

# Thessaloniki ConfExPark an urban crucible



## An invitation to everybody

The Thessaloniki ConfExPark will be an urban area of unique quality; a place of congregation that can cater for large crowds and still offer intimate situations, an address of international importance and a local meeting spot. A centre of sport, business, art, history and politics that finds itself within a relaxed setting of shaded groves and luxuriant gardens. It is a location where some of the largest buildings in the city join together to welcome big events of all sorts. Fairs, concerts, exhibitions, shows and rallies, yet it is also a place of individual hospitality, gastronomy and simple relaxation for the citizens of Thessaloniki.

## Permeability and urban scale

To achieve this unique quality we propose an urbanism based on three spatial principles. First, all new interventions in the park are designed to be permeable, so that public space can flow through all areas of use (new and old, large and small). Secondly, we propose a marriage of scales that breaks the impact of the very large exhibition halls through the introduction of smaller elements that are akin to the size of the existing cultural buildings such as the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art. Thirdly, the existing buildings of Museum, YMCA Arch and the OTE tower are joined by the new hotel at Simtrivanj/ Ekthesi Metro station to provide landmarks that structure the space and help orientation. Intuitive and efficient flows.

## Intuitive and efficient flows

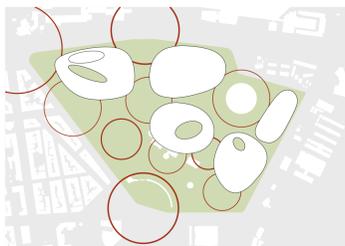
The main area of the park is reserved for pedestrian and cyclists. All car and delivery traffic is fed in and out of the ConfExPark directly from the surrounding streets. Access for delivery traffic for the exhibition halls as well as visitors arriving by car is dealt with in the most efficient way from the East and North. Within the site, delivery lorries are circulating on minimal terrain that can convert back to park and exhibition area when there is no assembly or disassembly of exhibitions going on.

For pedestrians there are two main routes: firstly, the "Mountain axis", a leftover from the 19th century park that occupied the area before TIF-Helios.

It runs in right angle to the topography, connects the ConfExPark with the University campus and continues up into the mountains. Secondly there is the "Culture Path" that connects the "Rotunda" in the North-West with the museums as well as the City Hall at the South-Eastern end of the park. All other routes flow like subsidiary creeks and rivers into those two major streams.

## Entrance plazas

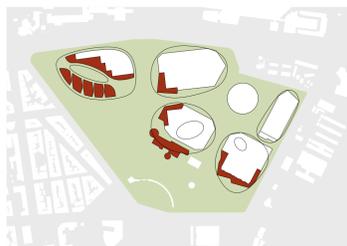
Along these routes there are several stations that act as entry points into the adjacent facilities. In the heart of the park, where the main lines of movement cross, one can enter both the TIF-Helios exhibition halls 1.1 and 2 as well as the new multi-purpose hall that is connected to the hotel and business development in the north of the site. To the south - marked by the existing OTE tower - a second entrance plaza offers access to the exhibition hall 2 and the Conference Centre as well as the Luxury Exhibition Hall.



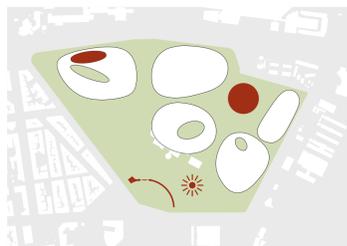
park as invitation for different communities



