



PROAP

Landscape Architecture

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TEAM COMPOSITION

For the challenge proposed by Atelier Albania with this International Landscape Design Competition for Tirana’s Park of Faith, **PROAP** has joined forces with Albanian office **ARKIMADE** so that with a strong local and international team, the questions and issues proposed by the competition organizers can be addressed with a local focus of the design proposal. This collaboration permits getting the most out of the two companies experience and bring to the design the complementary expertises of their teams.

PROAP (www.proap.pt) is a leading international design practice exclusively dedicated to landscape architecture, founded in 1989, based in Lisbon (Portugal) and with offices in Luanda (Angola) and Treviso (Italy).

The partnership is led by João Nunes (Landscape architect) and currently employs 30 professionals, a cross-disciplinary team, with distinguished levels of expertise in landscape, in its most inclusive conception. The firm’s core business is landscape architecture, namely landscape design development, project management, sustainable design and development, urban design and planning.

The studio’s work and research are oriented according to a principle of intervention in landscape, which is based on the reading and the interpretation of places, recognizing its most intimate rules and mechanisms to found its approaches. A landscape project is seen as an organizer of a succession of times, steps and states in a given period of time. In this sense, it acts as the integrator of a complex set of processes; it is not a provider of a rigid predetermined line of evolution. It manipulates positively the metabolic factors of nature, adding a poetic or ideological or artistic sense to it. It merges these factors with human factors, both economical outcomes or plain people desires and expectations.

A consolidated group of external offices provides the necessary expertise backup in the fields of economy, engineering, mobility, energy, ecology and resource management in a group that has matured through friendship and gratifying team work. The Lisbon office, we’re the vast majority of the company’s staff works, is equipped with 20 Windows based workstations and uses Autodesk software solutions as the main design tool as well as Adobe CS and Microsoft Office packages.

Internationalization began in 2002, mainly through award winning entries in international competitions, and is currently developing distinguished, large scale, projects in Italy, Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, Belgium, Luxembourg, Spain, Algiers, Libya, Morocco, Lebanon, Switzerland, France and China.

PROAP’S interventions have progressively spread throughout Europe and reached Central America and Asia. The constitution of the Angolan society PROAP SA, in 2007, responded to the growing volume of work demands, and is currently one of Proap’s major investments. In the European context, the establishment of the society PROAP Italia Srl, in 2008, enables an improved accommodation of a previously known presence in the Mediterranean and aims to deepen the relations with Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

In its continuing quest for excellence, **PROAP** follows quality management systems that steer design procedures from conception to construction, according to international standards ISO 9001:2008.

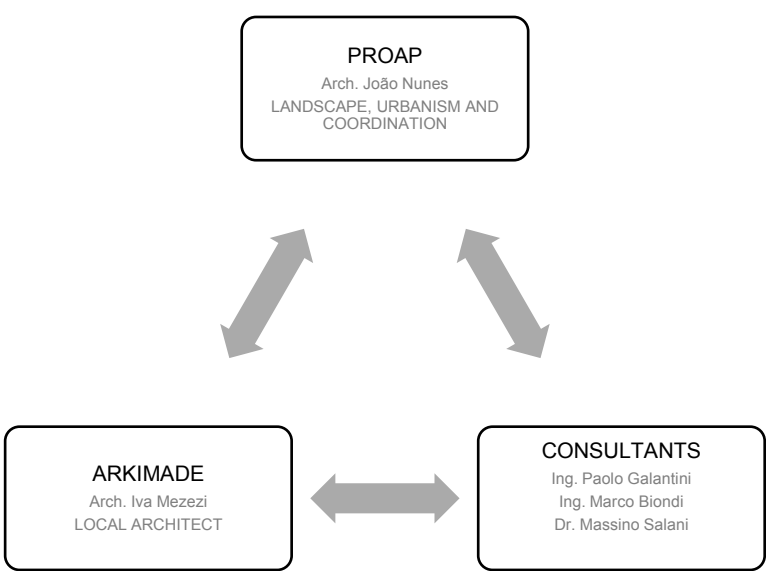
ARKIMADE(www.arkimade.com) is a private company, situated in Tirana, Albania. This company started the activity in the beginning of year 2006 and offered services in the fields of Urban Design and Architecture. In July 2010 ARKIMADE expanded its services operating not only in the fields of Urban Design and Architecture, but also in Construction, Roads, Water Supply and Sewerage and their supervision as well.

