

# Cyclopes - awakening the myth

EUROPAN 09/ Siracusa/Italia







## Abstract

The Cyclopes are back!

Being misunderstood by many, the Cyclopes represent nevertheless the essence of Sicily's landscapes. Simply because, they too have been born by the earth, the fire and the sea!

The Cyclopes have come to Syracuse - that has fallen apart into the Greek Ortigia and its rural and industrious suburb - to rehabilitate the city and reset its Sicilian history in motion towards a prosperous future.

For after its history of petrol what will Syracuse's future be like: an outdoor museum and disadvantaged suburb?

The rehabilitation of the former railroad is an interconnection, to which our Cyclopes dock on. The project enables joining together, setting limits, and building up future city districts thanks to new spaces of public realm, oriented towards the coastal landscape.

It is the unique occasion to place the city's marginalized districts into the very heart of Syracuse's identity by embracing them with this project that will furthermore activate an interlacing of the spread out urban tissue on the scale of the city.

Thus the ancient "primitives" Polyphem, Acamas and Steropes resettle on the coast and take form in three buildings of "events" that incarnate the Cyclopes innate qualities: agro-biology, energy for creation and spectacles as well as energies originating from the sky: sun, water and wind.

By their nature and their ambitions, the Cyclopes and the "cyclopean" sites represent new spaces open for public, for interaction and sharing, susceptible of generating an economic and social valorization of the city, as well as further development of tourism.

Thereby they engage Syracuse in a future based upon its very own resources.

By awakening the myth, the Cyclopes invite us to reflect upon a new spectacular as well as sustainable landscape; attractive as well as anchored in its territory, poetic and concrete ....

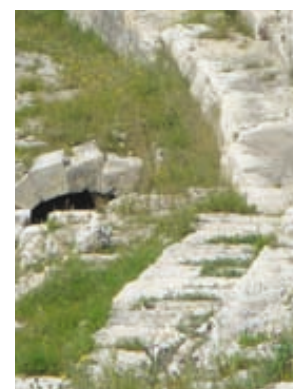
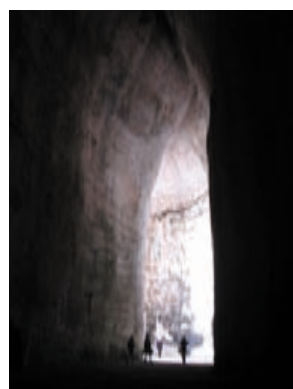
## Some thoughts...

*Syracuse respires history. The millenarian construction of its landscapes is the source of an imagination strongly influenced by great mythological characters.*

