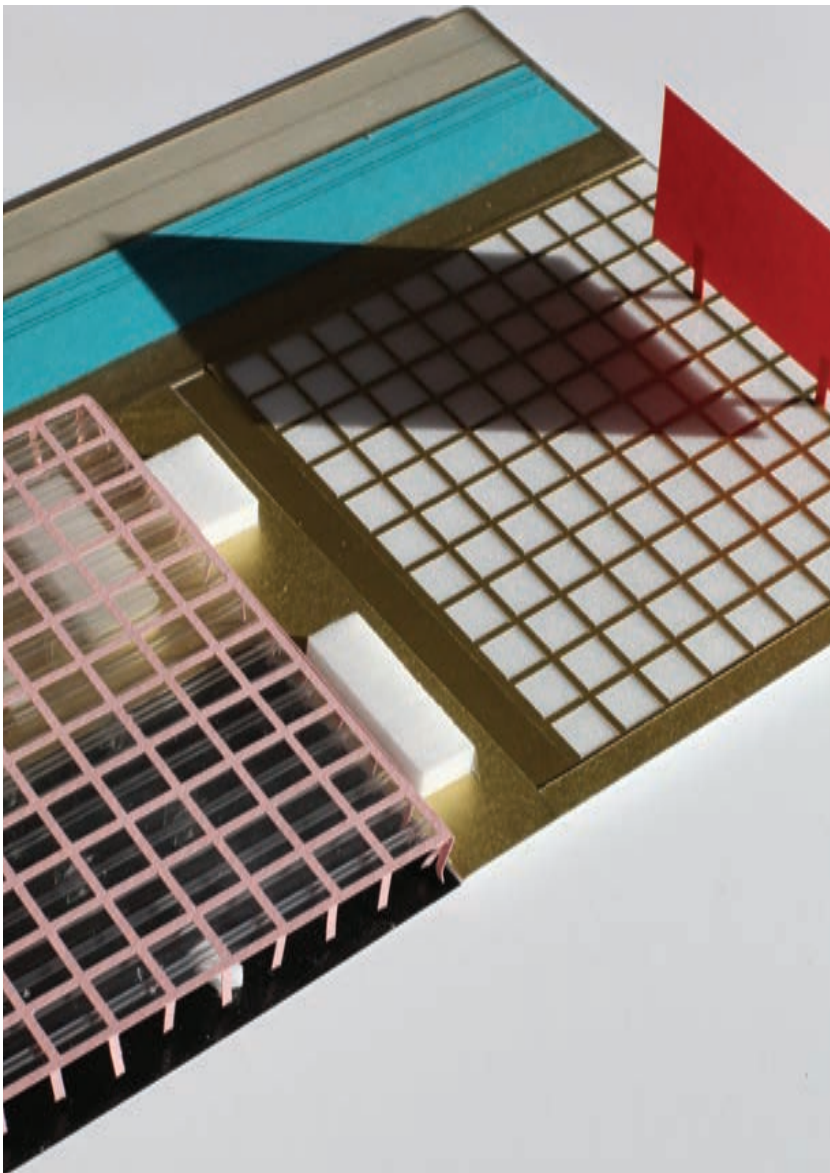


FEBRUARY 2014

VLORA WATERFRONT PROMENADE COMPETITION



A CITY CLOSER TO ITS WATERFRONT



SOUTHERN PROMENADE
Urban boulevard riding along the coastline.
Dense developments facing the sea

COASTAL STRIP
City open to the sea.
Cultural activities related to the university and the city.
Open Market hall.
New harbour terminal.

WESTERN PROMENADE
Natural facade of the city. Pine tree plantation along the coastline

A CITY CLOSER TO ITS WATERFRONT

Vlora is in need for a renewed image. Major problematic have already been approached through infrastructural studies, projects or masterplans. These studies have led to a major restructuration of the city's image: the main roads have been enlarged, some parts of the waterfront have been brightened up with squares and public promenades, some larger unexploited territories are now part of the city's development plans...

The construction of a large port is currently under study as well as a new bypass aiming to reduce regional traffic through the city centre. All these evolutions are placing Vlora closer to european urban standards, and give a positive signal of its touristic development expectations: a greater number of tourists and a more qualitative category of tourism.

What Vlora needs today, as many european city of a comparable size, is to develop its own specific and strong identity. The construction an emergence of this identity must be taken as an opportunity to organise and envision future developments of the city under a new eye, to assemble these future developments under a progressive and unifying urban image, to establish priorities, to construct a unique and outstanding urban development programme that will allow the city to increase its current standards in terms of quality of life, touristic attraction, cultural and economic dynamism. This identity has to be built upon Vlora's particular assets. The city is located in a very beautiful landscape, facing a protected peninsula, and surrounded by hills aplenty occupied by olive trees and vineyards. This makes the potential for Vlora to become one of the most attractive spots in the Mediterranean region.

Vlora also hosts one of the most important universities of Albania with no less than 15,000 students living and studying there. Projects are currently under study to increase the capacity of the university.

These assets must be placed at the service of a sustainable development process organised by a comprehensive project. Yet, in the current situation of most european cities, and especially in Albania, such a project cannot rely only on costly public investment. This does not mean that the project should not aim at ambitious goals, but it means that it has to rely on a clever and gradual urban strategy, allowing to start from simple and unexpensive actions that will trigger further development, attract and organise private investment.

The city coastline is the main asset from which Vlora can build such an urban development strategy and start implementing it.

Our project identifies priorities, instruments and guidelines that form a coherent yet flexible and open set of measures, enabling the city, its population and its visitors to win back the waterfront. From this starting point, we propose actions than can be developed in time with great flexibility, gradually contributing to the emergence of a new structure for touristic and economic growth at the scale of the entire city. To ensure the progressivity of this development, all actions that we propose are rooted in existing elements of the city and consist in gradually enhancing their potential. We call this a «soft planning» strategy.

The revival of Vlora's waterfront requires an infrastructural action. The Coastal Strip starts from simple projects, activations and animations that will at first aim at, address to and imply Vlora's population. This first step will establish the base of new relations between the public and the waterfront in a soft and enjoyable manner. A series of events, temporary seasonal activities, light architectures... will establish the waterfront as a new address and destination in Vlora and in the Mediterranean. Progressively, they can consolidate into more solid and permanent forms, clearly identifying a new kind of centrality by the water.

A second step will spread the new values, qualities and attractivity given to the waterfront within the urban structure of Vlora, interconnecting all existing and future strategic sites, from the city centre to the port, from Soda Woods to Tunnel, from the old airport to the future port and industrial zone.

The redefined urban structure will reassert the specific geographic position of Vlora, between sea, city and hills, as the base for its economic and urban development.

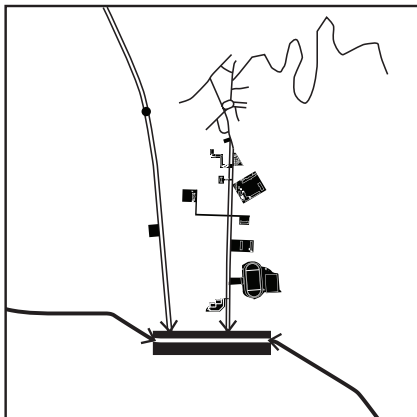
The «soft planning strategy» that underlies our project for Vlora and its waterfront negotiates the shift from the current technical and strategic planning approach to an embodied vision of Vlora's future, rooted in its geographical and cultural assets and in the dynamics of its population.

By implementing and developing this strategy, Vlora's waterfront project can become the testbed for a more extended coastal revival process at the scale of the entire country. From Shëngjin, Durrës, Dhërmi, to Ksamil, each Albanian coastal city can reinvent and build its own image, strengthen its position on the Mediterranean, and built the future upon the specific assets of its territorial situation, landscape, and culture. The coast of Albany becomes an interconnected network of cities and natural spots, redesigning a touristically and economically attractive maritime façade. Cities closer to their waterfronts.

THE COASTAL STRIP

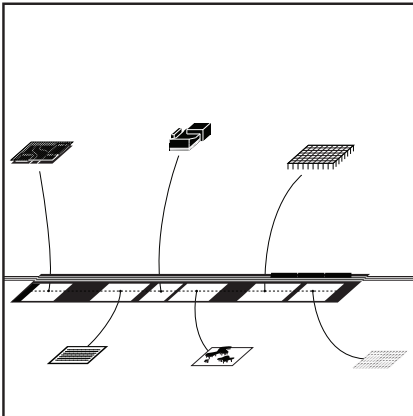
THE COASTAL STRIP EMERGES FROM A SERIES OF SIMPLE MOVEMENTS. THIS STRONG FIGURE MATCHES THE DESIRE FOR A DIVERSE AND INTENSE WATERFRONT AND THE INFRASTRUCTURAL NEEDS FOR A HARMONIOUS, ENJOYABLE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. ONLY FEW STEPS ARE NECESSARY TO UNDERSTAND THE LOGICS UNDERLYING THIS FIGURE. IT CAN BE SUMMED UP AS THE FOLLOWING SIMPLE ACTIONS:

PROLONGING & ARTICULATING – INTENSIFYING & OCCUPYING – EXTENDING & DEVELOPING.



