Research through design:
Finding ways to be flexible and renewable to natural phenomena
Place of Testing: Isle of Osumi, Berat

AFFIRMATIVE* RESILIENCE

DRAWING AN ISLAND IN THE BED OF A RIVER

TEAM

landscape architecture, cultural monuments, architecture

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hydroelectric engineering, art installation

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* An affirmative action in the legal vocabulary is a law aimed at creating equal opportunities for social/ethnical minorities. Borrowing from the legal vocabulary, this proposal aims at creating an effective role for the river Osumi in the city of Berat. The strategy for reaching this goal is based on respecting the natural resilience of the river bed.

CORE OF THE PROJECT

The proposal is conceived as a commentary on the morphology and on the history of Berat.

This commentary is articulated into words, though these words are peculiar: they pertain to the vocabulary of architecture, and in fact they are architectural objects. Each object/word is meaningful in itself, and each object/word can be assembled with another or others to form meaningful sequences/phrases. When they are assembled all together the objects form the overall commentary, but nevertheless it is not needed to build all of them to be meaningful and consistent.

In fact the proposal is thought for a medium/long term, and thus to be realized in several different, small-scaled phases easy to be financed and managed.

The goal of the proposal is to to enhance the usability of the city as a touristic destination and to highlight the importance of its heritage, not to compete with it by adding pseudo-iconic buildings or installations.

To pursue this goal the proposal is based on two strategies.

As to the first strategy, it introduces new standpoints from which to observe Gorice, Mangalem, the river between them and the landscape surrounding them.

As to the second strategy, it introduces new paths along the river sides and above the river bed. Each standpoint as well as each new path would drive the attention to specific features of the built and/or of the natural environment, highlighting the uniqueness and the beauty of the place. In this sense, the new paths and standpoints would be "comments" rather than additions to Berat's heritage.

ELEMENTS OF THE PROJECT/0

The proposal consists of five main elements, plus an art installation.

To keep consistency with the place, the materials of which the elements are made of are stone and timber, and these two materials are used separately one from the other. Stones are used where the urban character prevails, timber is used where the river, thus nature, prevails.

Therefore, there are two "worlds" that are established by the proposal. The first is paved with stones and it recalls the floors of the streets and the walls of the houses of Mangalem and Gorice; the second is made of timber and it evokes the structural elements of the overhangs and of the roofs of the houses of the same two villages .

The elements are mostly two-dimensional, so they are first and foremost made of a floor, than this floor is implemented with a number of sub-elements such as benches and railings.

A path/bridge that goes into the river is the only exception, since it is a typically three-dimensional object. The role of this path/bridge is particularly important because it creates the physical link between the city and the river bed. In the river bed the most important element is the island, that function as a pole of attraction for the city.

The main elements are:

- the paved edge of the island in the centre of Osumi

- a new path/bridge from the square Teodor Muzaka to the island

- two paths along the river, one connecting

- a square in front of Mangalem

- two panoramic amphitheaters, one looking at Mangalem, the other at Gorice

- a floating platform, in the form of a reverse volcano (art installation)

ELEMENTS OF THE PROJECT/1

Paved edge of the island in the river bed of Osumi

"Island is a land, that is all surrounded by water: I mean a land that is apart and distinguishable from the main land; a land that is touched all around by the sea: and we call islands those lands that are in seas as well as those lands that are in lakes, the only condition being that water surrounds them."
Tommaso Porcacchi, *The most famous islands of the world* (Venice, 1590)

The core of the proposal is in the island in the center of the river Osumi.
In fact this island has a peculiar character since its shape and sometimes its very existence depend upon the variations of the river level. These latter are ontologically unpredictable and include extreme scenarios: in case of flood the island ceases to exist, and in case of drought it transforms into a peninsula. Most of the times the island is a more or less extended portion of brushy terrain with blurry boundaries in the center of the river bed, either alone or either accompanied by an archipelago of smaller but analogous islands. Hence, the island is a ghost object also when it exists: its lack of shape prompts its lacks of functions.

The goal of the project is to make the island a well recognizable object, with a clear shape and attractive functions. On the other hand, this goal collides with the goal of keeping the island resilient. The very lack of form is indeed the consequence of the island resilience as a natural object.

The solution is to pave the edges of the island with stones analogous to the stones that pave the floors of the city. The individuation of the edges, so of the shape of the island is of course arbitrary: it is a deliberate action through which the island is transformed into an artificial object. Nevertheless this artificial, urbanized object keeps to be extremely resilient because the floor that gives the shape to the island is de facto a two dimensional object: it is indeed just a floor. As such, it offers no resistance to the water current and when the level of the river grows, the edges are partially, mostly or entirely submerged.

Eventually the island loses nothing of its amphibious character, but it gains an urban character that emphasizes the water outside as well as the wilderness of the river vegetation inside it: indeed the new floor encloses a "green" world, that is to say the vegetation, and is enclosed in a "blue" world, that is to say the water.
Form the symbolical point of view the "floor in the bed of the river" is linked to the main axes of the city because its design embeds stripes that are parallel to the axes themselves.

From the utilitarian point of view, the "floor in the bed of the river" is an artificial beach: it can allow to walk with naked feet in the river without touching mud, if the river level is higher, or it can allow to walk along the river without touching the water if the river level is lower. Eventually, when the river level grows more, the river level becomes an object for the eyes, visible from the sides of the river, from the city or from the castle.

Preliminary description:
The floor is made of paving stones, it is circa 50 cm above the average level of the water. It lies on a concrete foundation.