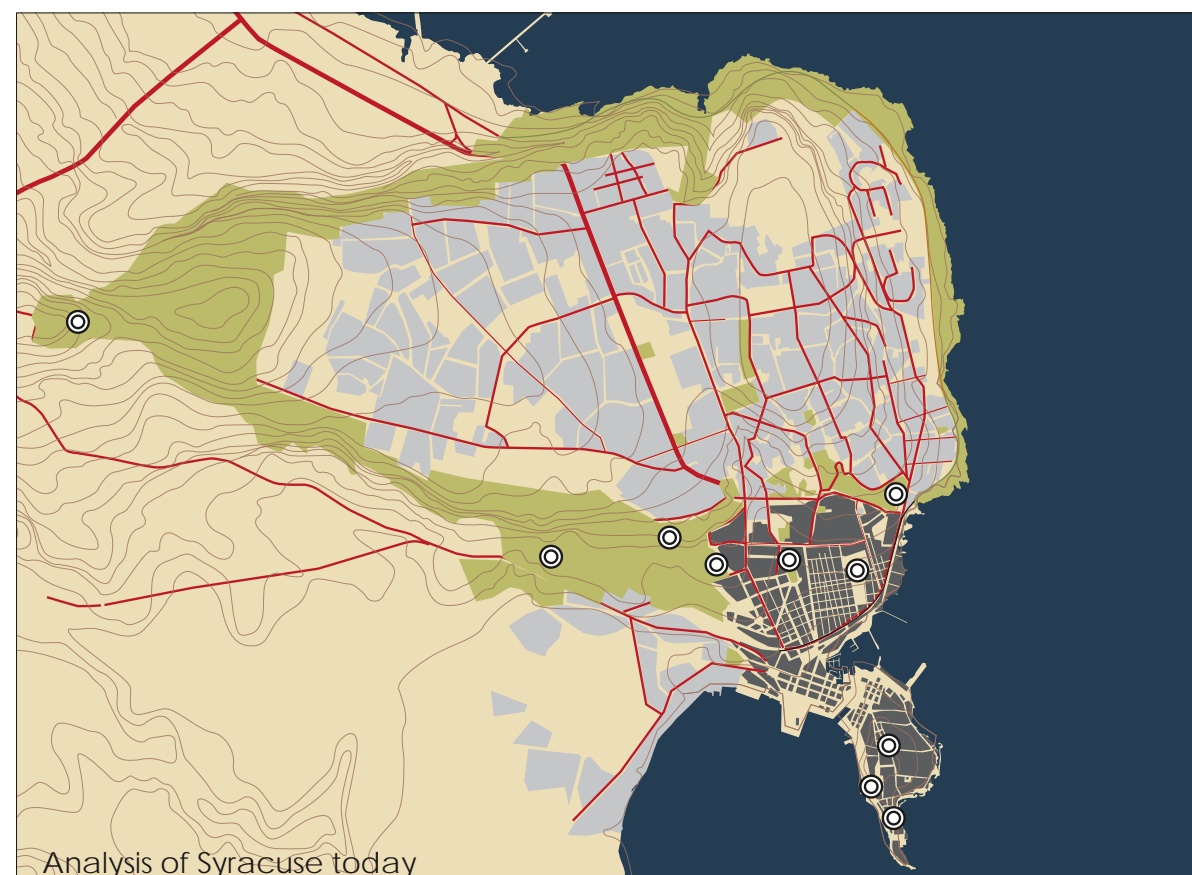
*Today, when contemplating the monuments of antiquity one might think, "How could man have ever conceived such structures?" Then actually dig, excavate, load, transport, pile up, and finally, build in such „titanic“ dimensions.*

*And what if the gods had really intervened in this endeavor? The limits of Syracuse are still those of yesterday – a wall of "cyclopean" measure built up only in 20 years!!*

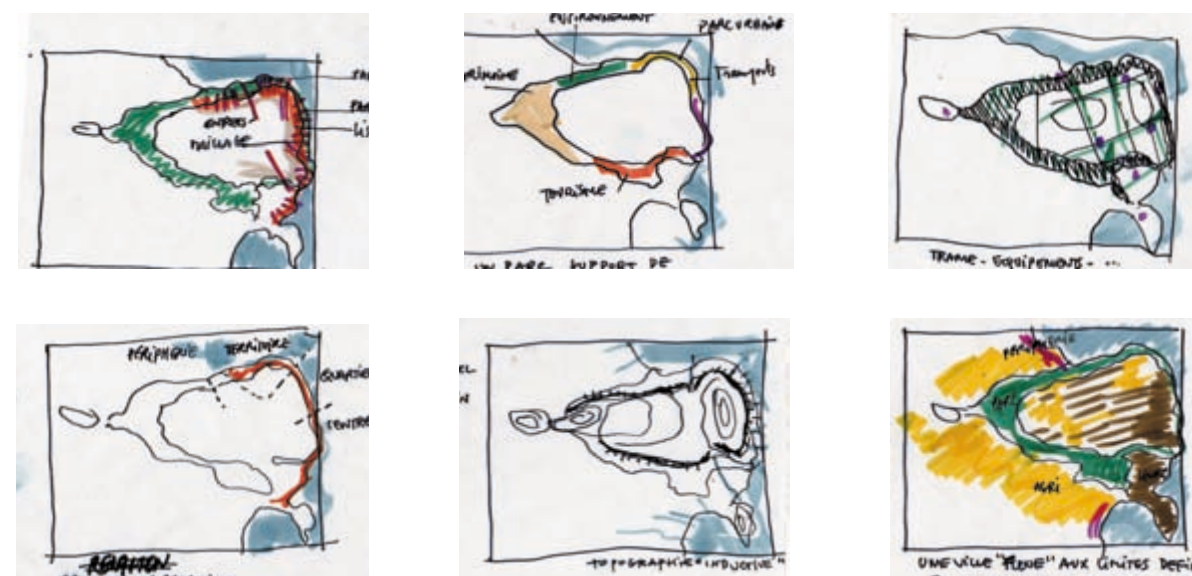
*Can we be sure that there is not one or two Cyclopes existing in one of the numerous caves in Sicily ... who else could have quarried these amphitheaters, these latomias or construct these enormous walls in so little time?*







- ⊙ -Historic monuments: concentrated in and around Ortigia, they mark the rupture between the old and new city
- -Road axes accompany and favor abusive urbanism
- -Districts spreading out over the the city's territory without relation to the site
- -The old city center is separated from the new city by its typologies and organization
- -The archeological park disposes of an unused potential for the city and its inhabitants



## Statement

### - Syracuse – an interruption of history?

This coastal city – all in all anchored in the inland by its agricultural activity – seeks to find equilibrium between the burden of its prestigious historical monuments and that of petrochemical industry of Augusta.