A. THE COASTAL STRIP EMERGES FROM A DOUBLE MOVEMENT from the City to the Port and the constitution of one continuous promenade

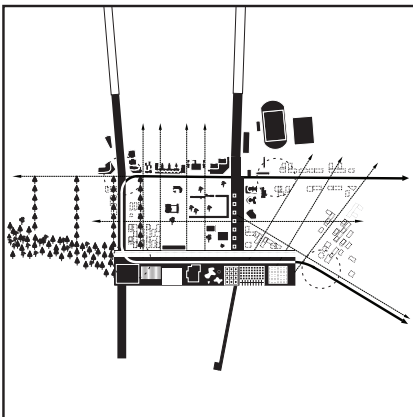
- The two central axis assemble the main urban functions of the city (business, university and education, sports and leisure) and tie them to the network of inter-city transportation modes (train, highway, port). These two main axis are extended as far as the waterfront, further continuing on the two existing jetties. The extension of the two axis pulls the intensity of the city centre towards the waterfront and provides Vlorë's population and visitors a new access to the promenade.
- The maritime façade of Vlorë can be revitalised only by the creation of a continuous promenade from Soda Woods to Tunnel. The space between the two existing jetties is also redesigned to link the western and southern coastal promenades which are currently separated.
- The intersection of the two extended axis with the continuous promenade draws a new public figure within Vlorë's geography. Thus is the fundamental ambition of the Coastal Strip asserted: an infrastructural project that articulates the different parts of the city and sets them in motion.



B. THE COASTAL STRIP IS A NEW PUBLIC POLARITY

from a multidimensional urban articulation to a very intense and programmed strip facing the sea

- The particularly favourable position of the Coastal Strip, where Vlora's districts meet enlarged streets and the waterfront, allows to envision the port as a more open and more connected element that will act as a major articulation at the scale of the city and the bay. The port becomes a central place embodying Vlora's revival, a «flagship space».
- The contour and design of the Coastal Strip are enhanced to receive new constructible spaces. The current coastline is slightly adjusted in order to recreate tension and intensify relations between two aspects of Vlora's coast: the western natural part and the southern urban part. This rationalisation of the coastline also creates opportunities for new public programmes to develop along the waterfront.
- A new ferry terminal is built in continuity with the main jetty. The axis that links the highway access, the train station and the new terminal becomes a structuring element within the city's mobility network, a kind of linear multimodal interconnector at city scale. Facing the new terminal, a new market is installed to complete a very public sequence of spaces by articulating existing public facilities such as the stadium, commercial groundfloors, the House of Independence...

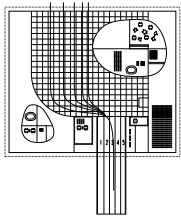


C. THE COASTAL STRIP TRIGGERS THE DEVELOPMENTS OF A NEW CENTRALITY BY THE SEASIDE

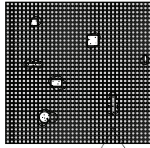
from the Coastal Strip to a new university district and the definition of new city limits along the coast

- A new conference centre is built in continuity with the existing university and House of Culture. It draws an extended figure of culture and creation in Vlora, right by the waterfront. Future developments can be envisioned around these strong public polarities, such as new university buildings or students housing that can be used as holiday residences in the summer. Culture and education are at the heart of these developments that happen just behind the Coastal Strip.
- Public space between these three emblematic buildings (ferry terminal, market and conference centre) is progressively occupied by lighter programmes such as an outdoor seawater swimmingpool, a public garden or a vast meeting and events piazza.
- The new configuration of public space goes along with a clearer expression of the limits between the city and the coast. The plantation of trees, a covered gallery, diverse side promenades running parallel to the Coastal Strip, define three clearly identified but strongly interrelated sequences: the Pine Forrest in the west, the Coastal Strip in the centre, the Mediterranean Boulevard in the south.

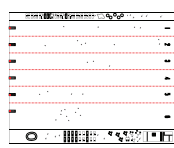
THE COASTAL STRIP



The Ferry Terminal



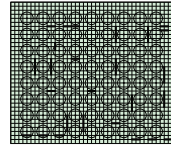
The Sea square



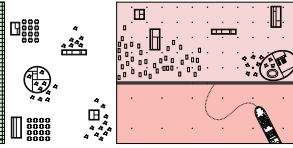
The Seawater Swimming Pool



The Conference Centre

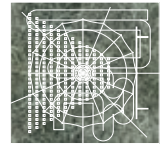


The Garden of Local Plants

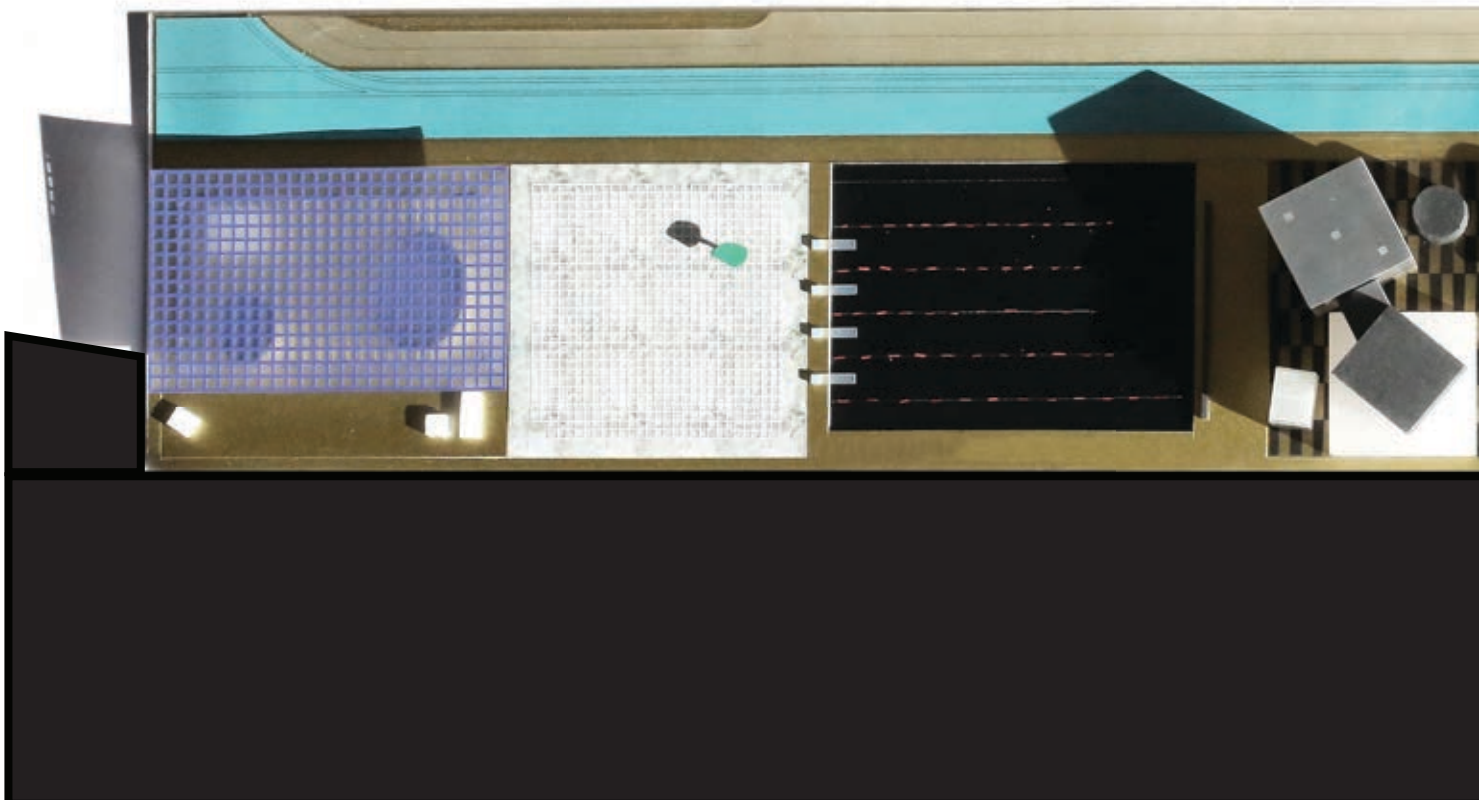
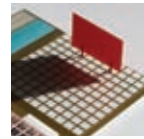
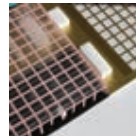
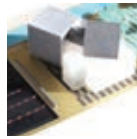
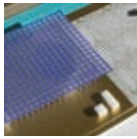


