

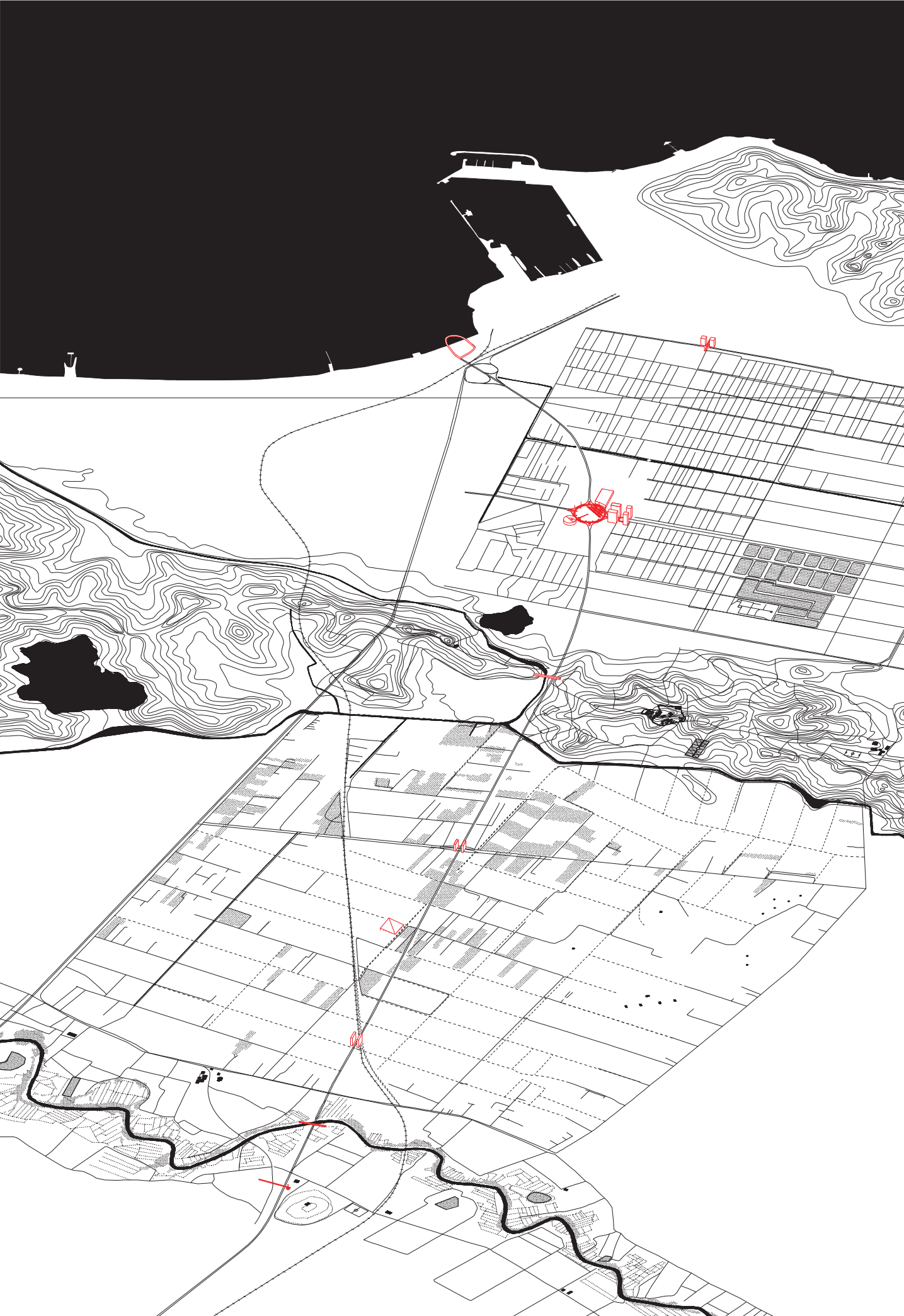
**DURANA  
INTERNATIONAL  
URBAN DESIGN  
COMPETITION  
stage 2**

**REGION #2  
DURANA  
lot. 3**

**DURANA STORIES**

**architects/team  
coordinators:  
landscape architects:  
designer/artist:  
local architects:**

**BAUKUH  
LIST  
SPACE CAVIAR  
ABKONS**





## INTRO



*Philip Guston, Red Box, 1977*

Durana is a complex metropolitan reality. It will need an attentive and articulated masterplan. In order to start this planning process we propose to identify a first series of relatively simple and relatively inexpensive interventions that could operate as an activator for the entire process.

In order to understand and transform Durana, we propose to focus and to operate by means of a single element, that we will use as a key to activate a transformation of the entire territory. By reducing our toolbox, we imagine to expand the consequences of our work. Our proposal is simple and precise.

We propose to use the Tirana-Durrës highway as the key to de-code and re-code the Durana metropolitan region. The highway is indeed not

only the main metropolitan element of this territory, but also the main instrument of its recent urban development. The highway, as public infrastructure, is also the easiest element to work with for a public subject such as the Ministry of Urban Development and Tourism. The highway ends up being the most effective and at the same time the easiest tool to work with in the context of Durana. We propose to maximize the possibility for success in the short period and to take the easiest way. Further interventions in the Durana area will follow the initial steps developed by acting on the highway. In particular, the interventions on the highway need to be compatible with the development of a metro tram/train serving the Durana region, an initiative that we consider crucial for the metropolitan region in the medium period.



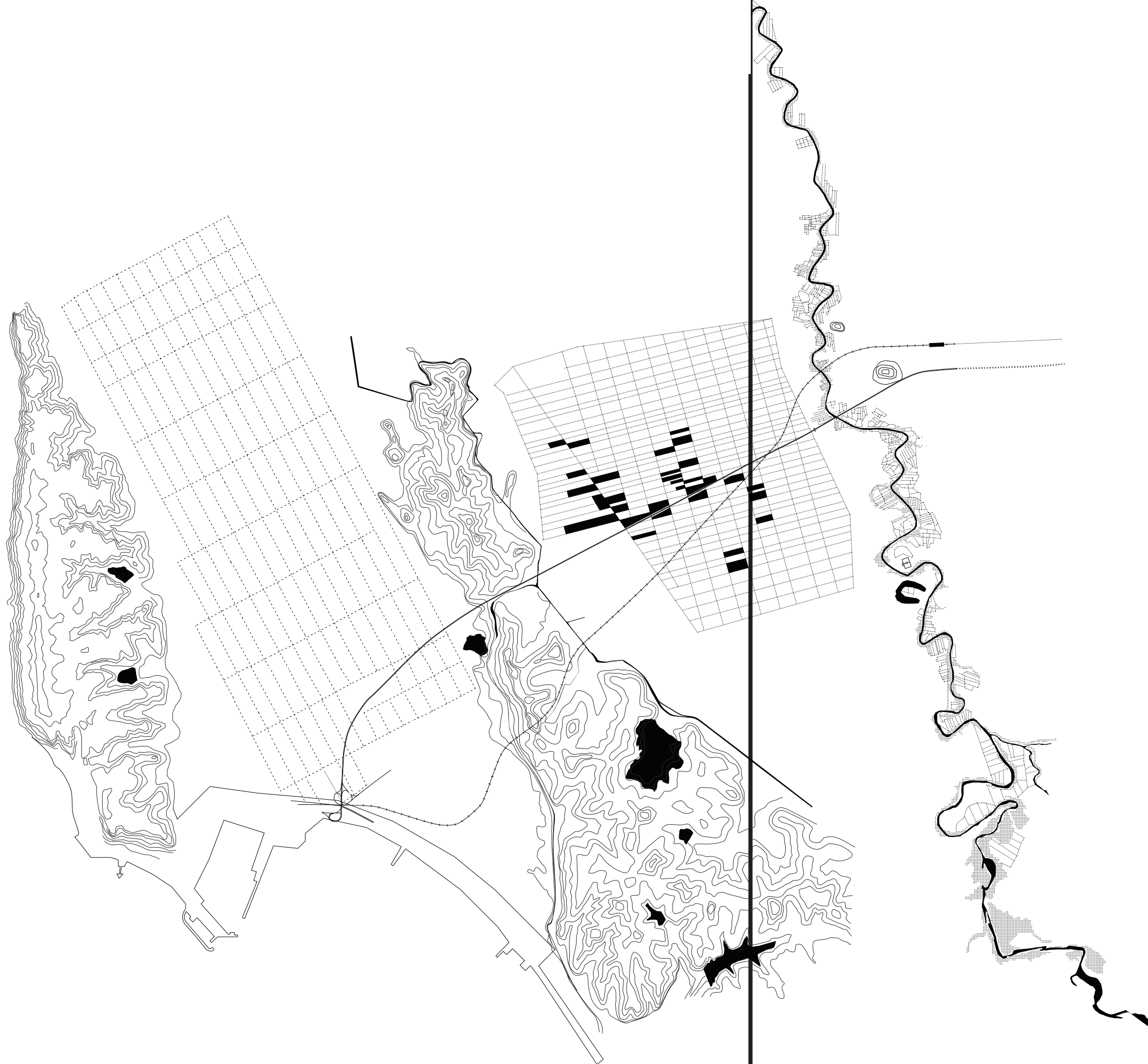
*Tower of Money, Living Theatre 1968 / Learning from Las Vegas, Flamingo Hotel, 1968*

The highway is OK. It makes sense as it is, it should not become a “proper” highway, neither should it become an entirely urban road (that would require another highway). The complex layering of different rhythms coexisting into the highway is just a consequence of the different speeds and multiple populations inhabiting the city. We need to understand this multiplicity of speeds as an asset. We propose not to destroy the promising hybrid nature of the highway, we imagine to protect its challenging ambiguity by simply giving *form* to it. We propose to provide better definition to the highway by recognizing the figures that manifest their presence along it. In fact, the highway operates as a stage of a possible *metropolitan theatre*. We simply need to attribute definition to the characters acting on this stage, to expose the rituals that enliven the *metropolitan theatre*.



**PART #1**

**DURANA STORIES**



***Overall territorial plan scheme***

**DURANA SEEN FROM THE HIGHWAY**

The Tirana-Durrës highway crosses a complex territory. The Durrës section is composed of 5 major territorial systems : (1) the Erzen-River, (2) the agro-logistic plateau, (3) the Shënavlash hills, (4) Kënetë grid and (5) the Durrës coastline. These five systems present major differences in terms of topography, territorial qualities but also in terms of spatial layout and logics of urbanisation. We consider these 5 systems and their significant differences as major assets to the future development of Durana. The highway, crossing these differences, should be able to have a dual approach towards them; that means it should be able to maintain its relative autonomy as an extraterritorial and efficient infrastructure and at the same time create interesting and fertile interactions and relations with these geographical and urban systems.



*Erzen, scale 1:30.000*

#### **1. ERZEN RIVER**

The Erzen river is an important amenity for Durana. In this semi-arid territory, the Erzen is not only an important corridor of humid flora and biodiversity, but also a major vector in the Durana urbanisation. Several villages, more or less linear, have developed alongside it. These villages, amongst which Shijak, Sallmone, Pjezë and Sukth form today a quasi-city. This linear urban structure, which developed on both sides of the river is cut by both the highway and the river itself, hardly ever accessible or crossable. While the Erzen-River-City seems to possess the amenity and the urban potential to form an important urban system, it still lacks qualitative connections and relations between its detached parts and the river.

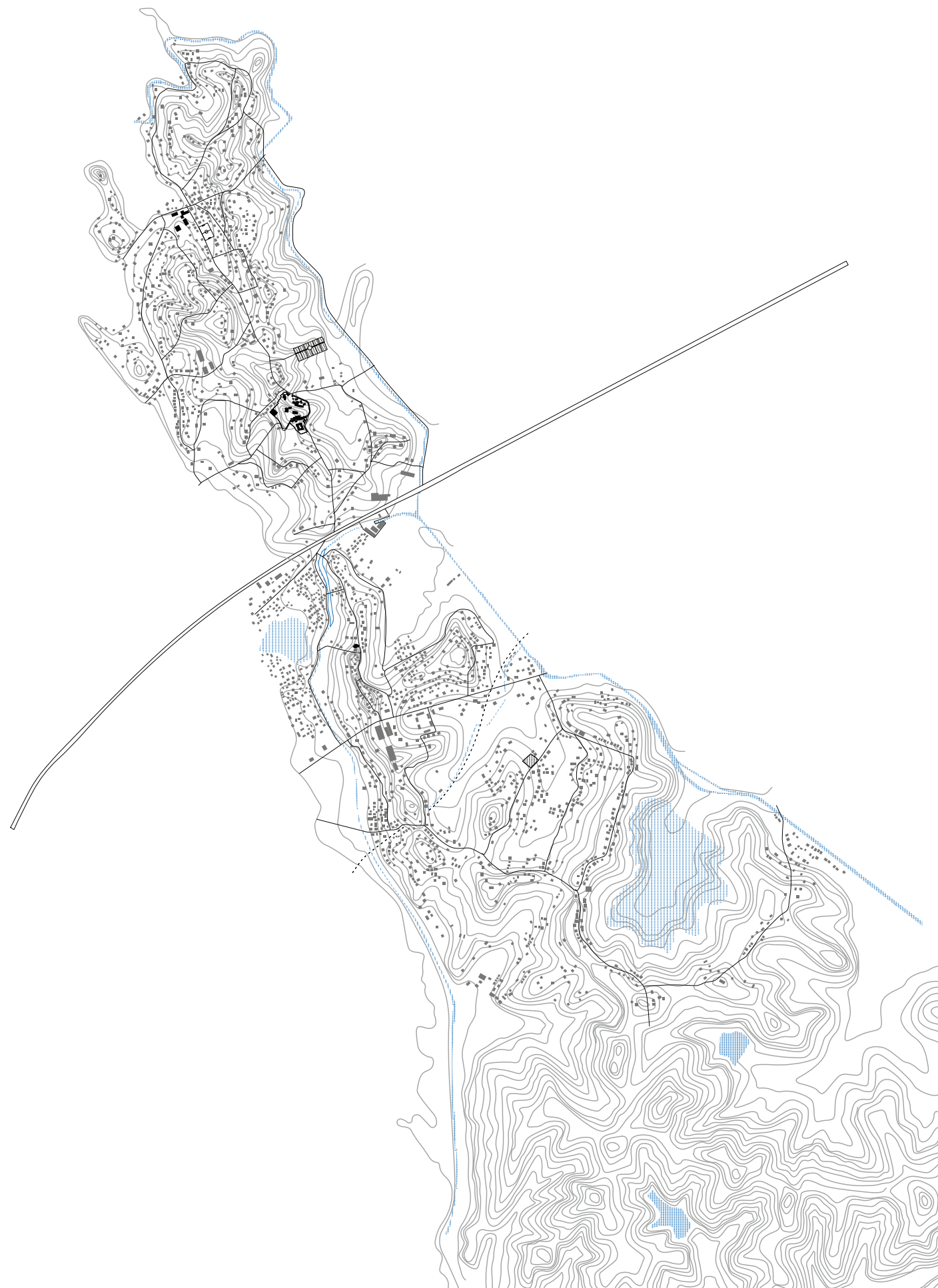




*Agro-logistic plateau, scale 1:30.000*

## 2. AGRO-LOGISTIC PLATEAU

The large plateau between the Erzen valley and the Shënvash hills is a productive and fertile land. This territorial entity presents more than 100 sq. kilometres of arable land. The part crossed by the highway and concerned by this study is a 15 sq kilometres squarish shape which is the most urbanised part of the plateau. Its layout is composed mainly of two irrigation grids: the first is originated by the old Durrës road, the second, on the west side, is a hybrid mix of the first grid and the direction of the railway line. Nowadays, the agricultural activities are quite dispersed and have a hard time resisting to the diverse economic and logistic boxes that take hold of parcels along and around the highway.