Today Syracuse stands at a crossroads, or at the shoreline if you will, ready to embark towards a new future. It now has the opportunity to set out for new horizons and seek its fortune.

Tomorrow, whatever the date of discontinuation may be, petrol will cease to be the source of income for the whole region. Will tourism and citrus fruits then become the only alternative economic source?

There is a high risk for Syracuse becoming like the whole of Sicily, an outdoor museum and for its economy to be based upon tourism only ... the end is nigh!

Syracuse is a city that seems to be splitting up in two halves; with Ortigia on one side and the more recent part of the city on the other. This impression is supported by the contrast between the dense and well-organized island and the mainland, which consists of an urbanism of opportunism and an unorganized repetition of architectural volumes. Furthermore, the city's relation to the project site and the coastal landscape only really exists in Ortigia, whereas the rest of the city turns itself towards the streets, roads, and asphalt where it is hard to find a quiet piece of shade.

### - An “un-urban” coastal strip.

The study site is particularly marked by the absence of urbanity. Only a few spaces exist which are dedicated to pedestrians, places with shade favorable to the community life which one often encounters in typical Sicilian cities.

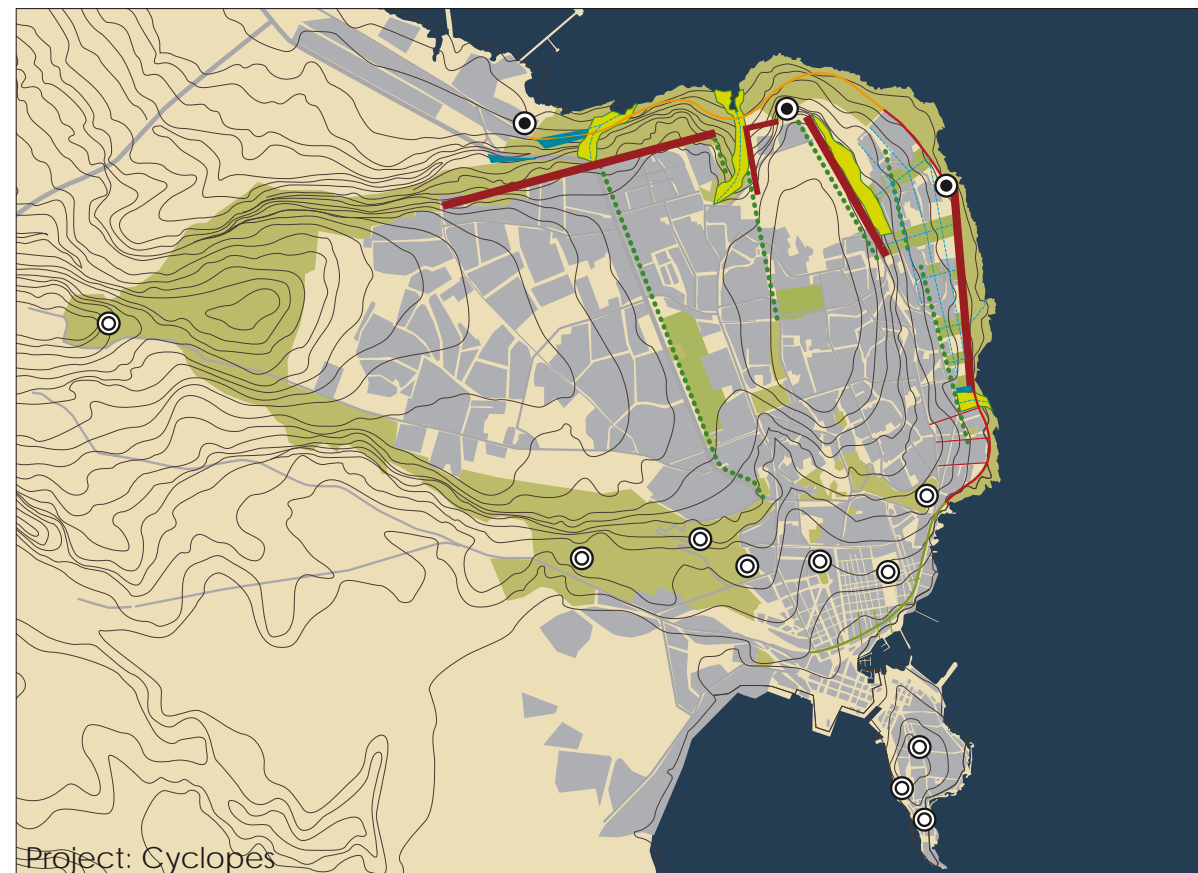
Omnipresent, and over-dimensioned roadways generally dominate the public realm.