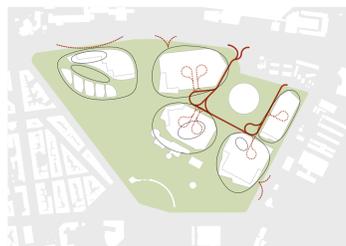
permeability



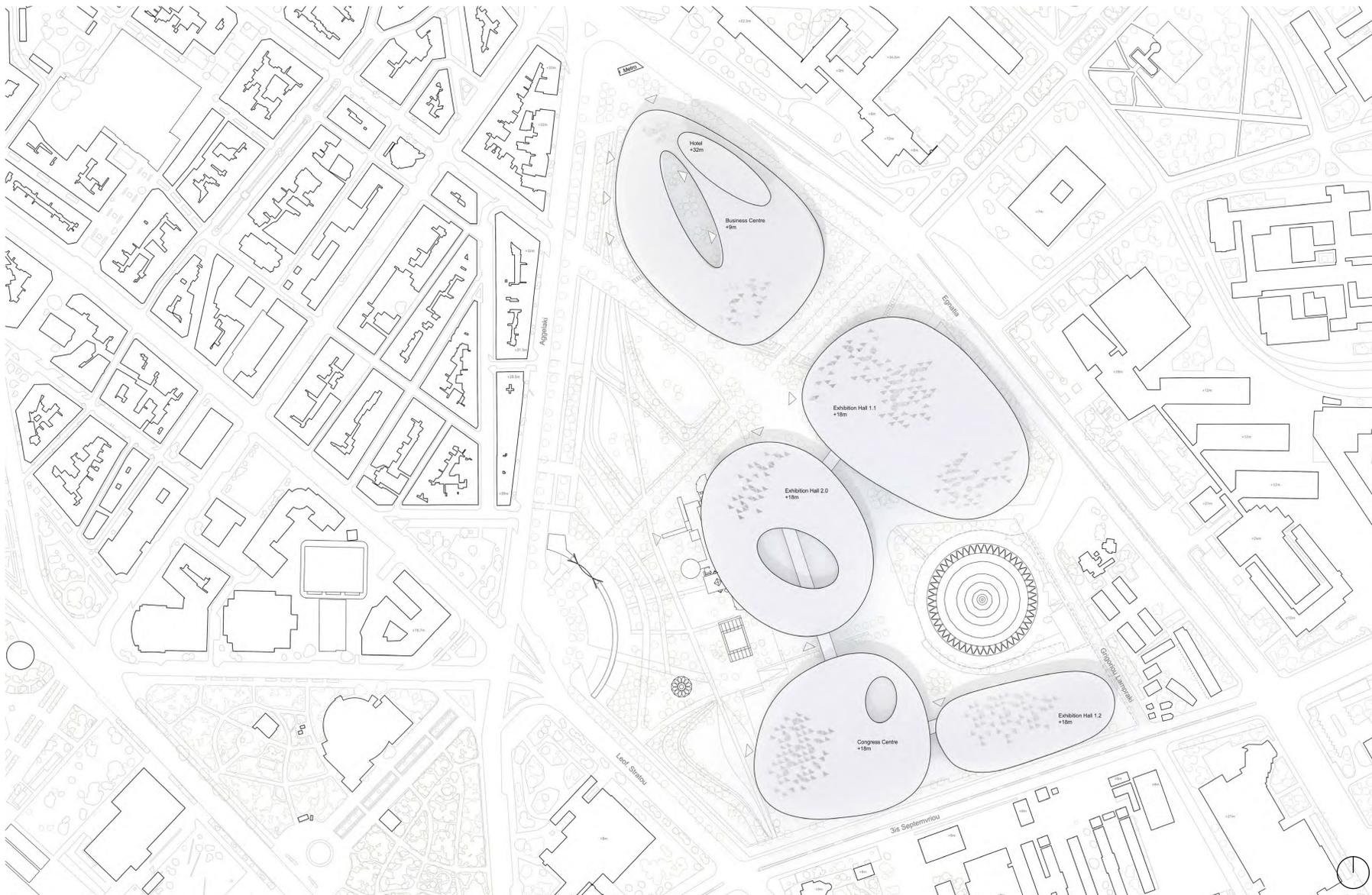
breaking the scales



landmarks

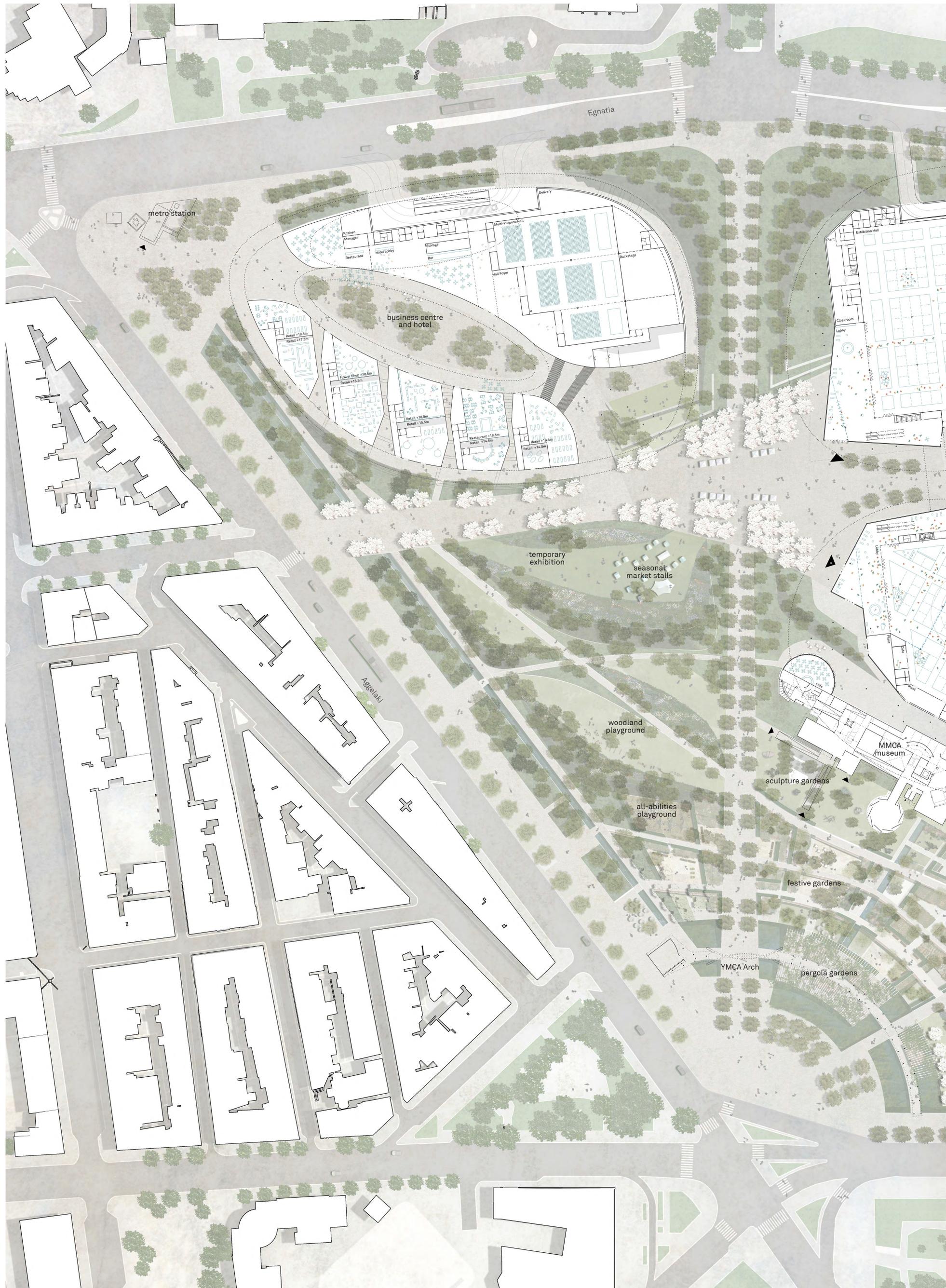


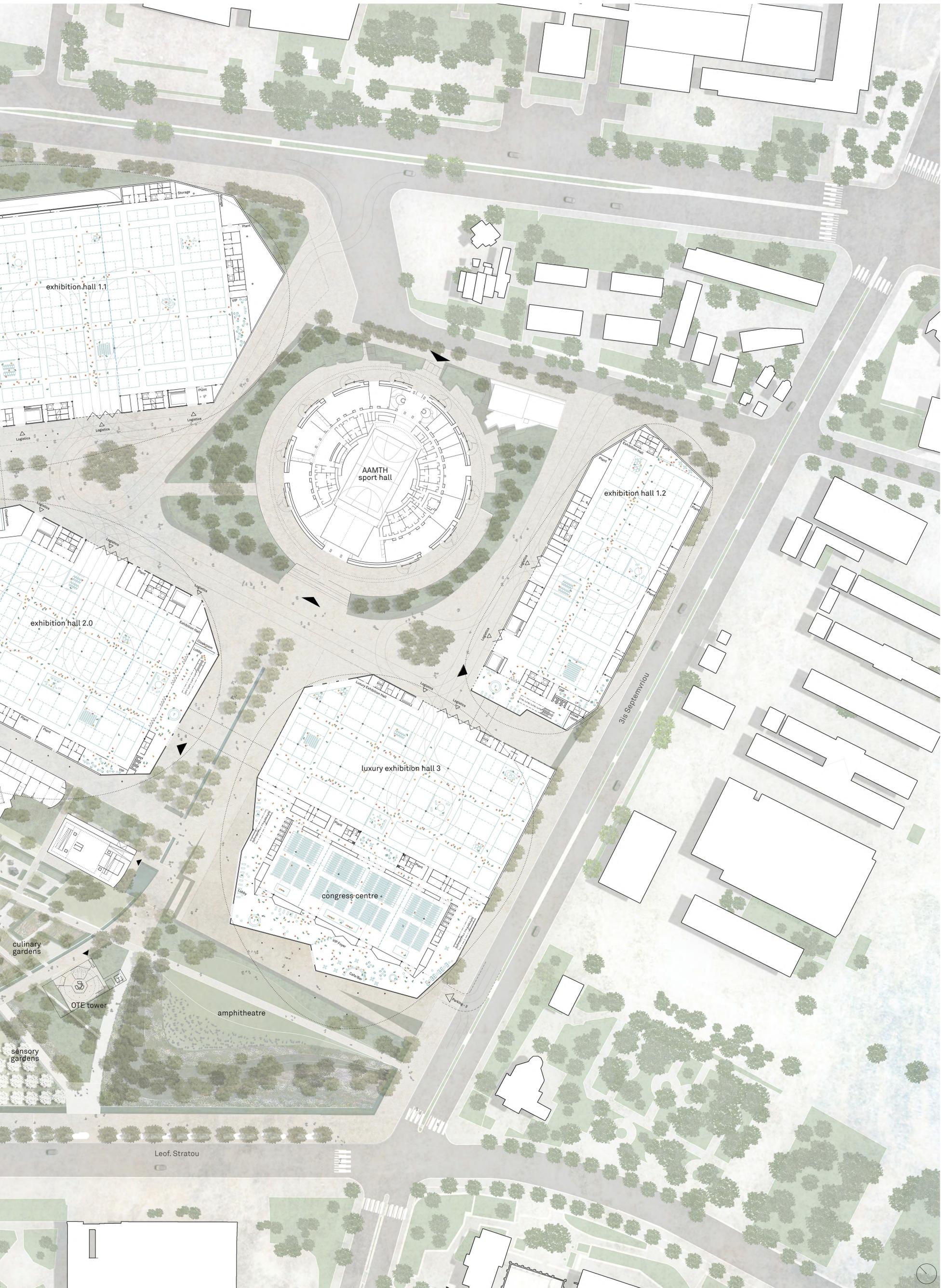
efficient flows



site plan 1:1500

Thessaloniki ConfExPark an archipelago of venues





# Thessaloniki ConfExPark the city's generous heart



## Landscape Principles – past, present, future – mountain to sea

Thessaloniki, placed between the mountains and the sea, is layered with memories of its history and cultures, as Greece's largest and most influential northern city, it holds an ambition to be the Balkan Region's major business and tourist destination. The new ConfExPark is at the heart of the city's present and future ambitions. Its strategic location requires that any re-development of this major part of the city should represent its traditions, memories and reputation for hospitality. The ConfEx Park's landscape is the conduit by which these qualities can be expressed, reflecting these layers in contemporary forms and making it a destination for all residents and visitors alike.

**The Mountain Axis** The existing axis running North-South must be rethought. It has been imposed rather than occurring naturally and therefore does not allow for fluid connectivity. Our design aims to reshape this axis for better and more intuitive connectivity and in turn will create opportunities for relationships between the mountain, sea, University, ConfEx site and wider city.

## The Culture Path

As one moves around the city centre, one observes the many excavated sites, historic buildings and monuments that provide orientation and an oasis of calm in what is a densely built urban environment. The ConfEx site sits outside the urban core, however major routes and streets fan out through the gateways of what was once a walled city. Some of these routes are currently blocked by the Helexpo layout, however they can now be reintroduced outwards from the city centre, across the site, towards the newer residential districts to the south and east.

We have called the most important route the Culture Path, which moves diagonally across the site. It links the new metro at Egnatia and Alexandrou Svolou in the north-west, to the Exhibition Halls, the MMCA Museum, the Congress Centre and the Archaeological and Byzantium Museums on Leoforos Stratos to the South East. This route provides a walk through the park, avoiding the city's heavily trafficked roads, and enables pedestrians and cyclists to relax and breathe freely in a planted park environment.