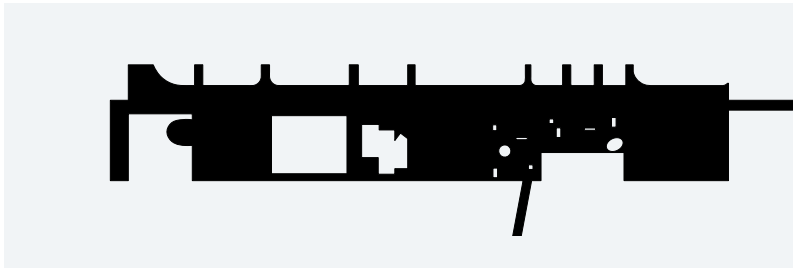
The Events and Meetings Plaza

The Market

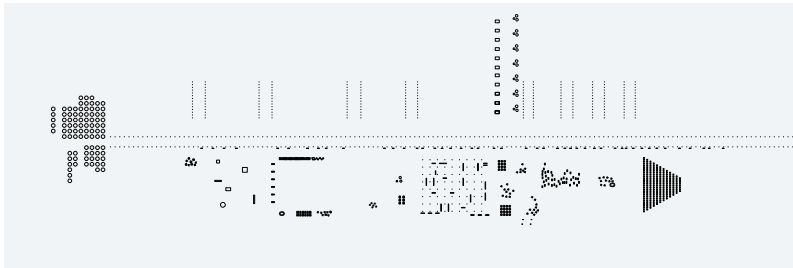


The Market Square

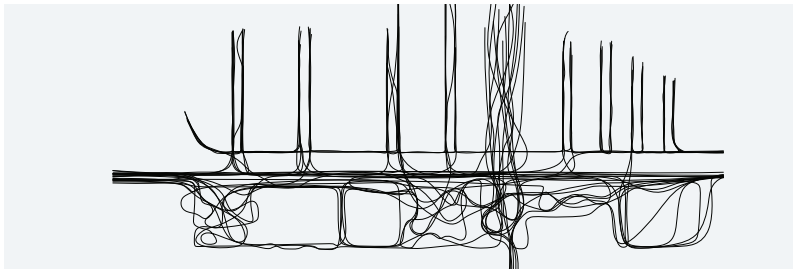




THE THREE ANCHOR PUBLIC PROGRAMMES (FERRY TERMINAL, CONFERENCE CENTRE, MARKET) STRUCTURING AN OPEN AND FLEXIBLE MULTIUSE PUBLIC SPACE

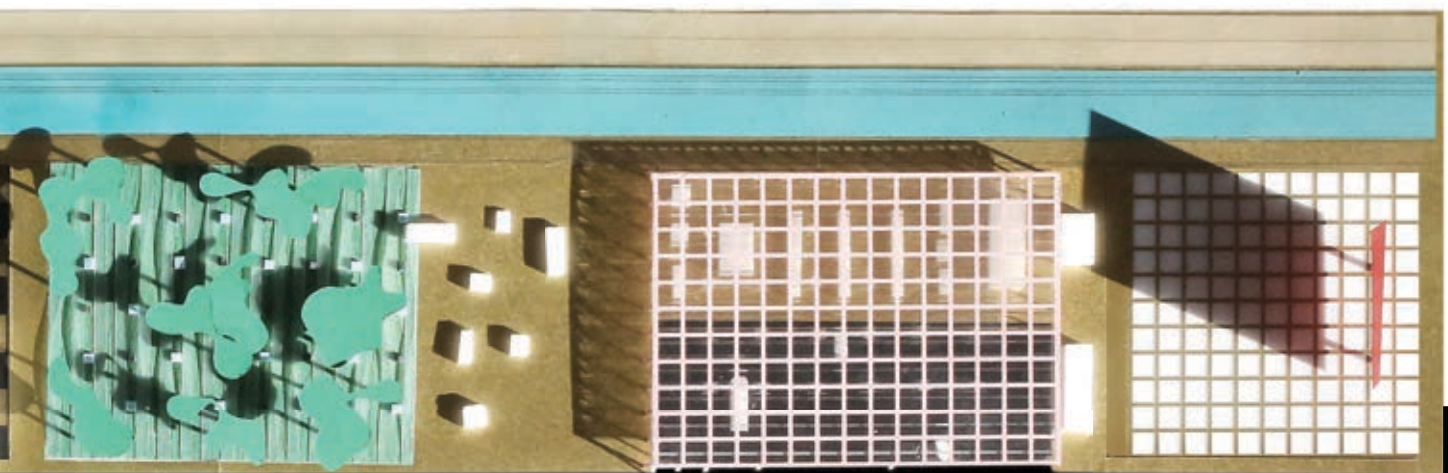


FLUX AND FLOWS: SEA TRAVELLERS, PEDESTRIANS, BICYCLE, CARS AND BUS-IN-LANE.



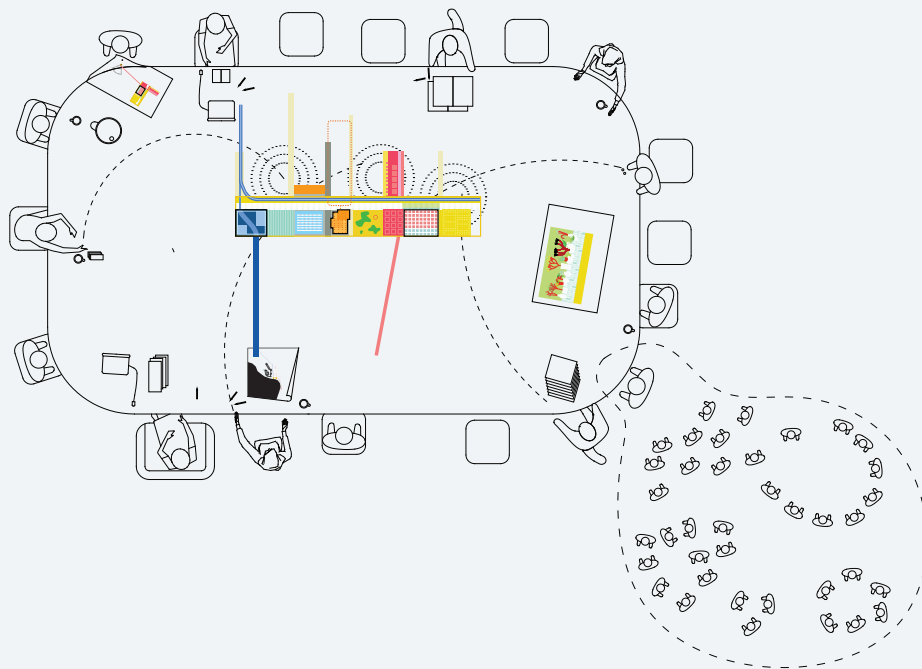
TREES, LIGHT AND URBAN FURNITURE ON THE COASTAL STRIP

CLOSE UP PHOTO ON THE PROJECT'S MODEL SHOWING THE COASTAL STRIP AND ITS FACILITIES.



PLANNING AGENDA

IN ORDER TO ENSURE THE SUCCESS OF THE PROJECT WE PROPOSE TO SET AN OPEN AGENDA. THIS AGENDA AIMS TO BUILD THE PROJECT IN TIME BY PRIORITIZING ITS DIFFERENT PARTS. IT INCLUDES EQUALLY THE INFRASTRUCTURAL NEEDS, THE CONSTITUTION OF THE WALKWAYS NETWORK, ESPECIALLY THE WATERFRONT PROMENADE, THE CONSTRUCTION OF MAJOR PUBLIC AND INSTITUTIONAL FACILITIES, THE TIMELINE FOR EVENTS. THIS AGENDA IS NOT ONLY MEANT TO PHASE THE PROJECT OF THE COASTAL STRIP BUT ALSO TO BUILD UPON TIME.



0. VLORA'S WATERFRONT PROMENADE PROJECT BUREAU

A Project Bureau is founded. Its role is to coordinate the actions on the city: the heavy and infrastructural projects meet the softer urban issues (housing developments, urban politics, public space projects...) and the dematerialized concerns such as communication, events organisation, lighter forms of planning in general. These topics are treated equally by a collegium constituted of city representatives, technical services, architects and urban planners, artists, designers and events planners, touristic authorities, neighbourhood councillors, etc.

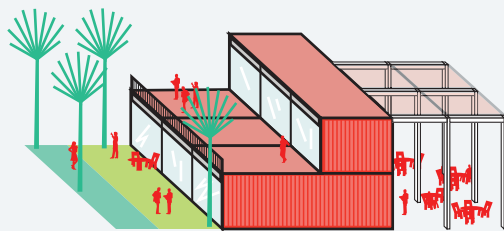
The Project Bureau aims to build a fully embodied vision for the city upon time and through precise projects

SOFT PLANNING AND IDEAS



THE PLANTS FESTIVAL

Some annual events can be organized by the Project Bureau at no cost or with very low public funding. The first of a wider series could be a Plant Festival: Vlora's population would be asked to bring a domestic plant on the seaside; we could expect some 80.000 plants. The Project Bureau could decide how to distribute and arrange this collective resource of potted or planted plants in the city, as a means to prefigure new public gardens or occupy the mineral walkways of the city with greener ornaments. This type of events would have a strongly positive impact on Vlora's image for tourists as well as for its own population. It would support a positive feeling of identity, community and public space appropriation for the city's inhabitants.



TEMPORARY ARCHITECTURES AND PREFIGURATIONS

Temporary architecture could also be erected on some specific spots of the coastal strip and along the promenades that are defined by our plan. They would prefigure the future and permanent programmes that will be built later: an open stage for a theatre, a few shops and cafés in cargo container for retail hotspots, temporary exhibition structures announcing a future museum...