The coastal strip oscillates between wasteland, dump, and botanical, or architectural sanctuary. It is mainly frequented by herds of cattle and serves at numerous points as a waste disposal.








The city turns its back against the sea, which has become a backdoor discharge unit: petrochemical pollution, wastewater disposal, and unauthorized dump...

In the middle of a field, situated near the Wall of Dionysius, one is awestruck by the sight of the sea and wishes godly intervention before becoming consumed by the chariot of Phaethon...





Project: Cyclopes

-  -Cyclopes: their disposition counterbalances the repartition of monuments and represent a means for delimitating the city's expansion by the Park of Dyonisius
-  -Cyclopean: new limits for the city
-  -System of parks and public facilities
-  -Gardens of rock - canyons and rock faces
-  -Planted boulevards and avenues
-  -Basins for alternative wastewater treatment
-  -Canals for collecting rainwater

## Intentions

### Regain the myth: Polyphem's dream / notion / thought

*"Myths express the history of communities and suggest an allegorical explanation for the world's mysteries. They are also a means of evoking the re-creation or re-establishing of the world."*

Yes, the Cyclopes are among us! They have returned in order to build up the Syracuse of tomorrow. They dispose certain virtues brought to us from the old world and they set the foundation stones for a new beginning.

By intervening in the coastal strip of the city, they create a new landscape that valorizes the city and at the same time enhances the project site's grandeur/power. The Cyclopes are the igniters of an economic and social renewal by dealing with energy, agriculture, arts and culture...

Represented by Steropes, Acamas and Polyphem they take form in three architectures and generous public spaces so as to reconquer the heart of the city and its inhabitants.

- Steropes, the child of the sky and the earth, master of renewable energies incites us to develop their usage by taking advantage of the sun and the wind – the principal resources of Sicily.

- Acamas the constructor invites us to build the city by coming up with complex alloys between culture, society and public realm

- Polyphem, the pastoral and agrobiologic Cyclops, inspite of his primitive character leads us by the hand to rediscover the virtues of agro-pastoral societies...

## Project

### - Attaching and limiting

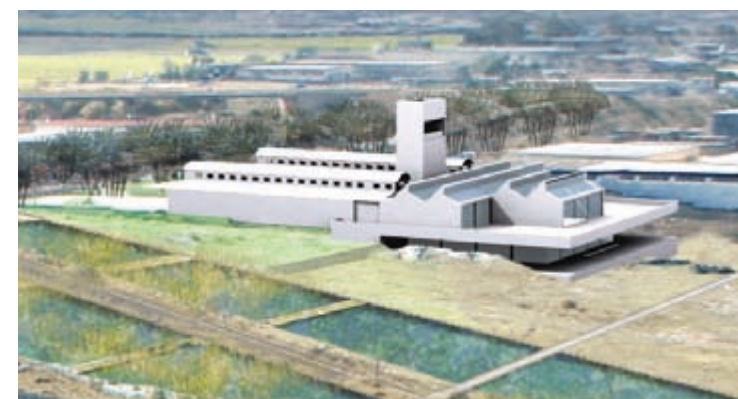
The Cyclopes create reference points that enable the setting of limits to the city's urban development and the interlacing the disconnected districts along the coast.