## Landform and Water

The ConfEx site was once the location of streams that gathered water from the mountain and deposited them in a marsh beside the sea. In time, the streams were utilized as part of the defensive earthworks that protected the City's walls. We have used this vocabulary as a natural method of marking the park's boundaries. By terracing its terrain to create useful, programmable space, we provide a sequence of framed garden spaces that reveal the city's regional landscape habitats and a home for a bio-diverse range of flora and fauna.

The strategy of placing water channels and ditches around the parks exterior and within its interior allows one to flexibly open up and close down various parts of the site for external events associated with the exhibition halls and city festivals. This allows the park's spaces to be programmed for art installations, specialist markets, film, music, theatre performances and more. This can be done carefully without the use of temporary or permanent fences. A path across a water channel or ditch can be easily gated, whilst a planted earth mound screens the ditch from view.

## The Events Fields, Festival Gardens & Amphitheatre

The Park naturally splits into three areas. The western wedge between Aggiaki and the urban axis, the central wedge that fans out between YMCA Square and the Contemporary Art Gallery and the southern wedge adjacent to Leoforos Stratos. These provide three territories for activities within the park.

The western wedge splits into a sequence of small, medium and large events fields. These are given their form by mounding the ground to create flat reinforced grass terraces that can support events. The smallest can contain a children's active play area, whilst the other two closest to the main entrance and exhibition halls provide external space for specialist markets, installations and exhibits.

The central wedge provides a sequence of small squares and terraces, surrounded by cultural plants. These appear like intricate excavations filled with fragrance, colour and texture. These are the festival gardens and

provide spaces to meet and socialise, or hold parties and small events. They are linked to an arc of cafes and restaurants placed to either side of the restored arced walk that frames the YMCA Square.

The southern wedge is another landform that will protect an amphitheatre from the noise of passing traffic on Leoforos Stratos. The amphitheatre is orientated towards the Congress Centre so that viewers face north out of the sun and can clearly see a speech made from the buildings entrance terrace, or a stage or screen placed beside it.

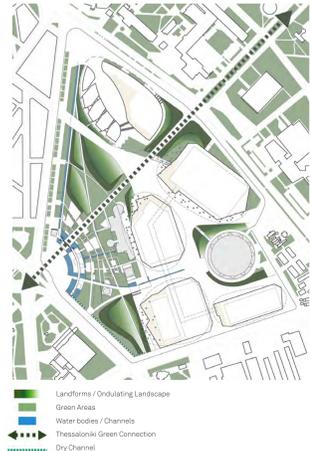
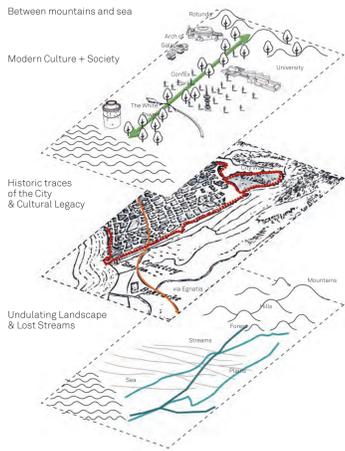
The two mounded landscapes are planted with native trees, shrubs, bulbs and perennials to create woodland screens. In turn, they will frame the central festival gardens that are like a physic garden of herbaceous and culinary plants found in cultivated gardens, orchards and fields. They combine to create a rhythm of calm, intense, calm, but enlivened by the life of the city on either side.

Between mountains and sea

Modern Culture + Society

Historic traces of the City & Cultural Legacy

Undulating Landscape & Lost Streams

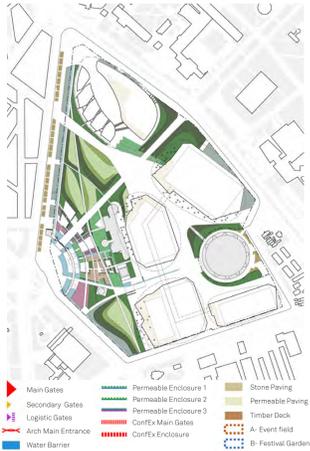


Landscape of layers

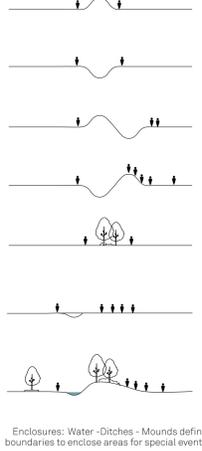
Water + Landforms - Green Connection



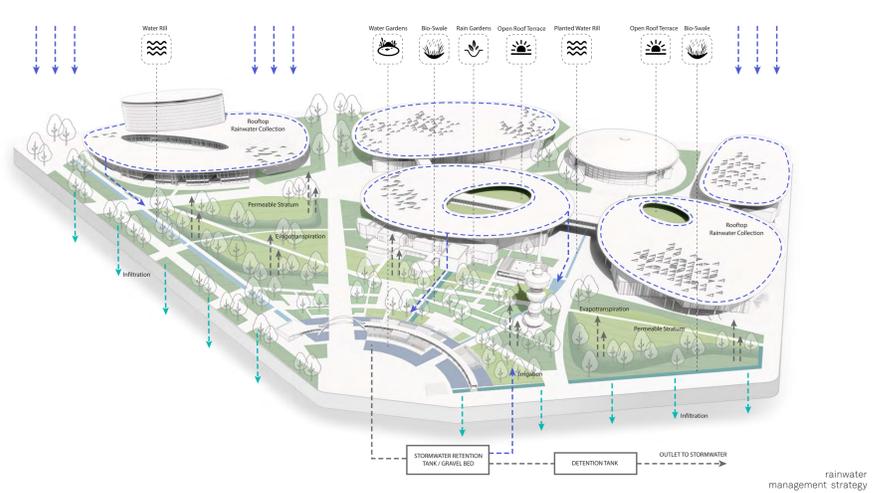
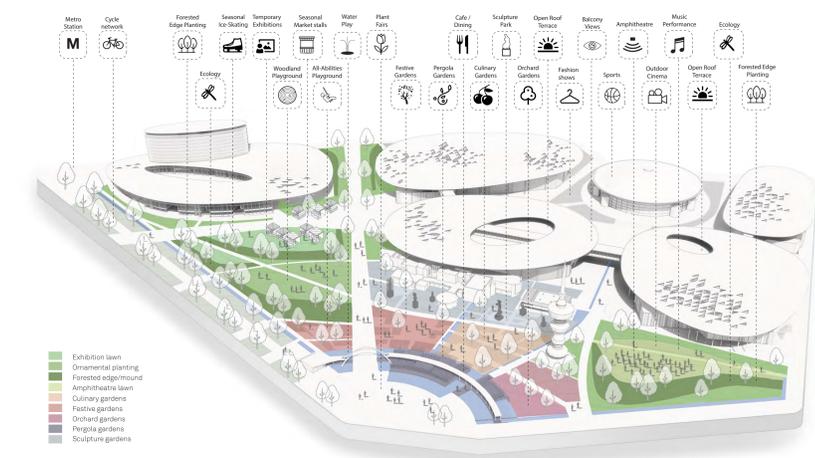
Landscape Characters



Boundaries + Hard Landscape



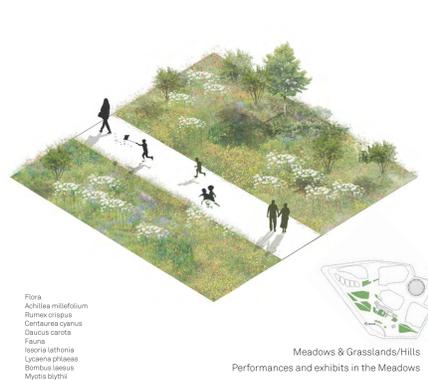
Boundaries + Edge treatment



rainwater management strategy



Woodland (Mixed species forest) / Mountain Woodland Playground in the Forested Edge



Meadows & Grasslands/Hills Performances and exhibits in the Meadows



Crops-Fruit Trees/Valley Celebrating in the Festive Gardens



Riparian Valley Cafe/Dining in the Pergola Gardens

# Thessaloniki ConfExPark an inviting exhibition centre



entrance exhibition halls

## Exhibition Halls like connected islands

Placed like islands floating in a sea of landscape, the size and position of the Exhibition Halls and the Congress Centre respect the indications of the brief for the most compact and efficient handling of the needs of all stakeholder groups: local residents, tourists, professional visitors, exhibitors and their construction teams as well as the organizers. However, their island character suggests open borders, spatial transparency and accessibility – depending on the respective status, size and type of the activities taking place around the various fairs and other events.