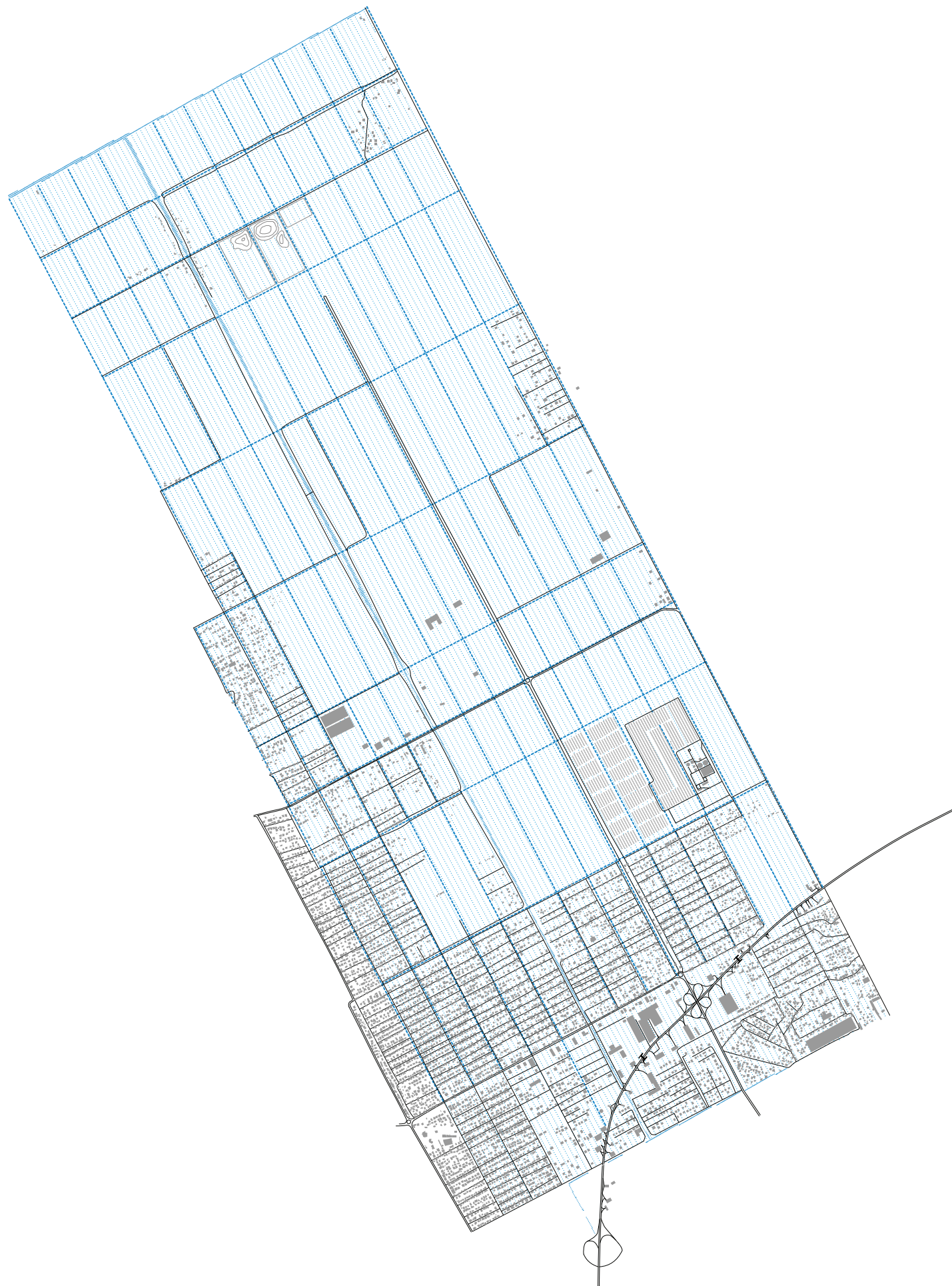


*Shënavlash hills, scale 1:30.000*

### 3. SHËNAVLASH HILLS

The hilly landscape of the western side of the Erzen valley slowly flattens and joins the plateau just north of Vrinas. The intersection point between the hill and the highway is hardly perceptible today. Yet, the Shënavlash church and the mosque, which are both situated on the crest-line of the hill are approximately 20m above the level of the highway. This slightly dominant position produces beautiful territorial views from the crest-line towards the plateau on the east and the city of Durrës to the west. The intersection point between the hills and the highway is definitively a strategic spot to underline the switch between the plateau and the city, as well as a highly fragile and dangerous crossroad between the highway traffic and the adjacent villages.





*Kënetë, scale 1:30.000*

#### 4. KËNETA

The Kënetë grid is an impressive territorial figure which stretches out from the centre of Durrës to Rinia Harbour.

The future transfer of heavy port activities from Durrës to Rinia, transforms this 6km long and 80% empty grid into a potential infrastructure for future economic, logistic and urban activities.

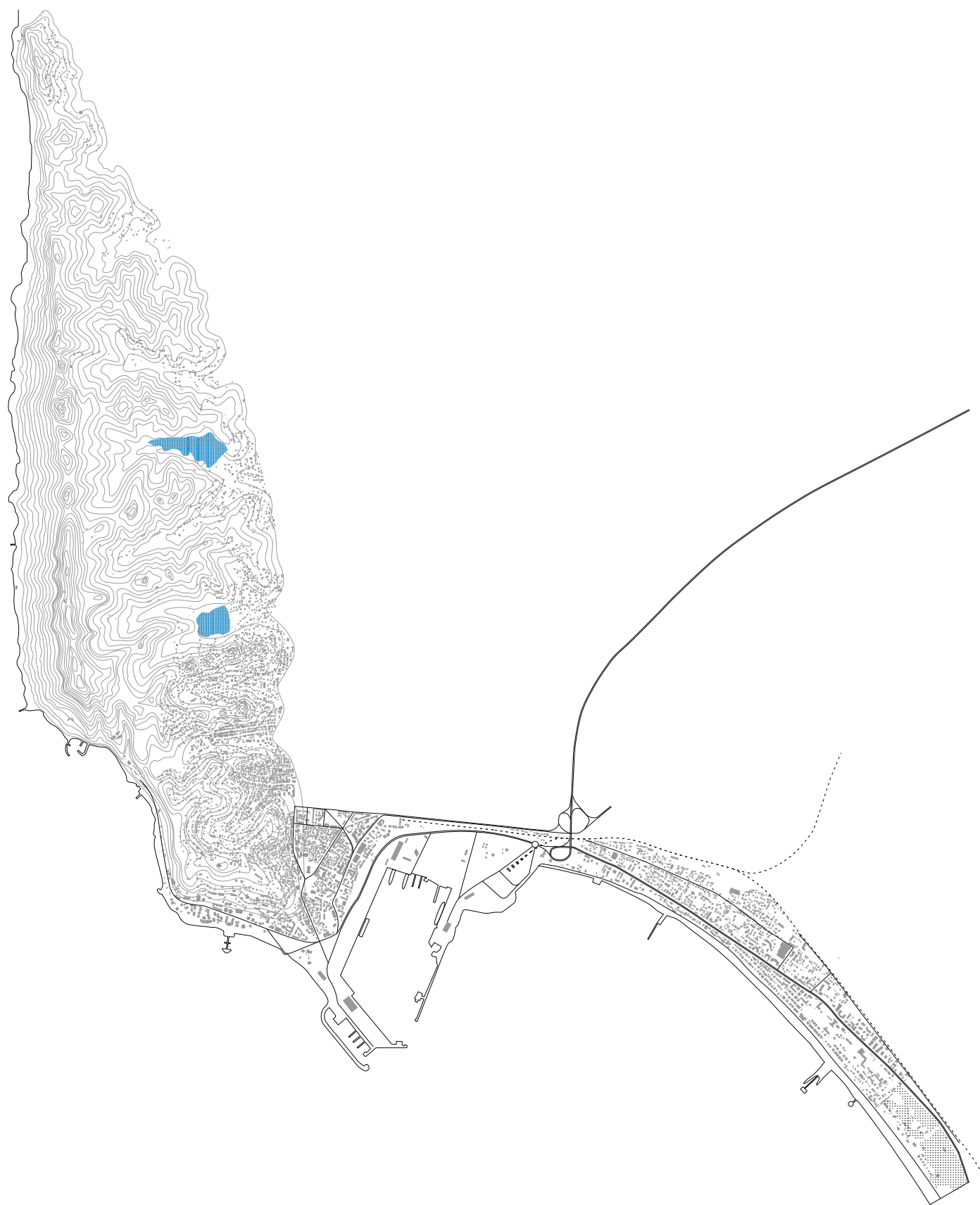
The irrigation canal system, which seems to be in pretty bad shape today, will probably become a precious piece of land for the creation of an ecological and energetic park, on the north, and for the redevelopment and improvement of the urban residential neighbourhood, on the south.

The encounter between the curved highway and the southern part of the grid, produces important clumsy shaped voids, with apparently

low constructibility.

The interchange between the highway and the Rruga Martin Camaj seems to emphasise the infrastructural and non-urban character of this encounter zone.

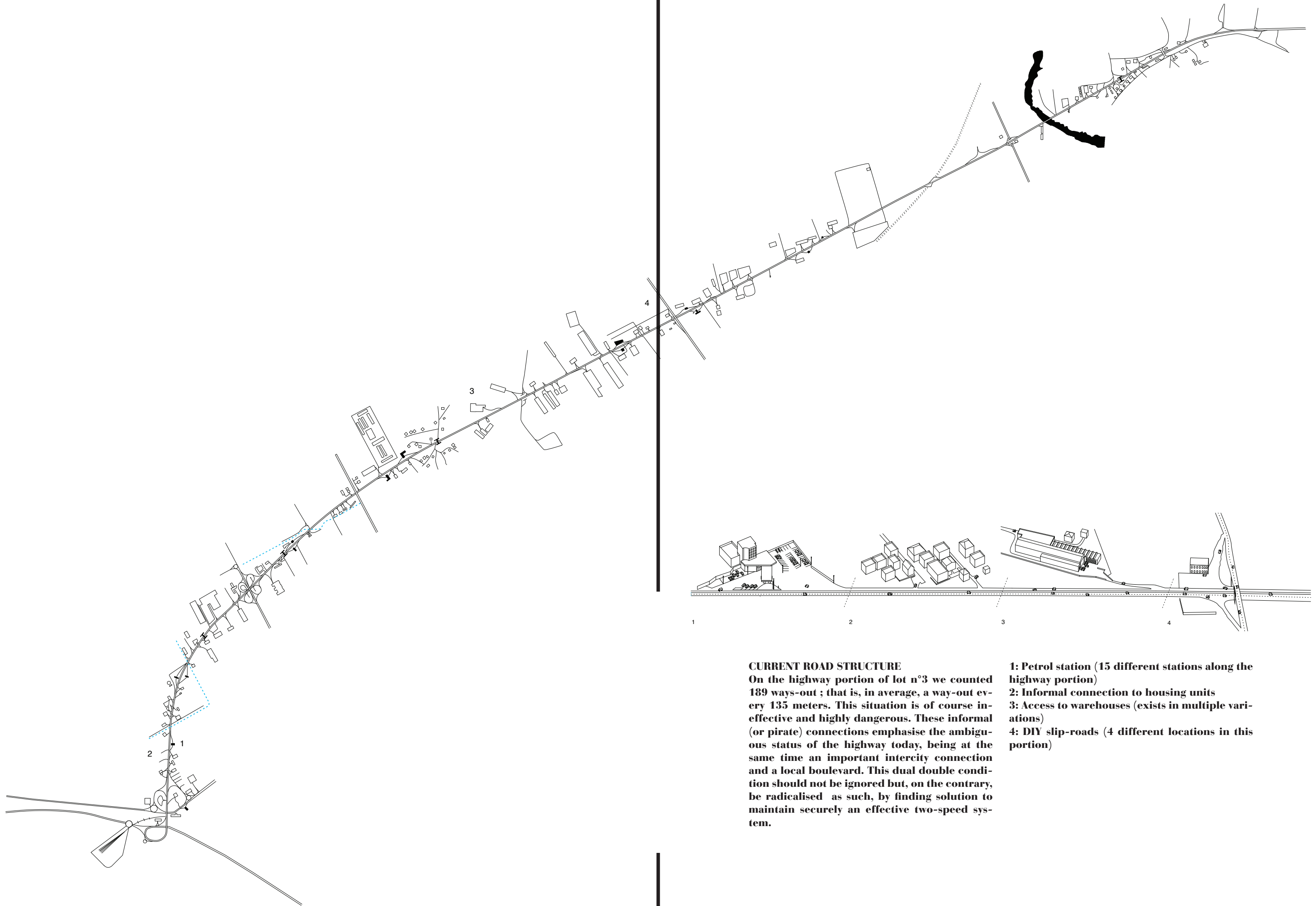




*Durrës coastline, scale 1:40.000*

##### **5. DURRËS COASTLINE**

The highway ends its trajectory in front of the Bay of Durrës in what seems to be an almost spectacular moment. The crossing of the rail-road, Rruga Adria and the slip road passing meters from the sea, gives the drivers only a glimpse of the Adriatic without establishing a strong visual connection with it. The strength of the geographical shape of the Bay is reinforced by the presence of the Durrës hills. The future departure of heavy port activities to Rinia will give the opportunity to connect the Durrësi beach and the hills, by the means of a continuous qualitative public space that will have to negotiate a passage through the highway's interchange.

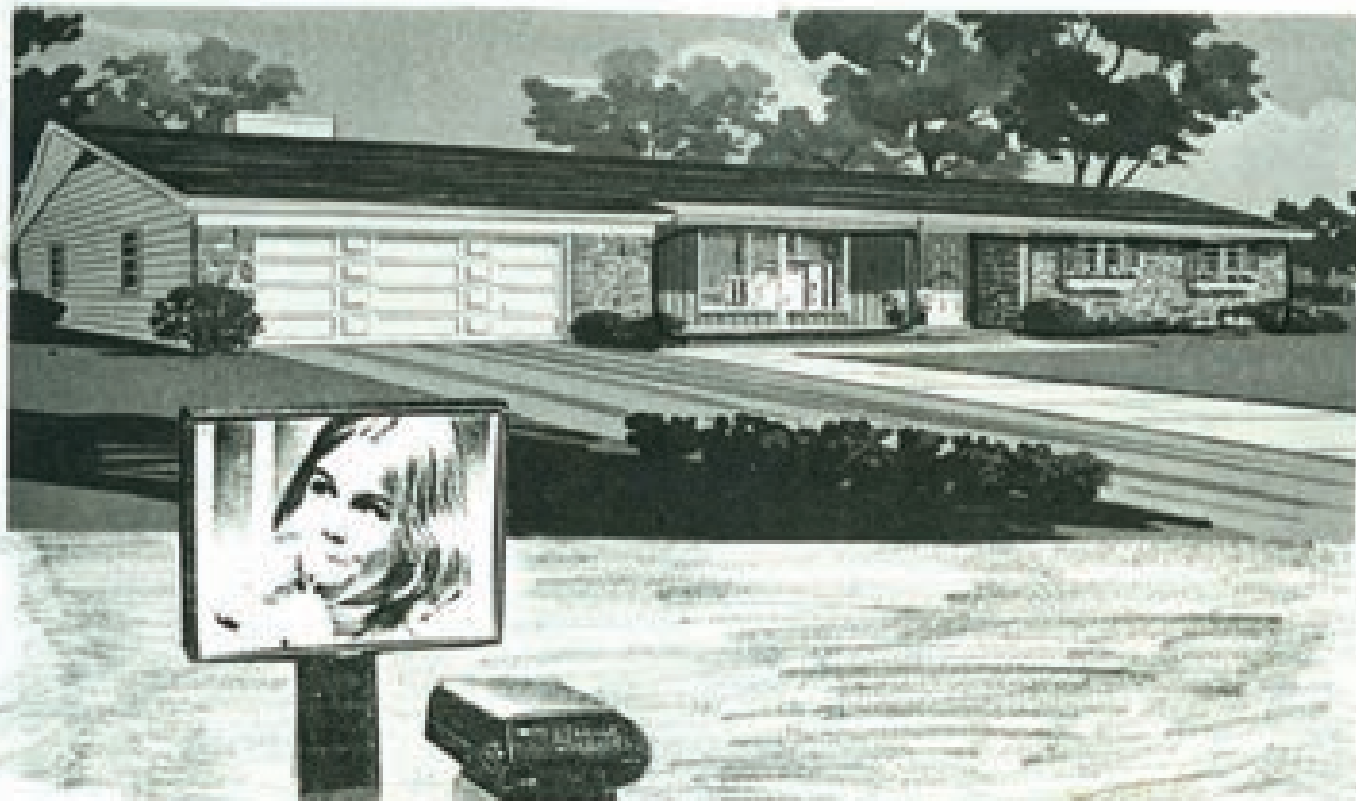


# **CURRENT ROAD STRUCTURE**

On the highway portion of lot n°3 we counted 189 ways-out ; that is, in average, a way-out every 135 meters. This situation is of course ineffective and highly dangerous. These informal (or pirate) connections emphasise the ambiguous status of the highway today, being at the same time an important intercity connection and a local boulevard. This dual double condition should not be ignored but, on the contrary, be radicalised as such, by finding solution to maintain securely an effective two-speed system.

- 1: Petrol station (15 different stations along the highway portion)
- 2: Informal connection to housing units
- 3: Access to warehouses (exists in multiple variations)
- 4: DIY slip-roads (4 different locations in this portion)

VIDEO PROJECTION OUTSIDE HOME (1978)



A large ADVENT video projection screen is placed on the front lawn, facing pedestrians on the sidewalk. It shows an image of whatever TV program is being watched by the family on their TV set within the house. When the set is off, the video projector is off; when the channels are being changed, this is seen on the enlarged public screen outside the house.

