

Triangulating concepts for integral outlooks in Koper, Slovenia

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Abstract: The article reviews the possibilities of a joint effort from the City of Koper, its port and academic contributions through a workshop inclusive of stakeholders, to address a new Cruise Ship Terminal that would productively link the city and the port bridging the levels and programs. Student's visions illustrate the possibilities.

Key words: renovation, Koper, waterfront.

Introducing the Area of Study

Background understanding of the precious city of Koper in the Adriatic Sea reveals centuries long relationships between the medieval stronghold, settled in a promontory surrounded by marshland, and the maritime and aquatic activities that sustained it over time. The XXth Century saw its transformation into the main port for the whole country of Slovenia, with the occupation of the low lying surrounding areas for infrastructural and logistics developments, both at its maritime waterfront and its back country. The city became an isolated and disconnected jewel, while the port continued its growth and strategic importance. With the growth of contemporary shipping vessels and container port operations in the last 25 years, the interphase between different modal transportation needs became critically challenged, substituting cargo modal split for terrestrial systems. As in many Mediterranean cities, displaced port operations opened new civic possibilities for the traditional waterfront relationships between the urban and the port activities. In 2010 vacant quays started receiving, though unequipped, the arrival of cruise liners, disembarking 3000 passengers to a barren tarmac esplanade, populated only by the arrival of busses and instant kiosks. These buses would transport the tourists to the inland attractions of Slovenia, completely by passing the town of Koper.

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Fig.1. Historic Koper view on a veduta from 1781, as an island, before it was connected in 1827 to the mainland with gravel. Author: Francesco del Pedro and Marco Sebastiano Gianpiccoli.



Fig. 2. Shows aerial view of contemporary Koper as depicted in a Google Earth 2013 image. We can appreciate how the original medieval insular town settlement has been surrounded by industrial landscapes in reclaimed parcels. The marsh areas were developed with the exception of the North East sector that still remains as a marsh.

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At this point the challenge is established among various triangular sets of realities and stakeholders, to address the newly envisioned possibilities for an interest common future:



Fig. 3. Koper waterfront views from the Passenger Port of Koper official Brochure's 2013



On the one hand the geographical conditions of WATER/CITY/COUNTRY situations. It is to say the Adriatic Sea, the City of Koper as a hinge, and the interests of Slovenia as a country developing tourist attractions. On another hand the Cruise Ships lines, the land transportation issues, and the tourist receptivity opportunities, in the triad TOURISTS/BUSSES/RECEPTIVITY. These issues were manifested through another institutional triad of PORT/MUNICIPALITY/ACADEMIA that strategically joined forces to promote a study of possibilities for the articulation of the generators. Led by the University of Ljubljana's Professor Jurij Kobe with the participation of the University of Florida, professors and students from both schools developed a workshop that created proposals for the interlacing of the strategies of Koper Port and City that might otherwise be developed in a disconnected and conflicting manner. Too often Cities and Ports compete for scarce space between them rather than cooperate strengthening each other, bridging the institutional divide, analysed in City and Port like Siamese twins³. The issue was analyzed also by various authors in a publication from the International Center Cities on Water, the Land-Water Intermodal Terminals in particular by Brian Hoyle in the article Cities and Ports: development Dynamics at the Port-City Interface.⁴

The Workshop

The Workshop developed ideas and projects aiming at establishing a comprehensive Cruise Ship terminal bridging the vertical and horizontal gaps between quays and City, providing pedestrian connectivity from Ships to the Historic fabric, achieving transit modal separation, reusing port facilities, facilitating the arrival of passengers to the downtown areas, enriching commercial opportunities and establishing year round opportunities to enhance the experience for the permanent inhabitants of the City of Koper, of living in a port city, and enjoying the sea views. The projects were very well received by the stakeholders, and exhibited for the Days of Piran Conference 2013 in the Predstvitve v Radovac Gallery (Nov 22 2013). The proposals generated by the Workshop, in consultation with City and Port, were assembled and reviewed in a joint publication⁵. We illustrate here partially the outcome through an example of one of the students' groups proposed Master Plan as well as three of the projects of individual students groups.

We will like to highlight as a closing remark, that this workshop highlights the role of Academic Institutions, as generators of visioning ideas that provide public authorities with alternative and forward thinking ideas, beyond the Administrative boundaries, and engaging the creative proposal of students, unbound by the constraints of the real socioeconomic and political realms.