SIMPLE EVENTS TO START WITH

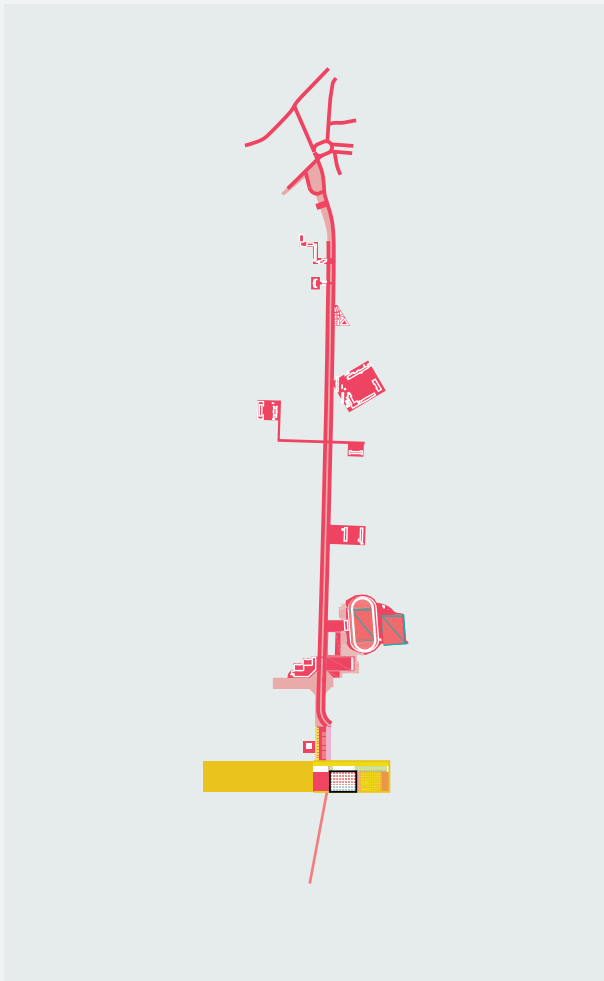
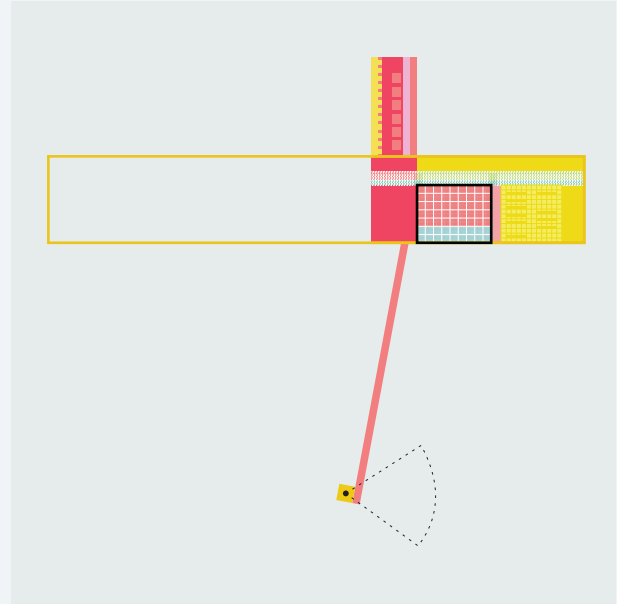
Simple events can be organised as soon as the first phase of the coastal strip development, like the installation of a Ferris wheel, open air cinematographic projections, etc. Local events such as the traditional dance festival might be relocated on the plaza facing the sea. A weekly market or outdoors public lectures could also be held regularly.

PLANNING AGENDA

FIRST PHASE (2014-2015)

1.1. THE MARKET

- The historical axis is extended to reach the end of the pier. This will allow citizens and tourists to discover the city under a new angle, with a panoramic view of Vlorë from the sea. A new perspective to envision the future of the city.
- A temporary structure is created to host the market. It is located at the convergence of the hills and the sea: a new place to experience local flavours by the seaside : oil, wine and fish.



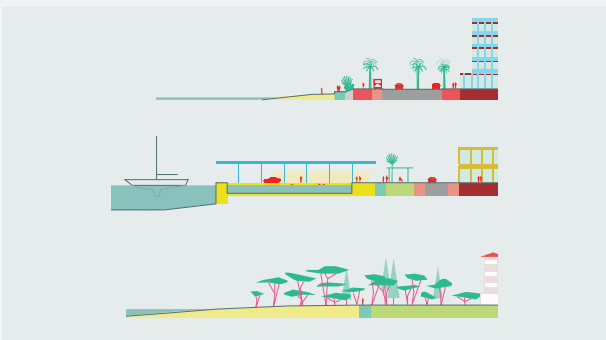
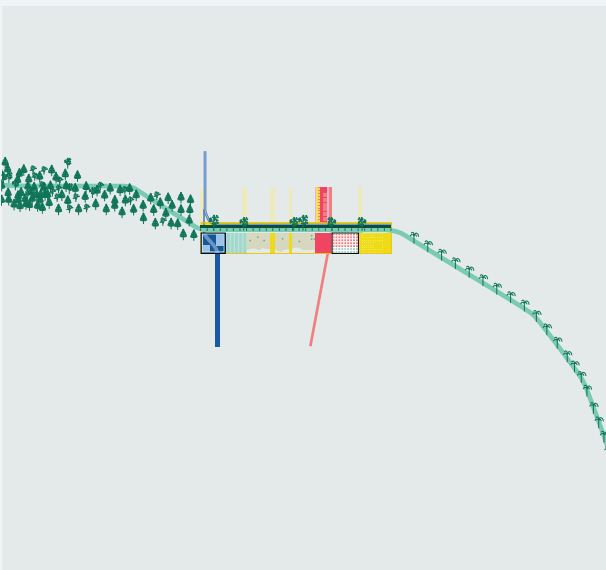
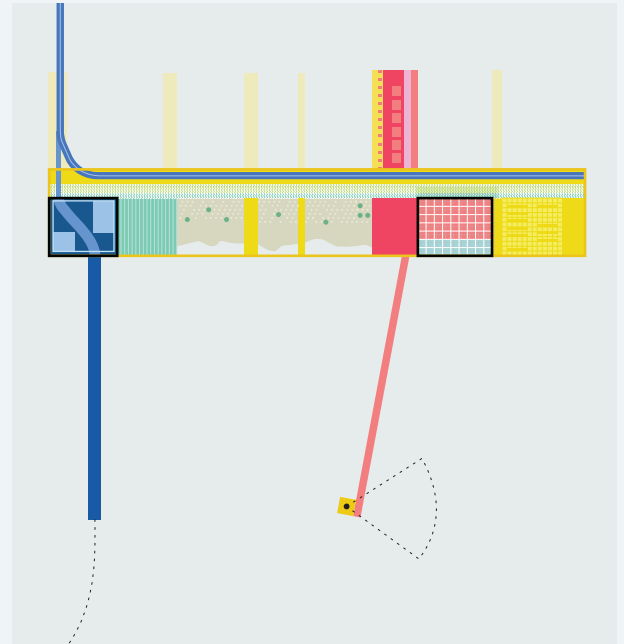
2.1. EXTENDED HISTORICAL AXIS

- The openness of the port through the market and the first sequence of the waterfront promenade ensure the physical continuity from the historical centre to the sea.
- This act enhances the strength of the historical axis, mixing all the major facilities of the city in one single and symbolic street.

NEXT PHASES (2015-2020)

1.2. THE TERMINAL

- A new terminal is built on the other side of the Coastal Strip. The second axis clearly links the sea terminal, the train station and the end of the highway. The new terminal gathers the police station, the customs border and the port administration that are presently disseminated on site.
- The waterfront is organised along the coastal strip as a continuous promenade from Soda Woods to Tunnel.
- The coastline is slightly remodelled through the construction of small piers conceived to later receive new programs and facilities.



2.2. FROM SODA WOODS TO TUNNEL: A CONTINUOUS PROMENADE

. The entire coastline from Soda Woods to Tunnel is now activated. The entire length of the promenade is rearranged with pine trees and palm trees plantations all along. The promenade is designed according to three different sequences.

. The first sequence, on the west side, is a natural walkway bending under the pine trees.

. The second sequence, on the coastal strip, is a mineral lane shaded by a long arcade and punctuated by isolated specific trees.

. The third sequence, on the southern part of the waterfront, is following the road at a lower level, providing an intimate stroll by the sea.

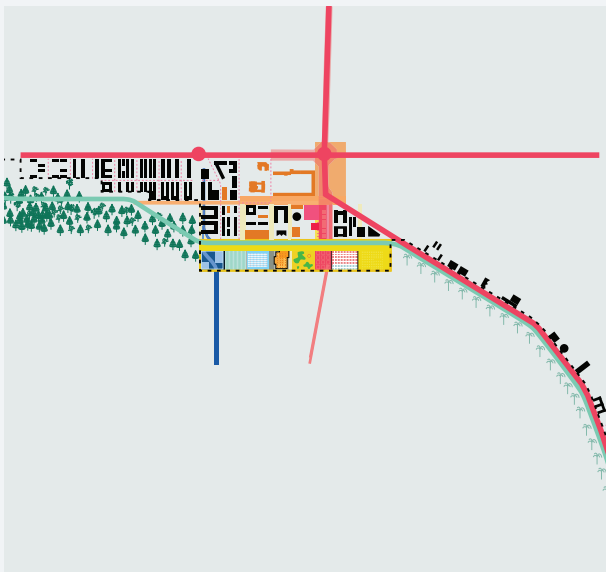
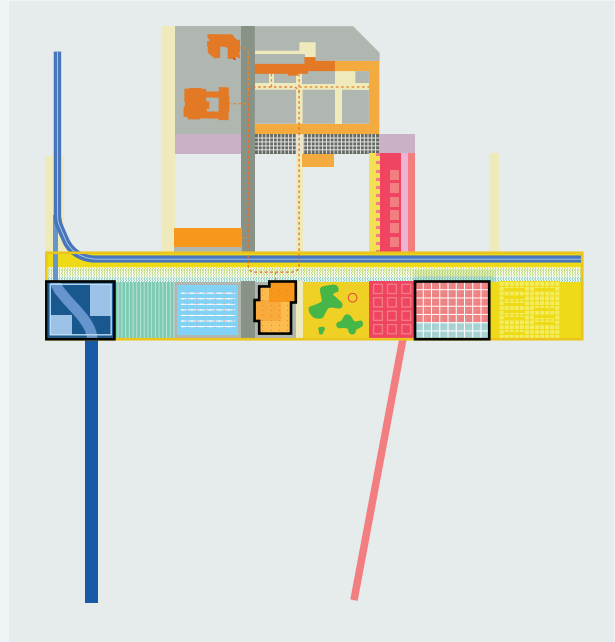
Three different sequences are defined along the coast line. They emphasise the already existing characters and qualities of each part of the waterfront.

