

Cross-Border Strands

Concept for Central Area and Pedestrian Street in Valga-Valka Twin Town Centre

CROSS-BORDER STRANDS

By identifying the natural and infrastructural strands that run from one side to the other of the frontier, our proposal stems from reinforcing these urban corridors to improve the connectivity between the Twin-Town through two distinctive elements: a reinvented urban axis that relates main public spaces of both sides of the border; plus the recovering of the creek area as a central Park, connecting the new core of the conurbation to the Pedele-Pedeli River as well as improving the accessibility between both margins of the stream.



SCHEME

The starting point of the proposal is to understand the singularity of the intersection between the Varžupīte-Konnaoja Creek and the new Pedestrian Street along Raina-Sõpruse. Our strategy is to recognize the Pedestrian Street as the first and main urban strand of a series of novel filaments that will pass through the Creek Park to the River area.

These strands are organized parallel to the Pedestrian Street on the Valka side, arranging a new Plaza for multiple events in addition to the bus terminal. The itinerary of these lines inflects and turns once entering into the green space of the creek. Some pathways create the limits of the green area; other trails bridge over the creek, whereas some others meet existing paths in order to reach the fluvial space.

The former boundary between the two countries is now an interface green space fulfilled with passageways that invite citizens to WALK through one town to the other, blurring political limits to connect diverse facilities and leisure areas. Valga and Valka WALK toward each other again like in the past.

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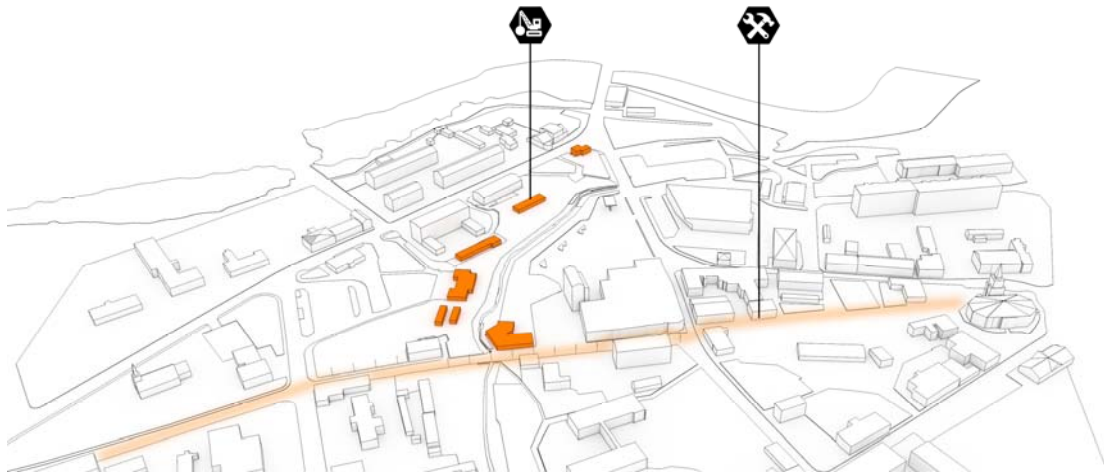
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URBAN INTERVENTIONS

We propose to break down the interventions into various scenarios. These prospects are not necessarily in chronological order, but are differentiated in various urban elements that can be executed independently or in other sequences depending on the future needs.