*Dan Graham, video projection outside home, 1978*

#### METROPOLITAN THEATRE

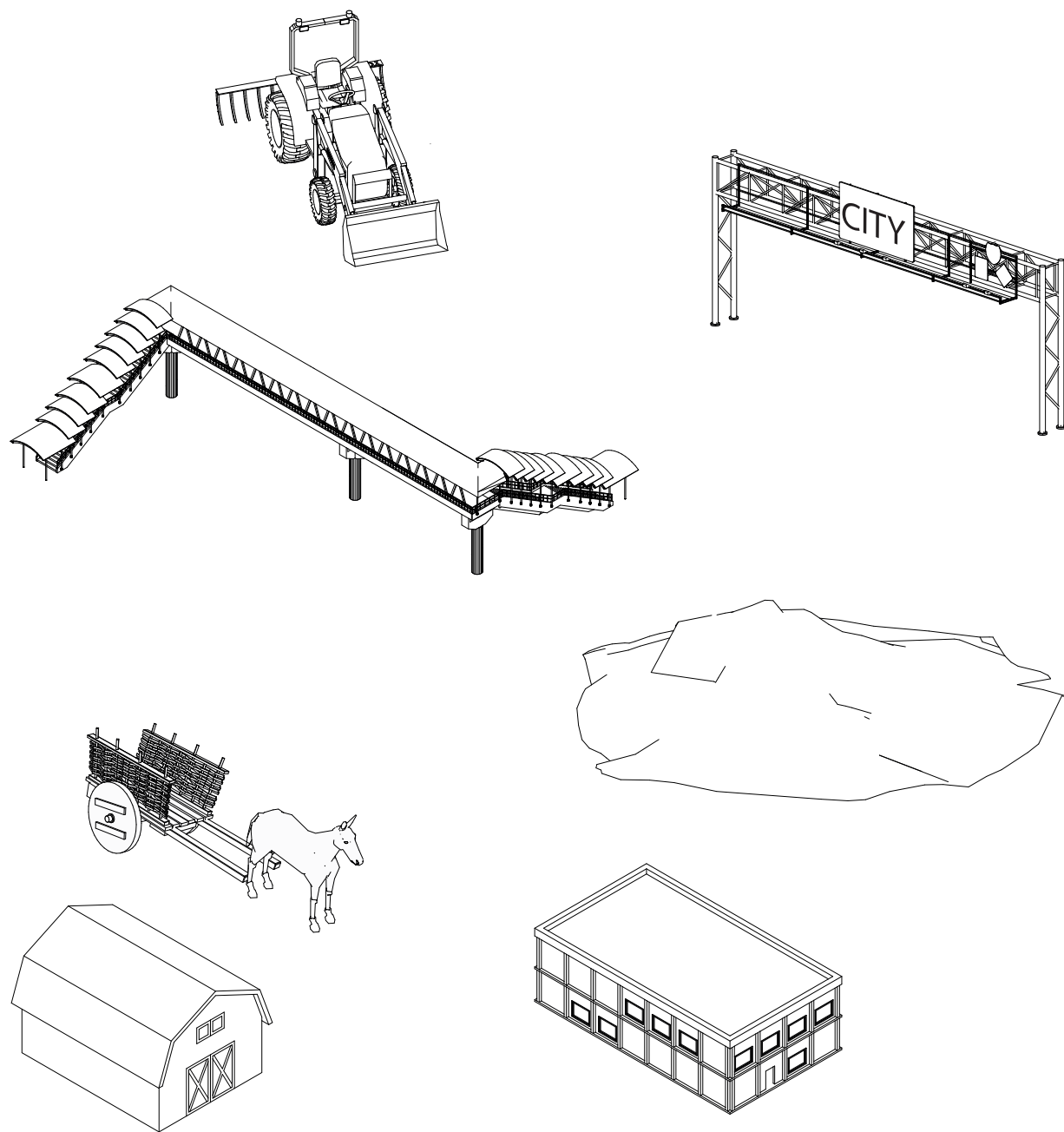
Our project aims at the reorganisation of the pre-existent forces at play along this stretch of road. The highway becomes a *metropolitan theatre*, where spectacles are staged on an everyday base. The architect operates as the director of a theatre - a linear theatre, the longest in the world, Lina Bo's Teatro Oficina exaggeratedly stretched to the horizon - at the same time rigorously organized and entirely unpredictable.

The road's identity becomes a dramaturgical question: the highway as a cultural institution, a space of intense and planned cultural activity. Our objective is not to alter the basic organization of the space along the highway, but to activate it with intensely poetic moments that reconnect the overlapping experiences of the space.

By rethinking the hierarchy between the occupants of the stretch of road, we propose to engage with the activities along this path, offering a window into the daily life of each.



*Adrian Paci, temporary permanence centre, 2007*



#### LIST OF ACTORS

No boundary or line of demarcation separates the Theatre from the spaces of everyday activity along the Durana highway. The two coincide. The Theatre is an opportunistic device that absorbs its surroundings, recasting them as actors, props or backdrops.

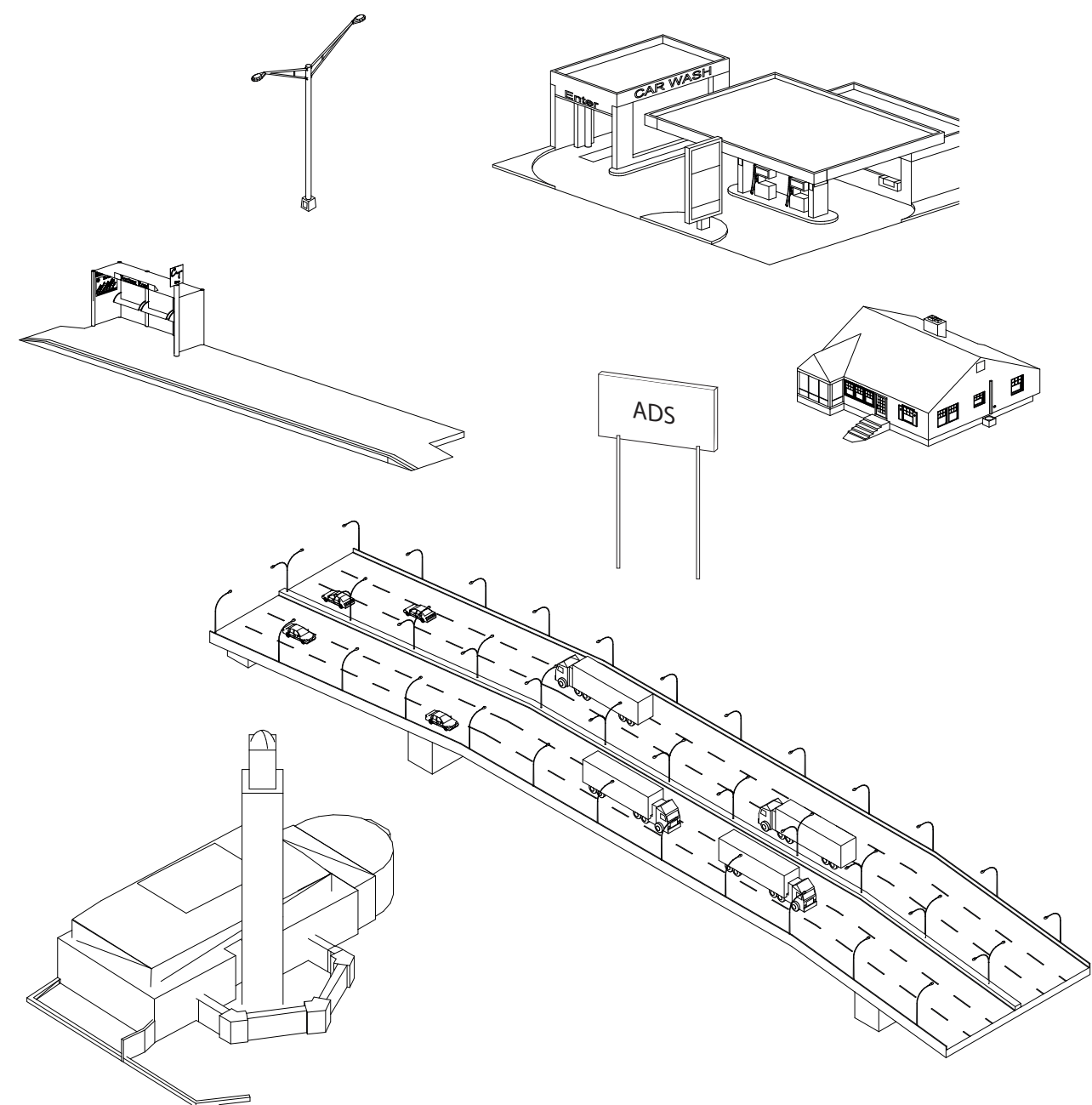
Possible casts and role:

Industry, habitation, stores, services...

Cyclists, pedestrians, minibuses, automobiles...

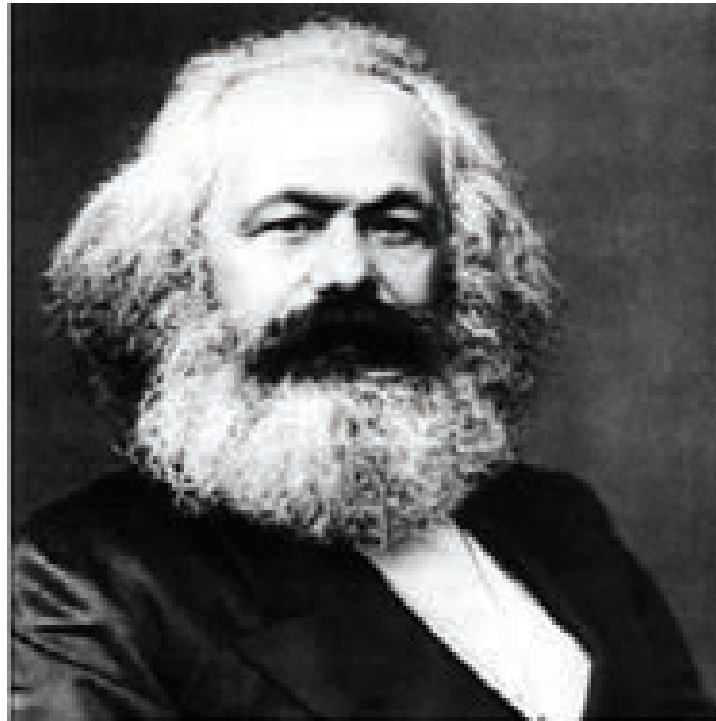
Artists, architects, performers, spatial practitioners...

Workers, tourists, inhabitants, commuters...



**PART #2**

**DURANA FUTURES**



#### **SUPERSTRUCTURE/ BASE**

Durana certainly needs infrastructural improvements on many levels. Just to mention the main needs: water, electricity and energy supply should be improved in the next years. And yet, while recognizing the fundamental relevance of this infrastructure, we believe that the first interventions – the ones that could address the entire planning process – could be simpler and lighter. In fact, the definition of innovative territorial strategies cannot wait the long times of hard-core infrastructural interventions. The relative simplicity (and relatively limited cost) of architectural and artistic interventions allows to imagine the definition of the software of a territorial scenario later to be implemented by means of more substantial infrastructural hardware.

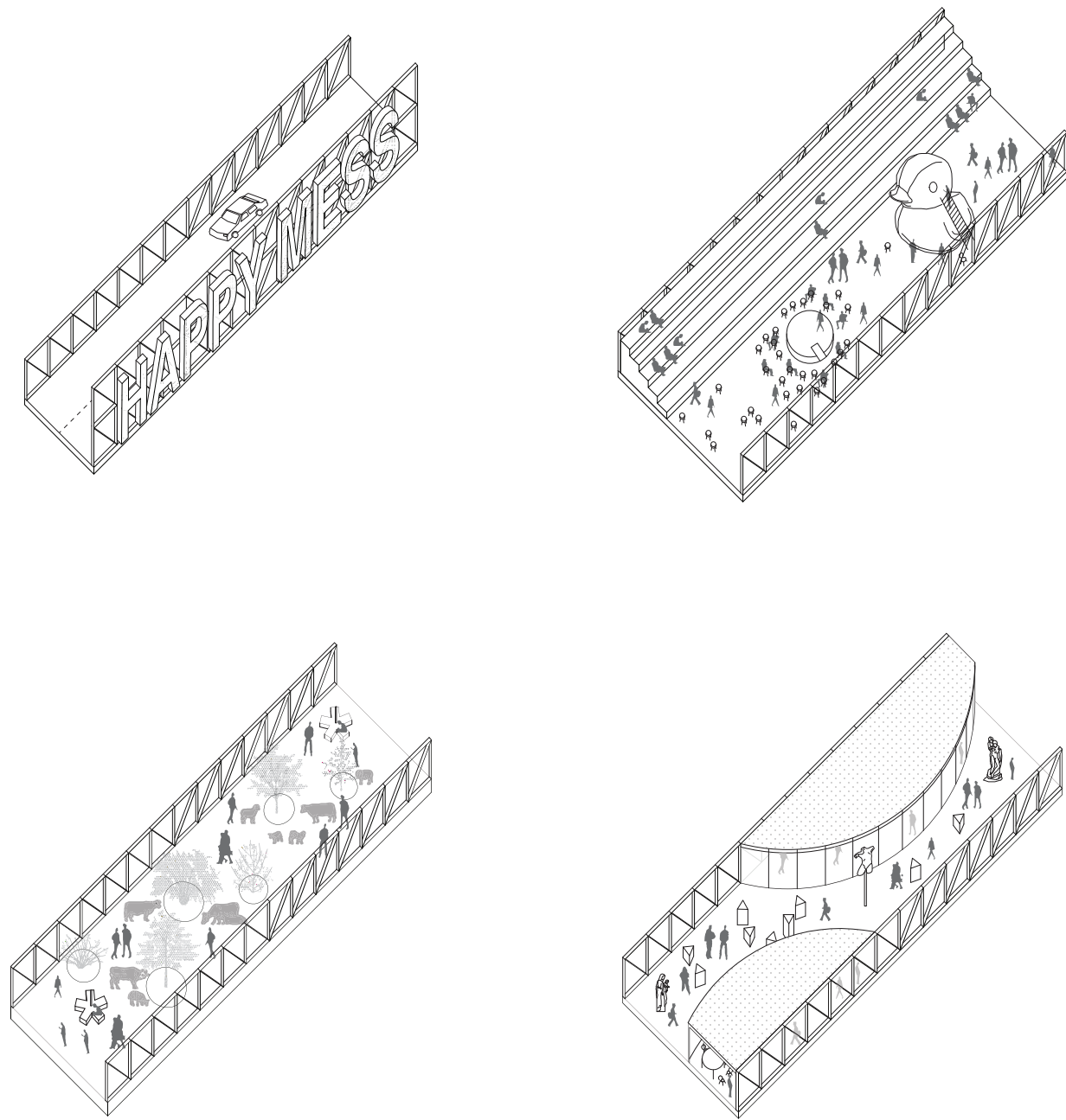
In this respect, Durana could *learn from Tirana*,

from the positive relation that was established in the early 2000s among artistic interventions, urban transformations and overall infrastructural upgrade. Tirana defined in this period a model of urban strategy that operated as a model at the scale of the entire Europe.









## BRIDGES

To rethink of the highway in terms of the theatre, we must address it as a question of design, and equip this “cultural institution” with the necessary performative elements.

