



Design

North Sea: Landscapes of Coexistence
Transitional Territories Studio 2019-2020
North Sea: Topography of Chance

Design Report

The Naked Island

Unveiling the Dichotomy
of Productive and Romantic Territories

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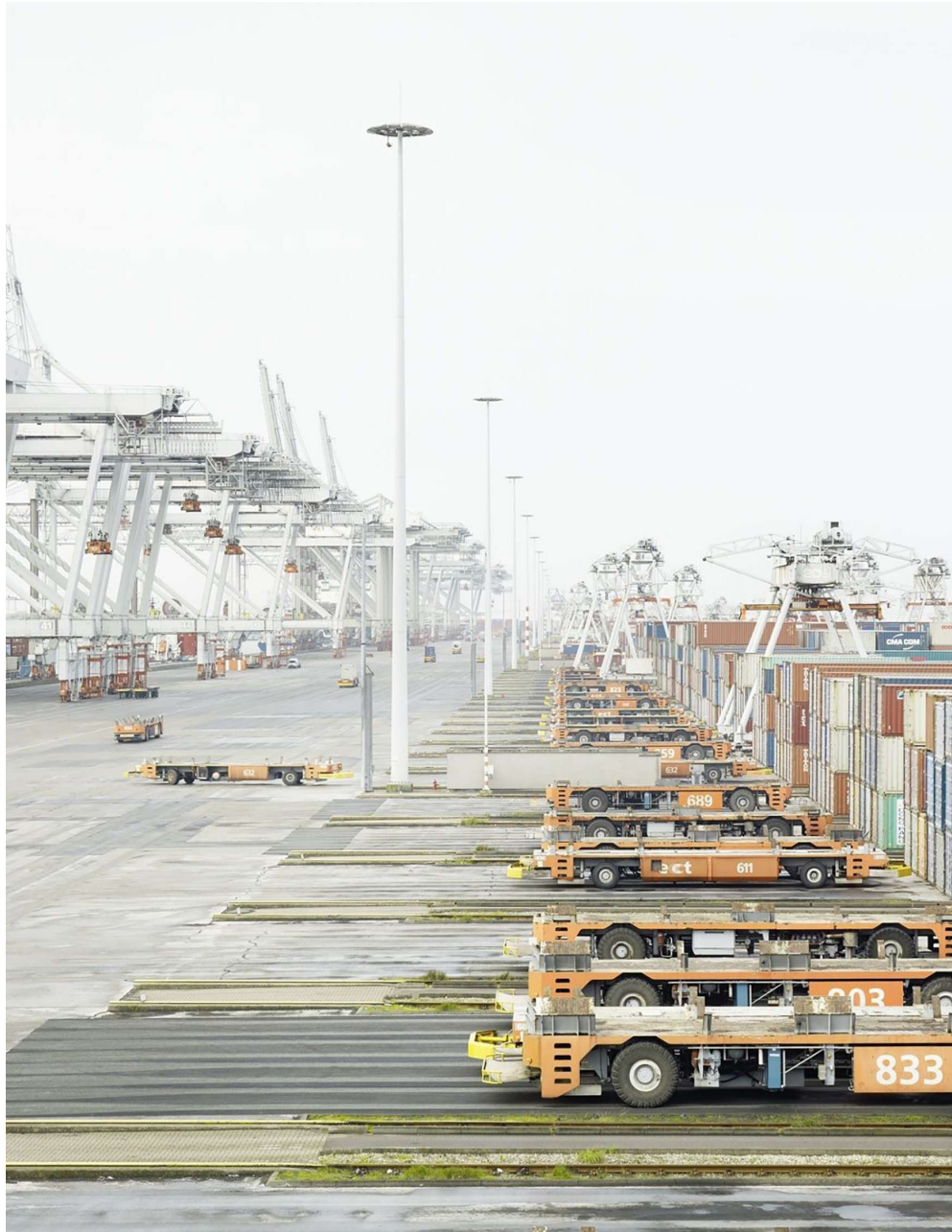
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Proposition

Land and Sea are of a very different kind. One roots people to their contexts, tying them to its borders, properties and complex systems of relations; the other suggests the possibility for limit-less, unconditional wandering, an overwhelming experience of movement, in both space and time. This ancient tension between the anthropic process of colonizing Land – as the space of exploitation for collective survival – and the unseizable wilderness of the Sea – the realm of individual bravery – is the founding act of western societies. However, this delicate balance – or perpetual confrontation – is now endangered by its own premises. Land, as intrinsically limited, is reaching its maximum capacity: to ensure our survival and growth, the Sea is being identified as the new frontline for the rationalizing logics of territorialization.

The Sea-as-a-territory is a political imposition: it is the tool for the collectivity – or the state – to enforce its hegemony on the sea-scape. Being the Sea a context-less space, dynamic, free from roots and limitations, the logics of colonization and exploitation are projected with even more harshness and strength. The Sea is facing the risk to lose its original role as memory of individual freedom – beyond the state; nevertheless, its exploitation is crucial to the survival of the collectivity and cannot be avoided. Therefore, the notion of the Sea-as-a-territory needs to be mitigated, in order to re-establish a coexistence of opposites, or at least to create awareness of the dualistic relation between the two paradigms of Land and Sea.

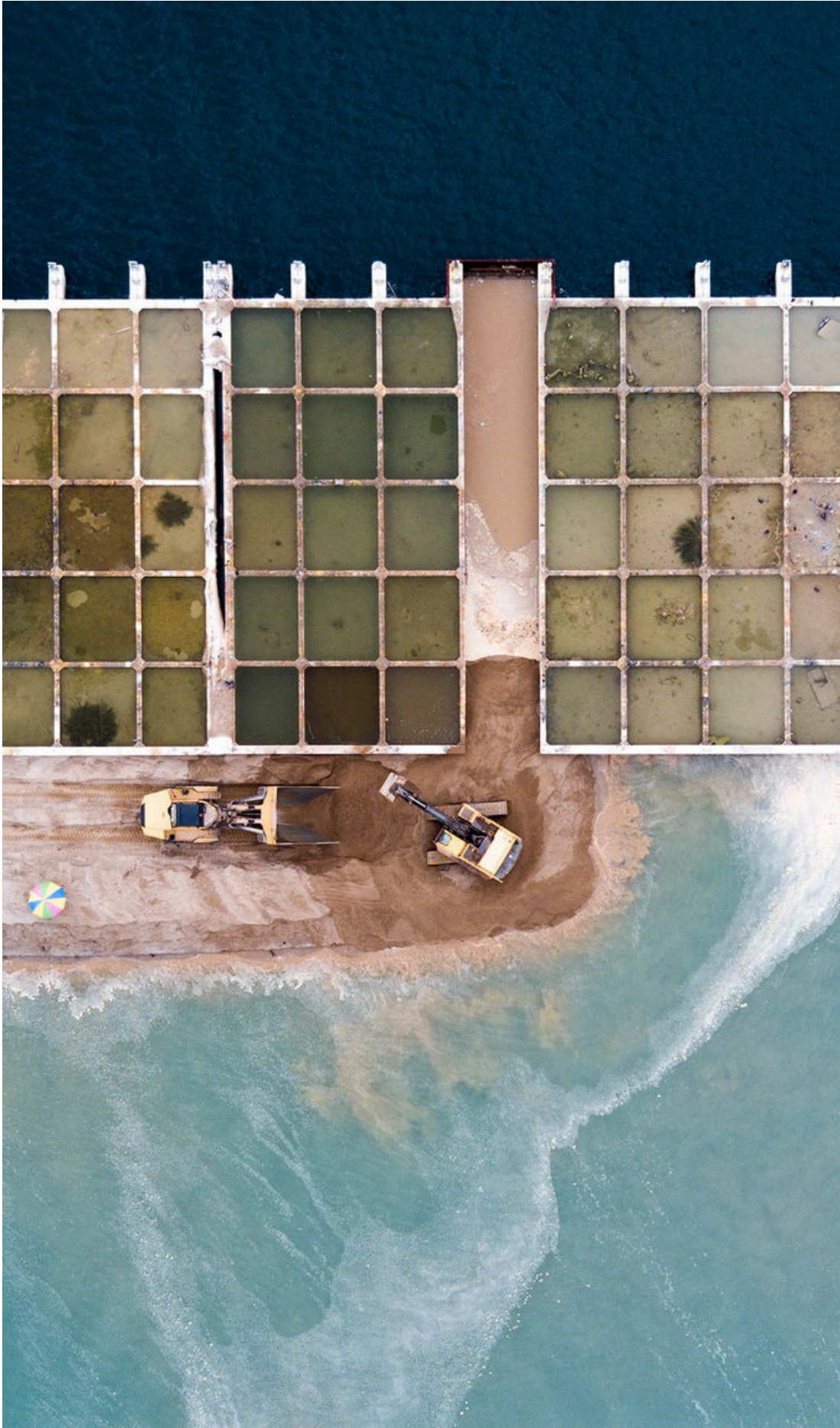
The North Sea is urbanizing quickly and violently; such trends appear to be most visible in the Flemish Coast, a region which is deeply struggling to rule on its waters – groundwater and sea – while planning further expansions towards the sea, to protect the coast from storm waves. To meet the needs of the region – and of the collectivity – while mitigating the territorialization processes towards the Sea, the construction of an island is proposed, to be realized in four phases: the **formation** (I) or the act of imposing order with the definition of a protective wall; the **accommodation** (II) or the territorial reclamation using natural conditions; the **production** (III) or the desalination of seawater as act of exploitation; and the **colonization** (IV) or the human element, through the construction of a system of pools. The constant confrontation of these four elements – the wall, the landscape-in-formation, the desalination plant, the baths – constitutes the possibility for a different interpretation to the Sea-as-a-territory. Their relation – spatial and temporal – might become the trigger for a new consciousness on the mitigated narrative of territorialization, this time ruled by the intrinsic condition of ephemerality of the process itself. The island-as-an-outpost – or the island-machine – is a fortress; and fortresses are always doomed to surrender.

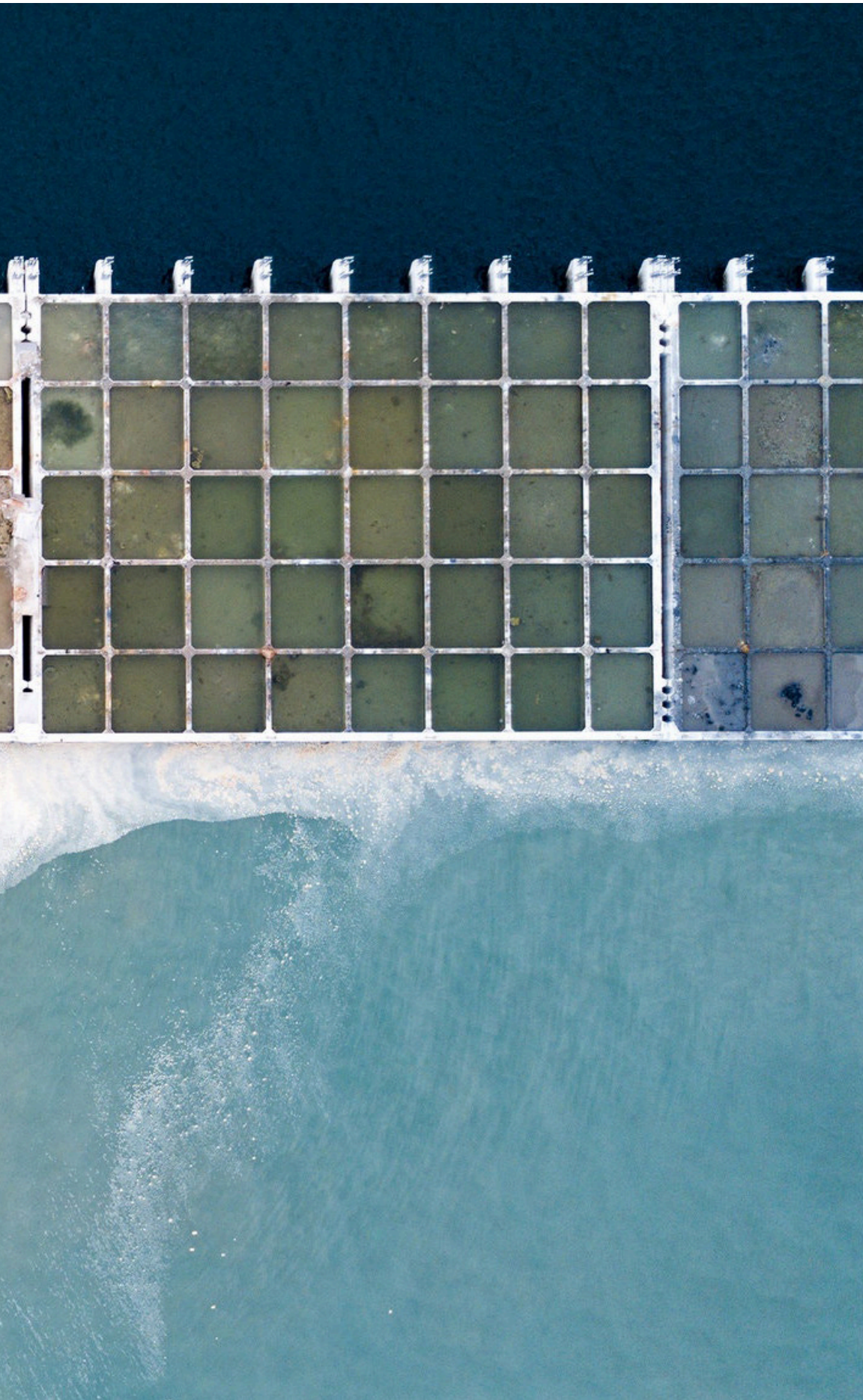
sources:

- Adams, R.E., *Mare Magnum: Urbanization of Land and Sea* (Chicago, 2015).
 Cacciari, M., *Arcipelago* (Milano: Adelphi Edizioni, 1997).
 Deleuze, G., *L'île déserte et autres textes 1953-1974* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2002).
 Elden, S., *Terror and Territory* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).
 Guérard, C., *Philosophie légère de la mer* (Paris: Edition des Equateurs, 2006).
 Schmitt, C., *Land and Sea* (New York: Telos Press Publishing, 2015; first ed. *Land und Meer*, 1942).

H. Spohler, *In Between, Container Terminal*,
 Rotterdam (NL), 2017.

source: *Atlas of Places*





1.
THE ISLAND:
OUTPOST

1. *Ianus* (or *Janus*) is the Roman god of gates, duality, transitions, beginnings and endings, future and past. The doors of its temple were open only in times of war.

1.1. Reclamation, Movement, Edge

The Naked Island is an Outpost. It is the projection of Land on Sea, thus the base-camp for future actions of reclamation or exploitation; it is also the furthest piece-of-land on sea, thus the point where all the pipelines, cables, radio-waves, light signals are first collected. It is both a lighthouse and a gate: *Ianua* (1). It protects the coast from storms, and it establishes - or imposes! - the human presence on the previously “hostile” sea territory.

Despite the shallow waters of the Flemish Coastal Region, the foundation of the Naked Island is not an easy task. This will happen in four separate *phases of reclamation*, each introducing new opportunities of interaction: with natural conditions - winds, waves, sediments flows - anthropic processes - sediments accumulation, water desalination, energy harvesting - and human senses - eyesight, hearing, memory.