ARKIMADE founder is Iva Mezezi (architect) and the staff is made by very experienced engineers and technicians working since its early establishment in Albania and Kosovo.

ARKIMADE has completed many design projects by different contractors. This company is involved in many big projects for new buildings and rehabilitations as well. These buildings include social and education buildings such as Social Centers, Schools, Kindergarten, Business Centers, Multifunctional Buildings, Civic Buildings, Hotels, Residential Buildings, etc. In these big projects Arkimade” is involved in preparation of the Project Documentation, Bidding Documents, Bidding Proposals Assessment, Conceptual and Detailed Design, Bill of Quantity, Supervision of Works including supply with different equipment and furniture’s. Also, the Company and its staff have been involved in the field of property evaluation, feasibility studies, urban planning and resettlement plans consultancy, hydro-geology and geo-technical investigations as well. All the work is based on the applied local standards environment biodiversity conservation, cultural heritage and labor safety of World Bank, IDA, IFC performance standards 1-8, United Nations, EU frameworks and directives, etc.

The above mentioned projects have been financed by European Council, World Bank, UNDP-Albania, USAID-Albania, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Urban Development, Regional Development Fund, Municipality of Tirana, Durres, Kamza, Shkodra, Lezha, Korça, Saranda and other important private foreign and local companies.

Joining the two teams organized in a consortium we have Ing. Paolo Galantini (Pisa, Italy) and Ing.Marco Biondi (Pisa, Italy) as consultants as well as Dr. Massimo Salani (Pisa, Italy) as an expert in religious matters.



CONTEXT

The city of Tirana as suffered overwhelming transformations in the last two decades with particular consequences in its urban condition, with a huge increase in population and a consequently increase in car and vehicles circulation. Demographics and rural exodus as had a significant impact in the city's life and organization. This transformation is a dynamic that the main purposes of this competition reflect. The way urban tissue reacts to intense change in short periods of time reflects its resilience and flexibility at the same time. City's like Tirana, marked by intense periods of social and politic change, are good examples of this situation and this new era of the country's capital towards European Union integration is the right context for major urban operations that look at the city as an integrated mix of cultural, social, political and architectonic factors and events. Choosing a Park as the protagonist of this change is particularly interesting and of great courage, since not in all cities as this typology been used with this degree of importance in the city's transformation. The symbolic charge that trespasses all the big moments of the city's transformation in the past century, associated with power and politics, is also of great importance since these big architectonic gestures remain part of the city's structure.

The territorial insertion of the competition area in Tirana's urban tissue is of major importance. The big plain in which the city as established itself along the centuries as permitted, when the political decision of transforming Tirana in the country's capital arrived, to implement ambitious and monumental urban interventions of great scale, from which the big axes and squares, with its surrounding buildings, are the most important examples.

One of these important axes, the Boulevard of the Martyrs of the Nation, gathers the most important buildings of the city and of the country which gives it a strong institutional and symbolic role in the city's life still today. This importance is reflected in the way the street's network relates to it and by the importance of its two major gravitational poles, the Skënderbej and Mother Teresa Squares. This axis, working as the spinal cord of the metropolis, is particularly sensitive to the major transformations in the city's demographics. In broader terms, the Boulevard works also as part of the main green structure of Tirana and through the existence of an important corridor of trees (pine trees) completes the connection between the Park of Saint Procopius and the city center. Crossing this, the canal of the Lana River, completes the linear functions of connecting territorially the city to its major landscape units. The topographical condition of the city, with its system of hills like the Dajti Mountain surrounding the big plain, also emphasizes the need for urban structures to accomplish structural roles, since the inexistence of relief doesn't permit to have a previous structural condition that submits the city's design and construction. The axis, limited by important and symbolic buildings like the National Museum and University, becomes the main theme of the morphological composition of the city's core and, in itself, a structural element of enormous strength.