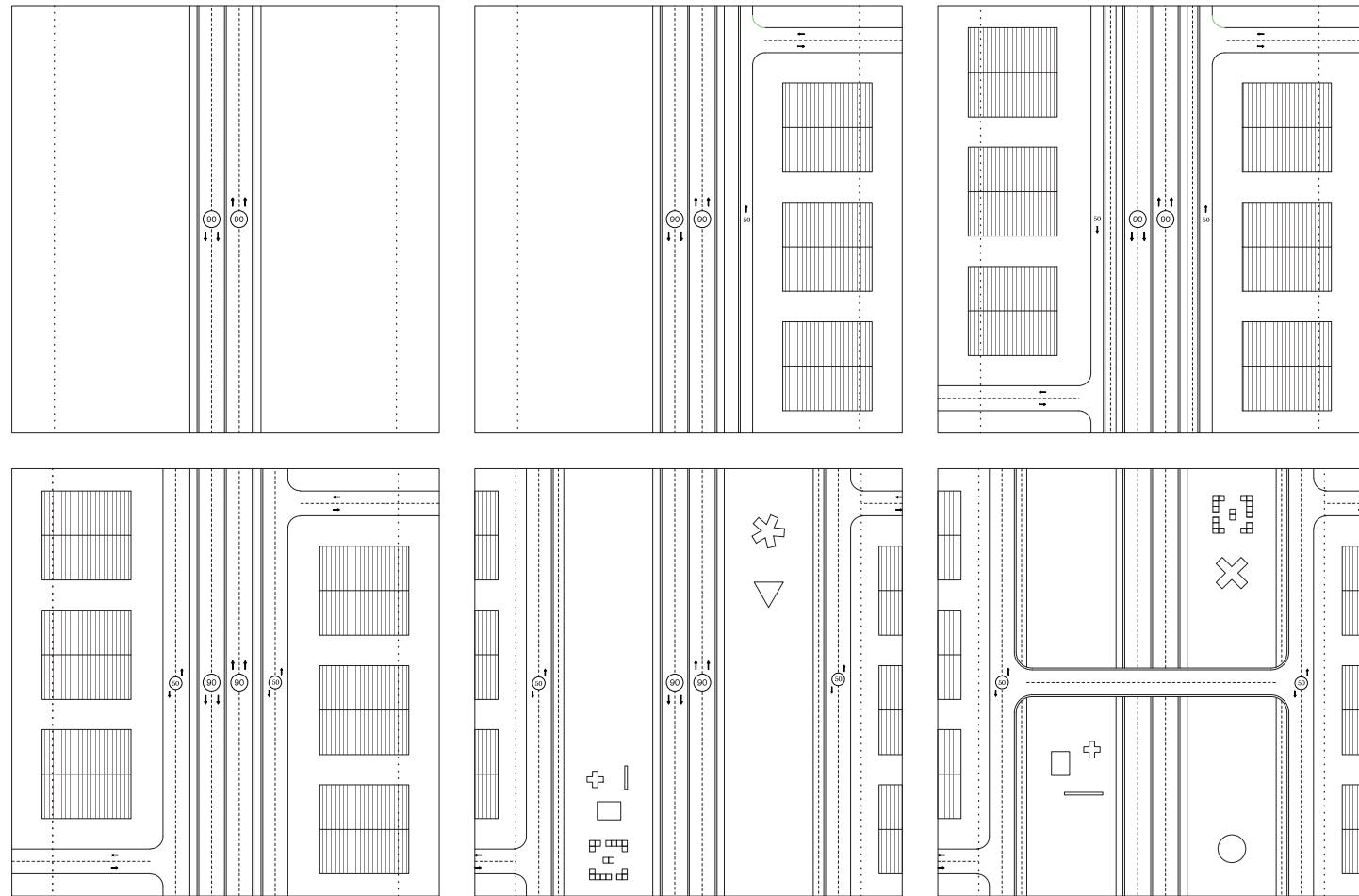
The bridges provide a much needed pedestrian connection among neighbourhoods on the opposite sides of the highway. As such, the bridges reconstruct a relationship among two separated urban realms. The bridges combine their usual role as connective infrastructure with different types of public space and public facilities included in the bridge or distributed at its margins. At the same time, the bridges operate as a memory-framing device.

Bridges indeed are the interfaces of the experiences of the driver and the pedestrian: the pedestrian crosses the bridge on its longitudinal axis, using the bridge as a belvedere opening

onto the landscape, while the driver crosses the bridge along its transversal axis, passing below it and recognizing it as a sign framing the experience of the drive. By reappearing one after the other, the bridges frame the experience of the Tirana-Durrës, defining a silent and precise measure of the different conversations in the car, of the different memories associated with the trips. The stability of the territorial frame defined by the bridges is challenged by the artistic interventions that happen to take possession of the bridges.



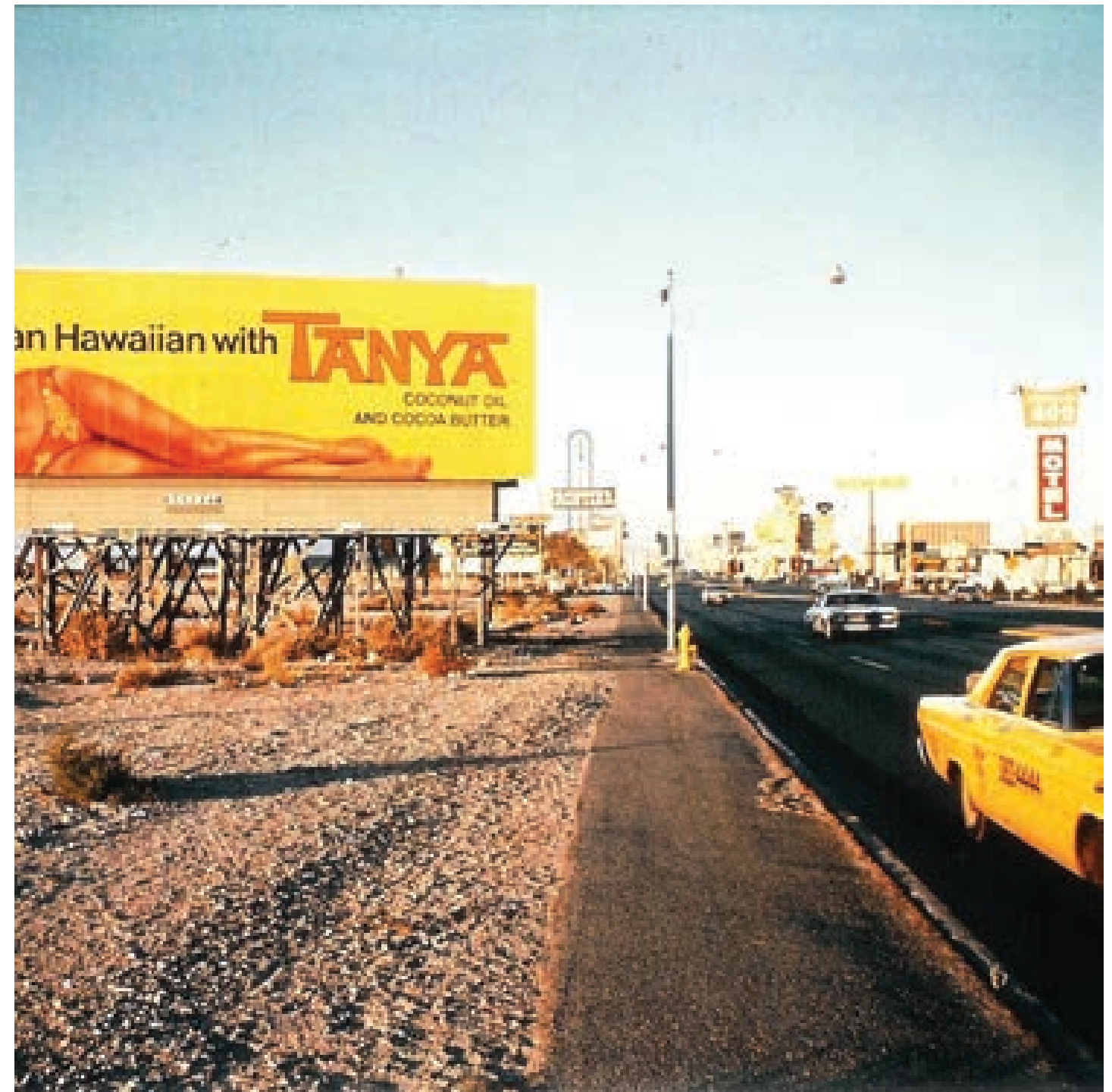
*Canaletto, Capriccio con il ponte di Palladio*



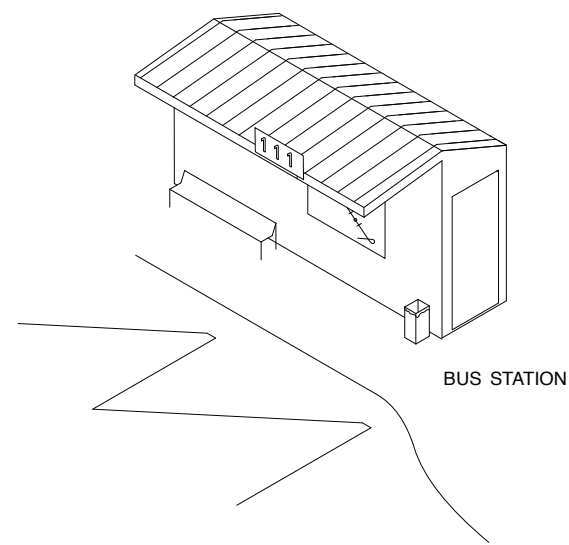
#### SERVICE ROADS

The current structure of the highway is highly chaotic, as way too many different entrances and exits punctuate it. Un-systemic service roads, informal junctions, un-signalled U-turn possibilities and dangerous crossing points only add to the confusion. At the same time, this awkward accumulation of the most diverse systems allows the highway to interact with its surroundings, ultimately producing a flexible organism in which the needs of mobility are intertwined with the events happening at the margins, an organism not without fascination. The project aims to upgrade the mobility system through a minimum degree of systematization, rationalizing the junctions using various configurations of service roads, while U-turns will be systematically allowed every 2 kilometres. The system will retain a high degree

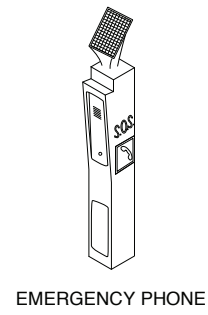
of flexibility, ranging from pure highway, to a highway with two ways service roads on both sides at the opposite extreme of the range. The buffer zone will be implemented gradually and only when necessary. The highway will be both efficient as a mobility device, as well as rich for the events which will continue to happen at its extended margins, events which the projects will boost further. The highway will slowly mutate into an extremely generous two-speeds super-boulevard.



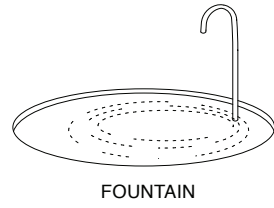
*Glen Hodges, Tania billboard on the Strip, published in "Learning from Las Vegas", 1972*



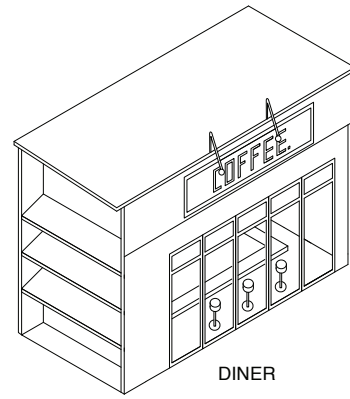
BUS STATION



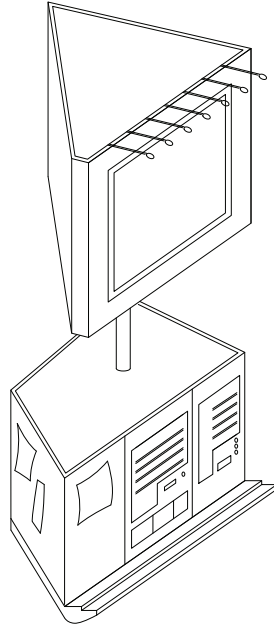
EMERGENCY PHONE



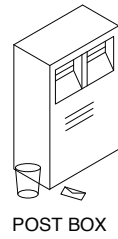
FOUNTAIN



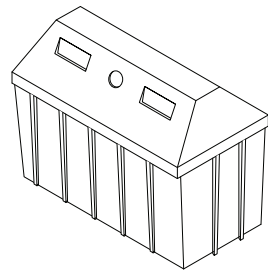
DINER



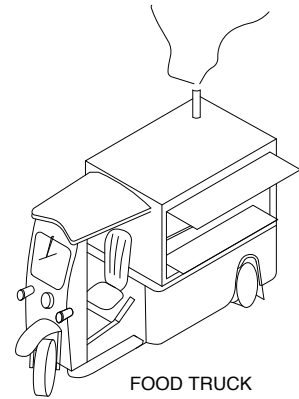
BILLBOARD &  
VENDING MACHINES



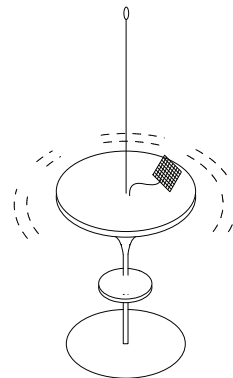
POST BOX



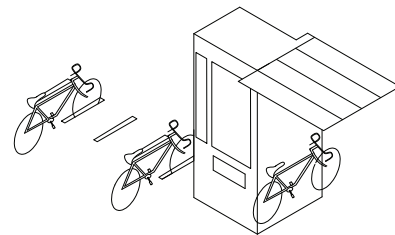
RUBBISH BIN



FOOD TRUCK



WIFI SPOT

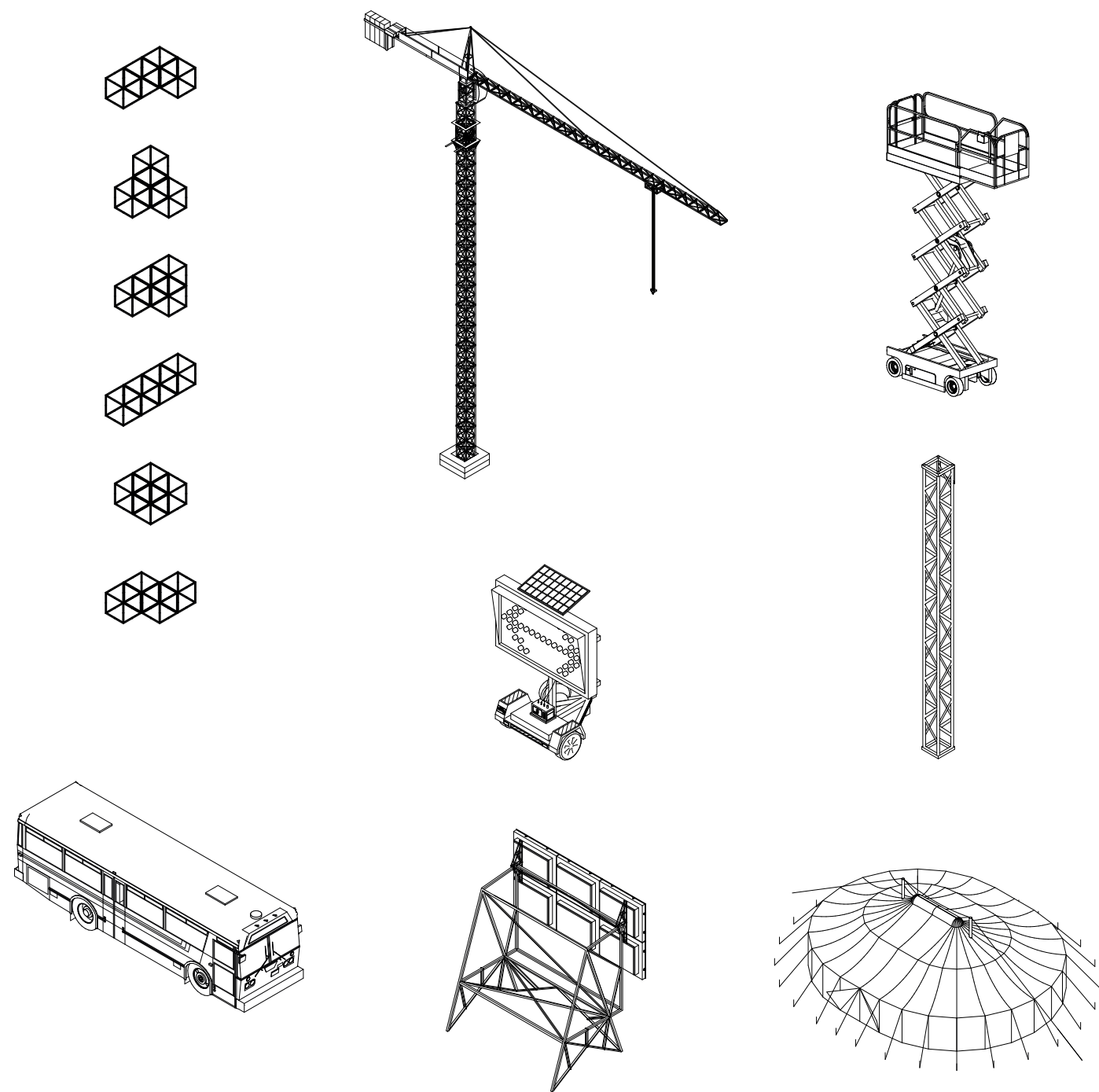


BICYCLE STATION

## SERVICES

Economic activities, warehouses, small businesses will be grouped in small clusters. Each cluster will be equipped with small device services. The services are degree zero architecture that help to sustain the autonomy of these clusters. They provide services but they also generate informal spaces of sociability around them.