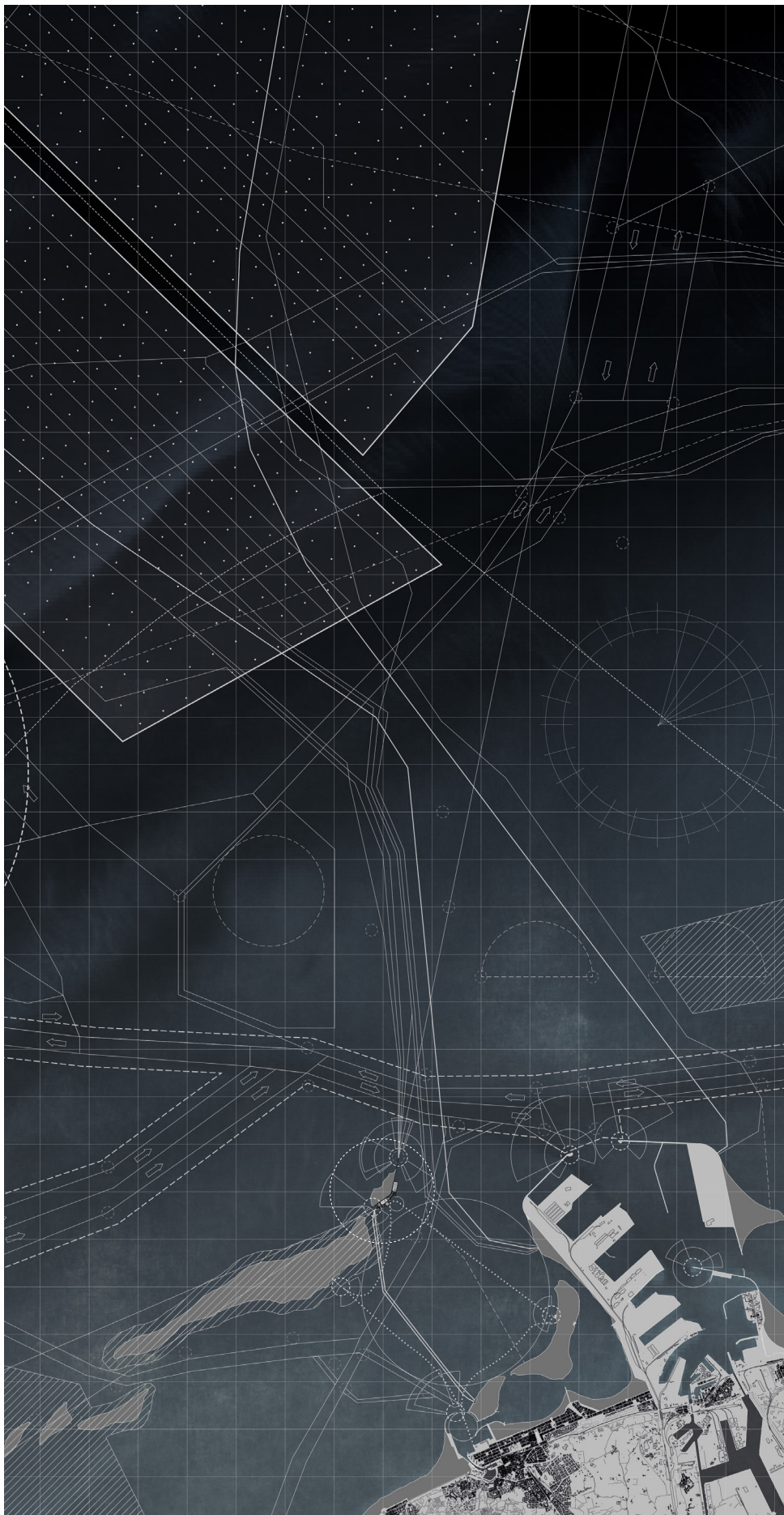
“The formation (I) and accommodation (II) are the first and second of four phases which constitute the linear narrative of definition of the machine, in parallel to the linear process of territorial reclamation: a minimal anthropic imposition – a wall, interacting with the mentioned natural conditions, creates the opportunity for the island to exist. This act questions our understanding of what is natural and what is artificial, the first blurred edge. Then, the production (III): on the other side of the wall, protected from the storm waves, the desalination plant is assembled. Entirely powered by offshore renewable sources – wind and “blue” energy – its cycles are integrated in the existing regional water management, giving shape to a circular system of water use, re-cycle and discharge: an environmentally harmless outcome from a hyper-technological mindset. Again, the edge is blurred: can human ingenuity really coexist with natural cycles? Finally, the phase of colonization (IV) introduces the human presence in the factory: most of the products of the industrial process are indeed locally re-used in a system of public baths. These – and the artificial island as a whole – act as the self-celebrative landmark of the human achievements on sea territorialization: a profusion of *hybris*, which is anyway stemmed by the parasitic conditions of the architecture of the baths, a reminder of the ephemeral condition of the whole anthropic structure.” (2)

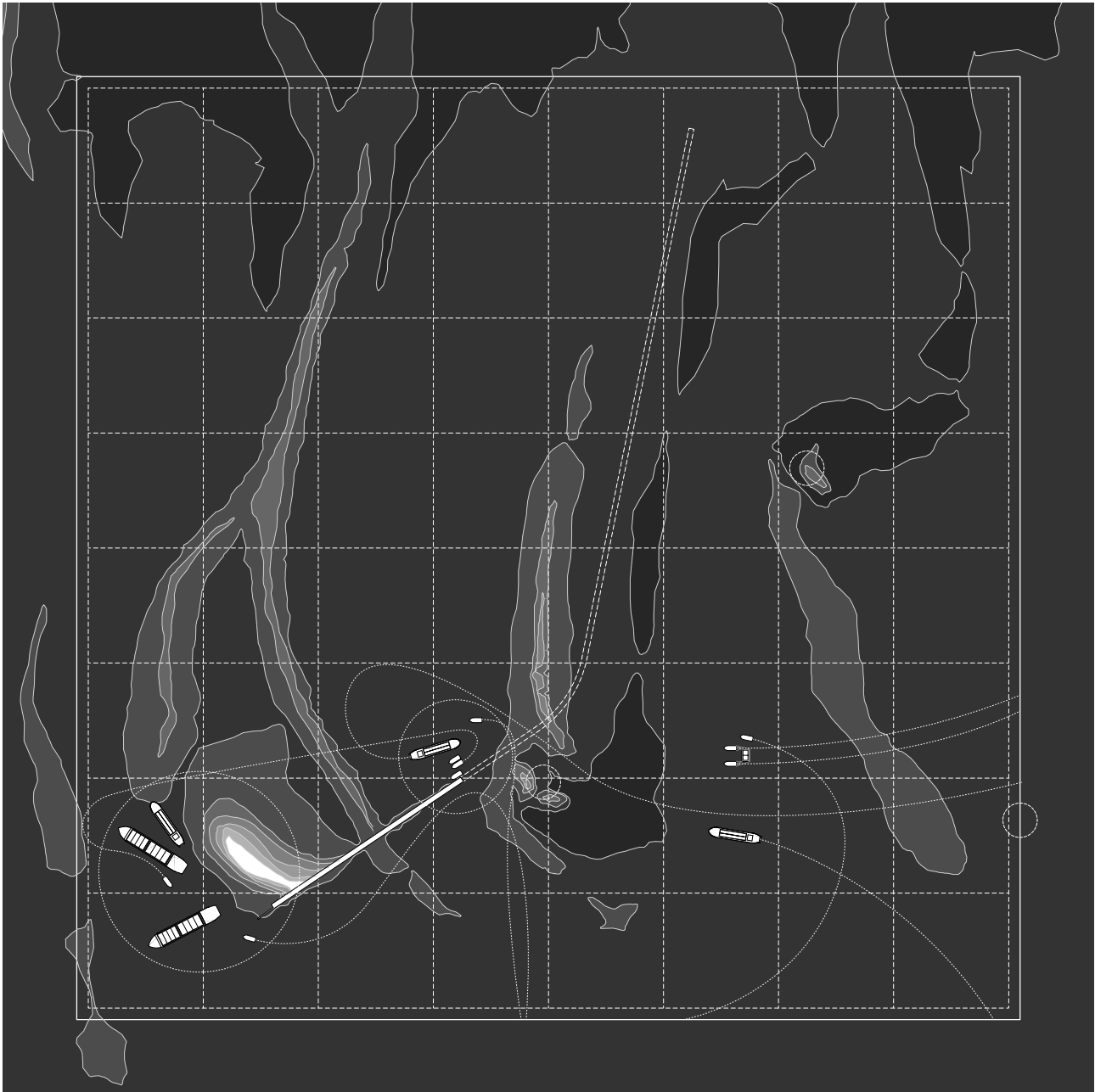
2. An extract from the Reflection Paper.

Moreover, four *movements* - or journeys - are proposed as design principles, each in accordance to one of the four reclamation phases: the path - the ferry experience (I); the cycle - the natural landscape (II); the process - the factory (III); the ritual - the human component (IV). The relations among these elements - the *edges* which define them - constitute the real essence of the Naked Island.

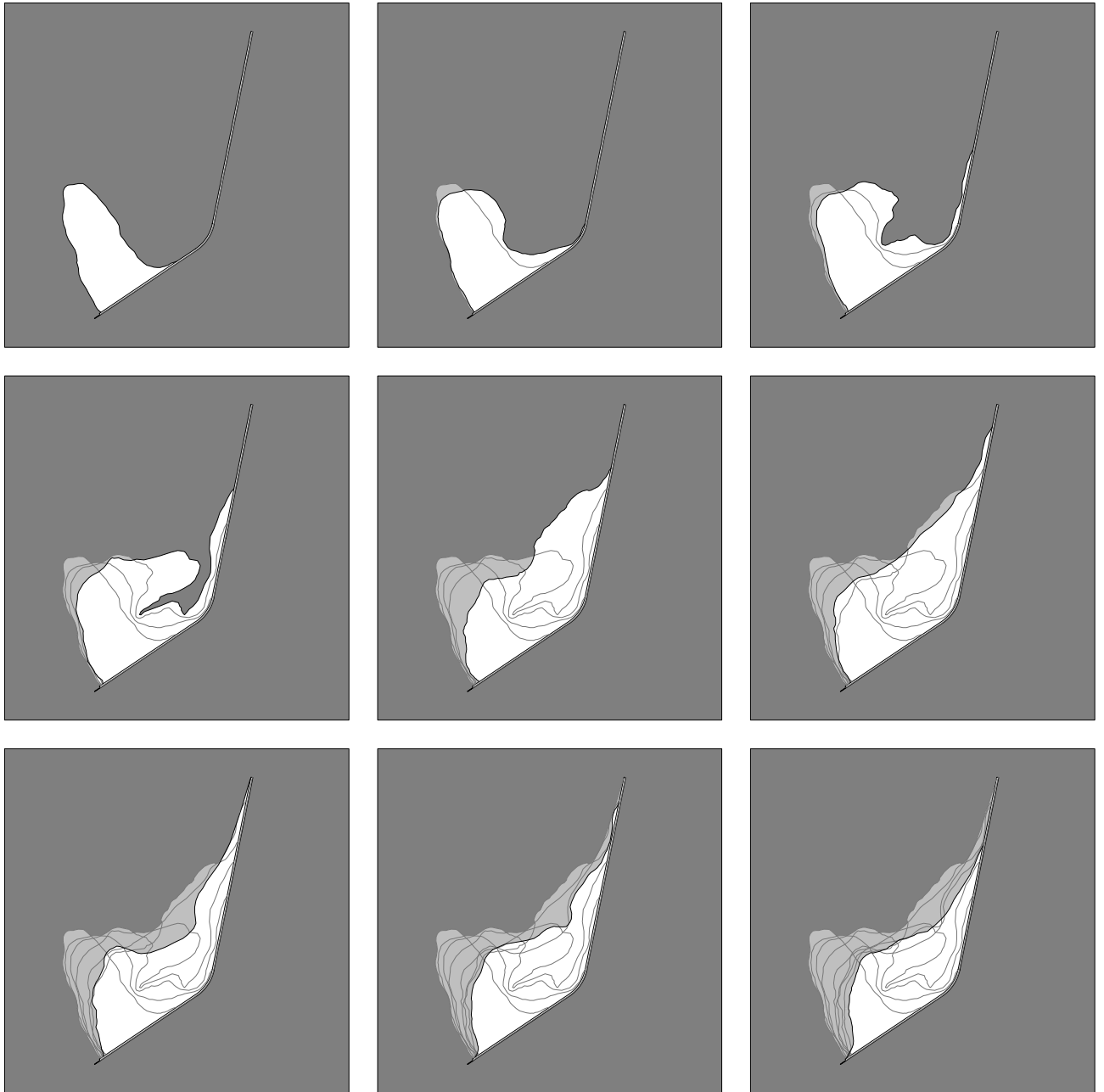
Speculative masterplan of the Belgian Section of the North Sea, 2020-2070, based on the existing zoning of the sea by Belgian national authorities.

In the previous page:
Tuas Port Reclamation Project,
Singapore (SG), led by the
Maritime and Port Authority
of Singapore, 2017.

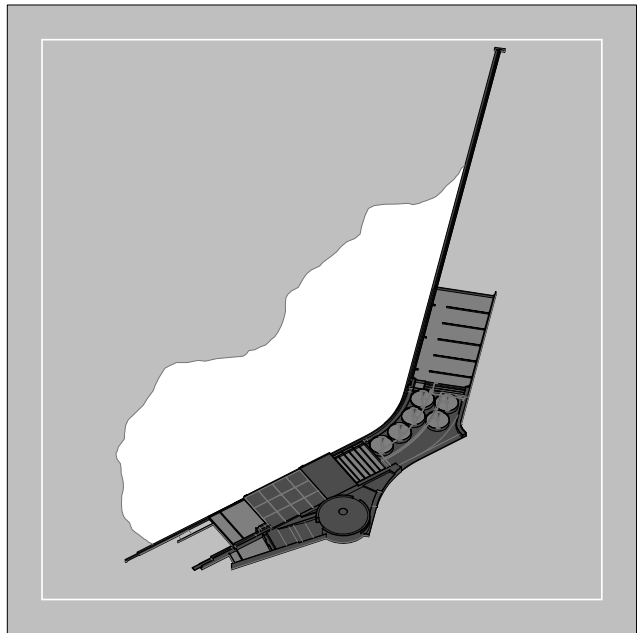
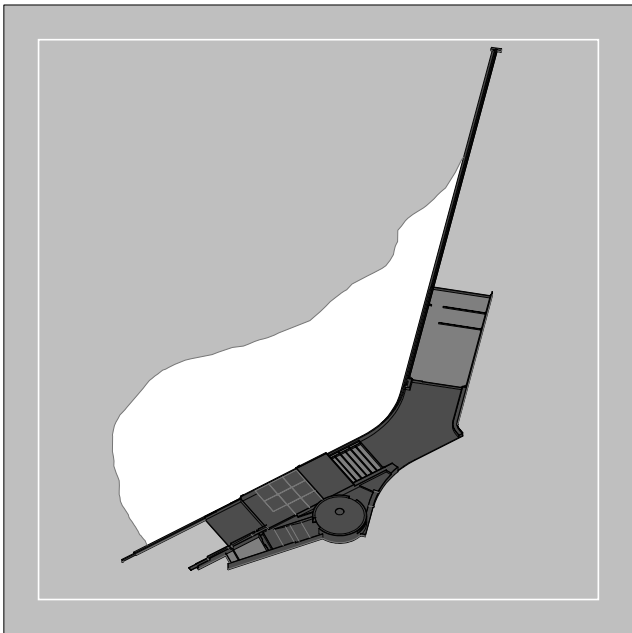
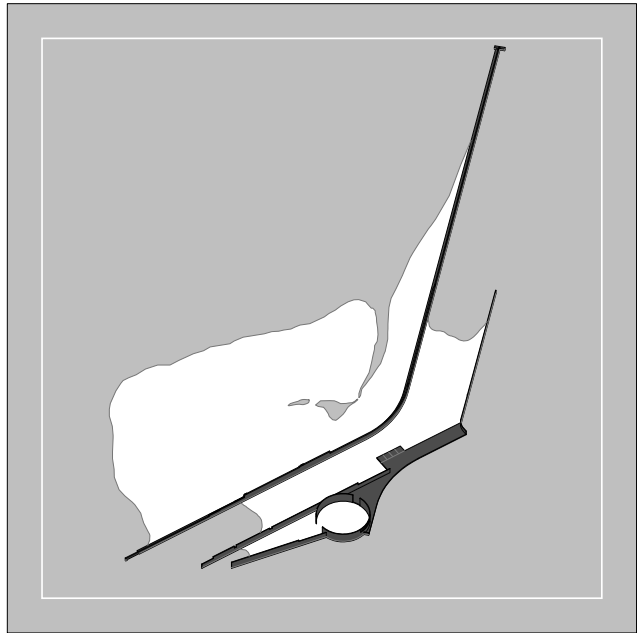
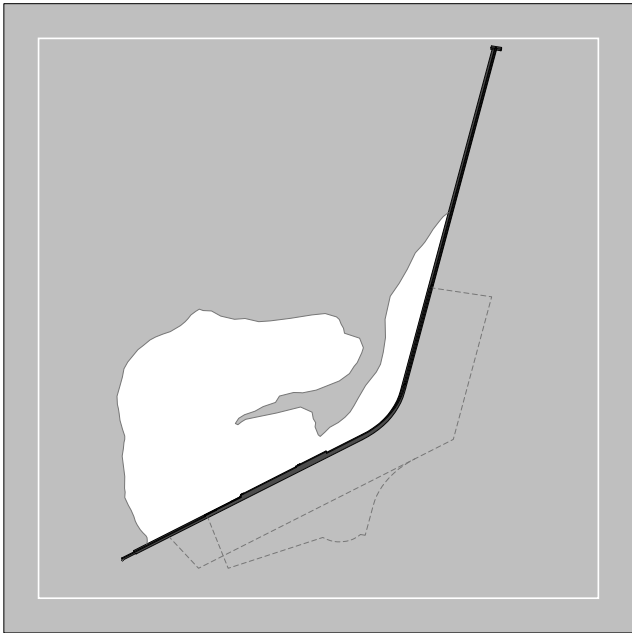