The proposal recognizes this particular circumstance and seeks, while trying to answer to the programmatic guidelines of the competition, to reinforce this condition, both in terms of its role in the green superstructure as in its role in the urban fabric. Recognizing first the necessity of giving the Boulevard's profile a new design, and reestablishing a new urban intensity for it, we aim at creating a very strong point, in urban terms, with a simple gesture. The new design for the Martyrs of the Nation Boulevard is not only a refurbishment and embellishment of an old big avenue, but more than that, the affirmation of an overall strategy for the city center's public spaces.

This strategy is mainly based in the superposition of a geometric matrix over the urban fabric, transforming all of the elements that construct the urban public space as part of a global vocabulary, which unifies and connects simultaneously as it permits the materialization of the programmatic questions put by the competition guidelines and objectives, namely the creation of a unified Park from fragments of public open space of heterogeneous characteristics and different levels of urban interaction with

the urban context. This new Park is in fact unified by two forces that work together at different levels: the matrix, with its geometrical rule, and the theme "faith", proposed as the big intellectual and conceptual script that trespasses all the spatial boundaries of the present condition of the fragmented open spaces of the intervention area.

This search for structure, both morphological and intellectual, permits the creation of a unifying layer of comprehension to the overall interventions by choosing ecumenism and spirituality as the argument for this new reinterpretation of an existing network of empty urban spaces. The ambition of such a noble use of spirituality as a leitmotiv for the creation of a big urban park is addressed by the proposal in a very subtle way, trough the use of light, space creation and linear walking path connectors between the different spaces, all ruled by a matrix under layer, most often just suggested, as opposed to a rigid implementation of hierarchies and conventions of spatial use and form.