#### SCENERY TOOLS

Art is an integral part of the strategy, something that spills out into every part of the highway ecosystem, not confined to preordained ghettos. Some peripheral zones on both sides of the road operate as sectors for artistic interventions working with the existing fabric and deploying, “as found”, the language of the highway itself. A toolbox of infrastructural elements will be assembled to facilitate the activation at the lowest cost possible of the highway-theatre through the construction of scenarios.

Together, these scenarios constitute an artistic masterplan of temporary/permanent low-cost interventions, an ongoing cycle of activities through the seasons.





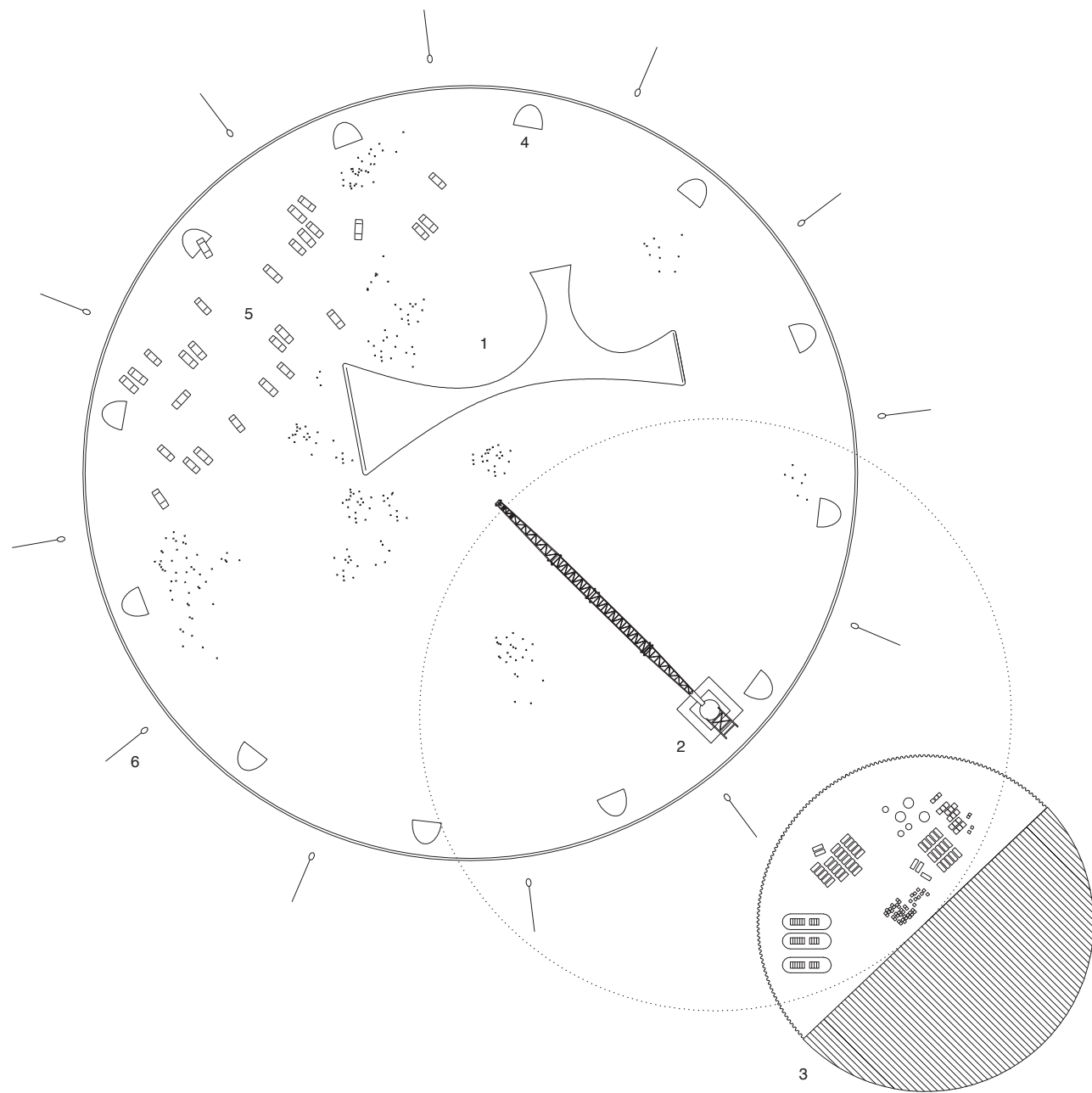


SITUATIONS



*"Ritual Group Drawing," Sea Ranch, CA. Experiments in Environment Workshop, by L. and A. Halprin, 1968*





#### ROUNDAABOUT

In order to operate, the system of stages needs its own infrastructure. Such machinery of the metropolitan theatre is stored in a deposit next to the circle at the entrance of Durrës.

The inside of the circle, marking the entry into the city of Durrës, is a completely flat, colossal platform, the last and biggest of the metropolitan stages. This unpredictable space, half moon, half desert, half parking lot is periodically occupied by colossal art pieces, mass events, rock concerts. The space – normally unused – provides a platform at the metropolitan scale for the entire Durana region. The circle normally is asleep; it works just as a large dot of emptiness marking a change in speed that correspond to the entry into Durrës. Sometime, once every couple of months, the silent moon erupts and is activated by a new event.

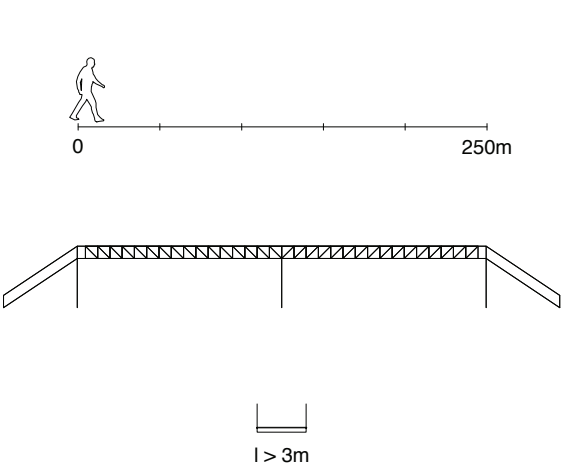
- 1. art
- 2. crane
- 3. art/events storage
- 4. gate
- 5. parking
- 6. lamp post



*Burning Man, Black Rock Desert of Nevada*

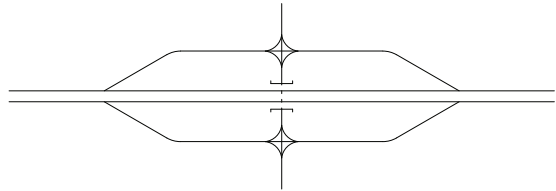
1. Pedestrian Crossing

The distance between two passages above or below the highway should not exceed 500m. In that way, from every single point on the highway, one is maximum 250 m away from a footbridge or a tunnel. The minimum width of a bridge should be 3m and the minimum height 5,5m. Bridges should be designed simply and be comfortable to use. The big pedestrian bridge, at Shēnavlash hills should be wider and be fit for cattle crossing.



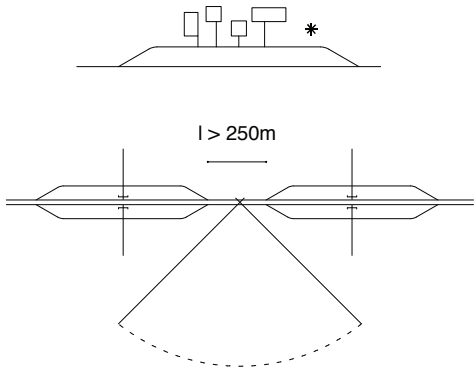
2. Car Crossing

Economic zones, grouped into clusters, should be connected to the main highway only via side-roads. The side roads should give access to these clusters but also provide secure connections to all perpendicular roads. Side roads should not be continuous in order to avoid a systematic widening of the highway, their maximum length should not exceed 1km.



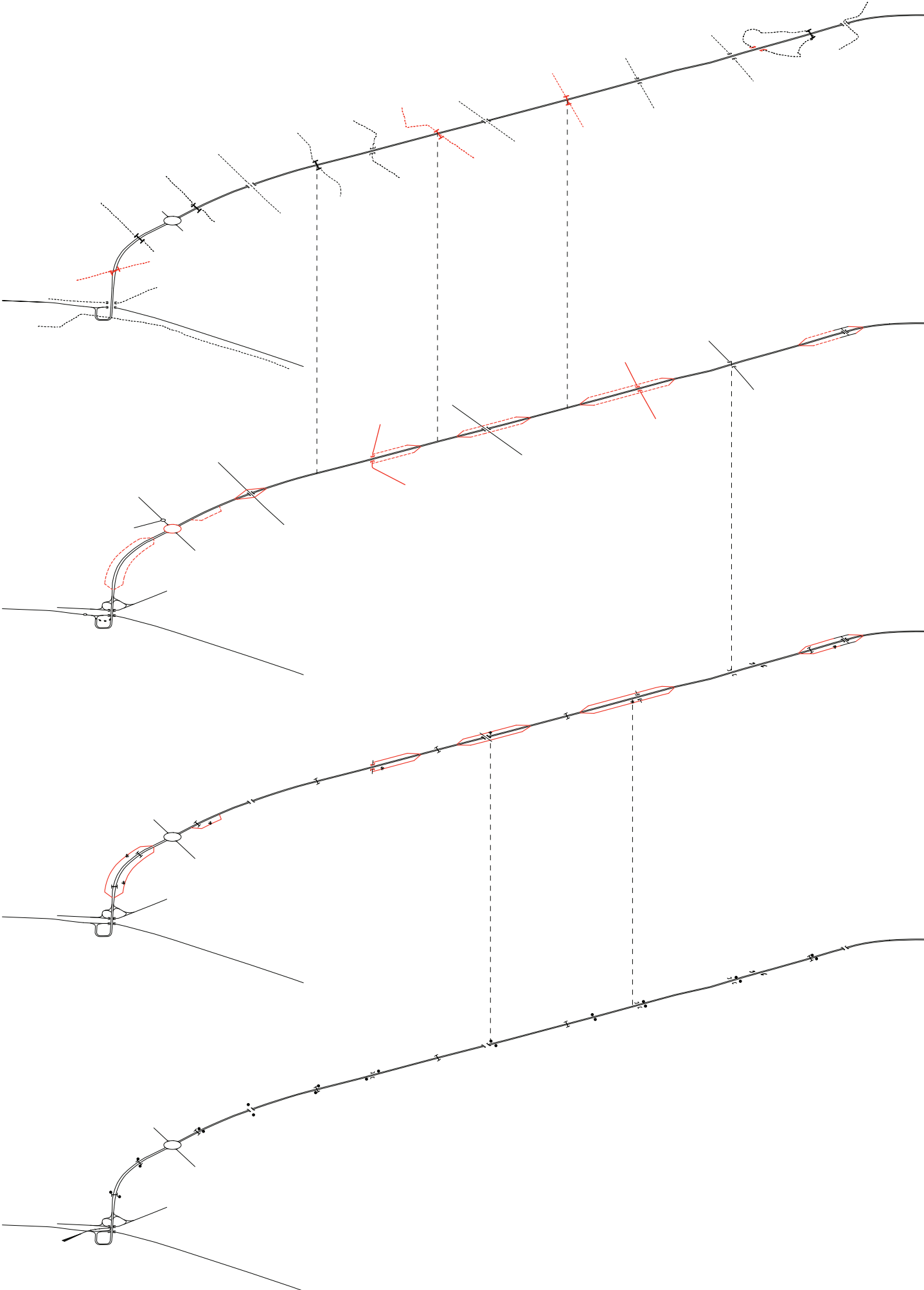
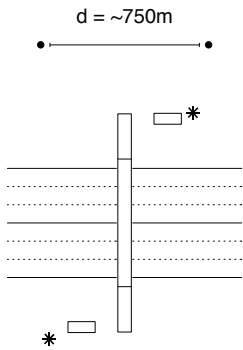
3. Activity Clusters

Economic zones, should be grouped into compact and relatively small clusters. Each cluster should be equipped with small local services. The amount of services will be determined according to the size of each cluster. Window zones, clear of economic actives, should be placed in strategic spots along the highway in order to give qualitative perception of the different Durana landscapes.



4. Bus Stops

Average distance between bus stops should be of approximately 750 m. Bus stops should be placed in secure places, if possible on side-roads and not directly on the highway. They should also be placed systematically next to footbridges and if they are separated from clusters, they should be equipped with minimum services.





*Cedric Price, Potteries Thinkbelt / Cedric Price, Fun Palace Helicopter View*

**THE HIGHWAY SEEN FROM DURANA AND  
DURANA SEEN FROM THE HIGHWAY**

Five territorial systems span the distance between the Erzen river and the Adriatic sea, as recognizable parallel strips, each one with its own semi-independent identity. A sixth system crosses them all, i.e. the highway. As such, the highway provides them with a possible narrative, as events of a bigger account. The highway becomes a machine of vision, a depositary of multiple memories. Along the highway, in each section, two complementary perceptions, two co-existing realities intertwine their destinies. The highway seen from Durana and Durana seen from the highway recompose their diverse fragments into a shared, collective narrative.

