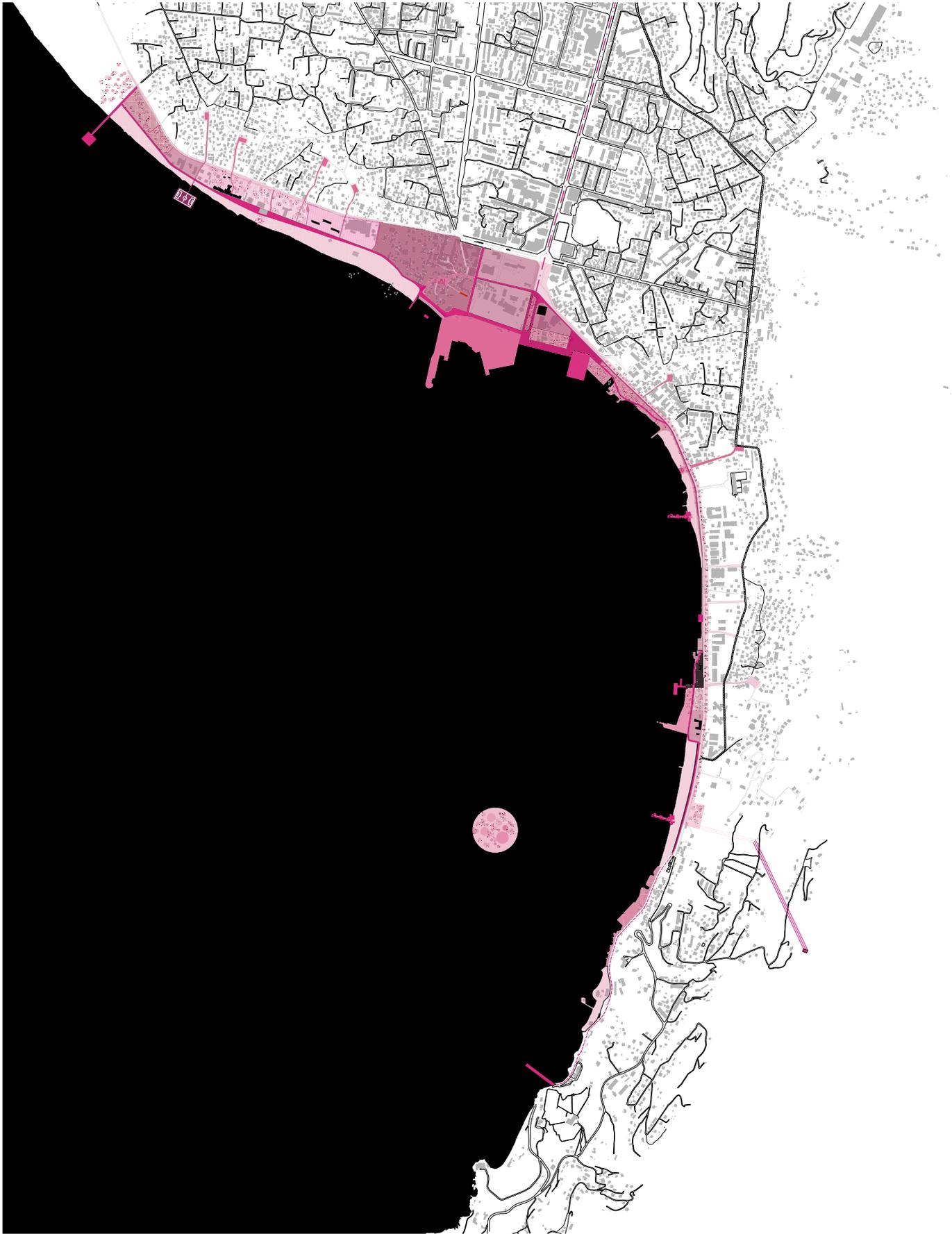
INVESTMENT IN WASTE MANAGEMENT

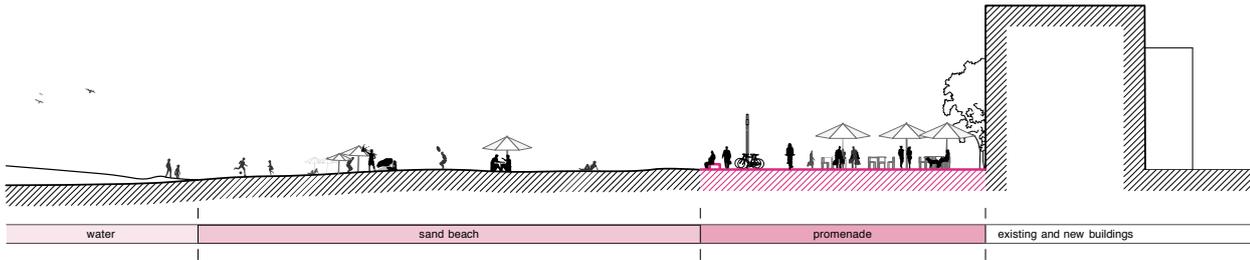
An acute problem in the city of Vlorë is waste management. The recent news that a task-force for cleaning touristic areas is being set up is very welcome news, however the newly created National Coastal Authority should create a long-term plan in preventing and disposing waste in touristic areas. These interventions in tandem with a new set of local regulations could raise awareness on the importance of conserving the environment.

PUBLIC SAFETY

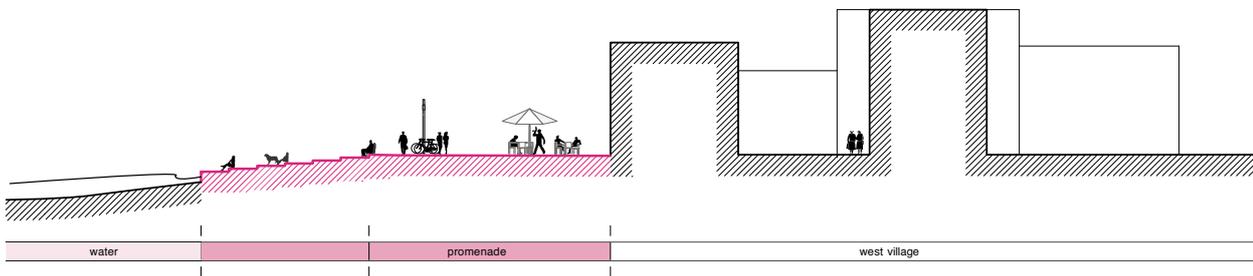
Public safety, including lifeguards, coastal police and doctors, should have their own offices in the Waterfront and operate full time throughout the touristic season. This is an important minor step in raising the quality of the services to those found in other similar destinations in the region. Again this would primarily be to the benefit of the citizens but indirectly improve the services for potential tourists.

