

Mnémé

A memorial site in Mati, Greece

Mnḗmē

In Greek mythology, Mneme (Greek: **Μνήμη Mnḗmē**) was one of the three original Titanian muses, along with her sisters Aoide and Melete before Arche and Thelxinoë were identified, increasing the number to five. Later, the Nine Olympian Muses were established. She was the muse of memory.

Definition

-Noun : mneme (plural mnemes)

Persisting effect of memory of past events.

Masterthesis

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Memory I

And I with only a reed in my hands.
The night was deserted, the moon waning,
earth smelled of the last rain.

I whispered: memory hurts wherever you touch it,

there's only a little sky, there's no more sea,
what they kill by day they carry away in carts and dump behind
the ridge.

My fingers were running idly over this flute
that an old shepherd gave to me because I said good evening to
him.

The others have abolished every kind of greeting:
they wake, shave and start the day's work of slaughter
as one prunes or operates, methodically, without passion:
sorrow's dead like Patroclus, and no one makes a mistake.

I thought of playing a tune and then I felt ashamed in front of
the other world
the one that watches me from beyond the night from within my
light
woven of living bodies, naked hearts
and love that belongs to the Furies
as it belongs to man and to stone and to water and to grass
and to the animal that looks straight into the eye of its approaching
death.

So I continued along the dark path
and turned into my garden and dug and buried the reed

I whispered: some morning the resurrection will come,

dawn's light will grow red as trees blossom in spring,
the sea will be born again, and the wave will again fling forth
Aphrodite.

We are the seed that dies. And I entered my empty house.

-George Seferis

Motivation

As every writing bears the traces of an autobiography, this work is drawing from my own experiences that I consciously brought into this study.

Two years ago a devastating event of a wildfire near Athens, Greece resulted in taking the life of 102 people, left many people homeless, severely injured and emotionally drained.

This was my neighborhood.

My family was there and luckily survived this without having to mourn a family member. Through the prism of experiencing this traumatic event, escaping the fire, living the horror and then the aftermath of it, my thoughts these two years have never left Mati.

While trying to better understand the concept of memory and identity, I became interested in the issues of identity loss in relation to belonging, culture, and memory and how architecture and our built environment have a critical influence on these issues. Here I attempt to approach the relation of memory, identity and space and the effects of their loss. For a person, memory is an integral tool of identity formation and self-image construction. For all entities, individual or collective, memory and the past serve the needs of the present and the need to build a vision for the future.

This thesis explores the aesthetics of remembrance and the relationship between memory and memorial architecture. Can history and loss be physically represented, while we honor individuals and commemorate many deaths? How can architecture address the events, honor the victims and survivors, contribute to acts of remembrance, heal, demand proactive engagement, and envision a better world?

Two years after the fire, as the people in Mati start to rebuild their lives, the need for a memorial is more important and crucial than ever.



Contents.

Abstract

Theoretical research

1. The concept of Memory	14
1.1 The mechanism of memory.....	16
1.2 What is memory and how do we remember.....	17
1.3 From personal to collective memory.....	20
1.4 Memory, Topos and Architecture.....	21
2. The concept of Identity	23
2.1 The definition of identity, of belonging and the importance of architecture in the construction of a personal identity.....	25
2.2 The loss of identity though the loss of architecture and its built environment.....	27
3. The (re-)creation of Memory	28
3.1 Recollection of the past	30
3.2 Memory and Trauma.....	31
3.3 The question between memory and oblivion.....	33
4. Memorials	34
4.1 Definition and memorial categories.....	36
4.2 The memorial as a place of mourning and healing.....	37
4.3 Memory topographies.....	38
4.4 The Counter Monument.....	39
4.5 Memorial typologies.....	41

Mati; A wounded place

5. The place	48
5.1 Location, history, demographics, geomorphology and other characteristics.....	52
5.2 Architectural characteristics and existing urban design.....	56
5.3 The future urban design.....	57
6. The fire	60
6.1 The events, death toll, injuries and material losses..	64
6.2 The day after.....	71
7. Interviews	72
The Project Proposal	
8. Architectural Idea	83
8.1 Master plan.....	86
8.2 Places and network of intervention.....	90
8.3 Information and evacuation.....	92
8.4 Weather conditions and shelter.....	98
8.5 Rescue from the sea.....	104
8.6 Topography and escape.....	108
8.7 The memorial (Panic, Organization and fire protection)..	112
8.8 A matter of time.....	148
9. Construction	150
9.1 Materiality and construction.....	152

Conclusion

References



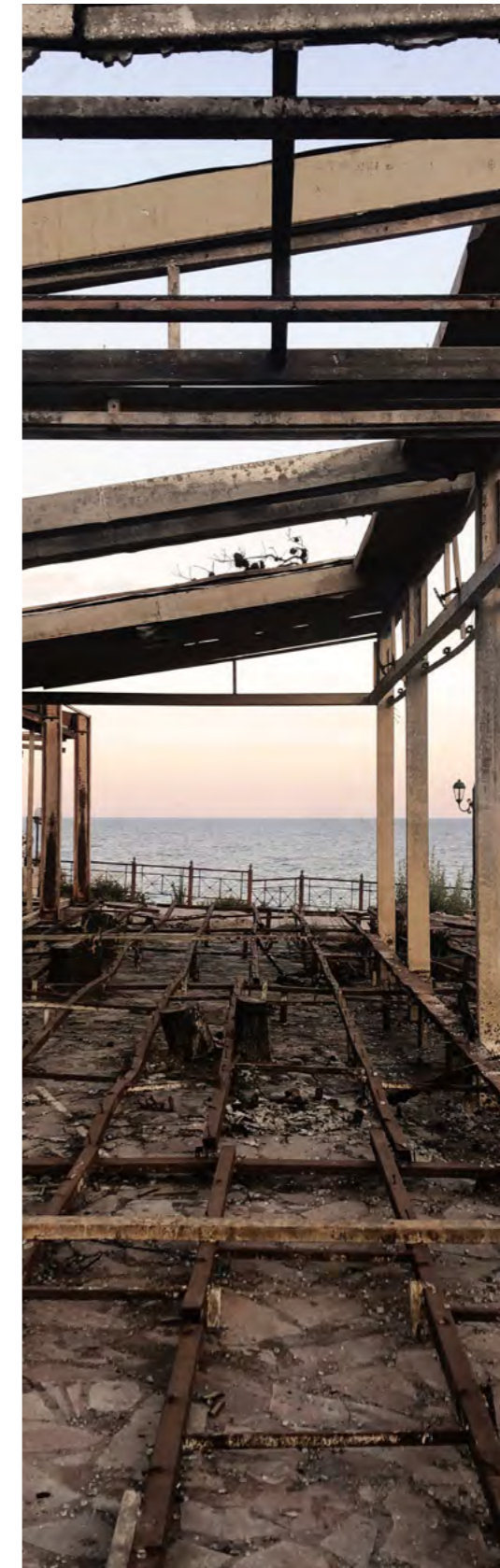


Abstract

Since the 1980s, the majority of Western societies have developed an interest in memory. The mechanism which bridges the gap between reminiscence and the present in order to compare, associate, restore, create and exist.

This project explores the concept of memory and its relation to space. Memory, Identity and Architecture are initially examined. Aim of the research is to better understand how architecture can contribute to the process of commemoration, by turning a traumatic event, experienced individually into collective memory. Memorialization, as a representation of remembering the past, combines memory and architecture. Memorial architecture provides the space to bring people together and unite their individual memories into a collective one. Memorial architecture has the ability to transform words and thoughts; capture emotions and preserving memories into a tangible form.¹ Thus, memorials ought to approach and interact with their visitors as a whole, but in a different way with each and every one of them.

The research leads to the proposal of a memorial in Mati, Greece. Five interventions of various scales are scattered in the area to create a larger image of a memorial site. All of them create a network of symbolic emblems, representations of the handling of some of the most critical moments of the disaster. Their locations are carefully chosen, indicating places that have either saved or taken the lives of many people on that day. Furthermore, a Documentation and Educational Center is proposed, in order to cultivate the visitors and prepare them to better manage similar events in the future. The concept of this project is based around the idea of the void and the wound, which becomes a physical manifestation of the traumatic event, attempting to tie the multiple layers of the loss of the built environment, death, loss of nature and personal identity together.



1. The concept of Memory

Memory exists as the foundation upon which meaning is built. It sustains our connection to the world in which we live in. Every aspect of our experience becomes enveloped in the process of memory. It forms our personal identity and brings individuals together to form the identity of social groups.

Without memory, our existence would be meaningless. We could not learn, we could not be able to capture moments, events, places and people. Without it, nothing would make sense, logic would not exist. Without it, time would have no coherence and would consist of fragmented moments, without meaning. It is because of memories that people are able to think back on their experiences and needs, compare them and come to conclusions.

Adolf Loos has written that memory begins where history ends.² History is not continuous. It is made up of starts and stops, presences and absences. Memory has a fundamental role both in the transformation and in the preservation of history and cultural manifestation. Memory is a social instrument for identity and development.

Without memory, no present or future exists.



Memory, within this structure, is the consciousness of the city; it is a rational operation whose development demonstrates with maximum clarity, economy, and harmony that which has already come to be accepted.

- Aldo Rossi³



1.1 The mechanism of Memory

At the beginning of the 20th century, four social scientists have almost simultaneously introduced the idea that memory has a social dimension as well rather than it being just a process of purely absorbing the environment that surrounds us. Sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, psychologists Janet and Blondel, and Bartlett all expressed the view that memory is a social construct that evolves through communication processes. In order to analyze and understand the complex term of memory, we must first look at how this works.

Human beings live and learn and this usually happens through experiences and environmental interactions. Everything starts with a stimulus. The sensory systems receive the information of these stimuli and transmit them to the brain to process and interpret them. The information processing in the brain occurs within neuronal circuits that are interconnected by synapses. Each modification of these synapses has an impact on how we remember things or react to certain stimuli.⁴ The brain, receiving a variety of stimuli, has to process each of them and chose those that are necessary in order to perceive certain situations. Every time it decides to „keep“ and register new stimuli, it compares it to the content that is already registered and maintained by the memory mechanism. This process is constantly happening, always evaluating and registering information. People react, according to the stimuli that they receive, while their reactions and choices are inspired by their past experiences and previous memories of similar situations. Consciousness contributes to this drastically because it acts as the intermediate link between perception and memory. Thus it contributes to the voluntary recall of memory and the introduction of the past into the present. According to Henri Bergson, „perception is never a mere contact of the mind with the object present; it is impregnated with memory-images which complete it as they interpret it. The memory-image, in its turn, partakes of the ‚pure memory,‘ which it begins to materialize, and of the perception in which it tends to embody itself. Lastly, pure memory, though independent in theory, manifests itself as a rule only in the colored and living image which reveals it.[...] Whenever we are trying to recover a recollection, to call up some period of our history, we become conscious of an *act sui genesis* by which we detach ourselves from the present in order to replace ourselves, first in the past in general, then in a certain region of the past; a work of adjustment.“⁵

1.2 What is Memory and how do we remember

Memory is vital not only to our knowledge of the world in general but also to our personal past in particular. It underwrites our identities as individuals and our ties to other people. Therefore it has been studied by a variety of scientific fields such as philosophy, biology, psychology, social sciences, etc.

The philosophical interest in memory dates back to antiquity, with Plato and Aristotle writing about memory and reminiscence. In Ancient Greece, memory was articulating temporal human existence and godly immutability. *Mnemosyne*, from which the term „μνήμη“ *mnēmè* derives, was the child of *Ouranos* (heaven) and *Gaia* (earth) and became the mother of the nine muses. Mnemosyne enabled to transcend time's evanescence. For Plato, memory was considered the source of verity. Later, he proposed the idea of memory being like a wax tablet, in which sensations imprint themselves into a substrate. The strength of these imprints, and thereby their duration, was thought to be tributary of the malleability of the wax; the more malleable the wax, the less durable the memory.⁶ Aristotle regarded all mythological background from his reflections, reducing memory to a faculty shared by all beings that were able to feel the perception of time. This implies the distinction between before and after, earlier and later. Thus it became for him, one among the several functions of the *Psyche*. The interest in the philosophy of memory has remained prominent ever since. Augustine of Hippo in book 10 of his Confessions, developed his „prescient“ view of memory, or as he mentions it „the vast domains and palaces of memory“.⁷ He actually distinguished different categories of memories based on introspection, and according to a variety of criteria, such as the type of content which memories possess. His conception of memories is organized within a theoretical framework (sensible memory, intellectual memory, memory of memories, memory of feelings and passion and memory of forgetting). The culminating point of Augustine's contribution to the definition of memory is that one of the most evolved memory systems one has, is actually dealing with personal events and that it is precisely this memory system that enables a mental travel in time, whether backwards (when visiting one's past) or forwards (when building up one's projects). Later, in 1986 the French philosopher Henri Bergson argues that memory is linked to creative duration. As we do not live isolated in present, memory is not the past but involves the co-existence of past and present and also the anticipation of the future.⁸

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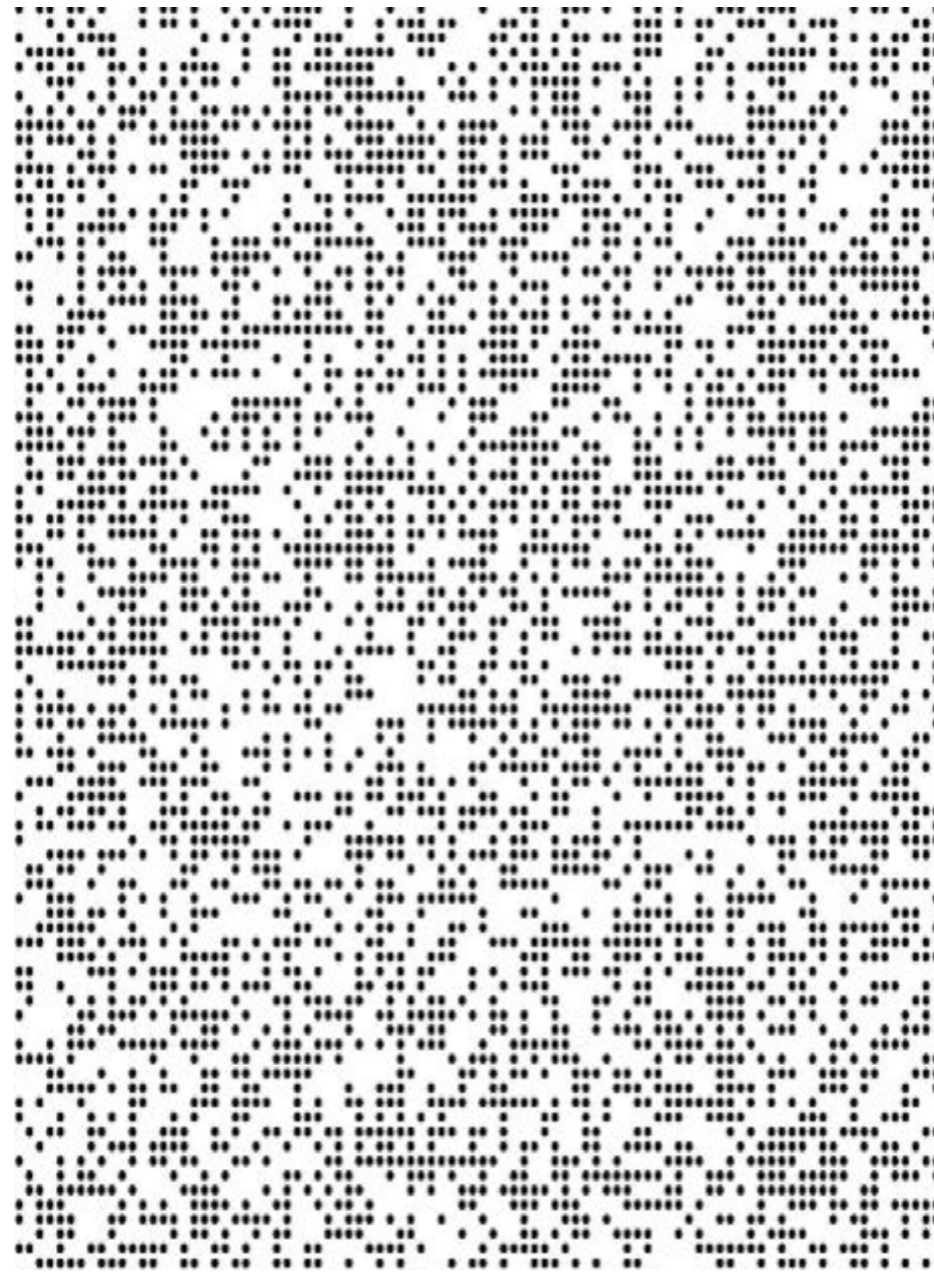
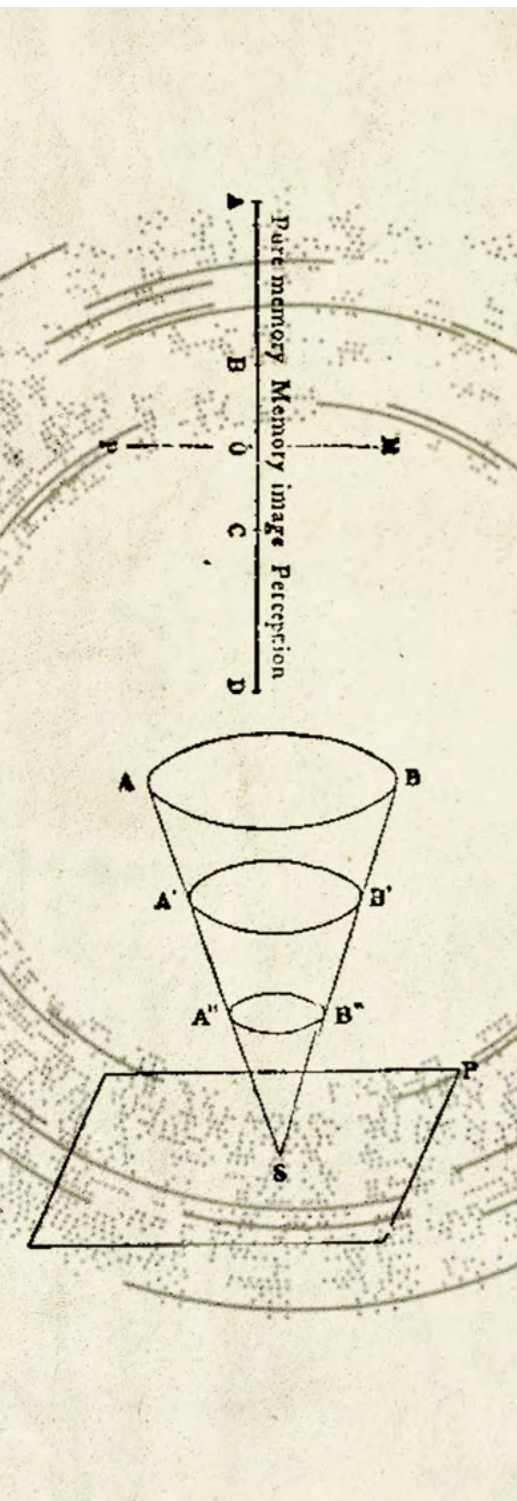
7. Augustine of Hippo. "The Confessions of Saint Augustine", translated by Pusey, E.B. Modern Library. New York. USA. [1999]

1.2 What is Memory and how do we remember

The process of remembering is a complex one. Ricoeur explains that „the Greeks had two words, *mnèmè* and *anamnèsis* to designate, on the one hand, memory as appearing, ultimately passively, to the point of characterizing as an affection *-pathos-* the popping into the mind of memory; and, on the other, the memory as an object of a search ordinarily named recall, recollection.“⁹

Remembering is not only welcoming and receiving an image of the past, but it is also searching for it, thus “doing” something. The verb “to remember” stands in for the substantive “memory” and designates the fact that memory is “exercised”. Henceforth, the term „remembering“, signifies this *anamnèsis* or recollection. According to Bergson, “the effort of recall consists in converting a schematic idea, whose elements interpenetrate, into an imaged idea, the parts of which are juxtaposed”¹⁰ In fact, it is almost impossible for a person to accurately recall most of the facts and events of the past. In order to remember, people need to retain information from the past, consisted of the memories that have left an intense imprint on the „memory wax“ that Plato suggested. Memory also operates in the wake of the imagination, as the imagination can fill the gaps of the fragmented recollections, with static images composing a single narrative which may not be faithful to the past, but seems credible. When we are recalling a memory and trying to remember, we are also recalling the emotions of this time, the perceptions, values and thoughts that characterized this moment. All these can alter our perception of this memory and the emotions that this recollection has caused. Therefore, the image of the past that emerges does not contain the universal truth of what happened in the past, nor is it characterized by pure objectivity. There exists a constant danger of confusing remembering and imagining, resulting from memories becoming still images, and thus affecting the goal of faithfulness of memory. But as Bergson suggests, to call up the past in the form of an image, we must be able to withdraw ourselves from the action of the moment, we must have the power to value the useless, we must have the will to dream.¹¹

19



9. Ricoeur, Paul. "Memory, History, Forgetting", translated by Blamey, Kathleen and Pellauer, David. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago, London. [2004]. p.04

10, 11. Bergson, Henri. "Matter and Memory, translated by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer. George Allen and Unwin. London. [1911]. p.94

1.3 From personal to collective Memory

Along the path of recollection and recognition, the two principal mnemonic phenomena of memories, we encounter the memory of others. In 1928, Pierre Janet approached memory as a social function instead of an individual one. Though, Maurice Halbwachs made the bold intellectual decision to attribute memory directly to a collective entity, which he named a group or society.

According to Halbwachs, although experiencing things on our own, our memory needs the memory of others. We are never alone; what we experience has an immediate link to the experiences of the others. We are constantly creating, preserving and reproducing memories. Memories from every period of our existence, which upon recall form our personal identity. But precisely because these memories are repetitions from different periods of our lives, they have lost the form and appearance they once had. It is extremely important to be able to recall these memories and in order to do so, the individual memory relies on the collective memory and temporarily merges with it to fill possible gaps. As Halbwachs suggests “a person remembers by situating himself within the viewpoint of one or several groups and one or several currents of collective thought”¹² People acquire their memories inside the society. In there, they can recall, reorganize and localize these memories. „A man must often appeal to others’ remembrances to evoke his own past. He goes back to reference points determined by society, hence outside himself”¹³ This happens because most of the time, we appeal to our memory only in order to answer questions which others have asked us, or that we suppose they could have asked us. When we remember, it is others who spur on us; their memory comes to the aid of us and our memory relies on theirs.

Nevertheless, one indeed remembers only what he himself has seen, done, felt, and thought at some time. Our own memory can not be confused with anyone else’s. We place our own remembrances within the framework of our personality and personal life and we consider those of our own. On the other hand, we act as group members, helping to evoke and maintain impersonal remembrances of interest to the group. The collective memory of the group encompasses all the individual memories while remaining distinct of them¹⁴

Many people have criticized the concept of collective memory. Among them, the historian Guy Beiner has criticized the unreflective use of the adjective “collective” in many studies of memory stating that “The problem is with crude concepts of collectivity, which assume a homogeneity that is rarely, if ever, present, and maintain that, since memory is constructed, it is entirely subject to the manipulations of those invested in its maintenance, denying that there can be limits to the malleability of memory or to the extent to which artificial constructions of memory can be inculcated. In practice, the construction of a completely collective memory is at best an aspiration of politicians, which is never entirely fulfilled and is always subject to contestations”¹⁵

However diverse the approaches and premises en vogue in memory studies, they (individual and collective) have differing and limited, spatial and temporal boundaries.

1.4 Memory, Topos and Architecture

“We may live without her (architecture) and worship without her, but we cannot remember without her”¹⁶

Being in a space, we experience it intuitively, we feel and perceive the atmosphere around it; this is the poetic quality of everything that surrounds us, such as pace, materiality, light, etc. Through personal memory, the space is charged with situations or values that accompany it, thus affecting people’s behavior.

The concept of *topos* (‘place’, ‘location’) can be analyzed and interpreted in various ways and theories. A space without human presence can be seen as something abstract, without limits. From the moment a person appears, the space that surrounds him is organized around his activities, dreams, expectations, desires and emotions. Through human presence, space is delimited, concretized and transformed into a place or *topos*. Tim Creswell distinguished places from spaces and landscapes. “Space has been seen in distinction to place as a realm without meaning, as a ‘fact of life’ which, like time, produces the basic coordinates for human life. When humans invest meaning in a portion of space and then become attached to it in some way (naming is one such way) it becomes a place”. Seeing the world as a world of places, we see attachments, connections between people and place, worlds of meaning and experience.¹⁷ These experiences and connections, perceived in a spatial context then, become memories, individual or collective. Memory, however, can also be attributed to places, turning them into mnemonic landscapes, places with a unique history, as well as certain characteristics that define them. As Aldo Rossi stated „One can say that the city itself is the collective memory of its people, and like memory, it is associated with objects and places. The city is the locus of collective memory. This between the locus and the citizenry then becomes the city’s predominant image, both of architecture and landscape, and as certain artifacts become part of its memory, new ones emerge.”¹⁸

Mnemonic landscapes arise as accumulations of lived experience, while the memory of the experienced space is inextricably linked with life in it. Memory emerges in relation to *topos* and is approached as a process inscribed in life, as an active dimension of experience and as something that happens through the habitation and experience of place. The different interpretations of space and the performance of space in time determine the deposits in it, both material and semantic. Habitation is the bridge between space and memory, architecture and reminiscence. The act of living in a particular place and time. Within the Dasein, the relationship between the subject and the space-time, memory finds its place. Thus, time from an abstract concept becomes specific, transformed into „season“ or „period“ and redefined in space. Every city, as a man-made object, has a before and after¹⁹ which becomes the Platonian wax upon every experience and memory of the people who lived in it, is imprinted. To conclude, the process of creating memories creates space and space creates memories. Every space carries a plethora of memories, however, not all spaces carry such significant memories and memorial symbolisms to be recognized as mnemonic landscapes, memorials, or monuments.

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2. The concept of Identity

Many people, scholars, philosophers, sociologists, as well as psychologists, have conducted remarkable research in the field of *identity*. Yet, the concept of identity itself remains something of an enigma. Its meaning as we use it, is not well captured by dictionary definitions but can only be understood through complex models.

John Locke managed to bring the definitions of memory and personal identity under the same equation. According to his theory, personal identity consists of memory; sameness of memory is metaphysically necessary and sufficient for sameness of persons.²⁰ This theory has been later criticized by Thomas Reid who held more realist theory of memory by claiming that personal identity is simple and unanalyzable. Though memory is not the metaphysical ground of personal identity, according to Reid, it provides first-personal evidence of personal identity.²¹

Undoubtedly, personal identity is the product of a variety of factors from people's engagement and dialogue with their environment to their memories. Every diverse element that surrounds an individual, from social, cultural, economic, built, or physical can affect people's outlook of the world and the understanding of who they are.



"Men and women are not only themselves; they are also the region in which they were born, the city apartment or the farm in which they learnt to walk, the games they played as children, the old wives' tales they overheard, the food they ate, the schools they attended, the sports they followed, the poets they read, and the God they believed in. It is all these things that have made them what they are ..."

-Somerset Maugham²²



2.1 Definition of identity, of belonging and the importance of architecture in the construction of personal identity

Recognizing our identity comes as something natural. People seem to know who they are and who others in their lives are. Our present idea of identity though is a recent social construct that becomes more and more complicated. Even though people use the word properly in everyday discourse, it appears as something really difficult to explain adequately. The dictionary definition of the word fails to capture everything that is included in this complex term. Identity is a new concept and not something that people have eternally needed. As individuality plays a significant role in today's society, the quest to understand who we are and what our place in the world is, has become extremely important.²³ The search for defining identities has become one of the most fundamental and repetitive acts of individuals and societies. Political, social, material and other characteristics play a role in this quest and achieve different social, sexual, political, religious, ethical and many more identities. The modern way of life involves a plethora of complex roles that people are asked to adopt. Identity is not something unambiguous, but a balancing act.

In order to establish, defend, protect and balance our identities we first need to understand the notion of them. As there is no short statement to cover this broad term, models and other methods are suggested. Identity is therefore divided into two distinct categories whose meanings intertwine, "social" and "personal" identity. Social identity is just a categorization that a group of people designated by a label that is commonly used by the majority of the people. Ethnic, religious, political and professional identities are considered as such. On the contrary, personal identity includes all attributes, beliefs, desires, or principles of action that a person thinks to distinguish him or her in socially relevant ways.²⁴ All the predicates of a person, the properties that are so essential to him or her, that the idea of changing or losing them can result in a different person, create a personal identity. Thus, every time one or more of these attributes change, due to internal and external pressures, the way people conceive their environment and themselves changes as well and their personal identity may swift and evolve. According to Croucher²⁵, „some of those identities intersect or collide with others, and all vary in salience across time and across contexts“. Identities can be seen as something fluid, an ongoing process to define and redefine what we project to the world.²⁶ The situations we experience, the memories, the stimuli and the people we interact with, push us to constantly redefine this identity. As the philosopher Paul Kerby suggests, people throughout their lives construct stories of who they are, giving meaning to the way they view themselves, to their sense of identity.²⁷

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People, with the help of memory, associate the past with the present, to form the identity that will characterize their present and future. Memory as well as its absence, oblivion, filter the events of the past, present and future in order to serve the individual's identity and feed the collective memory. Thus memory, whether individual or collective, is not fixed but "seeks to rescue the past in order to serve the present and the future"²⁸ According to Mantoglou, memory is important for creating the feeling of belonging because of the open dialogue of the present with the past. We see the past with the eyes of the present, while the events of the present are influenced by the past.²⁹ What we remember from the past determines who we are now and affects what we will do in the future. Therefore, we understand that memory is like an invisible „thread“ that connects what we experience now, at this given time, with the past and our future and creates our identities.

Moreover, an individual perceives the world based on his or hers surroundings, their exposure to narratives, traditions and beliefs. With narratives, traditions and beliefs arising from humans' engagements and interactions with their built and social environments, it can be concluded that the relationship between the two is largely interdependent.³⁰ Thus, identification does include the place and environment in which the narratives take place; the architecture that surrounds us and creates a sense of belonging. Not all people experience the same connection and feeling of attachment with their environment however, it is clear that architecture plays a crucial role in the development of personal identities. As individuals fill the places in which they live with personal values and meanings, they tend to develop emotional ties and attachments to these places and thus construct deeply personal bonds. Li, Hodgetts and Ho observe that place attachment and identification „can emerge on a range of scales from a house to a neighborhood, community, town and country“, implying that place-identity is a far-reaching component of self-identity.³¹ Whether the connection and engagement with a place happen as a conscious dialogue with the built environment or not, architecture plays a significant role in the definition and expression of personal identity.



2.2 The loss of identity through the loss of architecture and its built environment

“Goodbye dear house, old grandfather house. Winter will pass, spring will come again, and then you won't be here any more, you'll be pulled down. How much these walls have seen!”

Anton Chekhov, „The Cherry Orchard“, 1951

Anton Chekhov in his *Cherry Orchard* portrays the feelings that are produced after the loss of the grandfather's house. A house, an architectural object, a public place can be a collection of lifeless, plain walls or a full of life place which hosts a variety of experiences and brings people together. Places that staged a plethora of experiences can be lost forever.³² From migration to unfortunate events such as a fire or another natural catastrophes, the demise of a familiar piece of architecture, creates a sense of absence, instability and loss. According to Glusac,³³ people experience places deeply and form special bonds with architecture, after developing connections, emotional attachments and meaningful memories that are relevant to the development of a sense of belonging and self-identity. The detachment from the familiar and known, however this may happen, results in a feeling of shock, grief, a sense of being lost and experiencing the unknown. Suddenly the „here“ has become „there“, „our“ place becomes a memory and people feel as if their personal identity has been ripped apart. Coming into terms with the new circumstances, and the instability of losing an identity may be difficult but connections to places continue to exist even after material things and architecture that once tied the people to their places have vanished.

Each community has its architecture, cultural object and material anchor of all of the narratives about the past. These carry the message, concept and characteristics attributed to the community and are dependent on the geography, traditions, manners and history of the community. When cultural objects are considered by communities to represent something special, something related to the chosen identity of that community, they become heritage, cultural heritage.³⁴ Experiencing the loss even for one of these material anchors destabilizes the identity of the place and the people that identified with it. On a building for example, a sudden transformation from a consummate cultural achievement to a ruin can be perceived as a symbol of transience.³⁵ Then, although this anchor is no longer an integral part of someone's life, the connections still remain engraved in them, in their daily movements and habits, in the sensation that something close to them is missing.

32. Chekhov, Anton. „The Cherry Orchard“. Penguin Books. Lincoln, United Kingdom. [1951]

33. Glusac, Tanja. „Architecture and Belonging: Migration, Re-territorialisation and Self-Identity“. Curtin University. Perth. [2015]

34. Hilgert, Markus. „Why Culture Matters: Fostering Identity Through Cultural Heritage“. Article, The Globalist. [2017]

35. Meier, Hans-Rudolf. „The Cultural Heritage of the Natural Disaster: Learning Processes and Projections from the Deluge to the »Live« Disaster on TV“. Heritage at Risk Special Edition, a publication of ICOMOS based on lectures given at the international conference »Cultural Heritage and Natural Disasters. Risk Preparedness and the Limits of Prevention« Leipzig. [2006] p.28

3. The (re-)creation of Memory

Memory is fluid and open to rewritings through death and regeneration, memory and oblivion and so is the value attributed to each memory-bearing space, shifted and under constant redefinition. Ensuring the historical and cultural continuity of the environment that we inhabit is essential if we are to maintain or create spaces that will help people to get to know themselves.

Traces of human activities incorporated in a material and spiritual structure of continuous mnemonic interpretations. A memory of various historical periods, a memory of important events, recent or distant, in time. A memory of a trauma that may cause discomfort. The memory of our lives. The city acts as a carrier of these memories and social values, like a physical representation of them, which emits, imposes and highlights special aspects of our existence. It is our duty to recognize these traces, these crystallizations of memory within the city, which act as the material resource of our collective past. These places are valuable places where memory was not just created but still exists, inviting us to remember, to recollect, to learn and to form our identity.



"The past is full of life, eager to irritate us, provoke and insult us, tempt us to destroy or repaint it. The only reason people want to be masters of the future is to change the past. They are fighting for access to the laboratories where photographs are retouched and biographies and histories rewritten... The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting."

- Milan Kundera³⁶



3.1 Recollection of the past

As mentioned in previous chapters, people constantly search their mnemonics and try to recollect their memories, in order to remember, to achieve a sense of self-identity and cultural continuity. The voluntary evocation of memory consists precisely in a traversal of planes of consciousness. Bergson suggested a dynamic scheme, for distinguishing the role of automatic, mechanical recall from that of reflection, of intelligent reconstruction, intimately mingled in ordinary experience. "I mean by this, that the idea does not contain the images themselves so much as the indication of what we must do to reconstruct them"³⁷. While it has become clear how we can recollect something from the past, by reconstructing the images that exist in our memory, the question of why we do it is further explored.

According to Pierre Nora, „We speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left. Our interest in *Lieux de mémoire*, where memory crystallizes and secretes itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn; but torn is such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites“.³⁸ These *Lieux de mémoire*, sites where one remembers, originate as Nora has put it, with the sense that there is no spontaneous memory; we must deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries, organize celebrations, pronounce eulogies and notarize bills, because such activities do not occur naturally. If a man was able to live in the memories, he would not have to create spaces in the name of these memories.³⁹ The main purpose of commemoration is to prevent forgetting and give meaning to the present and future world.

The recollection of memories relates closely to the built environment and its architecture. All our experiences, individual or collective, are happening around a spatial framework, our cities, neighborhoods, homes and other places. The memories of these experiences are tied to these places and form a special bond with the built environment. When recalling specific events, the spatial context in which they happened, is also being recalled. Memories and experiences have a place-bound nature that defines them and underlines the importance of architecture in accordance with the personal identity as well as the territorialization process after a possible loss. Built fabric can contribute to the construction of the memory of place and help ease the healing process after a loss. People who lost under various circumstances their spatial identity and environment, when faced with their new reality are feeling lost and alienated, as they can not find many grounding memories in the new environment in order to draw from them and feel at home. Under such circumstances, memory frameworks are recalled in order to evoke familiar, soothing feelings and remember how things were.⁴⁰ Adapting to new surroundings and trying to redefine one's identity is often so difficult that drawing from memories can help overcome the gap between present and past. As objects and our built environment do not possess meaning by themselves but are literally what we make of them and what we see in them, they give people stability, a sense of duration and lasting values.

Memories and recalling will not bring back the same sense of stability, but they may act as catalysts in order to try to achieve this stability again while moving forward and creating new identities.