3. Montevideo: City and port as Siamese twins, Martha Kohen, Portus Magazine, The Port-City Relationship and the Urban Waterfront Redevelopment. September 2001. Marsilio Editors.

4. Land-Water Intermodal Terminals. Edited by Rinio Bruttomesso. 1998. Marsilio Editori, Venice.

5. Koper Cruise Port terminal and Connection to the old City. Luka Koper, Mestina Obcina Koper, University of Florida, Univ Ljubljani. Workshop report presented to stake holders. 2013.

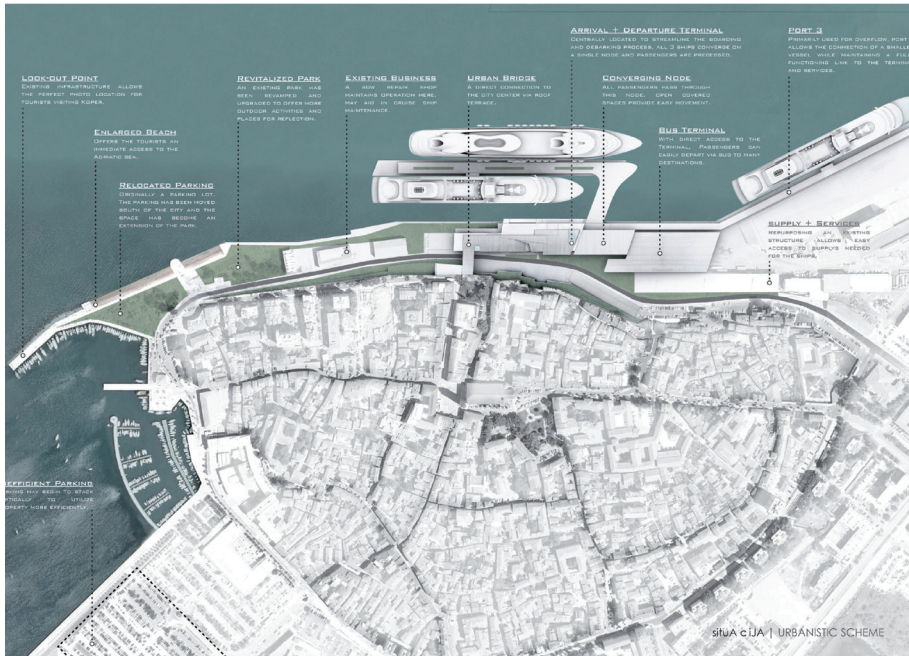


Fig. 5. Master Plan proposal example

The Mending of Port, City and Country

Present day Koper provides the cruise industry with a precious gem; a close proximity to a historical city center dating back to the 900s. What the city lacks is a true port terminal for the thousands of tourists descending on the city every year, a terminal that would not only serve the city of Koper but also serve as a crucial link to inland Slovenia. The proposal that follows is one that mends this gap between Port, City, and Country.

City reputation was a key factor in the design proposal; the concept of an iconic port that the world will recognize as the Port of Koper can only help increase the popularity. The beautification of waterfront property is a must; much of the area currently is used as parking and/or services. There is great opportunity to the south of the city to drastically reform existing parking to be much more efficient by simply going vertical. By doing so, one can remove existing planes of concrete and replace them with green promenades and parks along the Adriatic Sea. The beautification process caters to both locals of Slovenia and tourists, providing them with paths and parks for recreation and relaxation.

While it is important that the Cruise Industry receives the facility they require to operate their business, it is even more important that the building contains elements that respond to both the desires of the tourists and the functionality of the locals. It is the locals after all, that will be left with this facility in the cruise off-season.

The clear layers of the facility are the direct result of conflicting programs. Direct connections between the layers of programs are intended to break the segregation of tourist and locals, allowing the public to enter almost all of the facility. Security

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is in place to restrict access to the passenger waiting area and the piers during cruise season however; these boundaries are easily dismantled in the off-season allowing public access to the piers.

The blending of occupants is crucial to the proposal; it is through the blending that we are able to mend the port, city and country and facilitate travel to inland Slovenia.