-Along Mazzarona a large quay follows the route of the former railroad and brings the city closer to the sea

-Towards Santa Panagia the boulevard on the plateau rim leads to the pastoral Cyclops and links the isolated housing site to the city. Furthermore it anticipates the possibility of recovering the military terrain for future urban development

-The Cyclops in the industrial zone at the former slaughterhouse is set facing the city's entrance with which it has a visual relation enhanced by the refurbished railroad track

The continuity of the former railroad's route is preserved, but its treatment is set into direct correlation with the project site or the districts it traverses. We believe that as long as there exist automobiles and scooters, there will be Sicilians who will drive them. Thus the railroad track, while conserving the continuity of its route, will be attributed to the districts it traverses (the quarried connections in the city, the quay, the footbridge above the Canyon park) and to the wide, open natural spaces (removal of the embankment).







## - Building up the city district by district

The project means all aim at creating an attention to and flow towards the sea and its coastal landscape in order to valorize its image among the inhabitants and offer a spectacular event to potential visitors. In addition to the visual interests, there will be even more importance laid on the construction and reconstruction of the urbanity of these recent districts for the future.

-On the "waterfront" between the city and the quay a series of public and athletic facilities are implanted alternating with spacious planted surfaces providing shade for hot summer days. This park of sports and leisure activities animated by its inhabitants represents the city's border in the district of Mazzarona. Inside of the quarter the streets are recalibrated to give way to vegetation and alternative pedestrian pathways.

-The new district of Santa Panagia is set on the edge of a large sculpted park in the canyon below. It will be defined by terraces, which are designated to help construct this new district. The urban organization is based upon the existing relief and the principles of implantation of Sicilian cities and villages on topographical edge situations. The street being a sheltered space protected against wind and sun. The inner logic of the quarter refers to the rational grid plan of the old city center of Syracuse.



## - Fertilizing the city

The excavation of the latimonias (has made it possible for fabulous gardens to emerge and develop. Following this extraordinary example of cyclopean endeavor, the landscape of the canyons and ravines on the coast will be made accessible and practicable.

At Santa Panagia a garden sculpted into the rock will generate a new relation to the sea and the creek of the former Tonnara. In order to enable its accessibility the railroad embankment will be removed and replaced by a suspended footbridge.

The canyon's park of nature's history features a series of different natural environments – from swampland to barren rock – which will provide settings for the different types of agriculture developed and practiced all along Sicily's agronomic history: sugar cane to citrus fruits.

In the same way the other canyons and ravines and on the coast will be rehabilitated in their hydraulic function and as possible links between the city and the sea. They will regain their role of "city gates" they had played for a long time during history.

The Tonnara will be transformed into a youth hostel and information point about the former activity of this facility for visitors exploring the varied coastline and Syracuse itself.



This system of parks, joined by the sports facilities will offer the opportunity to establish a large green belt taking under consideration hydrologic regulation - recuperation of water, canalization, purification. This Green Belt will connect the system of latomias and the Neapolis archeological site with the coastline and materialize the existence of the archeological parc of the Wall of Dionysos. These areas will be taken care of by a herd of sheep watched over by the Cyclops Polyphem. It will experiment new techniques of maintenance of the city's open spaces. Further the sheep will permit conserving and enhancing the environmental and botanical riches of the coast – the coastal grass land today is in a situation of overgrazing by cattle in numerous areas.

Furthermore it is a unique occasion for the city to discover its unexpected places, which once more enhance the determined qualities of the landscape and the imagination they excite.

The recuperation of water is an important issue for the future of Sicily. Especially, when one compares its situation to the devastating situation on the island of Malta. Thus it is all about organizing future developments depending on the necessity of collecting rainwater and stock it for collective use (public green spaces or private gardens) by means of a system of canals for retention and stocking. Once more on the "cyclopean" scale these will also participate in structuring the districts' network of path and roadways and finally supply cisterns with the recuperated water.

Basins for alternative wastewater treatment represent the final step in the system of water management before regains its natural way into the sea.





## Principles

A cyclopean relation to the site

The project bases itself upon the logic of quarrying the natural preexisting levels as in the image of the antique Greek theater. The principle is to develop a confrontation between construction and landscape going even as far as to mix the different forms. The construction work follows the ancient Greek concept of using extracted material to erect the main building structures.

The scale of the project is the same as the existing relief, the structures are ... cyclopean. By working on the scale of the proposed project site and its totality, we wish to counterbalance the ever too strong impact of the limitless districts and their architecture sprawling over the entire site.

