

GRONINGEN (E12)



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The 2008-2020 Groningen Masterplan builds its planning on the strategic location of the city of Groningen on the North of the Netherlands. It highlights the importance of the existing mesh of transportation networks, by air, land and water and the necessity to further strengthen their function and interconnectivity. Such networks allow the city of Groningen to be in constant collaboration and exchange with its neighbouring satellite cities of Assen, Drachten, Winschoten on a regional level and the rest of the country and the world in a supra-regional scale.

As put forth in the programmatic description of the Masterplan, the position of Groningen on the Northern Development Axis and its qualities as a national urban network provide abundant opportunities in an international, national and regional perspective. The joined vision that the Municipalities of Assen and Groningen share the past fifteen years are a valuable asset for the future development of the area; they raise the challenge of any proposal for the European competition site beyond the strict limits of the city of Groningen itself.

The idea of a mini metropolis is what stimulates our thinking and drives our design proposal. To come up with functions and urban typologies that allude to the immediate needs of the city yet share the vision of inter-regional collaboration, of joined initiatives.

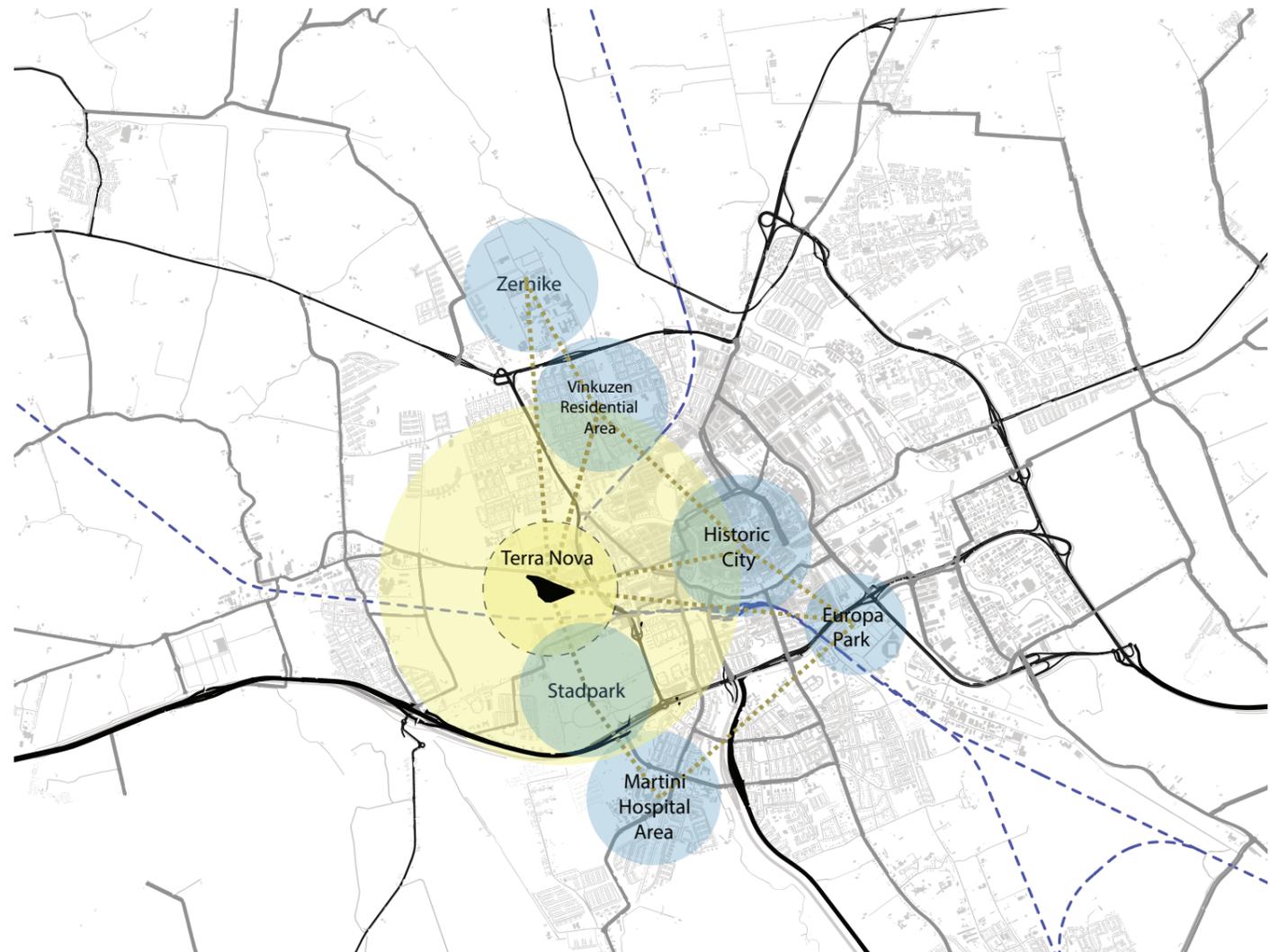
The European 12 competition strategic site, broadly defined as the area west of the Central Train Station, dissected by the Hoendiep canal, and circumscribing the former Suikerunie factory in the south and the Furniture Boulevard on the north, is in close proximity to a series of important urban clusters of the city, the Central Railway Station area, the Historic City Center, the Stadspark to name a few. Purely for reasons of internal organization and risk management the area has been excluded from the 2008-2020 phase of strategic planning of the city. The competition of European comes to raise anew the question regarding the use of this area, its potential to complement the strategic planning of the city so far or even to exceed it, presenting ideas that could either conform to the hierarchical structure of the city or break away with it.