Approximate cost estimation:
from 250'000 to 300'000 Euro

ELEMENTS OF THE PROJECT/2

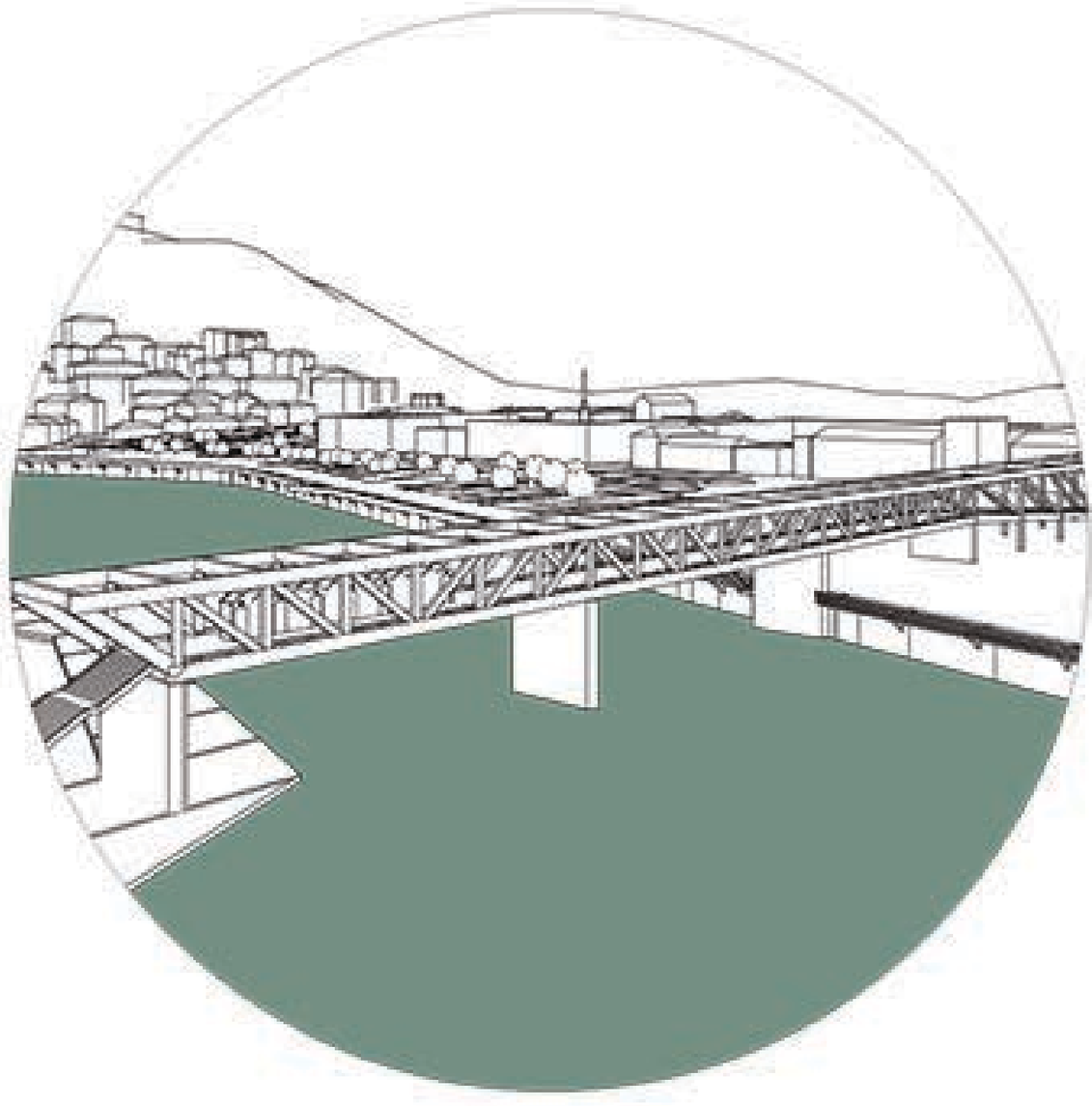
New path/bridge from the square Teodor Muzaka to the island

The mosque and the church along the Rruga Antipatrea are a visible sign of the unique character of Berat in particular and of Albania in general, i.e. the peaceful coexistence of Islam, of Orthodox Christianity and of Catholicism.

To highlight this feature a new linear structure would point at the area of the mosque and of the church, it would then cross the street along the river and it would eventually end into the island. A stair would allow to descend into the river bed and to eventually touch the water. This stair in case of flood could be retreated like a drawbridge, recalling the medieval origin of Berat. A series of beach huts located just before the stair would allow to wear swimsuits.

From the structural point of view the new path/bridge would be made of two parallel reticular timber beams. Form the point of view of program it would overlap the symbolical level with the utilitarian level. As to the symbolical level, it would indeed be a sort of processional path from the mosque and the church towards the water: it would recall the ritual importance of water as symbol in both Islam and Christianity. From the utilitarian point of view the path/bridge would allow to include the river bed and the river itself into the city.

Berat already has a strong offer for tourists attracted by cultural heritage as well as for tourist in search of food and wine quality: what is lacking is an offer for tourists that are also in search of sport and leisure. The inclusion of the river would be critical to implement a new sports and leisure offer, and the bridge would be the instrumental for this.



Preliminary description:
The understructure is assumed to be concrete and the superstructure timber,
the stairs can be withdrawn in case of flood

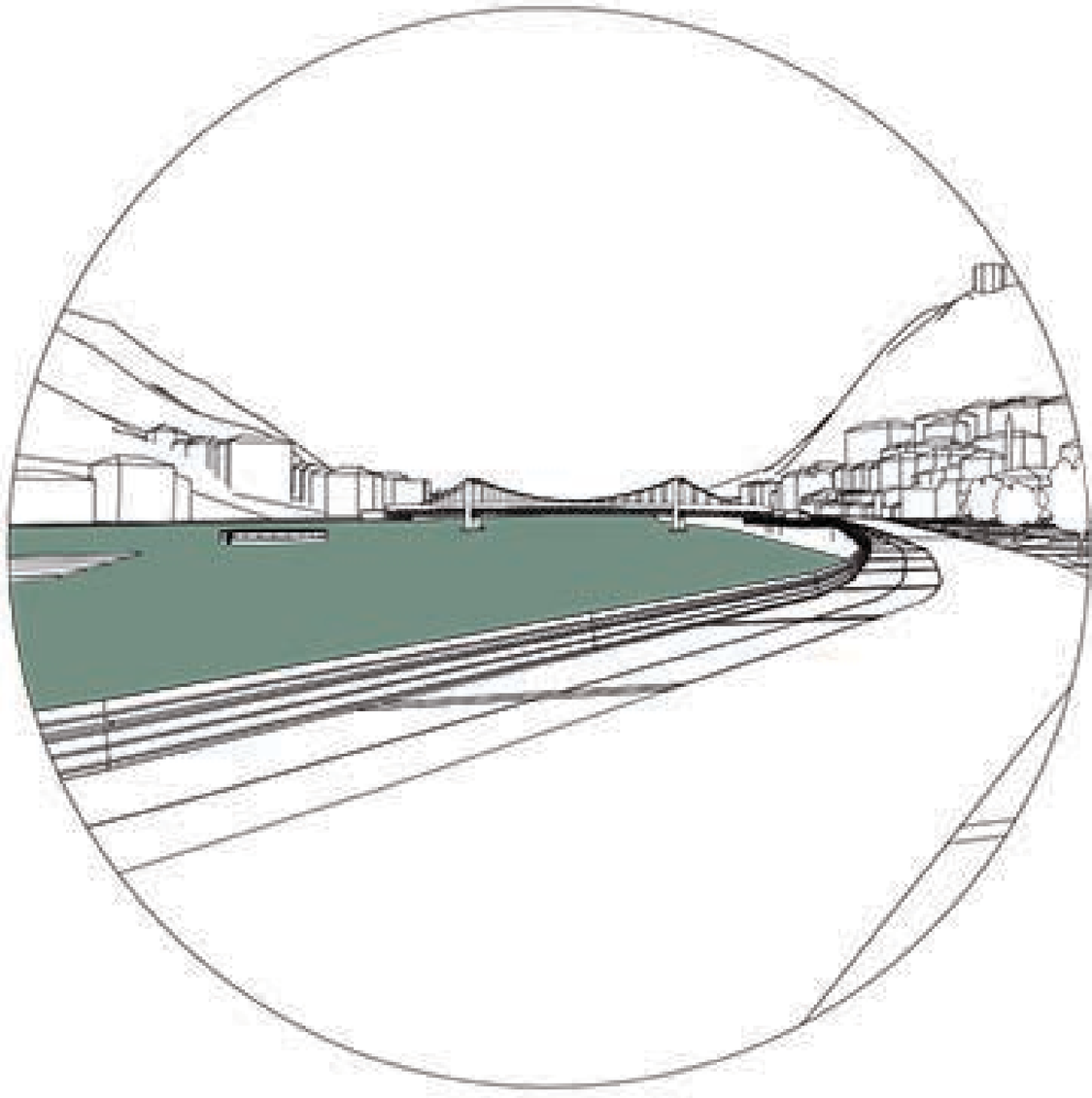
Approximate cost estimation:
from 300'000 to 350'000 Euro