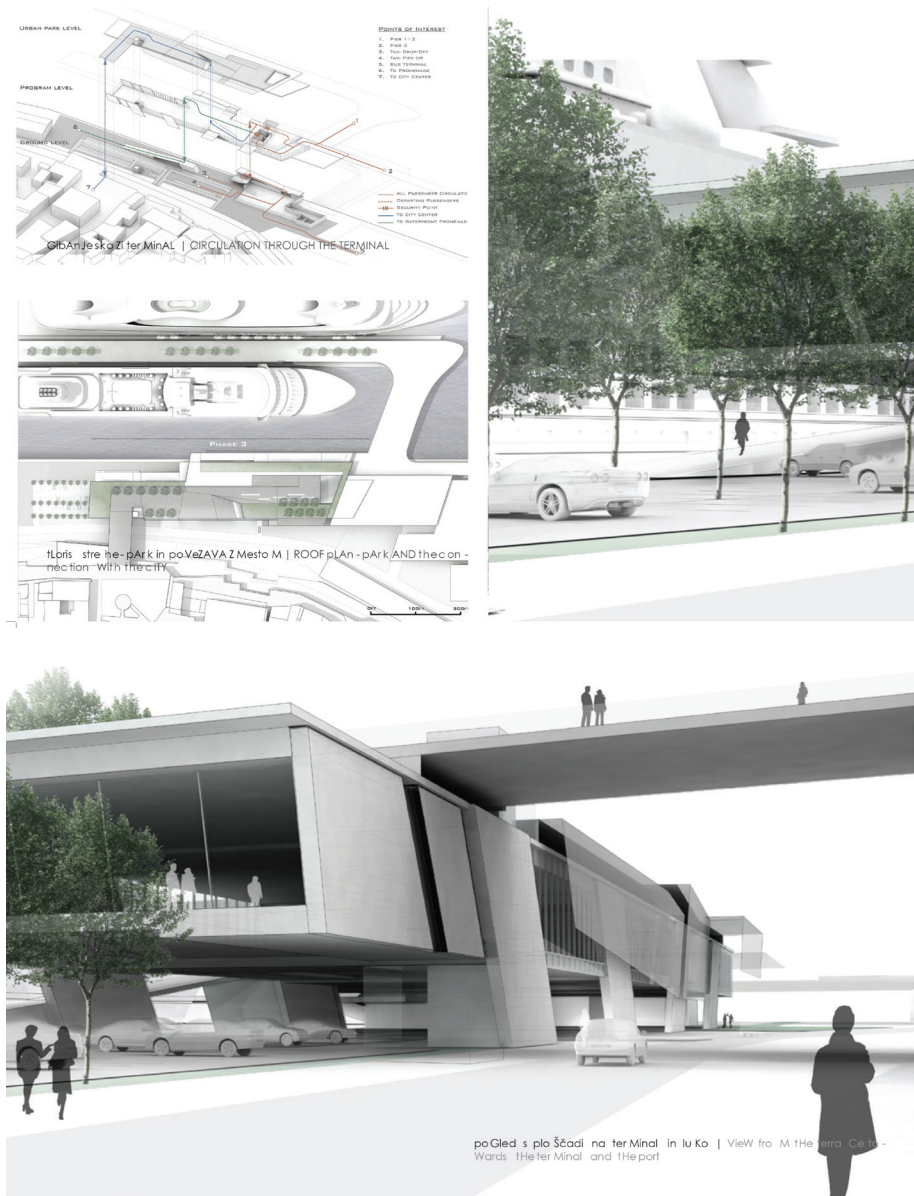


Fig. 6. Park and the connection with the city.
View from the terrace towards the terminal and the port. Rendering by Timothy Beeken