Within the broader context of Groninger as mini-Metropolis and capital of the North, **we set up to explore ways in which the strategic site of the European area could transform itself from its current state as the backyard of the city to one of its most prominent destinations and spectacles.** In its former state, up to the beginning of the demolition of the factory buildings, the site was pretty much determined, both in terms of land use and identity. The 'brutal' act of demolition signals a turning point for the urban regeneration of the site. A dense amalgam of industrial structures, the house of a very labor-intensive production process is wiped out, deleted as if it had never existed. The last remnants of the almost centennial history of the factory, a brick chimney and small part of the building stand amidst a vast tabula rasa of urban land; forgotten pixels in an image that seems to belong to the realm of computer graphics rather than of reality. We like to face the challenge of such a bold intervention and set it almost as a paradigm.

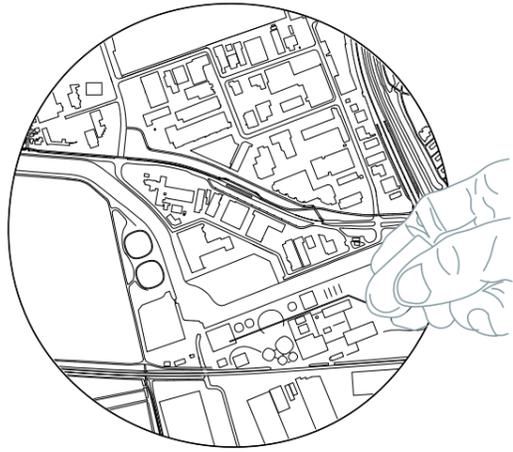
The act of removal becomes a design tool, a first necessary stage to create a new substrate to work with.

We set out a new infrastructure of interventions rather than a singular act. We think of process and the ripple effect of results. We seek foremost a new identity on which to place a barrage of design steps. We question the meaning of the words urban innovation and experimental garden for new urban developments. To the competition brief we answer: Does it entail **The design of an iconic building** as a source of inspiration for area development — as has happened frequently in Groningen? Or is there rather a need here for a more modest **architectural intervention** but then one **that acts as a catalyst for a spectacular transformation for this part of the city.** We wish to aggregate the urban mesh of Groningen with another important node.

The left-over character of the site becomes its greatest premise. We respond to the brief of the competition by laying out on this new land, this Terra Nova, the seed of multi-functionality. We wish not to overdetermine the program at this stage, only to point out that the new land is born out of the city, its paths being the natural extension of the streetscape, its infrastructure, physical and virtual, contributing to the extensive network of educational and research institutions of the city.