**Staged realisation** The decision to articulate distinct building volumes supports the possibility to realise the new ConfEx park in several steps; beginning with the public park together with the Business Centre, continuing with the Exhibition Halls, one by one as well as the Conference Centre, each in discrete stages if so desired.

**Unifying architecture with multilayered uses** The Exhibition halls as well as the Congress and Business Centres are seen as a family of buildings that are unified by their generously overhanging roofs. These roofs act as large scale "Sustainability clouds" that provide both shade and an interface to the climate: fields of photovoltaic panels harvest electricity, the huge roof surface collects rainwater to be used in the watering of the park and openings in the roof provide both controlled natural light and ventilation. Needless to say, that the large roofs will act as very effective solar protectors keeping the solar heat out of the Exhibition Halls.

The Exhibition Halls are designed to read as volumes that are "tucked under" the roofs. Foyers are treated like building extensions to the main volumes. They match the scale of the important Museum of Macedonian Art that will be integrated into the whole complex. In times when halls are

not accessible due to exhibition-setup, the foyers of the halls are treated like independent "house-in-house units" which will be open for public use to serve as cultural and social venues. These park-foyers are well proportioned, daylight spaces, equipped with facilities like café-bars, lockers and WCs to be used as smaller venues, for example by the university or other stakeholder groups for lectures, exhibitions or banquets and parties with direct view and access into the park.

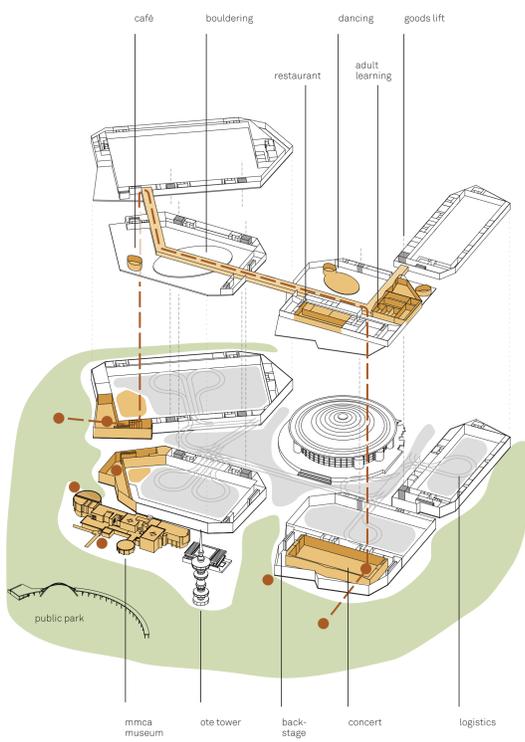
**Exhibition access and circulation** There are two main access points for the main exhibition area: coming from the new metro-station in the north, people walk through the court of the Business Centre or along its public south-edge lined with gastronomy and shops to enter the exhibition area between hall 1.1 and 2. From the south one passes through the YMCA Arch to pass the MMCA Museum and reach the same gate. Alternatively one

can use the southern entrance right next to the OTE tower leading to Hall 2 and the Congress Center center which can also be accessed directly from 3rd of September Str. The Exhibition Halls and the Congress Centre are all placed on the same level (+13.5m) so that circulation between Halls can easily take place on the ground floor. In addition this scheme proposes a "Vasari-Corridor", named in reference to the footbridge connection between the Palazzo Pitti, Ponte Vecchio and the Uffizi in Florence, independent from traffic on the ground this 1st floor corridor and bridge connects all first-floor exhibition areas including the open air exhibition zone on the rooftop of hall 2. In times outside the exhibition-dates this walkway in the sky can be a destination for locals and tourists to take a stroll with views over the rooftops of Thessaloniki, across the park and to rest for a meal in an inviting rooftop terrace.

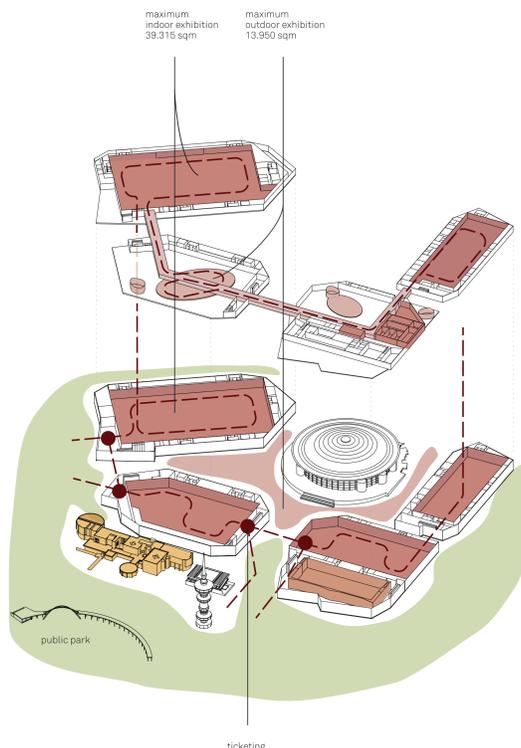
## Reduced and controlled traffic

Located in the heart of the urban fabric of the city of Thessaloniki with good accessibility to public transport the amount of car traffic associated with the ConfExPark will be further reduced by clustering functions such as hotel, congress and exhibition to allow for close walking distances between destinations. Entry and exit points for taxis, cars and delivery vehicles take the main road network of the city into account with a view to reducing traffic congestion of the wider road network and ensuring an increased level of road safety. At the same time, the possibility of licensing the traffic connection by the competent authority is ensured, based on the current legislation in force in Greece. Respectively, the layout of the facilities and the traffic approach inside the plot was guided by the orderly circular and safe traffic operation while at the same time an effort was made to minimize the areas of involvement of moving vehicles achieving an increased level of road safety inside the premises. To avoid delivery traffic above ground, all the halls are connected in the basement with a carpark which also facilitates smaller deliveries.

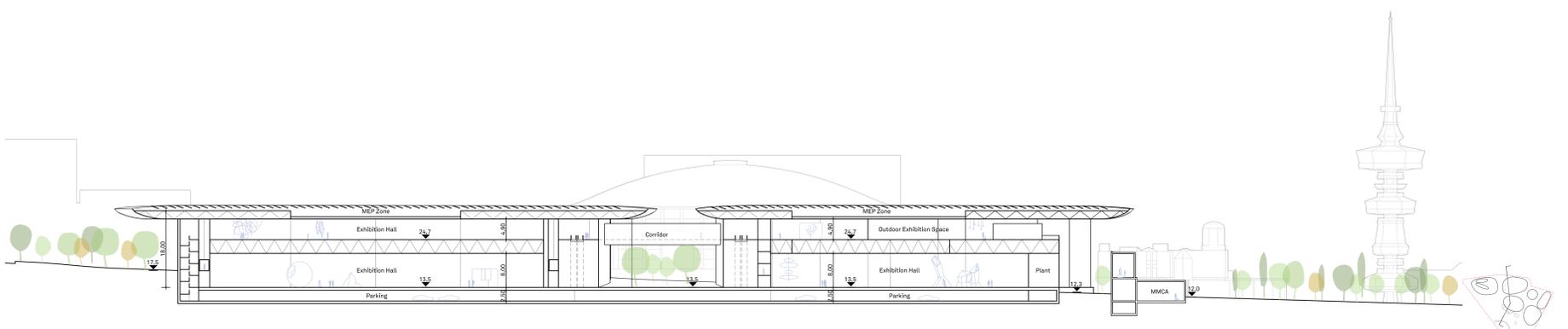
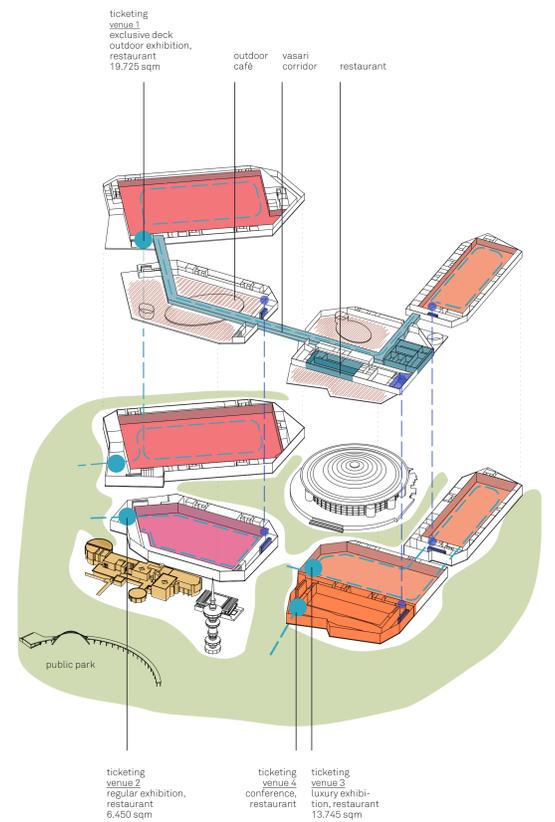
a) while exhibition is set up, foyers at the park can be used for public events and vasari-corridor will be a public promenade