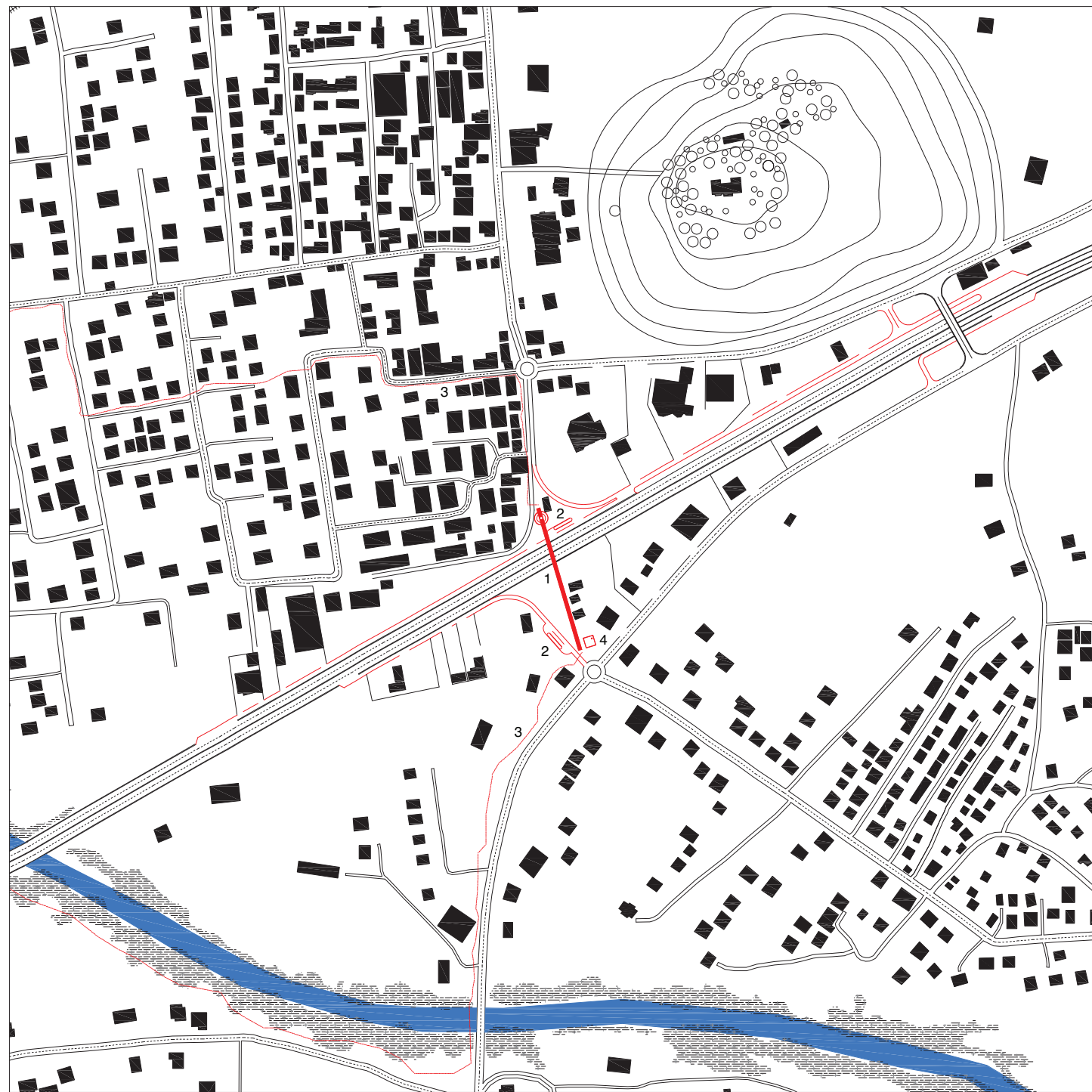


*Erzen, scale 1:30.000*

#### **1. ERZEN RIVER**

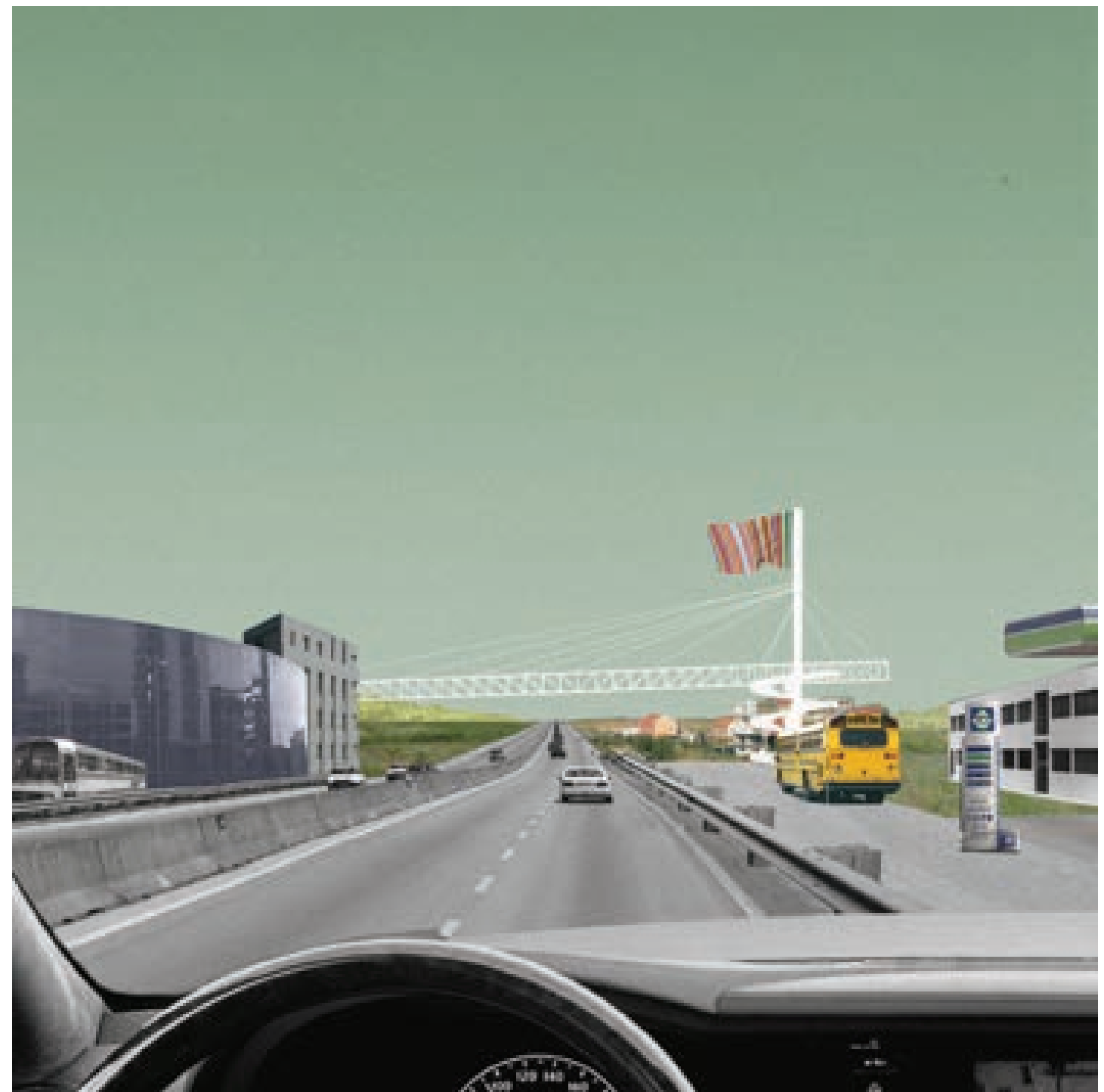
A view of the Erzen river, with a bridge functioning as a small public space. The bridge is a part of a small pedestrian loop (1), punctuated by small open air installations. This system is doubled by a larger loop, accessible for small vehicles, allowing passage between the two banks of the river as well as between the two sides of the highway (2). This system might be repeated several times along the Erzen (3), and help to reorient the linear urbanisation towards the river. The small train station, situated today 800m to the east, might be moved to this denser zone (4) and at the same time integrate the loop system.





*Erzen river, project plan, scale 1:5000*

- 1. pedestrian/bike bridge
- 2. bus stop
- 3. pedestrian/bike loop
- 4. art stage



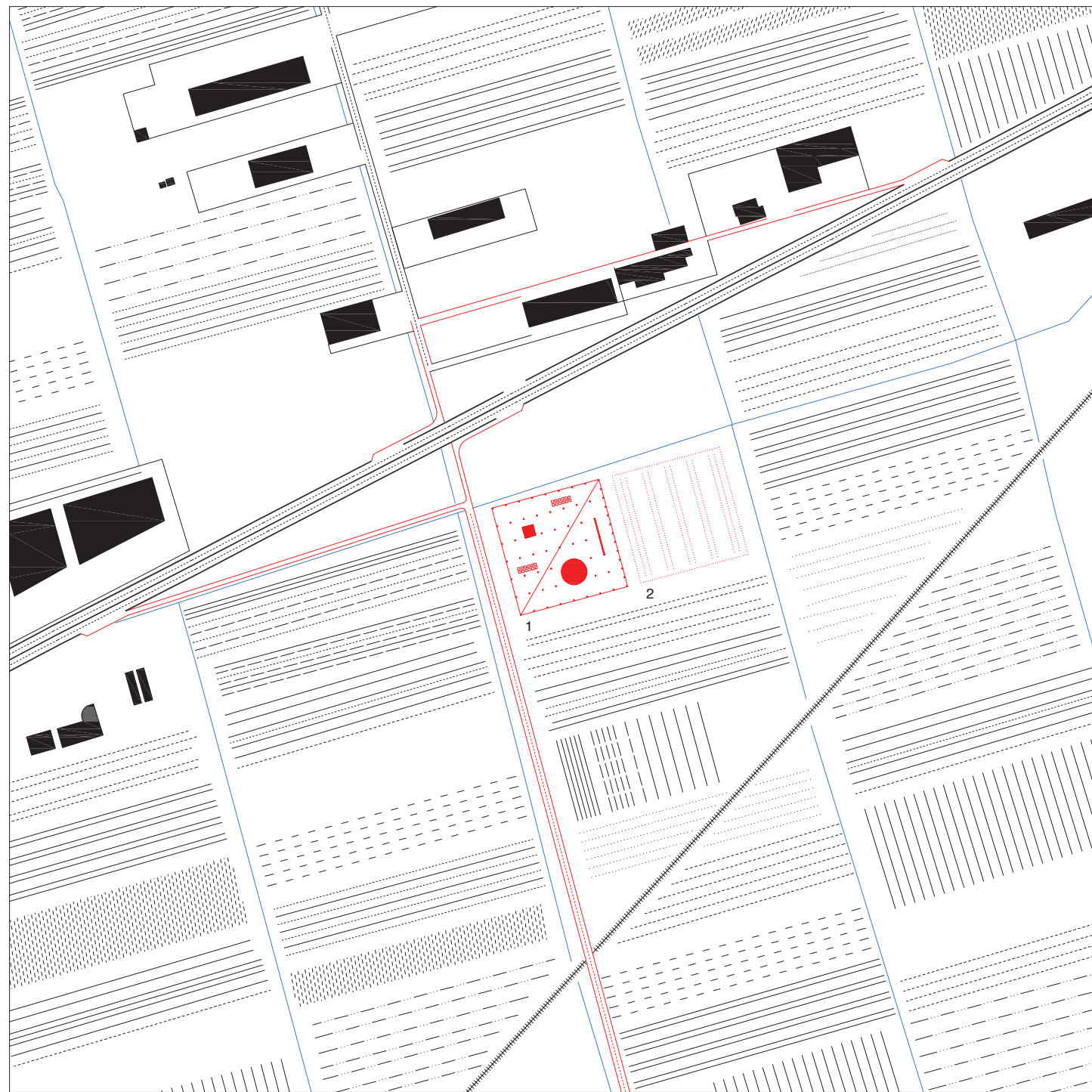


*Agro-logistic plateau, scale 1:30.000*

## **2. AGRO-INDUSTRIAL PARK**

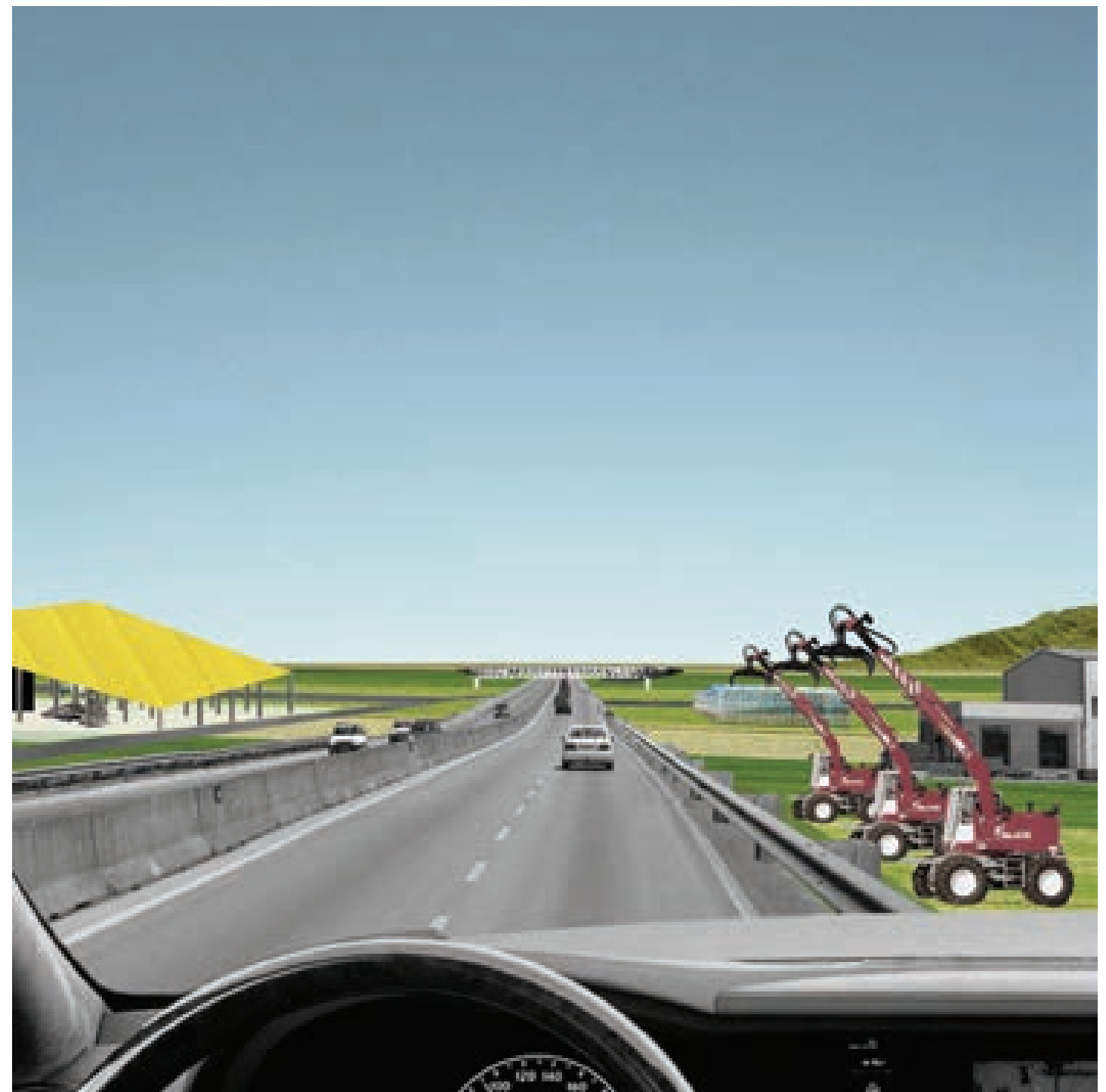
A view from inside the fruit and vegetables auction building (1) towards the highway and the agro-industrial park. The auction building will concentrate the production of the multitude of small scale farmers of the agro-park. It can also be connected to a small freight station (2). Along the highway, greenhouses, warehouses and other agriculture related spaces are rearranged in clusters along several side-roads (3). A new road traverses the plateau from south to north passing beneath and connecting to the highway (4).