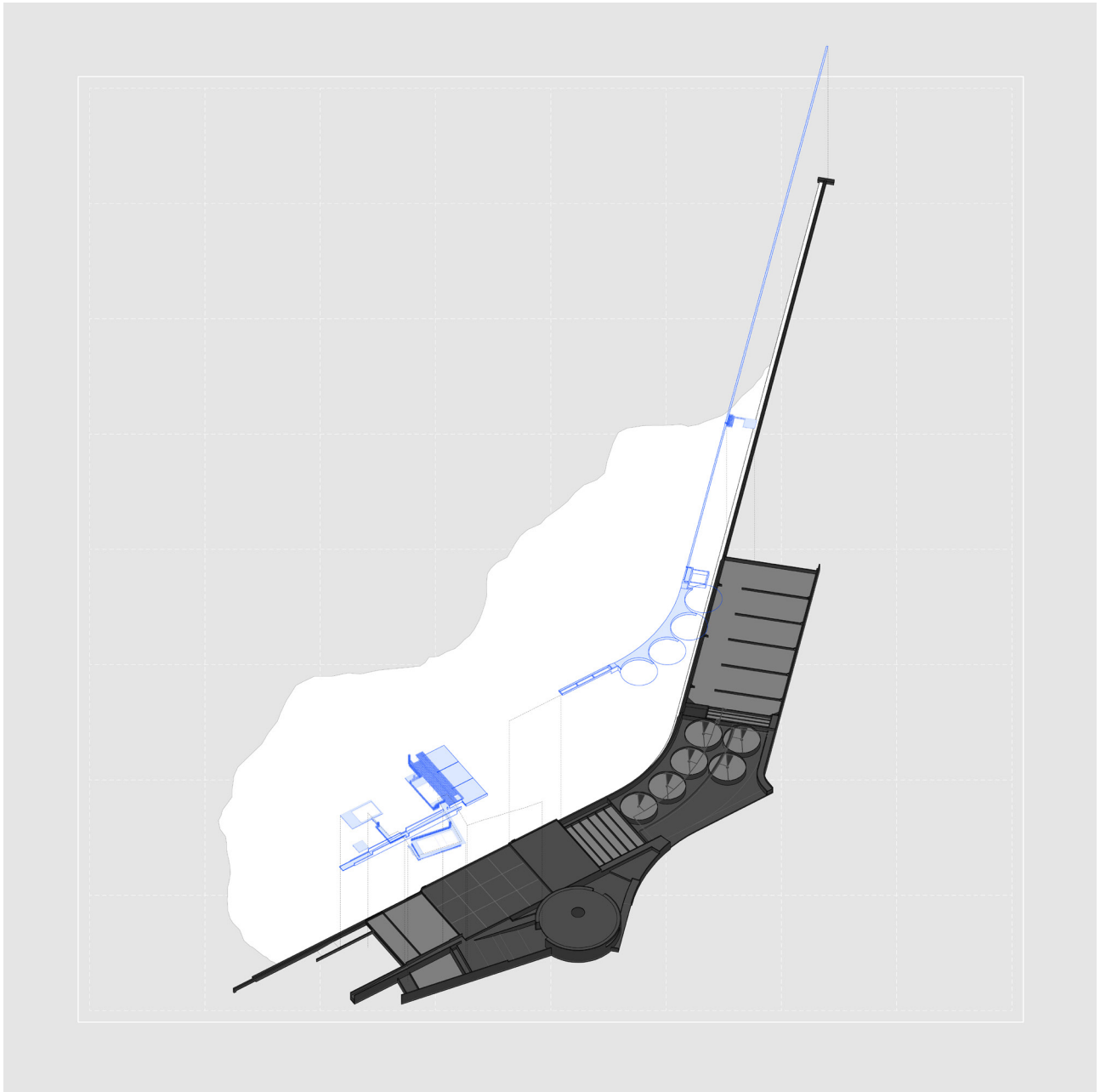
I. *Formation.*
The caissons foundations of the wall are transported from the coast and sunk into water.



II. *Acomodation.*
The sand-engine is shaped by
wind, waves and currents: the
landscape-in-formation.



III. *Production.*
Opposed to the natural side
of the island, the factory is
assembled.



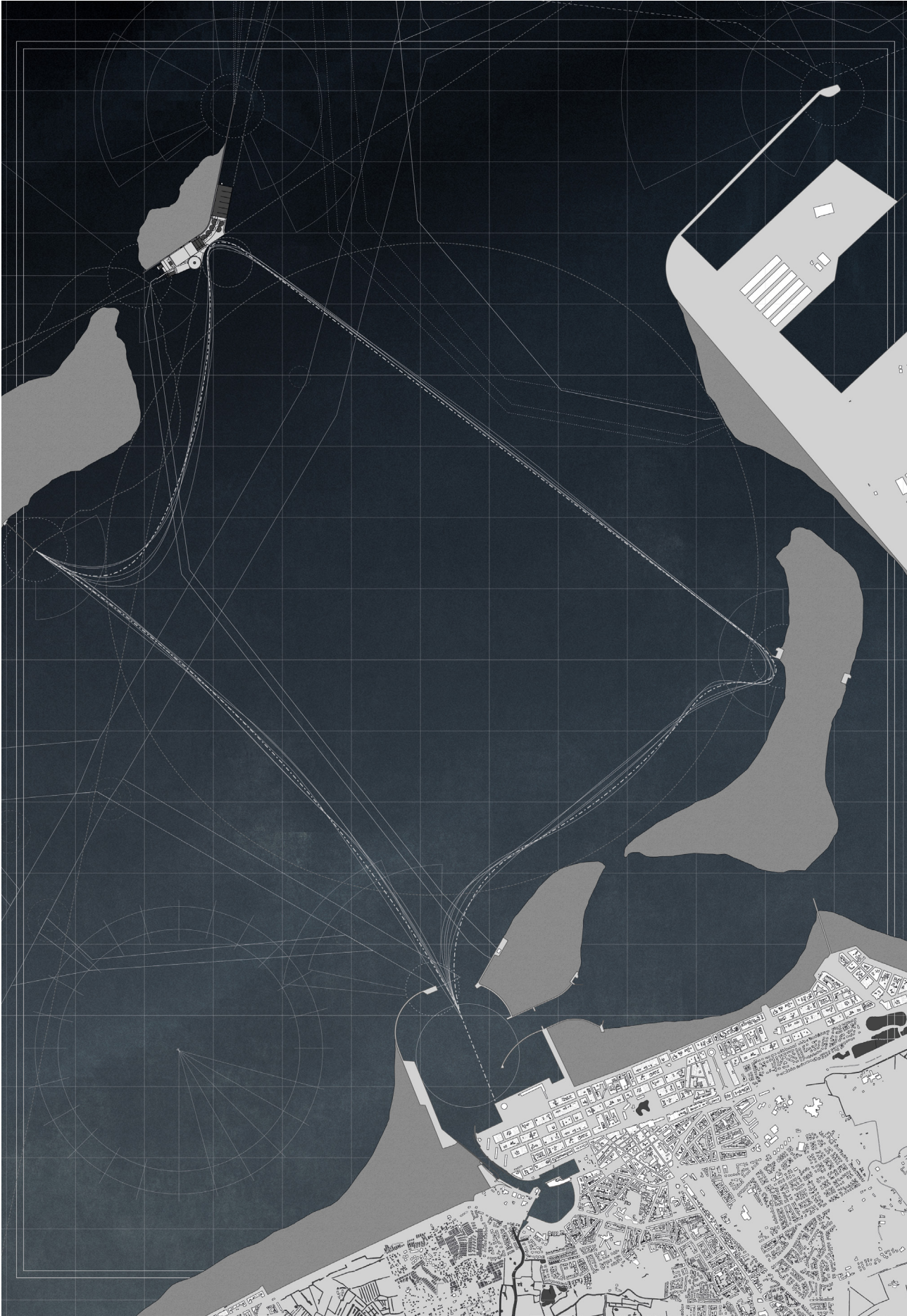
IV. *Colonization.*
The introduction of the human
component: an ephemeral act
of self-celebration.

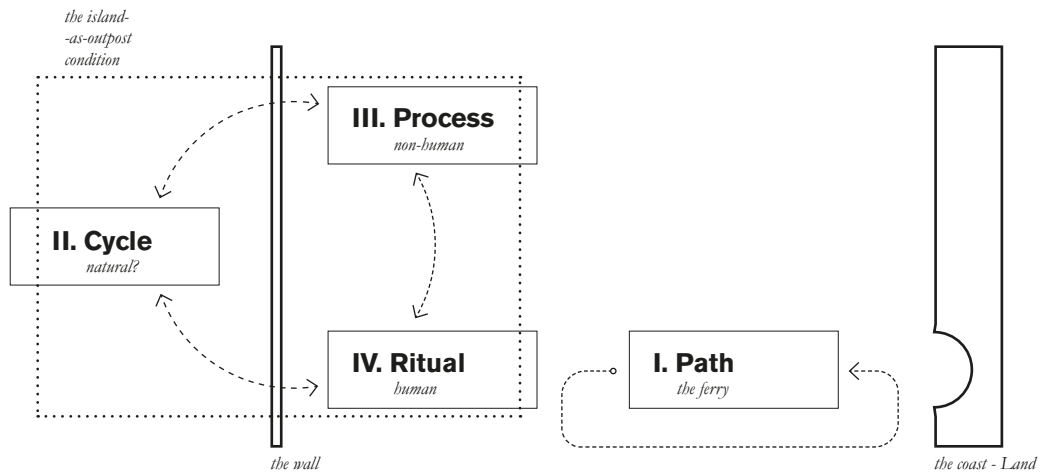


The Ferry Journey: the Illuminated Seascape

To reach the island, it is necessary to take a ferry. This becomes the opportunity to experience the particular condition of sea-crossing: eyesight, hearing, smell are overwhelmed by lights, horns, waves, saltiness. The ferry offers two extra stops to the distracted visitors: in fact, to get to the Naked Island must be a conscious and careful choice.

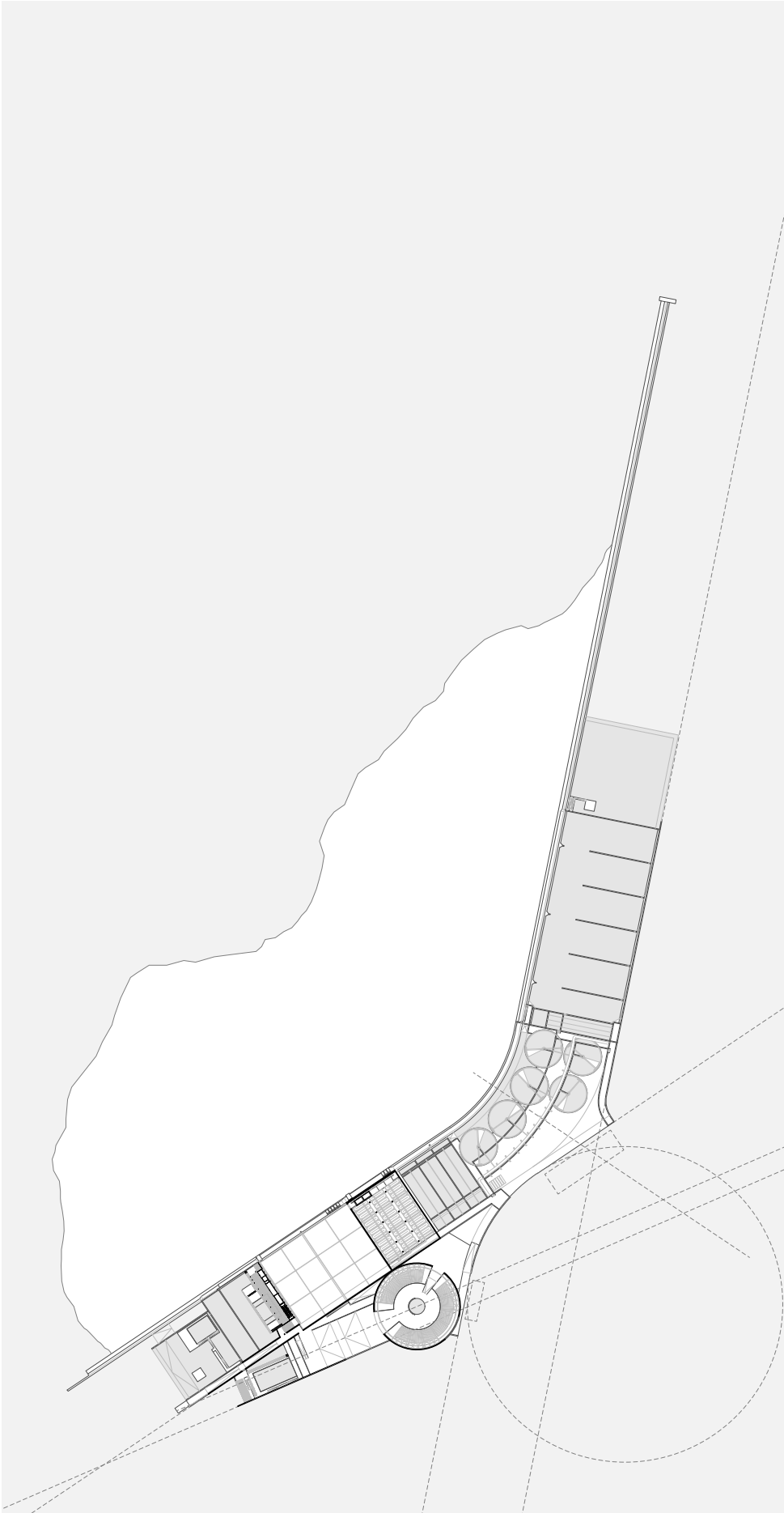
The ferry path.





