

## Productive Biosphere

### Nature and community growing together

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Situated in the middle of the Dalmatian region, on the shore of the Adriatic Sea, defined by the presence of multiple types of nature, the town of Nin hosts “**Productive biosphere**”, our proposal for European 15.

This year the competition is focused on the sudden change that European cities are experiencing and how a more ecological reality can be related to the productive city. In particular, as far as Nin is concerned, it is required to find a new balance between the relations, the processes, the flows and the multiple forces of the sites.



How to deal with such a task in this kind of reality ?

We looked at the town of Nin and at the project site as an open door to a wide and **fertile landscape** for everything. More precisely, the proposal is located in an area slightly detached from the city itself but organized around **four principal cores**: the sea, the river, the saltworks and the Roman legacy. In fact, to the north and west, there are beaches in direct contact with the sea; in the south side, there is a huge expanse of saltworks with the thematic museum; and finally, to the east, there is a river that flows into the sea and is used as a quay for some boats. Everything is connected through a path that leads to the historic center of Nin. The local history dates back to the times of ancient Rome and is also visible in the sunken stone shoal, which used to be the Roman seafront. Each of these principles, therefore, has great **potential** in the social, economic, cultural and environmental spheres.



How can the parts work with the whole ?

Our approach to the design aims to answer this question for the four principles above. The proposal is conceived as a long term **overall strategy** for development in which the goal is not to design a massive transformation by implementing a masterplan but to initiate a smooth urban

transition. In this, the city is considered as an **ecosystem** where everything works together and where the interaction between the various elements and, in particular, the **synergies** that are created between them, play a leading role. Then, the basic objective is to exploit existing natural resources as a source of livelihood and **income**, to make the city of Nin **self-sufficient**, to generate a flow of tourism more distributed throughout the year and finally to give an **identity** to the place.



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Today, the question of a productive city is related to sustainability. For this reason, the process used for the design follows the concept of **sustainable development**.

Sustainable development is by definition the organizing principle for meeting human development goals while at the same time sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend. The desired result is a state of society where living conditions and resources are used to continue to meet human needs without undermining the integrity and stability of the natural system. Sustainable development can be defined as a progress that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations. In particular, this method has been declined in three different design principles: **cooperative design**<sup>1</sup>, **sustainable tourism**<sup>2</sup>, and **biodiversity**<sup>3</sup>. As you can well understand, these three design principles have the objective of making the most of the great potential of the area, described above in the social, economic, cultural and environmental fields. The principle of cooperative design has the objective of creating an **identity** of the place. Through sustainable tourism, the interventions aim to exploit the benefits of the natural resources to make them become forms of **gain** without affecting their uniqueness. With biodiversity, the project seeks to generate a suitable **habitat** for humans, flora and fauna. This creates a healthier and more mitigated environment to live in and gives new job opportunities to the community.

In order to make the strategy for the future development of Nin that includes all the design principles possible, a transformation process divided into **several phases** was taken into account focusing in particular on the actors that will take part in the process itself.



## What role does the community of Nin play ?

The most important thing to get this process started is to make the community **recognize** itself in this. Before the urban planning project, it is necessary for the community to regain possession of the space, disfigured by a speculative tourism market. If the aim is to convey the tourist development of Nin with the support of its inhabitants, then we must give them back what

speculation has taken away: a center of aggregation, a square, the view of the sea, a promenade, fountains, benches and playgrounds. In this giving back, however, the inhabitants themselves **regain possession** of it. The process must start from the community because it will have to welcome new tourists. It is necessary to reverse the system that sees in the tourist the ‘spark’ of change and in the city the resource to be economically exploited, to a system that sees in the community and in the place (natural resources) the premises of change and in tourism (12 months a year) the source of income that makes it possible to implement it. Consequently, in the first phase (activator) the starting point for the for the beginning of the re-appropriation is given by the creation of a square. It will become the symbol of change, a new meeting point where the community can begin to live, to take possession of it.

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What is the role of architecture ?

In this strategy, the role of architecture has a particular nature. It must aim both to improve the quality of spaces for the community and to make the most of the natural resources that surround it. In our opinion, it can only respond to these needs by taking a **step back** and putting itself in second place to the community and natural resources, the real protagonists of the story. For this reason, our project proposal sees the use of what is called ‘**city acupuncture**’<sup>4</sup> and it looks at the urban void, of a fragmented urban fabric, as the ideal stage. The interventions are always on a small scale, more human and intimate, and dispersed throughout the size of the project site. In this way, no hierarchies are created between them, but each area assumes peculiar importance and acquires a specific character that makes it a **unique space**. To take advantage from the natural resources without oppressing or ruining them, the architectures are minimally invasive and use local materials. We believe that the community can be recognized more easily and can establish, with the ordinary nature of this architectural language and the punctuality of the intervention, a **relationship in continuous evolution**.



How is nature placed between the community and architecture ?

Nature is the founding principle of the entire design strategy. Without its strong presence and potential, the productivity of Nin would not exist. In our proposal, it is considered in a continuous **process of evolution**. Consequently, for each period of time, nature plays a different role in its relationship with the community and architecture. For example, in the beginning, the park plays the role of a **social connector**, of a new outdoor meeting place. Then it becomes a **green barrier**, a mean by which the city is protected from winds and bad weather and with which it is mitigated. The benefits are also climatic, with fresher and cleaner air.

Finally, the park becomes a **biodiversity incubator**, coming into contact with all the natural resources of the place, starting to host different types of fauna and flora and becoming a biological connector thus attracting visitors and experts in the research field.

And why not think of future development of what towards the abandoned chimney? The possibility of hosting a new cutting-edge **research center** would be an opportunity to attract scholars, academics and nurserymen from all over the country. Nin could, therefore, be relaunched as a city aimed at research and not just tourism.



We can not say what will happen after. It is you with **your ideas** that can imagine an even better future for your community.

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> cooperative design\_ *co-operative design, now often co-design is an approach to design attempting to actively involve all stakeholders (e.g. employees, partners, customers, citizens, end users) in the design process to help ensure the result meets their needs and is usable. Participatory design is an approach which is focused on processes and procedures of design and is not a design style*

<sup>2</sup> sustainable development\_ *sustainable tourism is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems*

<sup>3</sup> biodiversity\_ *biodiversity refers to the variety and variability of life on Earth. Biodiversity is typically a measure of variation at the genetic, species, and ecosystem level*

<sup>4</sup> city acupuncture\_ *a small- scale but socially catalytic interventions*