ELEMENTS OF THE PROJECT/3

Paths along the river

To emphasize the river Osumi as a natural element and to distinguish it from the city itself two paths parallel to the river could be introduced as a filter, as an edge and as an observation point. These paths would have a timber structure and floor and would include balconies to allow going closer to the river.

The first path would connect the square Teodor Muzaka and the iron bridge, the second would connect the iron bridge to the Ottoman stone bridge, on the side of Gorice. As independent components their construction might be split into two phases.



Preliminary description:
The understructure is assumed to be timber, as well as the superstecuture.
The structure of the railings is assumed to be made of steel.

Approximate cost estimation: tract from the square Teodor Muzaka to the iron bridge:
from 250'000 to 300'000 Euro

Approximate cost estimation, tract from the iron bridge to the Ottoman bridge:
from 200'000 to 250'000 Euro

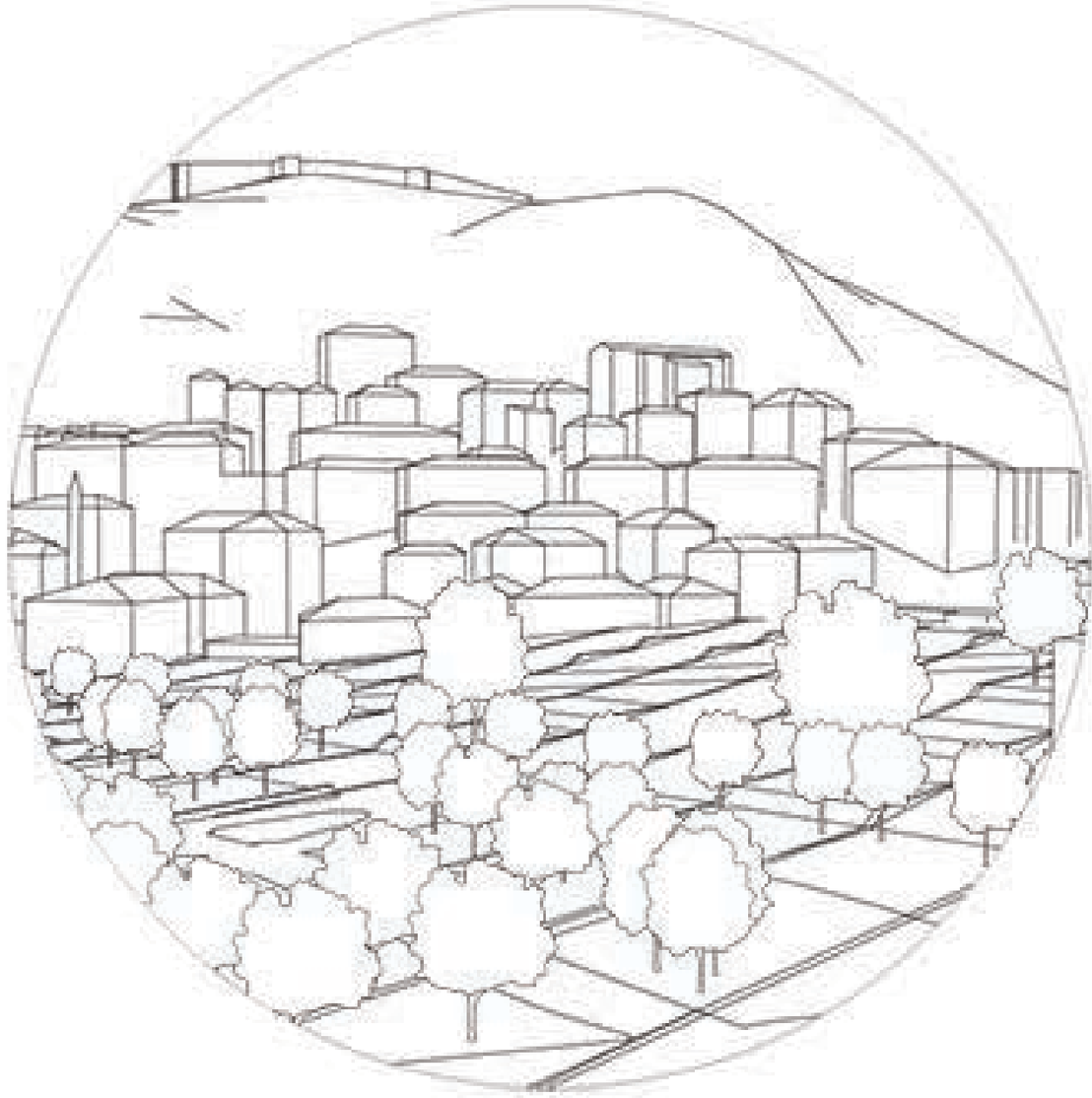
Approximate estimation, new railing on the side of Mangalem, from the Ottoman bridge to the iron bridge:
from 30'000 to 50'000 Euro

ELEMENTS OF THE PROJECT/4

Square in front of Mangalem

A new square, paved with stone and including benches and green areas would emphasize the importance of the pedestrian axis that the municipality already created.

This square would be obtained by demolishing the building of the Palace of Culture Margarita Tutulani and it would have the crucial function of creating a proper distance between Mangalem and the modern city, making the first perfectly visible. Following the directions that are already included in the city masterplan, automobile traffic would be kept but the roundabout would be moved towards the modern city.