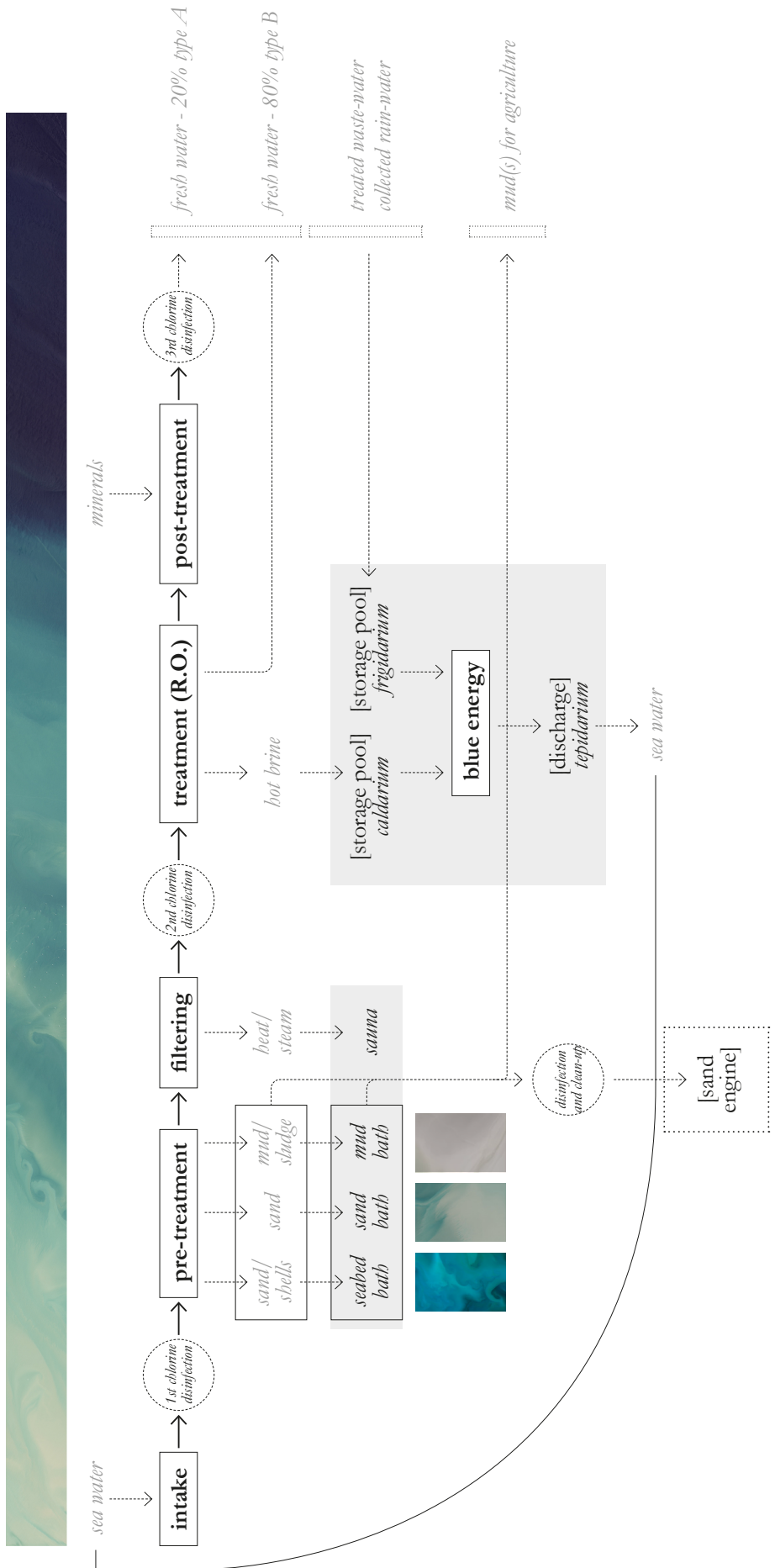
**The Island-as-Outpost:
The Four Movements**

For each of the four phases of reclamation, four movements - or journeys - are defined as the core principles around which the Naked Island functions. The mutable relations among these elements - the dynamic *edges* which define them - constitute the real essence of the island.



Mitigated Territorialization Linear Circularity

Sea water desalination is the main *raison d'être* of the Naked Island. This process, however, is envisioned to be of a less harmful kind, being integrated in other sorts of cycles. Circularity means that every waste product of the desalination process becomes the primary resource for something else - the baths, or the sand-engine. However, the island remains an outpost of territorialization, thus its operations still lies within the original linear time-scape: this appears quite clearly in the colours and textures of the gradual process of water “clarification”.







2.
THE ISLAND:
MACHINE

2.1. Colonization, Ephemeral, Baths

The Naked Island is a Machine. It is a space of aggressive exploitation, or perpetual production to sustain the existence and the growth of the *Mainland*. By expressing the ongoing trends of urbanization - or colonization - of the Sea, the Naked Island becomes the formal statement of the state - the Leviathan - to demonstrate the constitution of an anthropic maritime territory. However, such a staging of power needs its rhetorical monuments. Besides their primary functions of defense, control and production, the sand-engine, the wall, the desalination plant, the baths are the icons of the self-celebrative narrative of the collectivity - the state. The Naked island is also a propaganda machine.

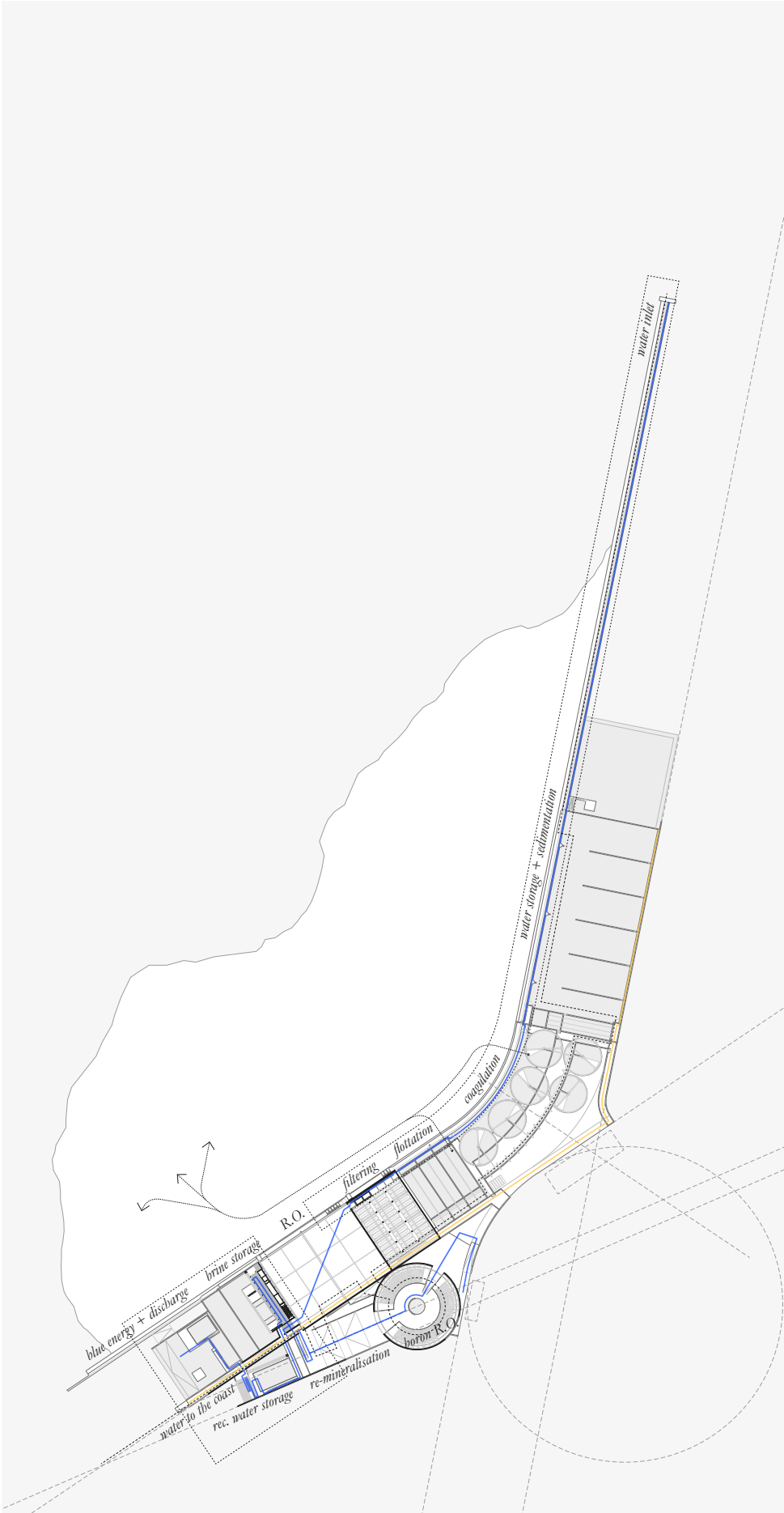
“The island-machine aims not to answer the premises of the research, but to reveal the real meaning of formalizing a *territory of the sea*, as an excuse to reflect on the territorialization process as a whole. [...] The ambition to play with the notion of edge, as stated at the beginning, becomes an opportunity to unveil the tension between opposites: an action which perhaps might end in denying the existence of such dichotomies themselves. It is thus a trigger to rethink the role of humankind in the shaping of the world; or more specifically, to give a hint on both the beauty – and impacts – of our endless action to adapt the environment for us to inhabit it. This project wants to provide citizens with not only awareness, but also consciousness of the meaning of inhabiting a certain territory – or all the territories. Pride or shame?” (1)

1. An extract from the Reflection Paper.

Being the most people-oriented component of the island, the baths are meant as a crucial element to create awareness on the ongoing processes. As stated before, the narrative of the whole story follows a state-centred perspective, glorifying the achievements of the collectivity to sustain their life on the water-scarce low-land region of the Flemish Coast; therefore, the existence of the baths is always shown as deeply dependent from the very same processes of water desalination. Yet, the ephemerality of the baths - which are a parasitic element on the island - aims to remind the long-term caducity of the same territory.

The Naked Island, plan. The processes of desalination are shown in relation to other cycles, and to the paths of the baths users.

In the previous page:
M. Vitali, *Entering a New World*,
Rosignano Solway (IT), 1999.





Baths as Individual Experience.
P. Zumthor, F. Guerra (ph),
Thermes Vals (CH), 2016.



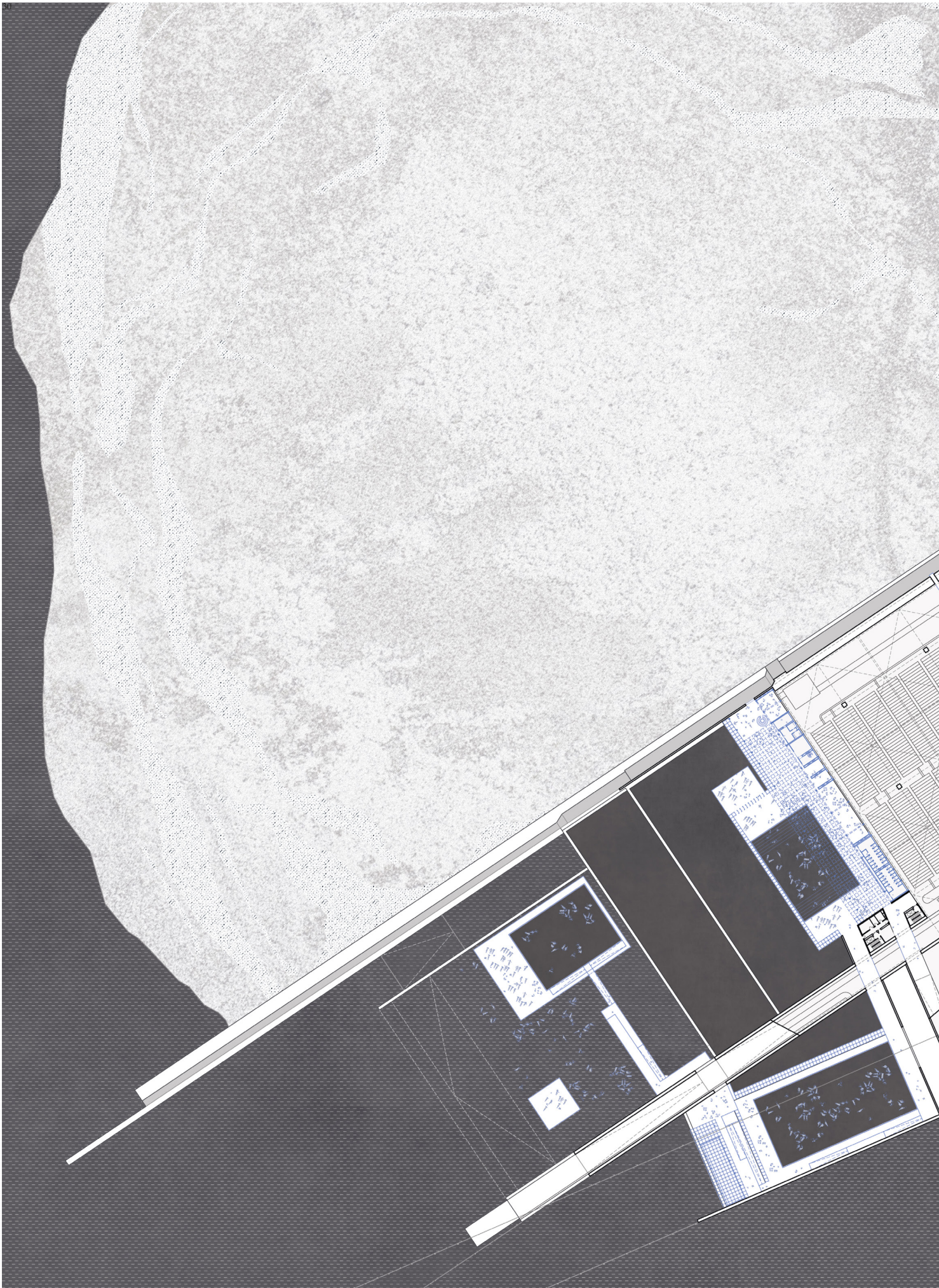
Baths as Collective Experience.
Palatinus Strand, Budapest, 1980s.