OVERVIEW

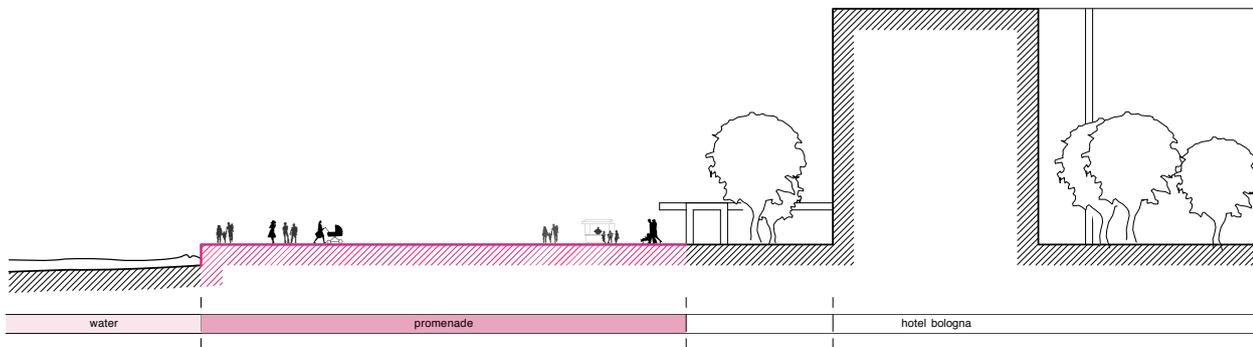




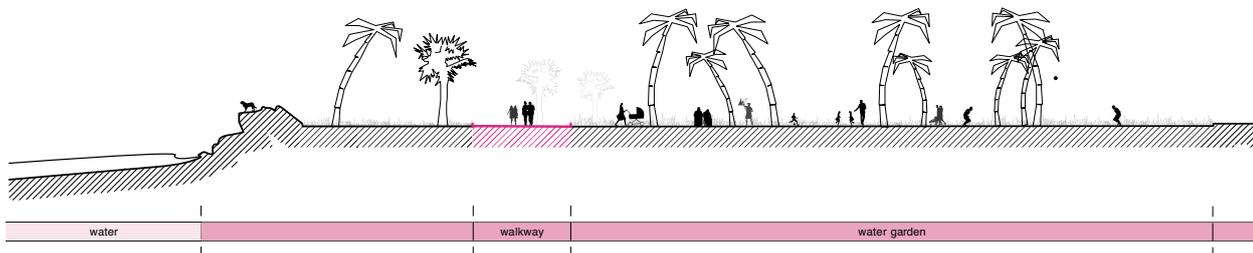
OLD BEACH



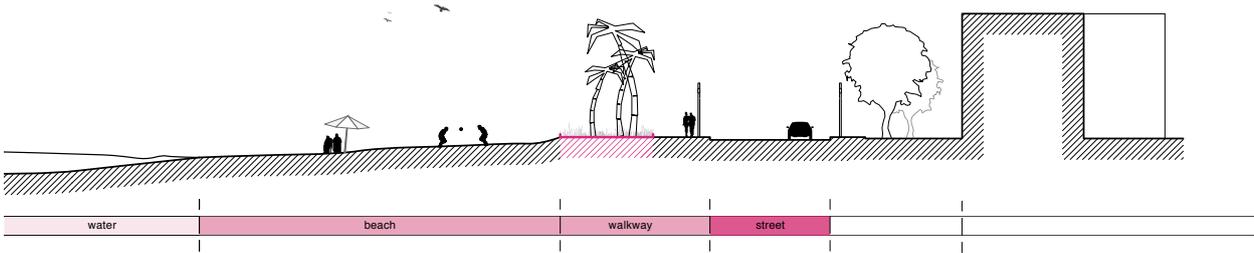
WEST VILLAGE



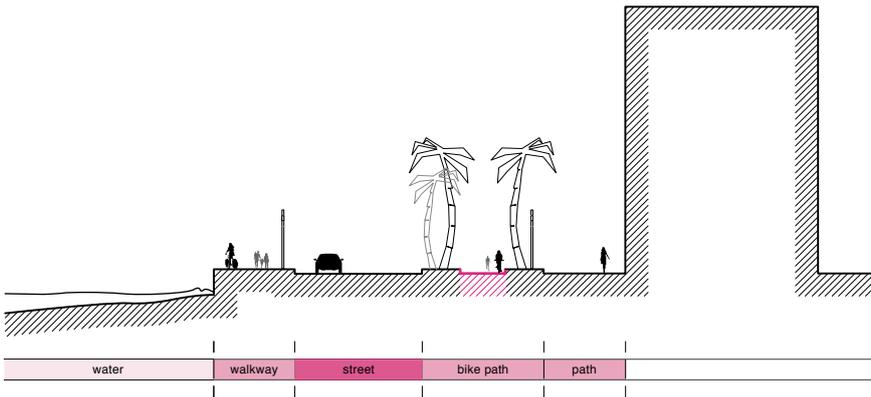
PORT



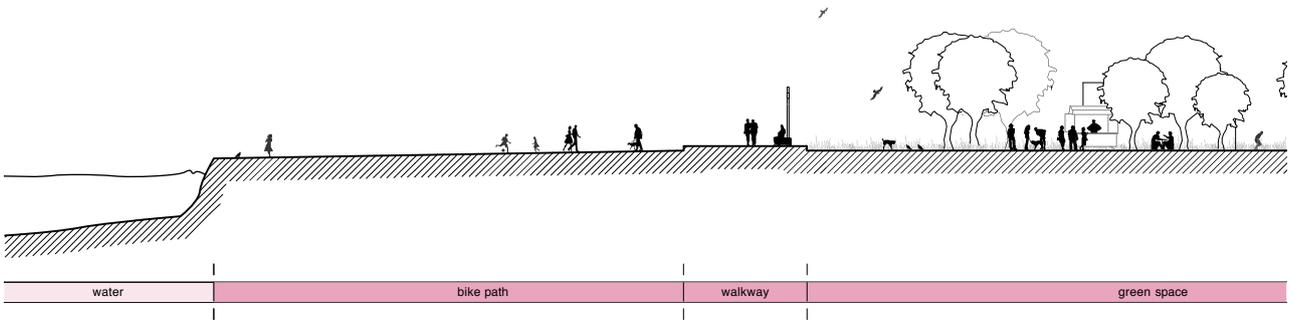
WATER GARDENS



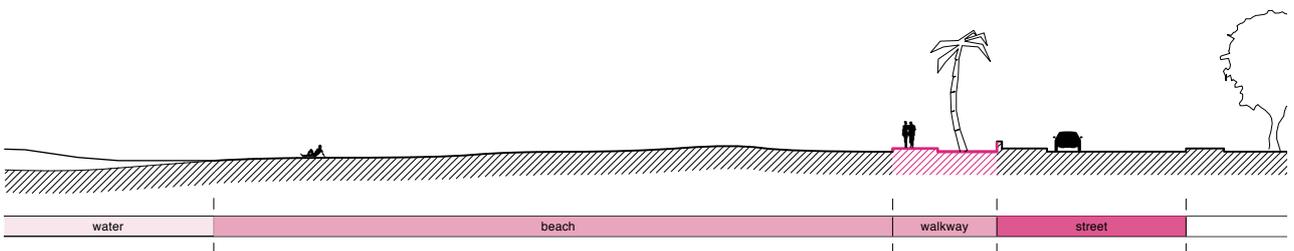
CENTRAL BEACH



ROCKY WATERFRONT



WATERFRONT CENTER



NEW BEACH



OLD BEACH

From the Soda Woods to the port there will be some low-cost efficient interventions. Initially a wooden deck installed at the far edge of the beach would make the whole area more accessible to the locals - especially for retirees and persons with disabilities. Furthermore the derelict Kampi i Punetoreve might be regenerated with a new program. Since Vlora is a central city to the Albanian coast by its location as well as its importance it would be appropriate to found a Maritime Research

institute and one wing of the Kampi i Punetoreve would be ideal being so close to the sea and preserving such an interesting shape. The other wing of the building could be transformed into a maritime museum with different leisure activities, different services, bars and restaurants. The Kampi would be the first in a series of activity nodes which are connected by the continuous boardwalk in the five kilometer boardwalk.



WEST VILLAGE

The informal developments close to the port create an interesting specificity that needs to be dealt with. The project envisions this as one of the only medium-term interventions in the old beach section. The area closer to the informal developments is unsuitable for being used as a beach because of the vicinity to the port as well as the informal houses. Therefore a gradual series of steps would cover this part of the old beach transforming this area in a

social magnet to spend some time and have a drink from local stalls while enjoying the beautiful views and still being very close to the center of the city. The stairs section could also be used by fishermen to open their nets in as well as seating space for the audience of the “stage in the sea”. This area has a lot of potential to become a center of gravity for locals.



EXTENSION OF INDEPENDENCE SQUARE

This area is imagined as a beautiful finalization of any trip from the boulevard. It should be an urban goal, the achievement of which would offer beautiful views as well as multiple ways of entertainment. It is envisioned as an extension of the current Independence Square - connecting the square to the sea and transforming it into a friendly and vibrant area. the square would further extend south-