36. Kundera, Milan. "The Book of Laughter and Forgetting." trans. Michael Henry Heim. Penguin Books. New York. 1981. p.22

37. Bergson, Henri. "Matter and Memory". translated by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer. George Allen and Unwin. London. [1911]. p.196

38, 39. Nora, Pierre. "Realms of Memory; Les Lieux de Mémoire". translated by Marc Roudebush. Representations 26. California. [1989]. p. 7-12

40. Fearon, James D. „What is identity (as we now use the word)?“. Stanford University. California. [1999]

41. Teresa Stoppani "Architecture and Trauma". Leeds Beckett University. Leeds. [2016]

42. Strange D., Melanie K., Takarangi T. "Memory Distortion for Traumatic Events: The Role of Mental Imagery". Front Psychiatry. [2015]

43. Ehlers A., Clark D. "A cognitive model of posttraumatic stress disorder". Behav Res Ther. 3:319–45.10. [2000]

44. Leys, R. "Trauma: A genealogy." The University of Chicago Press. Chicago, IL and London. [2000]. p.2

45,47,48. Ricoeur, Paul, "Memory, History, Forgetting", translated by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago, London. [2004]. p.72-79

46. Das, Veena. "Language and Body: transactions in the construction of pain". in: Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe I. Bourgois, Violence in War and Peace: an anthology. Blackwell Publishing. Oxford. [2004]. p.327-333

3.2 Memory and Trauma

In order to understand how to create commemorative architecture, we first need to understand the notion of trauma and its relation to memory. While people are able to recollect major events from their life with ease and a relatively clear accuracy, memories of traumatic events differ qualitatively from the other memories, as they are encoded differently than more routine, everyday experiences in life. What we call trauma is actually a series of reactions spread out in time-space and the body, caused by a sudden violent event. Trauma is a temporal becoming.⁴¹ Human memory does not function like a tape recorder, faithfully recording events later to be recalled on command. Our memories are fallible, they have gaps and inconsistencies.⁴² Memories referring to traumatic events can be easily distorted and fragmented. Cognitive models highlight the nature of the traumatic memory: fragmented, associated with intense arousal, readily primed and triggered, and poorly contextualized into memory. ⁴³ People that have experienced a traumatic event, may find it difficult to recall details in a complete linear order or may remember more trauma than they experienced. All these disorders of memory are attributed to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). According to Leys, while owing to the "emotions of terror and surprise caused by certain events, the mind is split or dissociated: it is unable to register the wound to the psyche because the ordinary mechanisms of awareness and cognition are destroyed. As a result, the victim is unable to recollect and integrate the hurtful experience in normal consciousness; instead, the victim is haunted or possessed by intrusive traumatic memories. The experience of the trauma, fixed or frozen in time, refuses to be represented as past but is perpetually reexperienced in a painful, dissociated, traumatic present"⁴⁴ Undoubtedly, horrific experiences are unforgettably engraved on the mind, but the mind in order to defend itself may banish some traumatic memories from awareness, making it difficult for victims to remember them until many years later. Trauma remains even though it may seem as inaccessible, unavailable and in its place arise phenomena of substitution. In particular circumstances, entire sections of the reputedly forgotten past can return. This "flashbulb memory" may last only a couple of minutes, but resurfaces all the emotions and memories of the traumatizing past. After, feelings of fear and stress may occur. Some believe that a representation intended to address trauma constitutes an impossible witnessing since it is considered too overwhelming. But, to overcome the melancholia of a difficult past it is important to act out, to remember and most importantly to mourn. Ricoeur suggests that memory does not only bear on time: it also requires time - a time of mourning.⁴⁵ It is important to experience grief, that sadness that has not completed the work of mourning. As the work of mourning is the required path for the work of remembering, joy can poetically crown with its grace the work of memory, rewarding the victim for reconciling with the trauma. It is necessary for individuals who suffered not only to recognize their pain but to have their pain recognized by others. If not confronted, recognized and remembered, denial of these feelings obstructs healing and can lead to social death.⁴⁶ "The work of mourning is the cost of the work of remembering, but the work of remembering is the benefit of the work of mourning."⁴⁷ There exactly, where the work of mourning and dealing with trauma and the work of recollection overlap, memory, individual and collective, acquires its full meaning.⁴⁸



3.3 The question between memory and oblivion

Undoubtedly, memory bears an important role in forming identities and entire societies. Sometimes though, people would much prefer to forget. Forgetting can be a cognitive defect or an unconscious choice in order to prevent informational overload by filtering what is worth remembering. But often, it can also be a conscious choice, an active process that requires effort, when certain memories are overpowering and traumatic. As memory is the interplay between recall and forgetting, the freedom of memory also entails the right to not remember, the right to forget.⁴⁹

After a traumatic event, the world for the people that have witnessed it, is never the same. Trauma [Τραῦμα] is a term deriving from ancient Greece, meaning „wound“. In places emerging from traumatic events, these events may be denied or asserted, as the „wounds“ are still open. The narratives, the analysis, the basic facts, about what happened and why, may be contested. Remembering the events and discussing the past in an open platform may not always be desirable. Traumatized individuals feel a plethora of emotions such as sadness, anxiety, depression, guilt, anger, grief, fatigue, pain, confusion, despair and loss of trust. For them, turning the page instead of constantly talking about the past and acknowledging what traumatized them, is easier, like a defense mechanism that blocks harmful thoughts and negative emotions and enables a positive spirit. Nietzsche indicated that active forgetfulness⁵⁰ is not a weakness of the mind and a passive dissipation of painful memories, but rather, an active faculty that regulates the chaos of impulses and provides some silence; it makes it possible to shut the doors and windows of consciousness for a while so the individual is not bothered by the noise of and battle with past demons.⁵¹ Aydin proposed that “trauma is like having a stone in one’s shoe; eventually, it will not only injure the foot, but also prevent the individual from going farther on his or her way, exploring other possibilities, and continuing to grow.”⁵² Although memories of a difficult past may be better forgotten, they still remain in storage and can unconsciously affect the victims behavior in a very negative way, for example, by manifesting themselves in nightmares or the inability to form stable relationships.⁵³ Therefore, it is important to recognize and process the trauma. For a successful closure, a genuine recognition of what exactly happened, who was involved, how, when and why it took place, is required. Processing the trauma by sharing the memories and incorporating it into the identity of the victimized person or society, results in the much-needed catharsis and relief. Only after the process of reinterpreting the trauma, people recover the power to regulate and orient the emotions evoked by it and take responsibility for their future.

49. Bublitz C., Dresler M. “A Duty to Remember, a Right to Forget? Memory Manipulations and the Law.” In: Clausen J., Levy N. ‚Handbook of Neuroethics‘. Springer, Dordrecht. [2015]

50. Nietzsche, F. “On the genealogy of morality”. transl. by K. Ansell-Pearson, Ed., & C. Diethel. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, UK.[1997]

51,52. Aydin, Ciano. “How to Forget the Unforgettable? On Collective Trauma, Cultural Identity, and Mnemotechnologies” *Identity*. 17:3. [2017] p.125-137

53. Weiner, B. “Motivated forgetting and the study of repression”. *Journal of Personality*. 36. [1968] p. 213–234

54. Ricoeur, Paul, “Memory, History, Forgetting”, transl. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago, London. [2004]. p.412-413

4. Memorials

Without an established context in which painful memories can be recognized or expressed, trauma becomes more evident for the survivors as they find themselves in an unimaginable situation that is most closely described as lingering in the “narrative void”⁵⁵.

The act of remembrance shows that the reconstruction of the past directly depends on the interest and interpreted present framework of our society. The process of remembrance no longer means giving importance only to heroic deeds but to individual pain and suffering as well.⁵⁶

Through the implementation of memorials, we prevent the process of forgetting, materialize the intangible and connect past with the present. As architecture is being used in the mechanism of healing, memorials become a construct of symbolic consolidation of memory in space and time. They act as a vestige of the past, whose interpretation will produce a revival of memory only if its connotations are compared with what it's omitted, or hidden.⁵⁷ Memorials symbolize and actually simulate the presence of those who are „absent“ while giving place to the individual suffering and mourning of those who are „here“ to take place.



“We erect monuments so that we shall always remember and build memorials so that we shall never forget... Monuments commemorate the memorable and embody the myths of beginnings. Memorials ritualize remembrance and mark the reality of ends.”

- Arthur Danto⁵⁸



4.1 Definition and memorial categories

If a man was able to live in the memories, he would not have to create spaces in the name of these memories.⁵⁹ When trying to recall a memory, the place that this memory has happened is also being recalled. Therefore the space, which we occupy, move through, have constant access to and can reconstruct in our thoughts and imagination is the space we must take care of so that memory can survive.⁶⁰ Memorials are the most obvious expression and representation of collective memory in the city. They capture the deepest engraved, most important moments of a city and as an exponent of this collective memory, they become an exponent of the identity and the history of the city itself. The term “memorial” derives from the Latin word *memoria*, which in addition to meaning “memory” also meant “record” and “method of remembrance”. Memory, even etymologically, is intended to communicate something that has been lost and to ensure its continuity in the future. In memory studies, the term memorial is often used interchangeably within the notion of monument. First Danto and later Berberich managed to form a clear distinction between the two; “While a *Denkmal* wishes to induce the onlookers to “Denk mal!,” to think, the *Mahnmal* contains the word *mahnen*, to reprimand... A *Mahnmal* consequently acquires a dual function: it commemorates the victims and at the same time it also confronts the perpetrators and their descendants with a remembrance of their crimes.”⁶¹

According to Alois Riegl⁶², monuments/memorials are distinguished between intentional and unintentional; those who serve deliberately as memorials commemorating an event or a person, and those who recall a specific moment from the past but are valued as memorials at a later stage. An intentional memorial is anything intentionally constructed to narrate. Anything worth remembering, any person and event worth commemorating has been expressed as such by many cultures through the years, from the ancient world to the modern times. After the two World Wars, intentional monuments evolved to memorials, providing a place to heal wounds. Their meaning expanded beyond plain artistic expressions, sculptures and common political and sociological symbolism and achieved new dimensions in the narrative of memories. Famous examples of intentional memorials include the Memorial to the murdered Jews (Peter Eisenman), the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (Maya Lin) as well as museums, such as the Jewish Museum in Berlin (Daniel Liebeskind), whose role is not only to display archived memory but also to offer a space for commemoration and facilitate forgiveness and reconciliation. Non-intentional monuments, are those who were not built as such but acquired this value through time or a specific event. Each society is constantly appreciating, evaluating and devaluating historical objects and unique works of art and architecture. Anything that gives information about the past from a book to a street or an entire village can acquire memorial value overtime and unlike intentional memorials, to which their commemorative value is given by their creator, to the non-intentional ones we are the ones attributing them their value.

A memorial, intentional or not, stays open to the public dialogue, consists in the ways of learning relating to forms of knowledge and knowhow, while activating and facilitating a plethora of emotions and memories. It resides in the city and becomes part of its identity, as it absorbs all the narratives attributed to it, allowing people to form not only their identity but also the legacy they envision for their future.

55. Tanovic, Sabina. “Memory in Architecture: Contemporary memorial projects and their predecessors”. Delft University of Technology. Delft. [2015]

56, 57. Dimkovi, Danijela Miodrag. “Memorial Architecture as the Symbol of Remembrance and Memories.” J Archit Des.:10018 [2016]

58. Danto, Arthur Coleman. “Art: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial”. in: The Nation Vol. 241. New York. [1985] p.152-155

59. Nora, Pierre. “Realms of Memory; Les Lieux de Mémoire”. translated by Marc Roudebush. Representations 26. California. [1989]. p.10-12

60. Dimkovi, Danijela Miodrag. “Memorial Architecture as the Symbol of Remembrance and Memories.” see J Archit Des.:10018 [2016]

61. Berberich, Christine. “The Continued Presence of the Past: New Directions in Holocaust Writing?” in: Modernism/modernity 13, no. 3. [2006] p.574.

62. Riegl, Alois “The modern Cult of Monuments: its character and its Origin”. in: Oppositions, 25. [1982] p.21

63. Rowlands, Michael. „Trauma, Memory and Memorials“. British Journal of Psychotherapy. [1998]

64. Brett, Sebastian; Bickford, Louis; Ševenko, Liz; Rios, Marcela. “Memorialization and Democracy: State Policy and Civic Action”. Report International Coalition of Sites of Conscience. [2007]

65. Lin, Maya “Making the memorial”. The New York Review of Books. [2000]

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67. Forty, Adrian; Kuchler, Susanne. „The Art of Forgetting (Materializing culture)“. Berg publishers. Oxford. [1999]

68. Tanovic, Sabina. “Memory in Architecture: Contemporary memorial projects and their predecessors”. Delft University of Technology. Delft. [2015] p.311

69, 71. Peterson, Anna. “The production of a Memorial Place: Materialising Expressions of Grief”, in: Deathscapes:Places of Death, Dying, Mourning and Remembrance. Ashgate Publishing Ltd. [2010].p.141-161

70. Rowlands, Michael. „Trauma, Memory and Memorials“. British Journal of Psychotherapy. [1998]

4.2 The memorial as a place of mourning and healing

Memorial architecture serves the purpose of collecting existing narratives related to living memories, as well as acknowledge the trauma and offer a place to heal. It is as Rowlands suggests, a sign of recognition of peoples suffering and an escape from annihilation, where both public and intimate commemorations are invigorated. In this way, a sense of continuity is created and feelings of belonging are strengthened by offering a space for people to channel their emotions.⁶³

Since a traumatic stressor can constitute a variety of difficult memories, it is challenging to establish one platform that could support all representations intended to address trauma. Memorials should act as these platforms, designed to evoke a specific reaction or set of reactions including public acknowledgment of the event or the people represented, as well as learning about the past and reflecting or mourning and expressing anger or sadness about what has happened.⁶⁴ As stated before, in order to overcome the melancholia of a difficult past it is important to mourn and accept the loss. The pain of loss will always be there, it will always hurt, but we must acknowledge the death in order to overcome it.⁶⁵ Hence, memorials become experiential spaces that aim to facilitate several functions instead of just representing the loss. As such, they are expected to exist not as a place reminiscent of terror and despair, but one which actively engages the surrounding urban fabric and welcomes all to its space.⁶⁶ They not only create a material framework for mourners and survivors but also prolong the collective social memory of persons or events beyond mental recollections of individuals who knew or witnessed them first hand.⁶⁷ Furthermore, they affirm collective and individual identities and they offer information and deeper insight into the story they are telling.⁶⁸ Once the visitor is exposed to the memorials designated mnemonic power, he participates as audience and performer at the same time.⁶⁹ He is provided with an environment in which he can commemorate, acknowledge his losses, learn from the past and reach a catharsis. Memorials as places of mourning are honest and raw, they are not there to make bold political statements, judge or demand justice. The dead are no longer with us. Memorials are built for us. For the rage and passion they cause us. Their role is the healing embrace of remembrance and reconciliation while their purpose is the temporal outcome of a successful closure; a stage reached when it becomes possible to remember to forget the pain.⁷⁰ Peterson suggests that once the immediacy of expression of grief decreases in its power, the mourning continues, being transformed into a ritual similar to visiting a graveyard. The memorial becomes a transitional object and a holding space, providing a significant locus for processing the legacies of trauma and creating an environment for individuals who need to make sense of loss and deal with conflicting emotions.⁷¹

4.3 Memory topographies

Spaces are the containers of our experiences, thus, they have meaning and importance. Trying to recall certain memories and events, we almost immediately recall the space that these happened. Therefore we can extinguish two different memory spaces, those who revolve around the lived experience and those who emerge as a representation of it, as they act as a reminder of what is no longer there.

The memory sites, or *Lieux de mémoire* as Nora stated, are writings of history; they participate in the memorial struggles between different groups or social actors who are attempting to appropriate a doubtful past.⁷² They are fundamental remains, the ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived. They make their appearance by virtue of the deritualization of our world-producing, manifesting, establishing, constructing, decreeing and maintaining by artifice and by will, a society deeply absorbed in its own transformation and renewal.⁷³ Spaces where existing memories are visible, have a symbolic value and are fundamental for the transmission of memory and the social framework, the points of reference which will allow recollection of the past. The habitation of spaces like that indicates what and in what ways it is worth remembering. Created biographies of places are more tangible if they are rooted in a material point of reference, possible to visit and experience.⁷⁴ Memorials of traumatic events erected at the place of the event (place-based memorials) emphasize the significance of the space and the destruction of it in relation to remembering the loss. They seek to meld remembrance and regeneration in order to provide a venue for cathartic expression of grief.⁷⁵ One is aware of the presence of the real site of a tragedy and therefore the “distance” of representation is erased. These memory sites originated in the trauma and the struggles, and through the habitation of them, their meaning and discussions they generate, they wage their own battles for the appropriation of the past. Consequently, the memory topographies, the places where the traces of a catastrophe are present, act as points of reference not only for those who survived traumatic events, or those who were not immediate witnesses but also for those born long after them. Sites of memory inevitably become a metaphor for narrating the past, places where people remember the memories of others. A memorial's ethical function arises from its capacity for establishing dialogues and presenting questions about the past (and the future).

Memory topographies are as transitory as are the groups of people who create and sustain them.⁷⁶ Time may dissolve the associations of the sites to the memories and replace them with other needs and other experienced memories. At that point, when the physical traces of trauma disappear, the characteristic trajectory of sites of memory may come to an end. Instead, the sense of place is reconstructed or rather enhanced by architectural elements designed to help visitors trace the historical narrative.⁷⁷

72, 73. Nora, Pierre. “Realms of Memory; Les Lieux de Mémoire”. translated by Marc Roudebush. Representations 26. California. [1989].

74. Martin, Angela. “The practice of identity and an Irish sense of place”. in: ‘Gender, Place and Culture’. Volume 4. Issue 1 [1997] p.89-113

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78, 79. Young, James E. “The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today”. Critical Inquiry 18 [1992] p.267–97

81. Young, James E. “Holocaust Monuments And Counter-Monuments” interview with Adi Gordon and Amos Goldberg =English and Judaic Studies at the University of Massachusetts. Yad Vashem. Jerusalem [1998]

80, 82, 84. Stevens, Quentin; Franck, Karen A.; Fazakerley, Ruth. “Counter-monuments: the anti-monumental and the dialogic” The Journal of Architecture, 17:6. [2012] p. 951-972

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4.4 The Counter Monument

Against this historical amnesia of the late 20th century, the counter monument movement emerged as a new critical mode of commemorative practice. The counter monuments were artistic creations in public space opposed to traditional static monuments and memorials of the late 19th century, which celebrated national ideals and triumphs. This movement rejected the value of memorial spaces, wanting to achieve the de-materialization of memory and introduced a more experiential part of memory in order to challenge the viewer's perspective rather than confirm it and bridge the gap between history and memory. In the words of its most vocal promoter, James E. Young, the counter memorials are “anti heroic, often ironic, and self-effacing conceptual installations that mark the national ambivalence and uncertainty of late twentieth-century postmodernism”⁷⁸ As we have identified before, neither the memorial nor its meaning is really everlasting, they are constructed in particular times and places, contingent on the political, historical, and aesthetic realities of the moment.⁷⁹ Traditional memorials are feared to be sealing memory off from awareness altogether; instead of embodying memory, they only displace it and thus, as the memorials do all the memory work for us, we become more forgetful. Counter Memorials explore the notion of the memorial; their form is a constantly evolving, never-ending process. Materials and forms appear to have particular symbolic connotations useful for avoiding obvious representation and for effacing or concealing overt narratives, in order to depoliticize commemoration.⁸⁰ A generation of artists and architects, most of them German, embodied this new kind of memorials, that disappear instead of standing for all time; that are built into the ground instead of above it; and that return the burden of memory to those who come looking for it.⁸¹ The most important aspect of the counter monuments is that they invite close, multi-sensory visitor engagement and rather than being didactic, they invite visitors to work out the meanings for themselves.⁸²

Some important examples of counter memorials include artist Horst Hoheisel's proposal for the Monument of the Holocaust titled, “Blow Up the Brandenburger Tor”, where he opted for the destruction of the German symbol as the best solution to remember the Holocaust victims.⁸³ Other paradigmatic examples are the Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz's Monument against Fascism, War and Violence—and for Peace and Human Rights in Harburg, as well as Horst Hoheisel's Aschrott Fountain outside Kassel's city hall. Artists such as Sophie Calle and Thomas Hirschhorn engaged in spontaneous and ephemeral constructions in pre-existing places of remembrance, while the counter-memorial also included practices such as Krzysztof Wodiczko's subversive audio-visual projections onto existing landmarks and Norbert Rademacher's light projections. Anti-monumentality aims to address troubling memories and feelings with abstract forms. Peter Eisenman's Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin, Sol LeWitt's Black Form dedicated to the Missing Jews in Hamburg, Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial and of course Gunter Demnig's Stolpersteine are exactly that; negative and complex like the issues they represent.⁸⁴



4.5 Memorial Typologies

Tragic events keep happening and the need to create a space where people can commemorate and heal their wounds is more important than ever. Thus, we can anticipate a continued increase in the number and range of memorials. Based on the morphology and the space that they occupy, we can define four basic typologies of memorials.

The memorial as a sculpture

Some of the first monuments and memorials that ever appeared in the cities were sculptures, statues and busts of political leaders and kings. In this typology, the memorial acquires mostly a political significance in the public space, as the reference to a person or an event is clear and can not be interpreted differently. Normally, such memorials are prominent and highly visible, located on an urban axis or a physically prominent site such as a town square. The sculpture memorial is an autonomous object in space, bears a clear symbolism to the event and is self-referential, imposing a clear presentation of the facts and the way we are supposed to remember them. Later, after the introduction of the modern movement, memorial sculptures evolved into more symbolic approaches, without bearing a clear reference to a person or an event.⁸⁵

The memorial as a ruin

Memorials can be considered as staged representations of history, while ruins are pieces of history themselves. Memorials as ruins arise from the culture of 'retro' that exists in the modern times. In cities with a difficult historical past, the forgotten and ruined architecture becomes memorialized in an attempt to discover history through its original sites. This encompasses memorials in which poignant remains have been preserved and turned into reminders of violent acts as well as memorials in which the iconographic traditions of the ruin are consciously reproduced for remembrance purposes.⁸⁶ The ruin allows for a visualization of different forms of mourning: we mourn loss, death, decay and destruction; man-made and natural catastrophes. From Berlin's "Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche" to the French village "Oradour-sur-Glane" and Berlin's "Teufelsberg", there are numerous examples where ruins became memorials as modern heterotopias of time and space.⁸⁷

The memorial as building

Museums, libraries and archives can be designed and considered as memorial spaces. Public buildings have always had an important role in the life of the city. Since the construction of museums, public and administrative buildings in the late 18th century until the Bilbao effect, public buildings were the pre-eminent representation of monumental architecture. Later, the monumental building typology evolved into deliberate memorial buildings such as Daniel Liebeskind's, Jewish Museum of Berlin where the architecture of the building defines the monumental experience and narrates the history without the need for exhibits.

The memorial as public space

Designing memorials as public spaces usually refers to places where an important event took place. Thus, the place itself turns into monumental space through architecture, so that the history of the place will not be forgotten. The importance of the monument as a public space lies in the direct presence of history within the everyday life. From the self-referential memorial in the public space, until the design of open public memorial spaces, the social structure of the city has been changed and democratized enough to actively deal and acknowledge its collective memory.⁸⁸

85, 88. Siska, Klelia. "Monuments of meta-modernity; Designing identities in public space". Department of Architecture, School of Engineering, University of Patras. Patra [2015]

86,87. Silke Arnold-de Simone "The Ruin as Memorial-The Memorial as Ruin" Performance Research 20:3. [2015] p.94-102





Mati; A wounded place

This research began with a very personal quest to design a memorial that would commemorate both my private and collective experience and trauma of the 2018 Wildfires in Mati, Greece.

The research has been directed towards understanding the notion of memory, identity and memorial architecture in order to better understand how to create a memorial that while addressing events and honoring victims and survivors, can contribute to acts of remembrance, demand proactive engagement and envision a better world. A memorial, to host pain, make room for the voices of those who can speak- those who can bear witness, and those who can not- or those who don't have the possibility to appear, those who will not re-appear.⁸⁹ In a ground that is so incredibly charged, in a place that still mourns its losses, the difficult memory of the fire is not something that can be forgotten. No matter how hard people try to face the events of that day, their wounds are still open and hurt. Time for them has stopped on the 23rd of July 2018. They have experienced terror, loss and grief and since then they have been feeling lost, angry and sad.

The purpose of this chapter is firstly to describe Mati, the place where the catastrophic events took place, -providing maps and images of it before and after the fire- and understand it's characteristics. Secondly, this chapter will provide a description of the events of the fire and the aftermath of it as well as map out all the difficult memories present in the territory.



5. The place

Mati is a place located on the east coast of the Attica region, 29 kilometers east of the city center of Athens, and has been a popular holiday destination. It is not a big city, nor a small village. It has a vacation character with smaller buildings with gardens built in the 60s. After the fire, in an attempt to question and blame the geography of the area, the way the houses were built and the urban design of the area was made. Mati was put under the microscope and the fire became political.

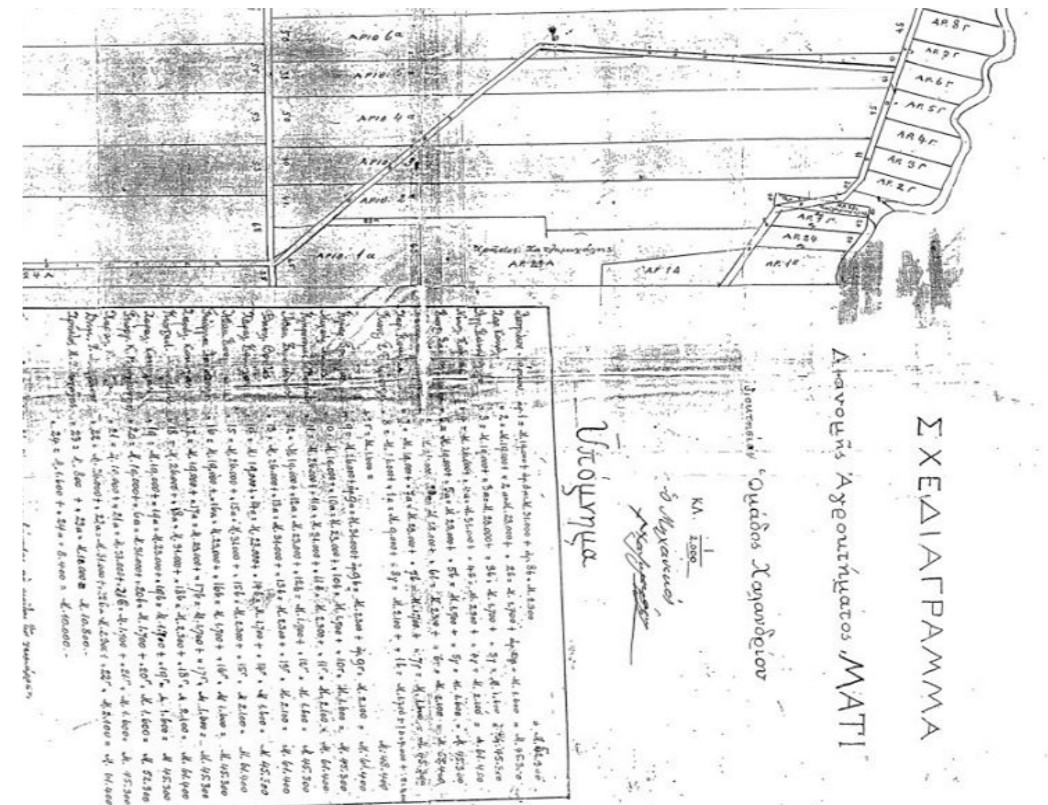
Hartog once said that commemorations set their own rhythms and terms, redefining the calendar of public life, which gives way and makes use of them, attempting to conciliate memory, pedagogy and political messages.⁹⁰ Memorials as stated before, are about honesty, acknowledging the lost and the events, without making any political statement.

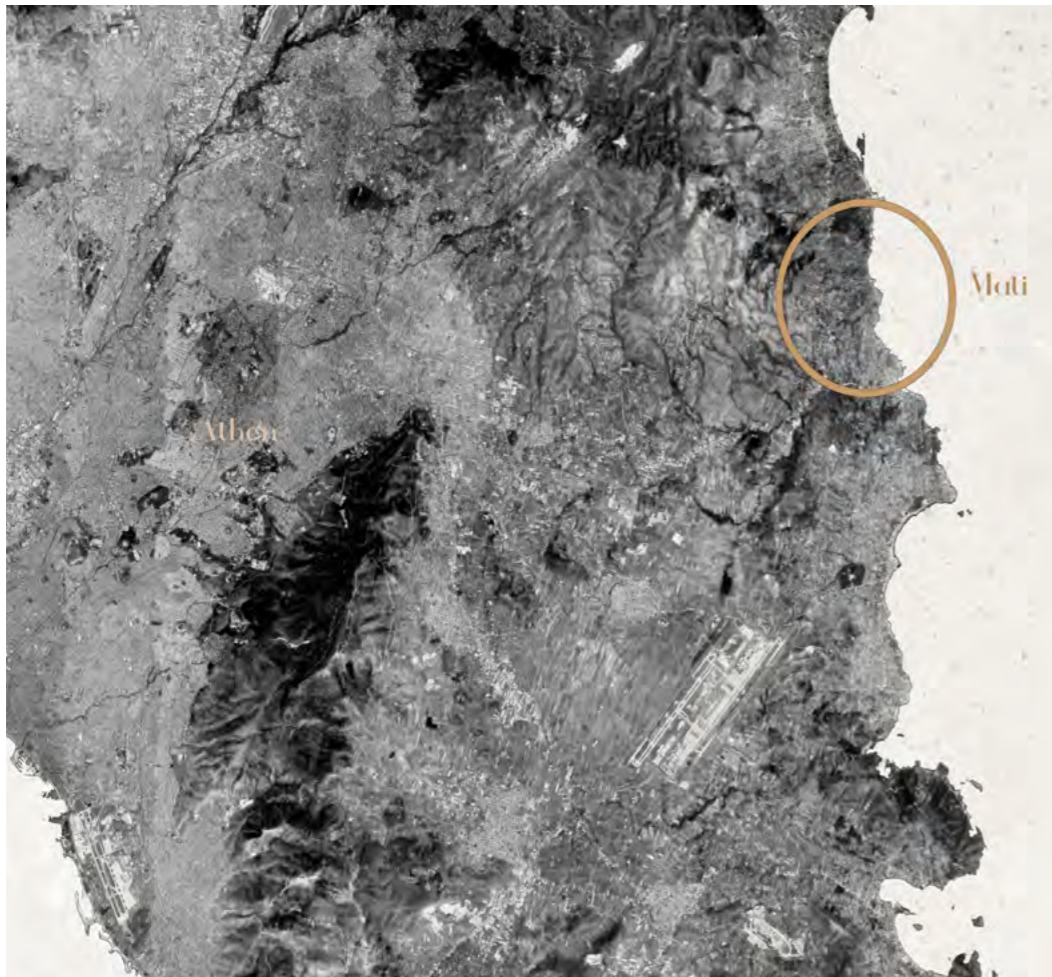
In order to understand the circumstances of the traumatic event, the place where the events took place and consequently design a memorial appropriate for the area, it is important to understand the notion of the place, its history, geomorphology and urban design.



"We will lay the foundations for a new, sustainable settlement in Mati. There are definitely many difficulties and obstacles, but we will keep our promises"

- Kostis Hatzidakis⁹¹





Schwarzplan Mati

5.1 Location, history, demographics, geomorphology and other characteristics

Mati is a coastal village based in the Municipality of Marathon in Eastern Attica, lying on the Aegean Sea coast and east of the Penteli mountains. Its name, Mati (*in Greek: eye*) is believed to derive from the imposing view of the area to the sea as well as the northern wind that characterizes it as “the eye of the North”. It is located between the 14th and 16th kilometer of the Athens classical Marathon, and few kilometers away from the archaeological site of the Marathon Tomb and Museum. Moreover, it is ideally located, really close to the Port of Rafina, the second largest port of Attica after that of Piraeus, as well as the Athens International Airport.

Mati has a fairly new history, starting in 1930.⁹² Before that, it was owned by the Monastery of Penteli, which owned more than 250.000 acres of land in Attica. After a large debt, the Monastery decided to sell some of these acres, including the area of Mati. Thus, by the end of March 1930, approximately 4.500 acres of agricultural land were sold and in 1933 began their distribution. By this time, Mati consisted of only 30 houses and could be accessed with great difficulty. For years it was almost exclusively a destination offering a temporary escape from the city, mostly through camping, in contrast to the famous holiday destination of the Saronic coast, which included loads of hotels and other buildings. At the time, Mati attracted low-income residents, mostly from Chalandri, Attica, who divided the area into plots of 300 m².⁹³ After the War and until 1960, Mati began to develop along its coastal and vertical axis connecting the coastal road with Marathonos Avenue. Every second property of the coastal lots that was being built was obligated to include a 2.5 meter alley leading to the sea. Roads started to widen, free camping gave its place to organized camps, such as “Oikos Naftou” (*Sailors House*) and gradually Mati acquired the form that it has today. A settlement was established. During the military dictatorship in Greece (1967-1974) Mati expanded and the vast majority of its current buildings were built by this time. Although the area was still outside the town planning zone of Athens, the residential development became possible, with a legal building permit according to the presidential Decree “ΦΕΚ 101/Δ/1967; On vacation facilities”.⁹⁴ Thus, small buildings with one floor and a vacation character were built all around Mati. This Decree allowed the erection, alteration or demolition of buildings in areas outside of the zoning law until 1996, when it was replaced by another presidential Decree “ΦΕΚ 1032/Δ/1996“, Article 3,⁹⁵ which allowed only the repair and maintenance of legally existing structures. Only a few things have changed since 1977. Mati, apart from houses, also includes several hotels, a few restaurants, taverns, cafés, bars, two open-air cinemas and a small marina. The area never lost its vacation character, with the majority of its population living in Mati only during the summer months, while from 2000 onwards it began to attract permanent residents as well.

Mati's population at the recording of 2001 included 4.112 residents, from which only 602 were permanent residents in the area, and the rest 3.510 was not living permanently there. These numbers increased a little bit by the time of 2011's recording, while the ratio of permanent to non-permanent population was still high, at 4.3⁹⁶ In general, in the whole area affected by the fire, it is clear that the permanent population is a lot smaller than what it becomes during

the summer months. More specifically, in 2001, there were 1.620 permanent residents compared to 8.062 non-permanent and in 2011, only 2.519 permanent residents were recorded compared to 8.062 non-permanent ones.⁹⁷ From these numbers, it becomes clear that the area during the summer semester quadruples its inhabitants, as it is ideally located, 29 kilometers east of the city center of Athens and offers the opportunity for a lot of families to spend the summer months in a place close to the sea, where children can enjoy their vacations while parents still go to work. Moreover, it is understood that on the day of the fire, the area had not only its permanent and non-permanent residents but also many tourists staying at the Hotels, visitors, as well as passing drivers from the nearby port of Rafina.