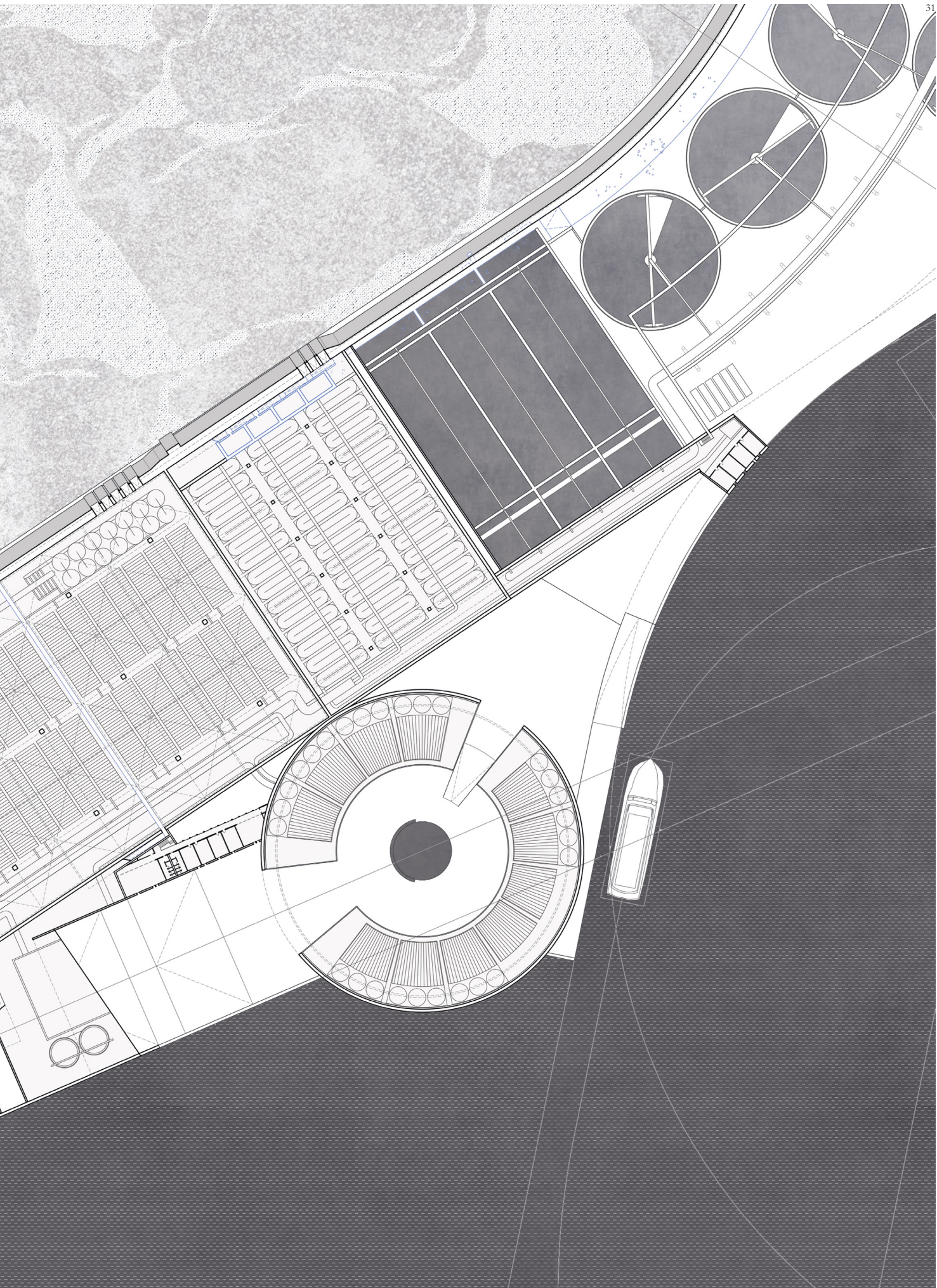


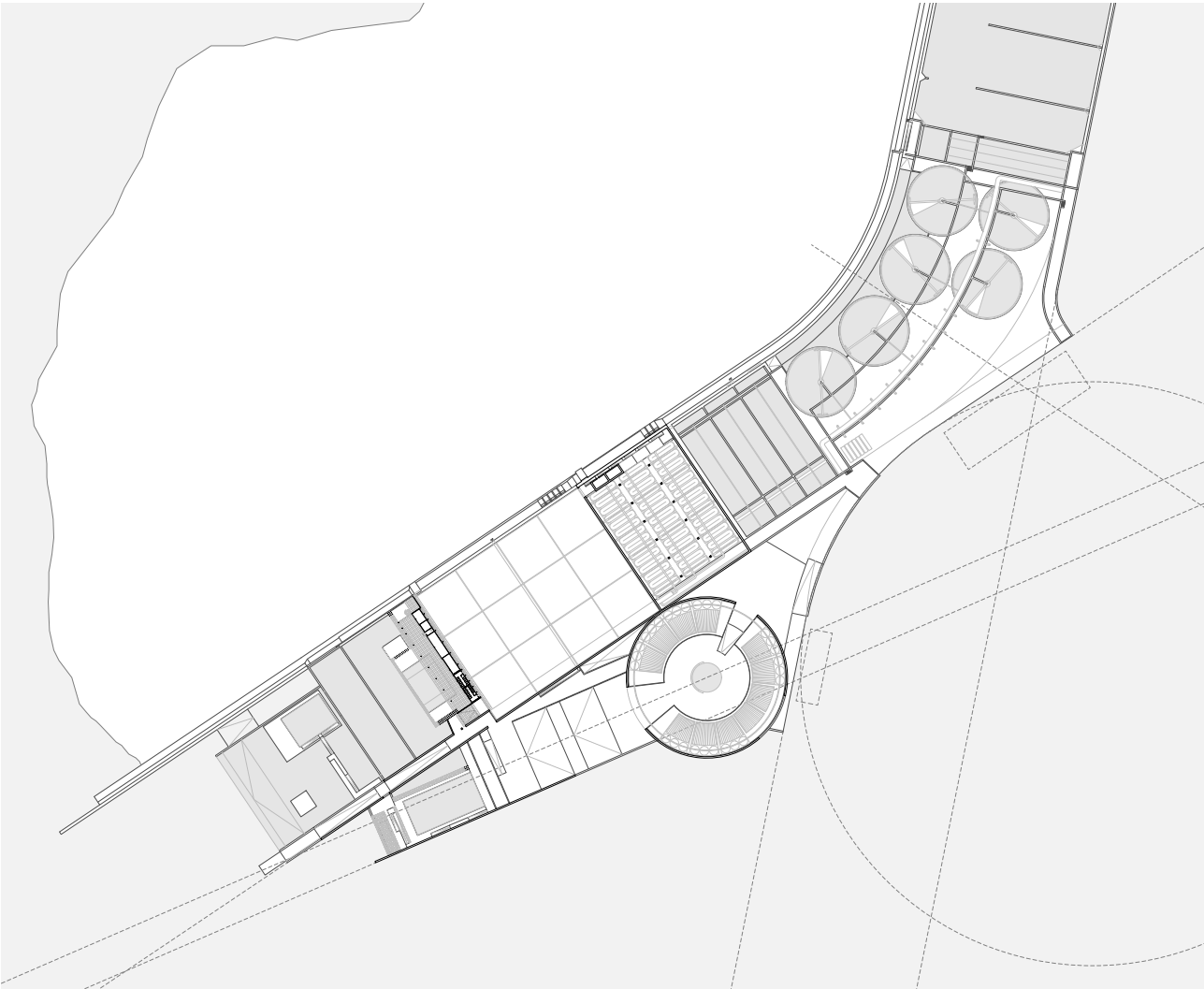
Inhabiting the Ruin
Moskva Pool, Moscow (1958-95).
The public pool was realized in
the abandoned foundations of
the Palace of Soviets.



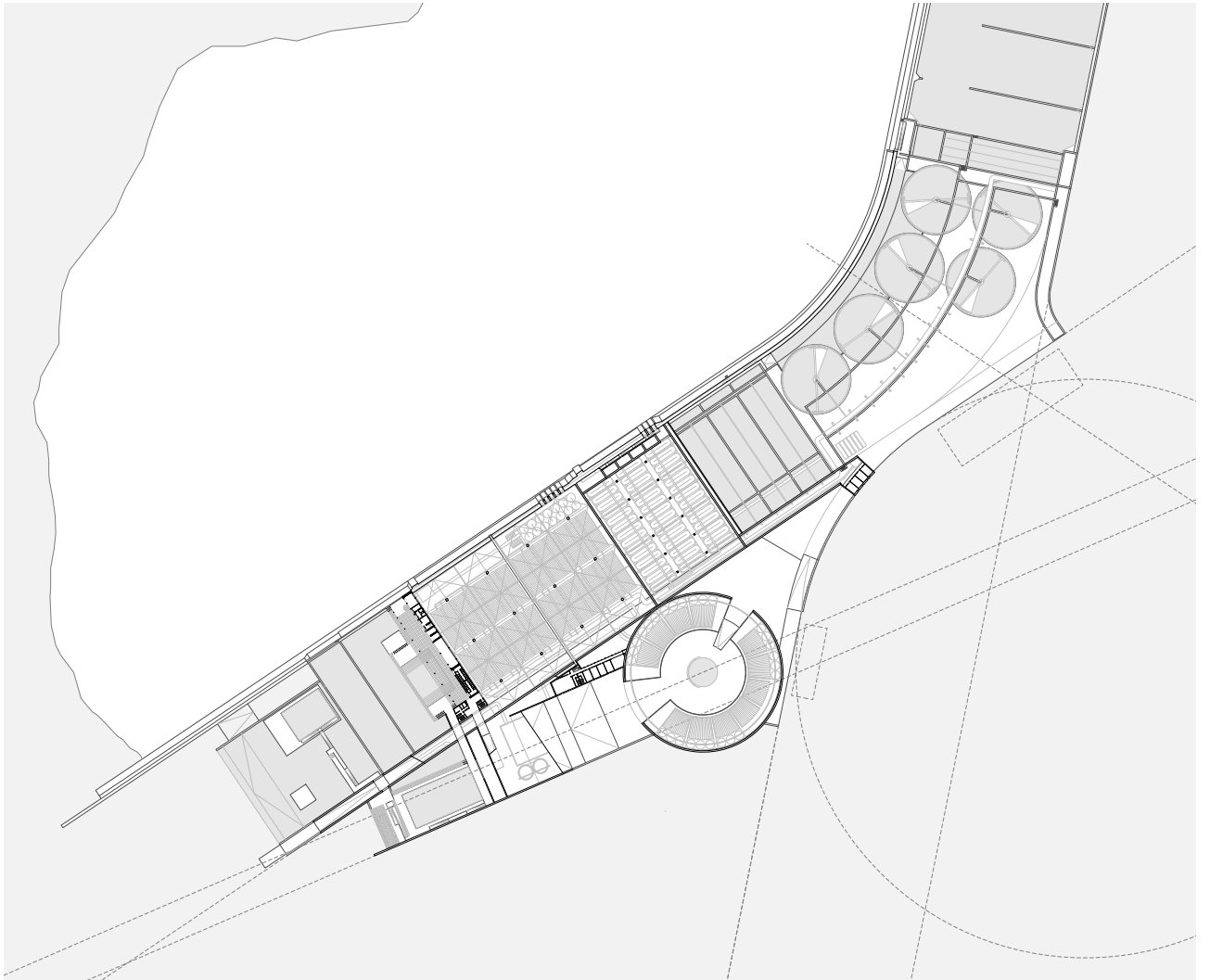
Parasitic Architecture.
M. Vitali, *Catania Under The
Volcano*, 2007.



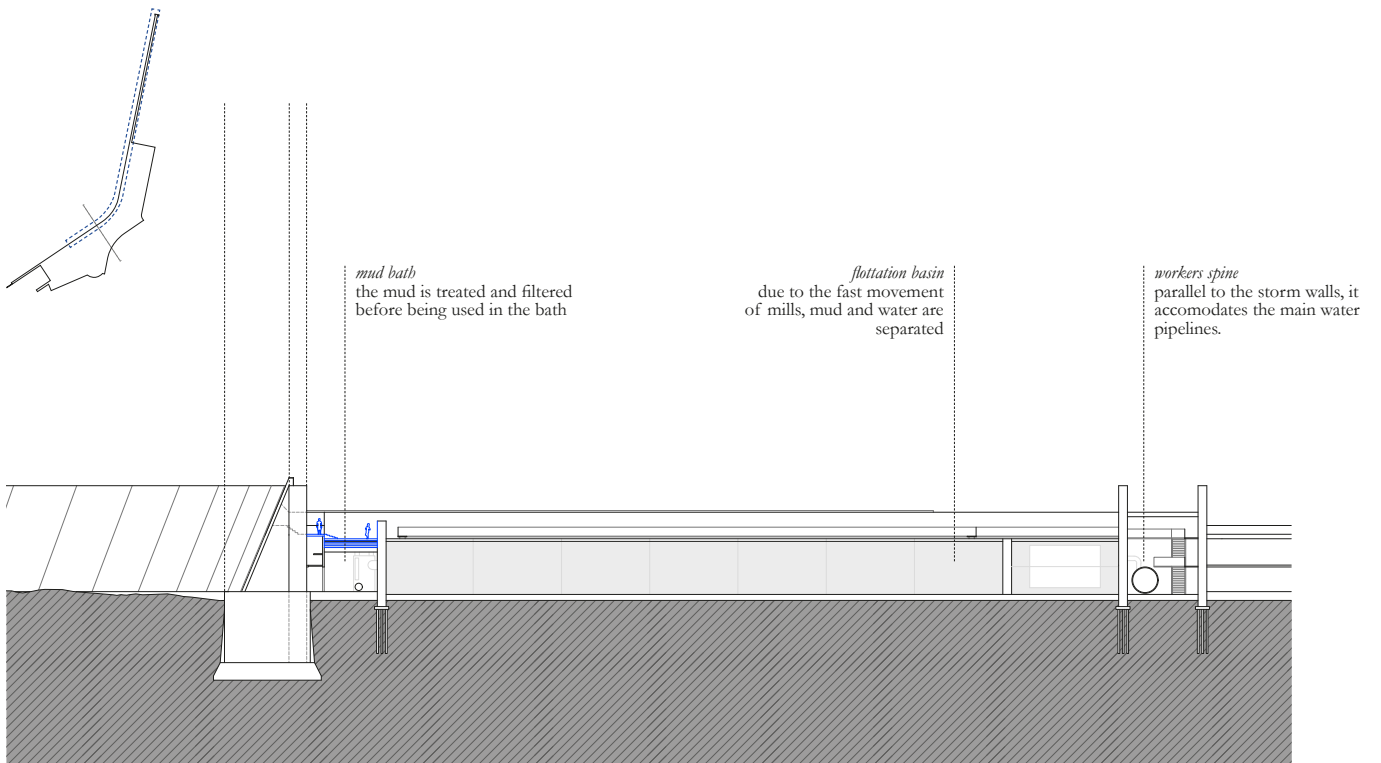




The Naked Island - portion;
solarium level - 16m

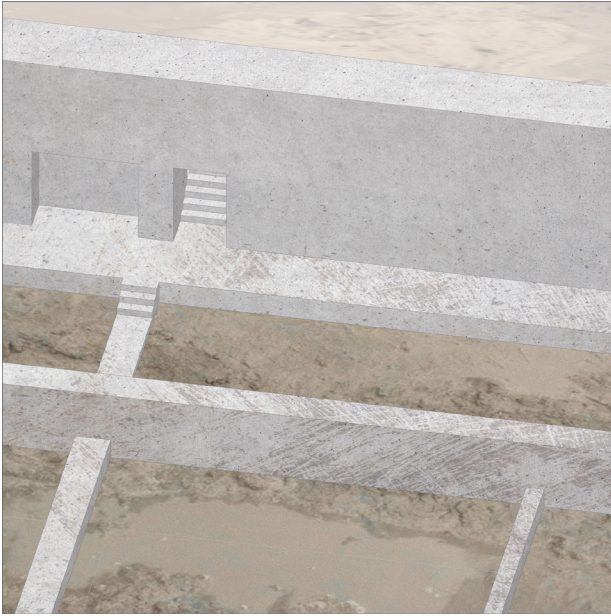


The Naked Island - portion;
caldarium level - 13m



The Linear Baths

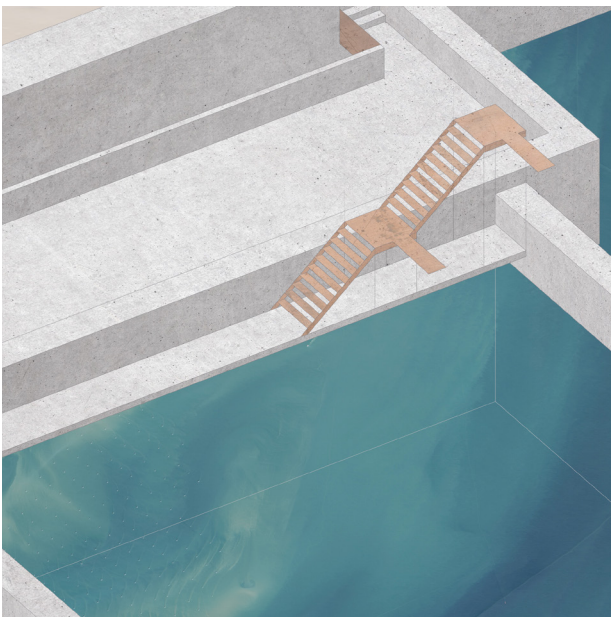
The Linear Baths are plug between the defense wall and the big pools of the pre-treatment phases of desalination. Therefore, a more therapeutic concept of bathing is here offerend, using sandy or muddy waters as a main product. The narrow nature of the public pools makes them a more private experience; however, the imposing omnipresence of the wall constantly reminds the dangers of being so far at sea.