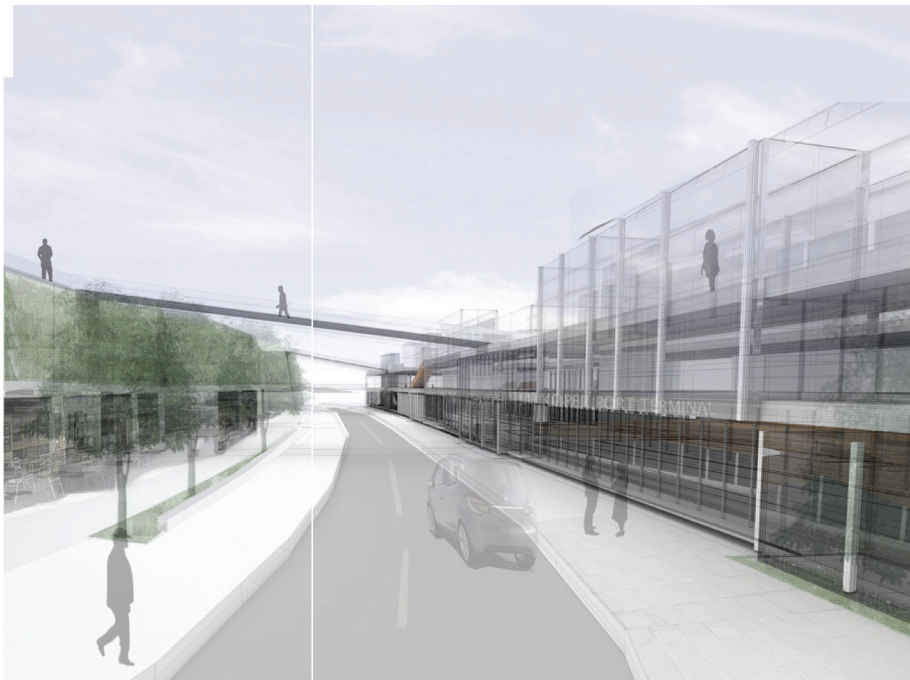
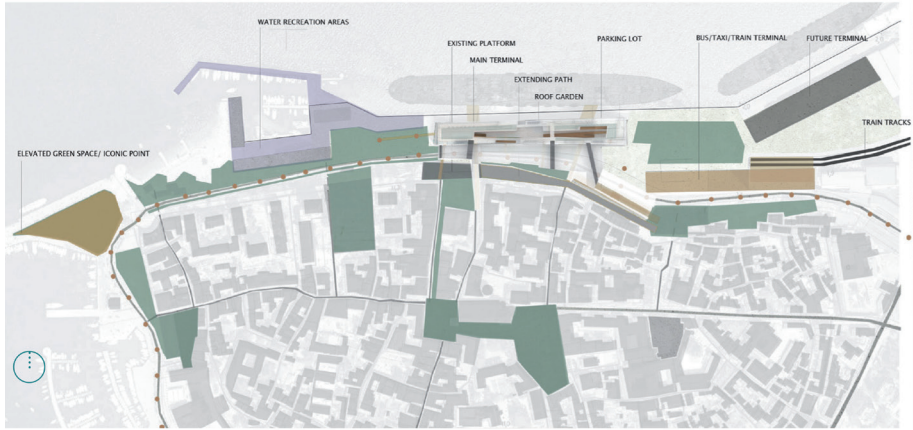


Fig. 6 Rendering by Marut Angsuratanawech.

The concept ideas of this intervention are to connect the city historic center by constructing transparent link between the city and the cruise ship. The light construction based on glass façade between two solid walls; city and cruise ship.

Even though this intervention seen as an open building but it has secluded areas for the passengers that separate by the level. Arrival section directly connects to the public transportation mean of the city. Building can be transformed when off-season as an exhibition hall or art gallery. In the night, the building will be a very illuminated landmark to the city of Koper.