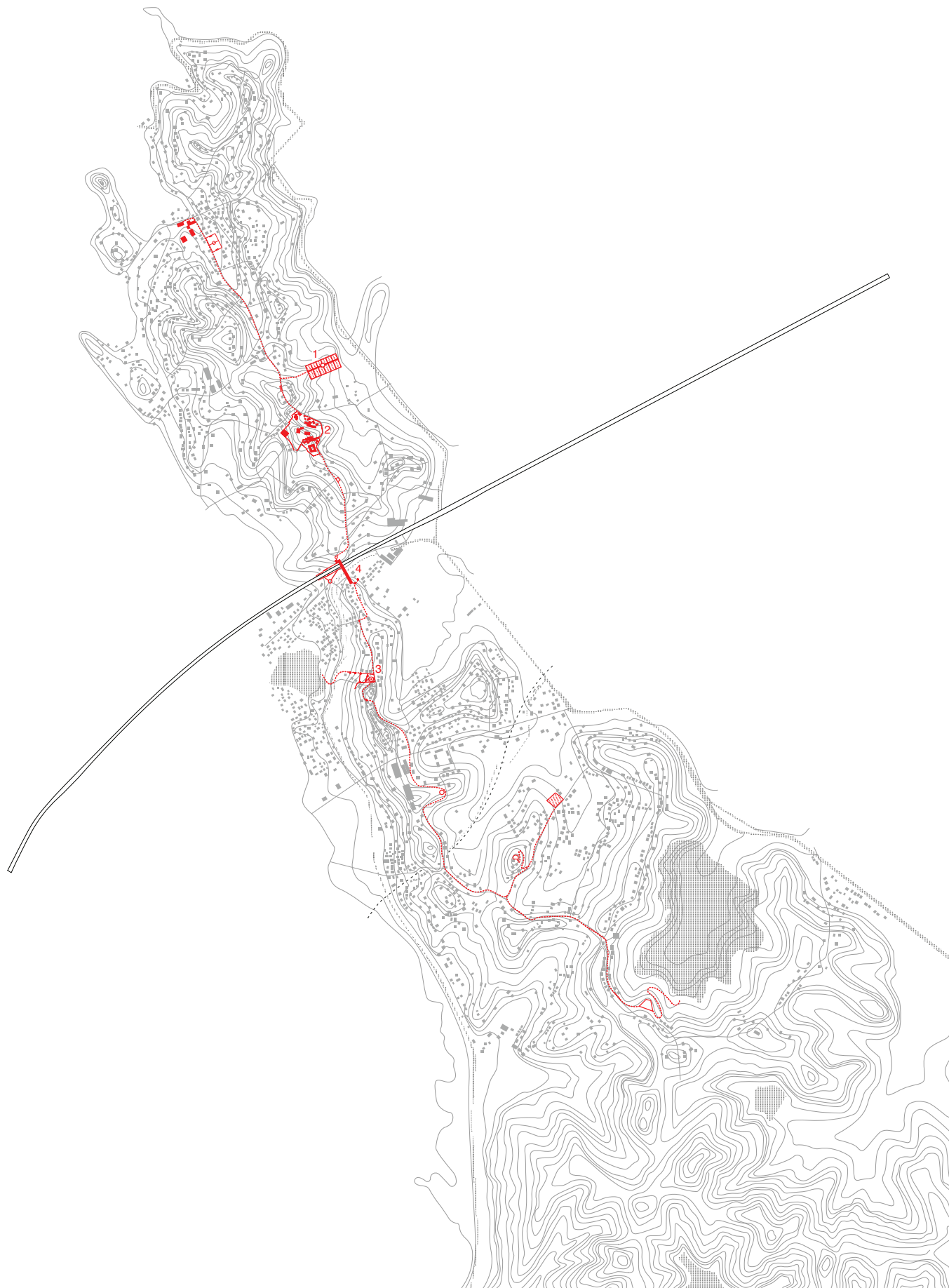




*Agro-logistic plateau, project plan, scale 1:5000*

- 1. agromarket
- 2. fruit and vegetable auction

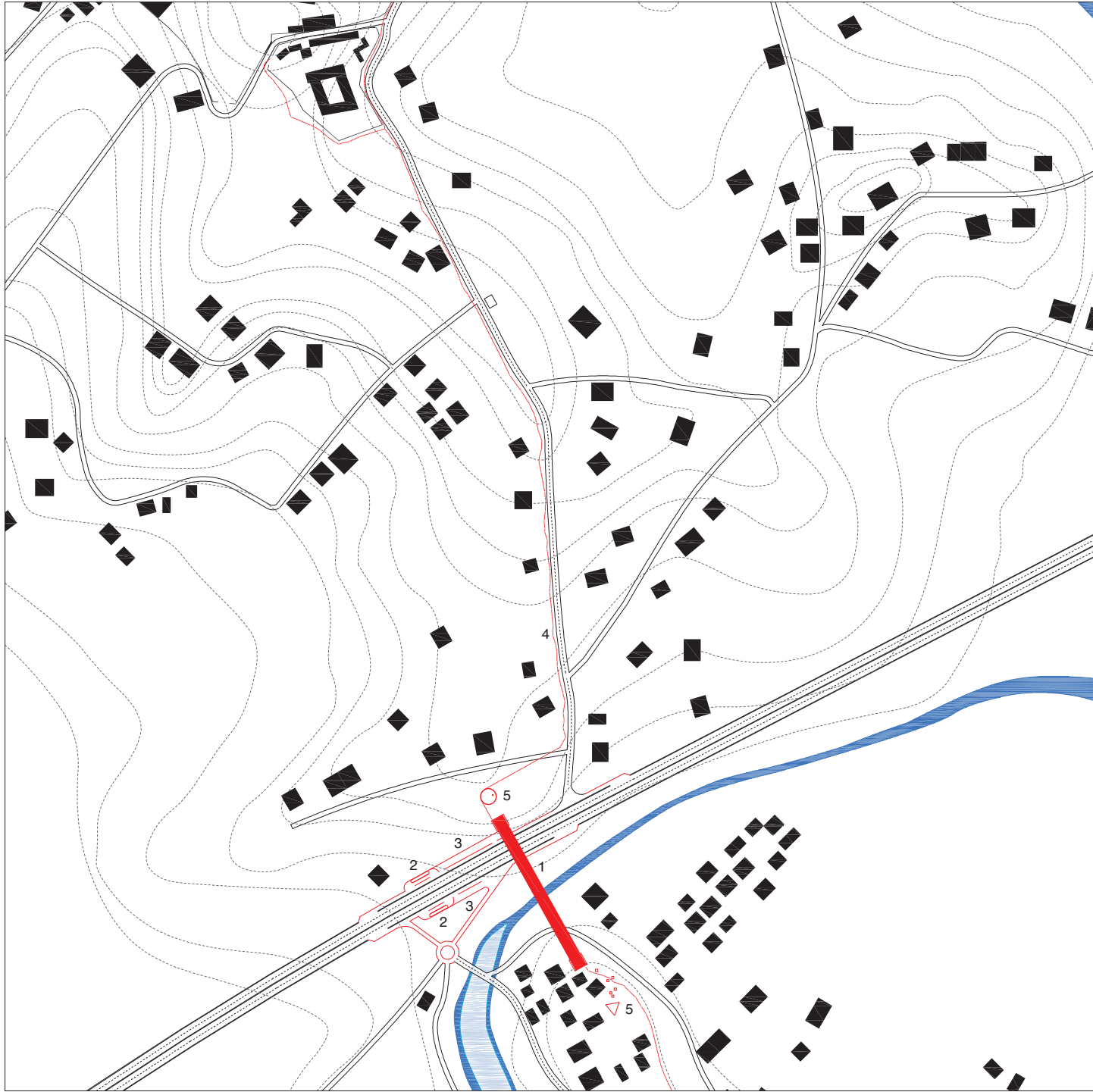




*Shënavlash hills, scale 1:30.000*

### 3. SHËNAVLASH HILLS

A view from a small public space with a panoramic viewpoint (1). It is located just next to the crest-line at Vrinas. This small space is a part of a constellation of small public spaces along the crest-line and in connection to public institutions like the cemetery, the Shënavlash church (2) and the Mosque (3). At the intersection of the hill and the highway, an important bridge-building (4) is connecting directly the two crest-lines. At the bottom of the bridge, a small bus stop and service point are installed in the newly arranged intersection.

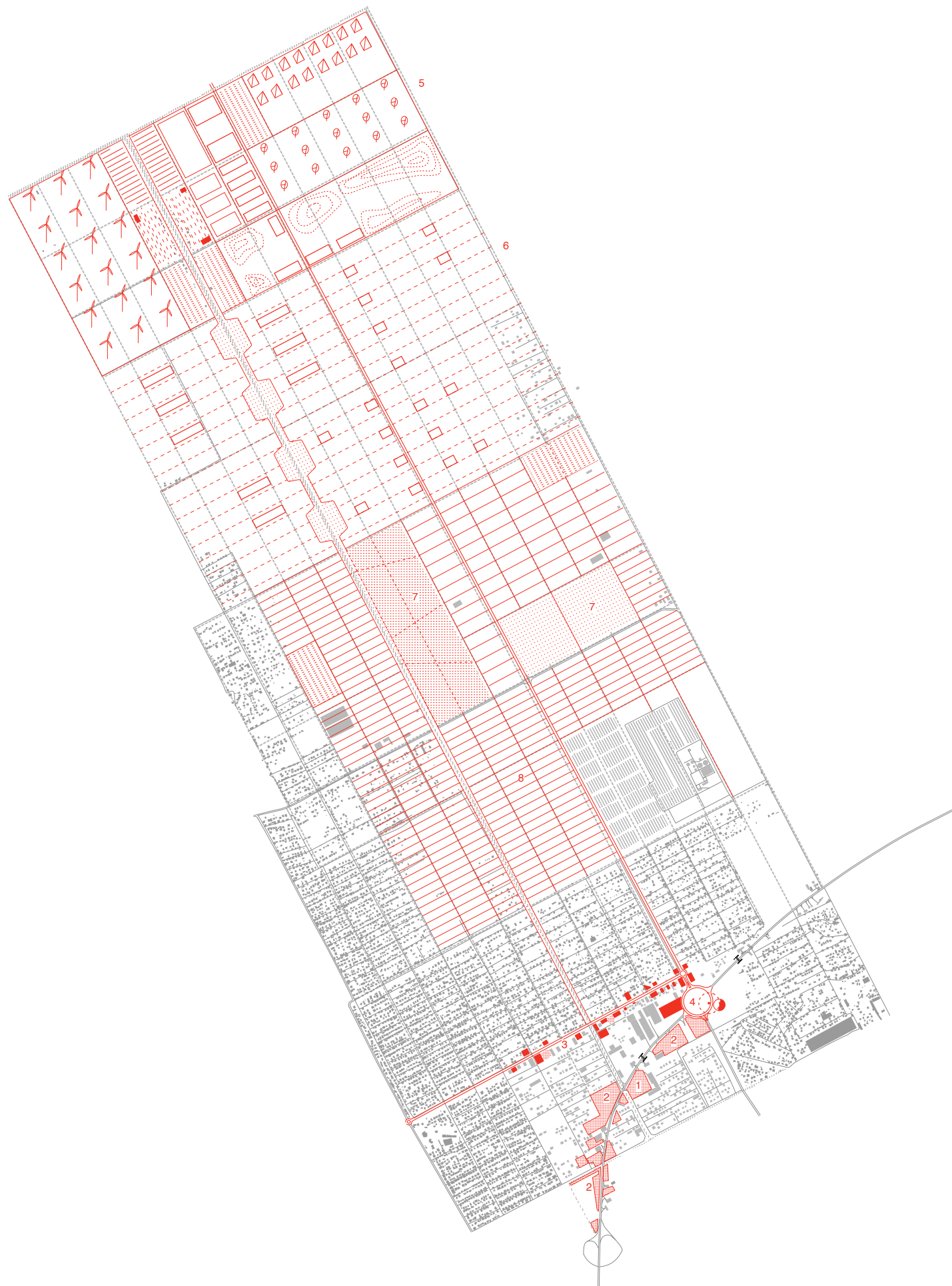


*Shenvalash hills, project plan, scale 1:5000*

- 1. ecological corridor/inhabited bridge
- 2. bus stop
- 3. parking
- 4. footpath to Shenavlash Monastery
- 5. art stage



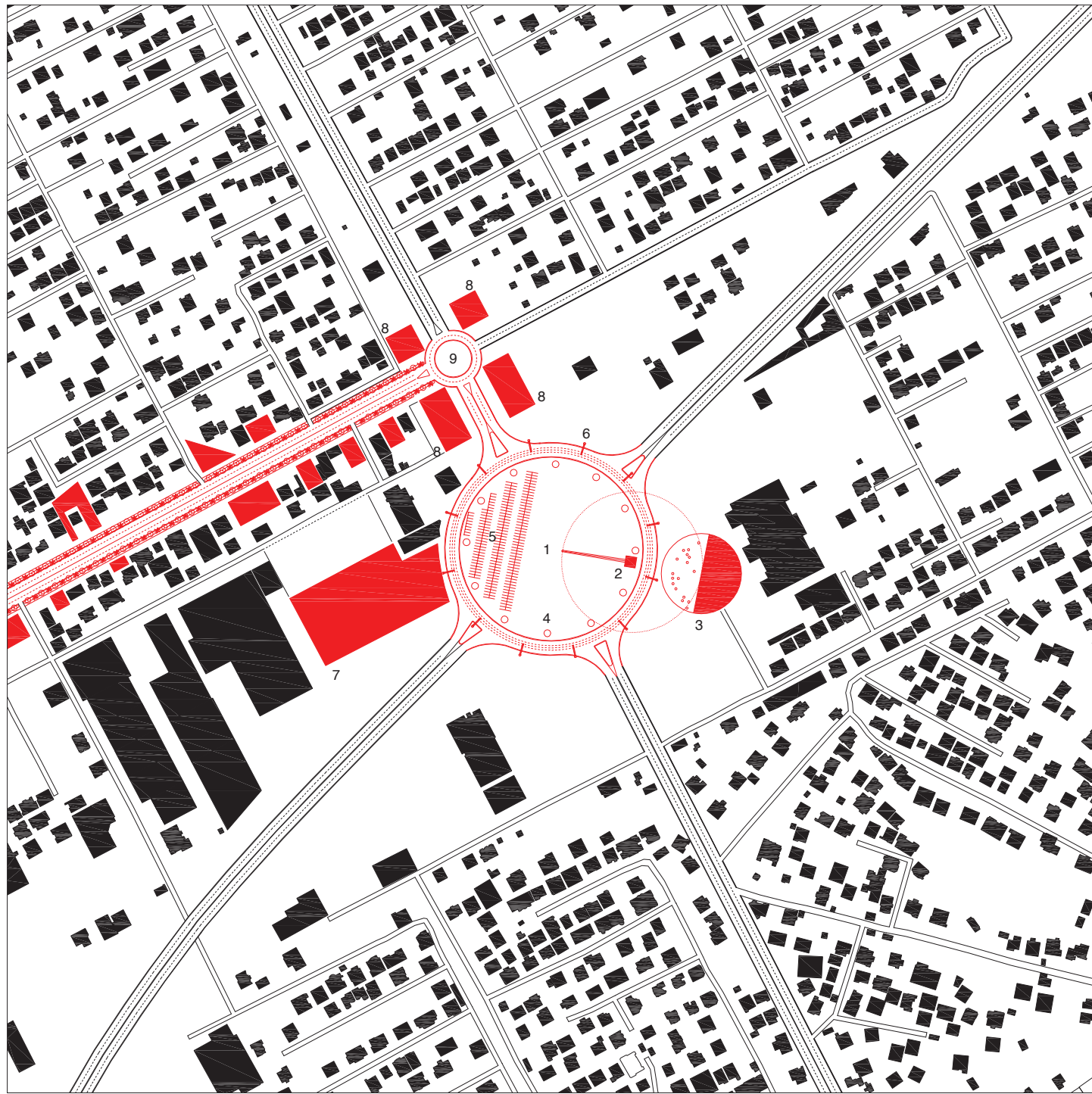




***Kënetë, scale 1:30.000***

#### **4. KËNETA**

A view from one of the parks along the highway. While the voids in between the grid and the curved highway are used to create public parks, the Rruga Drenica is densified and supports more urban and commercial activities (3). An extra-large roundabout replaces the existing interchange with a vast multipurpose space (4). Kënetë's 6 km long grid is connecting the new industrial harbour and the city centre of Durrës. Based upon its canal infrastructure, a series of parks is installed from north to south : an environmental and energy park (5), an industrial park (6), a large urban park (7) and an extension of the urban grid (8).



*Keneta, project plan, scale 1:5000*

**THE BIG ROUNDABOUT AS A SPECIAL TOOL**

In order to operate, the system of stages needs its own infrastructure. Such machinery of the metropolitan theatre is stored in a deposit next to the circle at the entrance of Durrës. The inside of the circle, marking the entry into the city of Durrës, is a completely flat, colossal platform – the last and biggest of the metropolitan stages. This unpredictable space, half moon, half desert, half parking lot is periodically occupied by colossal art pieces, mass events, rock concerts. The space – normally unused – provides a platform at the metropolitan scale for the entire Durana region. The circle normally is asleep; it works just as a large dot of emptiness marking a change in speed that correspond to the entry into Durrës. Sometime, once every couple of months, the silent moon erupts and is activated by a new event.

- 1. big roundabout
- 2. crane
- 3. art/events storage
- 4. gate
- 5. parking
- 6. lamp posts
- 7. mall
- 8. 10 levels mixed use buildings
- 9. small roundabout







*Durrës coastline, scale 1:40.000*

##### **5. DURRËS COASTLINE**

A view of the new park installed thanks to the extension of the highway loop into the sea (1). The departure of heavy port activities to Rinia gives the opportunity to connect the Durresi beach and the hills (2), by the means of a continuous qualitative public space (3). This promenade will interact with the transformation of the harbour (4) that will be able to host mixed-use activities.





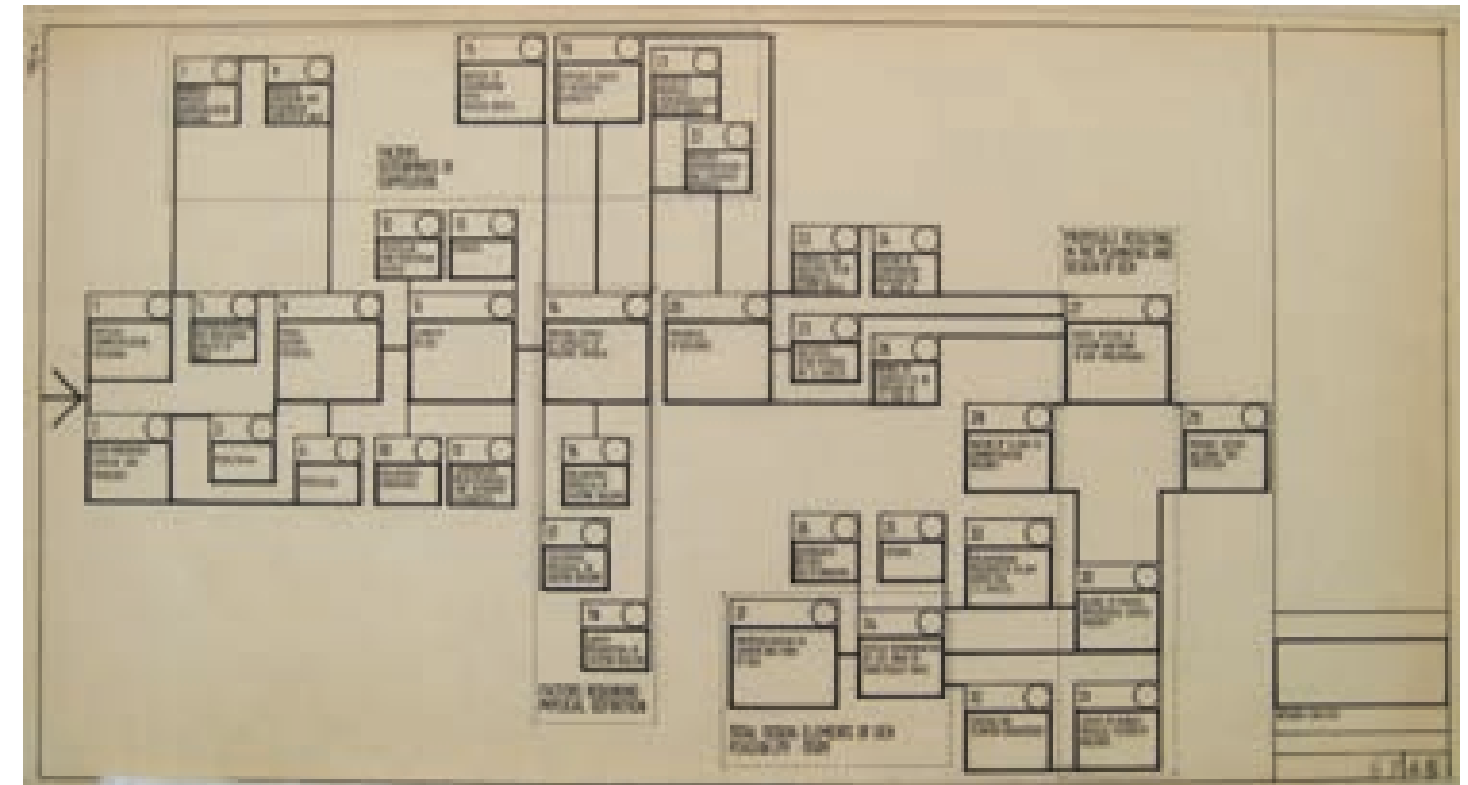
*Dürres, project plan, scale 1:5000*

#### BOULEVARD

Combined with this gigantic void, a smaller urban space (the everyday space associated to the exceptional gigantic circle) connects the circle to the new boulevard along Rruga Vellazerimi. The boulevard is already there, it only needs few formal operations in order to fully reveal its status. First, its borders need more definition: new trees will complement the existing ones, while specific rules will allow higher buildings on the two sides, all of them perfectly aligned towards the street. As a final focus point and as an entry gate towards Dürres proper, two identical towers will be allowed where the grid of Keneta ends.