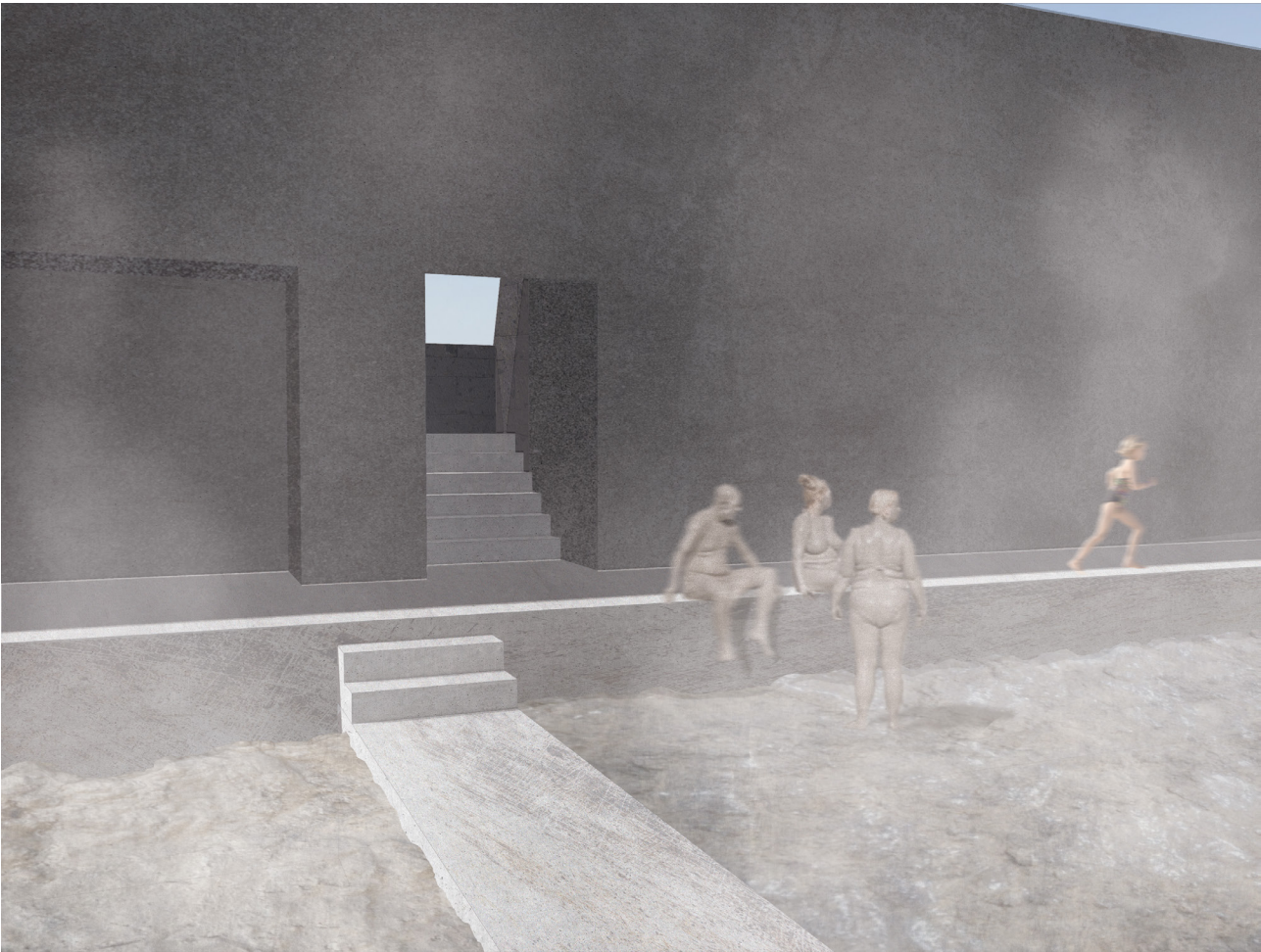
The mud bath

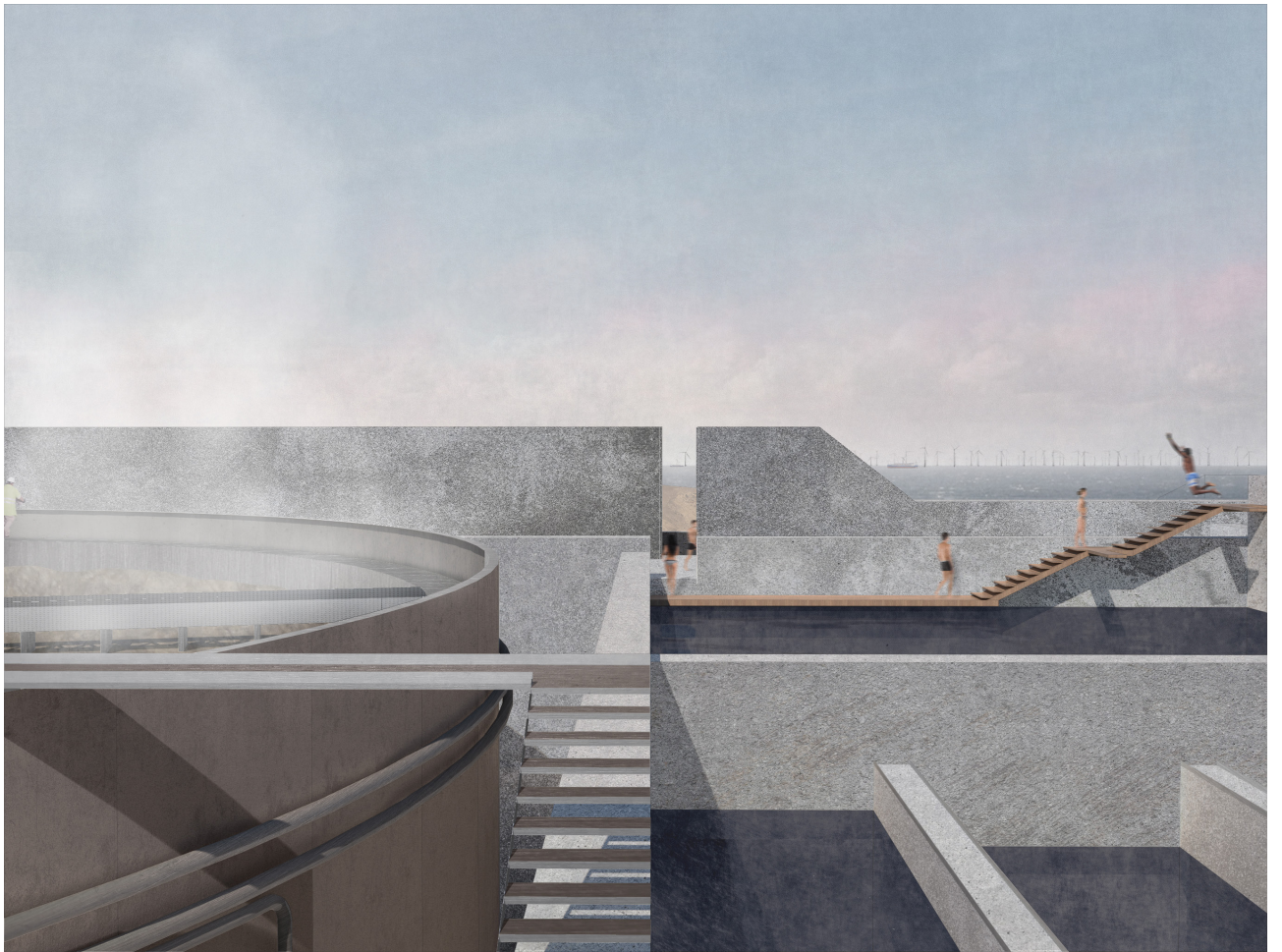


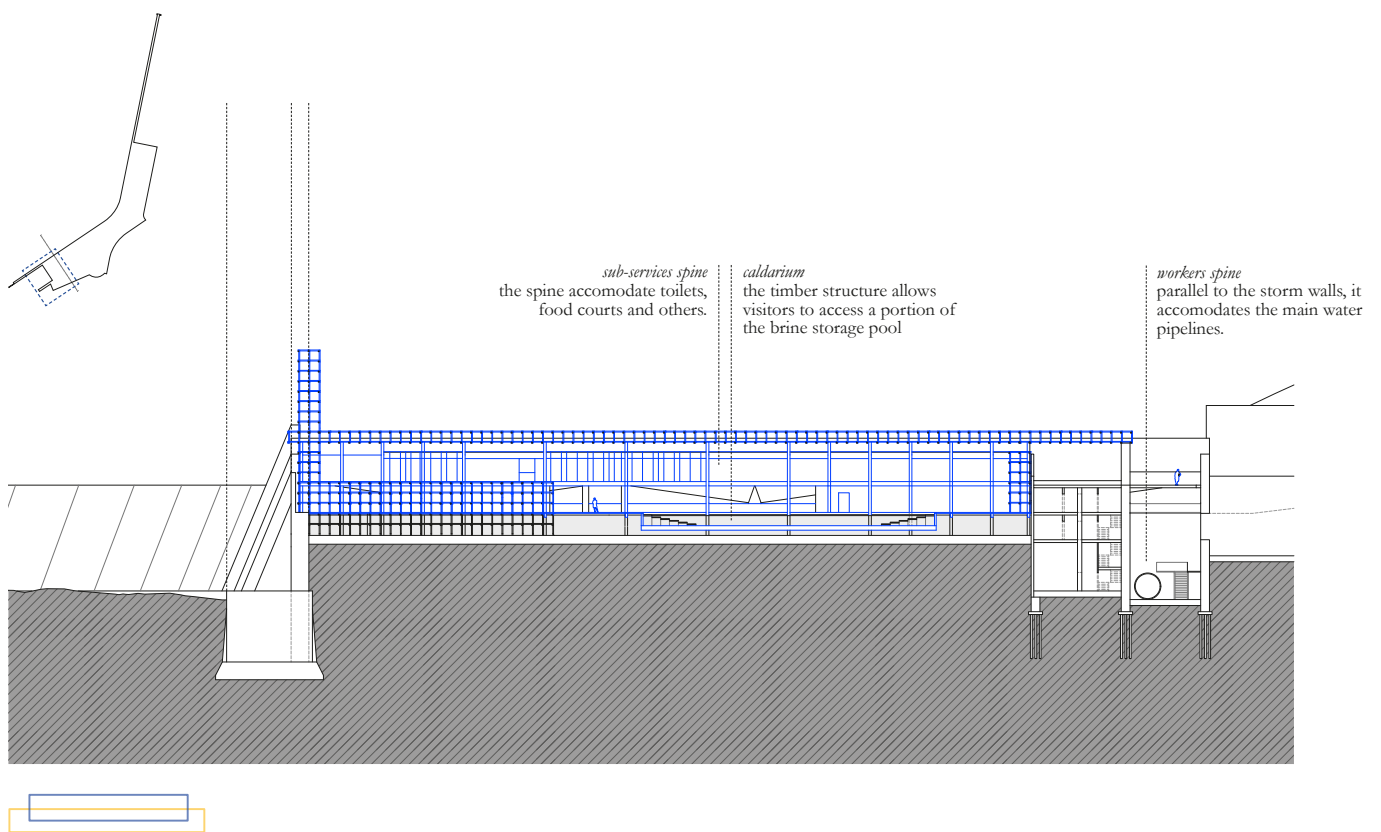
The sand bath



The seabed bath

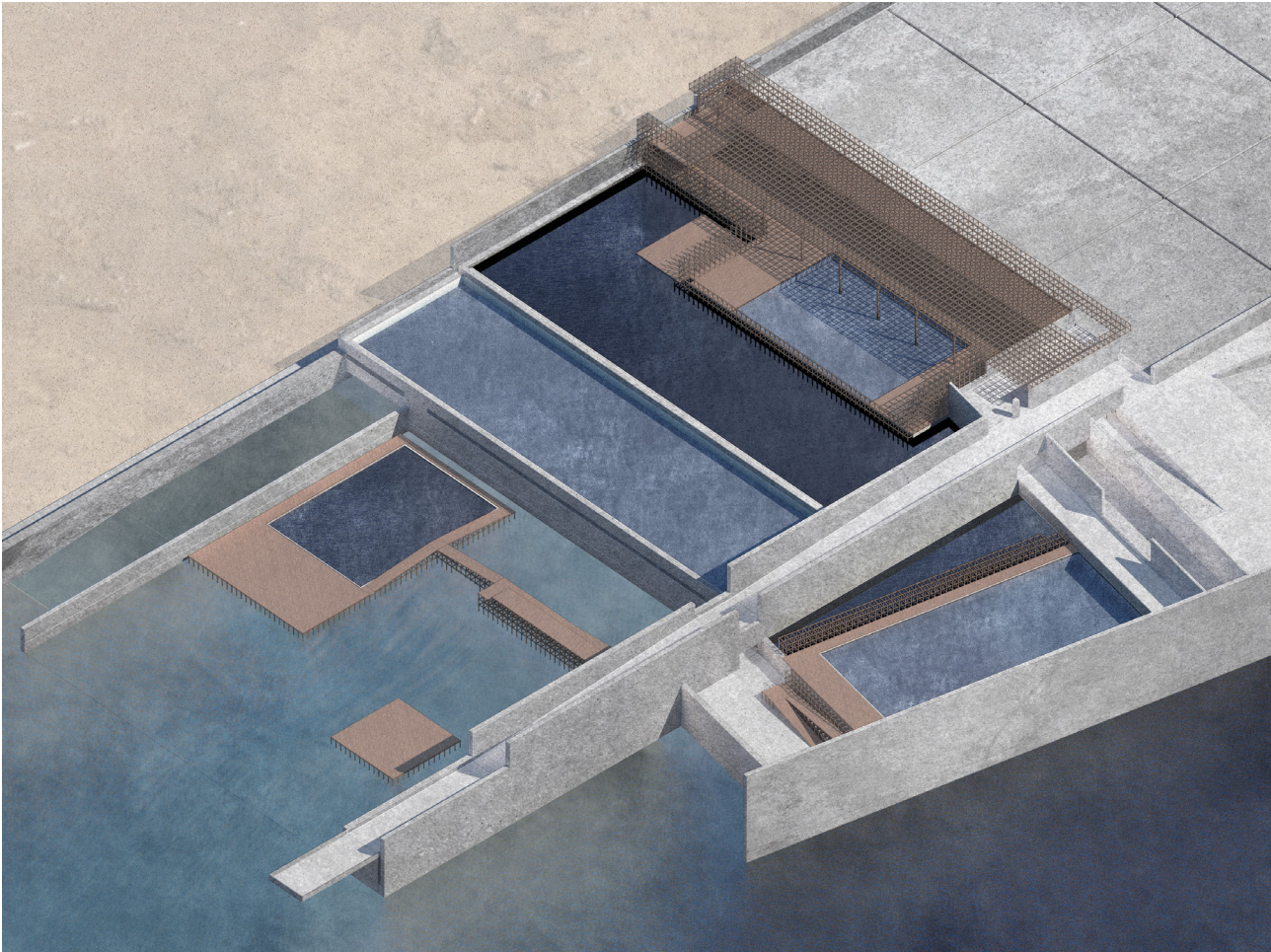


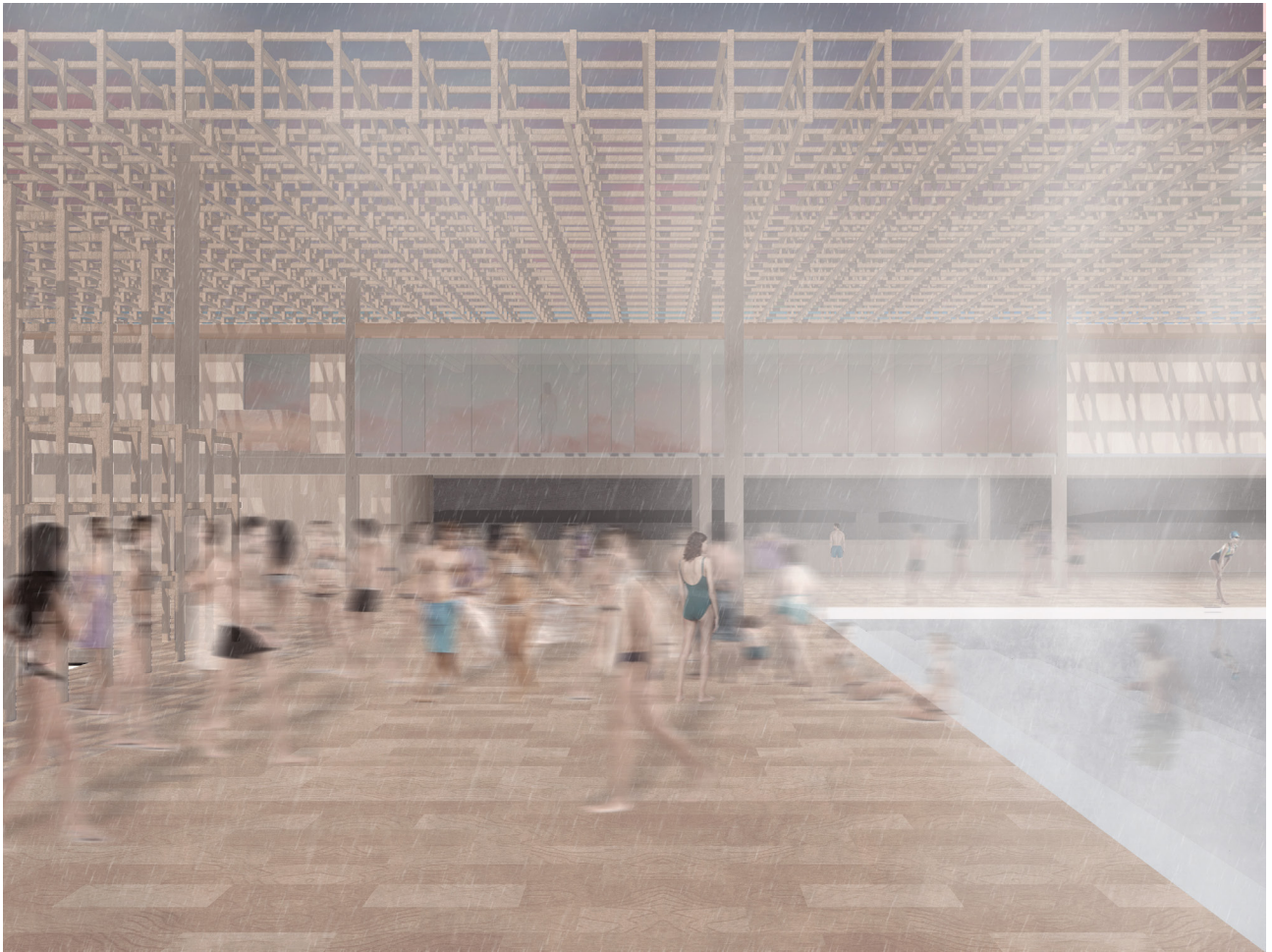




The Roman Baths

The Roman Baths dip in the wide storage pools of the post-treatment phases of desalination. The name originates from the more collective experience of these public pools, meant as crowded squares - to be in case fragmented and colonized by people themselves, via the use of textiles or other tools: a further ritual of territorialization. The ephemeral latticed structure express their parasitic temporal essence.











3.
THE ISLAND:
MIRROR

2.1. Protection, Unknown, Wall

The Naked Island is a Mirror. While being the peak celebration of human ingenuity - in the shape of the state - it also allows for the existence of its opposite: the unclaimed territory. Even though it still indirectly serves the collectivity - protecting the coast from storms - the *landscape-in-formation* is a piece of unknown, unexplored land, not even to be mapped. It is fuelled by the same processes of violent exploitation which now rule the sea; however, it is out of human jurisdiction. Therefore, the wall is a dual protection: it also grants the freedom of the last bit of non-anthropized state-less sea.