Mati geomorphologically extends on a sloped landscape with strong vertical lines. Geological formations of the Neogene and Quaternary period (marls, sandstones, marl cobblestones, etc.) cover the ground of the area while the morphology of the terrain includes downhill slopes formed by mount Penteli and the sea. In Mati, these slopes appear smoother, while in other affected areas (Kokkino Limanaki) they are steeper. The coastline is characterized by coastal erosion and narrow beaches with beach rocks and semi-rocky shores where marl, clay and cobblestones can be found. The coastline is also defined by significant altitude differences, especially in the southern part of Mati, where cliffs make the access to the sea almost impossible.⁹⁸

As far as the vegetation is concerned, Thermomediterranean formations of Oleo ceratonia, carobs and pines can be found in the area. Before the fire, the area was dominated by dense greenery, mainly of Aleppo Pines. Now, the natural plant communities have been degraded in the whole affected area, and only specific kinds of shrubs and lilies can be found, such as: *Oterium Spinosum*, *Genista Acanthoclanda*, *Euphorbia Acanthothamnus*, *Corydthymus capitatus* (thyme), *Salvia officinalis* (sage) and *Phlomis fruticosa*.⁹⁹

Last, the climate of the area is Mediterranean, characterized by small annual rainfalls, mild winters and hot summers. More specifically, according to the data of EAA M.S of Rafina, from April 2014 to December 2019, the average annual temperature was 17.87 °C. The warmest month is normally August with an average temperature of 26.96 °C, while the coldest is January with an average temperature of 9.47 °C. Mati, according to the rainfall map of Greece is within the zone with less than 400mm rainfall per year. Furthermore, Mati can be described as a particularly windy area in Attica, where the highest average wind speed is in August, with 8.9 Km/h, and the lowest average wind speed is in November with 5.32 Km / h.¹⁰⁰

89. Davis, Colin “Levinas: An Introduction” University of Notre Dame Press. Notre Dame [1996] p.83

90. Hartog, François. «Temps et histoire. Comment écrire l'histoire de France?». *Annales-Histoire Sciences sociales* no. 6, Paris. [1995]. p.1227

91. Hatzidakis, Kostis. public speech. Mati [2020] <https://www.ekathimerini.com/252974/gallery/ekathimerini/in-images/environment-minister-visits-mati-eyes-regeneration-plan>

92. Vrettos, Vasilis. Personal Research and Archive, Mati

94, 95. https://www.technologismiki.com/nomos/bd_7_8_67d.php?toc=0&printWindow&http://library.tee.gr/digital/books_tee/book_31138.pdf

96, 97. <https://www.statistics.gr/2011-census-pop-hous>

93, 97, 99,100. TEE, „Strategic study of environmental impact of the special urban plan for the fire-affected area of the municipalities of Marathon and Rafina-Pikermiou, Attica region“ Athens. [2020] p.28-45

ΟΔΗΓΟΣ ΤΩΝ ΠΩΛΗΤΩΝ
 ΑΡΙΘΜΟΣ 6166
 Πωλητήριο κτήματος διά δραχμᾶς 900.000
 6/3/1930

Ἐν Ἀθήναις σήμερον τὴν ἑκτην (6ην) τοῦ μηνὸς Μαρτίου
 τοῦ χιλιοστοῦ ἑνεακοσιοστοῦ τριακοστοῦ (1930) ἔτους ἡμέραν
 ἑπισημὴν ἐν τῷ ἐνταῦθα καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς διασταυρώσεως τῶν ὁδῶν Μητρο
 πώλεως καὶ Πεντέλης κειμένη Ματοχίῳ τῆς Ἱερᾶς Μονῆς Πεντέλης
 διοικητικῆς ταύτης, ἐνθα τὰ Γραφεῖα αὐτῆς καὶ ἐνθα κληθεῖς μετέ
 βην πρὸς σύνταξιν τοῦ παρόντος, ἐνώπιον ἐμοῦ τοῦ Συμβολαιογράφου
 καὶ κατοικοῦ Ἀθηνῶν Πέτρου Νικολάου Καβαδία, ἐδρεύοντος
 ἐνταῦθα, παρουσίᾳ καὶ τῶν κάτωθι προσυπογεγραμμένων μαρτύρων
 κἀγγέλου Κωνσταντείου Χριστοπούλου, δικηγόρου καὶ Ἰωάννου Ζω
 τηρίου Ζέρβα, ἰδιωτικοῦ ὑπαλλήλου, κατοικοῦ Ἀθηνῶν, πολιτῶν Ἑλ
 λήνων, ἐνηλίκων, γνωστῶν μοι καὶ μὴ ἐξαιρετέων ἐνεφανίσθησαν οἱ
 γνωστοί μοι καὶ μὴ ἐξαιρετέοι κ. κ. ἑνὸς μὲν οἱ 1) Πρηνόπιος
 Παναγιώτου Τζαβάρας, Ἀρχιμανδρίτης, κάτοικος Ἀθηνῶν, 2) Προκόπιος



5.2 Architectural characteristics and existing urban design

The architecture of Mati is characterized by the architecture of many Greek settlements in the 60s and 70s. In the majority, Mati consists of small buildings, with one or two floors and a garden. In the central and eastern parts of Mati, the buildings can be considered of high standards, having lush gardens, beautiful architecture and great construction. On the southern part, the buildings appear being built more dense and with lower, more ephemeral qualities in terms of construction and architecture. In this part of Mati, the morphology of the ground has a lot of contrasts, with different altitudes and a creek that separates the area. As it is not allowed to build near creeks, some of the constructions there, have been identified as illegal. Along the coast, on both sides of the coastal road, Poseidonos Avenue, can be found apartment buildings reaching up to five floors. This multi-family building typology, the so-called "Polykatoikia", can be met everywhere in Greece; in the city centers, in the suburbs, in old and new districts. These particular buildings do not comply with the smaller scale architecture of the rest of the area. As mentioned before, the coast of Mati is characterized by narrow beaches with beach rocks and semi-rocky shores as well as significant altitude differences in its terrain. The access to them is difficult and in some cases impossible, due to the cliffs that exist in the area. A continuous coastal front has nor been foreseen at the time that Mati was built. A pathway along the coast with some staircases, created by private initiatives, can lead to the accessible beaches of Mati. The access to this coastal pathway, serve several alleys between the properties of the coastal lots.

Due to the fact that Mati has not been included in the town planning zone, the urban design of the area has not followed any specific plan or design. Mati is characterized by parallel and vertical streets in a strictly rectangular order. There are three two main roads parallel to Marathonos Avenue and the sea, Poseidonos Avenue, which has a key role in the urban organization of Mati, and Kyprou street. Both cross the entire settlement in the East-West direction. Smaller vertical roads connect these three streets together. The most important vertical street of Mati is the Kyanis Aktis Street, which connects the marina of Mati and Poseidonos Avenue with Marathonos Avenue. This junction, where these streets meet is considered the main entrance/exit to Mati as well as the primary axis of the area.

Regarding the land uses in Mati, in addition to its mainly residential character, there exist some additional uses connected with tourism, leisure and trade. All these can be found along Poseidonos Avenue and in particular at its junction with Kyanis Aktis Street. Mati also includes some sports facilities, two churches and is close to some of the biggest camp facilities of Attica.

Important to mention is, that after the fire, more than 50% of the buildings in Mati have been completely destroyed and considered unsuitable and dangerous, along with many of the restaurants, cafes, etc.¹⁰¹

101. TEE, „Strategic study of environmental impact of the special urban plan for the fire-affected area of the municipalities of Marathon and Rafina-Pikermiou, Attica region“ Athens. [2020] Chapter 6, p.232

102. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-44966121>, <https://www.ekathimerini.com/231199/opinion/ekathimerini/comment/damage-control-without-accountability>

103. http://www.ypeka.gr/el-gr/Public_Consultation/currentpage/2

104. Hatzidakis, Kostis. public speech. Mati [2020] <https://www.ekathimerini.com/252974/gallery/ekathimerini/in-images/environment-minister-visits-mati-eyes-regeneration-plan>

105. TEE, „Strategic study of environmental impact of the special urban plan for the fire-affected area of the municipalities of Marathon and Rafina-Pikermiou, Attica region“ Athens. [2020]

106. <https://www.kathimerini.gr/1088745/gallery/epikairothta/ellada/to-mati-allazei-proswpo--ti-perilamvanei-to-aidiko-poleodomiko-sxedio-fwtografies>

5.3 The future urban design

Immediately after the fire, a long discussion has started over the urban planning of the area and the reasons as to why it was still not in the town planning zone. Mati and the fire became political.¹⁰²

It was clear that the need to immediately include the area to the zoning plan and create a future urban design plan was crucial. Not only, in order to make it possible for the destroyed buildings to be demolished, reconstructed and rebuilt, but also in order to create better living conditions for the people living there.

One year after the fire, the government appointed the creation of a zoning plan for the reconstruction of the fire-ravaged community of Mati and on July 2, 2020, the new zoning plan was released for public consultation with the aim of securing approval in October, 2020.¹⁰³ The plan, as the Environment and Energy Minister Kostis Hatzidakis claimed¹⁰⁴, aims to build a new, sustainable town including open recreation spaces, open escape routes for pedestrians to the sea and a newly designed, reformed waterfront. Moreover, the plan includes the demarcation of streams, stabilization of rocky outcrops and the implementation of anti-flood works. In addition to that, more and wider streets with designated bicycle and parking lanes, have been proposed offering better escape routes in case of a similar disaster. The creation of a better network, with smaller building blocks, will ensure the safe evacuation of the settlement and the preservation of its character. The ratio of public spaces and greenery to the total area is expected to increase by 21.93%.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, a total of 141 buildings will have to be demolished (residential, food, or tourism services), and enclosure walls will have to come down at another 339 properties, ensuring that no properties are close to creeks or the shore. The aim is to avoid two extreme approaches, Hatzidakis said, neither enforcing town planning rules so strictly so as to result in "endless demolitions and social upheaval" nor enforcing short-term solutions that would put the area at risk".

Since the plan is currently under public consultation, many things are expected to change and further design proposals to be made. Mati is expected to be included in the zoning plan of Athens until 2021 and its plans are considered to be a pilot test which will lead to a model that will be applicable everywhere in Greece. As Stasinou, president of the technical chamber of Greece, stated, "our goal is to learn from the procedures, the problems and the scientific data, create a legacy for the Greek state and use it in future efforts of spatial planning and urban design".¹⁰⁶

6. The Fire

It might be difficult for me to offer a sober and pragmatic perspective on the devastating fires that ravaged the east of Athens, on July 23, 2018 as the memories of the unspeakable tragedy are still fresh. On this day, Greece was faced with what is described as the second-deadliest wildfire event in the world in the 21st century.

The sky in Athens turned red, the wind was very strong and the small fire that was burning Penteli mountain started heading towards the east side of Athens and the area of Mati. Due to a second wildfire at the west of Athens, and a series of mistakes, the wildfire ended up burning an entire area, as well as trapping and burning people inside their houses, cars, or a few meters away from the beach.

Now, only a few clumps of golden-yellow shrubs grow where pines once shaded homes, streets and beaches. Some damaged houses have been repaired, some are still under reconstruction, and others still remain charred.

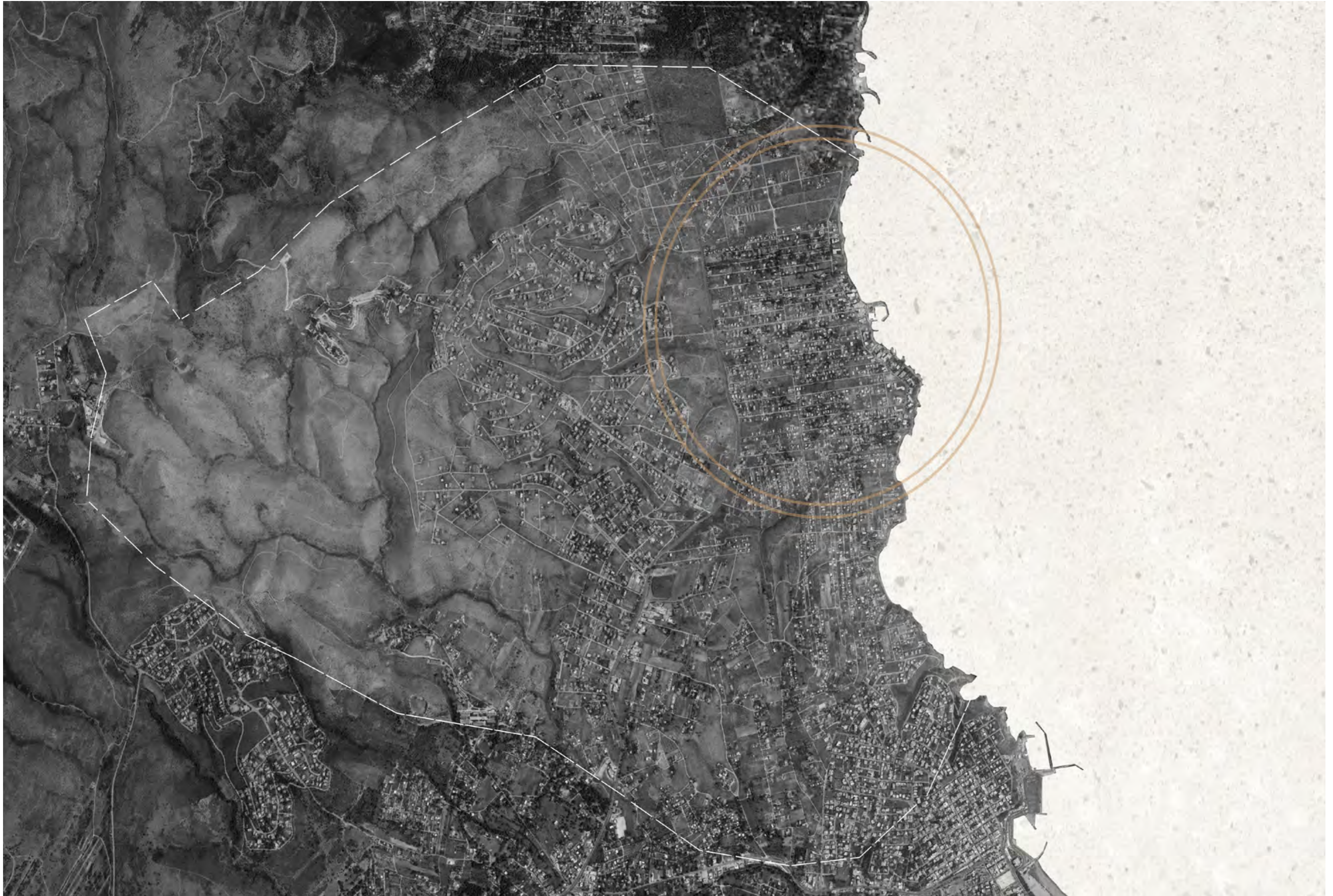
People, survivors, describe an abrupt coming-of-age or an inability to talk about their feelings. Others express feelings of injustice, rage, sorrow and emptiness that continue to overwhelm them. What they all agree on, however, is that they survived by pure luck. "It could have been us who were burned and others standing here today."¹⁰⁷



"For the rest of the world the fire is history. For us, however, it's still burning, it still smells. It's hard to walk through some streets knowing that that is where your friends died."

- Aphrodite Hatzianastasiadi¹⁰⁸





Area hit by the fire, Attica

6.1 The events, death toll, injuries and material losses

In the early afternoon, 16:41, of Monday, July 23, 2018, a fire broke out in the area of Daou Pentelis, approx. 20km northeast of Athens, by an elderly who was burning brushwood in the back yard of his home. The fire got out of hand quickly because of the strong wind.

Until 17:30 the fire was burning relatively low vegetation because the area had been affected by a wildfire before. Due to a second fire west of Athens near Kineta, the fire was initially overlooked and although the Fire Service was made aware of the fire at 16.57, the response was delayed, resulting in the fire spreading swingy to the east and eventually splitting into two fronts. One towards Dioni and one affecting, as it traveled along, the settlements of Kallitechnoulipsis, Neos Voutzas, Rafina, Provalinthos, Ampeloupoli, Kokkino Limanaki and Mati, where the fire was stopped because of the sea.¹⁰⁹

By 17:45 the first television reports about the fire were made, stating the existence of a fire in Daou Pentelis. There were no reports on where the fire was heading or what the actual status of it was. Although the smell was intense, everyone until this point thought that it was resulting from the fire in Kineta and continued their lives carefree, as they would do on a typical summer afternoon. Ten minutes later, the electricity went off and some people start worrying about the increasing intensity of the smoke.

Around 18:10 to 18:15, the fire moved quickly and with great ease towards Mati. Marathonos Avenue, with its four lanes that were until then considered an anti-fire zone, did not form an obstacle to downspread the fire. As the fire spread from the settlement of Neos Voutzas, crossing Marathonos Avenue, the Police diverted the traffic for drivers heading north as well as south, because the Avenue was at that time engulfed in flames. But instead of ordering drivers to make a U-turn and move out of the area, police directed them to take alternative routes that went through Mati.¹¹⁰ Within the next 30 minutes, the fire engulfed Mati and eventually was stopped because of the sea. In the absence of any warnings or an evacuation plan from the authorities, every decision made in those few hours was a split-second coin toss.¹¹¹ Until 19:00 the fire had destroyed Mati, Kallitechnoulipsis, Neos Voutzas, Rafina, Provalinthos, Ampeloupoli and Kokkino Limanaki. The area was full of residents, holidaymakers in hotels, or visiting their weekend homes, who had no means of escape. Moreover, the diverted cars, caused traffic congestion in the settlement's narrow streets and vehicles came to a halt as the flames approached.¹¹² Many people found rescue at the sea, where they remained for the next five to nine hours until rescue boats found them. The navy, local fishermen and private boats undertook the mission to collect those who sought salvation at sea.

The topography of the area, the climate conditions, and the strong downslope winds created the ideal conditions for rapid fire spreading. The wildfire, classified as a crown fire, was aided by winds of an approximate velocity of 90 km/h, while the bursts reached in several areas 120 km/h (12 Beaufort). It should be noted that the temperature on this day was between 39°C and 40°C, while the humidity was low. The heat, due to the fire, reached 800°C, resulting in car explosions as well as a variety of serious injuries.¹¹³

107, 108, 111. Papadopoulos, Yannis "We knew we weren't safe anywhere". [2020] <https://www.ekathimerini.com/254963/interactive/ekathimerini/special-report/we-knew-we-werent-safe-anywhere-says-mati-survivor>

109. Kanellopoulos, Vasilis „Why...“ Athens. [2020] <https://www.tovima.gr/2020/07/23/society/mati-to-megalogiati>

110, 112. Digalakis, Vassilis „The fatal decision that sent drivers to heart of inferno“. Kathimerini. Athens [2018] <https://www.ekathimerini.com/231423/opinion/ekathimerini/comment/the-fatal-decision-that-sent-drivers-to-heart-of-inferno>

113, 114. Lekkas, E; Carydis, P; Mavroulis, S; Diakakis, M; Andreadakis, E; Gogou, M; Spyrou, N; Athanassiou, M; Kapourani, E; Arianoutsou, M; Vassilakakis, M; Parcharidis, P; Kotsi, E; Speis, P; Delakouridis, J; Milios, D; Kotroni, V; Giannaros, T; Dafis, S; Kargiannidis, A; Papagiannaki, K. „The July 2018 Attica (central Greece) Wildfires-Scientific report“ Newsletter of Environmental Disaster and Crisis Management Strategies, Issue 8. Athens. [2018]

115. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Attica_wildfires, 20.07.2020

116. <https://www.kathimerini.gr/1022112/gallery/epikairothta/ellada/mati-ta-ntokoymenta-miloyin--oi-sygklonistikoi-dialogoi-ths-moiraias-nyxtas> [2019]

117. Smith, Helena. „In my nightmares I'm always in the sea': a year on from the Greek fires“ [2019] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/20/greek-fires-one-year-on-103-dead-survivors-and-rescuers-look-back>

118. Karyda, Marina; Andronopoulos, Alexis. personal records.

119, 120. Papadopoulos, Yannis "Recovery a distant hope for many Mati burn victims" [2019] <https://www.ekathimerini.com/242901/gallery/ekathimerini/community/recovery-a-distant-hope-for-many-mati-burn-victims>

121. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-44966121> [2018]

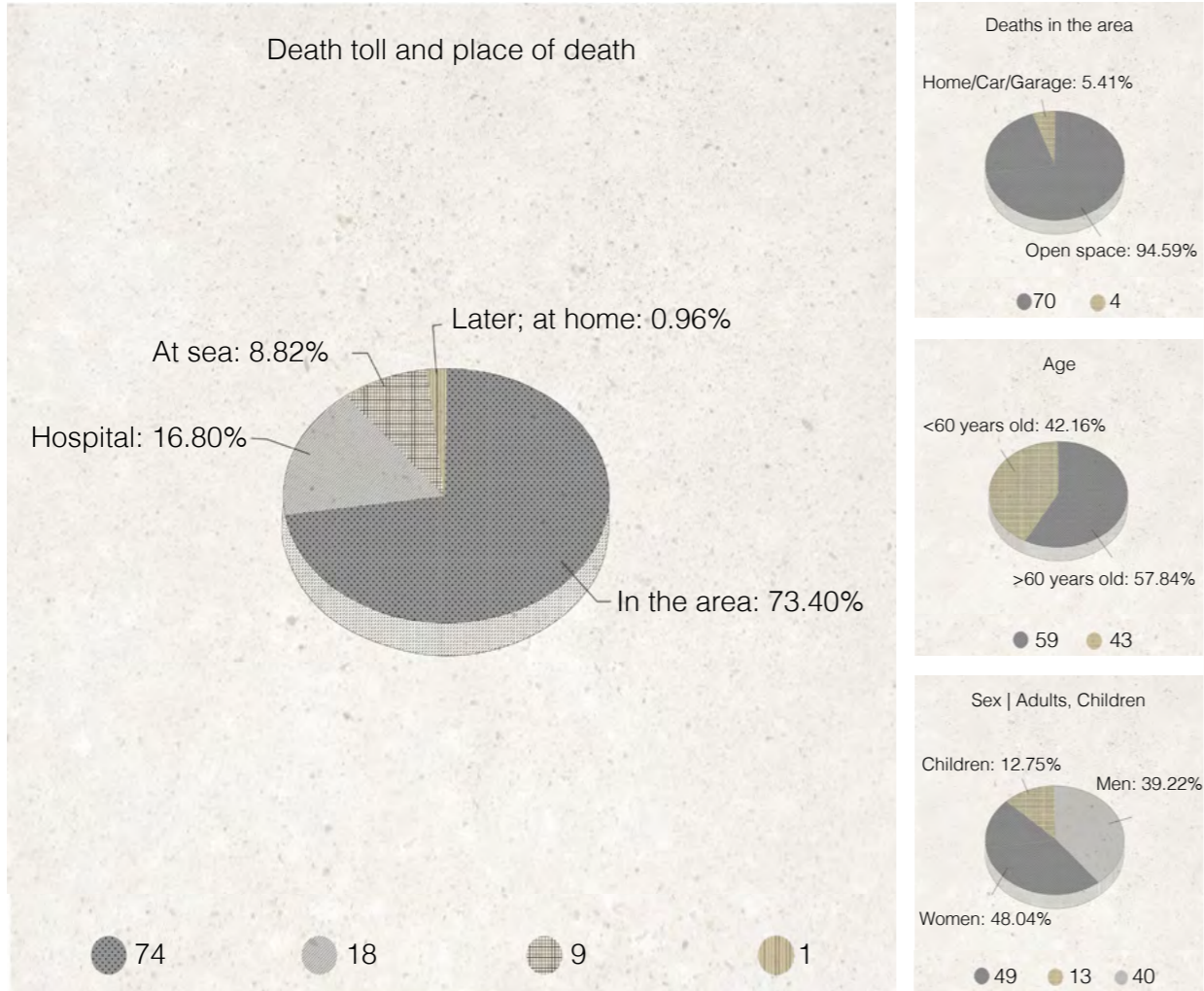
The aluminum wheel rims and car glasses melted under the extreme heat wave. It is significant to note that the melting point of the aluminum is about 660°C, while glass completely melts/liquefies at approximately 1400°C to 1600°C.¹¹⁴

The fire left 103 people dead, amongst them 11 children. The youngest was 6 months and the oldest 93 years old.¹¹⁵ Many were trapped in their cars. Others died inside and outside their homes or were overtaken by the advancing flames and smoke as they dashed to reach the sea. 26 people were found huddled together, entire families amongst them because they were trapped on a cliff edge without an escape route. A little girl jumped off the cliff in an attempt to escape the flames. Those who made it to the sea, dipped below the waves to stay cool, due to the blazing heat, as they waited for the coastguard and local fishermen to rescue them. It is important to note that making it to the sea did not guarantee immediate safety.¹¹⁶ People, among them many elderly, remained stranded for several hours with no help, and several drowned.¹¹⁷ Moreover, many animals (wild and domestic) died or were injured that day. The identification of the victims lasted several days, because the majority of the bodies were totally charred, while the process of identification was a devastating one.

At least 164 adults and 23 children were taken to hospital with injuries and severe burns that day, while 17 of them later died in the hospital.¹¹⁸ "The majority of the people had sustained burns on the back of their bodies, arms and legs exposed by T-shirts and shorts. Most had not been burned by the actual fire, but by the heat from the fire, which reached 400 to 500 degrees Celsius" said plastic surgeon Kyriakopoulos. "What I encountered resembled scenes from a war zone".¹¹⁹ Until today, almost 60 people are still severely burned, sustaining internal damages and extensive muscle atrophy. For them, recovery is a distant hope.¹²⁰

The fire burned more than 12,760 acres of land, destroyed more than 5.000 buildings, while severe damage was also caused to the electricity, telecommunications and water supply networks in the area.¹²¹ After the fire, the remaining residents of the area were scattered to all directions of the compass. As the area was completely destroyed, the houses were burned and more than 2500 families were left homeless. As many people had to move elsewhere, their deeply rooted connections to the place were lost; connections to the neighborhoods spanning several generations that constitute "home," were gone. The rest of the residents that stayed in the area, tried to bond, develop even more meaningful social relationships, deep attachments to the place, and a fundamental sense of community in order to feel a relative normality again. However, the loss of community, and roots is what everybody is still missing. The emotional and psychological burden the people are experiencing, arising not only from having experienced this traumatic event but also from not recognizing the place they grew up in, from losing all their belongings and having to start over, or relocating away from the place they were living, is sometimes unbearable.

The earth might still be black, a constant reminder of what is lost, but green shoots will begin to sprout.



Places where victims were found



Places where people tried to escape



Totally destroyed houses in the area



6.2 The day after

Both during the tragic event, as well as after, one thing became very clear, rescue came in the form of solidarity. Neighbors that tried to rescue each other, people that drove into the flames in order to transfer others to hospitals, people swimming for hours while holding one another and constantly asking if everyone is all right and local fishermen and private boats rescuing those at sea.

Before the death count was even finalized, while the search for survivors was still ongoing, many people, volunteers from all around the world as well as survivors from Mati, threw themselves into the relief effort.¹²² The scale of the response was remarkable. People across Athens could be seen filling their cars with supplies to help the affected areas, taxi drivers, people from all over Greece who stopped their vacations, refugees from Syria, tourists that felt the need to help, as well as volunteers from big organizations gathered in the area in order to help.¹²³ They assisted in search and rescue operations, looking for survivors in the small coves and beaches along the coast, they organized food donations, gathered tons of water, medicine and clothing, participated in night patrols, amid fears of looting, cooked and delivered food door to door, helped search for survivors and cleaned ashes and debris from streets, homes and beaches.¹²⁴ Moreover, an incredible amount of people rushed into hospitals to donate blood for the wounded. People opened their homes for those who lost theirs, volunteers tried to rescue animals, while a lot of professionals offered their services for free, such as vets, doctors, psychologists, drivers, etc. Survivors were overwhelmed by love and support on the aftermath of the fire, blood banks were overwhelmed with donations and collection centers have been inundated.¹²⁵ Furthermore, the morning after the fire, several nongovernmental organizations dispatched teams of mental health professionals and volunteers to Mati and nearby Kokkino Limanaki to provide psychological first aid. They went door to door trying to identify people who needed their help.¹²⁶ The Hellenic Red Cross, members of the Doctors of the World as well as the Greek Military have also created temporary camps to offer first aid. Organizations and ordinary citizens rushed to help in any way they could, while others offered financial aid. More than 27 countries offered their assistance as well, in the form of financial aid in dealing with the emergency situation, firefighters or airplanes.¹²⁷ People's grief turned into energy and everybody contributed to the extent of his or hers own means and capacities.

After the immediate needs of the survivors were met, the humanitarian response did not stop. Public information events and seminars on stress, anxiety and trauma were held at local schools and societies. The local community was organized into a Residents' Coordination Committee in order to tackle the difficult task of the regeneration of the area while the youth of Mati organized events that raised money, took part in reforestations and various art projects. Several teams were created, some dealing with the area and its problems, the urban design, the removing of toxic components such as asbestos, which were found at the area after the fire, while a team of volunteers was set out to check all the hospitals and track down the individuals who had suffered the worst injuries. Representatives of the teams met over the course of these two years with several Ministry officials on a variety of occasions, calling for action.¹²⁸

Hope acquired the faces of all those who helped during this dark time and continue to help to this day.

122, 126. Papadopoulos, Yannis "We knew we weren't safe anywhere". [2020] <https://www.ekathimerini.com/254963/interactive/ekathimerini/special-report/we-knew-we-werent-safe-anywhere-says-mati-survivor>

123, 125. King, Alex. "Citizen volunteers respond to horrific Athens forest fires" [2018] <https://www.huckmag.com/perspectives/reportage-2/citizen-volunteers-respond-to-horrific-athens-forest-fires/>

124. Spiggou, Sophia „Mati: The volunteer-angels at the burned land of east Attica“ https://www.ethnos.gr/ellada/359_mati-ethelontes-aggeloi-stin-kameni-gitis-anatolikos-attikis

127. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Attica_wildfires#International_assistance

128. Papadopoulos, Yannis "Recovery a distant hope for many Mati burn victims" [2019] <https://www.ekathimerini.com/242901/gallery/ekathimerini/community/recovery-a-distant-hope-for-many-mati-burn-victims>

7. Interviews

The first days, an acrid, burnt chemical smell was hanging in the air over Mati. The earth was blackened by flame and smoke. Burned personal items, would lie in the street as people fled into the sea to escape the swirling fire. This smell, the smell of burned earth, burned households, burned memories and burned flesh is still vivid for those who were there.

Every person has a different story about how they escaped the last minute, how they saved their family and friends, how it could have been them taking a wrong turn and not making it. Some made the difficult decisions to left people and pets behind in order to save themselves, others did not realize at the moment how badly they were burned as they could not feel the pain, due to the shock and the feeling of survival.

Everybody has lost somebody, a family member, a friend, a neighbor. Everybody is feeling guilty for not doing more that day to help others; for managing to escape while others have not. Everybody is feeling lost and confused. Everybody has still nightmares about this day.

These are some of their stories and hopes for the future.



"Months after the fire, an impenetrable wall went up. I would very much like to feel the liberation of reliving the incident, of crying and venting, but it has not happened yet. It's been two years and it's still not happened."

- Aphrodite Hatzianastasiadi¹²⁹



Matrakides Dimitris

I told my family to leave because they would burn alive. My wife, Eleni, escaped by car with our son towards the direction of Rafina. I arrived at the beach, Cavo, with my mother and our neighbors. After, I picked up a friend's car and went back to my neighborhood to alert anyone I could find. I was going back and forth like crazy. I knocked on doors and windows screaming: „Fast to the sea!“ When I went to the beach again, at 18:40, the place was blackened by the smoke, the day suddenly became night. We could not breathe. Next to me was our neighbor, Margarita, and her six month old baby, which was crying uncontrollably. Both were appeared having burns in their bodies. Margarita was panicking, her eyes were totally glazed and I remember helping to pull up her shirt so she could breastfeed him; but soon he became unconscious and I had to administer CPR.

I was in the water for seven hours. When the fire first reached the waterfront, many of us in the sea turned around so that our backs were facing the coast. We just stood there, arms crossed, as big clumps of molten ash rained down. The noise was tremendous. There must have been 400 people who ran into the sea. Bits of wood and metal were flying through the air, cars were going up in flames and gas bottles at the beach cafe were exploding, forcing us to wade further in. I went in up to my neck. Everyone was really frightened.

What we experienced was not fire. It was a war in peacetime, a total disaster. To this day I cannot understand why the army wasn't dispatched to get us on boats, when fishermen were defying the smoke and doing just that.

A lot of people, especially kids, were struggling to keep afloat. I called 112, the emergency telephone number. They said they would come to our rescue, but never did. I still haven't forgiven myself for not putting Margarita and the baby over my shoulders and doing more to get to a hospital. Even today I can hear her cry: „I beg you, save my baby“ When we finally got them to an ambulance, it was too late. The baby died later that night and Margarita a week later.

My house no longer exists. However, I am lucky that my family and I are alive. I still have nightmares. I am always in the sea – my legs freezing in the cold, my torso frying in the heat.¹³⁰

It is extremely important to give space to young people, scientists, engineers, architects and artists to promote, utilize and implement their work, especially when the flame is ignited within them by what they tragically experienced. Our region is in great need of such a memorial space. I imagine a museum for example that will highlight everything. The tragic event that we experienced, the feelings that we have to this day; sadness, love, hope, pain, the history of the area, etc. In the end, it will highlight culture. It will be very difficult but it is worth it. And we really need it. In my point of view, this memory space is imperative.¹³¹

129. Papadopoulos, Yannis "We knew we weren't safe anywhere". [2020] <https://www.ekathimerini.com/254963/interactive/ekathimerini/special-report/we-knew-we-werent-safe-anywhere-says-mati-survivor>

130. Smith, Helena. „In my nightmares I'm always in the sea': a year on from the Greek fires" [2019] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/20/greek-fires-one-year-on-103-dead-survivors-and-rescuers-look-back>

131. Pesonal discussion with Dimitris Matrakides, 01.08.2020

Andronopoulos Alexis

I got on my motorbike at my office in Athens and headed to Mati at 6.30pm. I've been a forest-fire volunteer for many years, but this time was different. My parents' summer home is there. I grew up with people who have apartments in the same block. They're all elderly now and I wanted to save them. It took me about 20 minutes to get there. I was stopped at the roadblock they'd set up at the crossroads outside the town. I'll never forget the traffic policeman. He was adamant I was going nowhere. It was my first taste of state services. When, finally, I managed to get in, at around 9pm, it was like a war zone, with cars and houses on fire, panic-stricken people running up and down. Around the apartment block, a lot of vehicles were completely burnt out, just windows and wheels. Occasionally, something would explode. I was frightened and there was a moment when I thought: "Should I stay or go?" I found myself stepping over dead bodies as I approached the apartment building. Several corpses were sitting in cars. Many people who had remained in their apartments were, fortunately, saved; those who had moved from one flat to another were burned. It was hard to see in the smoke. The first woman I rescued was 80 years old. With some difficulty, I got her on the bike, saying: "Close your eyes, hold me tight and don't think of anything." I took her up to the roadblock where another friend said her six-year-old daughter was trapped on the beach. I drove back and found her. I'd seen a corpse in the alley leading to the shore, so led her through a garden on my way back. Again, I told her not to look.

I did 18 runs, each time taking a person out and each time arguing

with officers at the roadblock. I insisted it was necessary to go in and save people, but they kept saying they were under strict orders and that it was not safe for them to go in. Even an ambulance driver refused to use his walkie-talkie to ask for help. From about 21:00 until 03:00, when I stopped going up and down, no police vehicle approached. In Greece, nothing works and nobody cares. The loss of life was greater because of the delayed response. Have lessons been learned? I don't think so.¹³²

For the past two years, we've been campaigning to help burn victims. It is a long process. The people are struggling. Even I, who have accompanied them from day one, am shocked until now. Many are still in extremely bad condition, they are still in a lot of pain, let alone the suffering, the trauma, the psychological aftermath, the financial bleeding, and the aesthetic problems they have.

I couldn't agree more with Dimitris Matrakides on the existence of a memorial. I think that we all agree that it is important. Our stories need to be heard. We need to learn from the past and hope for a better future.¹³³

Anagnostou Kalli

It's as if the clock stopped at 6.30pm on 23 July. Even now, there are days when it feels as if we are back there. It was so violent, with explosions, corpses, cars, houses and trees on fire; and everywhere around us, black, toxic smoke.

We were staying at my in-laws' summer home. At the time, we lived in Dubai; and we were on vacation in Mati. That day we were taking it easy; I first heard the wind when I woke up from a siesta. I looked out of the window and there was smoke everywhere. Minutes later, the power went off and I realized that we must leave the house. I grabbed my son, Constantinos, and told my father-in-law we had to leave. By the time we got out of the house, there were giant, two-meter-high flames, barely two meters away. I remember looking back and seeing blackness. I didn't feel the flames. It was the heat that burned us, the thermal wave that preceded the fire. As we ran down the street, a neighbor came out of his house in a tiny car and we screamed at him to stop and take us. That saved us. Constantinos' flip-flops melted and he was crying, "Mama, we're burning". When we reached the port, a tourist appeared with a first-aid kit and bandaged his feet. There was a moment when I thought: "This is it, this is how it all ends." I think that the adrenaline kept us going. Somehow, my survival instinct prevailed. I was wearing Lycra leggings and a cotton top and had suffered fourth- and fifth-degree burns across 40% of my body, damaging several layers of my skin, muscle and nerves. After grafts, 80% of my body was affected. Constantinos and my father-in-law were also severely burned. I was in a coma for three weeks while the doctors

conducted plastic surgery. In total, I spent 67 days in the hospital, 21 days in intensive care. Constantinos was in a trauma unit for 35 days and had daily skin-peeling procedures.¹³⁴ My father-in-law spent 50 days in the hospital. It was violent. The whole experience inside the hospital was violent as well, having all this terror in your mind, the voices, the screams, the agony, the fear. We did not know what we had left behind. We did not know what had happened to our home or in the area in general. At first, we had no contact with the outside world. I will need many more operations in the years ahead. Most people think that once you leave the hospital you are fine. They believe that our suffering and pain are over. What they do not know, however, is that burns are one of the worst injuries the human body can suffer. And while on the surface it may seem that some things have healed - as they have - the burn continues to hurt and cause problems for a long time after.¹³⁵

Before the fire, I was an executive coach. Now, we can not go back to Dubai, because the heat and sun are forbidden. I am training to become a life coach, specializing in trauma. What happened was terrible. Everything went wrong on that day. I am hoping on finding justice. I see it more as an ethical issue; something I owe to my son, to my „fighter“.¹³⁶

I do not think there is anyone who disagrees with the creation of a memorial or a park of memory! The 23.07 should be a day of remembrance. There are many ways in which one can pay tribute to our pain. It is important though to ensure that the victims are not offended in any way.¹³⁷

134, 136. Smith, Helena. „In my nightmares I'm always in the sea: a year on from the Greek fires“ [2019] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/20/greek-fires-one-year-on-103-dead-survivors-and-rescuers-look-back>

135. Vergou, Eleni. "We were burned, but why?" [2018] <https://www.cnn.gr/prosopa/story/158555/k-anagnostoy-emeis-kaikame-to-thema-einai-giati>

137. Pesonal discussion with Kalli Anagnostou 01.08.2020

Marina Karyda

We had no idea that the fire was so close. I told my daughters to close the house and prepare to leave precautionary at 18:24. The moment we stepped out of the house, we saw the house next to us engulfed in flames. I drove to the opposite direction of the flames and hoped that we will be safe. My daughter and my mother headed towards the port and were trapped along with several other cars. She called me crying thinking that she won't be able to make it. Luckily a friend, helped her make a U-turn. I felt so helpless thinking that my child and mother are in danger. All this time I was constantly on the phone, trying to speak with my family and neighbors. While trying to escape, a policeman tried to direct us back towards Mati, but my instinct prevailed and I drove towards the opposite direction. We were one of the lucky ones to escape just in time. Mati has no beach, it has rocks and cliffs. Beloved rocks and a deep sea, filled with sea urchins, whose thorns become the proud mark, the initiation that you are a native. This was our sea, our cliffs, a secret that only we were able to understand. These cliffs could never offer rescue, especially when everything was burning.