eastwards as an events and market area with market stalls which are however larger than usual and resemble the typical shops that can be found today in the boulevard of Vlora. It would be the centre of a dense activity node which is interesting to visit for the citizens as well as for tourists strolling through the waterfront.



WATER GARDENS

An important element of this project is having a connected waterfront from the port section to the end of the new beach. The wategardens would supplement the strictly commercial program of the boulevard. However this long section of the waterfront has along its way a number of perfectly functioning beaches. In order to let these beaches thrive the project envisions for a strolling path to snake

behind the beaches and return to the shore after them, in a way enclosing them while at the same time separating them further from the street and traffic. In sections such as the Watergardens the only need it to exploit the potential of what is already working, thus minor rearrangements are more than enough to integrate this already thriving area.



ROCKY WATERFRONT

The central waterfront offers amazing views of the peninsula of Karaburun and the island of Sazan. If traffic is slowed and different modes of transportation are implemented, this area could quickly become a more pedestrian section of the waterfront. Bicycle lanes and a

continuous seating space can transform this area. Like in the watergardens there are huge amounts of pedestrian potential here. Narrowing the current automobile street would also create enough space for services while making the beautiful view much more accessible than today.



NEW BEACH

Most beaches will be complemented by green piers which disguise sewage in the vicinity, mask the odors, and help clean the effluent before it is spilled into the sea. These piers would become a constant sight in the city and would disappear only as the sewage problems are permanently

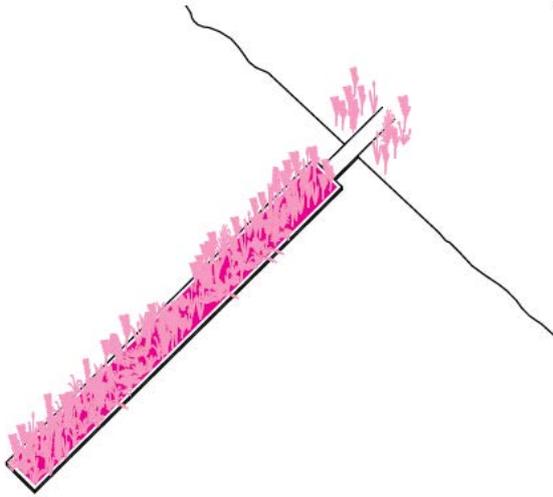
resolved. As described in the water regeneration section these freshwater ponds would be isolated from the water and therefore no algae would pollute the sea. This low-cost idea could be easily replicated in all touristic villages in Albania, where sewage spillage into the sea is routine.