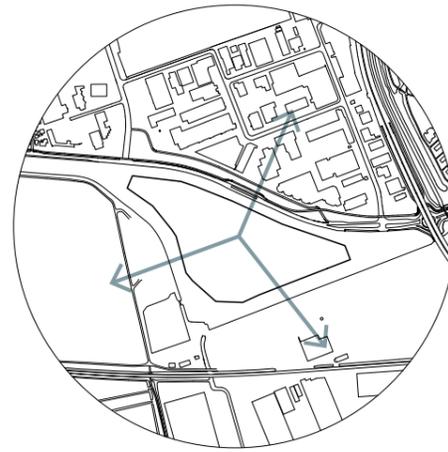
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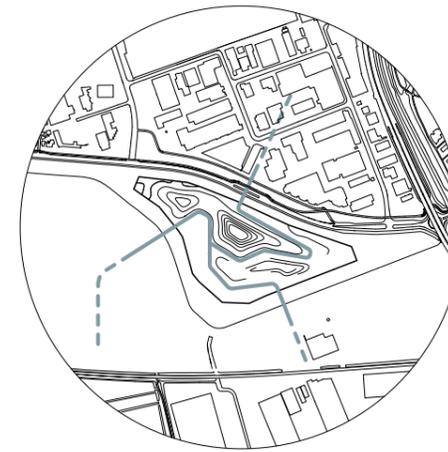
The industrial past of the area is gradually being wiped out with the exception of one brick chimney and a small part of the former sugar factory, left over as symbolic landmarks.



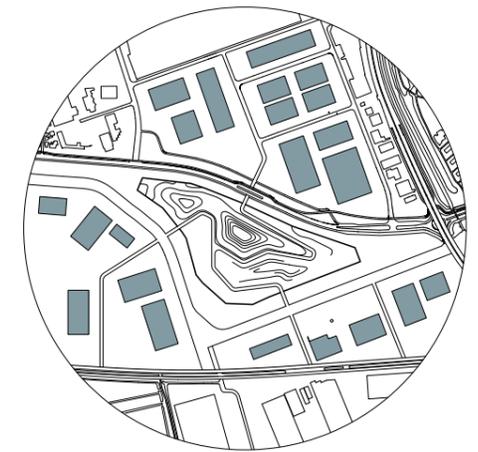
Following its predecessor across the canal, the poor-performing southern side of the Hoendiep furniture boulevard is removed. The only function still remaining on the island is that of KEMA factory.



A new canal is opened along the Hoendiep Avenue. Automatically the land assumes a new identity, that of an island. It is cut off from the "mainland" only to be reconnected in a stronger and most profound way. The center of the island becomes the pivot point for the development of the whole surrounding area.



The system of roads introduced serve a dual purpose. To connect the island in the best manner to its surroundings and to create a partitioning that can serve for diverse programmatic uses. The roads are intended for bicycle, public transport and emergency vehicles only.



In due time the development of the island will induce the development of the whole region. The presence of the island alone is bound to create a raise in the land value of its surroundings. The shed-like structures of the Furniture District would potentially be organized in more permanent structures. A variety of new land uses, both temporary and permanent will complete the planning process.



We consider the 'brittle' nature of the Dutch landscape. A landscape inhabited under the premise of technological ingenuity, owing its longevity to the capacity of the human intellect. Being Dutch means growing up under this fine line between the natural and the man made, the natural and the artificial, between what would naturally exist and what exists only as the desire of man.

The Hoendiep canal is physically connected to - part of this vast technical undertaking of man. A barrier and a splendid opportunity to quote the competition organizers. To work with the canal means to take into account this vast network and consider its importance. The first act of our architectural intervention is one of hydrological nature. Through the opening up of a new canal however we do a lot more than to reorganize slightly the stream of the water. We create a new artificial boundary, a new entity we choose to call the island (despite the fact that all of the country is more or less islands of some sort).

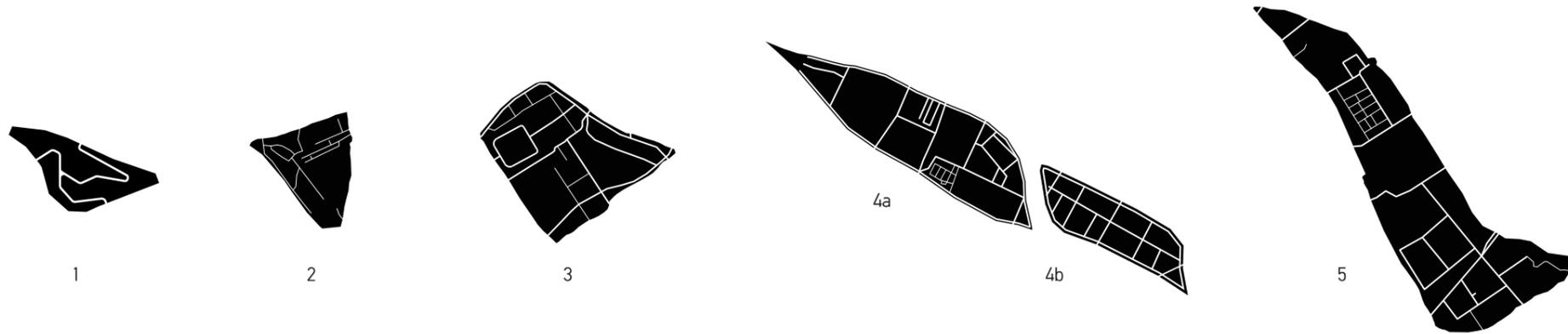
By treating it as an island we automatically introduce the potential of a new identity.