b) maximum exhibition indoors and outdoors



c) 3 different exhibitions and 1 congress at a time surrounded by a freely accessible outdoor areas



exhibition hall / section bb 1:500

# Thessaloniki ConfExPark third and fourth nature



perspective vasari corridor

## Gardens and Clouds

The whole park provides passive measures – both with natural and artificial means – to form the basis for a healthy, good environment with a modest climate: in summer, shading trees, shading roofs and water features will help to moderate outside air temperatures. In winter, roofs will shelter from rain, trees will reduce wind-movements and the generously glazed facades will benefit from the low standing winter sun. The roofs are equipped to work like artificial "Sustainability-clouds", harvesting sun-energy through PV-collectors as well as collecting rainwater to serve the park. The buildings will use geothermal energy and seawater to cool the interiors. Energy consumption in mechanical ventilation will be reduced by using cross ventilation and the natural stack-effect in the exhibi-

tion halls. The collected rainwater will be fed into an integrated water-management to sustain the needs of the park all year round.

To meet all high standards in terms of sustainability, in particular circular economy, energy and resource consumption in buildings and landscape, the project is targeting various fields during planning and realization process:

**Lifecycle assessments** Multiple options for the re-use of demolition waste are being considered. Depending on the usage, the carbon footprint of re-using demolition waste may differ significantly and can sometimes even be worse when compared to using new materials. We will use life-cycle assessments (LCA) in order to choose the method with the lowest carbon and material footprint.

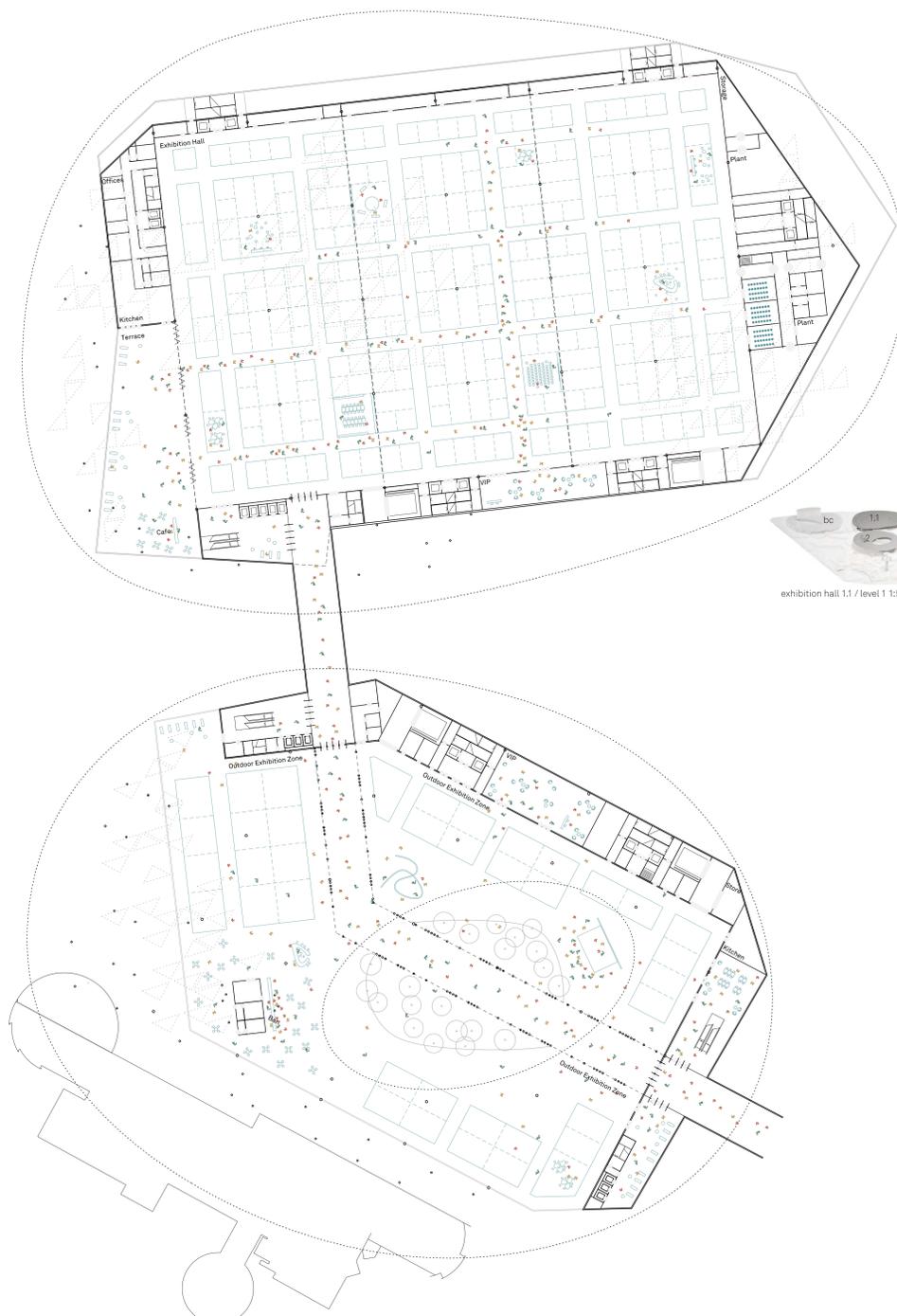
**Initial SDG screening** An initial, high-level SDG screening was already performed at the start of the design process to understand how the re-design of the ConfEx Park may impact Thessaloniki as well as the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. This helped understanding the opportunities to create positive changes, as well as new risks that the project may

introduce. The results of this initial screening are the foundation of the design process and helps to A) catalyze positive change and B) minimize and manage sustainability risks.

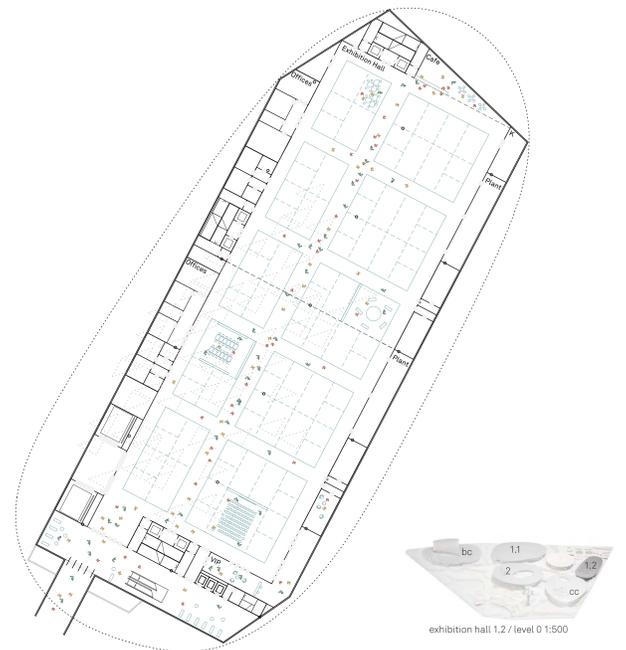
**Sustainability beyond resource consumption** Going beyond the aspects of sustainable construction, renewable energy use, recycling and low-energy cooling, the park has been designed as an invitation to share sustainability. This is one integral aspect of achieving a sustainable society – creating spaces where people can experience, learn and share new ways to address our global challenges at various scales. Our design idea incorporates shared sustainability in a number of ways: options for guided tours, the ability to share information about the use of resources, as

well as energy management, spaces for people to commune, community gardening, green spaces for Thessaloniki.