Preliminary description:
The square would be paved with stones, using a construction system and materials similar to the pedestrian axis of

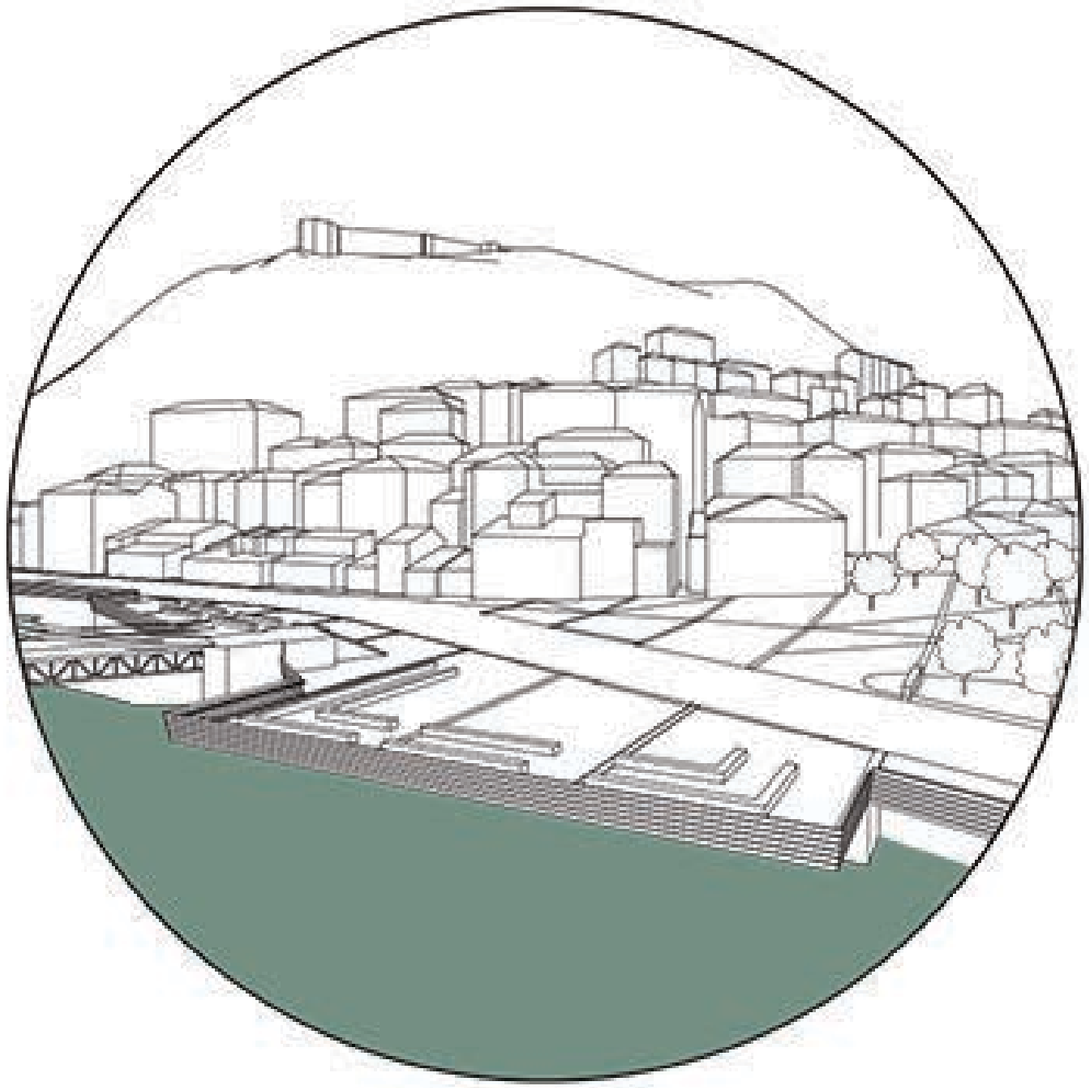
Approximate cost estimation (including the demolition of the Palace of Culture):
from 250'000 to 300.000 Euro

ELEMENTS OF THE PROJECT/5

Panoramic amphitheaters

To emphasize the importance of Mangalem and of Gorice, as well as to emphasize their relationship with the water, it might be imaginable to demolish the two buildings at the sides of the iron bridge between the two sides of the river. In place of these two buildings, two very simple sort of amphitheaters might be built with very low cost.

Looking towards the iron bridge, the amphitheater to the left would be oriented to Managalem, while the one to the right would be oriented towards Gorice. These two amphitheaters would be a continuation of the square in front of Mangalem.



Preliminary description:
The platform would be built with the same system and materials of the paths along the river, though the structure would be concrete. The benches would be made of stones. The demolition of the two existing building would be the preliminary step.

Approximate cost estimation (including the demolition of the two buildings):
from 300'000 to 350'000 Euro

The work can be easily splitted in two phases, according to which would be the first building available for demolition. The side to the right of the bridge (looking towards the side of Gorice) would be circa 35% of the total cost, the other circa 65%.