I remember the flames, my neighbors coming out of their yards asking what was going on, I remember the panic. Unprecedented images and sounds for a country in time of peace. Nothing. A dead city. Charred people. You only saw black bones. Black houses, black cars, black roads, black soil, black trees, black eyes. How could we ever forget?

Mati is loved by its people. It is a love that is passed down from generation to generation. Those

who were lost were the losses of us all. Many were our friends. But even if it was not your home who was burned and your friend who died, it still hurts. I can not even imagine the pain of losing a family member.

Sometimes I feel guilty that I escaped, that I am alive by accident, when so many are not...

My advice to my children was to never again waste a single moment of their life regretting, and instead show people how much they love them and how glad they are to have them near them.

While we will never forget what happened in Mati, others will. They will forget our fellow citizens who were burned, just as they forgot those who were burned in the previous ones. It is our duty to never forget and to remind them what happened only half an hour from Athens.

I believe that a memory space is mandatory in Mati. Not in the traditional sense. We don't need another marble memorial, or a plain reminder of the terror. I would love to see a memorial or a „museum“, as a modern place of remembrance, with archives of everything that we went through, photos of these days that make each visitor riveted with awe and respect for what happened. A place that makes you remember and helps you forget. A place that is abstract and beautiful, and while honoring our losses, invites our active engagement. This is what I hope for the future.¹³⁸



Katerina
Mala

I saw the fire while driving towards Rafina. I turned to my son and told him that this fire will burn us. We knew very well what kind of wind can burn the area, shall there be a fire. I immediately turned and headed home, where I found my daughter watching the news about the fire in Kineta on TV. I told both of my children to take shovels and create a three meter fire zone on the nearby plot. I was sure that we will burn alive with a fire like that coming towards us. We put all the flammable materials in the fridge, the wooden furniture in the house and then ran to pick up the grandparents from their house which is a few meters away. As we arrived, the flames were already in the back of their house. I realized that there was no salvation. The wind was at least ten Beaufort. I called the neighbors, knocked on foreign doors, screamed at people to leave their house and go to the beach immediately. There was no Police, there was no Fire Department, there was no one. I took the car and drove like crazy where I stopped the traffic and I shouted at the cars to make a U-turn and head towards Nea Makri, otherwise you will burn. Luckily, everyone listened to me, and more than 50 cars turned around. Many people were burned alive in their homes because they did not realize that they were in danger. No one warned us, no one protected us or ordered to evacuate the area. We would not be mourning so many victims today. Now that the pain has subsided, something else is taking its place. It is not anger. Not yet. It is the complaint of abandonment and indifference.¹³⁹

139. Ksyda, Romina. "The heroes of the fire in Mati: Angels in Flames" [2018] <https://www.protothema.gr/greece/article/809066/oi-iroes-tis-fotias-sto-mati-aggeloi-stis-floges/> as well as personal discussions with Katerina Mala

140. Petala, Ioanna. "They left us to die" [2019] https://www.kathimerini.gr/1034886/article/epikairothta/ellada/iwana-petala-mas-afhsan-na-kaoyme?fbclid=IwAR0w8AvqOHhIQN10ULcryg8zLKXj8g_6g40bpZZeqTfU4KGoALRju26PUM

Ioanna
Petala

On this afternoon I lived through hell. My father was charred and my mother was burned from the waist up so much that she did not even have hair and her clothes had melted on her skin.

We left the house as soon as we realized that it was burning the nearby home. We headed to the sea by car. The fire was chasing us from behind and from the left. Huge flames were only a few meters away. I screamed at my parents to get out of the car, otherwise we would burn. Everything turned black. As the fire approached, I fell down, I could not see or hear anything. Due to the panic, the smoke that turned day into night and the noise of the fire and wind, I lost sight of my parents while trying to escape. I did not understand that I was burning until someone told me. Out of survival instinct, completely mechanically, I run and fell into the nearest sea. I could not go out because everything was on fire. I could see my hands and I remember the skin coming out like a glove. I was in the water for 5-6 hours, alone, without my parents, but I did not stop thinking and praying for them. I stayed in the hospital for 75 days. I almost died, I live because of a miracle. The horrific scenes I saw will haunt me forever. How to ever forget them? People engulfed in flames running and screaming. Mothers asking for help.

Now I struggle to appear strong, to make my life out of the ashes. To heal physically and mentally. It will take time, but I will succeed.¹⁴⁰





The Project Proposal

Every narrative activates a past that enlivens the dramatic event through references to the lived and spatial experience. The port, the roads, every house that was evacuated, every car that exploded, the sea, the voices of the dead, and the reasons that led to this result. They have to resist the logic of oblivion.

Neither art nor architecture can compensate for a public trauma. What art and architecture can do, is to establish a dialogical relation with those events and help frame the process toward understanding and healing.¹⁴¹ Hence, it is important to conceive a memorial as a spatial topography that will sculpture space in reference to its topic, condense the various voices and open a safe space for dialogue through architecture and spatial planning.

Architectural space as a material reality that lasts over time, is of particular importance for the consolidation of a memory as it supports and perpetuates this memory and becomes a point of reference. Thus, it becomes a visible link between the present and the past.

This project becomes an anarchic other space where trauma is revealed, terror is showcased, identities are highlighted stories are unearthed and closure may be achieved. It encourages critical consciousness, committed memory work and the possibility of engaging with the world through transformative practices. It is not a project for silent and symbolic sites of memory but an agent for active dialogue. Through a process of engagement, the memorial aims to truly speak to traumatic memories - not only of the past, but of today and remind us how we can become better.

8. Architectural Idea

People tend to forget or even ignore the problems until they affect them. And even then, instead of addressing them, they often try to ignore the painful past because it does not fit into the comfortable narrative of the future. Aim of this project is to address this issue and the events, honor the victims and survivors, contribute to acts of remembrance, heal, demand proactive engagement, and envision a better world.

The project embeds both the idea of life and death, providing a network of symbolic interventions as representations of the handling of some of the most critical moments of the disaster. These act as constant reminders of the things that were missing when the fire took place. The concept exists in the ambivalence of being both soothing and emotionally challenging at the same time.

The ground in Mati is so incredibly charged that every intervention is carefully considered. Symbols are abstracted, providing meaning in the project while being open to individual interpretation. The memorial offers a place for timeless reflection. It demands that people do not forget, that they commit to never forgetting and learning from the mistakes of the past through a dynamic and engaging commemorative experience.¹⁴² Architecture develops a close relationship with the landscape and becomes part of it while taking up the role of a precisely designed scenography, set on the stage of a designated historical fact for the visitor to experience through different levels of participation.



"By scattering parts of the memorial over the location in order to emphasize its specificity, Karavan managed to communicate memory that is both local and international"

- Shelley Hornstein¹⁴³



8.1 Masterplan

The whole area and the landscape in Mati (natural or structured) with all its wounds from the fire, becomes a palimpsest of history and memory. The project is conceived as a memory and conscience site, that invites the visitor to explore the affected area and find the narratives himself.

Five interventions of various scales are scattered in the area to create a larger image of a memorial site. A network of emblems, symbols of the handling of some of the most critical moments of the disaster. Same in materiality and form but different in the function and experience that they present. They incorporate all the individual and collective stories of the fire and encourage a discourse with the reasons that led to this catastrophe. Their allegory lies in their function, as they do not actually provide a functional or comforting spatial solution that will be used in the everyday life. Instead, through their structure and form, they become a reminder of what was missing and act as an open invitation to imagine what would have happened, had they existed on the day of the fire. They are dedicated to facilitating not only the mourning process but also the education of future generations. They exist not as a quick fix or an attraction but as an indication and a metaphor of everything that went wrong. It is important not to repress the trauma, the anger and the voices asking 'why'; but to give them space to be expressed. Thus, as 'other' sculptures, these spatial concepts through their ambivalence, demand that people commit to never forgetting.

The last intervention of the five, consists of a larger memorial experience whose concept is based around the idea of the void and the wound, this sharp pain that lessens in time, but can never quite heal. It becomes a physical manifestation of the traumatic event, attempting to tie the multiple layers of the loss of the built environment, death, loss of nature and the loss of personal identity together. The visitor is being led deep into the earth where he can experience a plethora of emotions surrounding the traumatic event, from the initial denial, the loss of control, the helplessness, sadness, numbness and despair, to the catharsis and the healing embrace of remembrance, reconciliation and acceptance. To counteract the lack of planning, organization and control in fire prevention as well as the collapse of the system on that day, the proposed memorial is being concluded with the implementation of a documentation and educational center which aims to cultivate the visitors and prepare them to better manage similar events in the future.

All the interventions follow the same architectural vocabulary. The simple, blunt, orthogonal form is consistent in all of them. Votive inscriptions do not need to be pompous nor monumental. They deal with trauma, death and grief. Thus, whether small or tall, wide or long, the proposed interventions, as such reminders, adopt this straightforward form. They become modern cenotaphs, simple containers of a difficult memory that needs to be addressed.



Masterplan with marked interventions

141. Murphy, Michael interviewed by Vanessa Quirk for *Metropolis Magazine*, March 2017

142. Bonder, Julian. "On Memory, Trauma, Public Space, Monuments, and Memorials." *Places*: 21, Issue 1. [2009] p.62–69

143. Hornstein, Shelley. "Losing Site: Architecture, Memory and Place". Ashgate Publishing Limited. United Kingdom. [2011]



Information and evacuation

-

Marathonos Av., Mati



Weather conditions and shelter

-

Marina of Mati, NAOMA



Rescue from the Sea

-

Cavo Beach, Mati



Topography and escape routes

-

Fragkos Property, K.Limanaki



Panic, organisation protection

-

NAT Property, Mati



8.2 Places and network of intervention

The locations of the interventions are carefully chosen, indicating places that have either saved or taken the lives of many people. These include the Marathonos Avenue, where the fire crossed acquiring great speed; the port of Mati, where many people sought shelter; the Cavo beach, where people stayed inside the water waiting for help for more than 9 hours; the property where 26 people were found dead lying together near the top of a cliff; and a larger public property at the end of the settlement.

The ground in the whole affected area is incredibly charged with painful memories. As people tried to escape, they run through the streets, there they were encountered with fear, with panic and despair, with traffic jams, extreme heat, road blocks, flaming trees that were blocking the streets and exploding cars. Entire families were found dead on the street, only a few meters away from their home. Every house, every street and every pathway contains so many individual stories. Stories of escape or stories of death and pain. Some of the wounds, traces of these stories, remain visible on these streets to this day. Therefore, the importance of this space, which is often considered as transitional and in-between, should not be forgotten. In order to grasp the destruction that the fire left behind, to observe the wounds and listen to the stories it is encouraged to visit the whole area and try to discover the narrative. Thus, visiting the interventions should not be the sole purpose of the commemorative process. They exist and are part of the public space and as such, they can be visited separately, as well as be considered a part of a “memory walk”. There is no specific route that must be taken and the memorials have no particular order in which they need to be visited. They can be seen as autonomous entities, as each of them is a reaction to a different memory, yet all of them combined create a memorial network that incorporates all of these memories into a collective one. Each intervention has a small QR Code providing information about each intervention and the memorial site as a whole.

The streets that were used by the majority of the people in their attempts to escape (see Image 40 page 68), constitute in this memorial site, the network glue that binds all the interventions together. Subtle suggestions from Corten Steel are incorporated in the sidewalks of these streets. They can be considered as a form of an intervention themselves that is indicating the importance of these streets on the day of the fire as well as it provides a hint of the presence of all the other interventions. As other “Stolperschwellen”¹⁴⁴ they do not force the visitor to follow them and see where they lead; they are just there as an implied reminder.

144. The Stolpersteine project, initiated by the German artist Gunter Demnig in 1992, aims to commemorate individuals at exactly the last place of residency—or, sometimes, work—which was freely chosen by the person before he or she fell victim to Nazi terror, euthanasia, eugenics, deportation to a concentration or extermination camp, or escaped persecution by emigration or suicide. 75,000 Stolpersteine have been laid, making the Stolpersteine project the world's largest decentralized memorial.



8.3 Information and evacuation

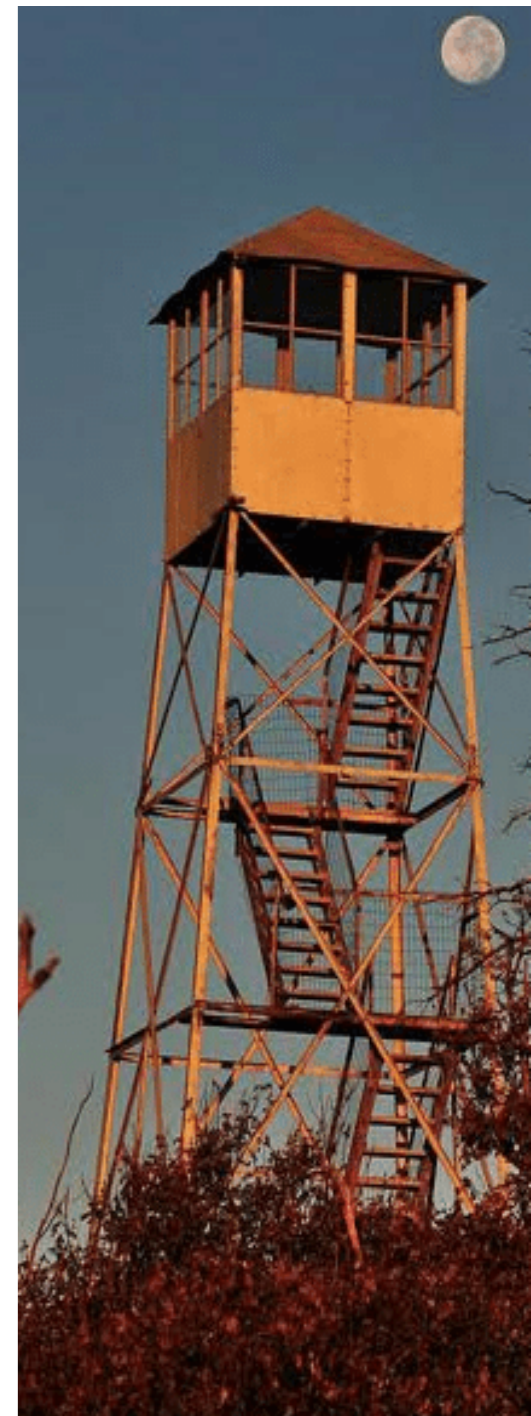
The first intervention to encounter while driving along Marathonos Avenue addresses the issues of the lack of information about the fire as well as the delayed response and lack of an evacuation plan. It is positioned along the four lane Avenue that was previously considered an anti-fire zone. Unfortunately, the street did not form a good enough obstacle to down spread the fire at this time. As soon as the fire crossed Marathonos Avenue, it engulfed Mati and within 30 minutes it destroyed everything.

The intervention is located on the last point before the fire entered Mati. Thus, it represents the hope that people had that they would be informed before the flames were at their houses, as well as the hope that the fire would have been in control before crossing this street. Its location makes it visible and accessible from everywhere.

Inspired by the fire lookout towers that can be found throughout Greece, the intervention takes the form of a tower. These towers are usually located on the summit of a mountain or other high vantage point where the fire lookout can see smoke that may develop, determine the location by using a device known as an Osborne Fire Finder, and call fire suppression personnel to the fire. Such towers can also be found in many other countries, including Germany. The first fire lookout tower in Germany was built to the plans of Forstmeister Walter Seitz between 1890 and 1900 and was located in the "Muskauer Forst" near Weißwasser.¹⁴⁵ Although many fire lookout towers have recently fallen into despair as a result of neglect, abandonment, and declining budgets, they are still considered an effective and cheap fire safety measure. The area affected by the fire in southern Attica used to have a designated fire lookout in the past. This intervention aims to reconnect with these towers that existed in the past and use them as reference. The conceptual intention is to create an architectural link between these fire lookout towers and the absence of information and response to the fire that characterized the day of the incident. Hence, the proposed intervention symbolically calls attention to the ways that this catastrophe could have been avoided, had we reacted and been informed about it in time.

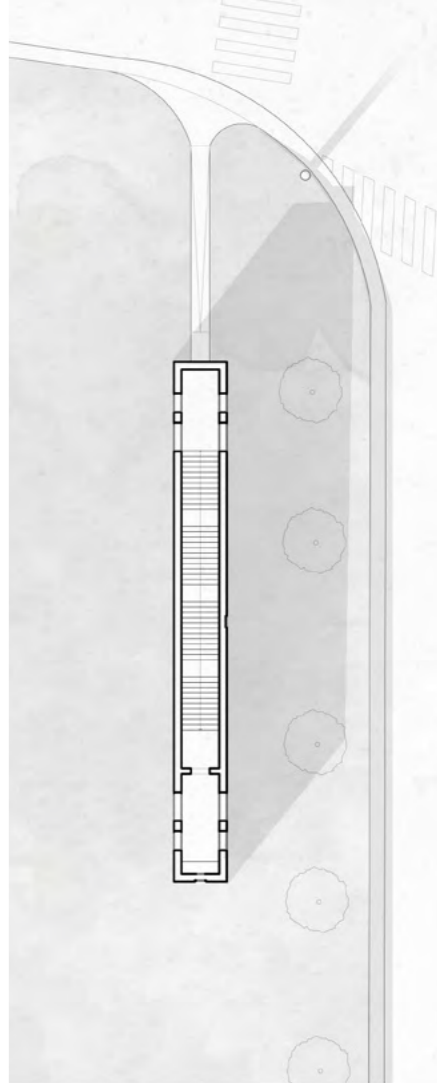
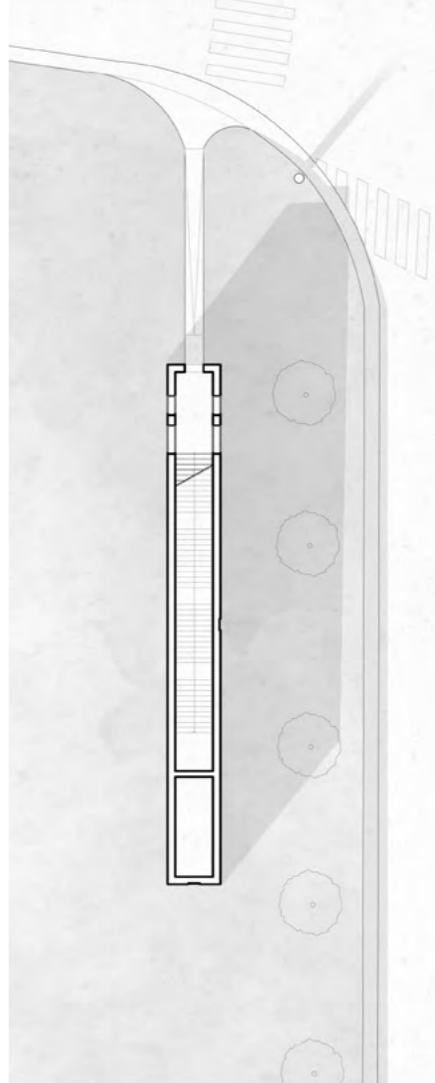
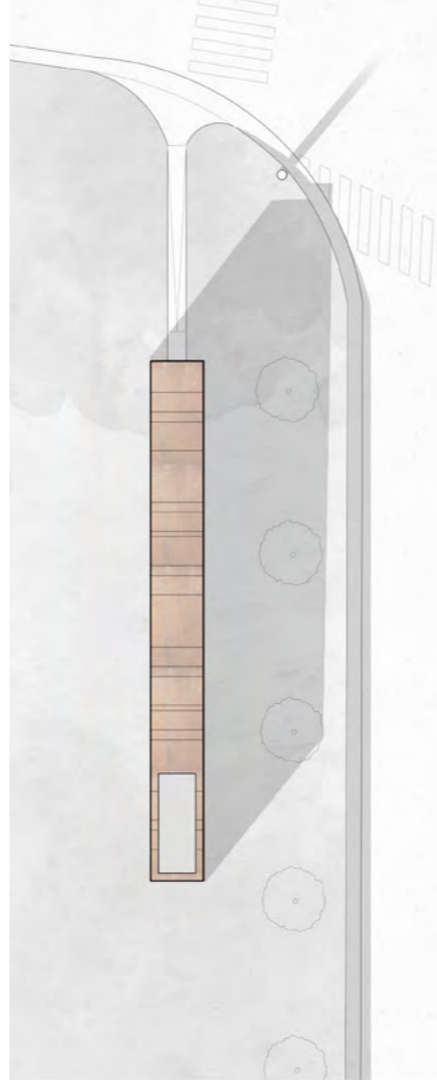
It consists, in reference to the typical lookout towers, of a staircase and a small room atop, known as cab. However, the cab does not offer the expected views that characterize the lookouts. Instead, the look is being directed towards the sky, though a large opening in the roof. A small glimpse of the outside view is possible through some perforated elements in the facade. The generated expression creates a clear contrast between the expectations and the harsh reality of a lookout that was not there on the day of the fire. Therefore it brings in tension and allows a dialogue to start of what could and can be done in the future, not only there, but everywhere to prevent similar situations.

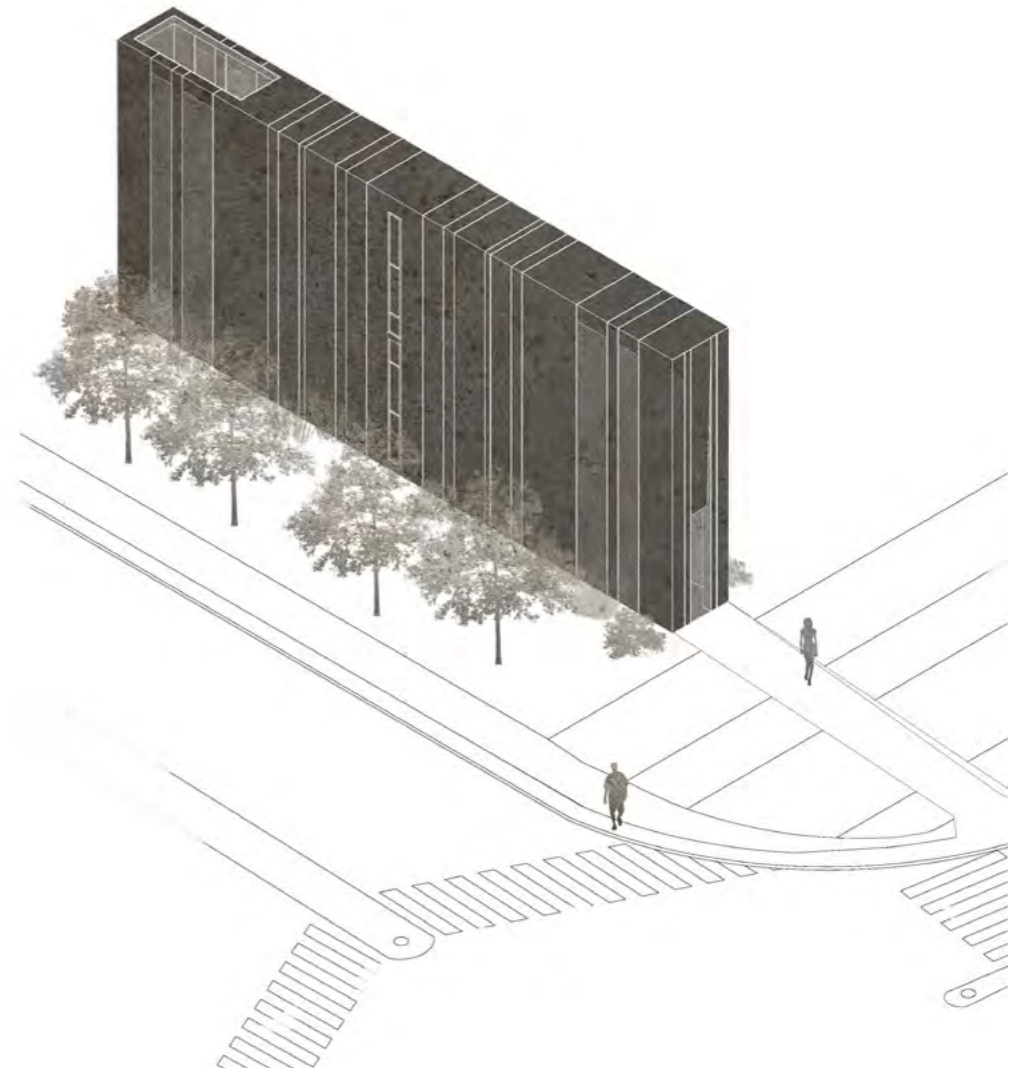
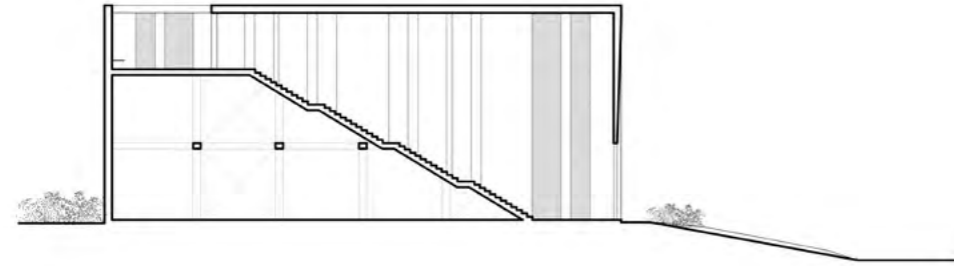
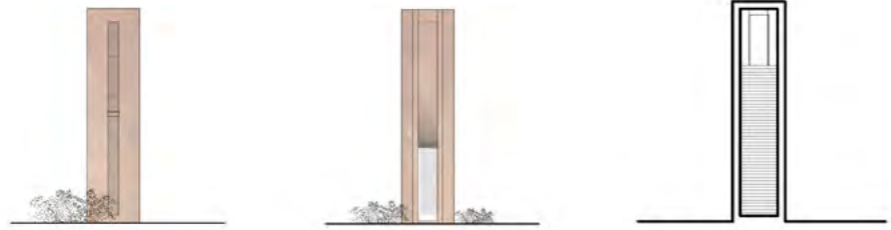
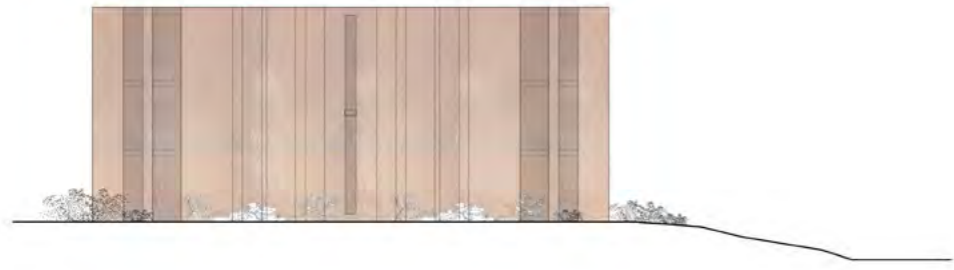
On the east and south facades, a Fire Danger Rating Index Sign¹⁴⁶ is being placed to offer a gauge of the potential fire danger and help firefighters and the public to be better prepared. Five rating levels from low to moderate, high, very high and extreme will be used to illustrate the probability of fire ignition and spread. The signs will be electronically updated every day and with their subtle color and light will inform the passengers regarding the degree of danger that the current environmental conditions pose.



145. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fire_lookout_tower#Wooden_towers, 08.10.2020

146. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McArthur_Forest_Fire_Danger_Index, 08.10.2020





8.4 Weather conditions and shelter

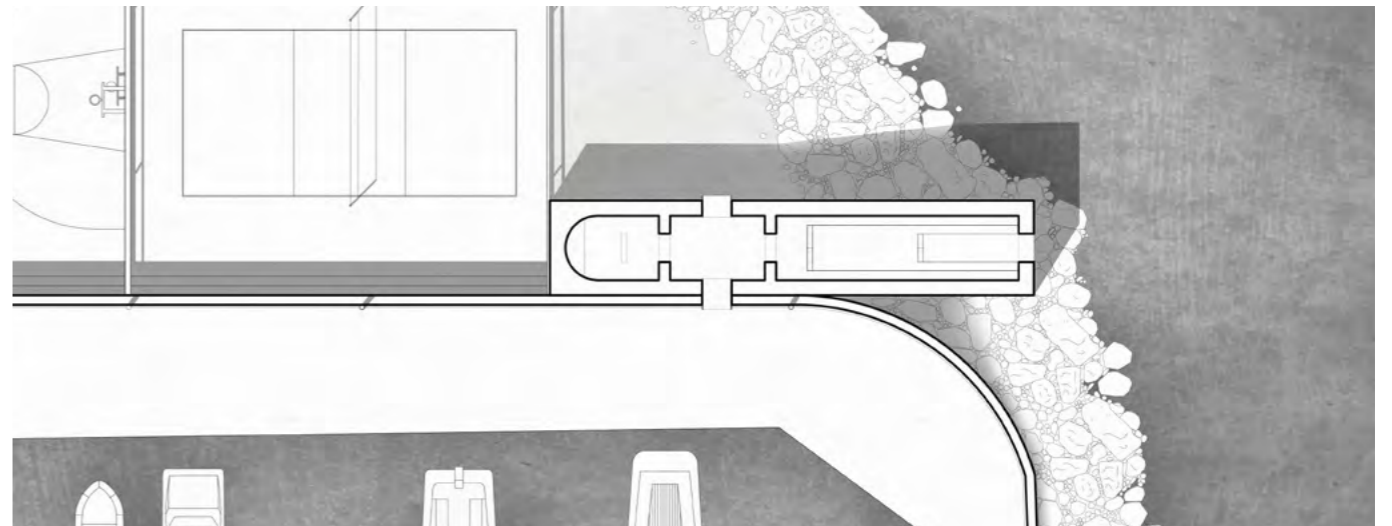
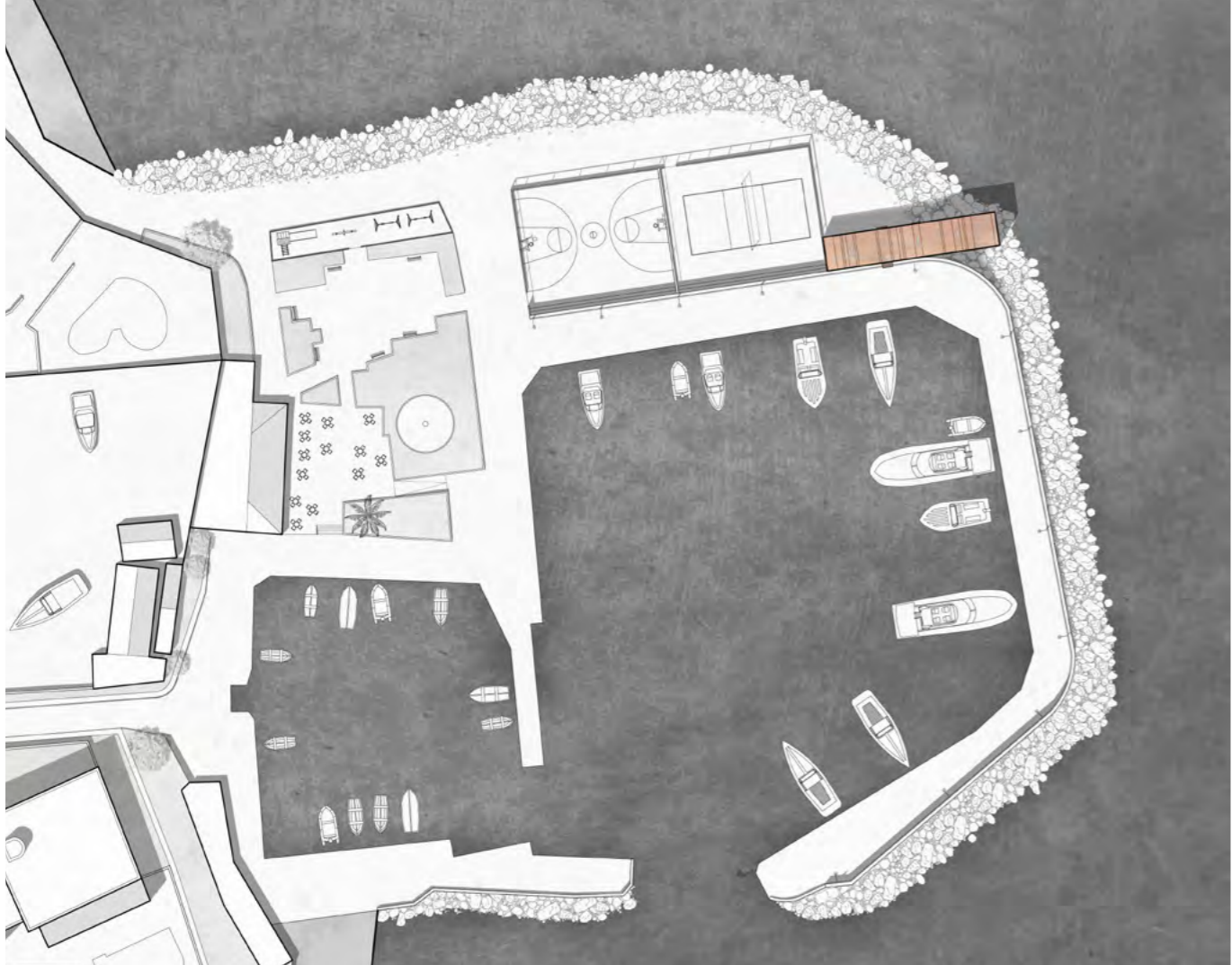
The second intervention is positioned in the small yacht marina of Mati that acts as the main gathering and meeting place of the settlement. Apart from the marina, there is also a small cafe, a playground, a basketball and volleyball field as well as one of the few accessible beaches in the area. As the fire raged, hundreds of people sought refuge in the marina, where they gathered near the sea, waiting for help to come. However, the intensity of the heat and the dense smoke caused many people major respiratory problems and various burns. The wind was so strong and the atmosphere was full of smoke in addition to the extreme heat.¹⁴⁷

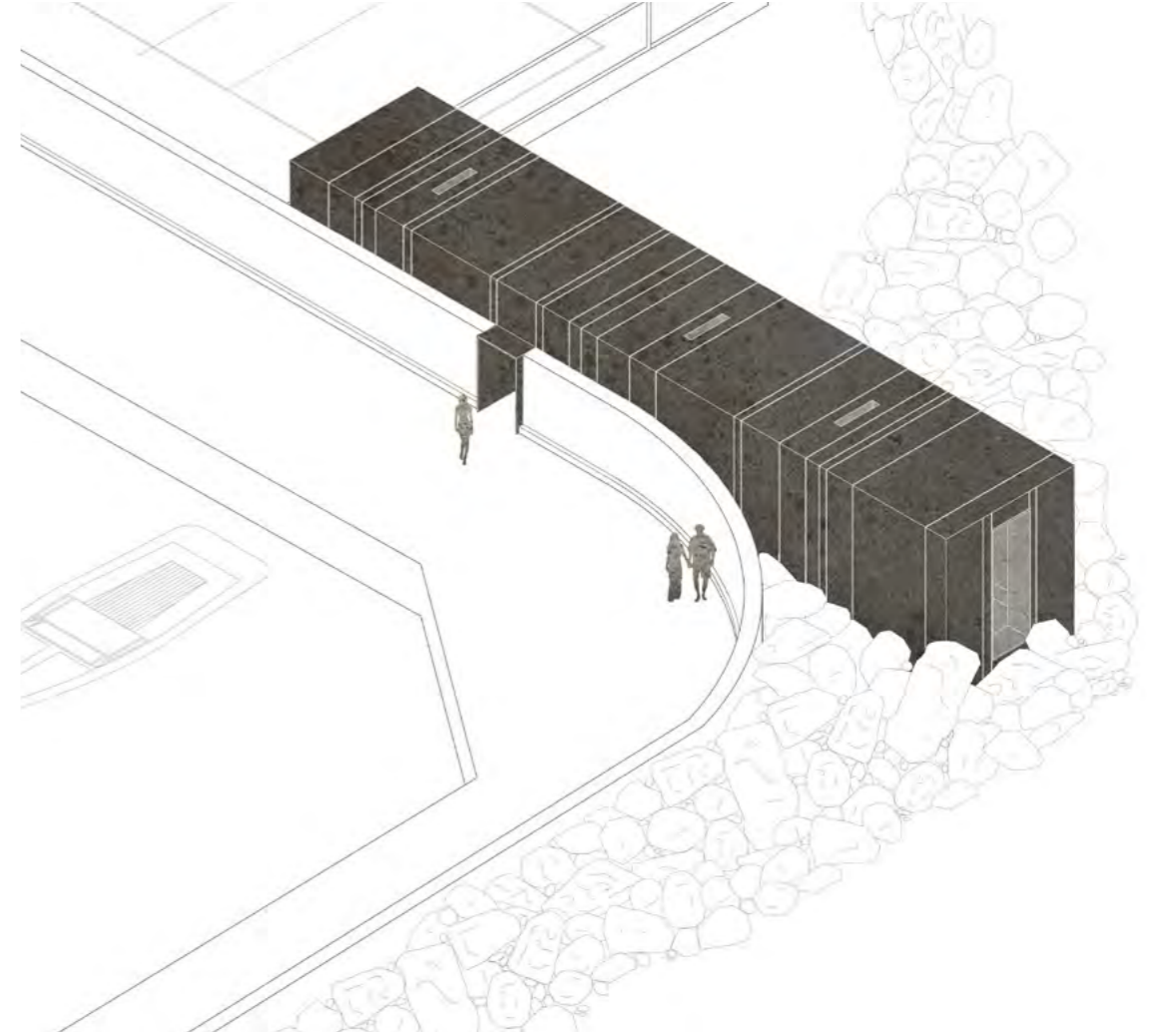
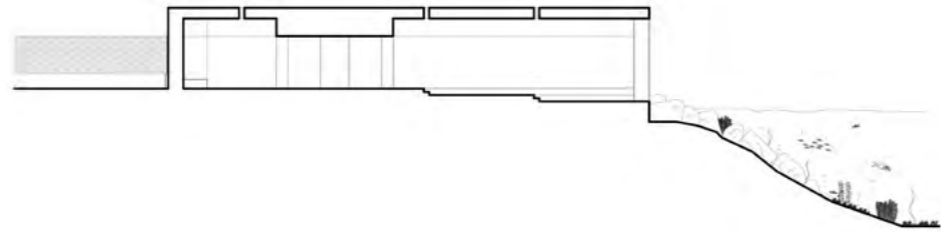
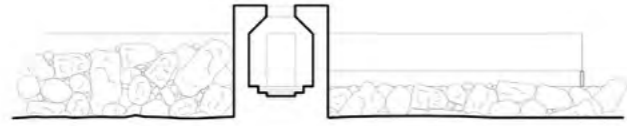
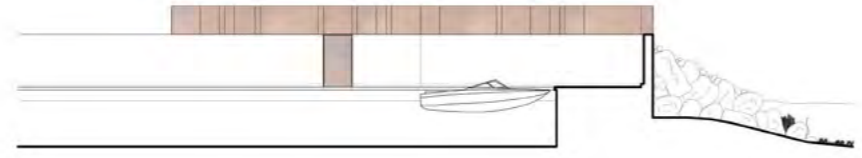
The intervention is located exactly at the place where all those people sought refuge for many hours. Inspired by a bunker, the intervention takes the form of a shelter. A place where people could be protected from the weather, the wind, smoke and heat. The conceptual intention is to create an architectural link between the kind of shelter that would allow people to be safe while waiting for help, and the absence of it on the day of the fire. Hence, the proposed intervention symbolically calls attention to the way people could have been protected, had a similar kind of structure existed while the fire happened.