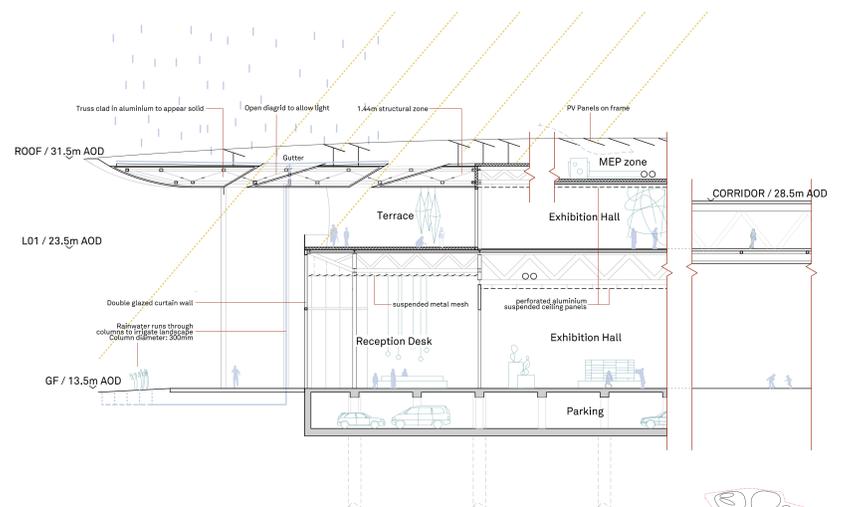
**Good health and well-being** It is our ambition to manage traffic around the ConfEx Park in a way that reduces the potential for traffic accidents and reduces pollution through limitation of motorized traffic in favor of public transport and cycling. The park itself is a place in the middle of the city, where overheating is reduced by shading trees and roofs together with water-features that help to cool down the climate. Polluted air is filtered by plants so the local environment becomes an inner city island to breathe.



exhibition hall 1.1 / level 1:1500



exhibition hall 1.2 / level 0:1500



exhibition hall 2.0 / level 1:500

exhibition hall / facade section 1:200

# Thessaloniki ConfExPark a versatile congress centre



frontyard congress centre

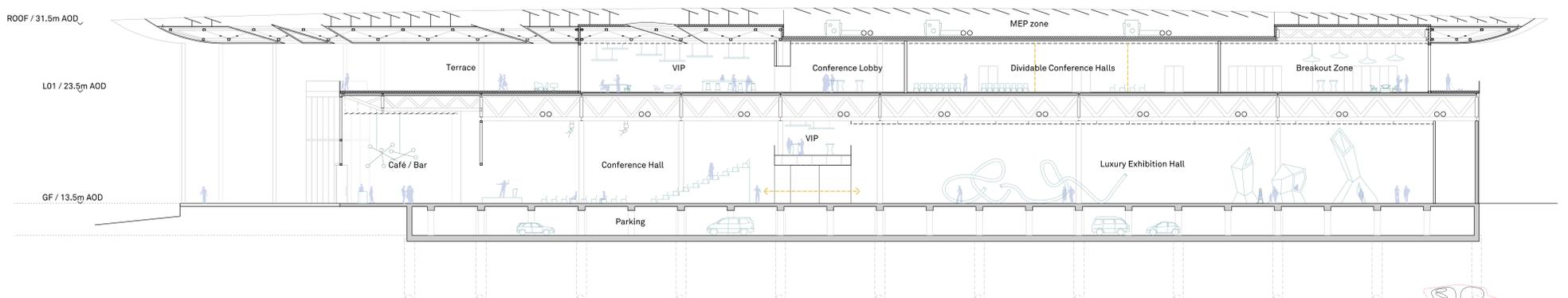
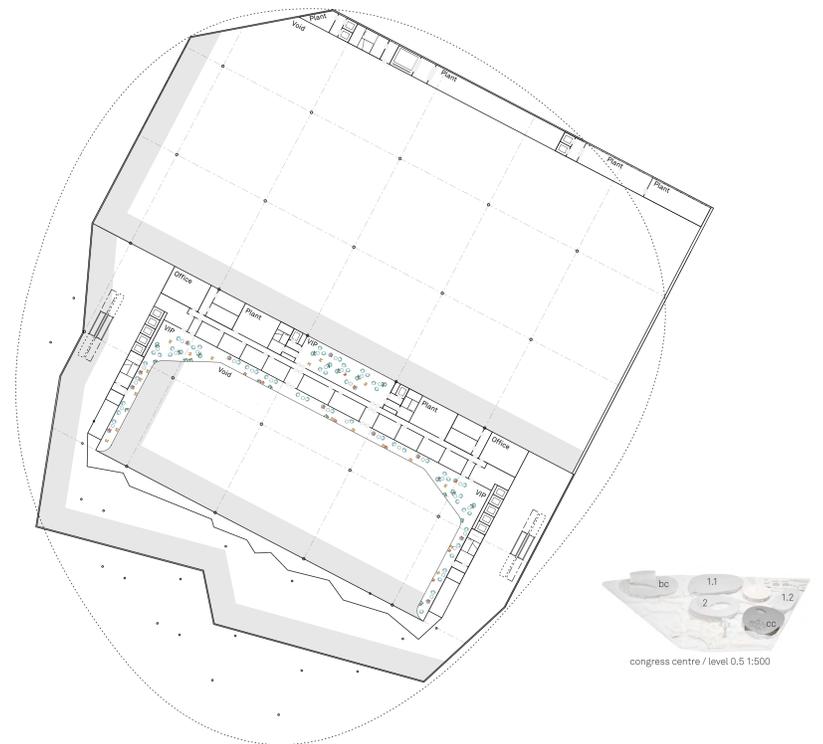
**Quality education** The design includes an opportunity for educational aspects, as mentioned above, to allow people to experience and share ideas for sustainable technologies, management of land and resources. To foster education and learning, parts of the new buildings but also outside areas can be used by schools and universities during times when no exhibitions and congresses are in place. This double-use of foyers and halls, helps to integrate the project into the society of the city. Citizens, children and adults will share the spaces in times when they would be left empty, so the park and the foyers of the exhibition-centers will be known as a welcoming place, not only for business people.

**Gender equality** Making the park accessible, safe at night by lighting and social control, helps the topic of gender equality. Other topics are an equal number of toilets for women and men, lightweight doors that have been designed with a female BMI in mind, a female review of all design proposals and processes.

**Life on land** The project is following aspects of nature-based solutions that support biodiversity recovery, such as the unsealing of areas covered by concrete, replacement of these areas with a restored ecosystem with local fauna and flora, providing space for local biodiversity, creating an urban carbon sink through the creation of green spaces, optimising local climate by creating green spaces and a river system that may be supplied with rainwater.

**Partnership for the goals** The design process will include a process for the co-development of some aspects of the ConfEx Park with local communities and NGOs, designers and artists. This shall be extended to the consultation of educational institutions and organizations in order to develop a cohesive educational experience. There are multiple connection points for partnerships implemented in the design. MMCA museum for example can be joined up with exhibition hall 2 to host bigger temporary exhibitions. The AUTH University can use the multi-purpose hall of park-foyers for symposia, lectures and festivities.

**Phasing and systematic sustainability planning** Sustainability also means preserving history. Therefore, the design includes options for sustaining historic sites, as well as the opportunity for a phased construction to enable a balanced transition in design and history of the place. This approach will also help to sustainably manage the financial resources to realise the project, which would give region full control over the planning process, as well as the ability to include lessons learnt from previous design phases, to collect additional feedback from the community and then make further adjustments if necessary.