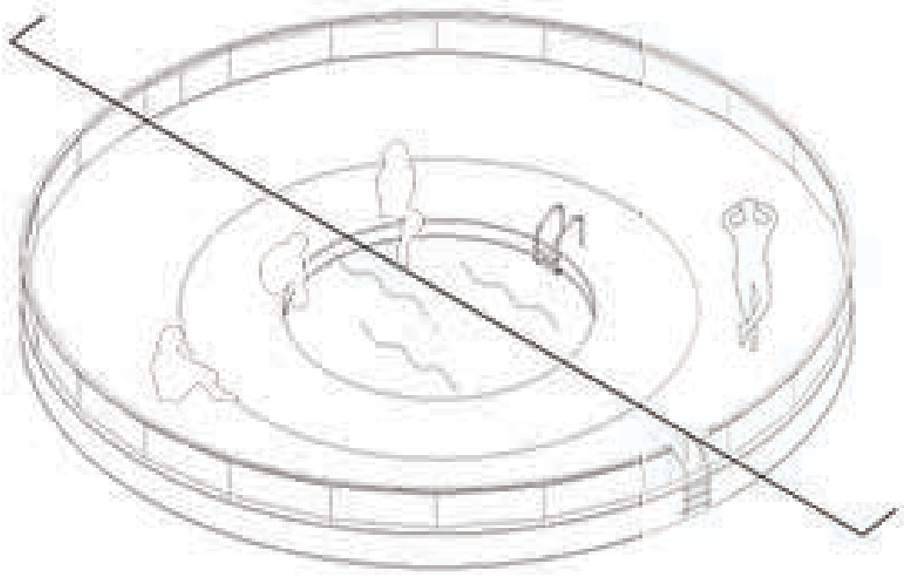
ELEMENTS OF THE PROJECT/6

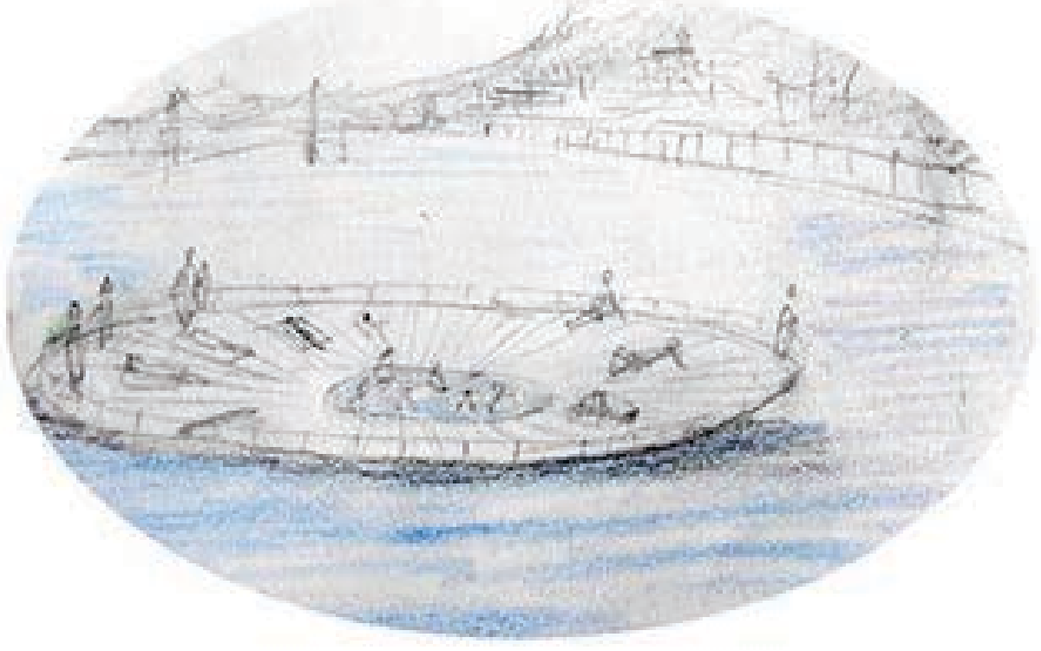
Floating platform, in the form of a reverse volcano

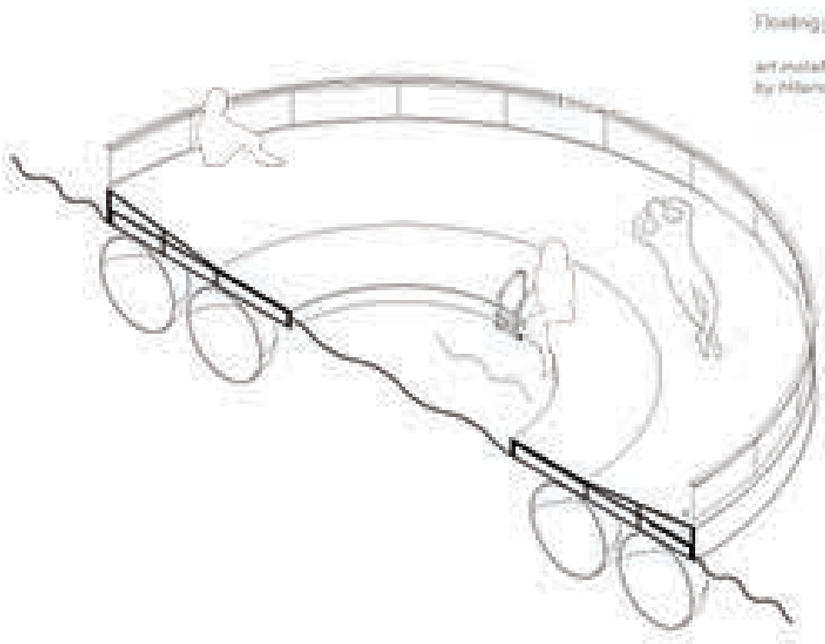
(art installation by Hilario Isola)

A circular raft with a whole in the middle would float on the Osumi river and would bring bathers to the areas where the water is deeper, and swimming is possible.

From the symbolical point of view the circular shape evokes an agora, though from the utilitarian point of view it would enhance leisure activities such as sunbathing and diving into the river. This paradoxical opposition is embedded in the ontology of the installation itself, an object that is half away between art and technique. Two circular cuts in the paved edge of the island would serve as sort of harbors of the raft, where the bathers gather and wait for their river tour. As in a reversed volcano, they would dive into the central hole that is filled with water, and not fire.







Preliminary description:
The platform would be built using a system typical of rifts, and it would be made of timber. The floating elements would be from floating piers.

Approximate cost estimation (including the demolition of thetwo buildings):
from 20.000 to 30.000.