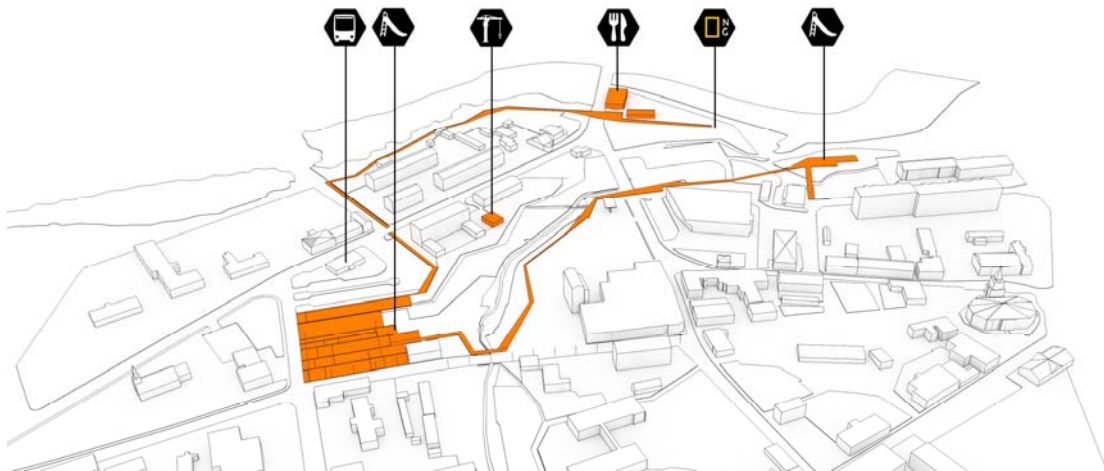
Prospect 1:

- Demolition of existing obsolete buildings and outbuildings of the apartment houses.
- Development of the Pedestrian Street along Raina-Sõpruse.



Prospect 2:

- Construction of new storage buildings for residents.
- Development of the new plaza with the redesign of the Valka bus operating area.
- Construction of the two new perimeter pathways of the Creek park.
- Restoration of the former Ramsi Watermill as a new service point and restaurant.
- Relocation of National Geographic's frame.