# Thessaloniki ConfExPark mix and match



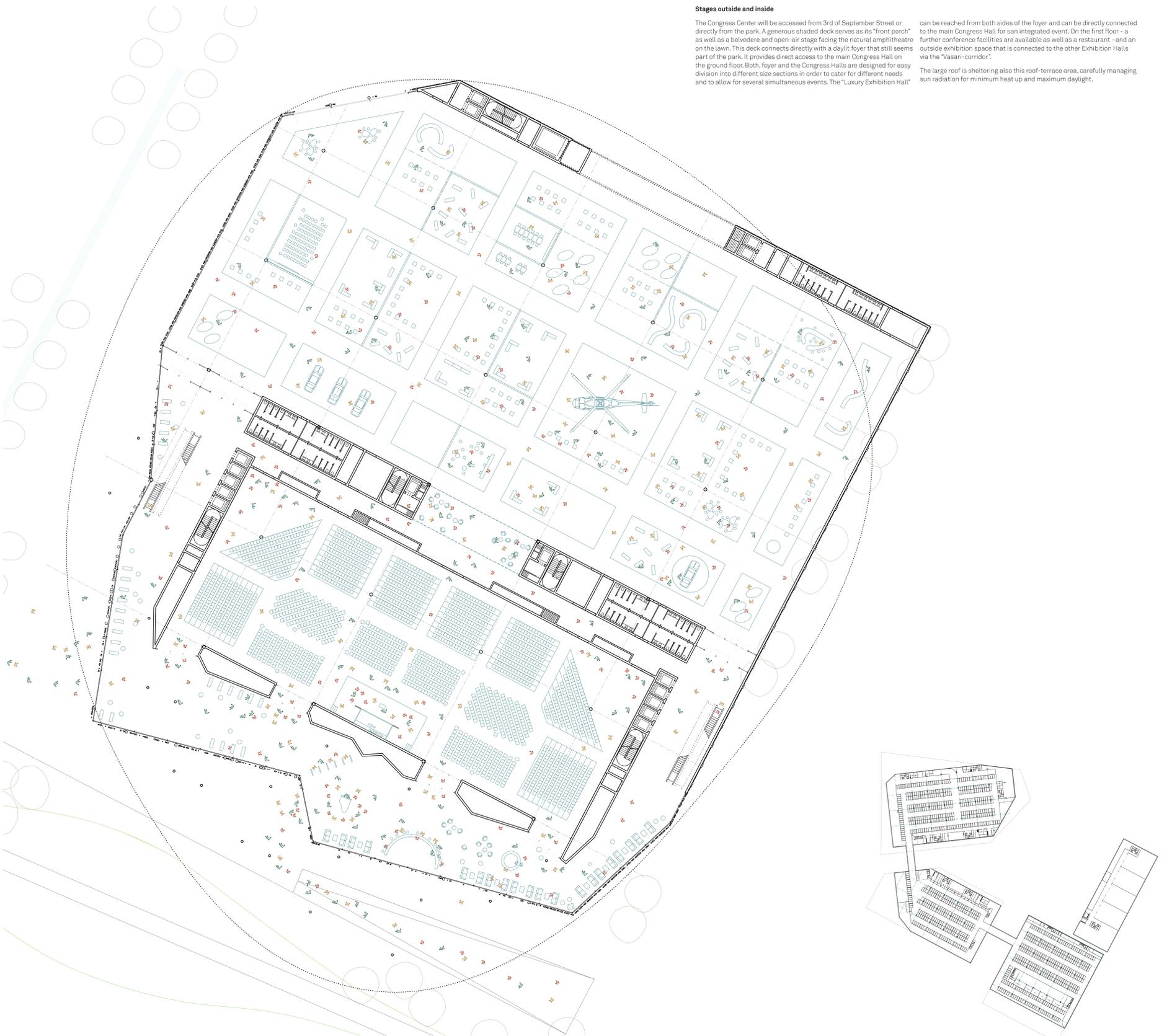
foyer congress centre

## Stages outside and inside

The Congress Center will be accessed from 3rd of September Street or directly from the park. A generous shaded deck serves as its "front porch" as well as a belvedere and open-air stage facing the natural amphitheatre on the lawn. This deck connects directly with a daylight foyer that still seems part of the park. It provides direct access to the main Congress Hall on the ground floor. Both, foyer and the Congress Halls are designed for easy division into different size sections in order to cater for different needs and to allow for several simultaneous events. The "Luxury Exhibition Hall"

can be reached from both sides of the foyer and can be directly connected to the main Congress Hall for an integrated event. On the first floor - a further conference facilities are available as well as a restaurant - and an outside exhibition space that is connected to the other Exhibition Halls via the "Vasari-corridor".

The large roof is sheltering also this roof-terrace area, carefully managing sun radiation for minimum heat up and maximum daylight.



congress center / level 0 1:250

carpark / level -1 1:2000

# Thessaloniki ConfExPark hotel and business centre



perspective entrance to business centre

## Walkways in and around the Business Centre

With its generous rounded roof, the Hotel and Business Centre is a part of the family of islands in the archipelago of venues. The Hotel building provides a well visible landmark to the north, an open air court creates an urban entrance gate at the northern wedge of the park. Coming from the metro-station or the city the ConfEx area can be reached via two routes: the protected court provides access to the hotel, office-spaces and the multi-purpose-hall as well as a set of smaller shops. From there a grand

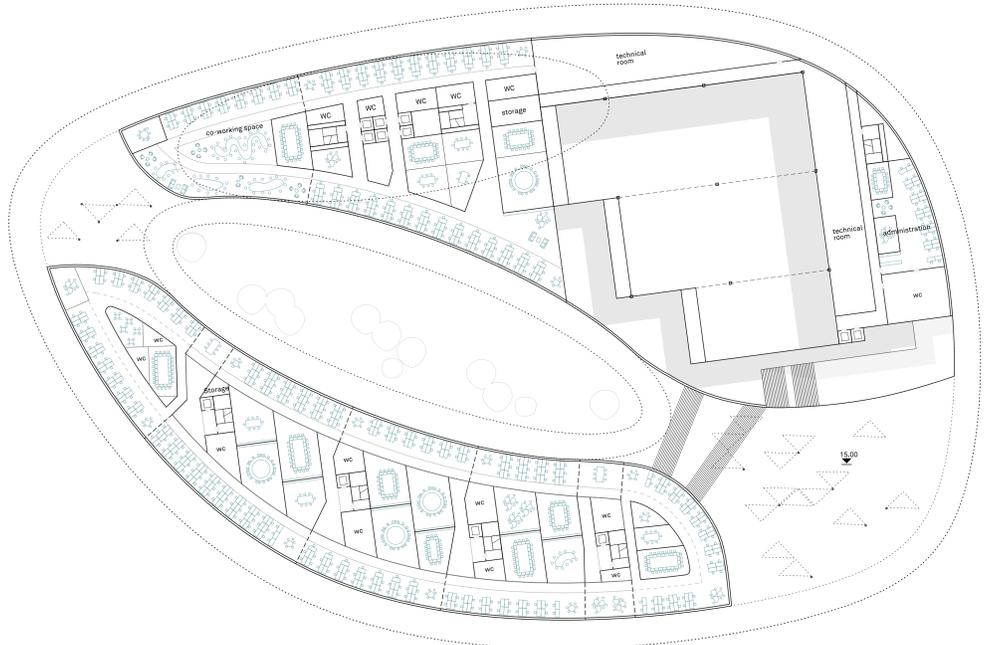
staircase leads on to connect to the Exhibition Halls 1.1 and 2. A second route passes the Southern side of the complex along an edge with shops and gastronomy facing the park and Aggelaki road. This situation melts city life and park into one coherent atmosphere as it also provides a service road for the whole of the exhibition centre from the West.