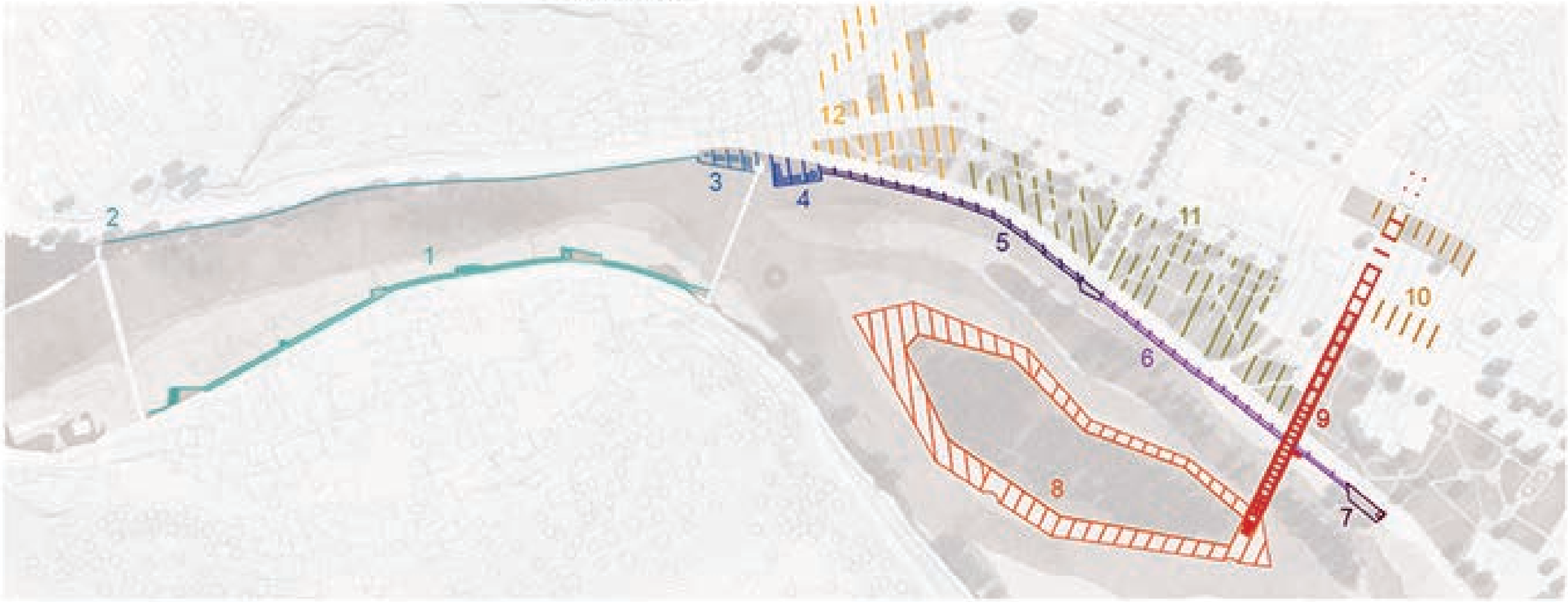
ELEMENTS OF THE PROJECT

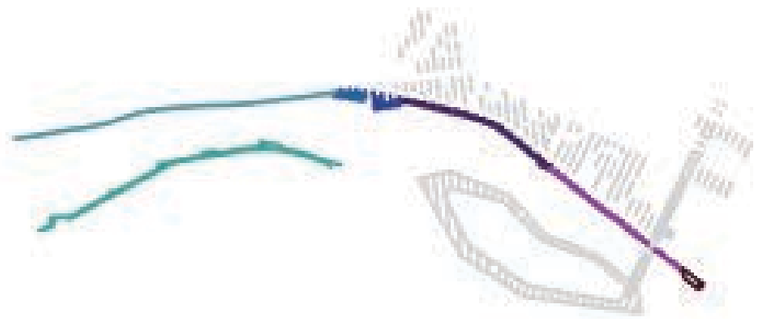
Phases

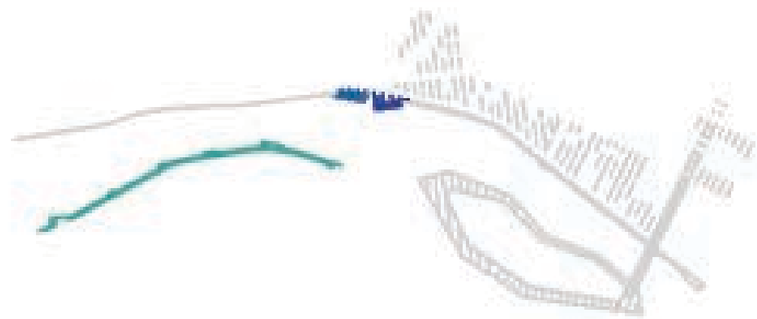
ALL THE ELEMENTS OF THE PROJECT ARE FUNCTIONAL AND MEANINGFUL PER SE

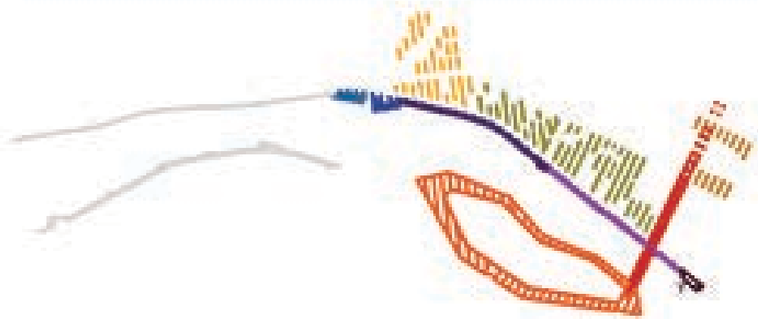
THE PROJECT CAN THUS BE BUILT IN A NUMBER OF PHASES, EACH OF WHICH CAN OVERLAP WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SPECIFIC ELEMENT

THE PHASES CAN BE COMBINED IN DIFFERENT WAYS, ACCORDING TO THE NEEDS AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF THE TIMES









The proposal is conceived as a commentary on the morphology and on the history of Seret.

This commentary is articulated into words, though these words are peculiar: they pertain to the vocabulary of architecture, and in fact they are architectural objects.

Each object/word is meaningful in itself, and each object/word can be assembled with another or others to form meaningful sequences/phrases, where they are experienced together the objects form the overall commentary, but nevertheless it is not needed to build all of them to be meaningful and consistent.

In fact the proposal is thought for a PROCESS/ living terms, and thus to be mutable in several different small scale phases likely to be financed and managed.

The goal of the proposal is to to enhance the usability of the city as a touristic destination and to highlight the importance of its heritage, and to do so both in by adding interventions/buildings or installations.

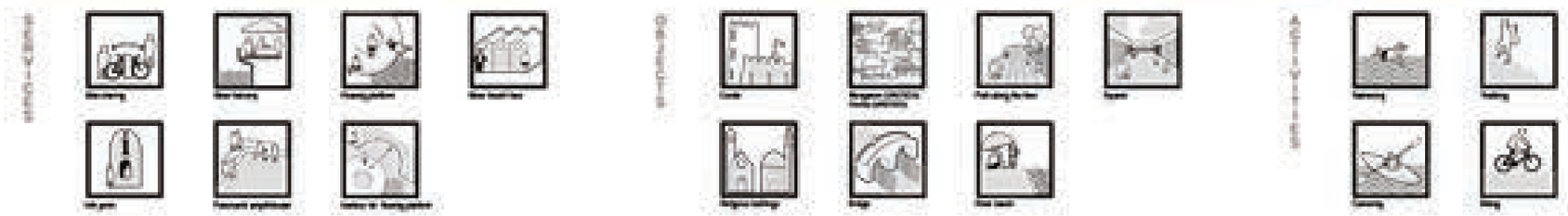
To pursue this goal the proposal is based on two strategies.

As to the first strategy, it introduces new stumbling/blocks from which to observe (ruins, navigate), the river between them and the landscape surrounding them.

As to the second strategy, it introduces new paths/ altering the current ones and connecting them new. Each stumbling as well as each new path would point the attention to specific features of the river and/or of the natural environment, highlighting the uniqueness and the beauty of the place.

In this sense, the new paths and stumbling would be "components" rather than additions to Seret's heritage.

"An affirmative action in the legal vocabulary is a new spread of creating equal opportunities for socioeconomic minorities. Borrowing from the legal vocabulary, this proposal aims at creating an affirmative role for the river Cricova in the city of Seret. The strategy for reaching this goal is based on respecting the natural resilience of the river bed.



AFFIRMATIVE* RESILIENCE

SITE PLAN

Scale 1:1000

1

Section A-A'

Railway and path along the River

Section B-B'

Panoramic amphitheatre to observe Mangalore and Surrathkal

Section C-C'

The historic mill & shops revitalized

Pathbridge from the square Tender Meadow to the island

Section D-D'

Pathbridge from the square Tender Meadow to the island

The cleaned square in front of Mangalore

Research through design:
Finding ways to re-locate and reconnect to natural environment
Places of Making: Isle of Texel, 2014

AFFIRMATIVE RESILIENCE

Team:
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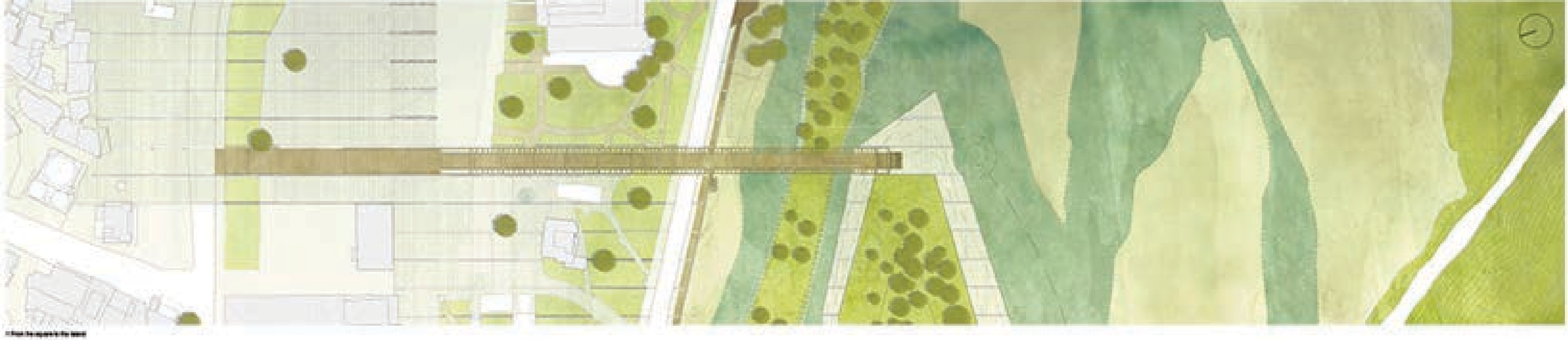
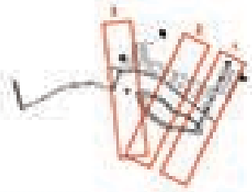
SECTIONAL DRAWINGS