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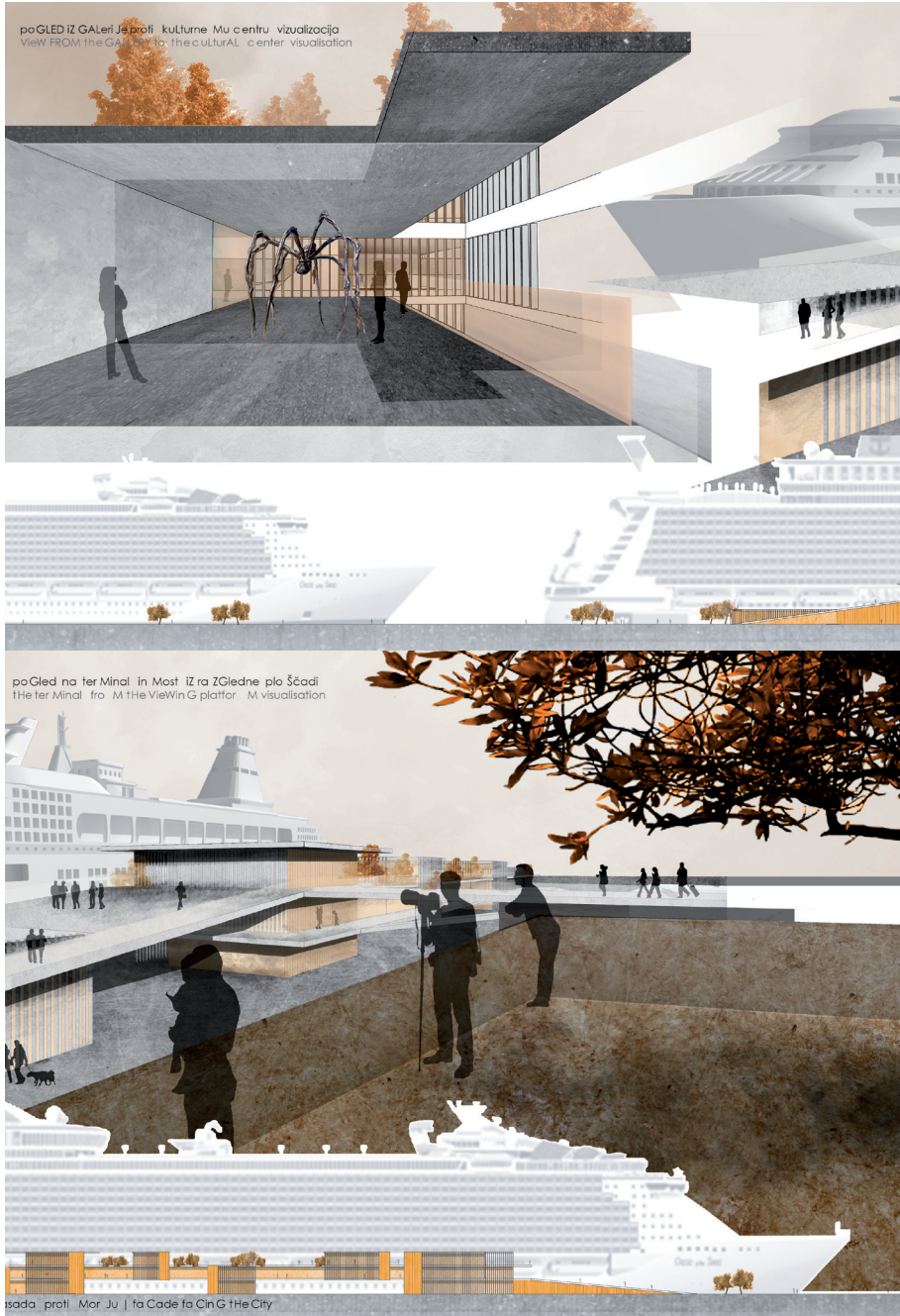


Fig. 7. Koper Viewing platform and terminal by Lan Babic, Sara Hocevar, Martina Matalaija. The cultural part of the terminal acts as an additional connection with the city and its edge. This part consists of the gallery with the in-ground auditorium. Under the bridge, there is a cultural centre. The main space at the middle level is accessible to large groups – it is a point of getting on/off ship.

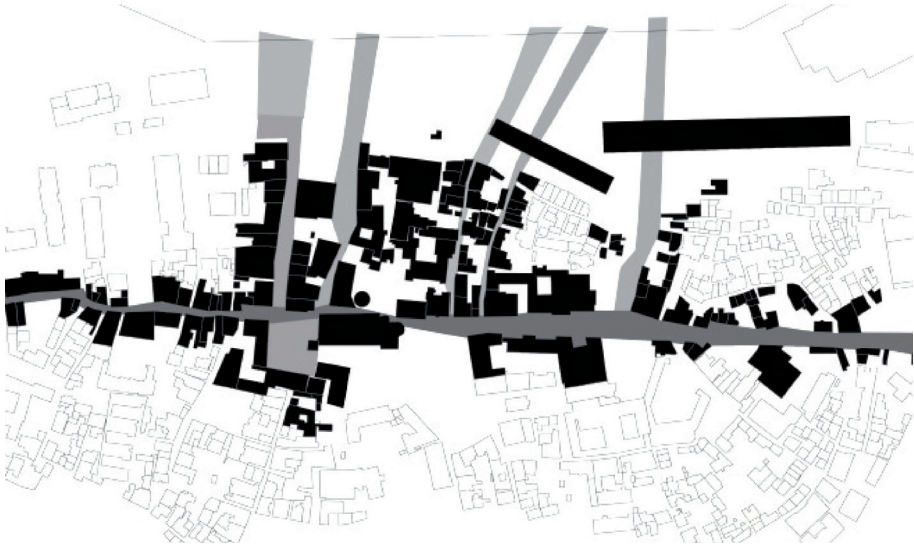


Fig. 7. Koper urbanistic scheme

The group's main idea was very similar to the idea of the majority, namely that the terminal should be connected to the old city centre by the existing arteries that flow through the city. All these streets would then be connected to the terminal via bridges which would allow people to access the roof with the park. This would become the focal point of the terminal which would then further connect to different ramps, tribunets and stairways.