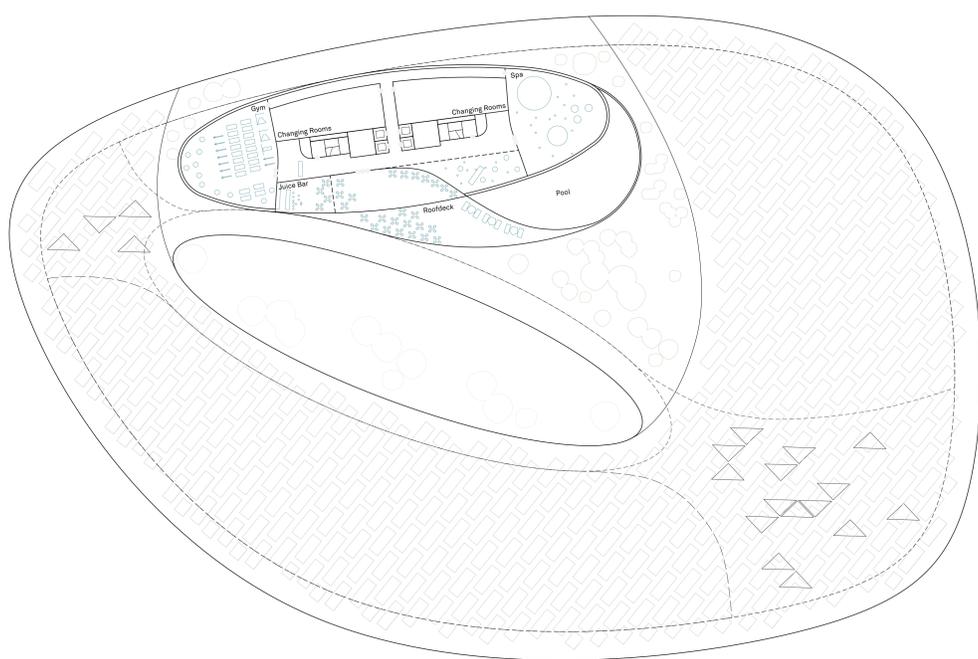
hotel skybar / roof level 1:500



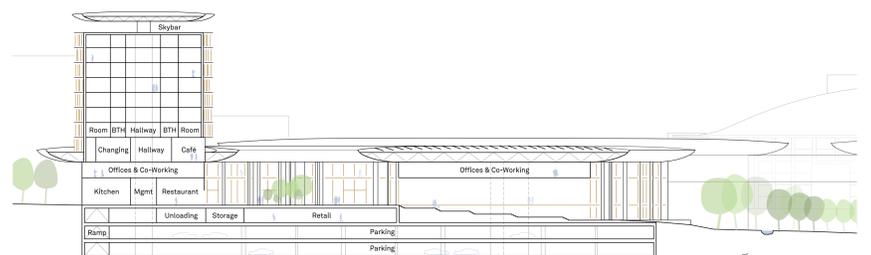
hotel / typical level 1:500



business centre / level 1:500



hotel spa / level 2 1:250



business centre / section ee 1:500

# Thessaloniki ConfExPark marketplace for work and culture



courtyard business centre

## A building as a part of the city as well as the park

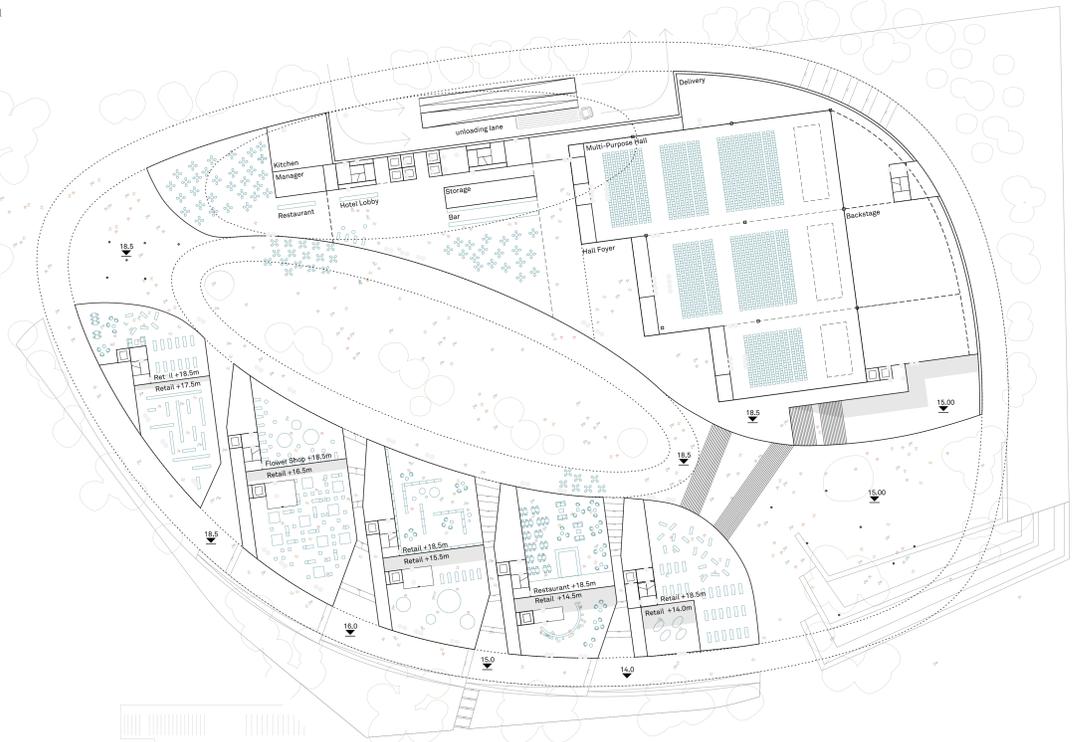
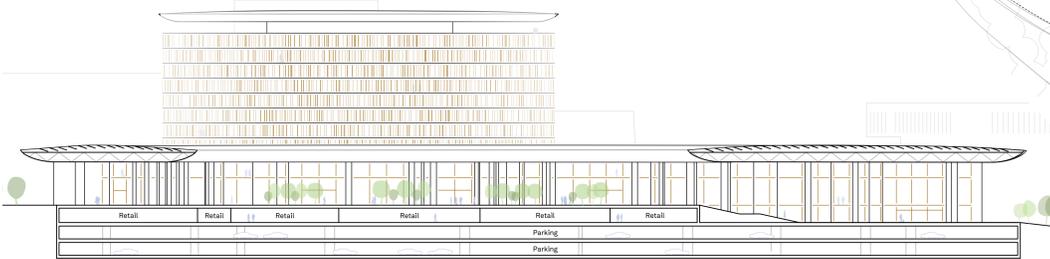
Shops and gastronomy facing the park and office-areas above will create a feeling of city-life in close contact with the park. The hotel and the multi-purpose-hall at Egnatia road will invite guests and locals to meet at events, meetings, or in the roof-top-bar or to use the hotel-spa on "cloud"-level. The proximity of hotel and multipurpose hall will help to create synergy-effects in use of both premises, hotel-reception and restaurant.

**Beyond business** The layout of an elliptic-shaped city-square closely connected to city fabric, metro, exhibition and park makes the Hotel and Business Centre attractive not only for business people attending the

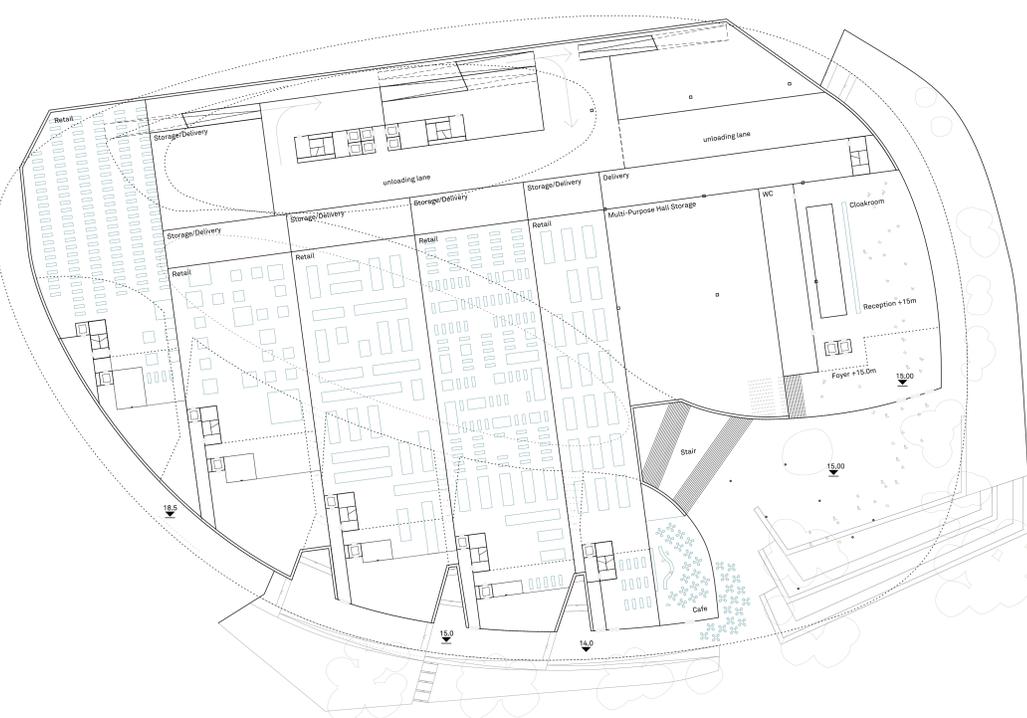
trade fairs but for locals too. It will be a community hotspot where cultural events can take place in the multipurpose hall, for tourists who look for accommodation close to both the city and park, and for everyone looking for recreation, work, shopping, dining or events. The shape of the building complex in relation to city and park is motivated by the desire to create a microcosm of the whole ConfEx Park where visitors and local citizens meet and interact.



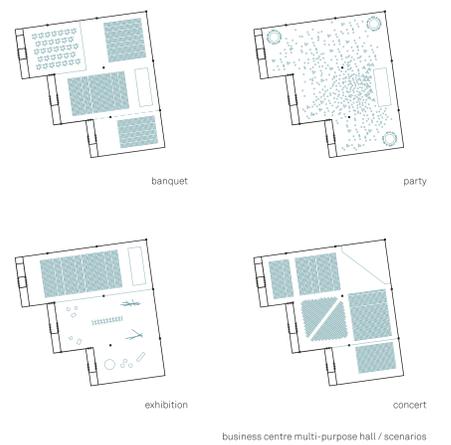
business centre / section ff 1:500



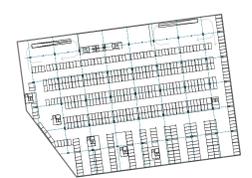
business centre / level 0 1:500



business centre / level -1 1:500



business centre multi-purpose hall / scenarios



business centre / level -2 1:200