Once the technological infrastructure proves stable and the threat of a natural disaster is diminished man starts to explore further this potential marriage of nature and technology. Artificiality becomes then an axiom and a modus operandi - the natural can never again exist without the technique. The engineers set new frontiers in the manipulation of nature to fulfil man's desire.

Yet only the outline of the island does not suffice to grant it a new identity.

We decide to build on the idea of nature as artifice, of land as a sort of malleable piece of paper. We introduce imaginary geological forces. Mountains are built, some made to look 'natural', others made to look artificial. The program is buried underneath. Now we have the straight and the curved, the horizontal and the oblique in one. We have plateaus, valleys and canyons, a beach and a small biotope, swimming tanks and open air theatres. And in the interior a powerhouse of knowledge, research facilities, innovation.

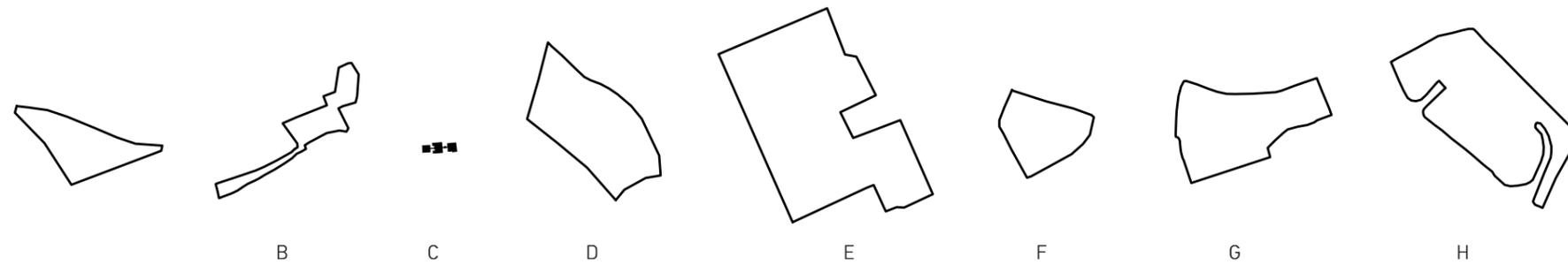
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URBAN ISLAND We attempt a comparison between our island and other such 'urban islands'. We wish to point out the importance that such urban clusters hold for their respective cities. In Venice, the island of Giardini, of a similar scale, hosts annually the Venice Biennale. In Berlin the Museum Insel is a famous destination for cultural sightseeing. In Paris the Ile de la Cite is synonymous to the historical city center.