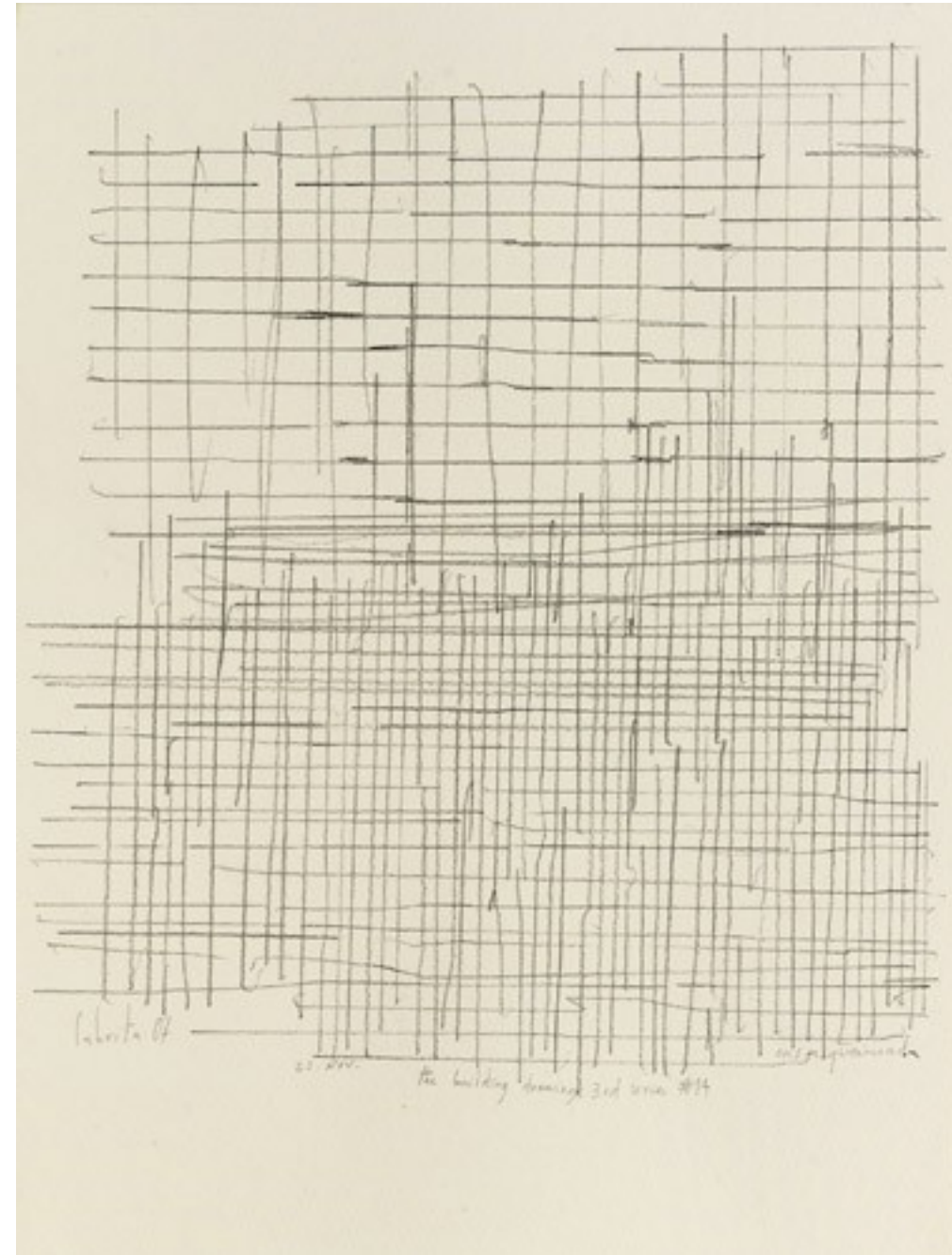
Google Earth Pro, aerial photograph of Tirana region

CONCEPT

The matrix is the unit from which the new layer of the city's vocabulary emerges. Its simple rule gets materialized with different intensities and intentions, function of the urban condition and context. In the main axis, it reaches its peak of formalization and perception, since the rules are quite clear and need that rigidity as a support for space clarification. Different lanes for different traffic, parking spaces, bicycle paths, sidewalks... As we leave this strong line the matrix gets diffused and becomes more a suggestion than a formal condition. Its abstraction grows from the spinal cord of the axis to the exterior. Inside the matrix's main unit, we can find sub levels of geometry, always subjugated by the bigger unit, where smaller units will permit different levels of expression of texture, materials and colors in reaction to diverse functions, uses and conditions. One example of this versatility is the manipulation of materials in the Boulevard's transversal profile, where several lanes became ambiguous on purpose for facilitating the interchange of uses when needed. The Bus lane uses the same texture and color of the sidewalk, permitting its conversion in it, in special events which benefit from an enlarged sidewalk (like parades, open air markets, etc). This on/off condition permits to maintain the actual traffic capacity of the avenue in regular days and to reduce it in special occasions without the need for big interventions. This strategy permits also to react circumstantially to specific conditions of the urban fabric along the axis as well as temporal changes in urban conditions. Where buildings of a specific nature need more space of interaction with the axis, the grid reacts by enlargement and creates deeper intrusions in the green spaces allowing for wider areas of people concentration and gathering.