The intervention features two entrances, placed at both the north and south points of the structure. Inside, it consists of three areas, the entrance and two rooms that are supposed to be protected from the weather conditions. A small enclosed room and a long narrow room, both of which fail to fulfill the purpose of an enclosed shelter that withstands the extreme weather conditions, as the openings allow the wind and water to come inside. The one room might feel more secure than the other, yet both of them seem to be too small to actually protect hundreds of people. The generated expression creates a clear contrast between the expectations of a shelter, which one can only briefly experience and the harsh reality of it not being there on the day of the fire. Therefore it brings in tension and allows a dialogue to start of what could and can be done in the future, not only there, but everywhere to prevent similar situations.



147. Smith, Helena. „In my nightmares I'm always in the sea': a year on from the Greek fires" [2019] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/20/greek-fires-one-year-on-103-dead-survivors-and-rescuers-look-back>





8.5 Rescue from the sea

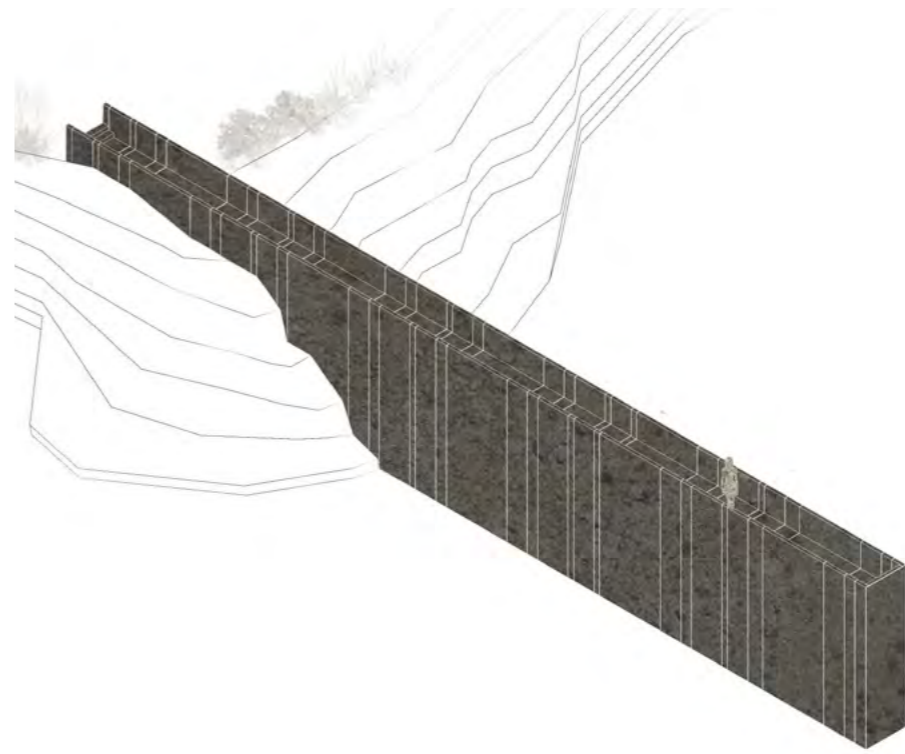
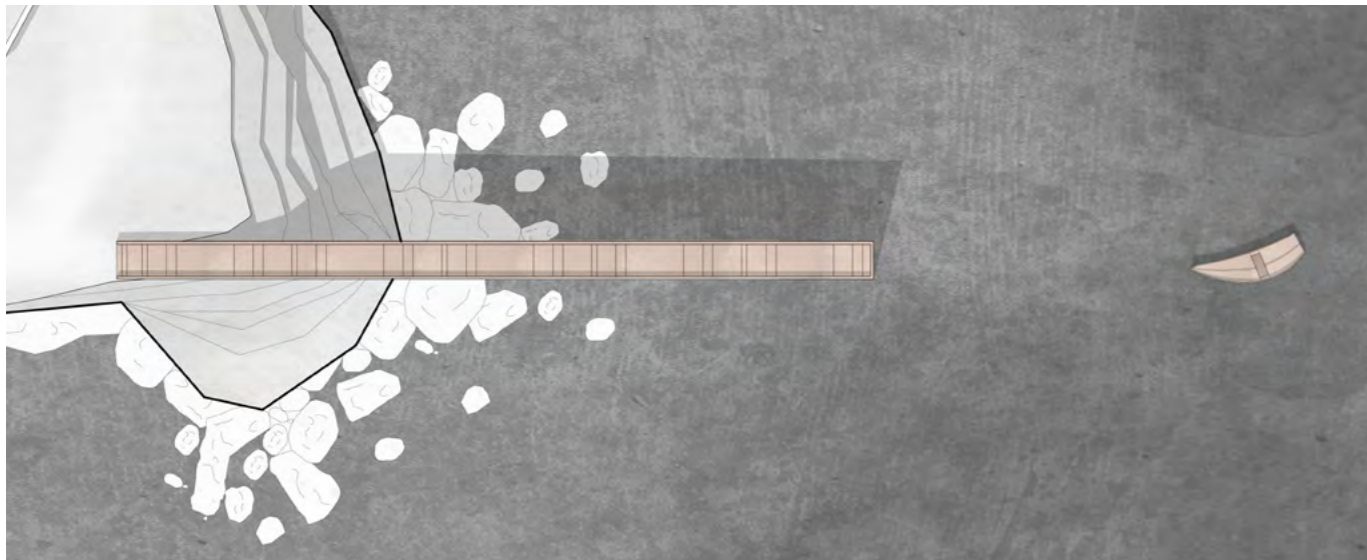
The third intervention is positioned in the Cavo Beach or “Silver coast” as the people call it. While it is surrounded by cliffs, this is one of the few accessible beaches in the whole area. More than 700 people sought refuge on the beach in order to escape the flames. The intensity of the heat, the dense smoke, the car explosions and the flaming trees and buildings forced many to swim out to sea, where they waited for help for more than 9 hours. The coastguard arrived hours later, as they considered it dangerous to reach the beach with such strong winds and the fire. Some people died during this time due to extended burns or respiratory problems. Those at the sea, had to fight the winds, waves and currents and a few did not make it.¹⁴⁸

The intervention is located exactly at the end of this beach, there were many of the people were swimming for many hours in order to stay alive and protected from the flames. Inspired from a dock the intervention takes the form of a footbridge. A kind of landing pier, that would enable the coastguard to approach the area sooner. The conceptual intention is to create an architectural link between the kind of footbridge that symbolizes the help and rescue from the water, and the absence of it on the day of the fire. Hence, the proposed intervention symbolically calls attention to the way people could have been protected, had a similar kind of structure existed while the fire happened.

The proposed intervention features a 40m long landing pier that is not actually leading to the sea level. Instead, it stands higher, like a bridge overlooking the sea. It is a long structure that aims to underline the effort and difficulty of reaching the end. The unending attempt to seek and receive help. Looking at the horizon and the sea, a minimal sculpture of a boat in corten steel can be identified floating above the sea. This is a constant reminder of the help that came too late and the help that seemed out of reach. The generated expression creates a clear contrast between the expectations of a landing pier, which might enable boats to approach the area and the harsh reality of it not being there on the day of the fire. Therefore it brings in tension and allows a dialogue to start of what could and can be done in the future, not only there, but everywhere to prevent similar situations.



148. Smith, Helena. „In my nightmares I'm always in the sea': a year on from the Greek fires" [2019] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/20/greek-fires-one-year-on-103-dead-survivors-and-rescuers-look-back>



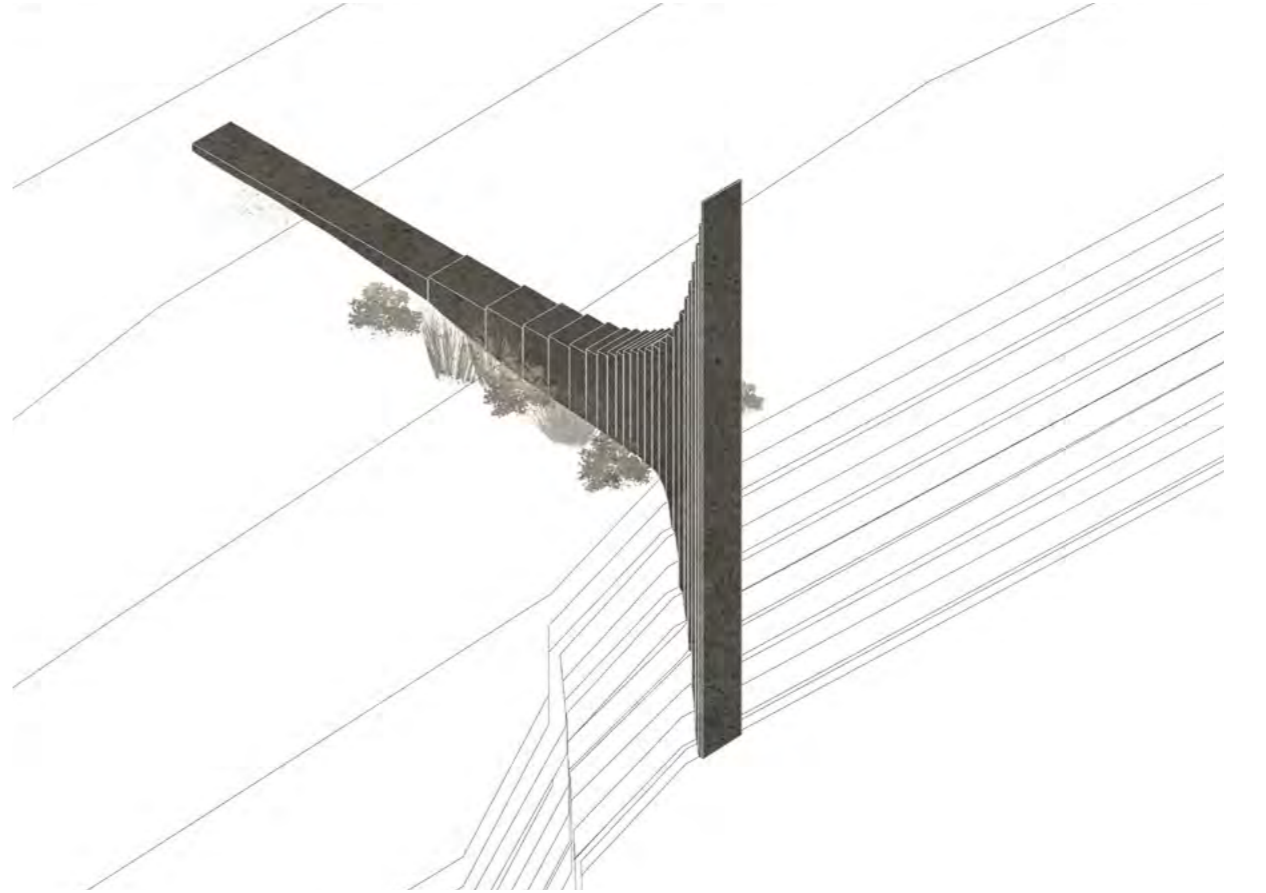
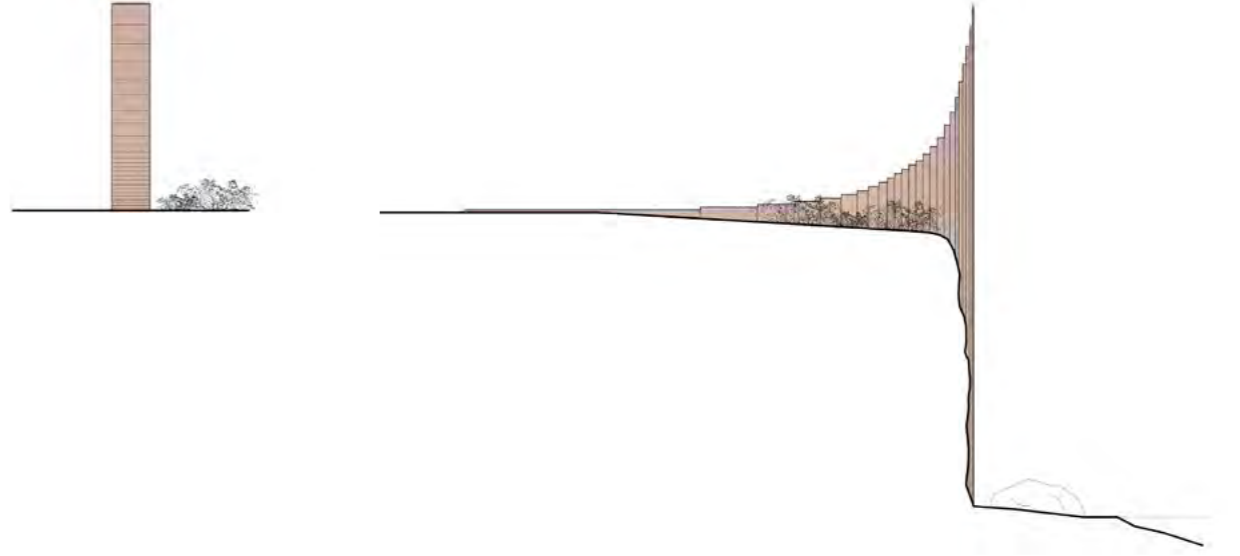
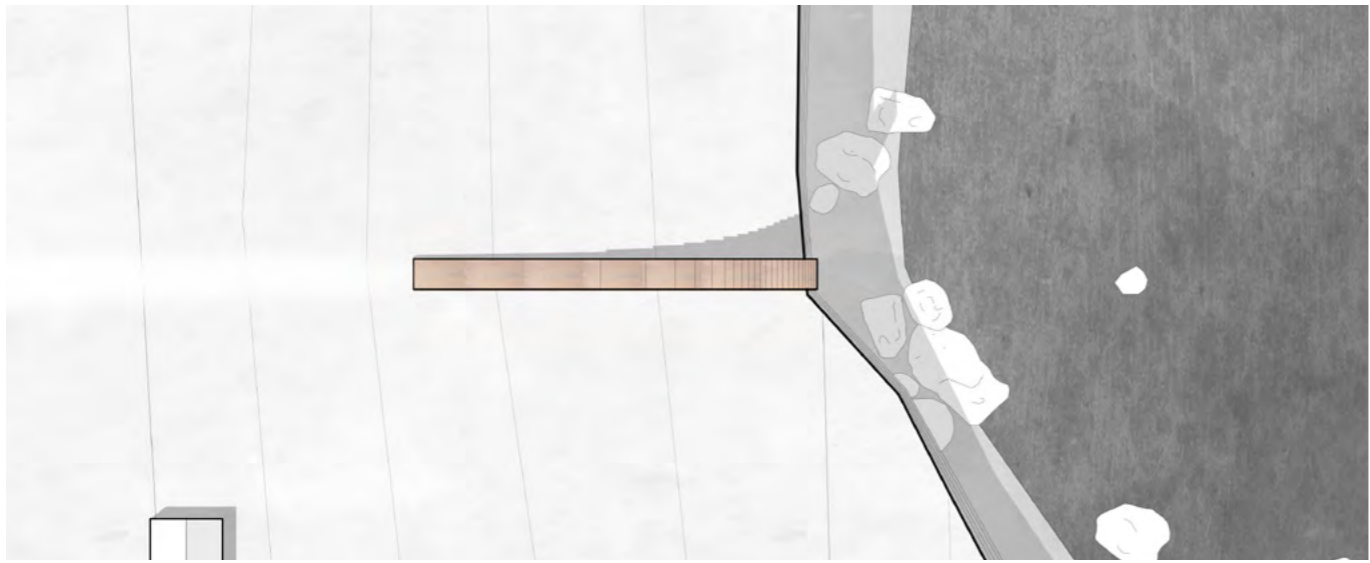
8.6 Topography and escape

The fourth intervention is positioned in the property of Fragkos Family. A plot of land which ends at a cliff, with only rocks below that can be accessed by some rough steps carved into the cliff face. As people were trying to escape the flames, they left their cars in panic and ran towards the sea hoping that they would find shelter. Unfortunately, 26 people, adults and children, lost their lives on that plot, as they were unable to locate an access to the sea level. Some of them were my friends. They became disorientated in the thick, choking smoke as the flames engulfed the plot. Most of them were found huddled together as if trying to protect each other. A 13 year old girl, Evita, jumped off the cliff and to her death in a desperate attempt to reach the sea. Neighbour Mr. Potamianos was one of the last to make it down the cliff and said: "I heard them all crying. I had to cover my ears because I couldn't bear the sound of their suffering."¹⁴⁹

The intervention is located exactly at the end of this property, there where Evita jumped to save her life. It takes the form of a staircase. A staircase for each and every one of these people that never found one to lead them to safety. A staircase with 26 steps, one for each person leading to the sky. The conceptual intention is to create an architectural link between the stairs that symbolize the escape from the cliffs, and the absence them on the day of the fire. The proposed intervention can be interpreted as a symbolic sculpture that commemorates these 26 individuals and takes a more emotional and personal approach. Yet, as a response to the problematic of the topography, the intervention existing on the top of the cliff "melts" down, bridging the distance between the clifftop and the sea. A metaphorical connection of a nonexistent overpass. Thus, it calls attention to the topography and lack of escape routes, a problem that characterizes not only this property or the affected area in Mati but many other areas in Greece. Therefore it allows a dialogue to start of what could and can be done in the future, not only there, but everywhere to prevent similar situations.



149. Murphy-Bates, Sebastian. „Not even death could tear them apart“. Mailonline [2018] <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6002037/Dying-screams-Greek-fire-victims-died-Greek-inferno-heard-families-fled.html>



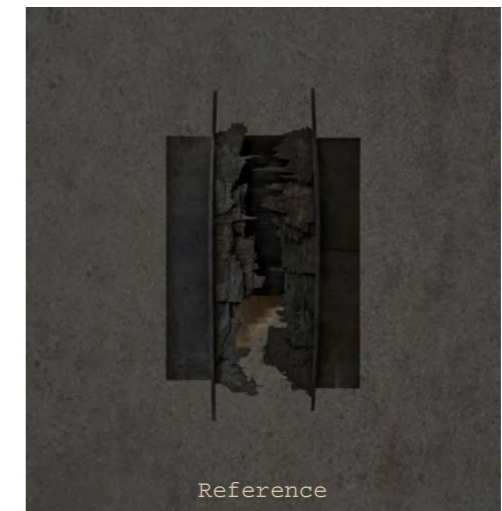
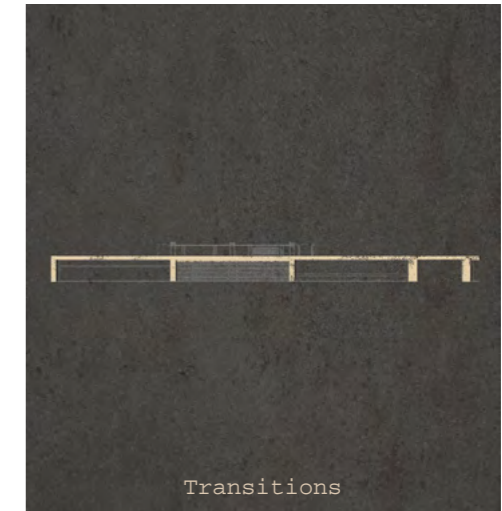
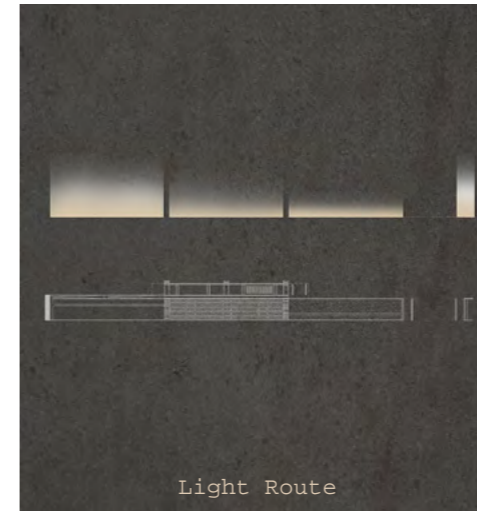
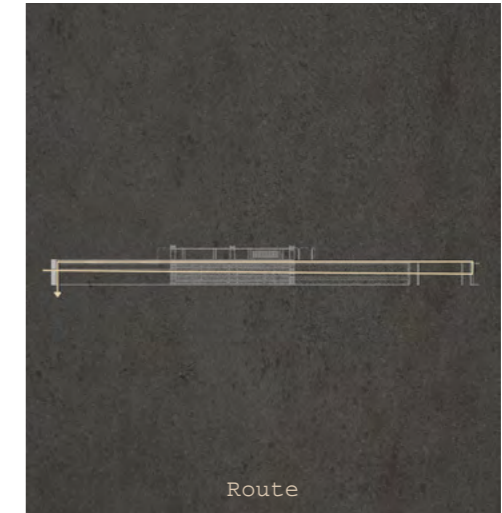
8.7 The memorial (Panic, organisation and fire protection)

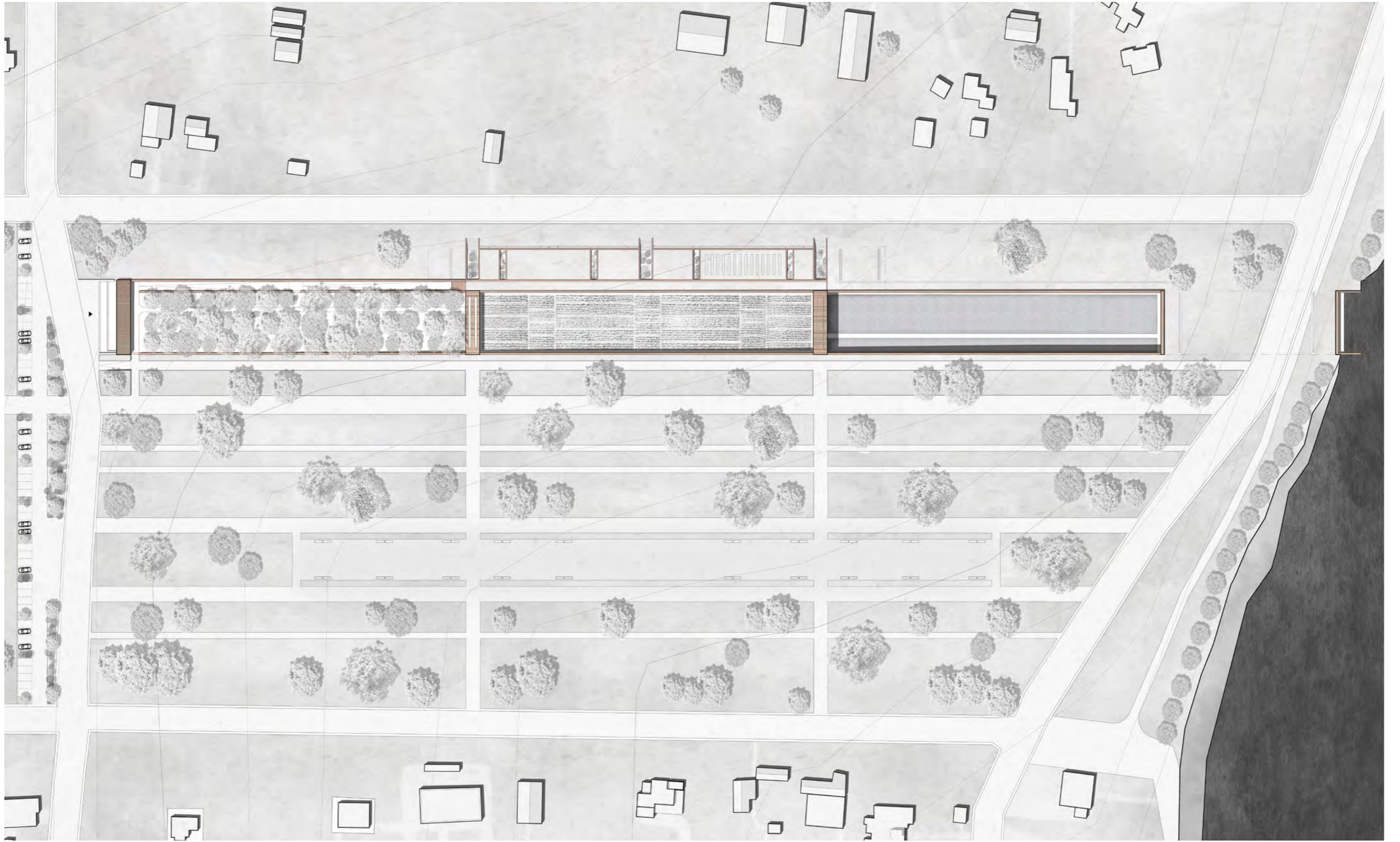
The last intervention is positioned in a large property that belongs to the city. It used to be a summer camp for the children of those working for the navy. Thus, the Name of this property is NAT, which means "Sailors House". The camp has been abandoned for many years prior to the fire and after the event, it was completely burned. It was of the last points of the settlement that were heavily affected by the fire. On the two-year mark of the fire, the government announced that this property will be given to the public and there, on the lower right part of it, a park will be created. A park of memory, a park where people can meet, children can ride their bikes and play and a park with enough space to act as a gathering and evacuation space in case of another catastrophe.

This proposal incorporates this memory park as an integral part of the spatial design. Here architecture develops a close relationship with the landscape and becomes part of it. The proposed intervention offers both a memorial experience as well as a symbolic response to the last of the five main reasons that this catastrophe has happened. This refers to the lack of planning, coordination, and proper execution in the fire management that resulted in panic and had fatal results. Therefore, an information and education center is being proposed. The idea behind it is apart from providing information about the fire, to educate people through seminars, lectures or private consultations and raise awareness. Thus, the visitors will get familiar with the dangers that occur when phenomena like this happen (from wildfires to earthquakes and floods) and acquire useful knowledge and skills on how to protect themselves and deal with similar situations.

The form of the intervention refers to the existing geometries of the property. The memorial lies in the earth with a calm and silent determination. It references an excavation, a cut in the ground like an open wound that leads the visitor deep into the earth. The visitor needs to pass through the memorial in a precise manner in order to experience the narrative. Architecture takes up the role of a designed scenography, where the architectural space has the responsibility for representation of memory while at the same time affirming to understand the elusiveness of it. In reference to the transitional period through which a mourner has to pass before he or she is able to return to society the memorial consists of a series of gardens. These represent the emotional stages that each person went and is still going through after that event. The entrance, the before, the carelessness of the time before the fire. Then, the fire, the chaos and the helplessness. Following the grief, the void, the emptiness, the stillness and quiet. The mourning, the realization of the loss and the lives who turned into coal. The passage from the profane to the sacred world, the sea, the cry, the acceptance. The cathartic stare at the waves and the horizon. Last, the hope, the regeneration, the envisioning of a better future and the transition from grief to hope, death to life and darkness to light. It is a transformative journey that encourages contemplation, commemoration and healing.

The intensification of melancholy in the gardens inheres in the dialogue between nature and culture. The changing light, the descent into the earth, the weathering steel, patina and ruination are all transcripts of this exchange.





Spatial Organisation

Entrance

The entrance to the project is located on the new extension of Kyprou Street. A building 1.1m below the street level invites with its form the visitor to enter. It consists of a roof, that acts as a gateway, supported by two volumes. The volume of the information point and this of the plant shop. The first thing to encounter, while entering the memorial is the information point. Here the visitor will get all the informations he needs and will be guided either to the memorial or directly to the educational center in case of a separate event. The building is visually divided into to sections through it's materiality. This enables the visual continuity with the walls from the Gardens, while underlining the importance of the entrance building, which is the only structure in the whole complex that is entirely above the earth level.

Παρελθόν - Past - Vergangenheit

Once inside the memorial, the visitor immerses into the experience of the gardens. The first one is the garden of the past. A garden that references a happy and careless period. The vegetation is dense and directly reminds the vegetation of the area before the fire. The spatial condition involves movement, allows the visitor to enjoy the environment, relax and awaken a carefree feeling. The feeling that every one of us had, even seconds before the fire. As the visitor continues walking downwards, the walls that surround the garden emerge. The outside view is now prevented and the visitor is enabled to fully concentrate on this commemorative experience.

Transition

After reaching the end of the first garden, the visitor encounters a small structure, a threshold that blocks the visual contact between the gardens. This building prepares the mind for the transition to the next garden. It is a barrier that distinguishes and opposes the different stages, while providing a paradoxical place where the gardens and different experiences communicate.

Φωτιά - Fire - Feuer

The following garden is the garden of fire. A garden that references the event of the fire and the feelings of panic and chaos that characterized this incident. Dry vegetation consisting of high grass, straws as well as rye and wheat are located here. The choice of the vegetation itself with the varieties of crops, contains the idea of life and death and embodies the process of grief and healing. The plants are at least 2m tall and therefore they limit the view. In order to continue, the visitor must walk amongst them and find his own route amongst the vegetation. This form of labyrinth experience through the "burned" looking vegetation symbolically corresponds to the state of panic that prevailed at the time of the fire, when nobody knew where to go or which way leads to safety.

Transition

Again, the visitor encounters another threshold that blocks the visual contact between the gardens. This building similar to the last one, prepares the mind for the transition to the next garden and acts as a visual barrier as well as a communication place between the different spaces. Its spatial structure resembles the last one, but this time the building is a lot darker, thus symbolizing contrasting feelings to the last transition space.

Κενό - Grief - Trauer

The next garden is the garden of grief and sorrow. Dark earth, and black stones that resemble coal characterize this space. The garden directly references the emptiness and complete absence of feelings that followed the aftermath of the fire. I remember wandering through the neighborhood the next day in a state of shock. I could not process my emotions nor realize what I was experiencing. Everyone I encountered those first days had the same empty look on their eyes. Spatially, the height of the surrounding walls of this garden casts imposing shadows. There is no way to avoid noticing the prominence of the walls and the size of the empty space. As far as the eye can see, there is "nothing", which spatially translates the emotions of emptiness, helplessness and grief.

Transition

At the end of the garden of grief, the visitor encounters the last threshold. Its spatial structure is again similar to the other transition structures, but even darker than the last one. Apart from acting as a visual barrier between the garden and the underground space, it also symbolizes the descent from light to darkness and from the initial shock to experiencing a wide arrange of negative and depressing emotions.

Απώλεια - Absence - Verlust

The last garden is located underground and is the garden of Absence. The space is dark and ponderous. Stillness, darkness and 102 empty stools occupy this space. They are positioned in a precise manner while laying in dark soil. Whether the visitor pauses to look at them or decides to navigate around them, they demand attention. They symbolize the 102 people that lost their lives at the inferno. Prevailing in this installation is a feeling of absence. The stools are empty, stark, bold and profound in their lack of adornment. They are not only materializing the absence of the dead, but also suggest a potential presence by creating a form of "empty-space aniconism"¹⁵⁰ The absence and silence fill the void with the raging lamentation for the dead and anxiety for the living. Each stool is standing both alone and in accordance with the others. They are all individually litten to emphasize that. Two slits in the ceiling, one at each end of the room, are allowing a small band of light to appear and help lead the visitor through the space.

150. Term borrowed from Mettinger ,Tryggve. "No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context". Almqvist & Wiksell International. [1995]

Spatial Organisation

Κάθαρση - Catharsis - Katharsis

From the mourning and absence the visitor is led to the stillness and quiet, the purest form of prayer. The last station in this commemorative experience is that of the acceptance. The cathartic stare at the sea, the waves and the horizon help enable the healing process. The visitor is allowed to breathe, contemplate what he experienced and acknowledge the trauma that the fire has left behind. The form of the building seems to embrace the visitor and comfort him. As if it reassures him that everything will be alright. The healing process, the acceptance and hope are experienced individually. It would be impossible to force them or mold them into symbolic gestures. Because if everything that is being left unsaid people can truly reach the desired catharsis. The existence of water and its power emphasize this metamorphosis and enable the esoteric reflection and calmness. Even the turbulent rise and fall of the waves, seem to help the healing process, as they reflect the turbulent nature of mourning and highlight what is essentially a 'coming of age' and accepting the existing trauma.

The ramp

Having reached the stage of catharsis, the visitor then encounters a ramp representing the transition from grief to hope, death to life and darkness to light. As he begins to ascend, he is being led by the light which accompanies him across the entire length of the ramp. From the darkest to the lightest point of it. Thus, instead of just being a mere vertical circulation device, the ramp acquires a more meaningful and symbolic status.