- The western sequence: the Pine Forrest, increased natural amenities.
- The Coastal Strip sequence: an intense urbanity by the seaside.
- The southern sequence: Mediterranean Boulevard.

PLANNING AGENDA

1.3. THE CONFERENCE CENTRE

- The Coastal Strip is completed by adding the last main facility: a conference centre. It is meant to be used by students but also for major public events, or even as a part of the university open to the public. Its location on the coastal strip draws a figure that links the existing university, its extension by a new building, and a seawater swimming pool facing a new library.
- With the new conference centre, the university emerges as a structuring facility in what appears to be a new centrality facing the sea and dedicated to everyone: Vlora's citizens and the tourists.

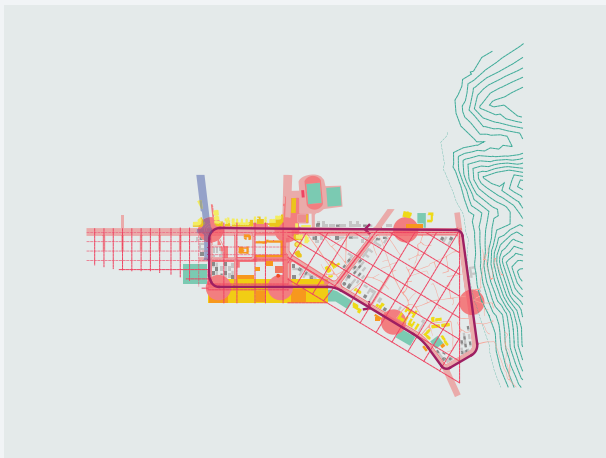


2.3. NEW CITY LIMITS AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS

. Along the reshaped promenade, new developments are made possible. Thus, new kinds of limits are created on the city's coastline: on the west side, some lots are made constructible for modern buildings between the large road and the pedestrian promenade, the ground is freed from car traffic and offers a close and intimate relation to the sea.

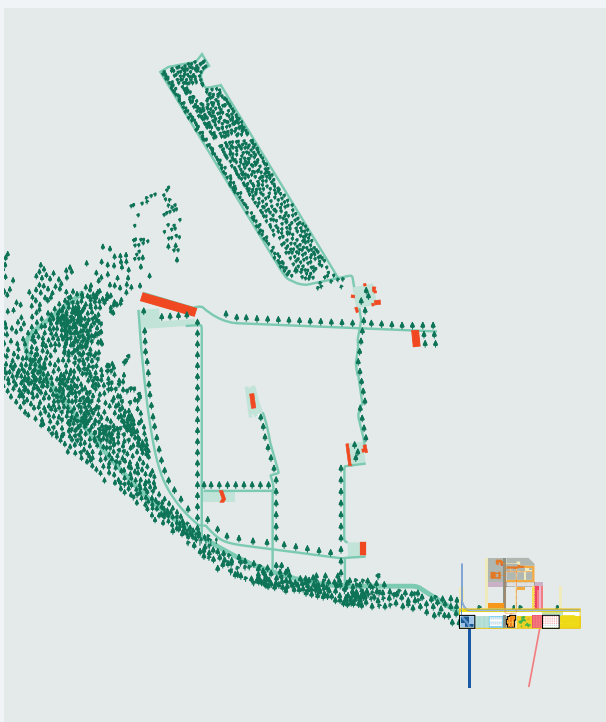
. Behind the rearranged port, the university's influence is enhanced and clearly asserts the vocation of this part of the city, a new city centre by the seaside dedicated to students, inhabitants and tourists looking for a more urban and cultural experience of the coast.

. On the south side, the atmosphere is positively urban with tall and modern apartments and hotel buildings facing the sea and the large road planted with regular palm trees along the beaches. Together, these three very clear sections of the coastline offer a multiple, diverse and exciting experience of the city's new waterfront promenade.



2.4. THE LOOP AND THE SEASIDE CITY CENTRE

- A new Loop can be created in order to concentrate the real estate and housing developments around the Coastal Strip. This figure of mobility is the support for a bus-in-lane and a bicycle path.
- It links the major facilities of this part of the city and the neighbourhoods on which it opens are ready to attract and receive new inhabitants, tourists, and activities. The western area of the Pine Forrest offers a very qualitative condition for those seeking an intimate relation to nature. The central area, directly attached to the Coastal Strip, has an increased attractivity and urban quality with the university, the stadium, the House of Independence and the programmed ground floors with cafés, restaurant and commercial space for a civic and intense experience of the waterfront. The southern Mediterranean Boulevard offers a more diverse and permissive relation to the beaches and the hills just behind.
- The infrastructural figure of the Loop also revitalises the east-west street running through the hills. This figure offers a condensed overview of Vlora's specific geographical assets that are particularly suitable for a new touristic centre: sea, culture, education, sport, hills and local agriculture, varied public spaces, public programmes, market and other sorts of shops and commercial spaces.



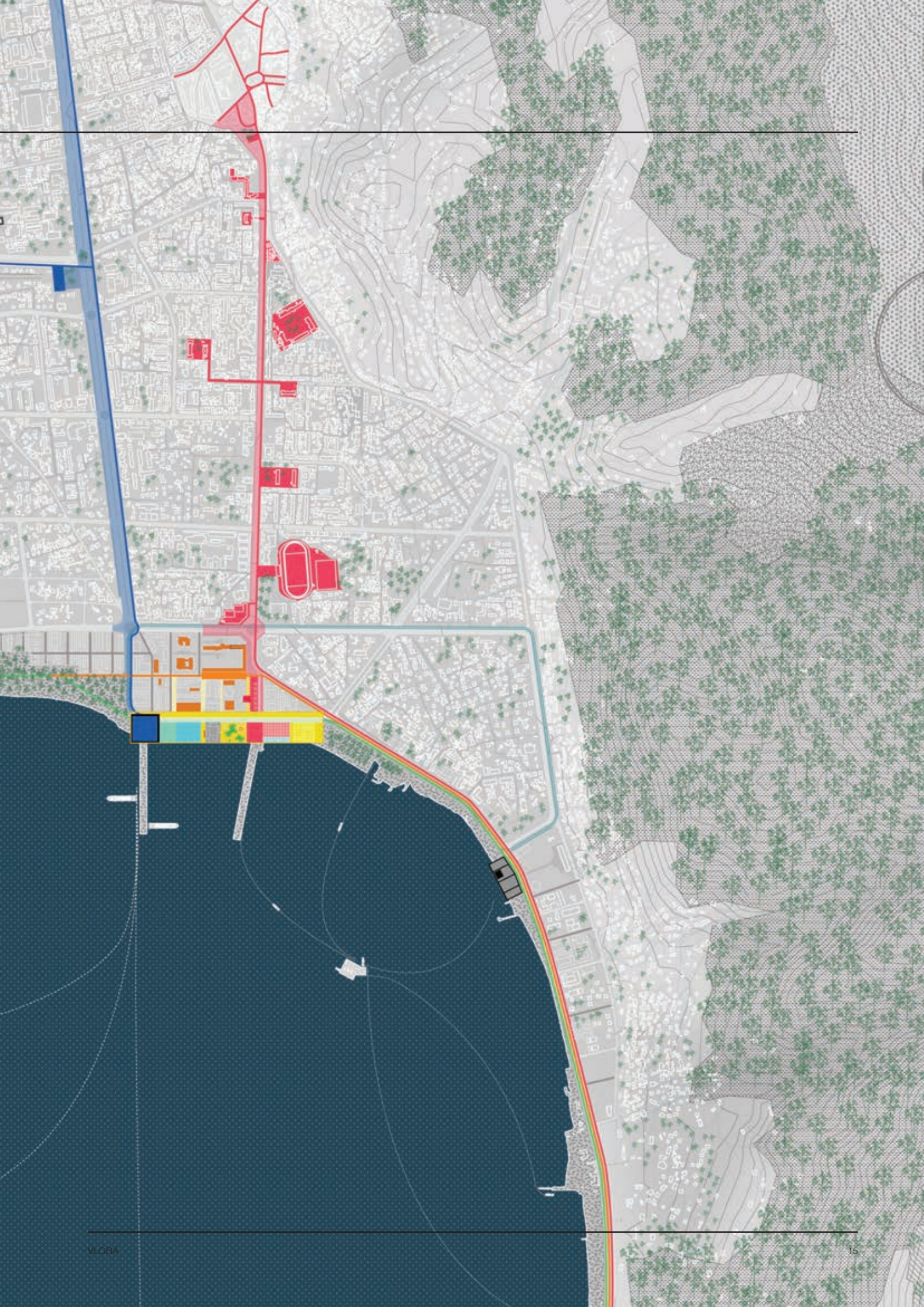
2.5. THE PINE FORREST AND THE ARCHAIC CITY'S PUBLIC SPACE NETWORK

- The western part of the promenade is generously planted with pine trees, extending the existing pine trees forest and separating the city from the future industrial zone. The former airport is landscaped and becomes a large park for Vlora's population.
- Some spaces between the waterfront and the future park are freed up in order to install a network of small public spaces. They are filled with programmes linked to the university, aiming to transform this part of the city into a large open campus and to establish strong links between the students and the city daily life. This kind of intervention is able to durably transform the identity of this part of the city while preserving the marks of its identity.