This matrix is not only the structural thread that unifies space but also the support for the unifying vocabulary associated with the spirituality theme that conceptually brings together the different park spaces. When the thread gets thinner and starts to relate to the empty green spaces of the park's spaces, it permits the creation of big "landart" structures. These structures mainly obtained by topographical manipulation, create new spatial unities within the park and permit, by its topographical configuration, to have the feeling of being outside the city's turbulence and confusion, trying to erase from the users perspective the buildings and urban profile and leaving only the sky to be perceived from within, eliminating the layers between earth and sky. The creation of these conditions will permit users of the park to have conditions for spiritual meditation and concentration inside the city's centre and eliminate, by perception manipulation and spatial conditioning, the noise and disturbance of the urban condition. Light, also associated with the matrix, will give a new layer of signification to the Park in its relation with spirituality. Lighting fixtures, sometimes linear and part of the major units, or just punctual when associated to areas where the matrix rarefaction has attained its maximum expression, will add a metaphorical and yet subtle layer of communication to the overall proposal. Seen from above at night, the Park will appear as a multitude of light pixels and lines that unify, in a conceptual way, these spaces and will constitute one major event in the city's imagery. Light, always associated to illumination and truth since the beginning of times, will also play an important part in the Park's capacity of relating the city with spirituality.

"Faith" is then perceived not as part of a particular system of religious belief but as a spiritual condition of Mankind. The "Park of Faith" is considered in our proposal as the opportunity, within the city and its numerous religious temples and buildings, to create spiritual spaces not specifically associated with one or another religion, but with the spiritual condition of Men. Considering the Pyramid building as a central point in this new kind of urban experience, the Boulevard axis as its main connector and the matrix as the formal and structural unifier of the whole concept, spirituality, in its broader sense, is the unifying thought that trespasses all these spaces and urban circumstances.



Pedro Cabrita Reis, The building drawings, 3rd series #14, 2007

PROGRAM

The programmatic issues established by the competition terms were addressed in a global understanding of the Park’s concept. In the main axis the proposal establishes quite clearly the rules of composition, as described earlier, as well as the functional and practical rules of space appropriation: the longitudinal flux of cars and vehicles is constrained in the main 6 interior lanes, divided by a new central separator. Between them and the sidewalk, a parking lane, only absent when the boulevard becomes too narrow or by proximity of institutional buildings. In the western sidewalk, a cycle path that goes all along the boulevard guaranteeing safe passage for bikers and alike. From these, the interior lane for public transport and the parking lane can change its function in special events or occasions becoming part of the sidewalk, more that duplicating the area dedicated to leisure. This on/off condition is eased by the material choices of these two lanes, which are more familiar with the sidewalk material than that of the road. This longitudinal movement is complemented by the transversal imposition of the matrix geometry, which relates to other functional elements like crossings and parking spaces, and, when it reaches de sidewalk can also permit, in reaction to some buildings, to create enlarged platforms that permit having more generous spaces in front of them. This transversal segmentation will also bring flexibility in its construction since it permits its phased execution by segments giving Tirana municipal authorities the ability to implement the project in several steps.