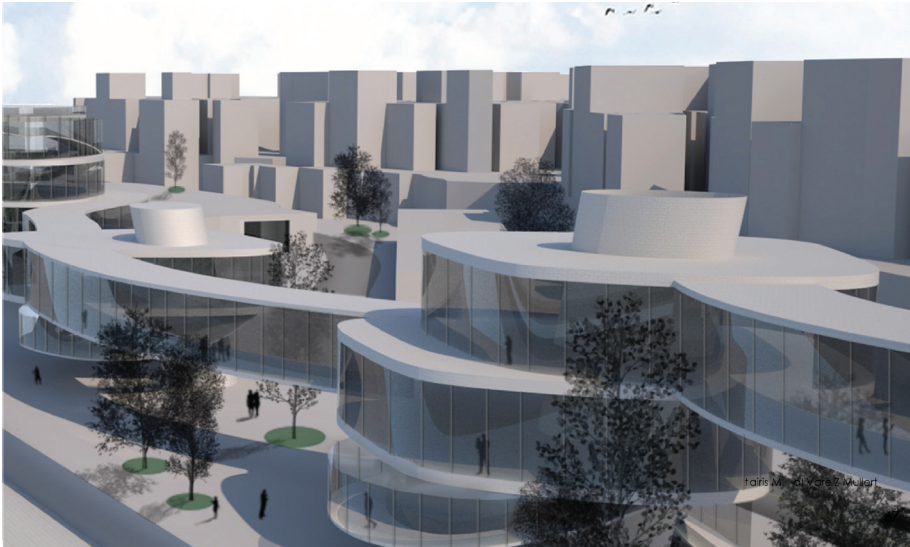


Fig. 7.1 Koper Mooring by Tairis Alvarez.

This project proposes a modular approach which can grow and expand in time depending on the Koper port's budget and needs. The modules are inspired by the moors found in ports as well as the mountains that surround the port. The buildings are elevated from the ground floor which creates open public spaces for residents and tourists alike. The project is connected in two points to the city center in order to create interest and easy access to the city of Koper, which will in turn increase tourism and the town's income.

Koper cruise port terminal and connection to the old city center - water piazza

During the charette in Koper the redesign of the Slovenian Harbor focused on creating a place of Identity, Interaction, Incorporation, Inspection, and Interspersion.

During the individual portion of the overall plan, the focus of this project focused on the Interaction portion of the design proposal through the creation and development of the Vodni Trg, Water Piazza. The location of this connection piece is positioned in a way to serve as an attraction from the cruise docking area to the rest of Koper's coastline. This compound consists of three separate, freestanding structures that possess the same structural language and serves the purpose of mixing inhabitant and visitor usage. The largest of the three structures serves as a barrier to the main road and allows the pool to be protected while utilizing the seaside backdrop. By moving the former marina south and opening more of the Slovenian coast line to the public, the creation of different levels of aquatic interaction can be developed within and around the water; such as, beach, harbor pool, and sunbathing areas.

Other activities, such as an exhibition hall, restaurant, café, and bathing facilities, housed within the enveloped structures, provide the resulting piazza with edge conditions and program to keep the space activated during the day, as well as the night. A series of floating decks provide swimmers with a place to rest and sunbathe during daylight hours, while these decks can be combined to form a floating stage for live performances at night.

Essentially, the interaction created in this space, between visitor and resident, would create a bridge between the Cruise Ship Harbor and the Koper's Coastline, acting as a destination point, not only for international travelers, but Slovenians as well.