The information and education center

As the visitor ascends, he is confronted with the information and education center. The ramp is integrated and interconnected with it, making it an important part of this commemorative and transformative journey. The center accommodates an auditorium, a museum, an archive, some offices, seminar rooms, a small cafeteria as well as other secondary functions. All the rooms remain distinct from one another, at once separated and linked by their common characteristics. They are all underground and placed in a linear order. This typological resonance matches the strict linear form and position of all the proposed interventions and thus reinforces the central concept. No trace of the construction, other than skylights and courtyards is visible. The courtyards in between the rooms provide enough light and airing to all of the rooms. In addition to the courtyards, various openings on the roof, skylights and slits as well as the exposed cliffs of the excavated landscape, provide an atmospheric environment, where light and darkness, interior and exterior and the antithesis between them coexist. The ramp is connecting all the functions together, while providing visual contact and communication with the courtyards and the garden of fire, emphasizing in that way the direct relation of the center to the incident of the fire. From the ramp, it is possible to enter the gardens, mainly through the transition pavilions. Autonomous and safe horizontal and vertical access by people with disabilities or obstructed persons is ensured in almost all areas of the memorial.

Auditorium

The auditorium is divided into three sections. The entrance, the main space and the storage. The entrance takes the form of a foyer, a passage or an in-between space that filters the view and noise. The tiered seating area of the auditorium is topped by slender steel skylight beams that appear to float and filter the light from the top.

Museum

Once inside the museum, the visitor immerses into a world conjured up by artifacts, historical information and photography. Visual and sound stimulation is also present. A uniform grid of columns is the only thing present, resembling an array of trees, like the ones that stood on this plot before the fire. Everything is displayed on them. The visitor is invited to explore the space, find the narrative himself, decide what he wants to see or hear. He can look at pictures taken on the day of the fire or hear some of the recorded dialogues of the fire department from the day of the fire. The visitor as he invited to choose and to communicate, he realizes that there is something to work towards and thus he is educated through experience and participation. Great care is taken to enhance the flexibility of the exhibition space, in order to enable later alternative exhibitions. The grid of columns, allow the space to be divided with the addition of exhibition walls and be curated in a plethora of other ways.

Archive

The next room contains an archive for Mati's historical records and documents, all the records concerning the fire, as well as documents about other catastrophic events in Greece. A small table in the room allows the visitor to quietly read and run through all the documents the archive has to offer.

Office

The administration offices include a large open space along with two enclosed rooms available for smaller meetings and private consultations. Here work all the people who run this space, as well as the educators who are responsible for the seminars/lectures and psychologists who are specialized in trauma and identity loss.

Seminars

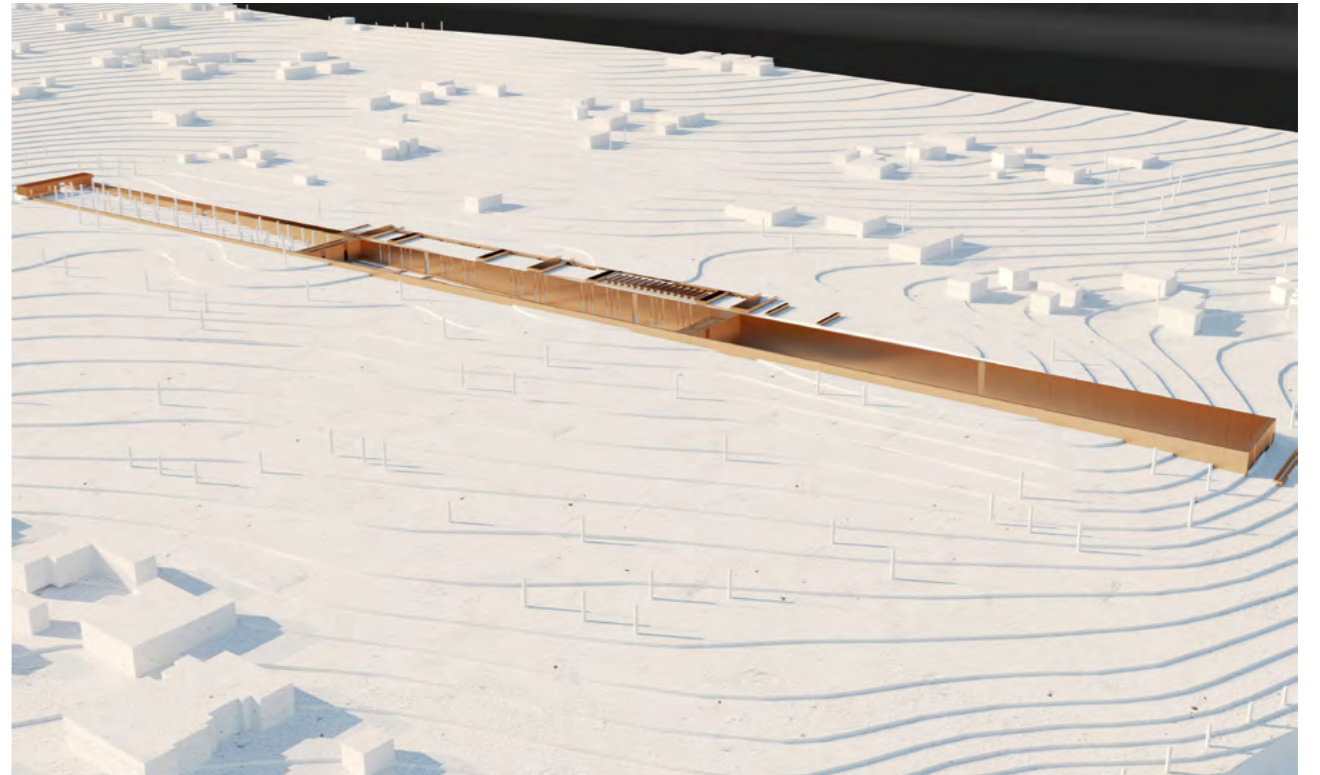
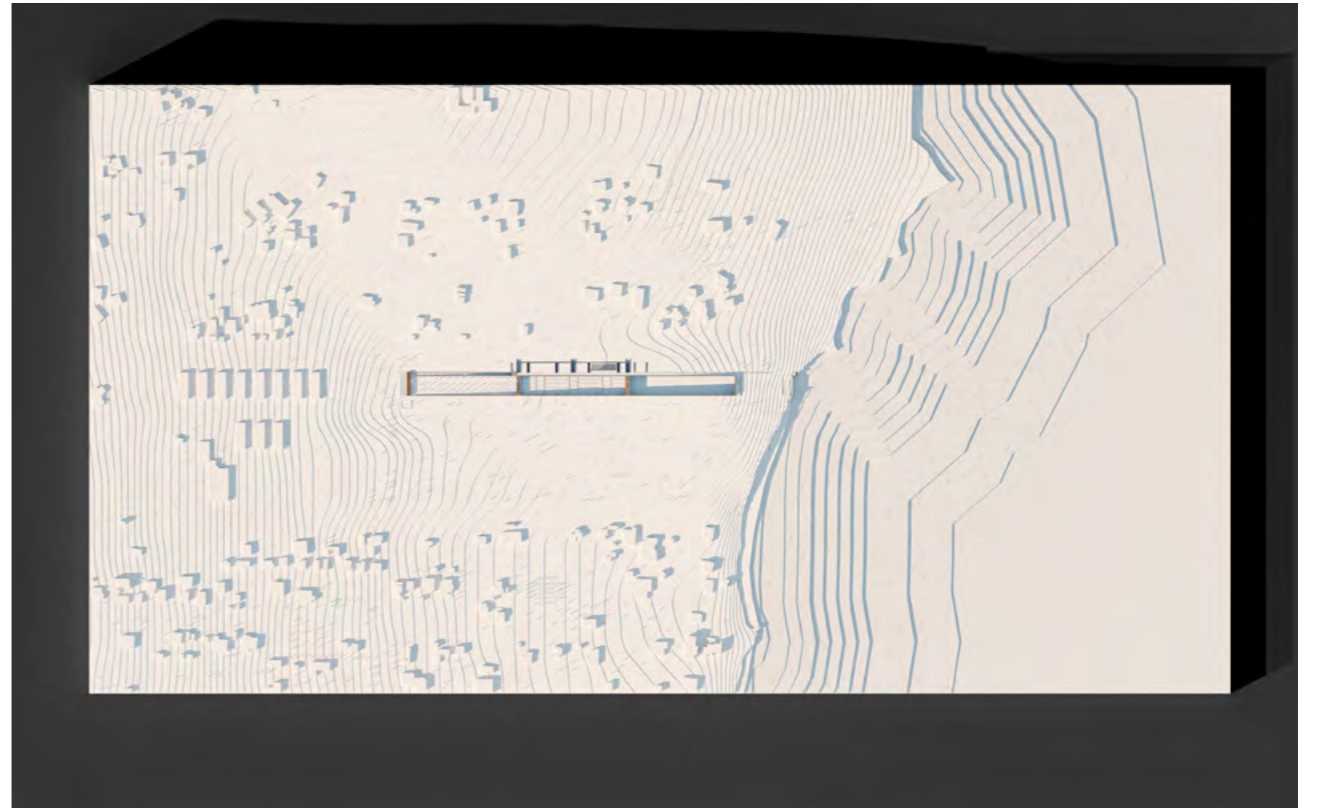
Two large seminar rooms are included in the proposal. They both incorporate storage spaces whose walls can be removed, offering spatial flexibility and creating a larger space if needed.

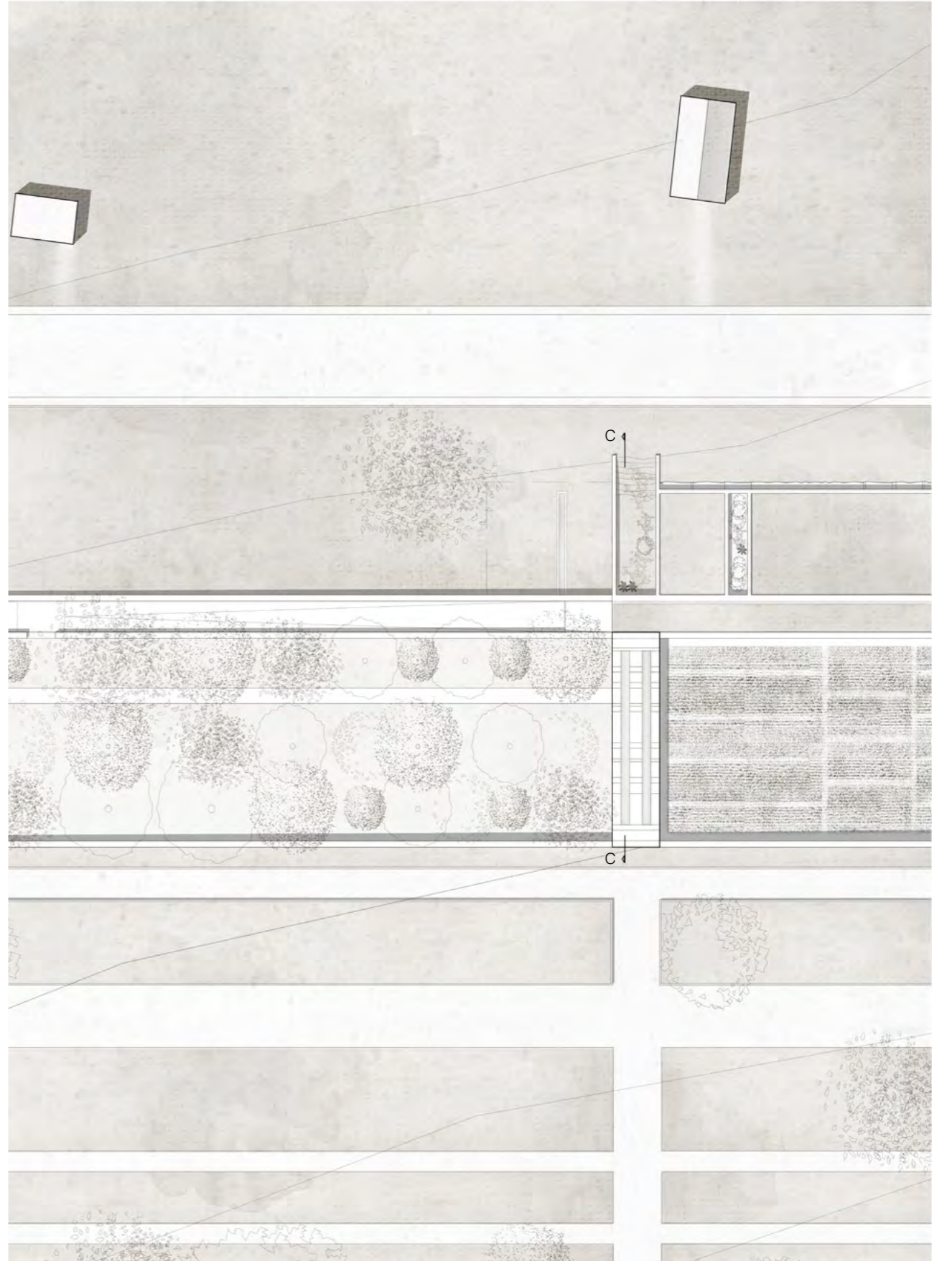
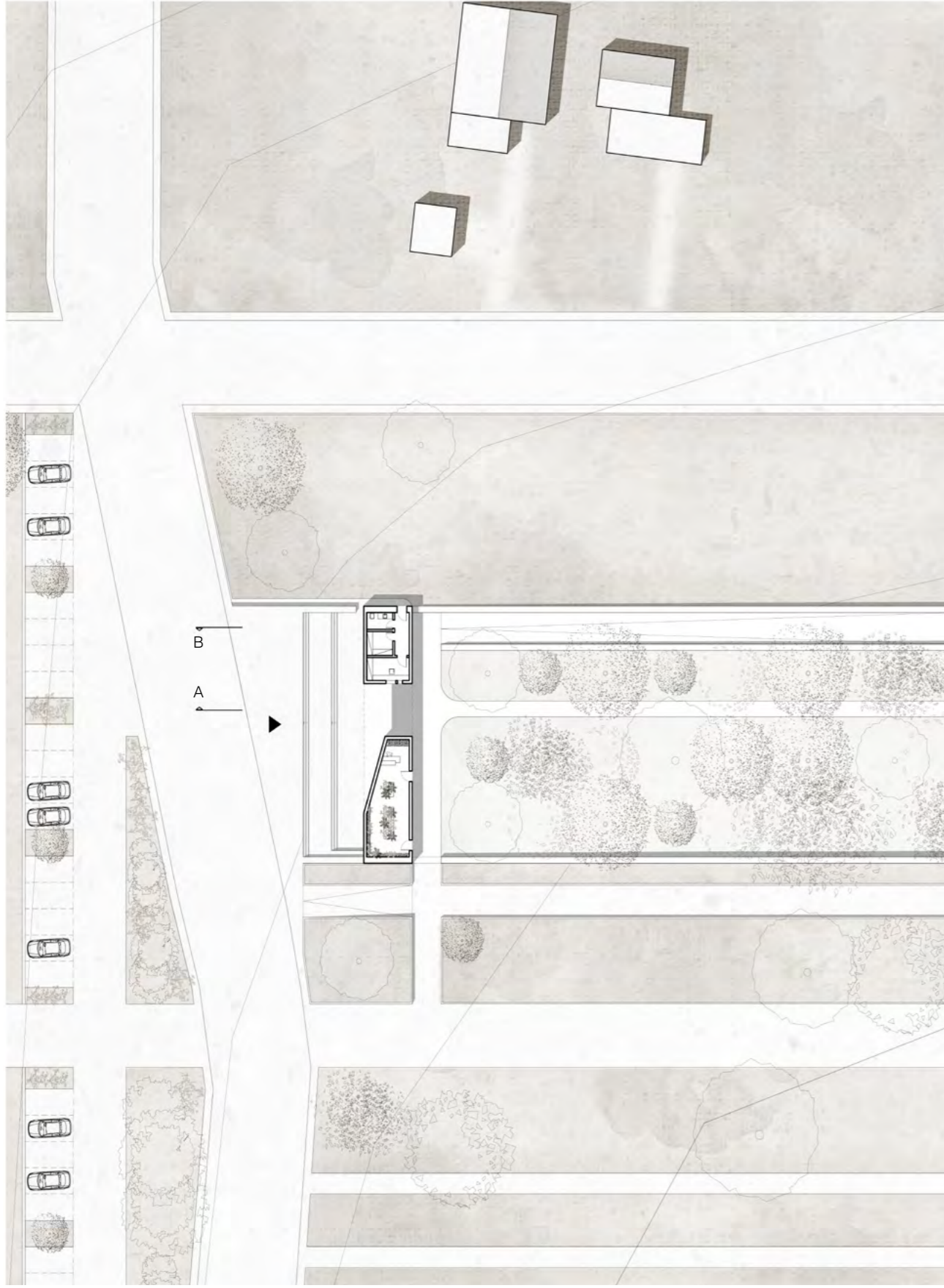
Cafeteria

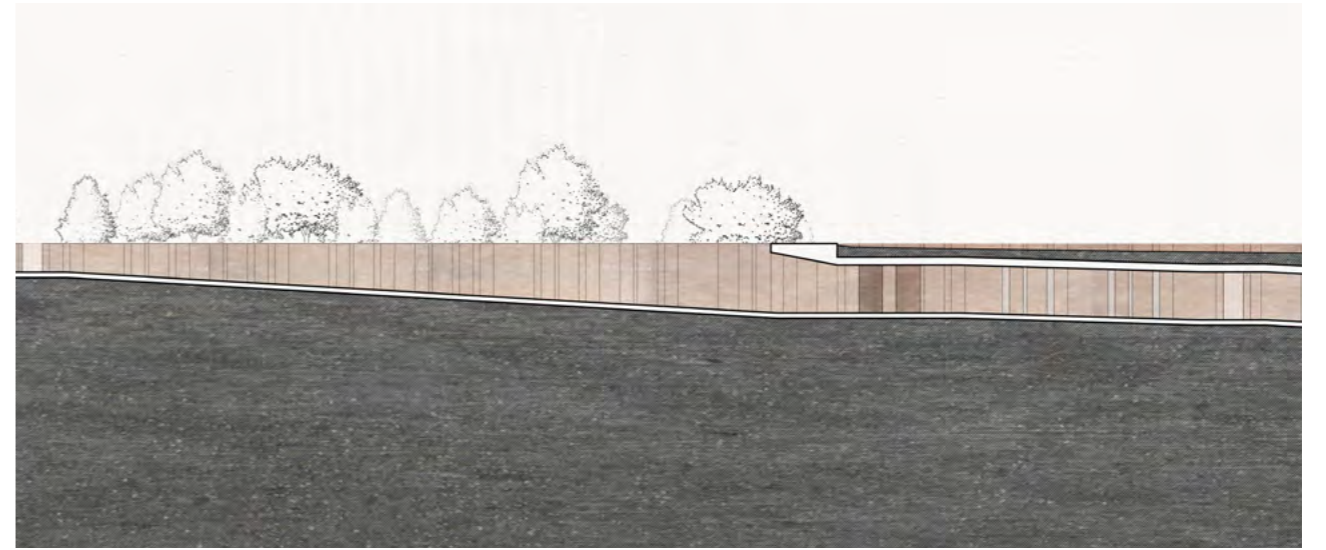
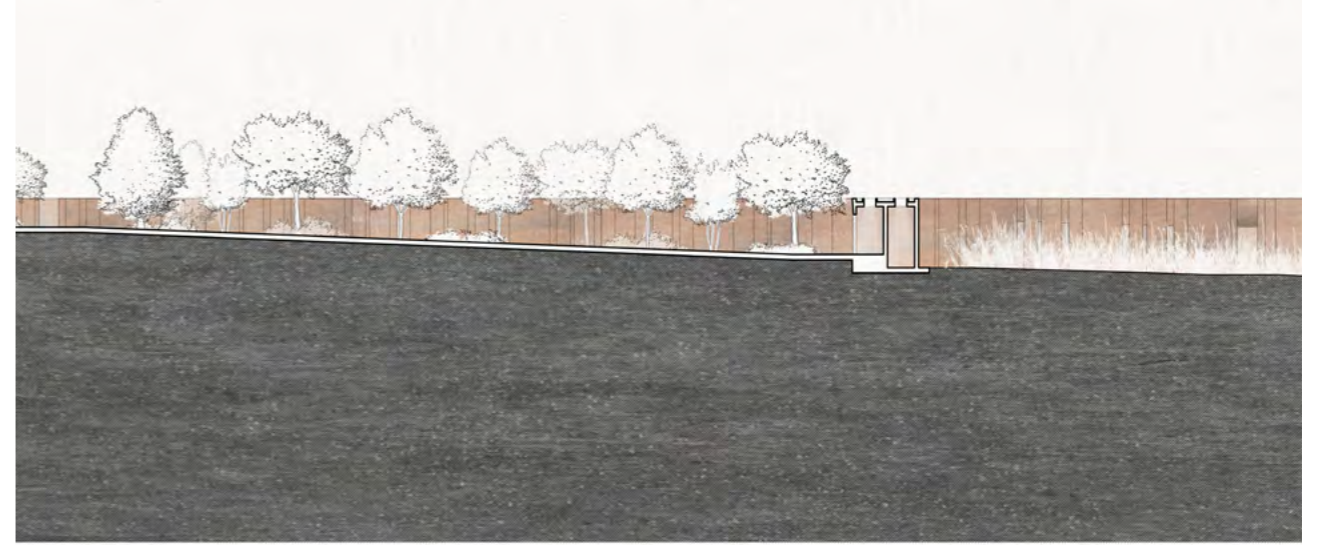
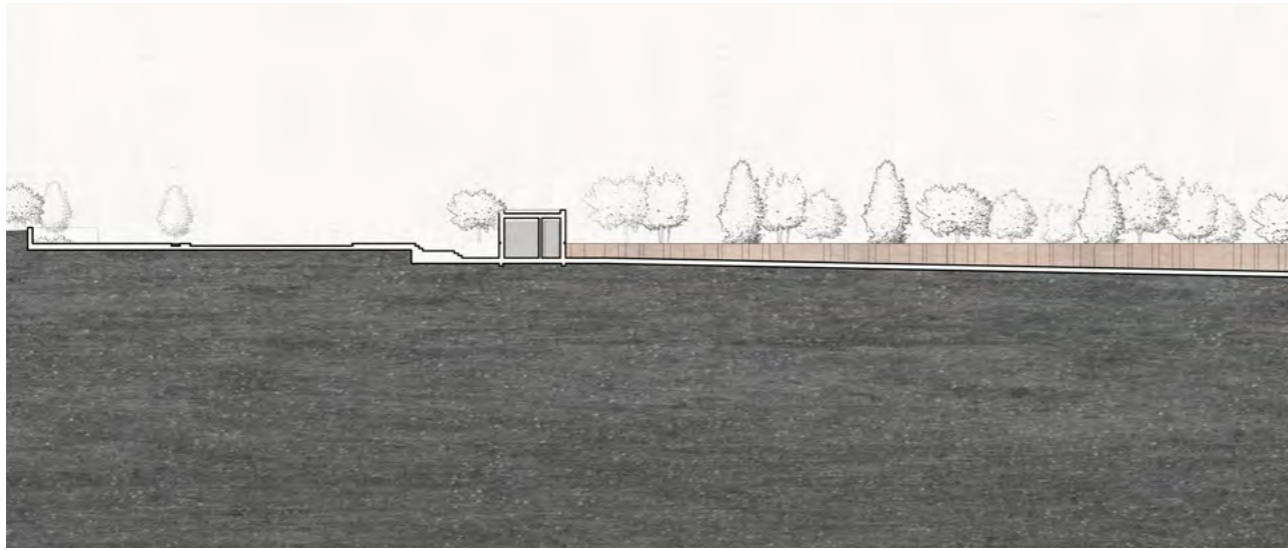
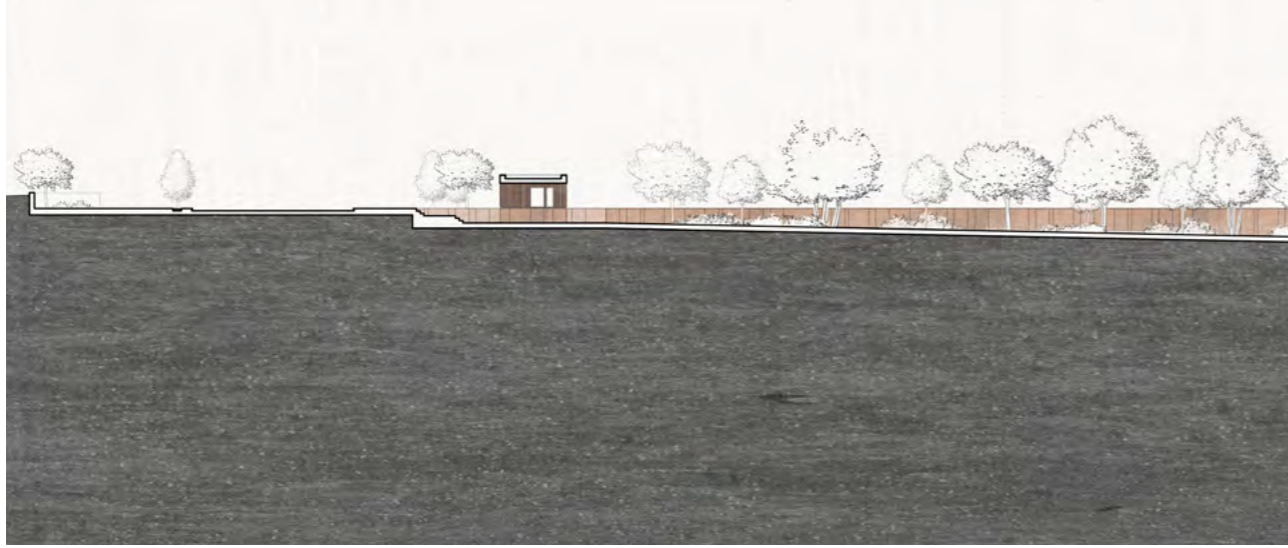
The small cafeteria is placed towards the end of the education center, closer to the garden of the past and the entrance-exit.

Exit-Regeneration

Reaching the entrance level the visitor can visit the plant shop and take a small tree, as well as all the necessary equipment in order to plant this tree in the nearby memory park. Thus, as he is exiting the memorial, he has the opportunity to help with the regeneration of the area.

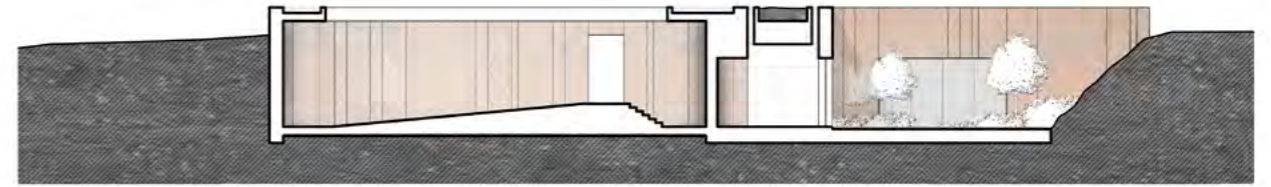


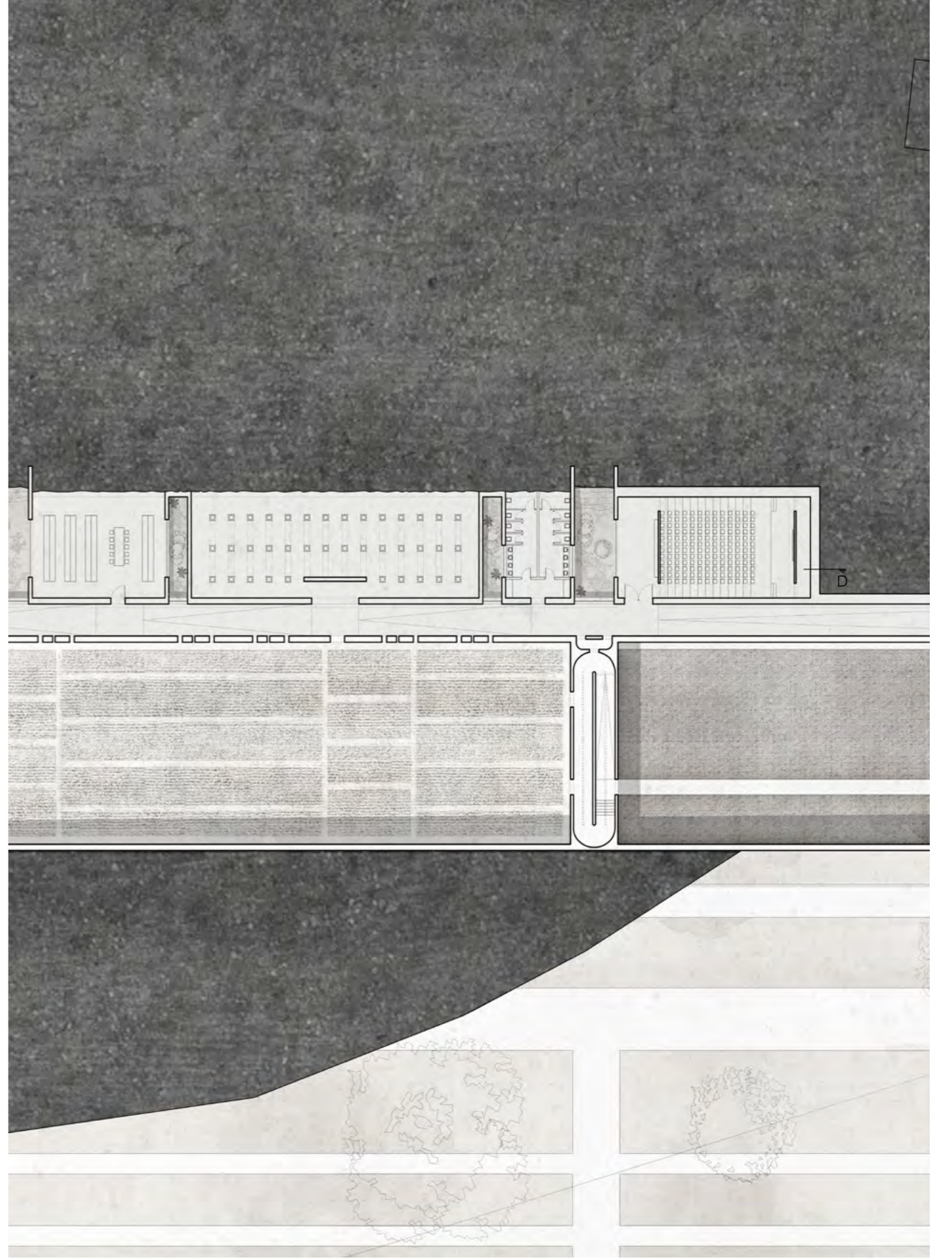
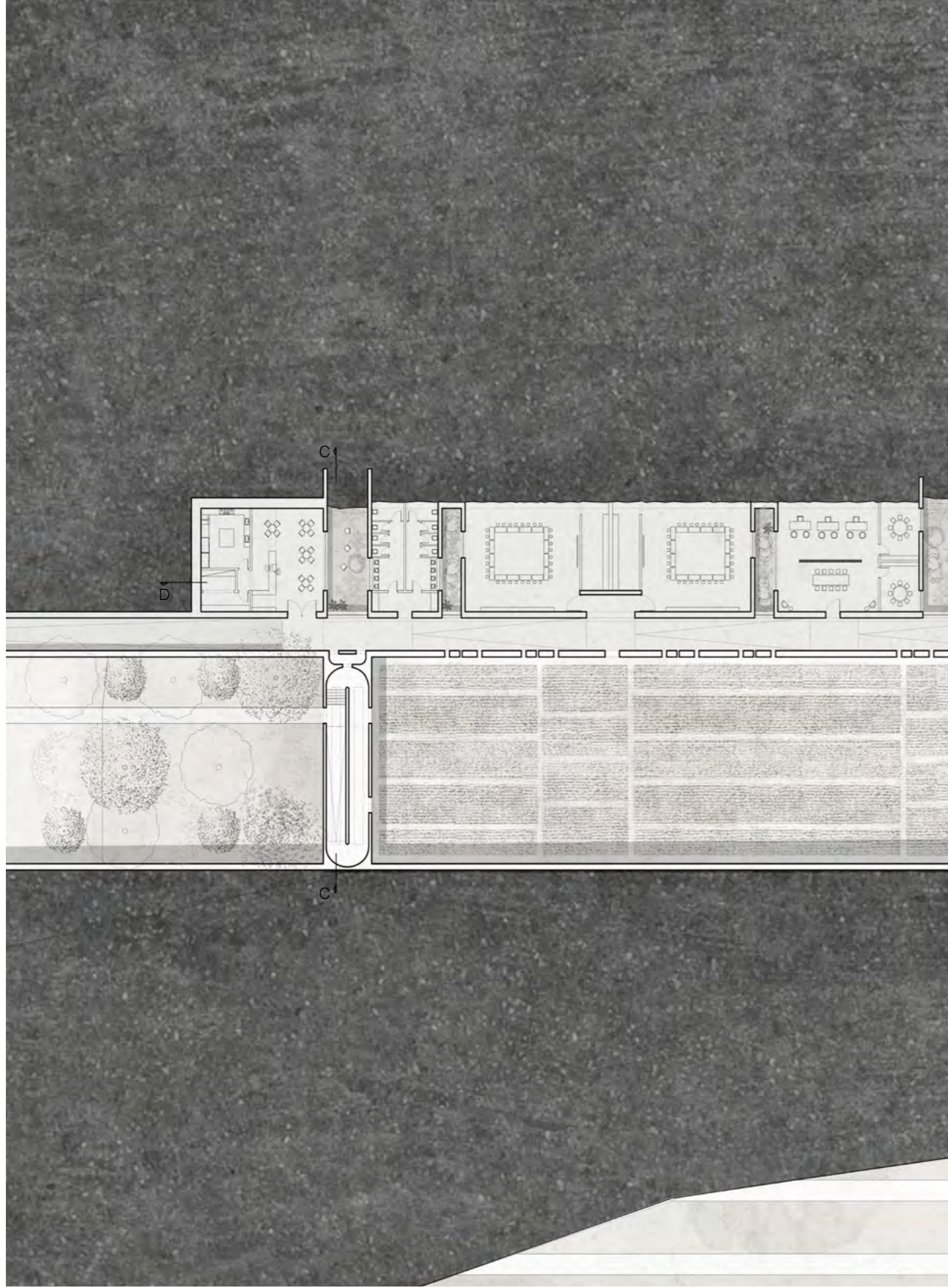