Scale 1:500

2





AFFIRMATIVE RESILIENCE

PLANS

Scale 1:500

3

WHERE YOU REST

WHERE YOU MOVE

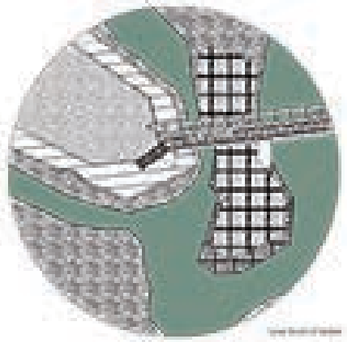
AFFIRMATIVE RESILIENCE

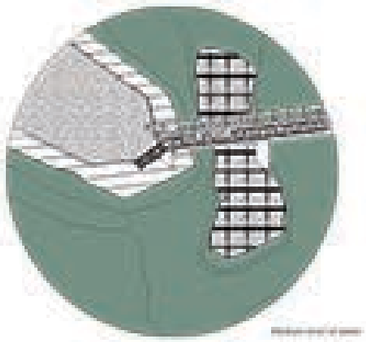
KEY FEATURES AND DETAILS

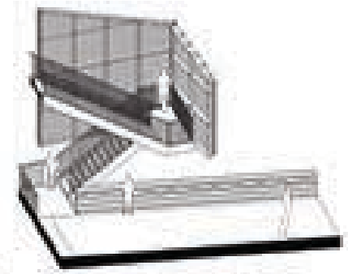
Scales 1:2000, 1:200

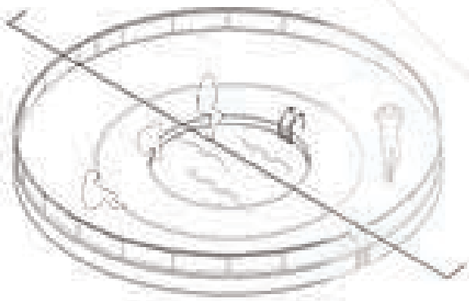
4a

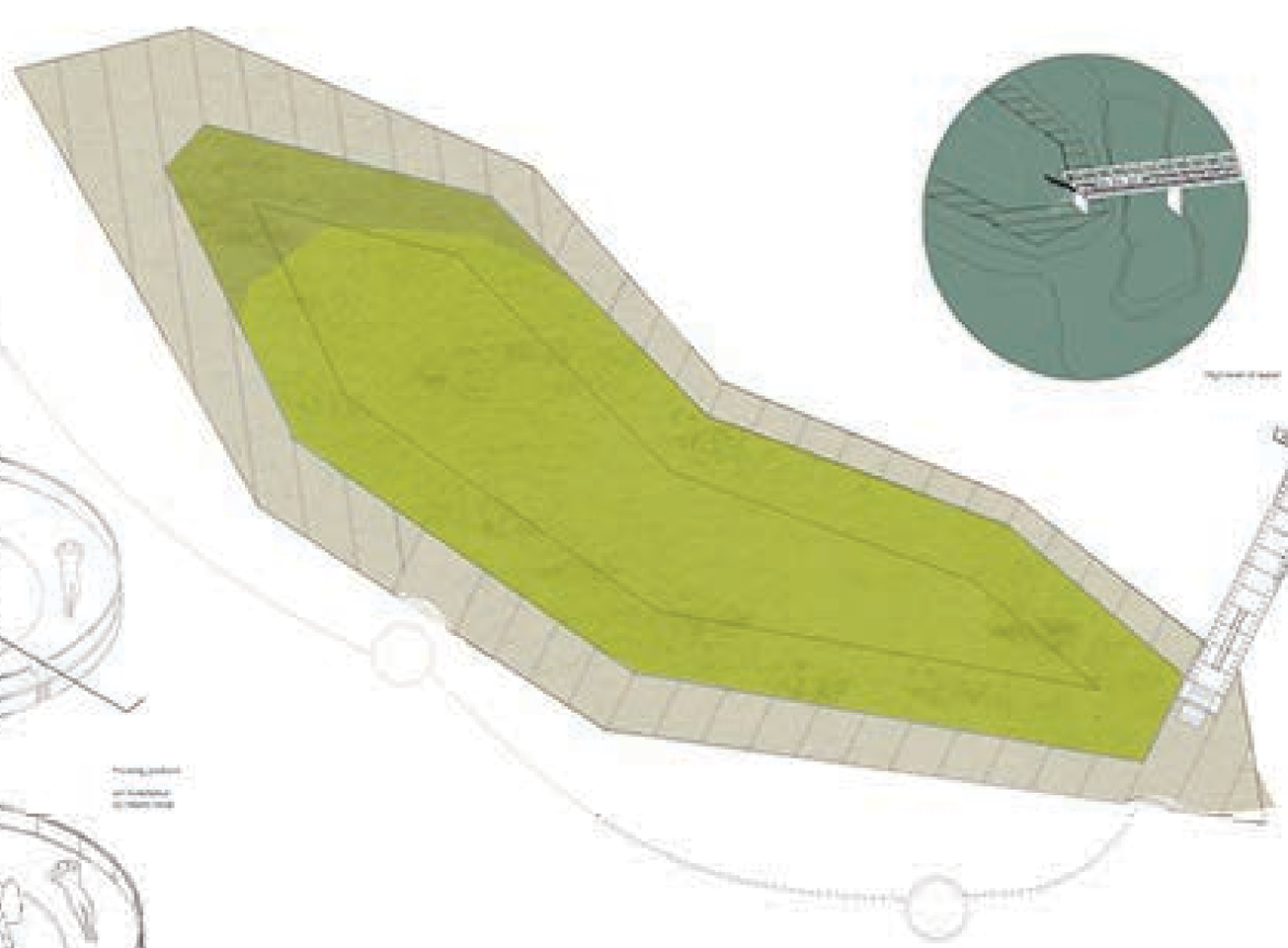
OBJECTS

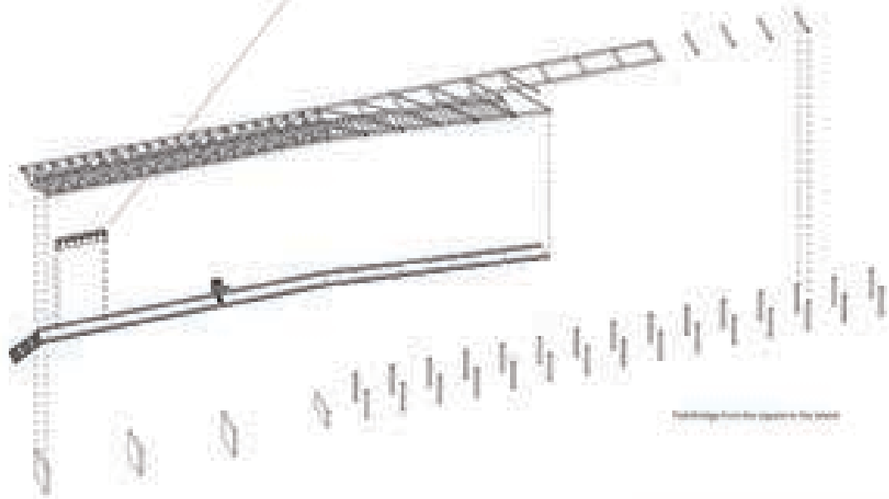


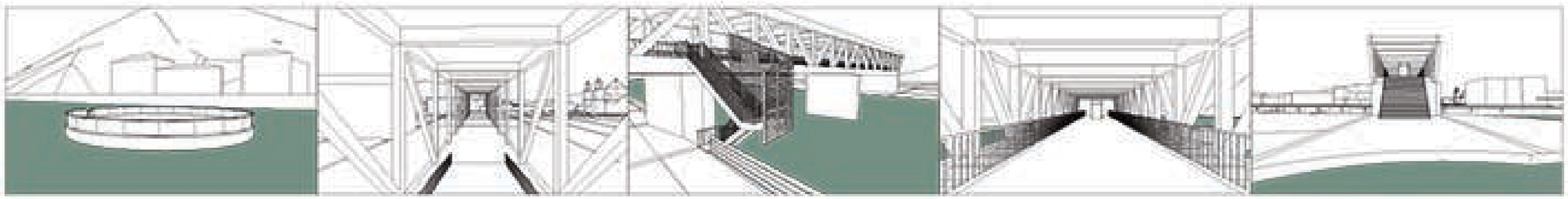










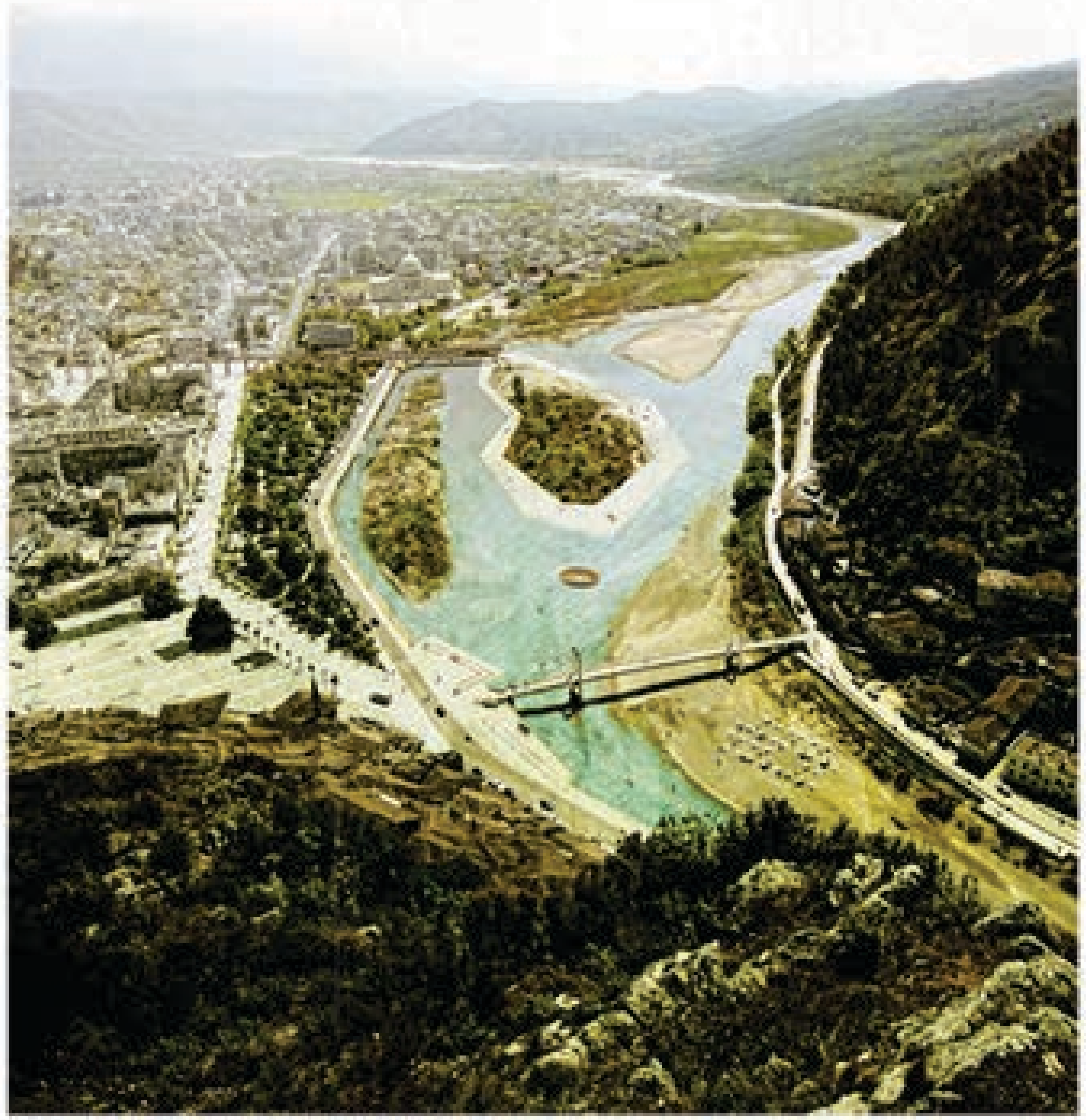


AFFIRMATIVE RESILIENCE

KEY FEATURES AND DETAILS

Scales 1:500, 1:100

4b



1 The paved strips around the island would visually integrate the island itself into the urban system

2 The path/bridge from the square Teodor Muzaka would physically integrate the island into the urban system

AFFIRMATIVE RESILIENCE

CONTEXT PERSPECTIVES

5

1. Approaching the heritage...

2. ...looking at the river...

3. ...eventually reaching the island (and the water!)...

4. ...then resting and sightseeing, before some food and wine.

AFFIRMATIVE RESILIENCE

EYE-LEVEL PERSPECTIVES

6