PROJECT PROPOSITIONS



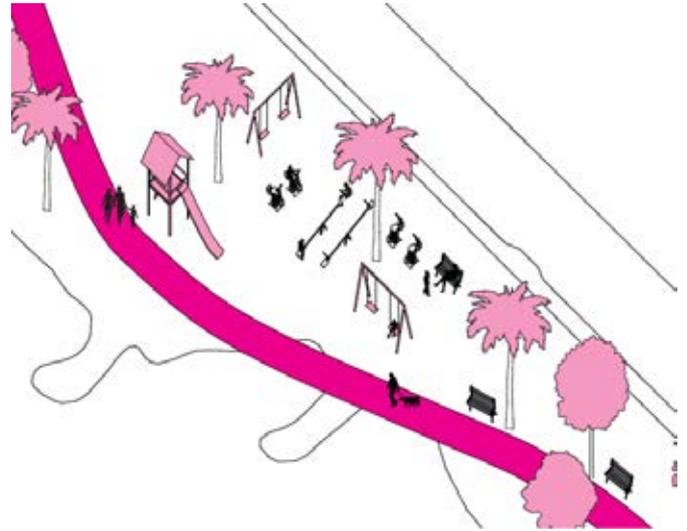
SHORT TERM PROPOSALS

The collection of project propositions describes the possibilities for completely different activities. The project defines the appropriate areas for these elements and additionally it gives informed suggestions based on the perceived needs of the city. An important suggestion is to let the citizens of Vlorë ultimately decide the program of some of these elements. The short term proposals can be adopted right away and be ready for the coming season. The priority is the health and environment issue. Improving the water quality, sport facilities and green spaces. and green spaces.



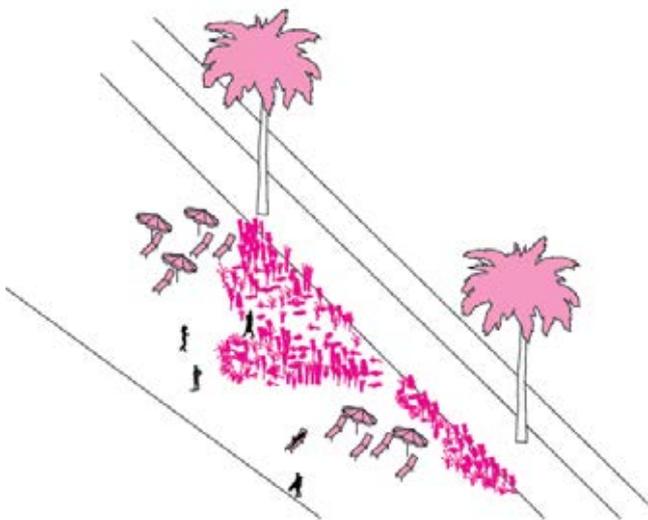
W1. GREEN PIER

Wetland areas can be created on floating piers. Using standard equipment to build modular floating piers, this proposition uses the assembling of modules sized 50cm x 50cm x 40cm and able to hold 350kg/m² as a support for an artificial freshwater pond.



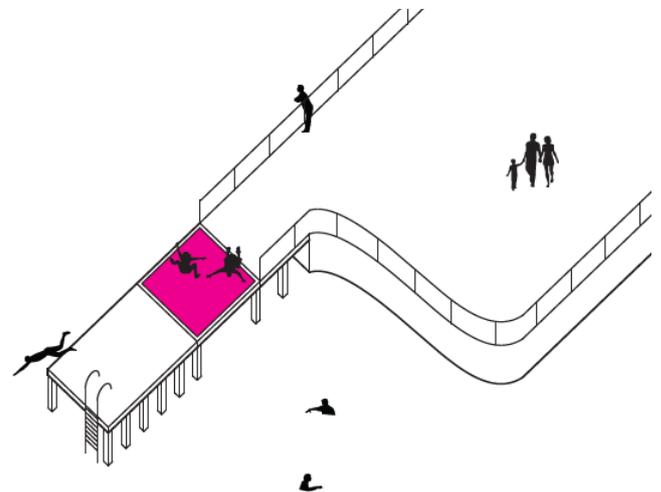
G2. WATER GARDEN

The Watergarden is a section of the coast that already exists in the Vlora bay. It will be improved, but without changing anything that already works. This would be a central activity node for children playgrounds, animal walking and exercising activities.



W2. WETLAND

This solution can create a nice landscape similar to a natural wetland area, and possibly become very attractive for different local and migratory bird species, which will create a more natural atmosphere around the area.

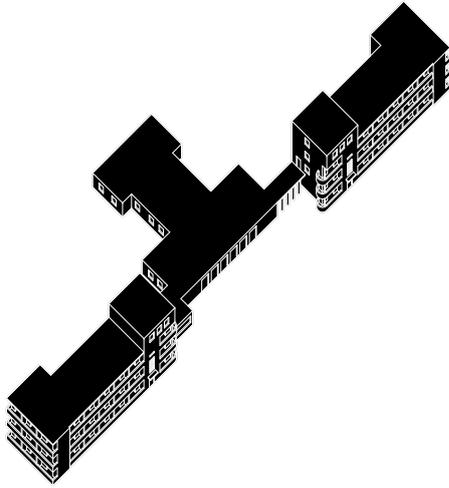


L2. TRAMPOLINE

The trampoline is a very unique asset of the Vlora beaches. This specific trampoline has been used by different generations to learn how to swim, to do competitions or to simply enjoy a jump in the water.

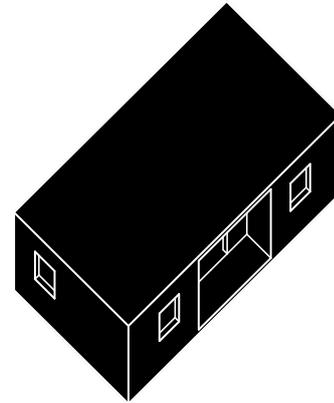
REPROGRAMMING

The reprogramming of existing buildings in the Vlora Waterfont will happen in locations that the waterfront necessitates building mass and program. The buildings we propose in our intervention will become important elements of the waterfront activity nodes.