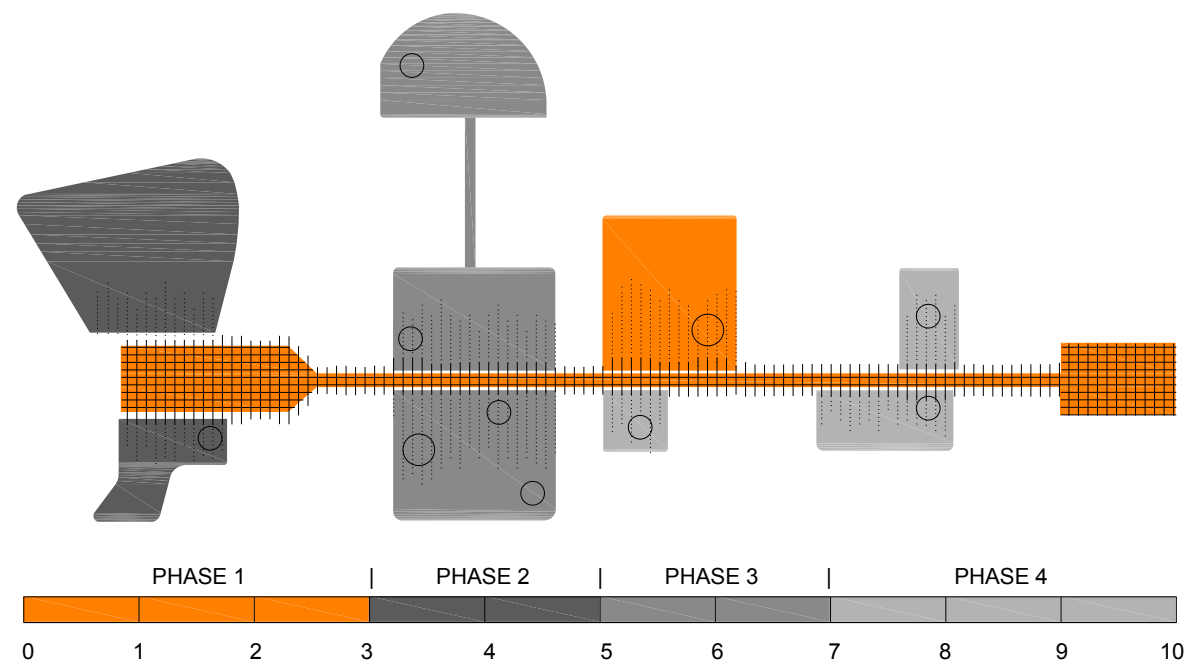
On the two extremes of this functional longitudinal system that is the Boulevard, the two big squares of Tirana, receive a new facelift. It is then that the transversal geometry of the matrix imposes to the longitudinal one and permits a more free interpretation of the design. These vast spaces, surrounded by public buildings of special interest, are invaded by the matrix in different ways. While in Skënderbej Square the road keeps its classic configuration and the central platform remains unchanged only receiving some geometry elements in a very abstract and subtle way (with the exception of the northern top where this becomes more intentional for reinforcing the public space character of the immediate spaces in front of the National Museum and Cultural Center), in Mother Teresa Square is the opposite that occurs, making the road disappear (metaphorically speaking since the circulation will still have its path signaled on the floor) and transformation the square into a big plateau of mineral nature where the matrix expands in both directions, longitudinal and transversal.

Once established the axis as the most rigid element of the matrix materialization, its rarefaction begins in the direction of the fragmented open spaces of the Park. Patch becomes line that becomes point, all in search of a spatial referential for the overall design. Inside the gardens, the intervention is reduced to a minimum, recognizing some of the existing elements and eliminating others always in search of simplification and clarity. The only new and stronger elements to be added, after this first effort of simplification, are the Landart sculptures introduced as a tool for creating spaces of contemplation and meditation. Simple forms (circles of various sizes) are created in several ways: topographical manipulation (depressions), tree edges, water features, linear patterns, etc. The circle in its purest form, suggests the urge for gathering, inherent in all animals, and appeals to concentration and meditation while appealing for the feelings of unity, wholeness, and infinity.



James Turrell, Roden Crater

ACTION PLAN



COSTS ESTIMATION

	TYPE OF INTERVENTION	AREA/UNITS	UNITARY COST (Albanian Lek)	TOTAL COST
1	Green areas	90.000 m2	3.000,00	270.000.000,00
2	Tree plantation	200 un	30.000,00	6.000.000,00
3	Paved areas/pedestrian	55.000 m2	7.000,00	385.000.000,00
4	Paved areas/vehicles	23.000 m2	5.000,00	115.000.000,00
5	Lighting	Global value		100.000.000,00
6	“Landart” objects	7.885 m2	20.000,00	157.700.000,00
7	Urban furniture	Global value		70.000.000,00
			TOTAL	1.096.781.000,00