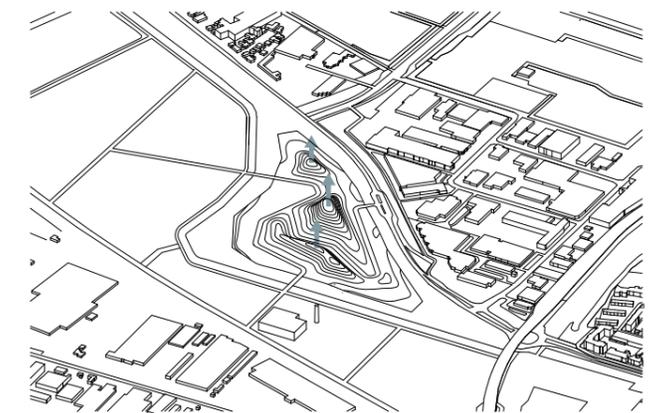
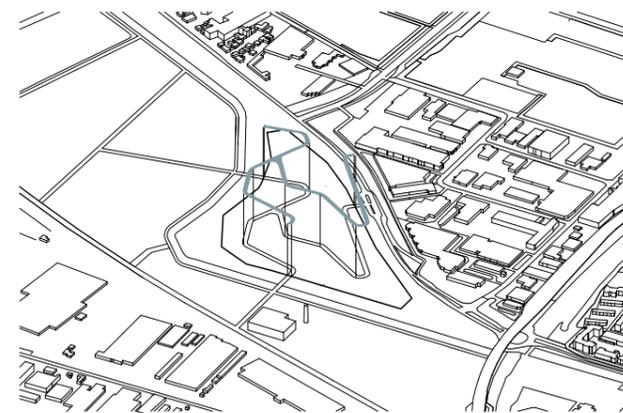
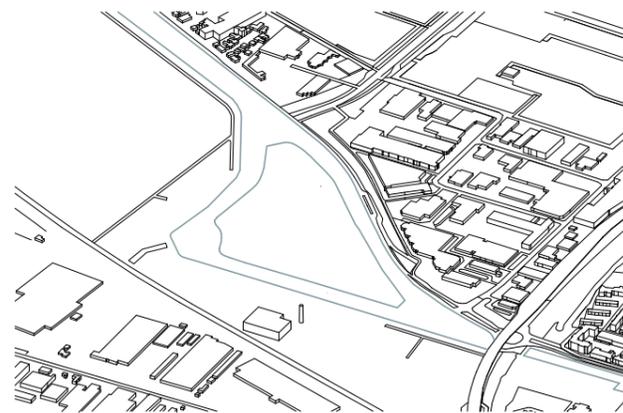
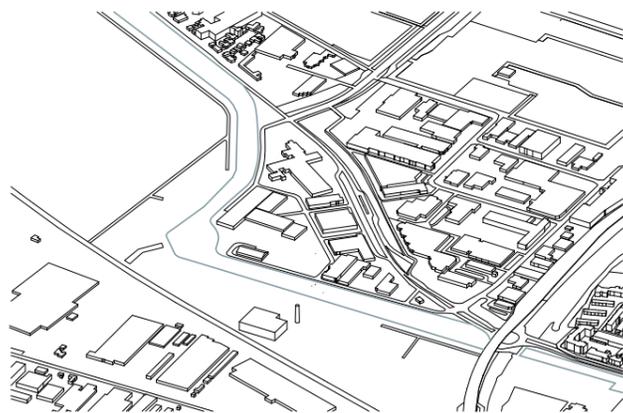
- 1. Terra Nova / Groningen
- 2. Giardini / Venice
- 3. Christianborg / Copenhagen
- 4a. Ile de la Cite / Paris
- 4b. Ile Saint-Louis / Paris
- 5. Museum Insel / Berlin

A



DE DYNAMOS "They are the carriers of the urban and regional economy. They offer quality and opportunities in a national and international perspective. These are the areas that have potential and developmental scope and are the boosters of new developments, often with an international and inter-regional spread."

- A. Terra Nova
- B. Historic Center / Grote Markt
- C. Groningen Museum
- D. UMCG
- E. Zernikecomplex
- F. Martini Ziekenhuis
- G. Central Train Station
- H. Europapark