ASSEMBLED FIGURES



STARTING FROM THE COASTAL STRIP, THE ARTICULATION OF STRUCTURING ELEMENTS SETS VLORA INTO MOTION: HISTORICAL AXIS, INFRASTRUCTURAL AXIS, CONTINUOUS PROMENADE, MEDITERRANEAN BOULEVARD, PINE FORREST, ARCHAIC CITY PUBLIC SPACES NETWORK, ALL INTERCONNECTED BY THE LOOP. THIS COMPLEX STRUCTURE ESTABLISHES A CLEAR LIMIT BETWEEN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY AND THE PRESERVATION OF ITS NATURAL LANDSCAPE. IT ALSO ORGANISES THE RECYCLING OF FORMER INFRASTRUCTURES. THE OLD AIRPORT IS TRANSFORMED INTO A PARK AND THE PORT IS MADE PUBLIC AND OPENED ON THE CITY. A NEW ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE IS DEVELOPED IN THE WEST OF THE CITY, WITH THE NEW PORT AND AN ATTACHED INDUSTRIAL ZONE.



THE VLORA OF THE NEW CENTURY

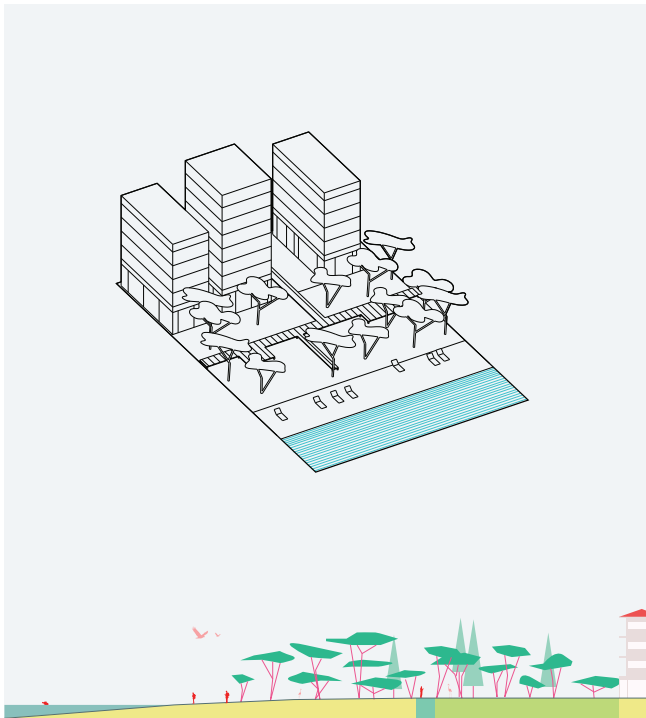
OUR PROJECT NOT ONLY REVEALS AND ASSERTS THE COASTLINE AND WATERFRONT PROMENADE AS ONE OF THE MAIN FEATURES AND ATTRACTIONS OF VLORA. IT ALSO ORGANISES FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE CITY THROUGH THE ATTRACTION AND CHANNELLING OF PRIVATE REAL ESTATE INITIATIVE BY PUBLIC PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE. THE WATERFRONT BECOMES VLORA'S MOST EMBLEMATIC LANDMARK AND ECONOMIC ATTRACTOR: A STRONG VECTOR OF ITS REVITALISED IMAGE AND IDENTITY, BETWEEN SEA, CITY AND NATURE.



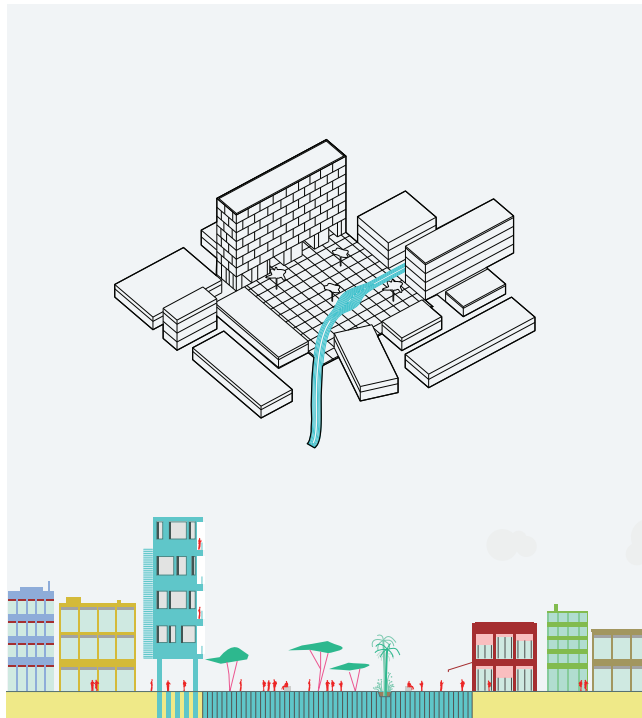
- ❶ WALKING UNDER THE PINE TREES
- ❷ ENJOYING NEW AND COOLER PUBLIC SPACES IN THE ARCHAIC CITY
- ❸ ENTERING VLORA FROM THE SEA THROUGH A CONTEMPORAY GATE
- ❹ LOOKING AT THE BAY WHILE SEATING IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM
- ❺ RESTING UNDER THE ARCADE AND ENJOYING THE VIEW
- ❻ TASTING THE FLAVORS OF VLORA
- ❼ WALKING ON THE SHADED PATH BETWEEN THE SEA AND THE CITY
- ❽ ENJOYING MULTIPLE ACTIVITES ALONG THE COASTLINE