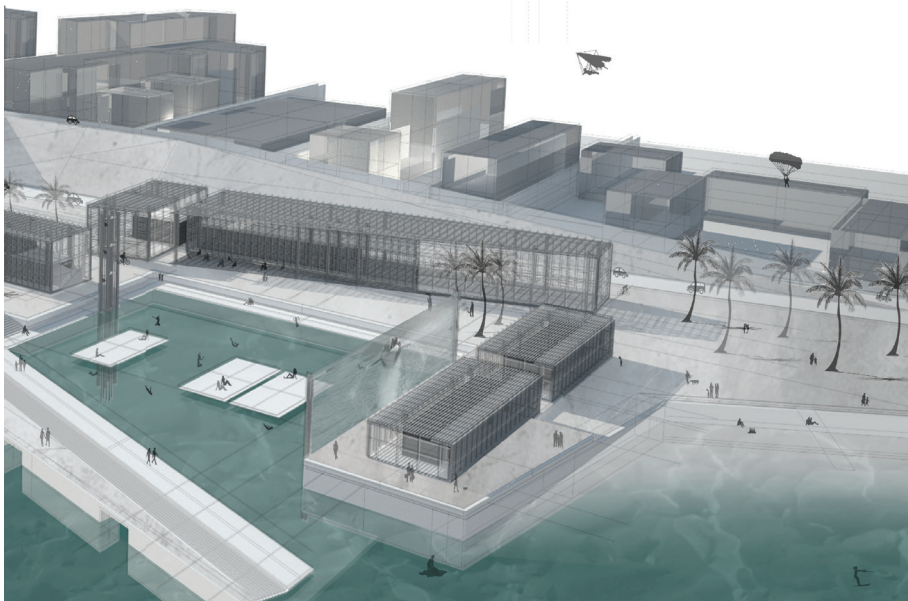


Fig. 8. Rendering by Lorin Johnson.

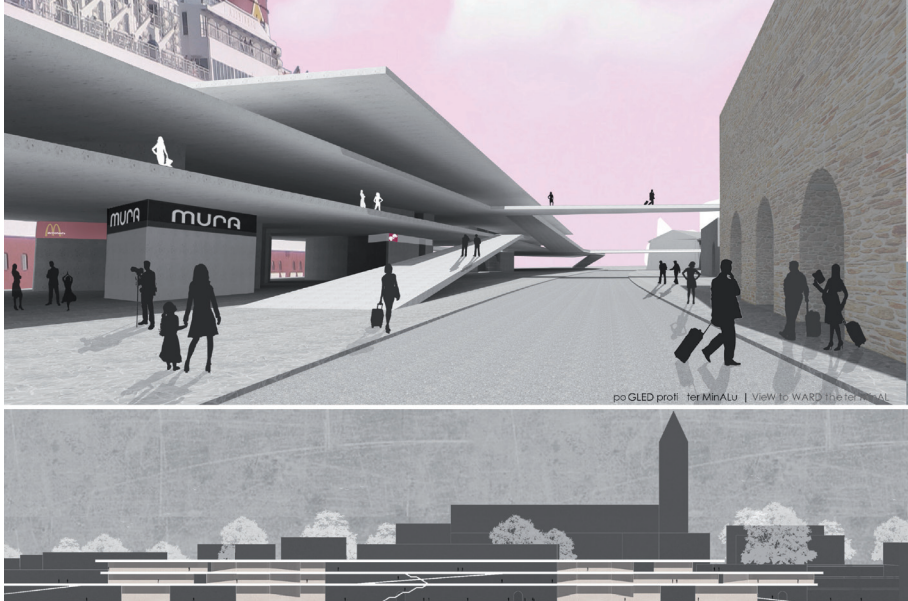


Fig. 9 View toward the terminal.