“A further reflection is needed on the political meaning of territorialization, or the imposition of the nation-state rule – the collectivity – on the sea, thus the putting aside of the individual will to freely experience the same sea. The wall of the island-machine divides the built half – desalination and baths – from the unclaimed unbuilt half. It also prevents to see both the landscape-in-formation and the sea, only allowing the existence of some semi-hidden viewpoints. This condition might be justified by the protective function of the wall itself, which therefore serves the collectivity; however, the individuals are then prevented to access the only free space left of the fully *urbanized/* rationalized sea: there is no more space for pirates. This project therefore wants to question the legal and political status of water: is the original political agreement of the Leviathan also valid on the sea? ” (1)

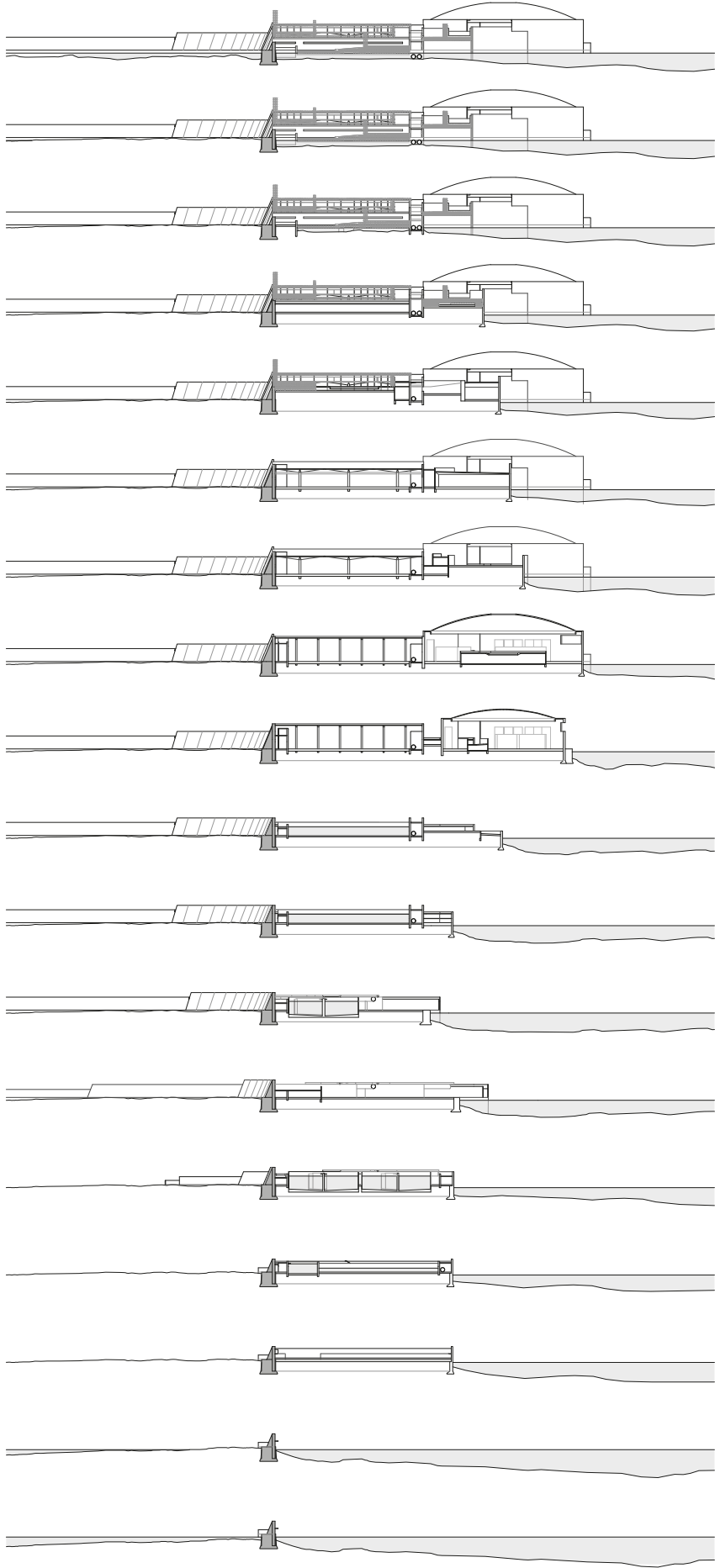
1. An extract from the Reflection Paper.

The theme of the viewpoints - as the only opportunities to experience beyond the wall - becomes thus crucial, allowing for a real and rough confrontation with a non-territory - if it can be named so. In fact, the possibility to acknowledge the existence of a non-anthrop elements allows the same state-ruled territory to define itself by negation: a process which is the foundation of the same idea of Europe (2).

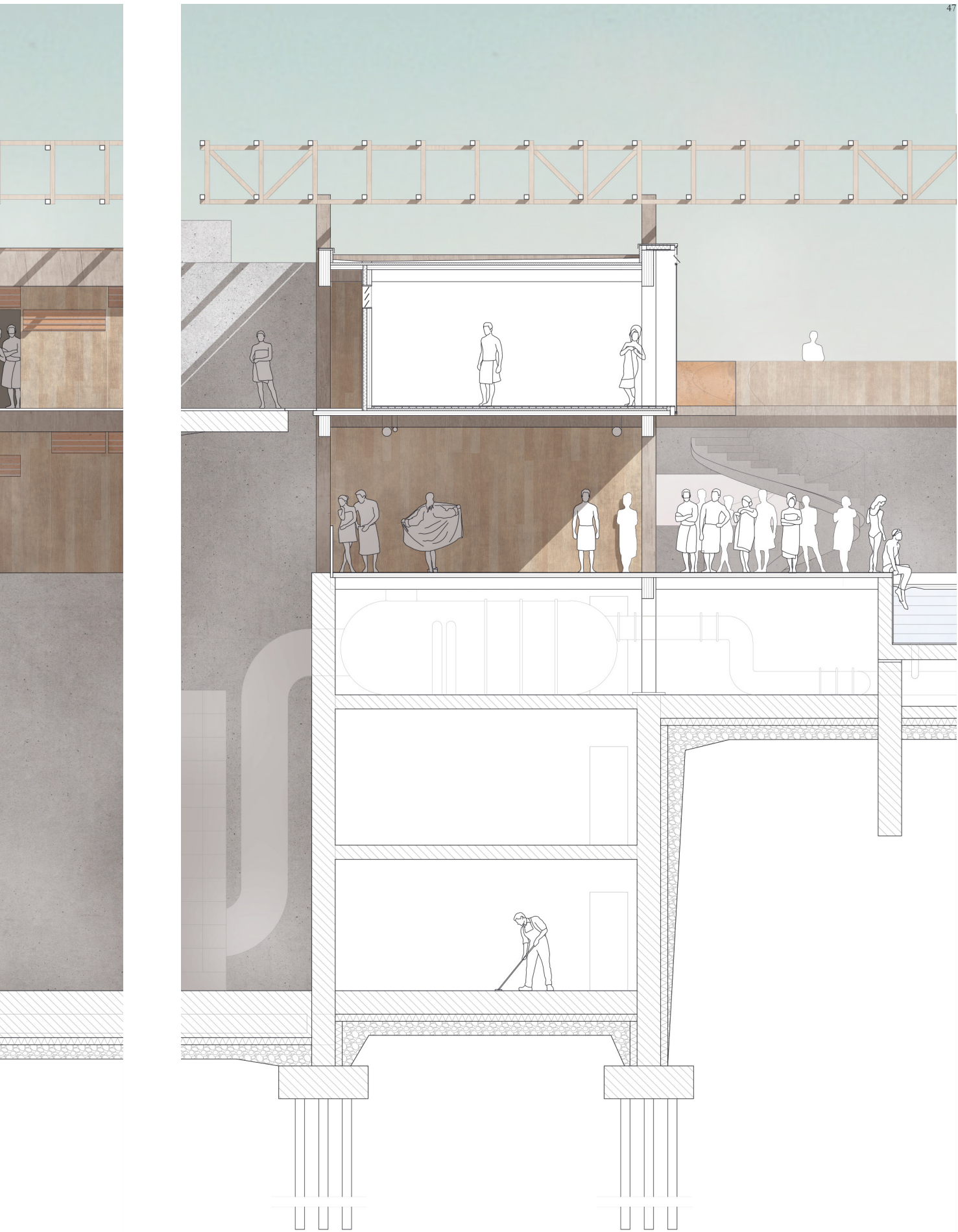
2. Cacciari, Massimo. *Geofilosofia dell'Europa*, Milano: Adelphi, 1994.

Sections of the defense wall. It is the edge between the state-ruled territory and the state-less non-anthropized sea.

In the previous page:
C. Schulze, *State of Nature*, Blackpool (UK), 2014.