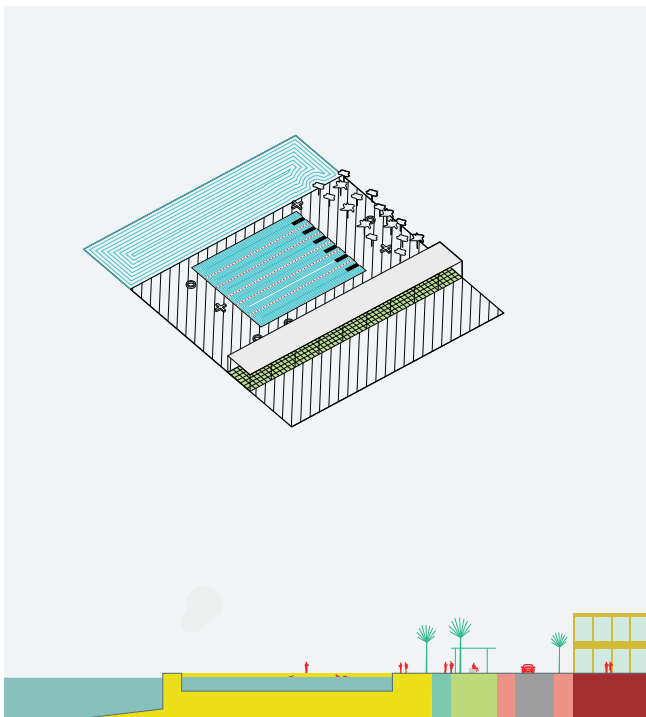
1 WALKING UNDER THE PINE TREES



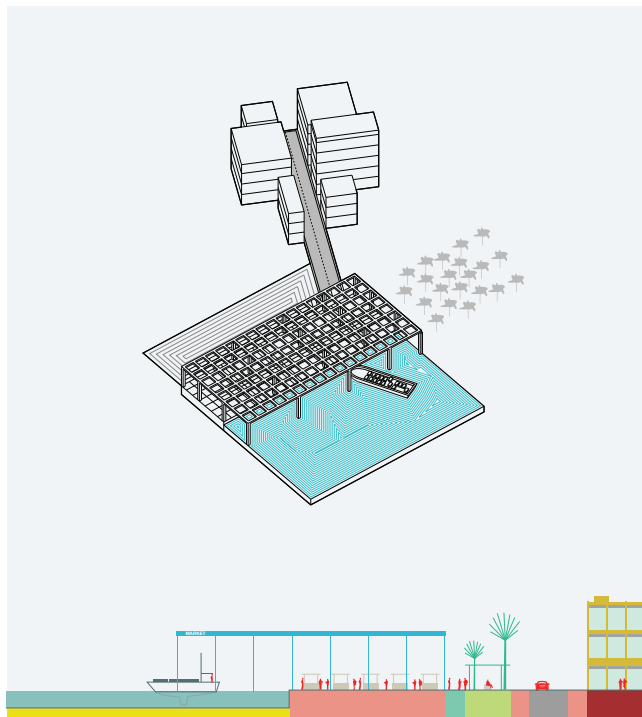
2 ENJOYING NEW AND COOLER PUBLIC SPACES IN THE ARCHAIC CITY



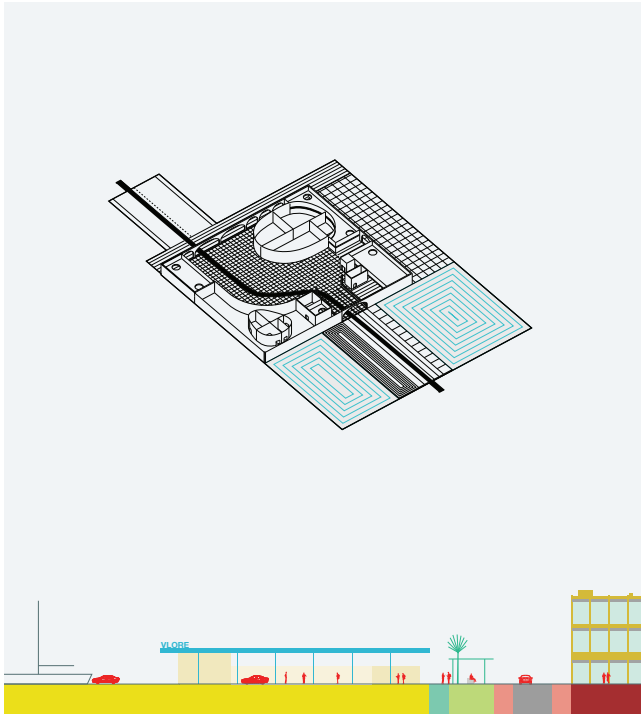
5 RESTING UNDER THE ARCADE AND ENJOYING THE VIEW



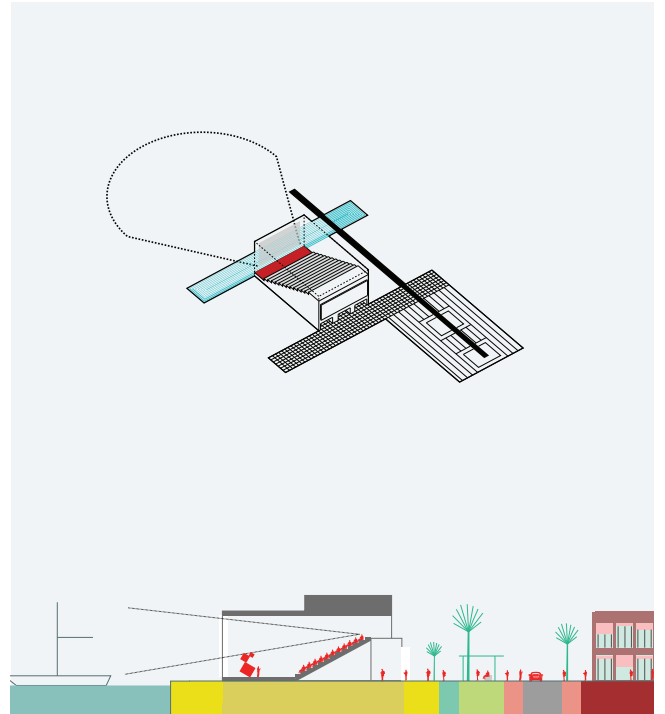
6 TASTING THE FLAVORS OF VLORA



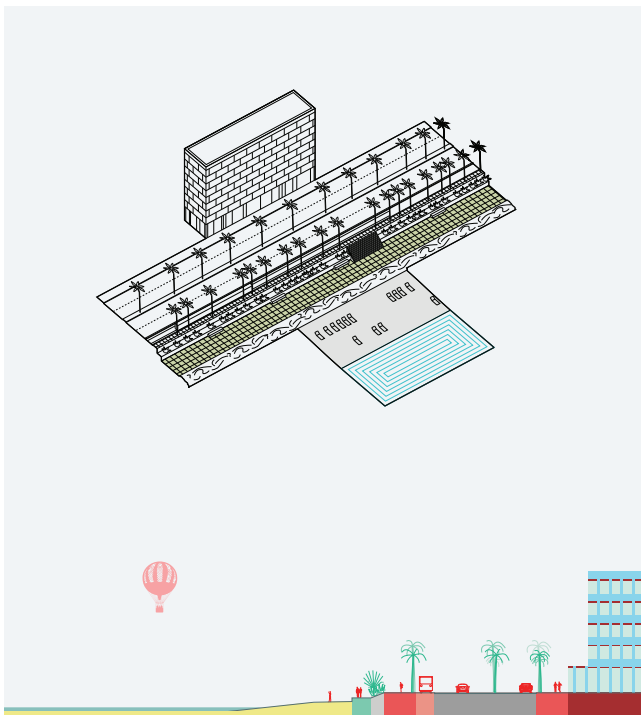
3 ENTERING VLORA FROM THE SEA THROUGH A CONTEMPORARY GATE



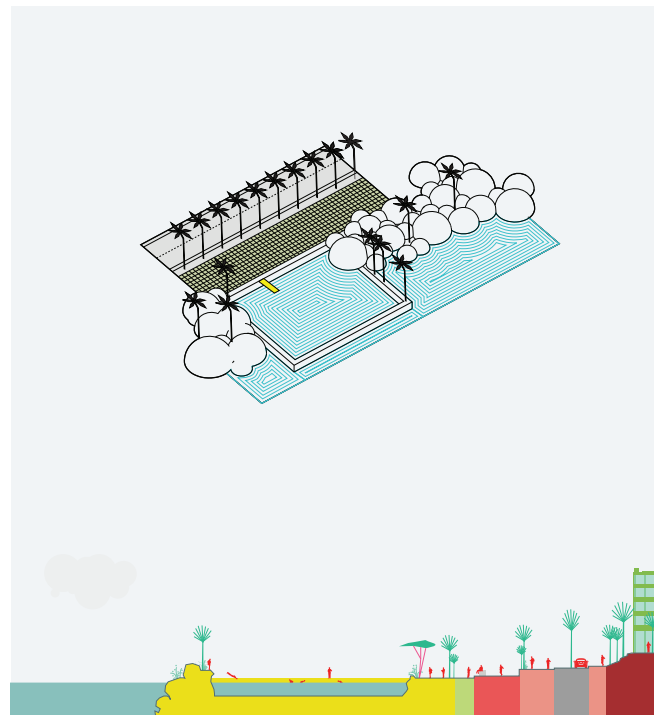
4 LOOKING AT THE BAY WHILE SEATING IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM



7 WALKING ON THE SHADED PATH BETWEEN THE SEA AND THE CITY



8 ENJOYING MULTIPLE ACTIVITIES ALONG THE COASTLINE



THE VLORA OF THE NEW CENTURY



1 WALKING UNDER THE PINE TREES

On the west side of the coast, one can walk under the pine trees. A light promenade snakes between the trunks of the newly planted trees that reshape this part of the waterfront as a greener space.



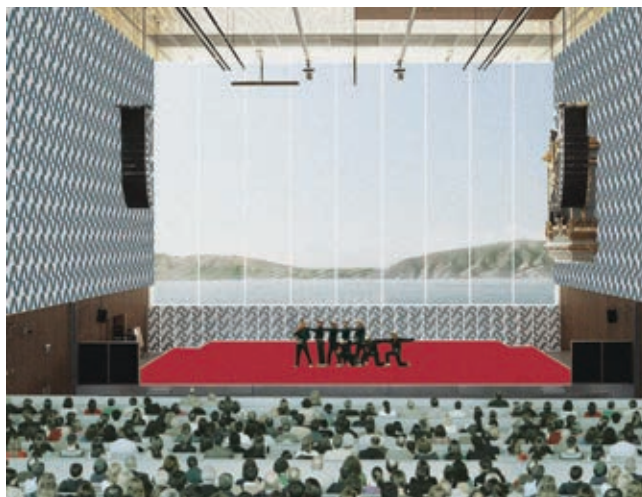
2 ENJOYING NEW AND COOLER PUBLIC SPACES IN THE ARCHAIC CITY

Small squares are set up in the archaic urban substance of the western part of the city. A university building or another kind of public facility is built on the edge. New cafés and restaurants make the most of this new public situation.



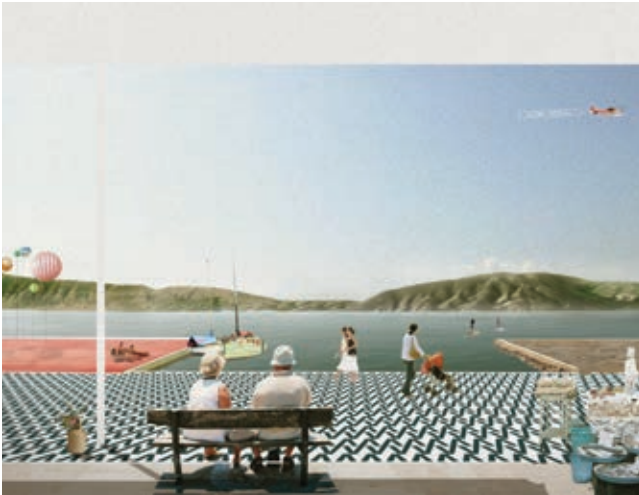
3 ENTERING VLORA FROM THE SEA THROUGH A CONTEMPORARY GATE

A more compact terminal for an easier access to the city for tourists. The multiple flows and flux are organised into a single building. The compactness of this new structure generates a new intensity on the coastline.