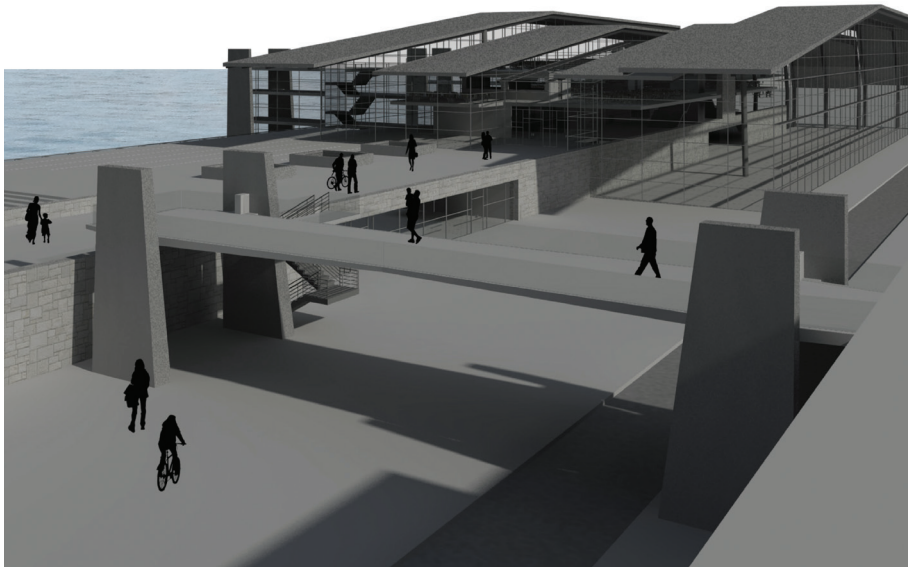


Fig. 10 Koper Cruise Port Terminal And Connection by Daniel "Miko" Mikolaschek



Fig. 11 Rendering by Elie Zer Amador Perez

Koper Cruise Port Terminal And Connection to the Old City Center - Dynamic Counterpoint

A counterpoint relationship between the fragmentation of the heavy city wall and the lightness, transparency and versatility of the terminal proposal. In this project we are using two different approaches attempting to generate a counterpoint between the old city wall and the new city cruise terminal for Koper. In the first stage of this proposal the master plan seeks was to utilize the old city wall to connect the city to the port by creating this “terraces and ramps” creating a tour inside the wall and also generate public and green spaces for the city of Koper. This public space locates different views to the sea and the terminal intervention landscape. The terminal proposal consists into a biomimetic lighter structural elements based on two sea creatures that live in the Adriatic Sea area. The main terminal is inspired on the vertebrae of the bottle nose dolphin. On the ground floor we have all the terminal program like check in, customs, maritime police, luggage and the entrances to the two other underground ship connection temporary terminals.

The semi-buried connection landscape between the main terminal and the temporary terminals entrance for the two other ships are based in the sea snail shape and composition. Inside the semiunderground access we will have different fenestration connecting the people to the multiple entrances of the historic wall. One of the main purposes of the biomimetic approach using natural shapes is to generate spaces that are efficient and totally differentiates it from the historic wall and give a modern image to the city of Koper. Also the intervening structures are thought to grow, shrink or adapt along time to the city port needs similar to the sea creatures adapt to their natural environment. The structural connector contains the terminal facilities required for the operations at ground and underground levels.

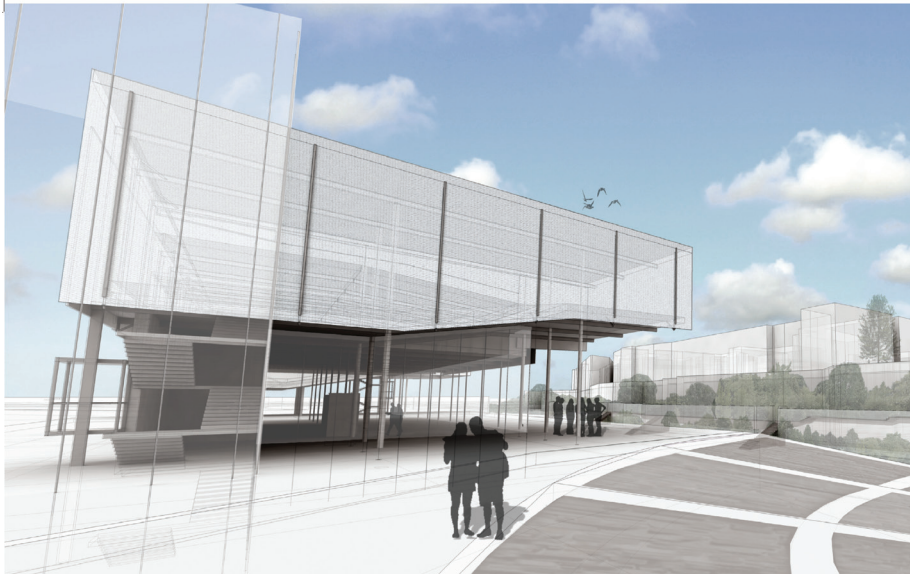


Fig. 12 Rendering by Amanda Byars.

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