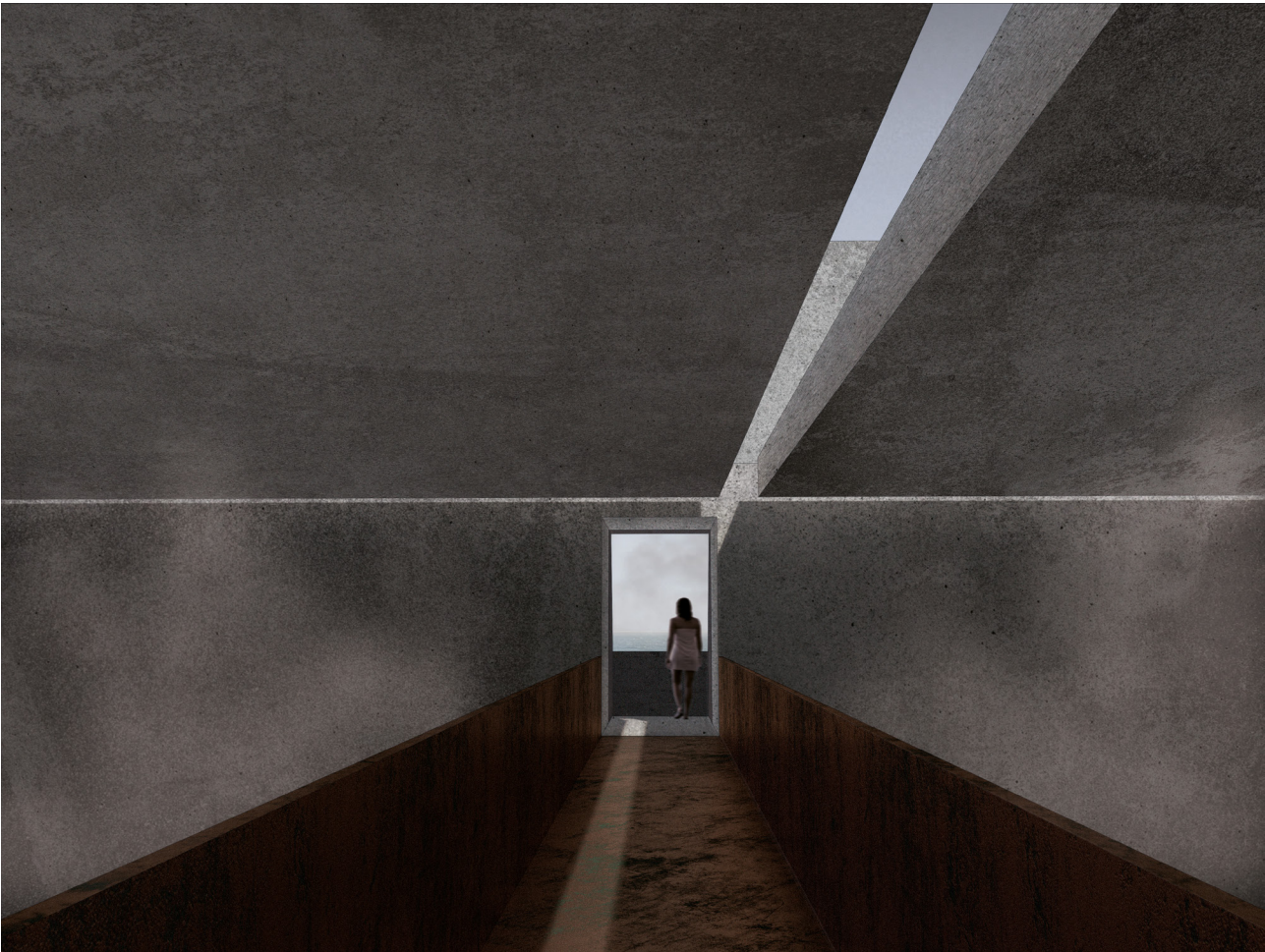


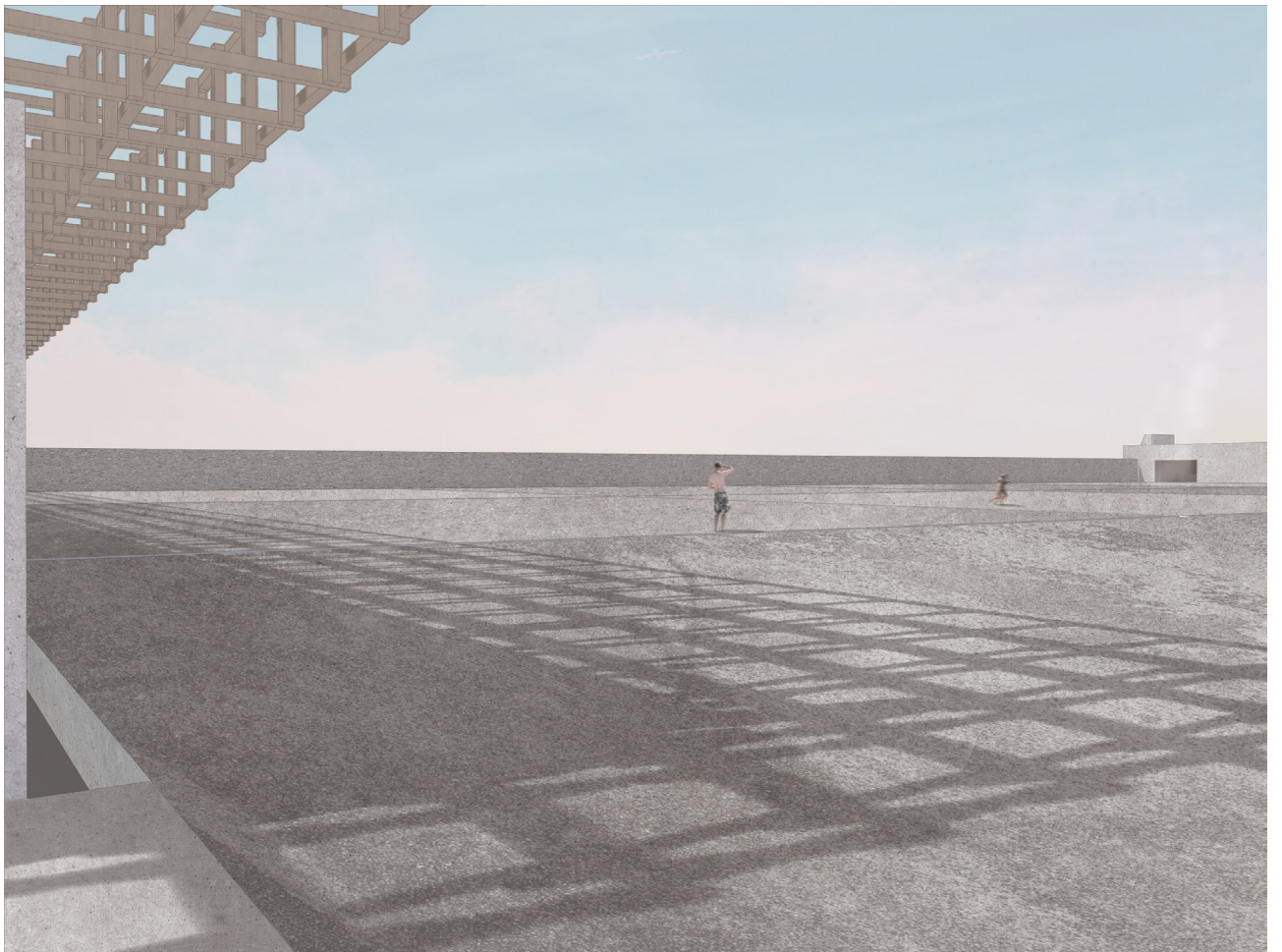


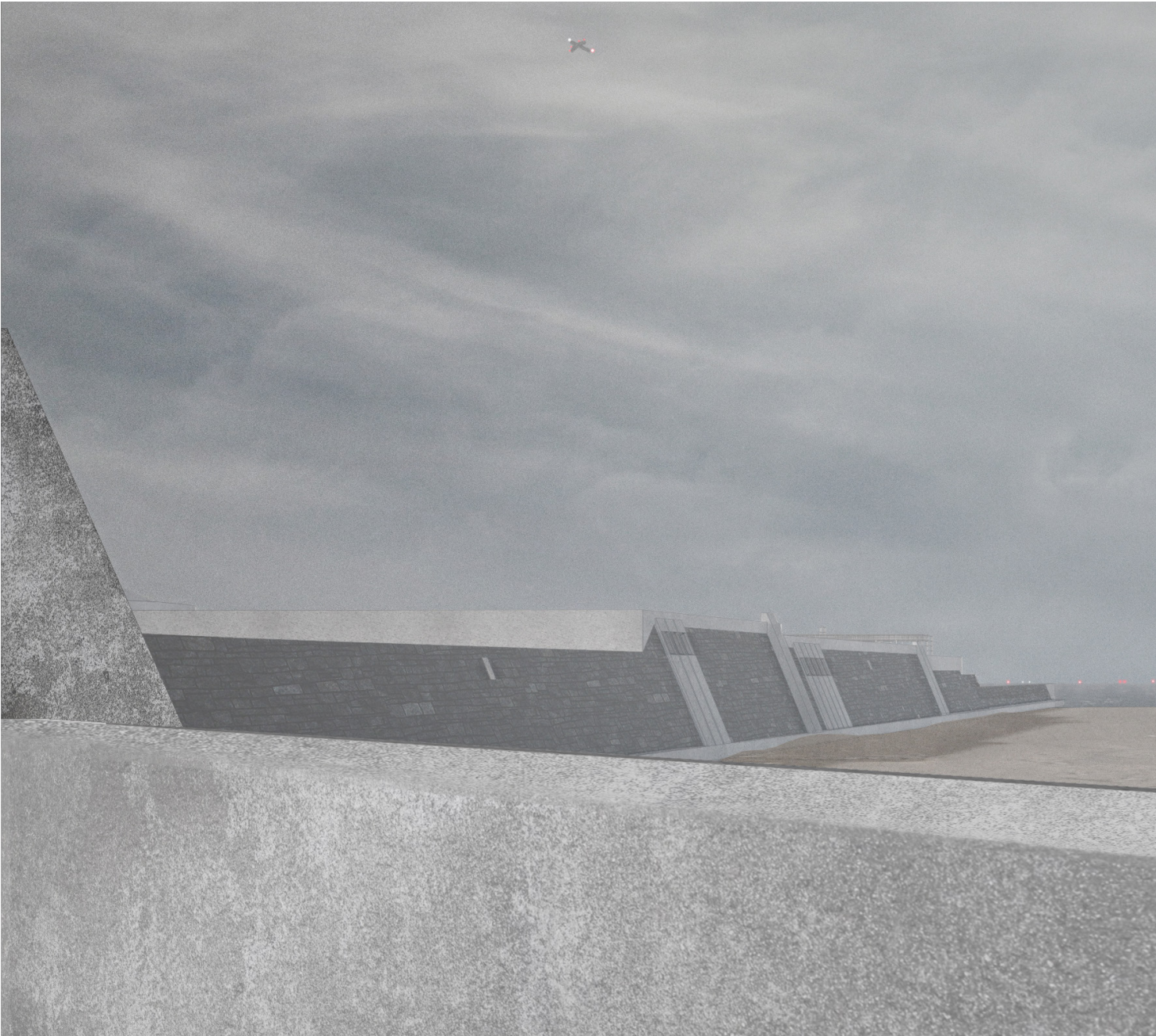


The Possibility of Ruin.
G.B. Piranesi, *Fondamenta del
Teatro di Marcelllo*, 1761.



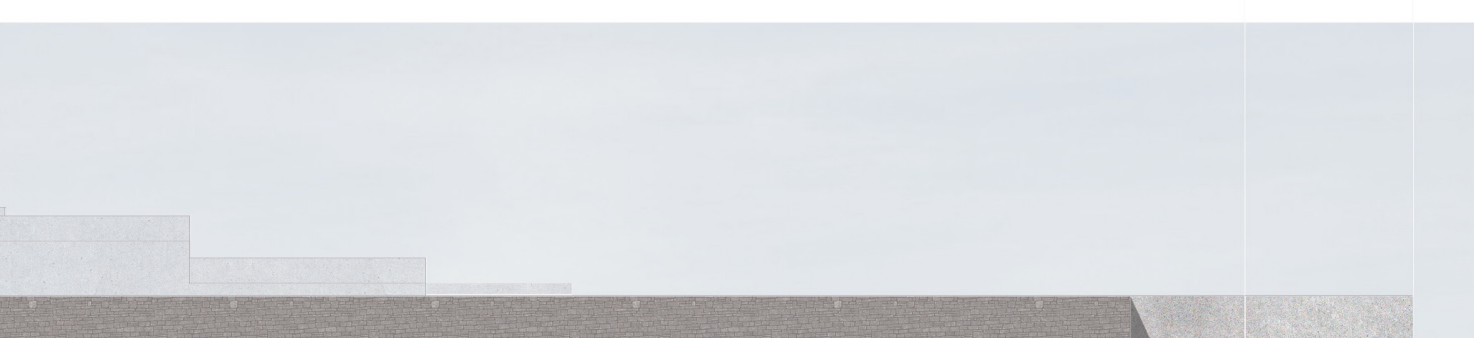
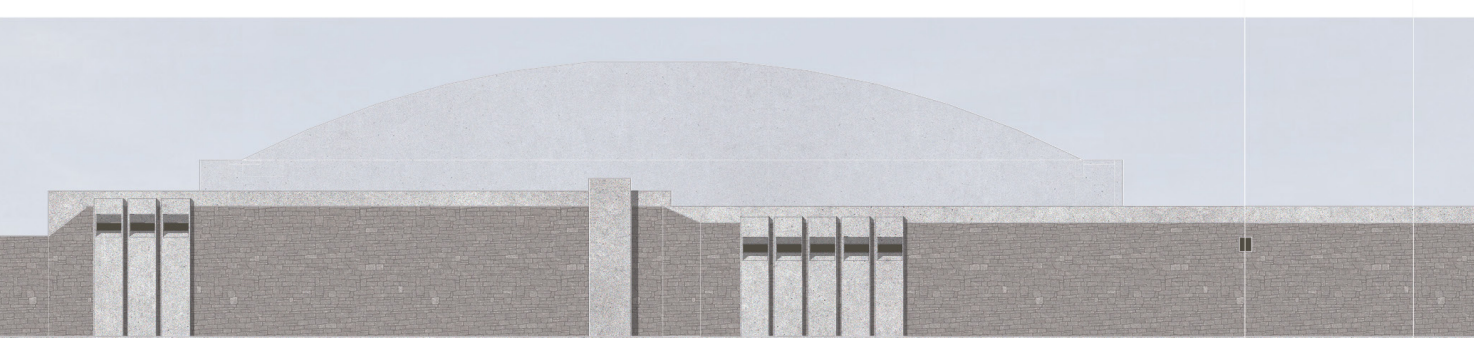
















4.
THE ISLAND:
NAKED

2.1. Projection, Memory, Ruin

The Island is therefore Naked. As naked is its landscape, made of concrete and sand, mud, sludge. As naked are the people inhabiting it, bathing in the fruits of territorialization. As naked is the image of society, the honest mirror of the human struggle to constantly adapt its surroundings. As naked is then the tale of territorialization, finally unveiled to its primary customers: us.

“A final point needs to be made on the theme of the ephemeral. [...] The whole society – both individuals and the collectivity – tends to deny death, meant as a possibility for the endlessly growing linearity of time not to last forever. In fact, the same idea of circularity actually implies the indirect possibility to keep on business as usual, just differently. And this project, as a tale of human struggle to relate to our surrounding environment, does not want to be different: in the extreme attempt to last forever, the ruins of the island have been designed. In a future scenario, when the sea level will rise enough to prevent the possibility of living on the Belgian coast, the whole island will lose its meaning: no coast will be left to be protected, or people to use the desalinated water. However, the wall will last as a warning, to the punishment of human *hybris*; or as a timeless monument to its ingenuity.” (1)

1. An extract from the Reflection Paper.

The Naked Island is an act of foundation. It is the possibility for a different kind of territorialization, not in the aims but in the modalities: a mitigated process to allow radical opposition - the perpetual confrontation of opposites. However, as already stated, the time-scape of territorialization needs necessarily to be still of a linear fashion: inevitably leading to its own defeat. But what if that defeat is already planned?

Island of Philiae and Temple of Isis (EG), under water due to the construction of the Aswan Dam (1960-70). In 1968, the temple was dismantled and rebuilt on a neighbouring island.

*In the previous page:
A. Gronskey, Pastoral I,
Moscow (RU), 2009.*