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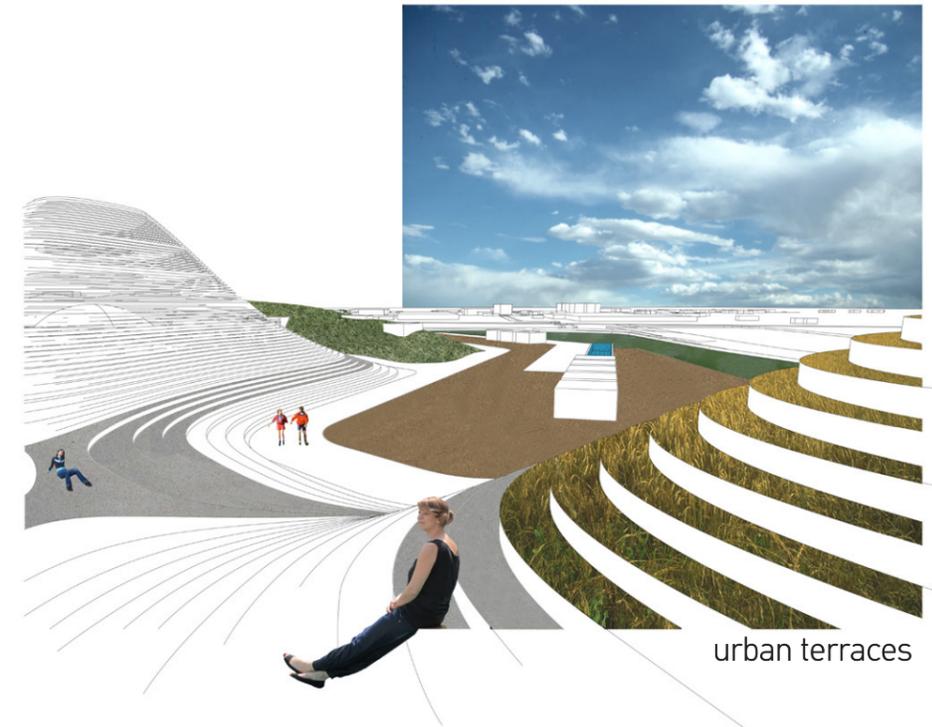
FROM MONO-LARGE TO MULTI-MIX

We consider the existing structures of the strategic site redundant. Their poor 'tin-box' quality lacks identity and can only deteriorate further. Their poor performance makes our decision lighter. The transformation of such tin-box structures would have been possible. Yet only as a temporary solution.

After the ground is cleared all that is left is the potential generated from the city itself - the dynamics of the urban surroundings. We see a ground plane full of potential. A ground that is pushed upwards to host a diverse program. We don't abolish the parameter of largeness but we push it to its extreme. We wish to create a cluster of multiple program and users, wrapped under an iconic architectural gesture.



city panorama



urban terraces



canyon



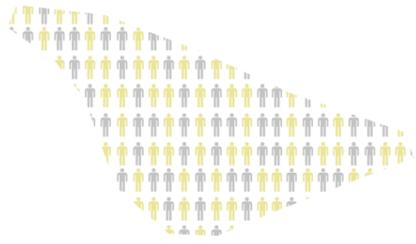
biotope



swimming pool

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IDENTIFYING PROGRAM TYPOLOGIES ON THE SITE



MIXING AND ADDING NEW PROGRAM TYPOLOGIES



IDENTIFYING THE STAKEHOLDERS



PREDICTING THE NEW STAKEHOLDERS

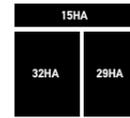


- Retail
- Industry
- Recreation
- Education
- Research

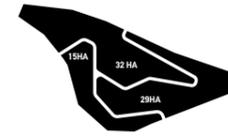
- Kema
- Furniture Retail
- UMCG
- General Public
- Municipality
- Cultural Initiatives



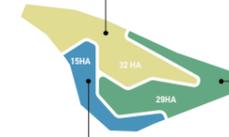
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PROGRAM DIVISION



