

Consortis Wins 2nd Prize in the Architectural Design Competition "Southern Gates of Thebes"

Consortis secured the 2nd prize in the Architectural Design Competition titled *"Southern Gates of Thebes: Functional and Aesthetic Upgrading of Public and Communal Spaces in the Southern Outskirts of Cadmea."*

Competition Scope

The competition focused on the reshaping of an urban complex on the southern outskirts of Cadmea, the historical center of Thebes. The intervention area includes a network of public spaces crucial for the city's operation and identity, encompassing significant administrative, commercial, recreational, and cultural uses. The area extends over public open spaces, road networks, surroundings of important monuments and buildings, and archaeological sites. Additionally, the competition involved the redesign of the municipal open-air cinema and adjacent outdoor sports facilities.

Design Approach

Our proposal approached the project with the following key objectives:

- **Establishing a distinct architectural identity**
- **Enhancing the area as a cultural and administrative hub with upgraded public spaces**
- **Implementing principles of sustainable mobility and universal accessibility**
- **Emphasizing environmental design and microclimate improvement**

The proposal seeks to highlight urban **resilience** as a fundamental characteristic that modern cities must develop to secure their future while simultaneously reinterpreting their relationship with the past.

Urban Resilience and Spatial Interventions

Our design introduces **three new "gates"** at the three corners of the study area, marking the concept of resilient urban planning. These gates are implemented through significant sidewalk expansions, transforming them into urban plazas that incorporate functions related to the three pillars of urban resilience—**environment, society, and economy**—while ensuring integration with the city's overall character.

The urban road network is redefined as a dynamic system of routes, pedestrian pathways, shared streets, urban squares, and small parks. Within the study area, four distinct locations are designated:

1. **“Cultural Folds”** – Includes the open-air cinema, sports facilities, and part of the natural stream.
2. **“The Square”** – The surroundings of the City Hall and Block 670.
3. **“Traces of History”** – Features an excavated micro-landscape that is reinterpreted within the design.
4. **“The Crossroads”** – Consolidates and organizes the northwest perimeter routes leading to the redevelopment area.

Thematic Integration: Myth and Memory

The **concept of myth** serves as the connecting thread between the different locations, inspiring pathways, rest stops, and intermediary spaces. The network of these intermediate spaces revolves around a main route, *The Path of Time*, which links key landmarks and unfolds along a water feature—symbolizing the historic stream. In the stream area, variations in elevation are utilized to create distinct micro-landscapes at different levels.

These spatial elements function as gathering points, places of collective activities, and viewpoints, all interconnected physically and visually through a unified aerial pathway. This pathway, at times, descends into the natural terrain and at other times follows its contours. The existing topography is transformed into a **sculpted landscape**, forming folds in the ground.

The open-air cinema is reinterpreted and redesigned with a **southern orientation and organic layouts**, incorporating new supporting facilities. The City Hall surroundings are reimagined as a **flexible space** for spontaneous community activities, featuring shaded seating areas. The excavation site is made accessible through an **elevated pedestrian route**, integrating it into the broader landscape via *The Path of Time*.

Environmental Design

A fundamental goal of the design is the **dominance of natural elements** and the **enhancement of the microclimate** through key strategies:

- Increasing **shading** by expanding green spaces
- Using **water-permeable and cool paving materials**: All surfaces in non-vehicle areas are designed to allow rainwater infiltration into the natural ground. Permeable cobblestones on a sand substrate and stabilized ceramic pathways are employed.
- Creating **sheltered areas** protected from cold winds
- Introducing **water features along main pathways**
- Preserving the **stream as a natural summer ventilation corridor**

The outcome is a **climate-resilient outdoor space** that can be used for recreation, sports, and relaxation for extended periods throughout the year. A **thermal comfort simulation** was conducted to assess summer heat stress, perceived temperatures, and overall comfort, particularly during the hottest months when outdoor conditions are least favorable.

Water Management

Particular emphasis was placed on **water management**, including the implementation of **rain gardens** and specialized **stormwater management systems**. The combination of water-sensitive urban design, appropriate **ground cover materials**, and vegetation contributes to the regulation of **microclimatic conditions**.

Sustainable Mobility and Traffic Management

From a **traffic perspective**, the proposal includes **mild interventions** aligned with the **Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP)**. The **roundabout** is redesigned with **optimized tools**, incorporating two single-lane mini-roundabouts. Additionally, several **streets are converted into shared spaces with traffic calming measures**, and **sidewalks are widened** to enhance pedestrian accessibility.