1. urban boulevard
2. sidewalk with trees
3. 7 levels mixed use building
4. 12 levels mixed use building
5. roundabout
6. boulevard plaza
7. road to the centre
8. road to the stadium and city centre





*Cedric Price, Diagram*

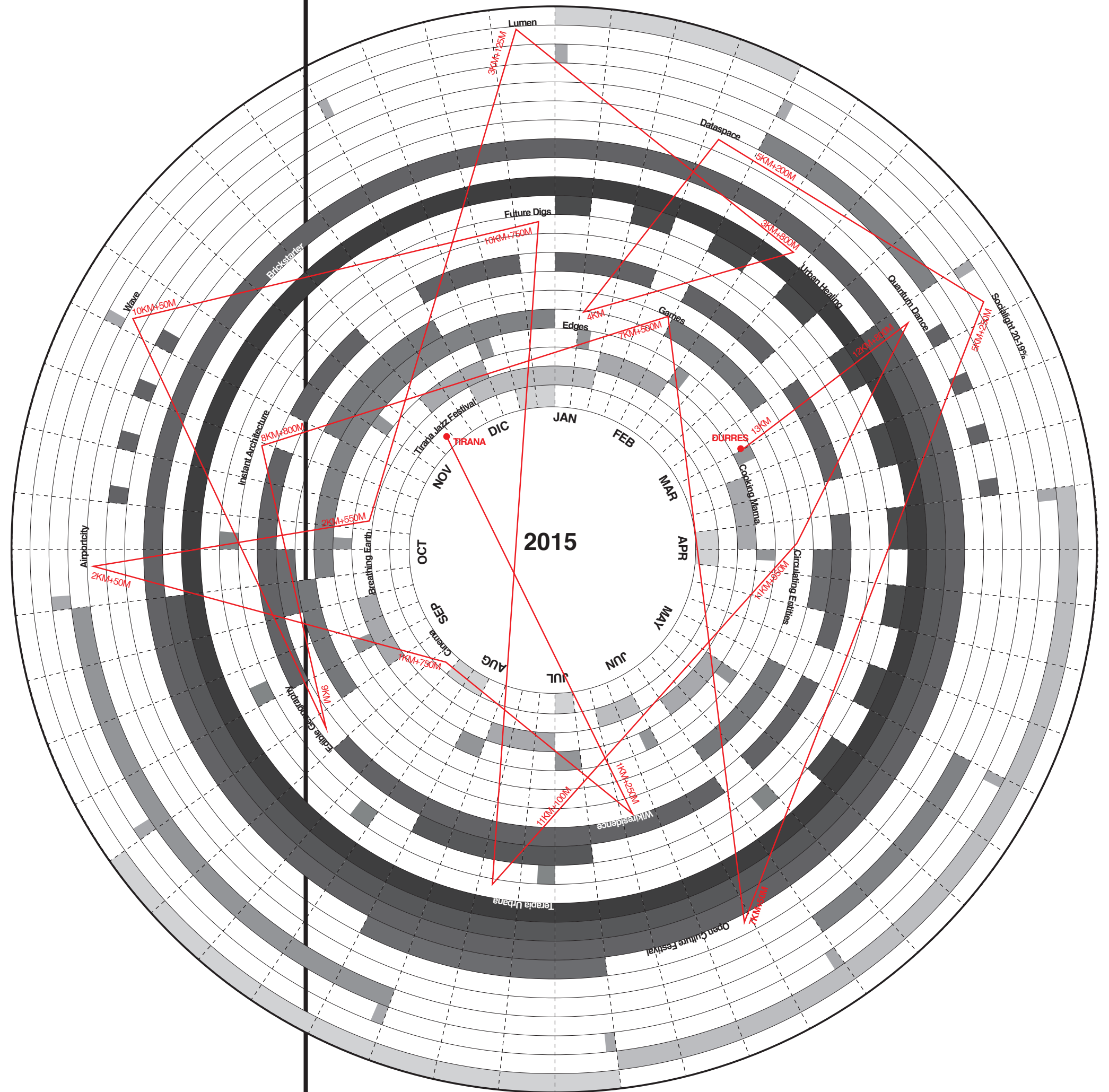
#### PROCESS AND PRIORITIES

The project is a systematic accumulation of many different actions, ranging from the small scale to the very big one. Despite the goal being one, multiple processes might lead there. By constitution, it can deal with the unpredictability of the available financial resources and organically react to changing conditions and mutating desires.

### CURATORIAL CALENDAR

Along the Durana highway, events unfold throughout a year-long calendar, alternately activating sites along the length of the road. Similarly to the overall urban strategy, the program evolves in time reacting to possible changes of events but maintaining overall consistency.

There are several reasons for building an artistic program as an integral part of the urbanistic strategy: it builds on Albania's tradition of considering the spaces of art and the spaces of everyday life as one (see Anri Sala's "Dammi i Colori" project in Tirana); it is extendible and replicable in other sites with similar conditions, of which there are many throughout Albania; it is a low-cost strategy that does not require any major infrastructural work, relying instead on a new attitude towards the existent fabric; it can be deployed quickly and incrementally.

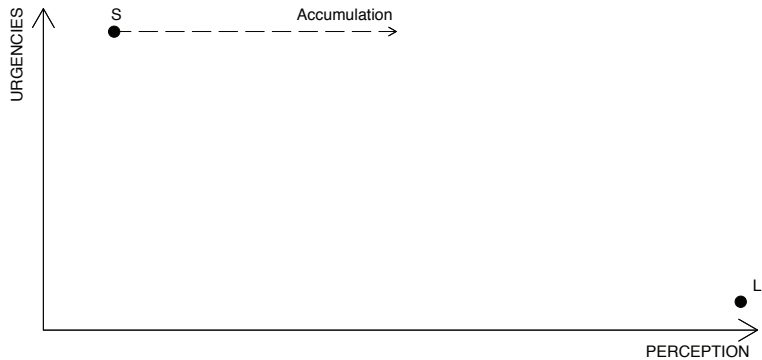




SCALE VS IMPACT

1. Urgencies and Perception

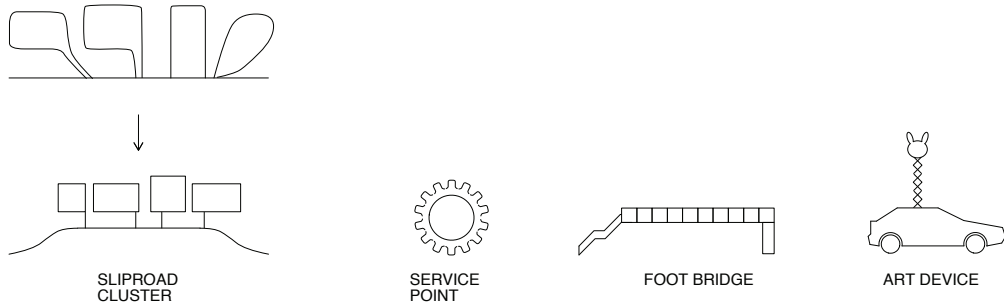
Small actions deal mainly with urgencies while large scale interventions operate mainly as perception catalysts. Yet, the accumulation of small scale actions will produce a progressive shift in perception. It is crucial to act on both scales and alternate small actions and big and ambitious interventions.



S

Small scale actions

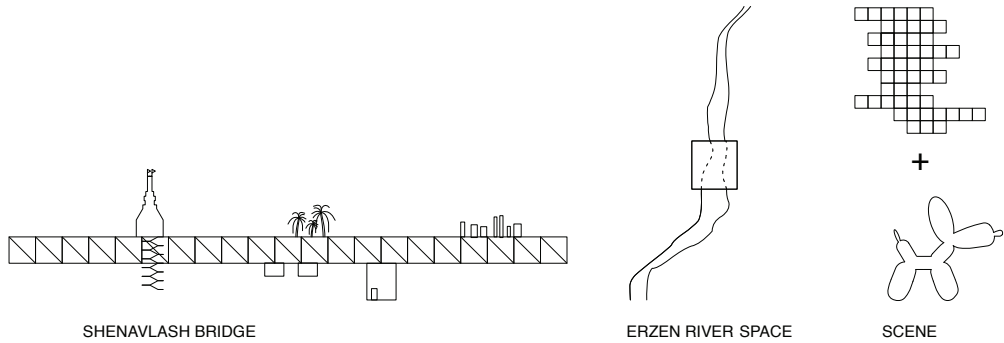
Small scale might be the installation of foot-bridges, small services or technological devices ; they also concern the reorganisation of small activity cluster around short side-roads and the creation of secured slip roads and bus stops. These actions should cost less than 500 000 euros.



M

Medium scale actions

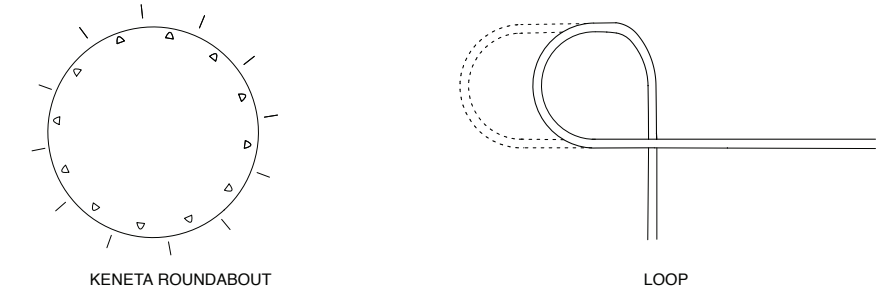
These actions, might be more ambitious and cost around 1-2 million euros. These important investments should have a wider impact both in terms of pragmatic resolutions and in terms of image transformation. The large pedestrian bridge at Shënavlash hills is considered as a medium scale action.



L

Large scale actions

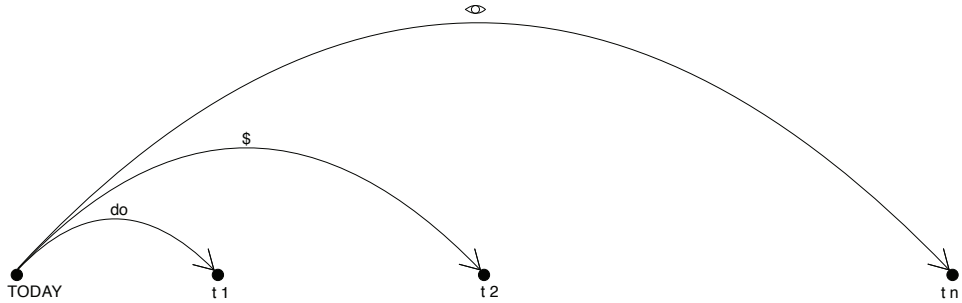
These action concern more heavy infrastructural interventions. They should be considered at a second phase of the project along with an important urban transformation. These action concern the transformation of the interchange into a roundabout and the end point of the highway in Durrës.



PRIORITIES

1. Triple temporality

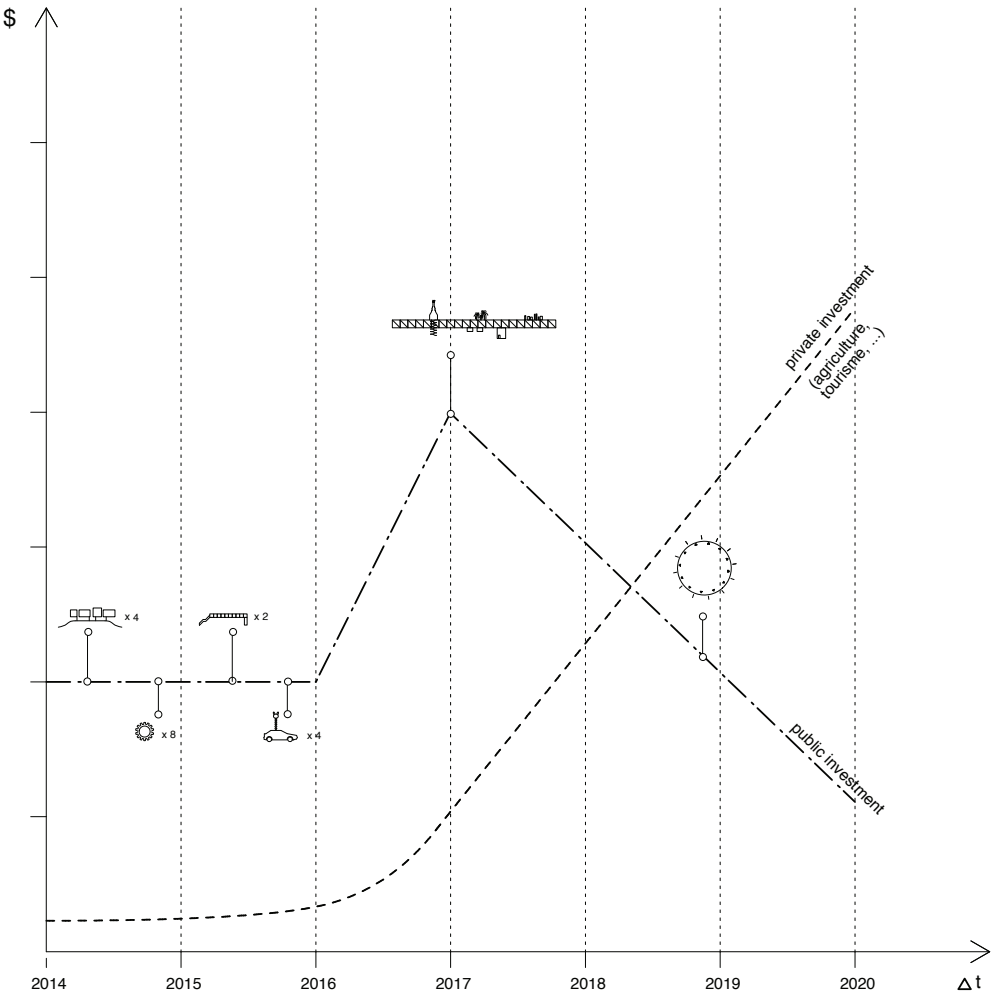
The project must be though in three parallel temporalities : (t1) first and localised actions should be done immediately ; (t2) next actions should be financed and programmed at the same time ; (tn) long term vision must be maintained and updated constantly.



2. Equilibrium

The best scenario is the one in which we build everything. Yet, in terms of efficient action and sober investment it is important to conceive a clear and efficient constellation of small and large actions. We consider that the scenario that we developed on the right is one of these tangible constellations. It is based upon three important moments :

- the first one consists of a continuous investment in small scale actions that deal with today's urgencies in an efficient way and within a sober investment.
- the second one, in a few years, demands a larger investment in order to build the Shënavlash hills bridge-building, which will have a much more visible impact. After this action, public investment should progressively decrease.
- the third one, should appear at the crossroads of the decreasing public investment and an increasing private investment (related to agriculture, tourism, urban developments), which should follow the progressive changes. This moment might be the opportunity for even bigger interventions, based on more balanced expenses.



**BAUKUH  
LIST  
SPACE CAVIAR  
ABKONS**