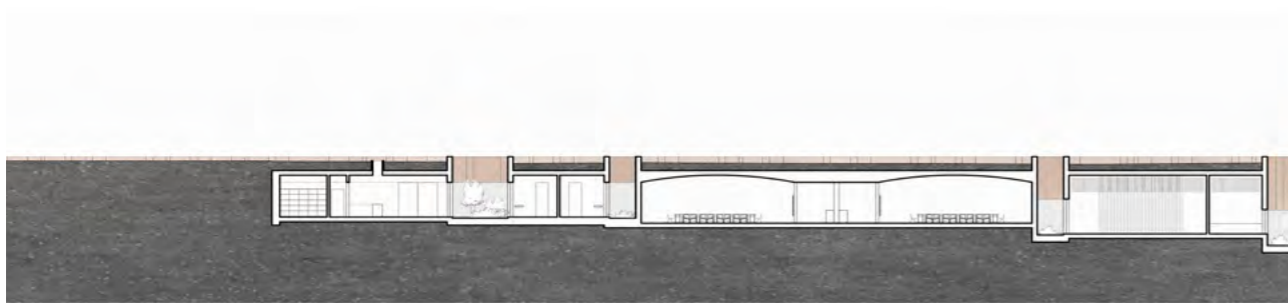
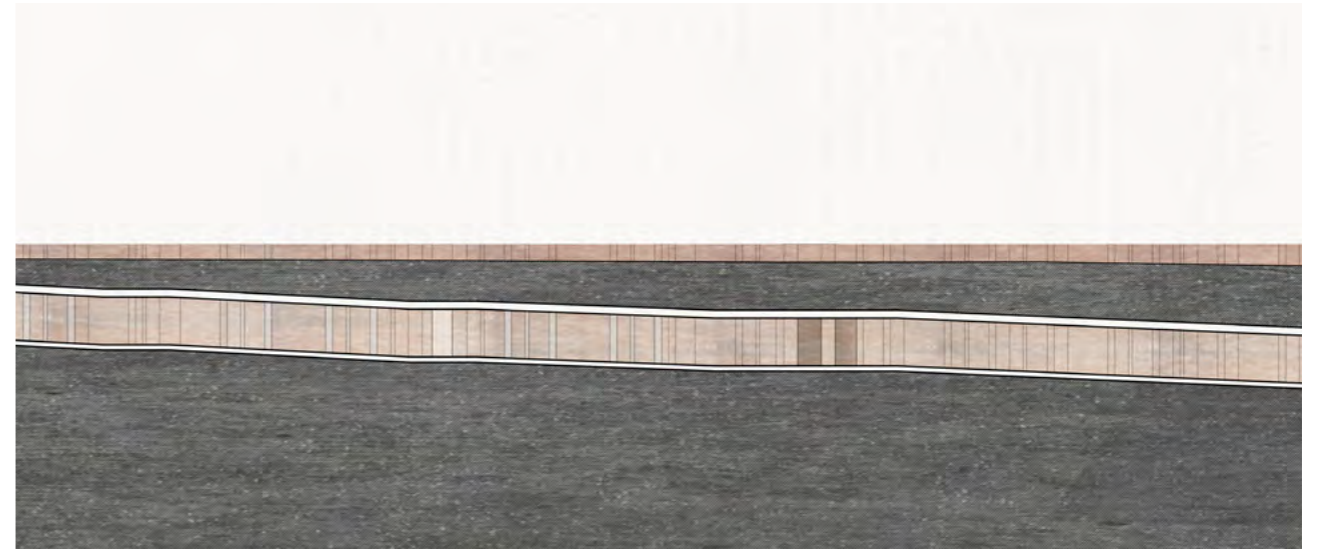
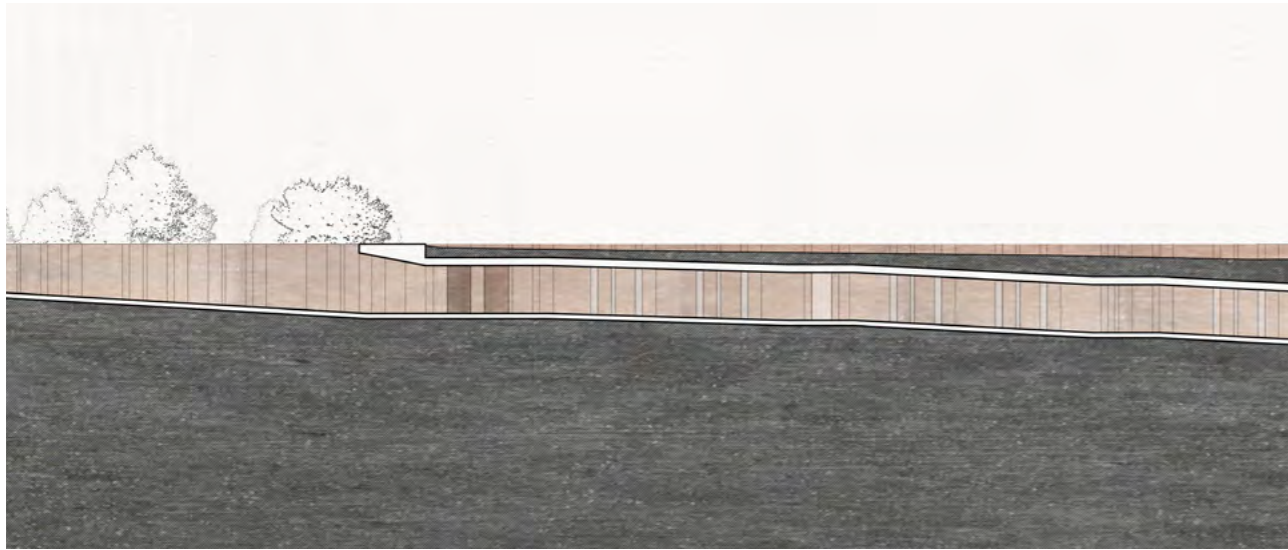
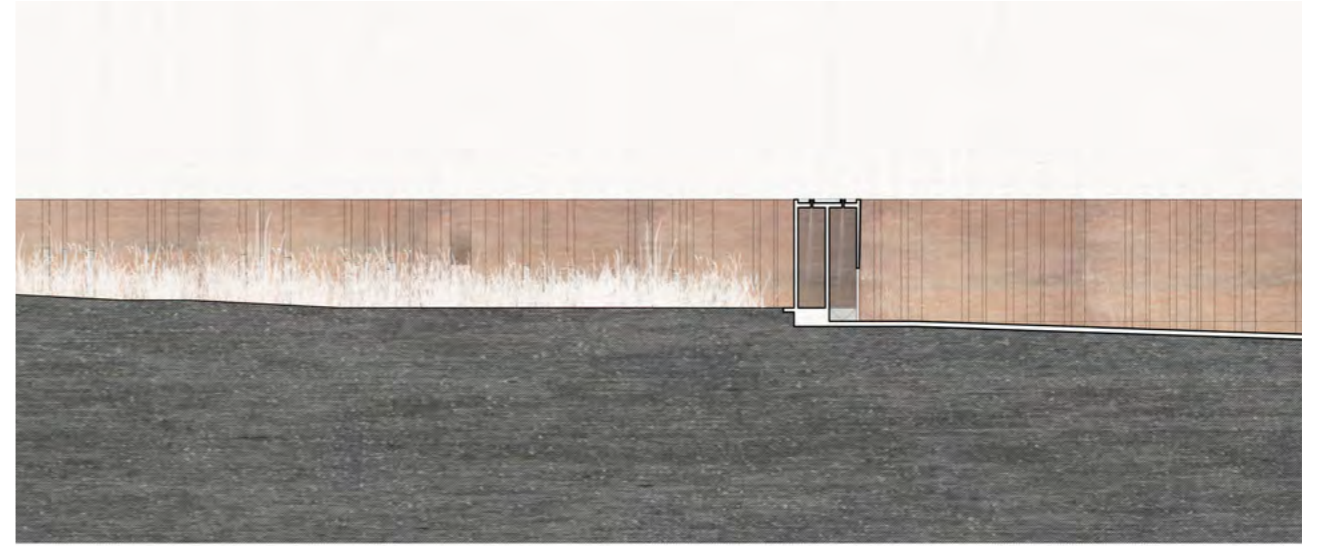
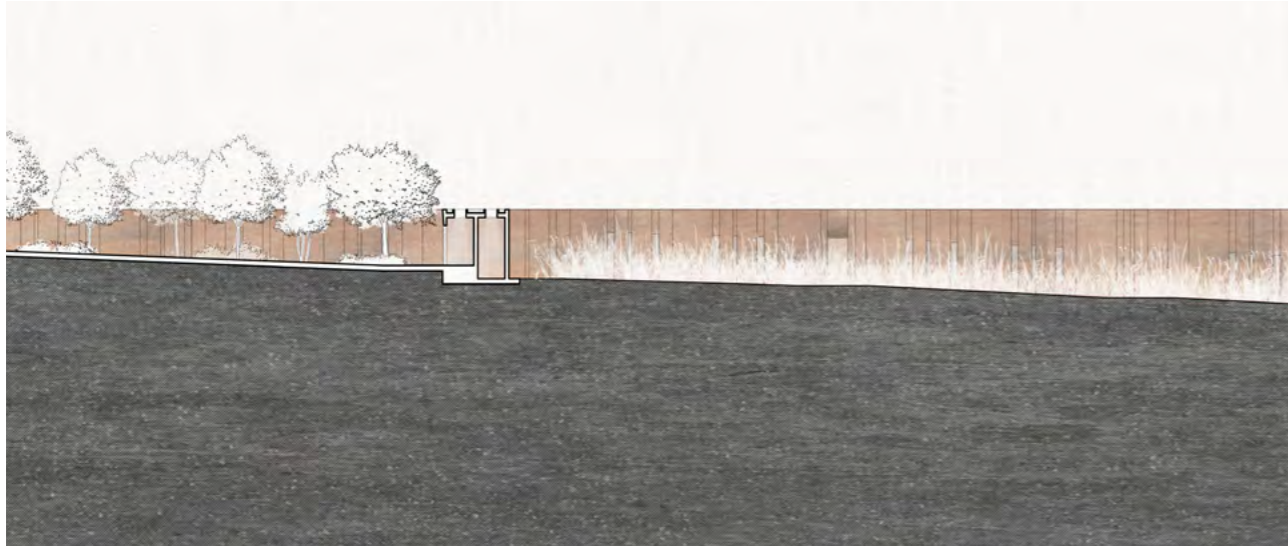


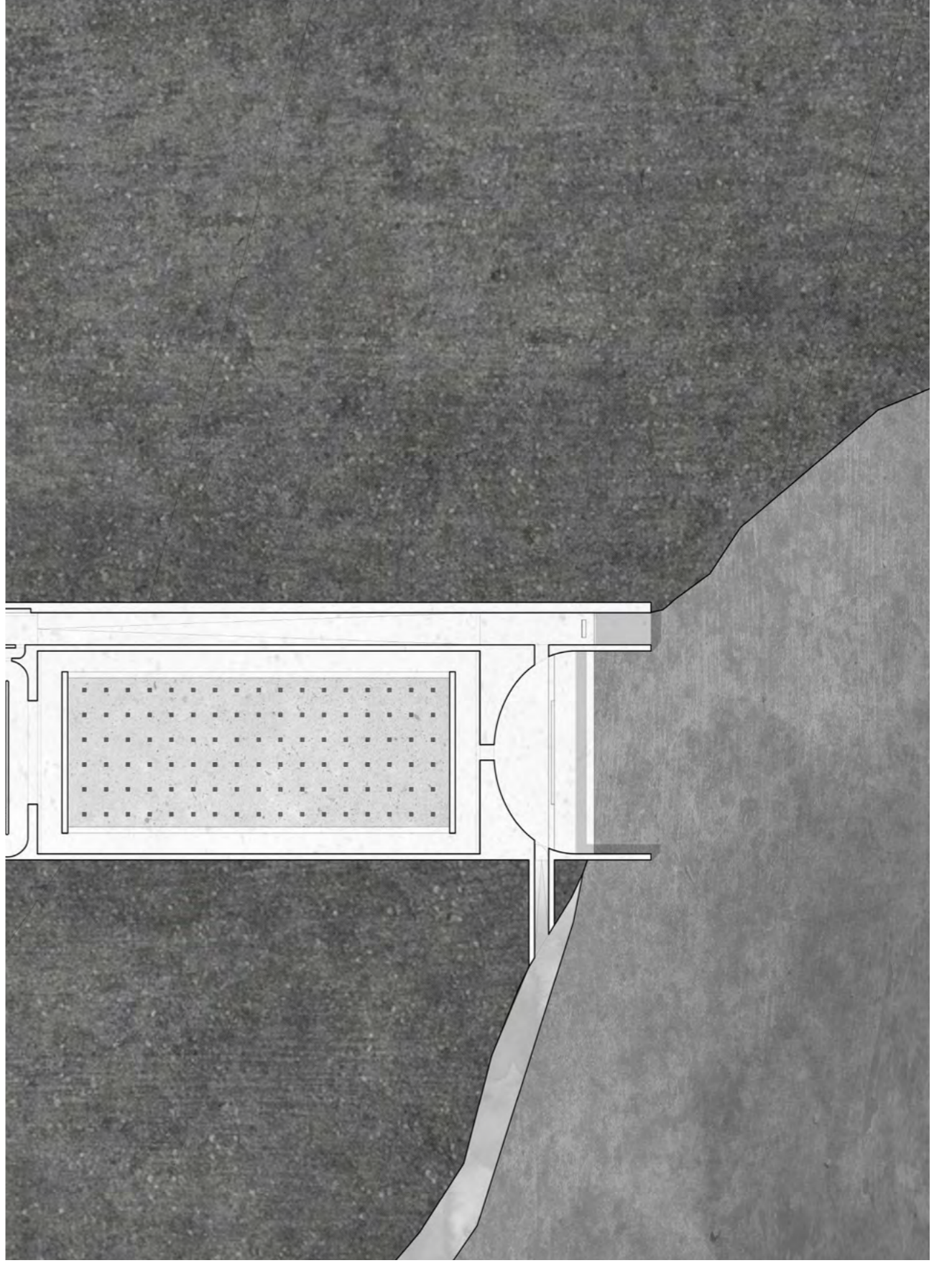
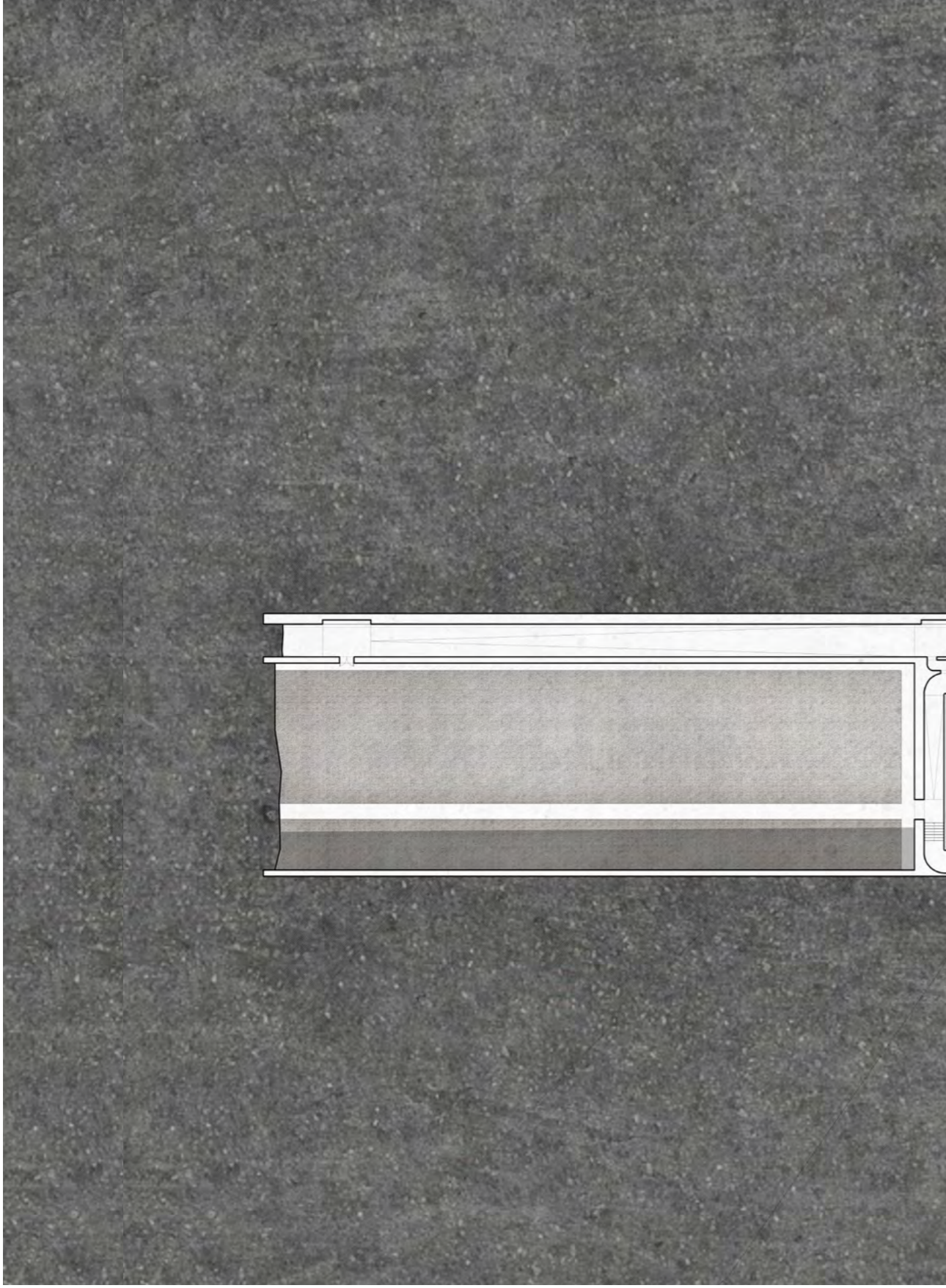


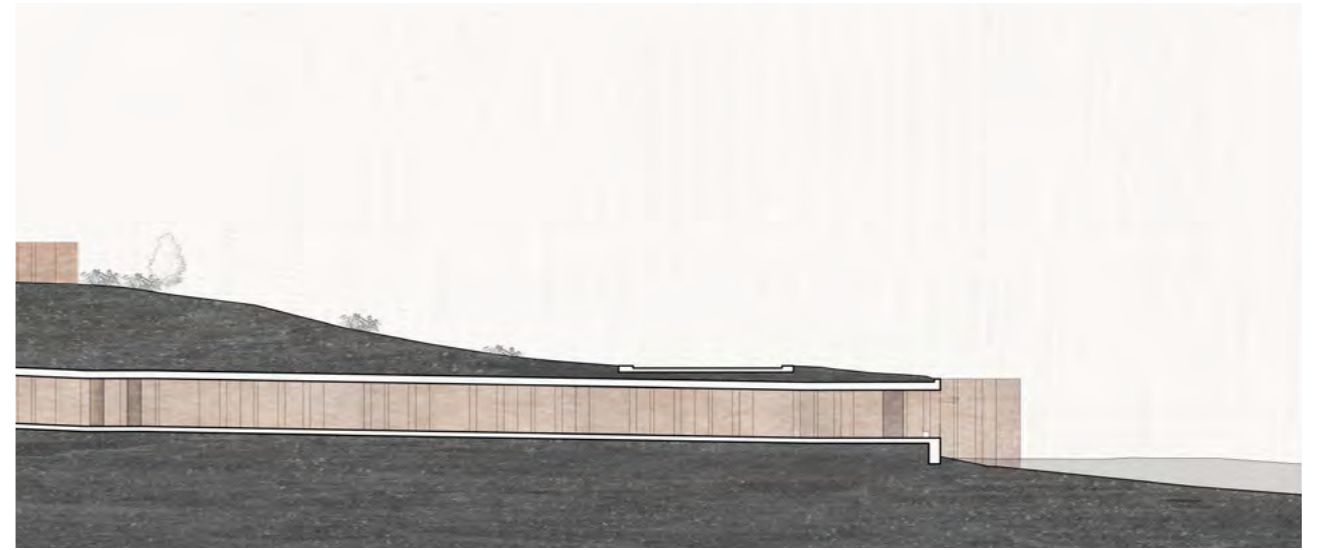
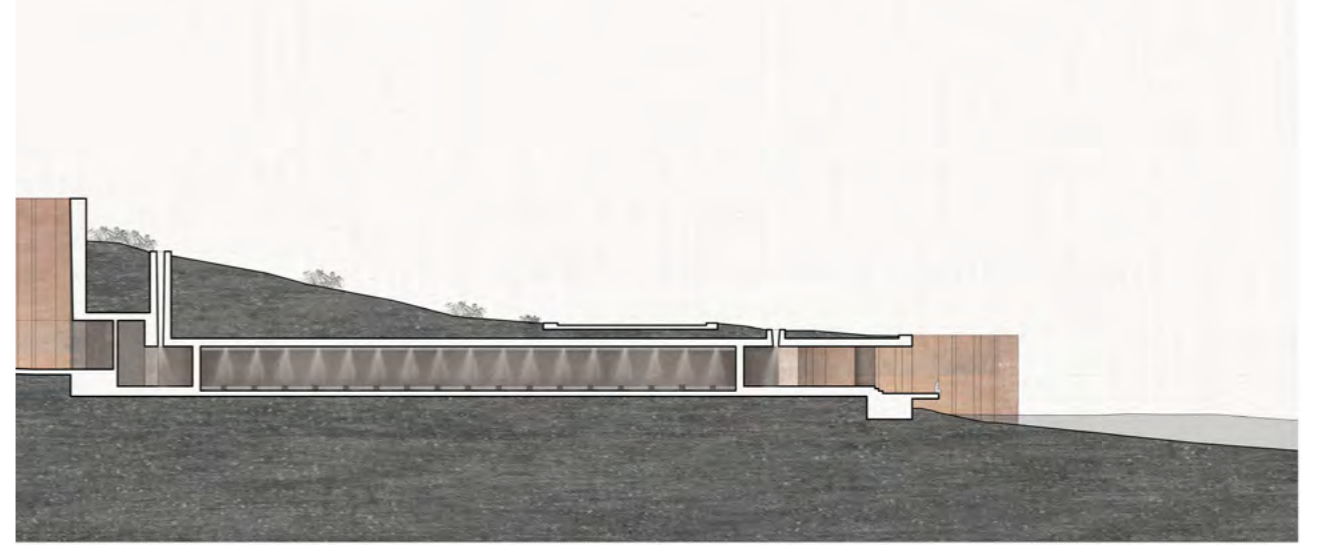
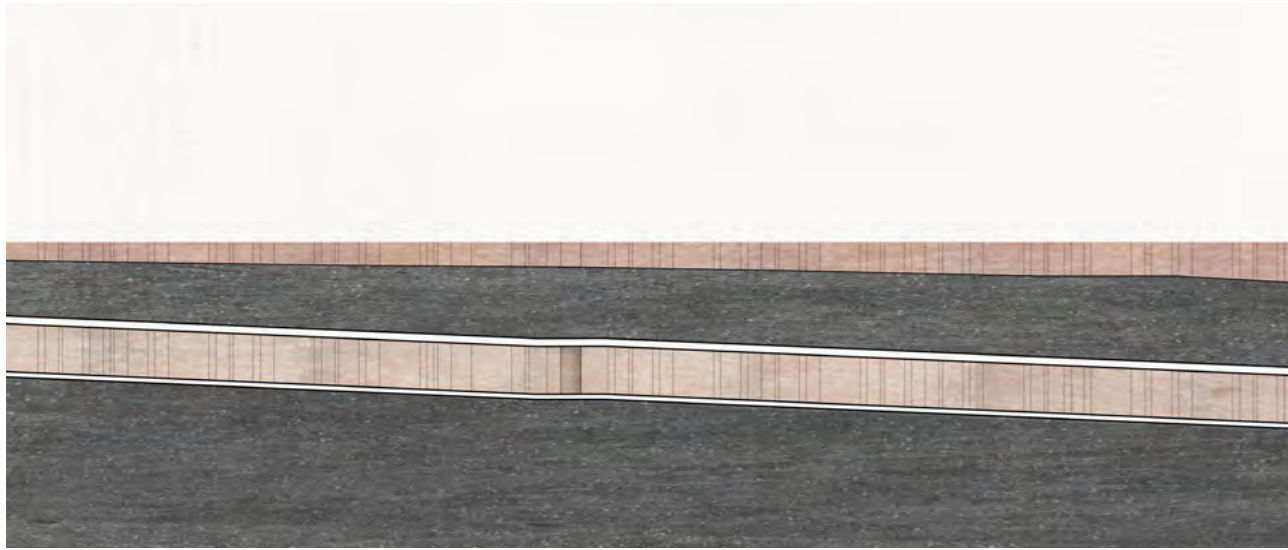
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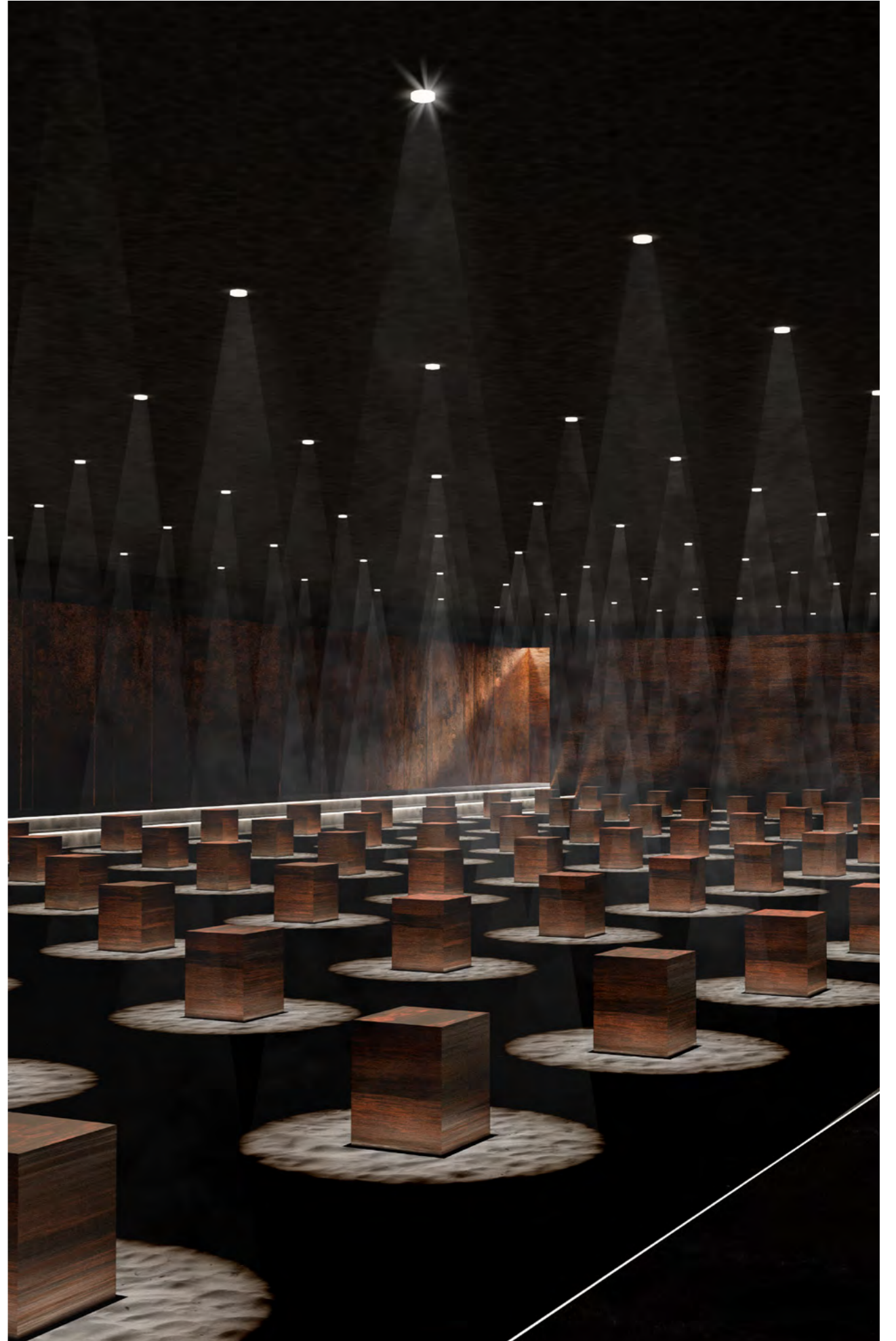
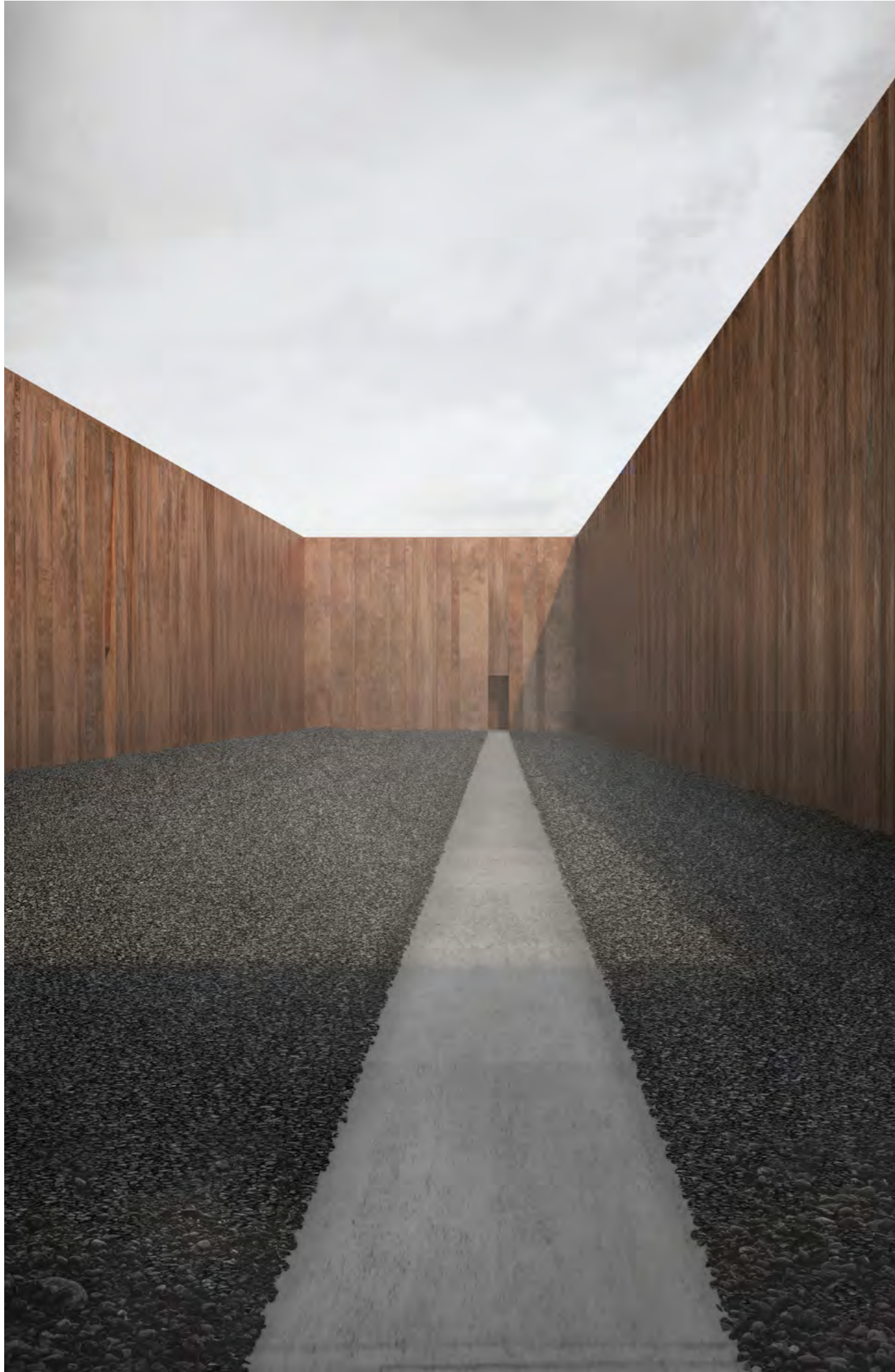


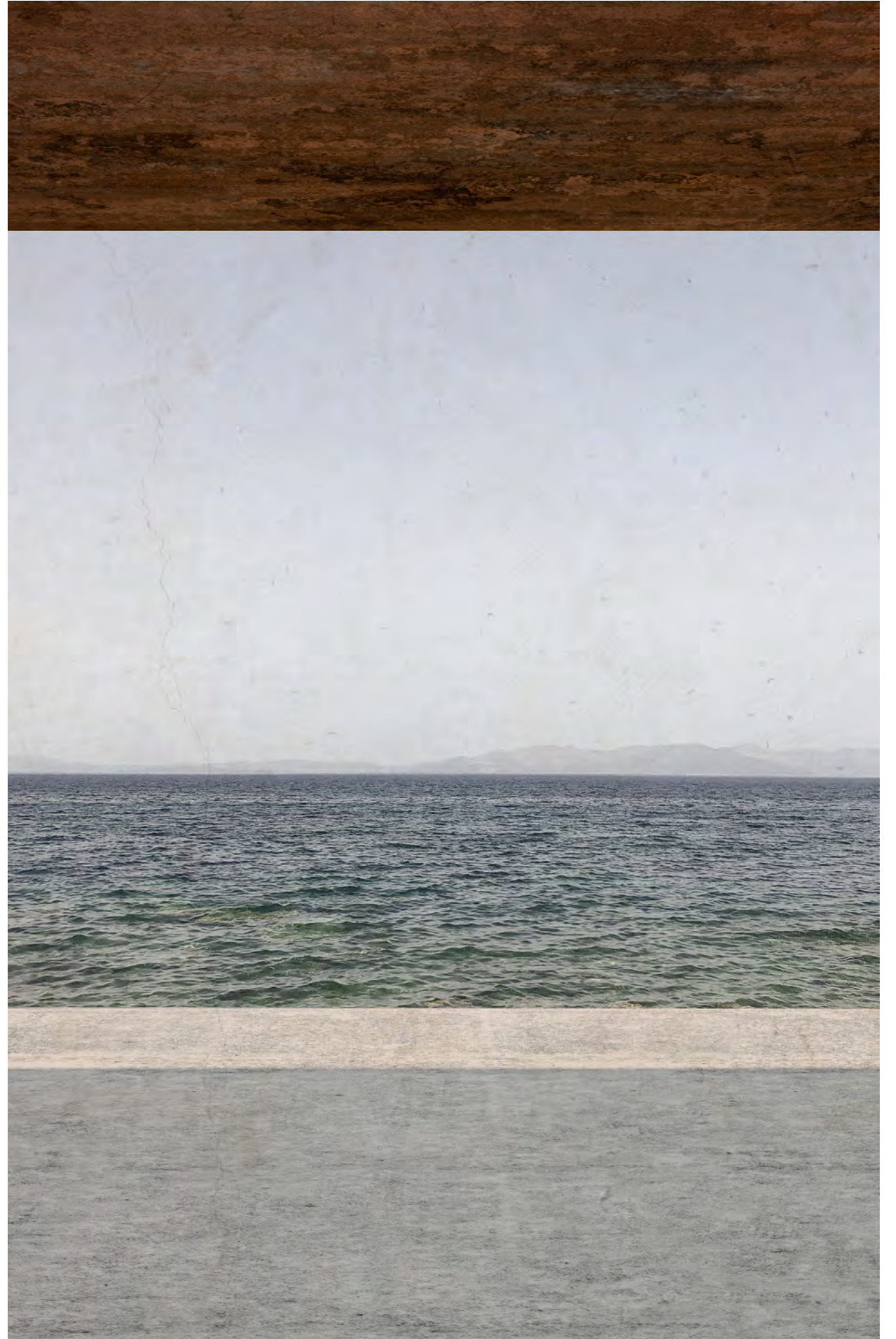






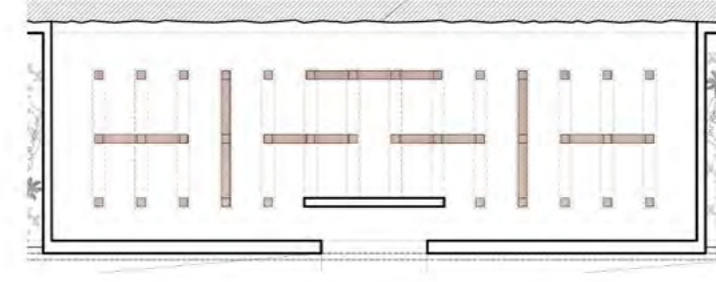
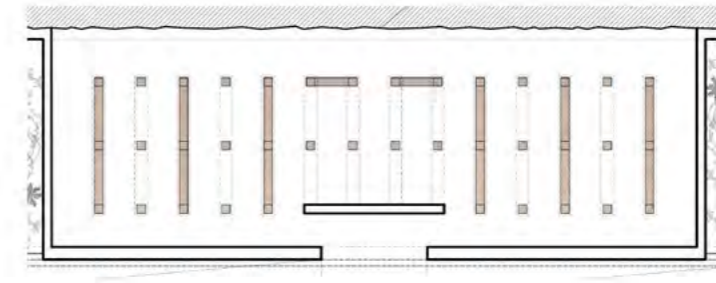
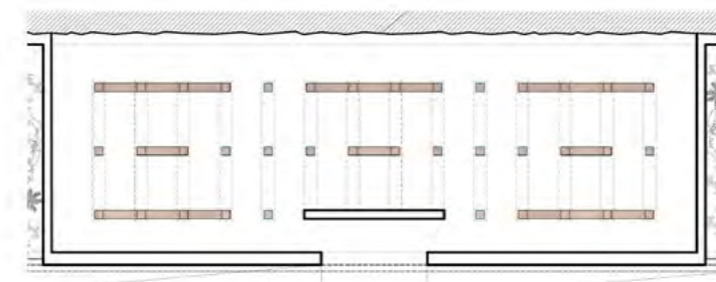


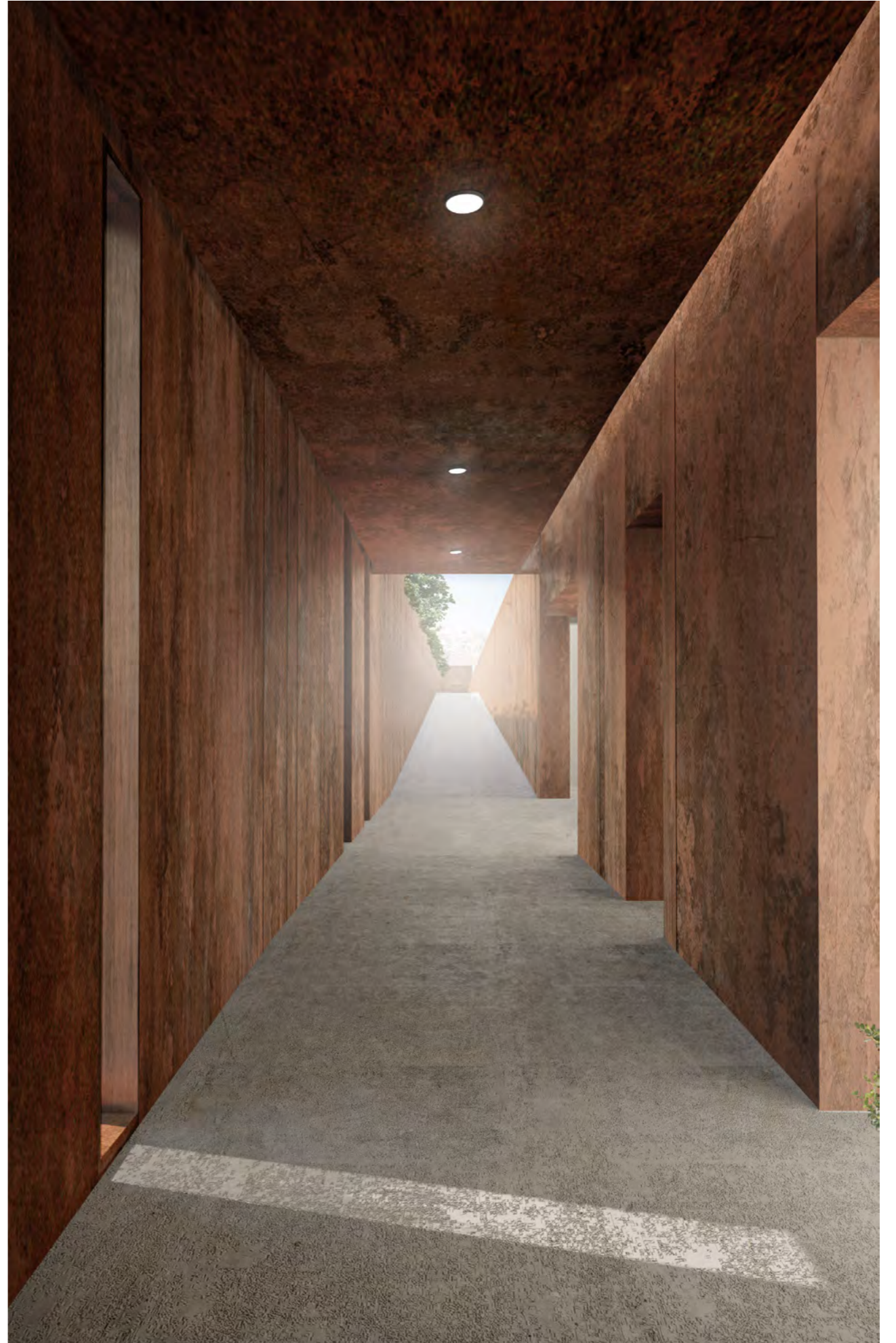






Memory I
And with only a seed
in my hands,
The sign was deserted, I
No moon morning
warm smelted of the
last rain
I whispered: memory hurts
wherever you touch it
There's only a little sky
There's no more sea,
what they kill by day they
carry away in sacks and
dump behind the ridge.
My fingers were rubbing
sly over the tube
that an old shepherd gave
to the baculus I said
good evening to him.
The others have abolished
every kind of greeting
they walk, shiver and court
the day's work of slaughter
to one pruned or operated
methodically, without
passion, sorrow's dead like
Palloriva, and no one
makes a mistake.
I thought of playing a tune
and then I felt ashamed in
front of the other world
the one that watches me
from beyond the night from
within my light woven of
living bodies, raised hearts
and love that belongs to
the Furies as it belongs to
man and to stone and to
water and to grass,
and to the animal that looks
straight into the eye of its
approaching death.
So I continued along the
dark path and turned into
my garden and dug and
buried the seed.
I whispered: some morning
the resurrection will come
Down's light will grow red
as lilacs blossom in spring
the sea will be born again,
and the wave will again
bring forth Aphrodite.
We are the seed that dies
And I entered my empty
house.
-George Sefaris







8.8 A matter of time

Grieving is not about forgetting. On the contrary, it is about remembering; remembering the loss, the good and the bad times. It has been said that time heals all wounds. But time is an abstract concept that does not actually possess the ability to do anything. The passage of time may take the edge off of acute pain and over time things may seem to get easier, but it does not heal pain. Though not a healer, time is still a valuable tool in the healing process. Sorrow is a long and arduous personal journey that requires time. A time for hurting, a time for remembering and a time for healing. New perspectives may arise, and perceptions might change. Trauma will be acknowledged and accepted. This inner process that requires all this time is what will eventually heal the wounds.