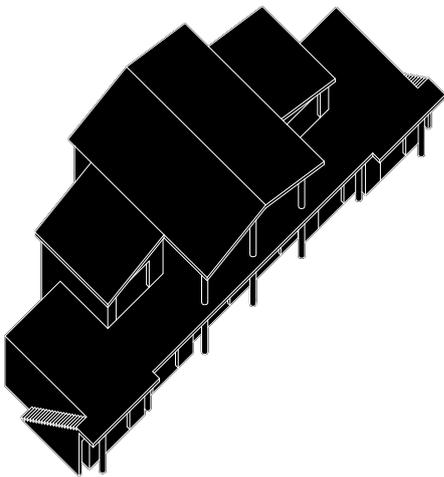
1. MARINE CENTER

Wetland areas can be created on floating piers. Using standard equipment to build modular floating piers, this proposition uses the assembling of modules sized 50cm x 50cm x 40cm and able to hold 350kg/m² as a support for an artificial freshwater pond.



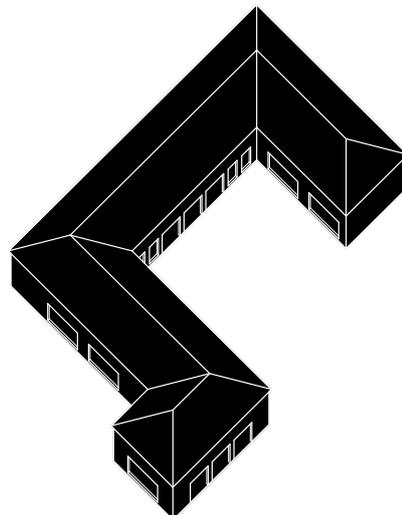
3. FIRST AID STATION

The Watergarden is a section of the coast that already exists in the Vlora bay. It will be improved, but without changing anything that already works. This would be a central activity node for children playgrounds, animal walking and exercising activities.



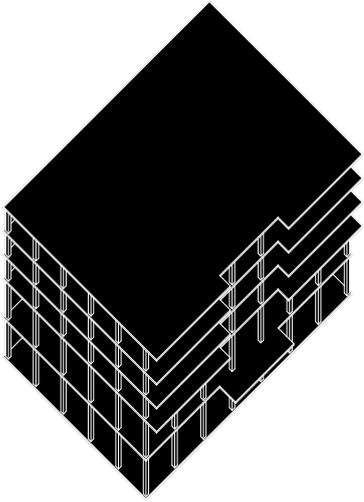
2. NAUTICAL CLUB

This solution can create a nice landscape similar to a natural wetland area, and possibly become very attractive for different local and migratory bird species, which will create a more natural atmosphere around the area.



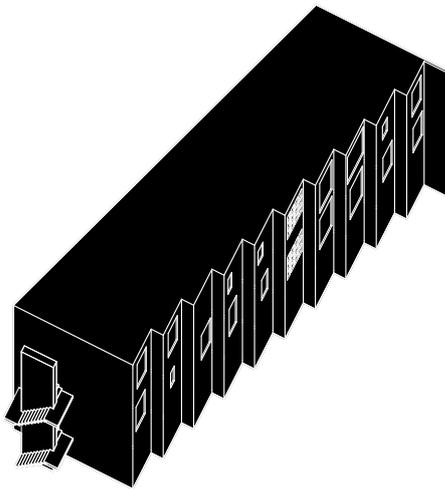
4. SHOPPING STRIP

The trampoline is a very unique asset of the Vlora beaches. This specific trampoline has been used by different generations to learn how to swim, to do competitions or to simply enjoy a jump in the water.



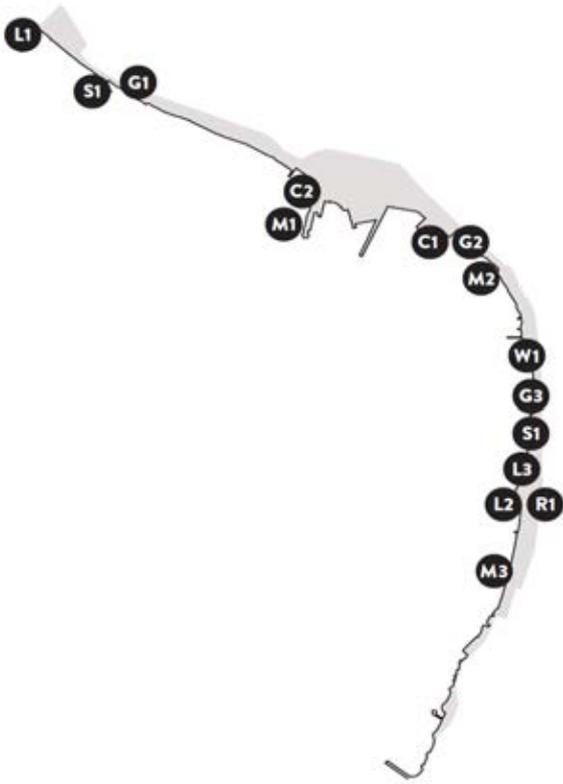
5. CULTURAL CENTER

Wetland areas can be created on floating piers. Using standard equipment to build modular floating piers, this proposition uses the assembling of modules sized 50cm x 50cm x 40cm and able to hold 350kg/m² as a support for an artificial freshwater pond.



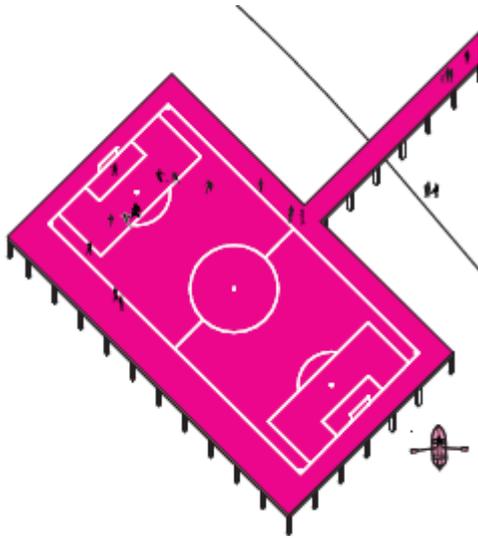
6. ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

This solution can create a nice landscape similar to a natural wetland area, and possibly become very attractive for different local and migratory bird species, which will create a more natural atmosphere around the area.