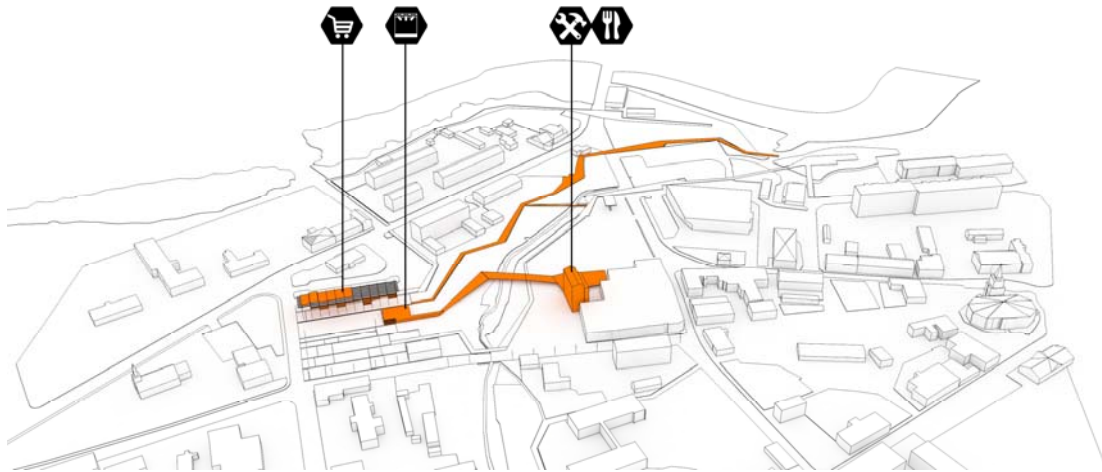


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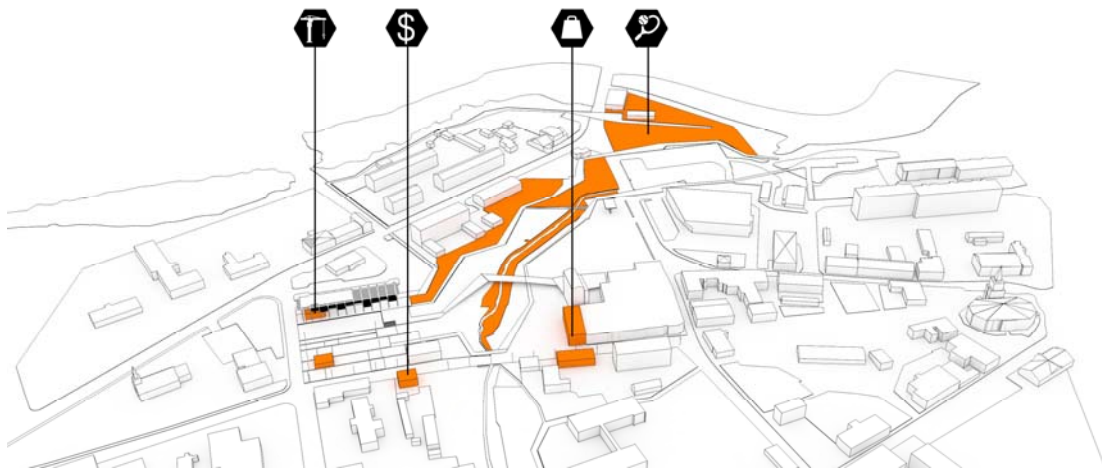
Prospect 3:

- Construction of a new market shed.
- Construction of the two central pathways of the Creek Park, which bridge over the border to create a new elevated platform connecting the Twin Towns.
- New wood open stage that articulates the new Plaza and the Creek Park.
- Restoration of the old Winery tower into a new cultural space and restaurant.



Prospect 4:

- Construction of new multifunctional building under the pergola, with further extension if needed.
- Imaginable future small local businesses along Raina-Sõpruse and the new Plaza.
- Future extension of Selver shopping center.
- Development of the Creek Park with new furniture, outdoor lounges and sports infrastructures for leisure activities.



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MATERIALS

The ingredients of the proposal are divided in three “*colours*” that create different atmospheres. Each colour defines a specific urban element with diverse roles in terms of use of the public space. We outline three differentiated characters:

- **Green:** Park areas with various vegetation.
- **Grey:** Paved areas such as the pedestrian street or the Plaza, made of granite cobblestones and concrete pavers.
- **Brown:** Pathways and siting areas made of wood. These strands are laying on top of the park as footbridge constructions where the natural ground is sloped or to cross the creek. Some sections of these paths can also be paved with bricks to get firmer and more continuous flooring.

The proposal is also considering a fourth material: the refurbishment of existing buildings to become new emblematic places for the area as “**Hot spots**”.



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BLURRING BETWEEN HARD AND SOFT GROUNDS

The focus of the layout implementation should be the strands. The type of ground between these traces is subordinated to its use: the park space along the creek will mainly have a soft ground with vegetation, while the plaza space or the bus operating area will mainly have a hard pavement. Having said this, we propose strategies to blur the edge between the hard and soft grounds. The scheme creates areas where vegetation and pavement interlock, like fingers. Moreover, a detailed system of permeable pavement is suggested, which allows for having areas half hard and half soft. It is a concrete pavement with permeable spaces between units.

Permeable pavement allows water to infiltrate, reducing storm water runoff and provides zone flood control with no need for traditional rainwater infrastructure (which reduces the cost), while also reduces soil erosion and extends the life of paved area due to less cracking from the freeze-thaw cycle. It also reduces the need for salt use during winter, due to little or no black ice.