This passage of time, metaphorically and physically is embraced in the spatial project. From the materiality to the way that the gardens evolve, traces of time and the effects of it are visible throughout the project proposal. Weathering steel hardens and gets stronger with time. Likewise, the vegetation changes through the seasons and the years. The trees in the Garden of the past will become bigger and more lush. The shade they provide will become stronger as time passes. The vegetation of the field in the Garden of fire will constantly change. Crops, like rye, oats, wheat and corn, during their life cycle die, only to be reborn months later in the form of a spike capable of providing sustenance to human beings. They contain the idea of life and death and embody the process of grief and healing. Last, the Garden of Grief, which references the emptiness and complete absence of feelings that followed the aftermath of the fire, contains black pebble stones. It is possible that after some time, the earth underneath them will begin to sprout. Weeds, small shrubs or little seasonal flowers may appear. Just as it happens with the actual grief, time will continue its course, introducing new life. Here, the community can decide whether they want to pull the plants out, bringing the garden back to its initial empty form, or leave them there as a reminder that the absence of feelings and the sorrow will indeed someday be replaced with feelings of hope.

No matter how much time passes, or how well we heal, our wounds leave us with scars. Scars that sometimes are ugly, blunt, strange or even invisible. Scars that we despise and scars that remind us of what we have been through. The form of all the proposed interventions, and especially the form of the last one, reference exactly that. As much as their offered experience or surroundings might change, accommodating new life, they will stand there as constant reminders. Scars from a day that should not be forgotten.



9. Construction

The construction and material qualities of the buildings in the area played a decisive role in their destruction from the fire. Although many good concrete buildings were also destroyed, a lot of the totally burned buildings consisted of temporary constructions and flammable materials such as wood.

The materiality and construction of this project are of particular importance. Apart from its apparent role, it must also convey feelings.

As Peter Zumthor states, "construction in the art of making a meaningful whole out of many parts. Buildings are witnesses to the human ability to construct concrete things. I believe that the real core of all architectural work lies in the art of construction. Details express what the basic idea of the design requires"¹⁵¹



" Materials themselves are not poetic. Sense emerges when bringing out the specific meanings of certain materials, meanings that can only be perceived in just this way in this one building."

- Peter Zumthor¹⁵²



9.1 Materiality and Construction

The proposed material being used throughout the project is weathering steel (corten steel). It is a modern industrial material which nonetheless suggests the archaic. Its unique qualities make it perfect for what is trying to be conveyed.

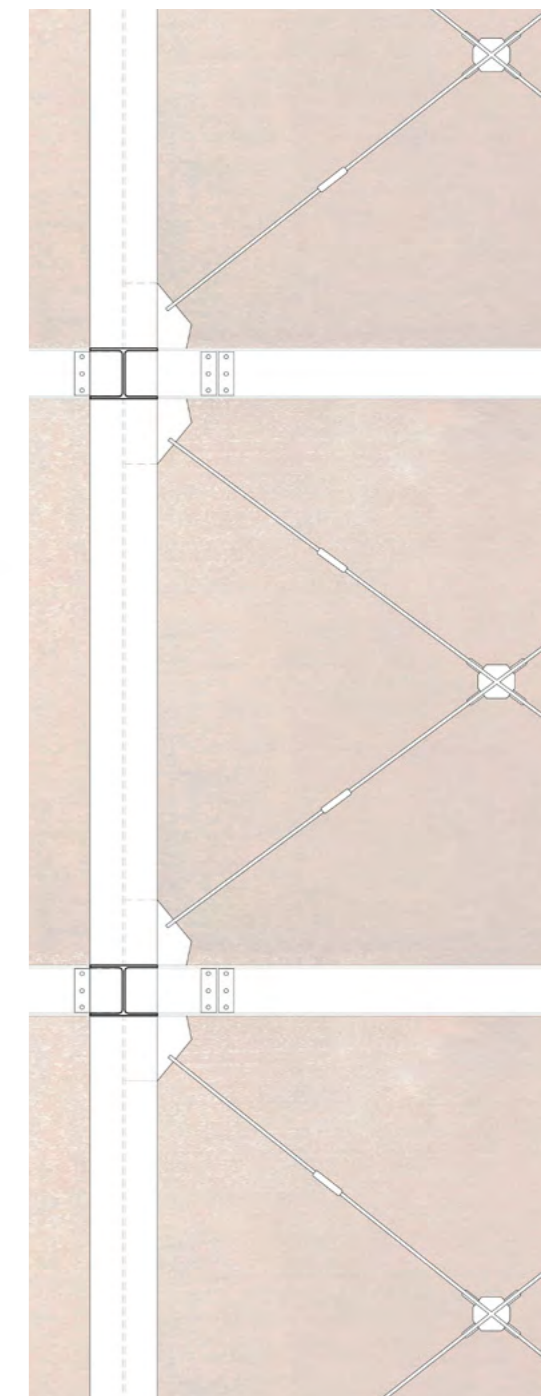
Also referred to as Atmospheric Corrosion Resistant Steel, this material is a highly effective material to be used in structural applications that are exposed to the atmospheric elements. Weathering steel hardens and gets stronger with time, a concept that is congruent with a vulnerable person having experienced a traumatic event who likewise, through the memorial experience will get stronger with time and heal his wounds. The material sacrifices its outer layer to protect the main body of the material and thus is considered as being a self-protecting steel. This can be seen as having parallels with dealing with the trauma. The steel oxidizes with pollutants in the air forming a thick layer of rust – this formation acts as a protective layer which prevents the steel from corroding. The layer constantly regenerates and forms over time. Just as memory does itself, constantly evolving and transforming. The dark brown/orange patina that is being formed in the exterior looks like burnt, which resembles and directly corresponds with the incident that is being commemorated. The majority of the interior surfaces, from walls to ceilings are mostly varnished in a deep, darker and more uniform hue. Thus, in contrast to the matte finish of the exterior, these surfaces respond to light with a burnished glow.

This insistence upon steel and the clear linear geometry can also be found in the way that the corten steel plates are placed. 5 different widths of steel panels are being used in a parallel linear rhythm; from 0.25m, 0.50 m, 1m, 1.5m and 3m. The strict pattern of the 6-millimeter-thick steel plates reinforces the strict linear geometry that characterizes the project.

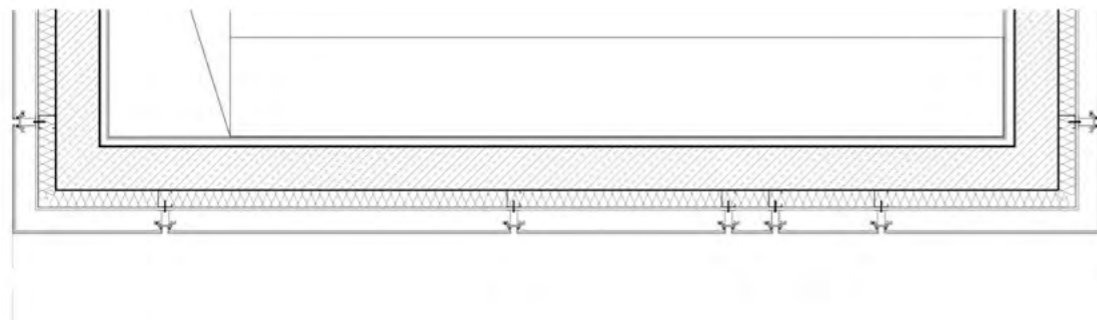
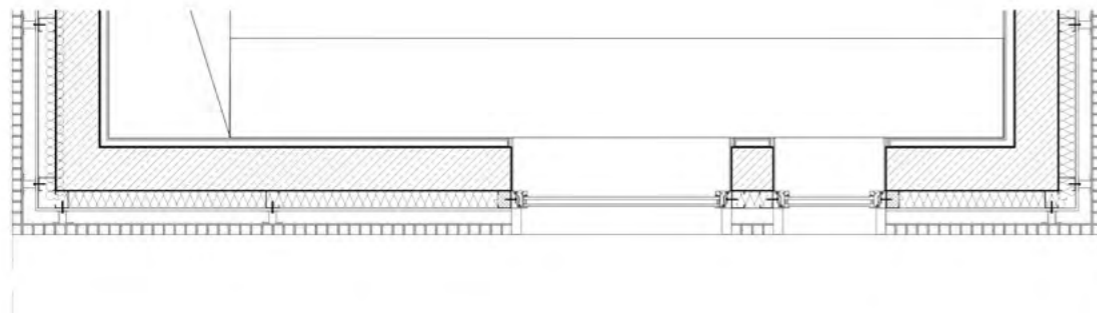
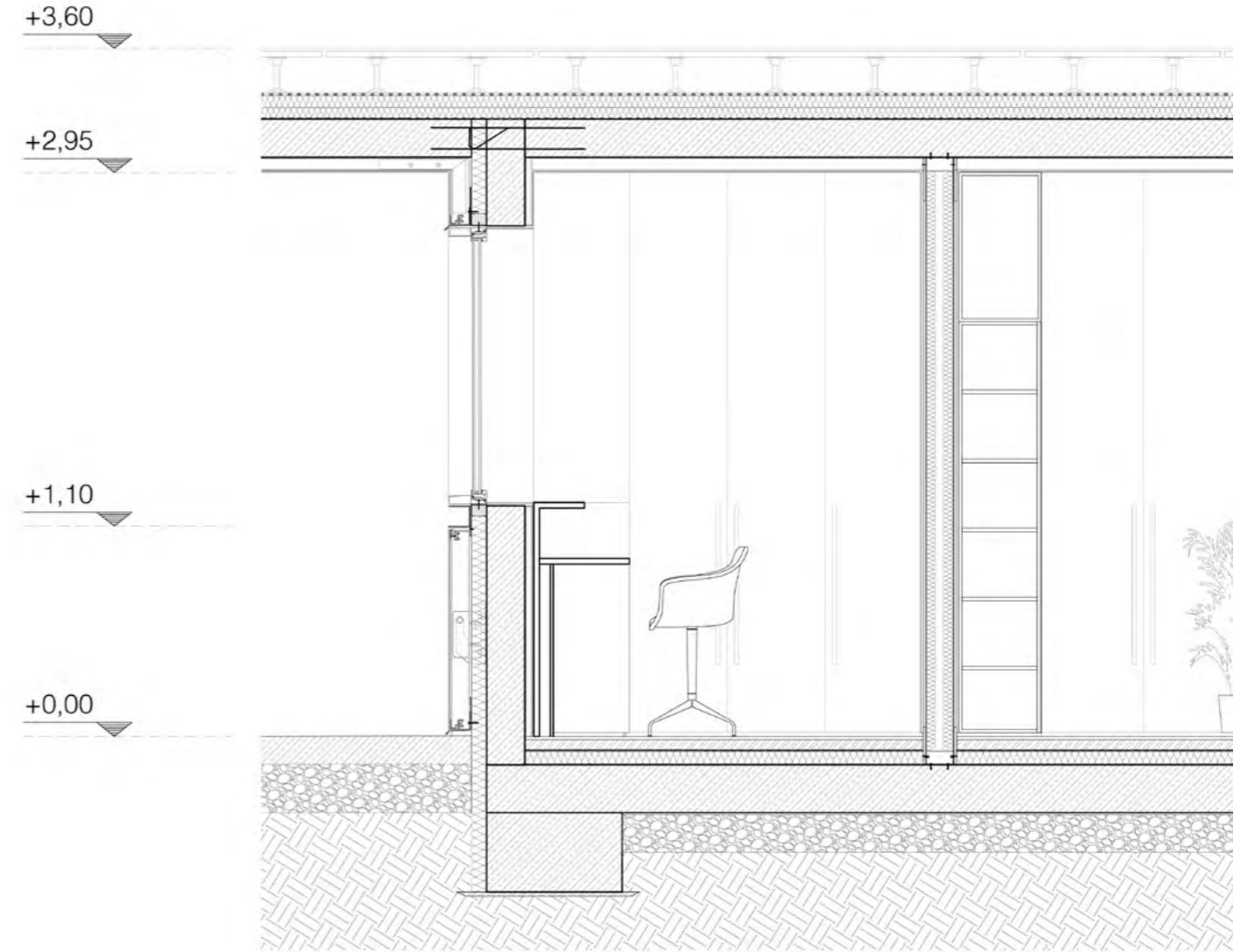
Apart from corten steel, concrete is also being incorporated into the project as the ground material. Sleek and simple it is used to provide a clear background and underline the concept. Basalt gravel, raw earth and of course a plethora of plants and trees appear in the gardens as well.

The structural armature of the main memorial intervention and the information and education center is principally reinforced concrete. Steel is used for wall cladding inside and out. Only a few exceptions are being made in the interiors of the seminar rooms and the office space, in order to incorporate a lighter interior feeling. The use of concrete is being commanded by the underground spaces that characterize the project. The earthen flat roofs organically blend the project into its natural environment while also achieving great heat insulation.

The rest of the interventions consist of lighter steel frame constructions, as they are more sculptural than functional in their sense. Their exterior is similar to the one of the main memorial intervention, showcasing the parallel steel plates.



151,152. Zumthor, Peter. „Thinking Architecture“ Birkhäuser. Basel, Boston, Berlin. [1999] p.11-17



Wandaufbau

Cortenstahlblech 6mm
 Untekonstruktion Edelstahl
 Wärmedämmung 80mm
 Stahlbeton 200mm
 Cortenstahl 6mm

Dachaufbau

Attikablech Cortenstahl 6mm
 Cortenstahl Gitter auf
 höhenverstellbaren Abstan shaften
 Abdichtung
 Wärmedämmung 120mm
 Dampfsperre
 Stahlbetondecke 200mm
 Installationsraum 10mm
 Cortenstahl 6mm

Bodenaufbau

Unterzug aus Ortbeton 16mm
 Estrich auf Trennlage 50mm
 Trittschalldämmung 70mm
 PE Folie- Trennlage 7mm
 Betondecke 250mm

Wall construction

Corten Steel 6mm
 Stainless steel supporting
 construction
 Thermal Insulation 80mm
 Reinforced concrete 200mm
 Corten Steel 6mm

Roof Construction

Corten Steel parapet cover 6mm
 Corten Steel grating on raising
 pieces
 Sealing layer
 Thermal Insulation 120mm
 Vapour barrier
 Reinforced concrete slab 200mm
 Services space 10mm
 Corten Steel 6mm

Floor Construction

In-situ concrete floor 16mm
 Screed on separating layer 50mm
 Insulation 70mm
 PE foil- separating layer 7mm
 Reinforced concrete 250mm





Conclusion

When working on this project, I frequently found myself sinking into memories. Memories of what it felt, memories of how much it still hurts and memories of what the architectural atmosphere and situation was like. What it meant to us. How it helped or trapped us. I tried to explore these memories and translate them into space. The problems, the despair, the sadness and the hope. Translate them into something that embodies the responsibility of the memory.

Heraclitus believed that opposites exist in harmony with one another. Without night, there could be no day. It is only with experiencing some sickness that we fully appreciate health. And it is the prospect of death that compliments life, giving it a measured potential within the world. In this project, fire is an emblem. As it is moving, flickering and fluctuating it appears differently from different perspectives. The flame blazes up and never at any moment does it seem constant, exactly as our memory process. Fire stands in the ambivalence of life and death, as it can both give and take a life. It both creates, warms, illuminates and destroys.

This project exists in this ambivalence as well. Compressed between earth and sky, between hope and despair, between past and memory, is located exactly in the present and the life itself. A sobering reminder of an unpleasant event. Of everything that went wrong. Of the people who were lost. It becomes an anarchic other space where trauma is revealed, critical consciousness is encouraged and the loss is being commemorated.

In order to move on and actually forget, *Léthé*, is not the solution. Acceptance and forgiveness are. Thus, the memorial for Mati while it commemorates and mourns the past, it also cultivates and envisions a better future.



Σχήματα της απουσίας II

Ποτέ δε φεύγουν τα νεκρά
παιδιά απ' τα σπίτια
τους,τριγουρίζουν εκεί,
μπλέκονται στα φουστάνια
της μητέρας τους την ώρα
που εκείνη ετοιμάζει το
φαΐ κι ακούει το νερό να
κοχλάζει, σα να σπουδάζει
τον ατμό και το χρόνο.

Πάντα εκεί -
Και το σπίτι παίρνει ένα
άλλο στένεμα και πλάτεμα,
σάμπως να πιάνει
σιγαλή βροχή καταμεσής
καλοκαιριού, στα ερημικά
χωράφια.

Δε φεύγουν τα νεκρά
παιδιά.
Μένουν στο σπίτι
κι έχουν μια ξέχωρη
προτίμηση να παίζουν στον
κλεισμένο διάδρομο
και κάθε μέρα μεγαλώνουν
μέσα στην καρδιά μας,
τόσο που ο πόνος κάτω απ'
τα πλευρά μας δεν είναι
πια απ' τη στέρηση μα από
την αύξηση.
Κι αν κάποτε οι γυναίκες
βγάζουν μια κραυγή στον
ύπνο τους,
είναι που τα κοιλοπονάνε
πάλι.

- Γιάννης Ρίτσος

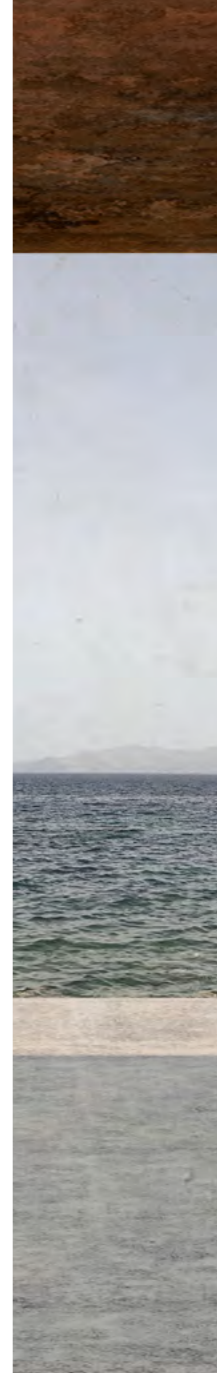
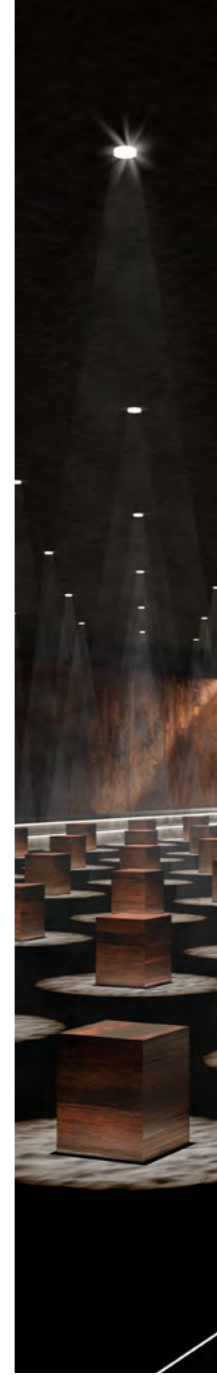
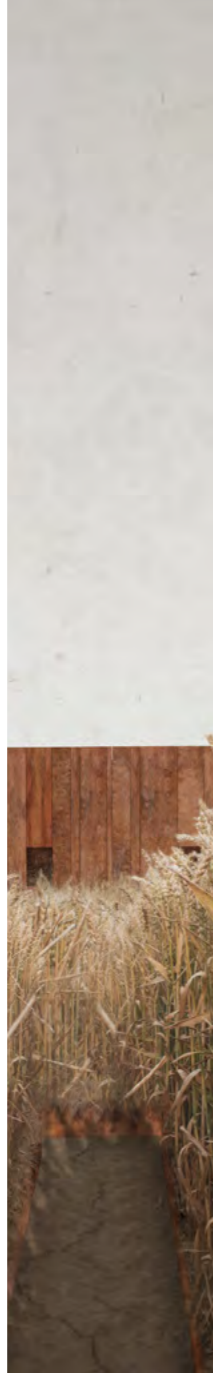
Forms of Absence II

The dead children never
leave their homes, they
wander there,
tangled in their mothers
dresses while she prepares
dinner. She hears the
water boiling, as if she
is studying the steam and
time.

Always there-
And the house appears
more narrow and more
wide, while it rains
heavily in the middle of
the summer, in the empty
fields.

The dead children never
leave.
They stay at home
and have a special
preference in playing at
the closed hallway
and everyday they grow
more within our heart,
so much that the pain
under our ribs is not
from their absence, but
from the growth.
And whenever women scream
during their sleep,
it is because of this
reoccurring stomach pain.

- Yannis Ritsos



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- Im01 p.04 Ikones in a burned house, Mati
-Photograph taken by Vrettos, Tassos on 19.07.2019
- Im02 p.09 Burned House, Mati
-Photograph taken by Gerakaki, Chrysa on 23.07.2019
- Im03 p.10 Tritonos Street after the fire, Mati
-Photograph taken by Gerakaki, Chrysa on 24.07.2018
- Im04 p.12 Burned House, Mati
-Photograph taken by Gerakaki, Chrysa on 23.07.2019
- Im05 p.13 Burned House, Mati
-Photograph taken by Gerakaki, Chrysa on 23.07.2019
- Im06 p.13 Cavo Cafe, Mati
-Photograph taken by Gerakaki, Chrysa on 23.07.2019
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- Im11 p.26 Burned House, Mati
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- Im12 p.26 Burned House, Mati
-Photograph taken by Gerakaki, Chrysa on 23.07.2019
- Im13 p.29 Street, Neos Voutzas
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-Photograph taken by Gerakaki, Chrysa on 24.07.2018
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- Im25 p.50 Attika Map
-Photograph courtesy of Google Maps
edited by author
- Im26 p.50 Athens Map and Site
-Photograph courtesy of Google Maps
edited by author
- Im27 p.51 Schwarzplan Mati
created by author
- Im28 p.54 Contract 6166 for selling the acres in Mati, 1930
-Kavvadias (lawyer)
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Images - Illustrations

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-Photograph taken by Stavrakis, Thanassis on 23.07.2018
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created by author
- Im37 p.66 Charts with victim data.
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created by author
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-Photograph taken by Gerakaki, Chrysa on 24.07.2018
- Im39 p.67 Places where victims were found
-personal research
created by author
- Im40 p.68 Places where people tried to escape
-personal research, experiences
created by author
- Im41 p.68 Sky above Athens on the day of the fire
-Photograph taken by Konstantinidis, Alkis (Reuters) on 23.07.2018
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-personal research
created by author
- Im43 p.70 Red Cross searching for survivors
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Photograph taken by Gerakaki, Chrysa on 24.07.2018

Images - Illustrations

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-Photograph taken by Bolari, Tatiana (Eurokinissi) on 29.07.2018
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- Im49 p.81 Car and burned land in NAT, Mati
-Photograph taken by Vrettos, Tassos on 19.07.2019
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-Photograph taken by Karmaniolas, Savvas (Agence France-Press, Getty Images) on 24.07.2018
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- Im51 p.82 Tree near the sea, Mati
-Photograph taken by Gerakaki, Chrysa on 23.07.2019
- Im52 p.85 Window of a burned House, Mati
-Photograph taken by Gerakaki, Chrysa on 23.07.2019
- Im53 p.87 Masterplan with interventions
created by author
- Im54 p.88 Marathonos Av. at the time of the fire, Mati
-Photograph taken by Gerakaki, Chrysa on 23.07.2019
- Im55 p.88 Port at the time of the fire, Mati
-Still from a Video taken by Verikokidis, Nikos on 23.07.2018
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- Im56 p.88 Cavo Beach at the time of the fire, Mati
-Photograph taken by Kalogerikos, Nikos on 23.07.2018
posted on his facebook account
<https://www.facebook.com/kalogerikos.nikos>, 04.08.2020
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-Photograph taken by Bolari, Tatiana (Eurokinissi) on 29.07.2018
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- Im59 p.89 House engulfed by the fire, Mati
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Images - Illustrations

- Im60 p.91 Proposed Steel Indication, Render
created by author
- Im61 p.91 Masterplan of indications
created by author
- Im62 p.93 Lookout Intervention, Collage of Idea
created by author
- Im63 p.93 Fire Lookout Tower, Mati
-Photograph courtesy Friends of Poke-O-Moonshine Fire Tower
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- Im64 p.94 Lookout Intervention, Site plan
created by author
- Im65 p.95 Lookout Intervention, Plans
created by author
- Im66 p.96 Lookout Intervention, Sections and Views
created by author
- Im67 p.97 Lookout Intervention, Axonometric Drawing
created by author
- Im68 p.99 Shelter Intervention, Collage of Idea
created by author
- Im69 p.99 Port at the time of the fire, Mati
-Still from a Video taken by Verikokidis, Nikos on 23.07.2018
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yy-jRpdkf10>, 04.08.2020
- Im70 p.100 Shelter Intervention, Site plan
created by author
- Im71 p.101 Shelter Intervention, Plans
created by author
- Im72 p.102 Shelter Intervention, Sections and Views
created by author
- Im73 p.103 Shelter Intervention, Axonometric Drawing
created by author
- Im74 p.105 Cavo Beach at the time of the fire, Mati
-Photograph taken by Kalogerikos, Nikos on 23.07.2018
posted on his facebook account
<https://www.facebook.com/kalogerikos.nikos>, 04.08.2020
- Im75 p.105 Pier Intervention, Collage of Idea
created by author
- Im76 p.106 Pier Intervention, Site Plan
created by author
- Im77 p.106 Pier Intervention, Plan
created by author
- Im78 p.107 Pier Intervention, Section and View
created by author

- Im79 p.107 Shelter Intervention, Axonometric Drawing
created by author
- Im80 p.109 Staircase Intervention, Collage of Idea
created by author
- Im81 p.109 Fragkos Property, Mati
-Photograph taken by Bolari, Tatiana (Eurokinissi) on 29.07.2018
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- Im82 p.110 Staircase Intervention, Site Plan
created by author
- Im83 p.110 Pier Intervention, Plan
created by author
- Im84 p.111 Pier Intervention, Plan
created by author
- Im85 p.111 Pier Intervention, Views
created by author
- Im86 p.112 Shelter Intervention, Axonometric Drawing
created by author
- Im87 p.112 Memorial Intervention, Pictogramms
created by author
- Im88 p.114 Memorial Intervention, Site Plan
created by author
- Im89 p.120 Memorial Intervention, Render - Entrance
created by author
- Im90 p.121 Memorial Intervention, Model
created by author
- Im91 p.121 Memorial Intervention, Model
created by author
- Im92 p.122 Memorial Intervention, Plan - Entrance
created by author
- Im93 p.123 Memorial Intervention, Plan - Garden of the Past
created by author
- Im94 p.124 Memorial Intervention, Section A-A
created by author
- Im95 p.124 Memorial Intervention, Section B-B
created by author
- Im96 p.125 Memorial Intervention, Section A-A
created by author
- Im97 p.125 Memorial Intervention, Section B-B
created by author
- Im98 p.126 Memorial Intervention, Entrance Views (East -West)
created by author
- Im99 p.127 Memorial Intervention, Section D-D
created by author
- Im100 p.128 Memorial Intervention, Plan - Garden of Fire and Education center
created by author
- Im101 p.129 Memorial Intervention, Plan - Garden of Fire and Education center
created by author
- Im102 p.130 Memorial Intervention, Section A-A
created by author
- Im103 p.130 Memorial Intervention, Section B-B
created by author
- Im104 p.130 Memorial Intervention, Section C-C
created by author
- Im105 p.131 Memorial Intervention, Section A-A
created by author
- Im106 p.131 Memorial Intervention, Section B-B
created by author
- Im107 p.131 Memorial Intervention, Section C-C
created by author
- Im108 p.132 Memorial Intervention, Plan - Garden of Grief
created by author
- Im109 p.133 Memorial Intervention, Plan - Catharsis
created by author
- Im110 p.134 Memorial Intervention, Section A-A
created by author
- Im111 p.134 Memorial Intervention, Section B-B
created by author
- Im112 p.135 Memorial Intervention, Section A-A
created by author
- Im113 p.135 Memorial Intervention, Section B-B
created by author
- Im114 p.136 Memorial Intervention, Render - Garden of the Past
created by author
- Im115 p.137 Memorial Intervention, Render - Garden of Fire
created by author
- Im116 p.138 Memorial Intervention, Render - Garden of Grief
created by author
- Im117 p.139 Memorial Intervention, Render - Garden of Absence
created by author
- Im118 p.140 Memorial Intervention, Render - Catharsis
created by author
- Im119 p.141 Memorial Intervention, Render - Catharsis
created by author
- Im120 p.142 Memorial Intervention, Render - Museum
created by author

- Im121 p.143 Memorial Intervention, Museum Plan alternatives
created by author
- Im122 p.144 Memorial Intervention, Render - Seminar Room
created by author
- Im123 p.145 Memorial Intervention, Render - Ramp
created by author
- Im124 p.146 Memorial Intervention, Site Plan with color
created by author
- Im125 p.149 Memorial Intervention, Axonometric Drawing
created by author
- Im126 p.151 Cavo Cafe, Mati
-Photograph taken by Gerakaki, Chrysa on 23.07.2019
- Im127 p.153 Interventions, Material Study
created by author
- Im128 p.153 Interventions, Construction Detail
created by author
- Im129 p.154 Memorial Intervention, Facade Detail - Entrance
created by author
- Im130 p.154 Memorial Intervention, Horizontal Section Detail A
created by author
- Im131 p.154 Memorial Intervention, Horizontal Section Detail B
created by author
- Im132 p.155 Memorial Intervention, Vertical Section Costruction
Detail
created by author
- Im133 p.157 Burned House, Mati
-Photograph taken by Gerakaki, Chrysa on 23.07.2019
- Im134 p.158 Burned House, Mati
-Photograph taken by Gerakaki, Chrysa on 23.07.2019
- Im135 p.159 Burned Piano at a House, Mati
-Photograph taken by Gerakaki, Chrysa on 23.07.2019
- Im136 p.162 Memorial Intervention, Render Details
created by author
- Im137 p.163 Memorial Intervention, Render Details
created by author

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This project is dedicated to:

Δημητρίου, Αικατερίνη, Ζωή, Δημήτριος, Αιμιλία, Ευθύμιος, Τάνια, Μαρία, Βασίλειος, Σοφία, Αγγελική, Θέκλα, Μαργαρίτα, Παναγιώτης, Αργύριος, Χαράλαμπος, Ευστράτιος, Ιωάννης, Σπυρίδων, Μαρία, Μαριάνθη, Ιωάννης, Παρασκευή, Νικόλαος, Σμαράγδα, Γαρυφαλλιά, Αθηνά, Βασίλειος, Μάρκος, Πάρης, Κωνσταντίνος, Ιάκωβος, Μαρία, Ιωάννης, Πιπίνα, Παναγιώτης, Γεώργιος, Δημήτριος, Επαμεινώνδας, Νικόλαος, Μαρία, Χρηστος, Μαριάνθη, Βασιλεία, Μιχαήλ, Αγγελική, Άγγελος, Βασιλεία, Βίκτωρας, Μαρία, Ασπασία, Κατίνα, Νικολέτα, Κωστούλα, Μαρία, Βασιλική, Στυλιανός, Ιωάννης, Παναγιώτης, Φλόρα, Σπυρίδων, Μοίρα, Ευαγγελία, Διονύσιος, Λεωνίδα, Ευγενία, Μιχαήλ, Ελένη, Ευαγγελία, Καλλιόπη, Ελένη, Ζαμπέτα, Δημήτριος, Κασσιανή, Χρύσα, Σπύρος, Θάλεια, Δημήτριος, Δημήτριος, Θεοδώρα, Παύλος, Βίκτωρας, Φίλιππος, Σοφία, Σοφία, Βασιλική, Ανδρέας, Γρηγόριος, Εβίτα, Παναγιωτης, Ελισαβετ, Νικόλαος, Εβελίνα, Ευπραξία, Μαρίλια, Βασιλική, Στυλιανη, Dirk, Beata Terasa, Kacper Nikolaj, Brian and all those affected by the fire.

Statement of Authorship

I hereby declare that the present master thesis was composed by myself and that the work contained herein is my own.

I have not used any sources other than those listed in the bibliography and identified as references. All formulations and concepts taken verbatim or in substance from printed or unprinted material or from the Internet have been cited according to the rules of good scientific practice and indicated by footnotes or other exact references to the original source.

I further declare that I have not submitted this thesis at any other institution in order to obtain a degree.

Chrysa Gerakaki
Weimar, 04 Oktober 2020