4 LOOKING AT THE BAY WHILE SEATING IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM

A new multiuse public facility on the waterfront: during high season, concerts and local cultural activities are shown to estivants in the new conference centre, while during the rest of the year the rooms are used by the university for masterclasses or daily conferences.



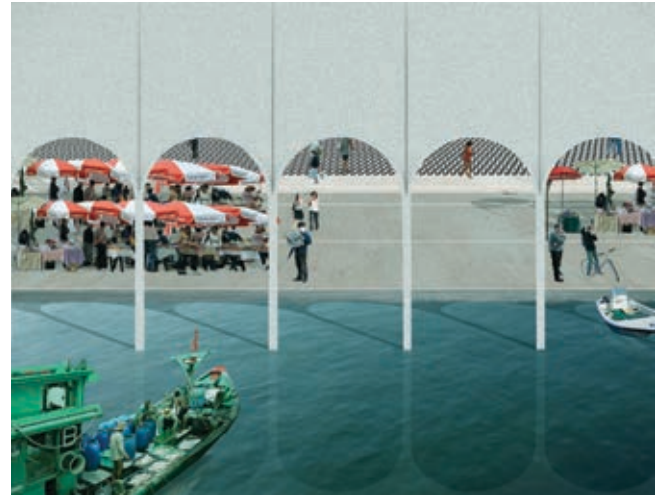
5 RESTING UNDER THE ARCADE AND ENJOYING THE VIEW

On the Coastal Strip, the waterfront promenade takes a strong importance. It is wider than in other part of the city and partially shaded by a long arcade stretching all along the way. Public furniture on its side and punctual trees brighten up this linear promenade.



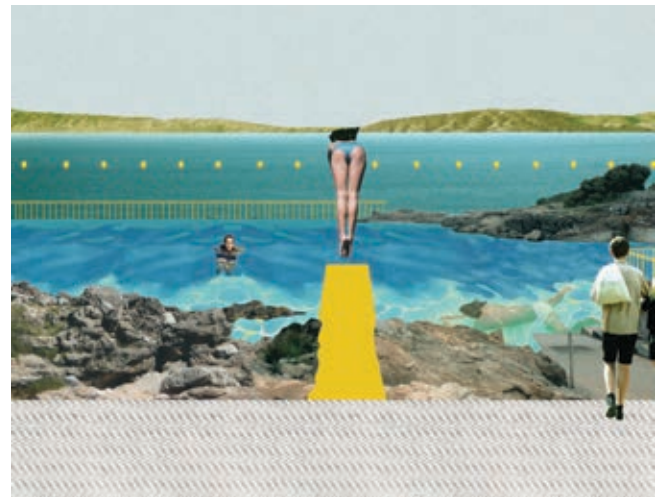
7 WALKING ON THE SHADED PATH BETWEEN THE SEA AND THE CITY

On the southern part of the waterfront, the large street is divided into multiple segments. Walkers can enjoy the boutiques at the street level under naturally ventilated galleries, or under the alignment of palm trees that gives this very particular atmosphere to this long urban street, or slightly below at the beach level, protected from the traffic by Mediterranean mid-sized plants and specific variety of trees such as fan palm trees, Syrian juniper, Portuguese oak or coloured laurel.



6 TASTING THE FLAVORS OF VLORA

The market is a place of strong importance. It is the first building to be erected on the Coastal Strip. One can access the market from the sea or from the city. Local producers sell their olives, oil, wine, fish and grapefruit under a simple roof. It is a vibrant place for the seaside city life.

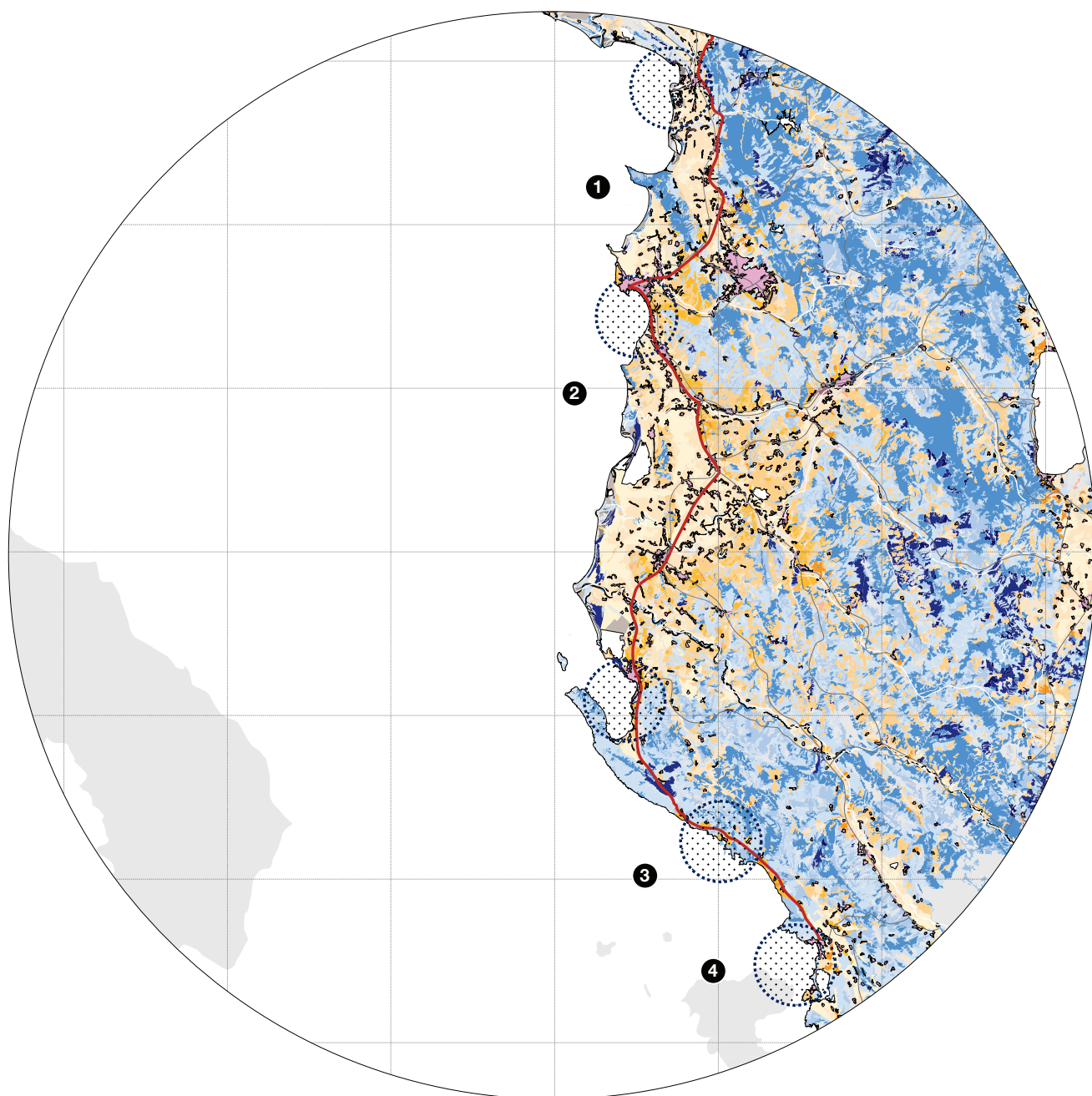


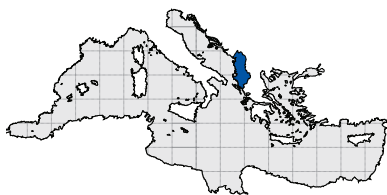
8 ENJOYING MULTIPLE ACTIVITIES ALONG THE COASTLINE

Along the Mediterranean Boulevard in the southern part of the city, new activities and developments define a new waterfront skyline. They are placed alternatively on the beach side or on the city side of the street. They provide extended amenities such as tennis courts, children's playgrounds, thematised gardens, small pools and fountains...

A NEW MARITIME FAÇADE

BY IMPLEMENTING AND DEVELOPING THIS STRATEGY, VLORA'S WATERFRONT PROJECT CAN BECOME THE TESTBED FOR A MORE EXTENDED COASTAL REVIVAL PROCESS AT THE SCALE OF THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. FROM SHËNGJIN, Durrës, DHËRMI, TO KSAMIL, EACH ALBANIAN COASTAL CITY CAN REINVENT AND BUILD ITS OWN IMAGE, STRENGTHEN ITS POSITION ON THE MEDITERRANEAN, AND BUILT THE FUTURE UPON THE SPECIFIC ASSETS OF ITS TERRITORIAL SITUATION, LANDSCAPE, AND CULTURE. THE COAST OF ALBANY BECOMES AN INTER-CONNECTED NETWORK OF CITIES AND NATURAL SPOTS, REDESIGNING A TOURISTICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY ATTRACTIVE MARITIME FAÇADE. CITIES CLOSER TO THEIR WATERFRONTS.





- ❶ LEZHË-SHENGJIN
- ❷ Durrës - TIRANA
- ❸ DHËRMI-HIMARË
- ❹ SARANDË-KSAMIL