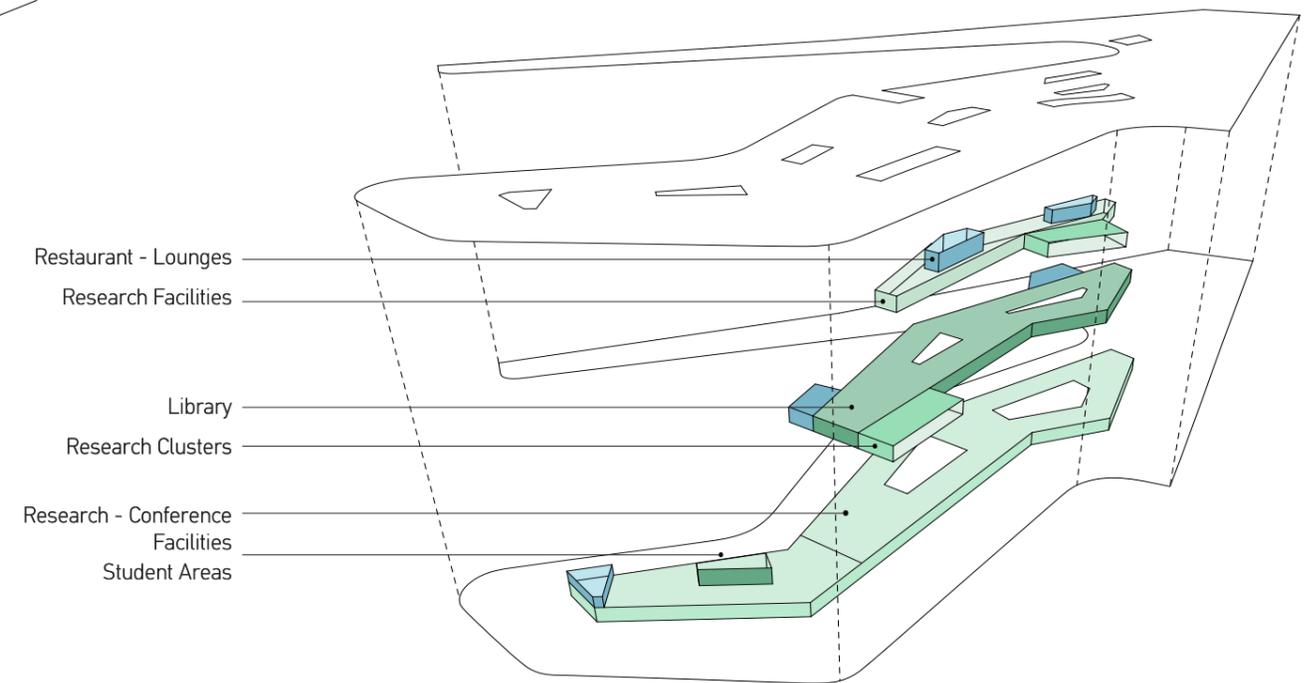
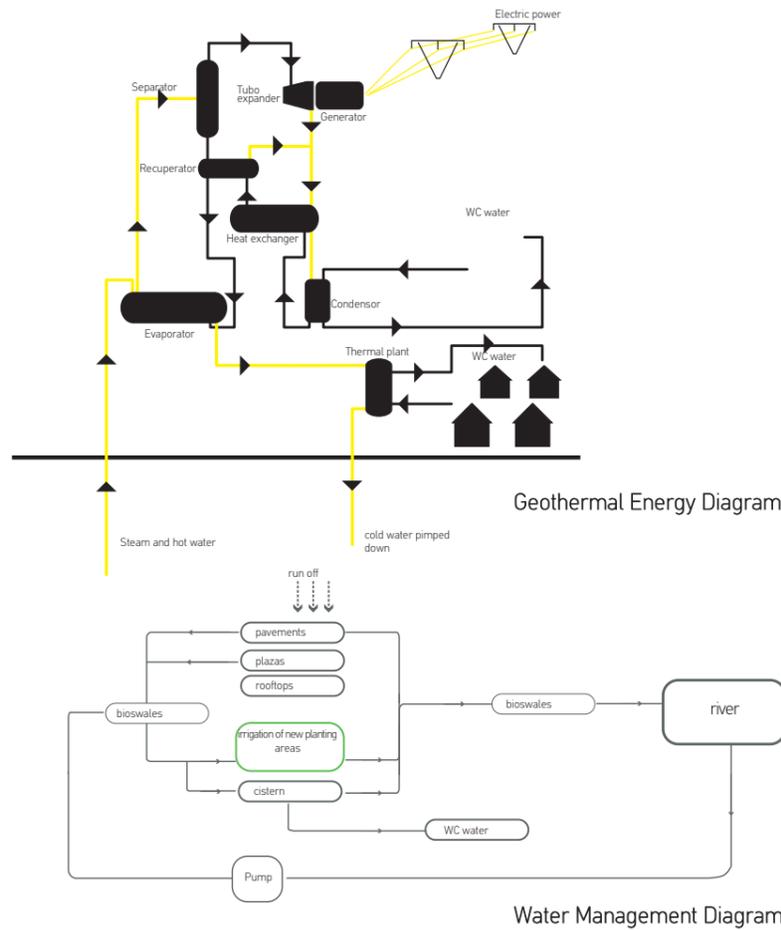
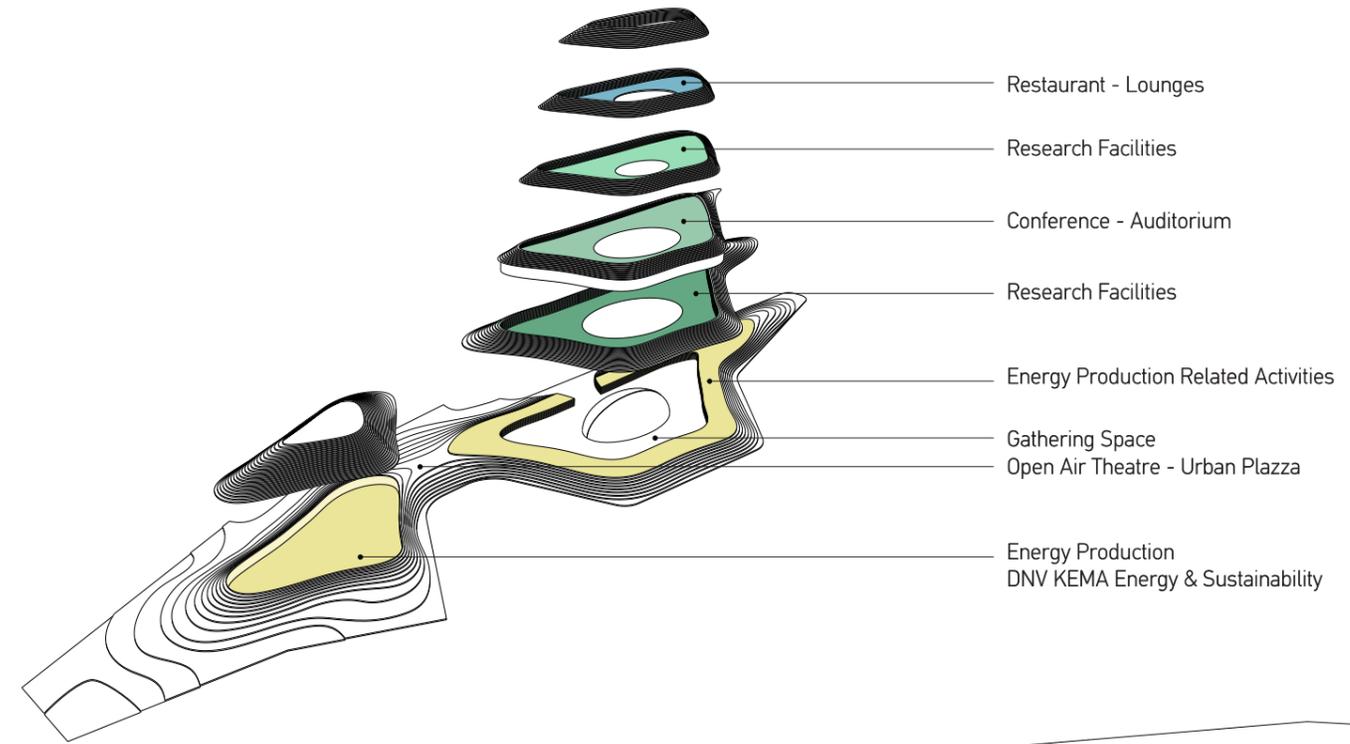
ADAPTING THE PROGRAM TO THE SITE



RECREATIONAL LANDSCAPE

URBAN LANDSCAPE

ECOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE



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One island, broken down in three distinct zones.

Each zone assumes a different character, in terms of program and architectural expression.

All three come together to form a coherent system that through its diversity and multi-functionality becomes a prototype of urban development

The first zone builds upon the theme of an urban landscape. The mountains are angled, built as stepped surfaces. A series of amphitheatres ideal for spontaneous events and a continuous stepping up to the two plateaus, where different views of the island and the city are offered. Partially planted, partially hard surface this part of the island belongs more to the city and the man-made than it does to nature. Inside the program could follow the thematic axis of energy and research related to energy production and sustainability. The KEMA factory, which continues to be housed under one of the two shells could prove to have a major role in this part of the island.

The second zone concentrates on the theme of ecology. The mountain form approximates a natural mountain one can easily climb on. This part of the island meets the water in a soft manner. Here nature comes to develop spontaneously. A biotope will eventually grow on today's parking lots. Inside multi-task research facilities could be available to students, young professionals, start-up companies. A powerhouse of creativity.

The third zone is purely devoted to recreation and sports. A sand beach, large swimming pools, beach volley courts, wellness centers. A live manifestation why Groningen is a pioneer in the Medical and Healthy Aging sector.