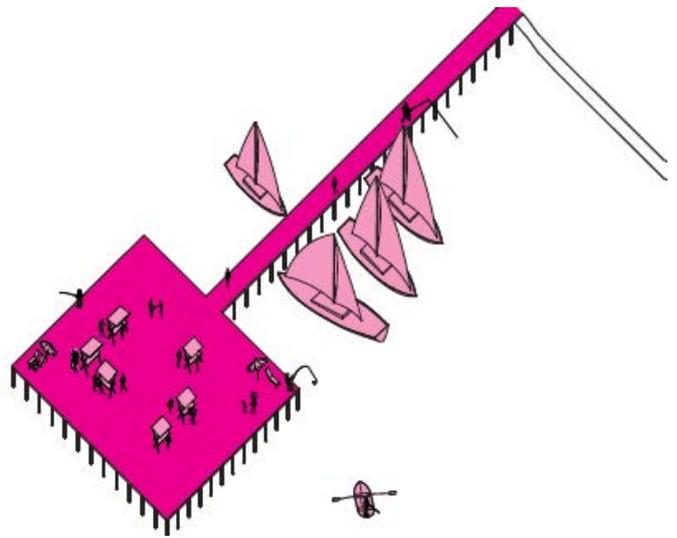
LONG TERM PROPOSALS

The long term proposals would need more time to be realized however they would be crucial to the quality and services that the Vlorë waterfront would offer. These proposals would significantly increase the level of health, culture, commerce and accessibility that the short term proposals start to delineate.



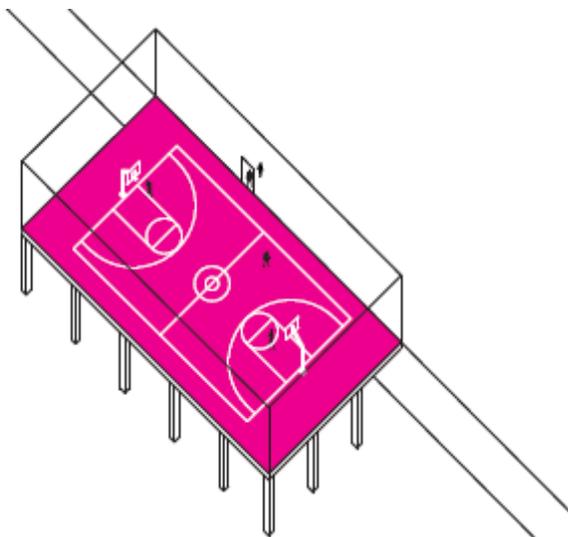
S1. SOCCER FIELD

Soccer is a long loved sport by the locals, it is typically played in the sand. This proposal would find soccer played in a platform on the sea, with the gorgeous view in the back and once in a while, with a refreshing jump in the water.



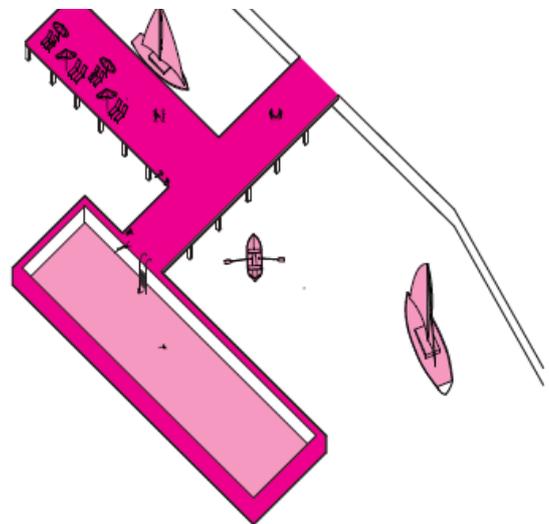
L1. FISHERMEN PIER

The fishermen pier is a necessary facility for the citizens of Vlorë. This is mostly envisioned for the local community that can anchor their boats, unfold their nets, and go fishing, or sailing. This facility is lacking for the moment and it has been demanded by the local community.



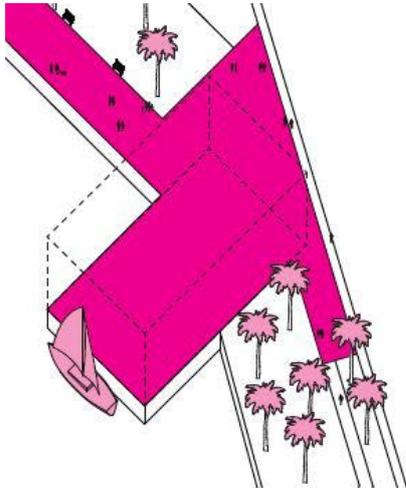
S2. BASKETBALL COURT

Basketball is a sport that has been slightly forgotten and should be brought back. The basketball field on the water is proposed as an attractive way to revitalize sports culture and healthy bodies in the city of Vlorë.



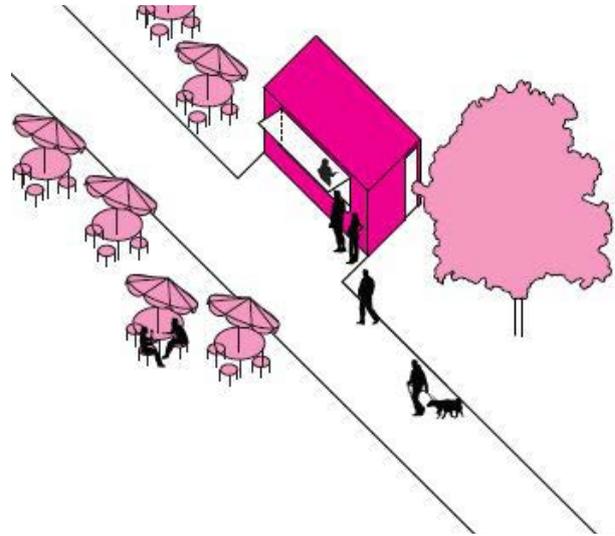
L3. POOL

The pool would be a summer and winter facility. It would be used for anyone that enjoys a swimming pool facility rather than the beach. The pool would also serve as a training facility for swimmers during the cold season.