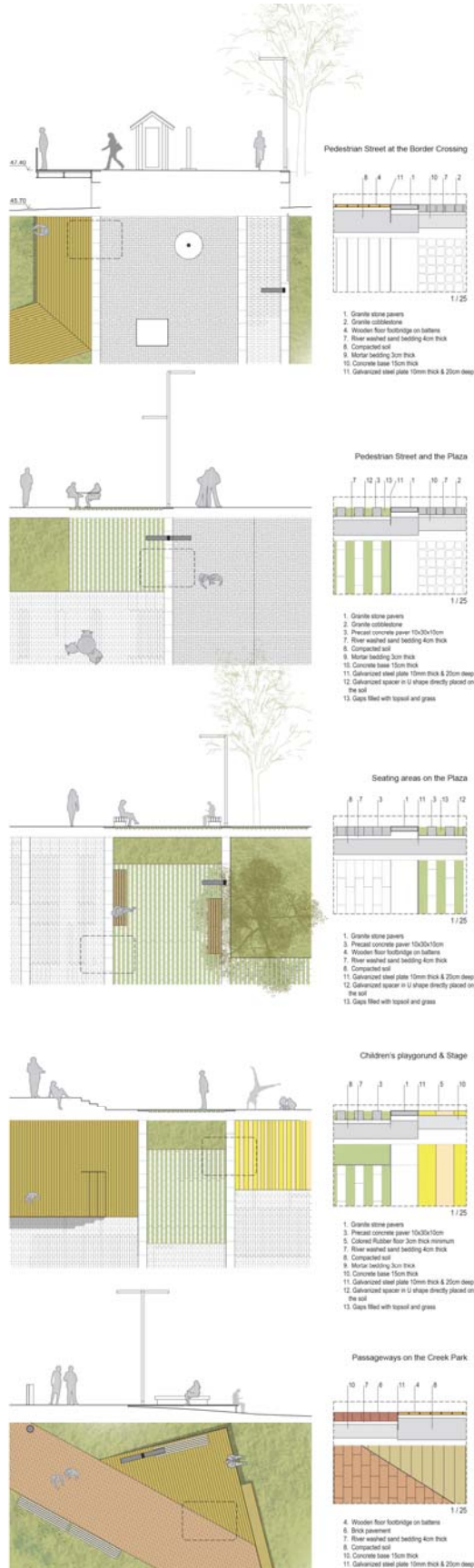
The proposed paving blends park and urban paved areas into one public space with no rigid transition. It allows a higher flexibility of uses and changes into the ground; so we can have grass areas able to resist temporarily parking, grass driveways good for cars as well as pedestrian, or green paved areas that can hold both leisure activities and occasional big events.



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CONSTRUCTION SOLUTIONS



All the materials proposed are designed to work into natural settings as well as urban contexts. The elements require no maintenance and have a long lifecycle. They are all installed by traditional means, but their juxtaposition forming the strands give them a new look to the public space.

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LIGHTING & FURNITURE

The proposal establishes 6 types of street lighting: 4 different pole lights, a lower bollard light and a linear lighting system for the market shed.

The first three pole lights are variations of the same BALI lighting system, made of a rectangular hot dip galvanized pole 20x10cm. Each design variant has a specific situation:

- 1) for street lighting; 2) for seating areas in the plaza; 3) for turning points in pathways.
- 4) Is a taller lighting post in galvanised steel with six parabolic floodlights, located in the middle of the plaza and the Selver parking lot.
- 5) Is a 90cm bollard light made of Cor-Ten steel (brown colour). This type of beacon is located at the pathways, acting as a reference point and boundary, accompanying pedestrians at the same time.
- 6) Linear fluorescent tubes located at the market shed and the spanning footbridge's rail.

All seats, benches and picnic tables are made of timber planks. The proposal looks for simple and neutral design that dilutes into natural settings as well as urban contexts. The bench can include optional backrest. The pinewood pieces are treated for outdoor exposure, with laminated metal fixtures. This furniture requires no maintenance and has a long lifecycle. It is possible to combine different modules and complementary elements to create warm and interesting resting places.

Resembling some of Kalevipoeg's illustrations, the strong giant carrying big planks on his shoulders, wood wants to become present into our proposal. This natural material takes all its traditional connotation to be displayed on the site forming new pathways on the landscape, furniture pieces and light erections such as the pergola. The wood defines fragments and traces of the innovative proposed strands that give a new structure to the site, connecting the Twin-Town Centres again.