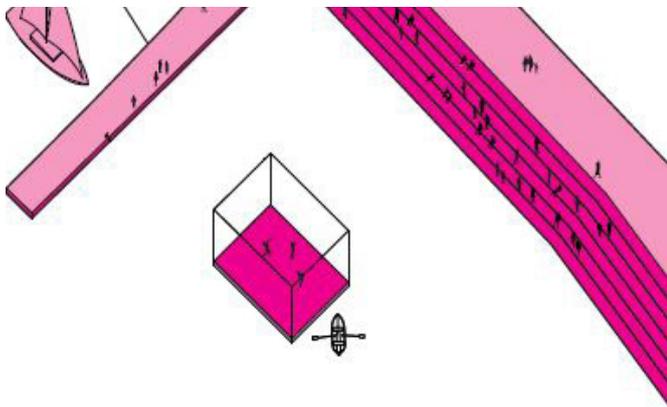
C1. LANDMARK BUILDING

The landmark building would be an elegantly designed two-floored building, that would be used in the interior as well as the exterior. Internally it would offer shows as well as exhibition spaces. While the exterior would be a place appropriated by the citizens of Vlora to relax, play and congregate.



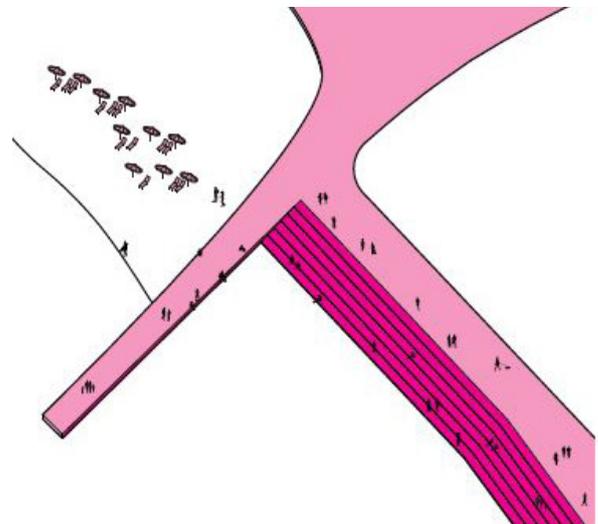
R1. BUVETTE

The buvette is an absolute necessity in the Vlora waterfront, not only for the typical necessity for tourists and locals to have refreshments and fast food, but also because of the inevitable Albanian culture of coffee drinking and discussions over it.



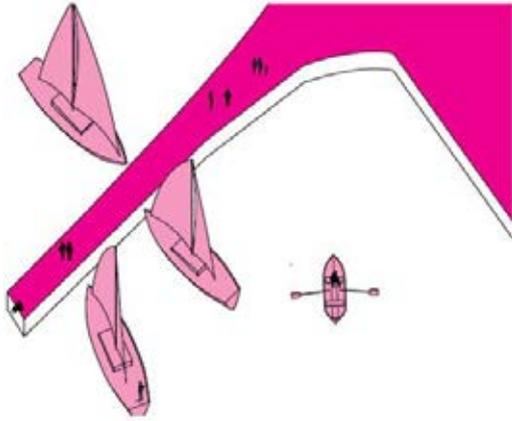
C2. STAGE

The stage would be the main attraction for anyone passionate of performance art. It would be located in the water, and the shows would be seen from the stairs. This could also work as a summer cinema with projected films.



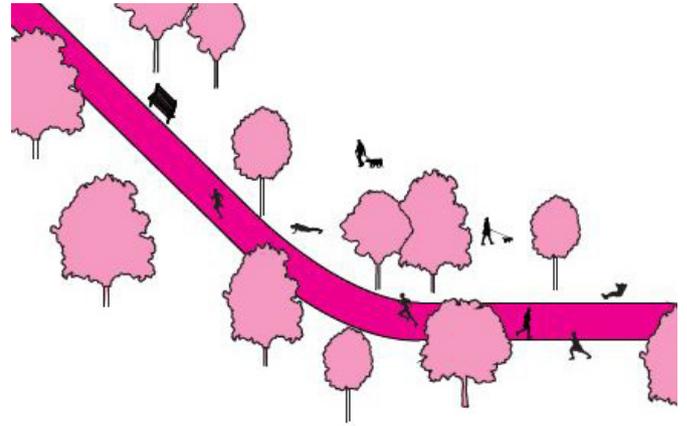
M1. STEPS

The steps would serve different purposes. Apart from being an alternative way of chilling at the beach they would be a gradual passage from the land to the sea. They could be used by fishermen to open their nets, or by the Stage Audience to sit on and enjoy the shows, the sun, or the stars.



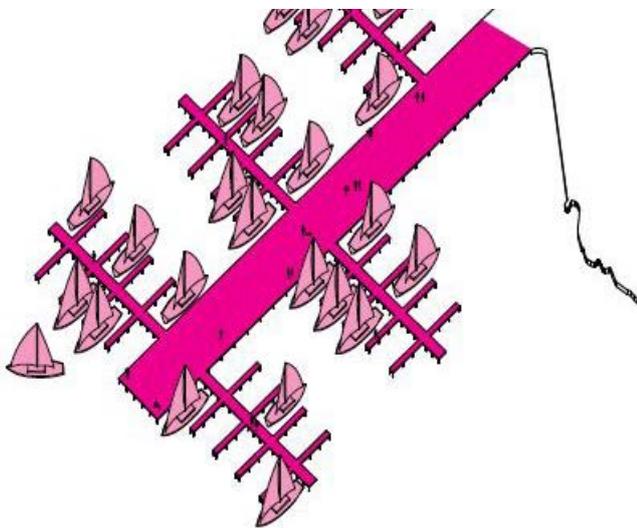
M2. PIER

The pier would serve for anchoring local and touristic boats, or for an evening stroll. They will also make sure to fill some of the eroded beach mass in critical parts of the coast.



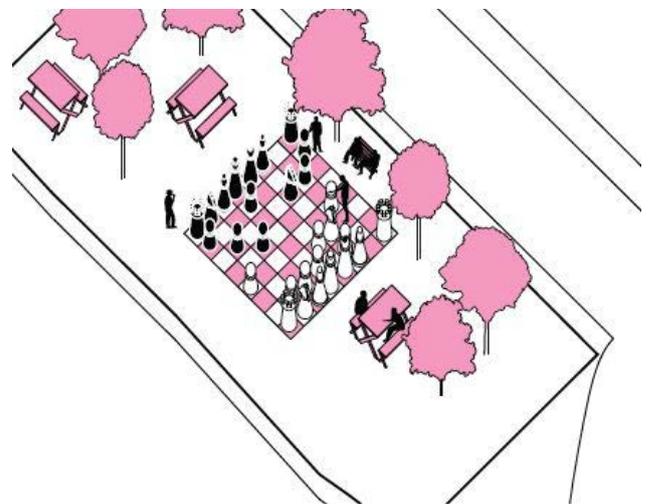
G1. URBAN PARK

Keeping in mind the intense construction that this landscape has suffered, green space should be given back in the hope that it will regenerate some of the flora and fauna that has been.



M3. MARINA

Since the port of Vlora will be turned into a Touristic Port then a marina will be necessary for incentivizing tourism and foreigners to anchor their boats and some of their time and money in the city of Vlora.



G3. SMALL PARK

The small park would be a great place for elders to play their domino games while the youth tries to move human size chess, have picnics or local music shows.

GREEN VLORA BAY

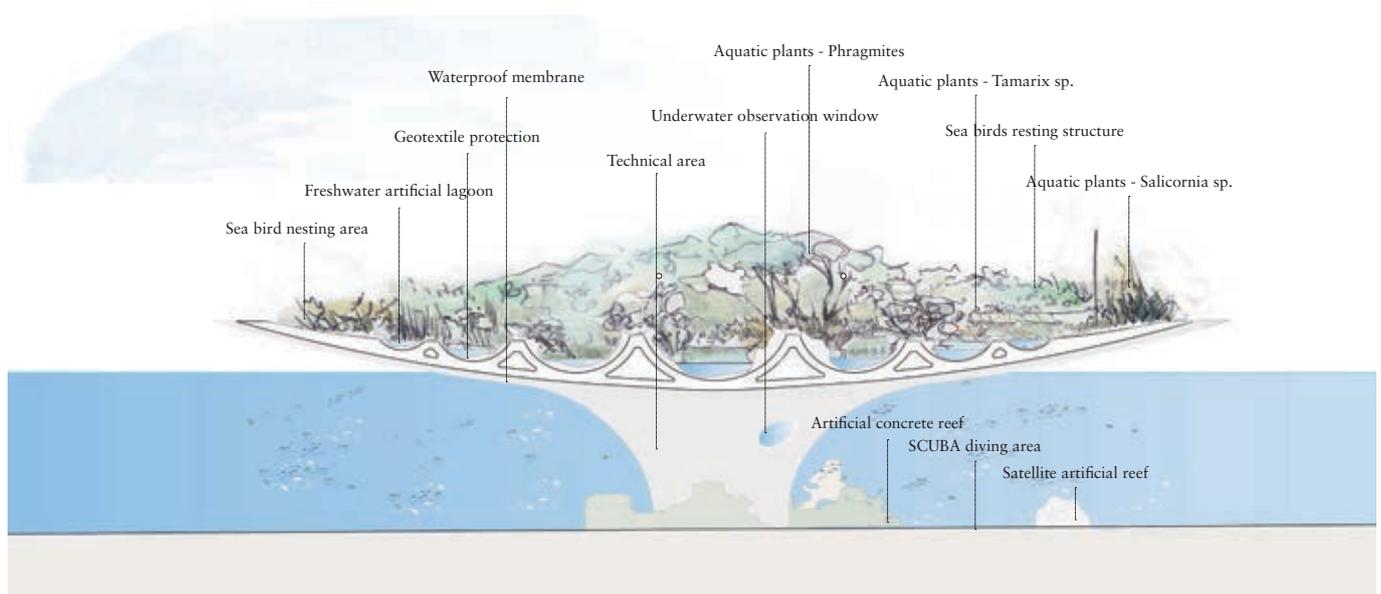


ISLAND - RECREATION OF NATURAL HABITATS

The ecological island would be a new symbol for the city of Vlorë. While it would be a much larger intervention than the proposed water gardens, it would complement them and become an emblem in the fight for ecological preservation. Located peripherally in the context of the waterfront so as not to impede the uninterrupted views to Sazan, the floating artificial island would preserve most plant and animal species found in the region of Vlorë. It would constitute a symbolical arc, reminding individuals of the importance of progressing towards sustainable touristic development - which when achieved might allow the island to be permanently anchored to the city and become a natural museum of its past.

As a complementary solution to a coastal regeneration strategy, the the creation of an artificial island is proposed in order to promote biologic colonization. The island will have a submersed part, recreating a rocky reef, to offer enough hides, holes and protection to promote species

colonization as fish, crabs, octopus and algae. This renewed habitat can also be an attractive point for divers, at the same time it can be seen from the island through an underwater window. A fresh water pipeline should be connected to allow the creation of a natural habitat with living plants. The construction of some artificial lagoons inside the island will also enable aquatic plants to grow up and will be very attractive for a different kind of sea birds such as *Larus* sp, *Sterna* sp or *Gavia* sp. To encourage the arrival of more sea birds diverse structures can be created to be used as resting points where they find themselves safe and become easy observation points for species as *Phalacrocorax* sp. The island will catalyze biological colonization and coast regeneration in the nearest areas once contamination level will be reduced by the sewer treatment plant. The island can also be an iconic symbol of the coast regeneration process which can be explained to beach users through permanent displays nearby the seaside.



THE NEW VLORA WATERFRONT

Considering the failures of the rigidly controlled planning of the communist era and the informal burst of the last 23 years, the context of the city seems to request a “third way.” A solid structure upon which development can grow at a pace defined by economic and social conditions - however always in unison and in a controlled direction. Parts of this vision can be implemented in a few months and have visible results before the touristic season starts. This vision allows for a pacing of the project which is constantly connected to the economic performance of Vlora while at the same time creating a stream of constant interventions.