The project's power attempts - across the myth - to confront man with his ambiguous condition: he is fragile and powerful at the same time. The project proposes significant public spaces, at the core of which a variety of public facilities (the quay) or new city districts (terraces) are set in place.

## Acamas, Polyphem and Steropes

The Cyclopes take shape in three emblematic buildings which will impose themselves on the three main horizons of the coast leaving the industrial zone of Augusta southwards: the former slaughterhouse, Santa Panagia, the district of Mazzarona.

At the former slaughterhouse a Cyclops dedicated to energy research anticipates the environmental mutations due to industrial activity and proposes alternatives to petrol as a source of energy.

At Santa Panagia, a cousin of the trustful Polyphem is awakenend - a shepherd Cyclops, watching over the city's herd and developing research on alternative and ecological agricultural practice.

At Mazzarona, the third Cyclops shelters the Temas and community college. He brings life to the district and is the bearer of the urban valorization of Mazzarona.

By their nature and size the Cyclopes represent places of social, cultural and economic revaluation of the city and function as a supplementary trump for Syracuse's tourism sector's development.

## Acamas

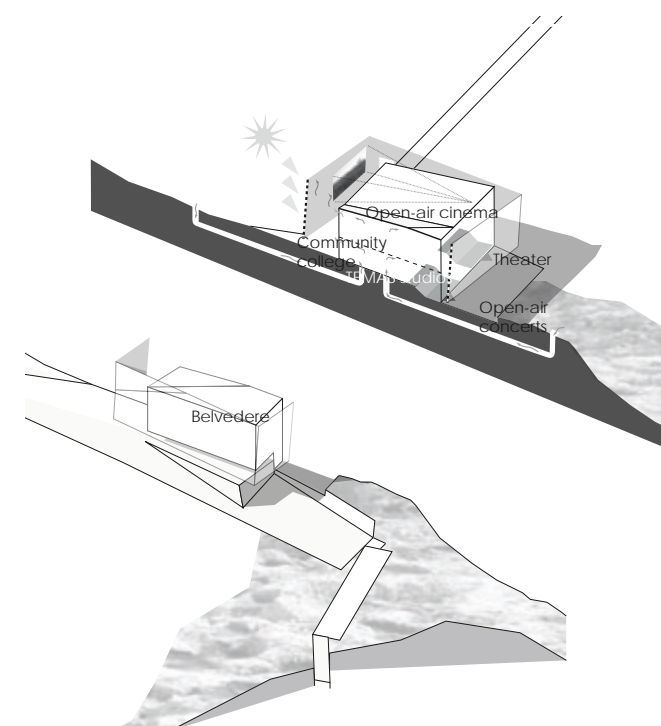
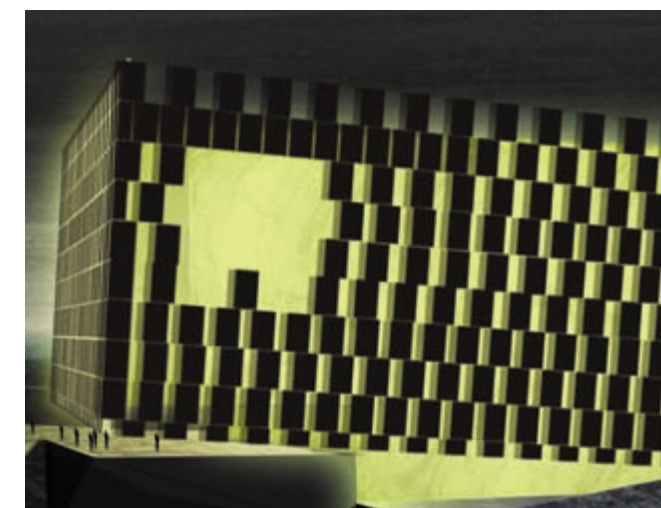
Cyclops of construction and creation set out to build himself a dwelling with the help of his cyclopean brothers POLYPHEM and STEROPES. In no time they achieved to erect a well built shelter protected by the scorching Sicilian sun, right opposite to the first quarters of Syracuse. Of course they did not forget to include a large window into the structure to enable him indulge in his greatest passion: observing the Mediterranean sea.

Ever since, ACAMAS has been welcoming his visitors by day and by night at the very tip of his quay. Syracuse's inhabitants eager to know more about culture and entertainment. By day reflecting the sunlight, at night reproducing it ACAMAS has become a trustworthy point of reference for folks at sea and on land.

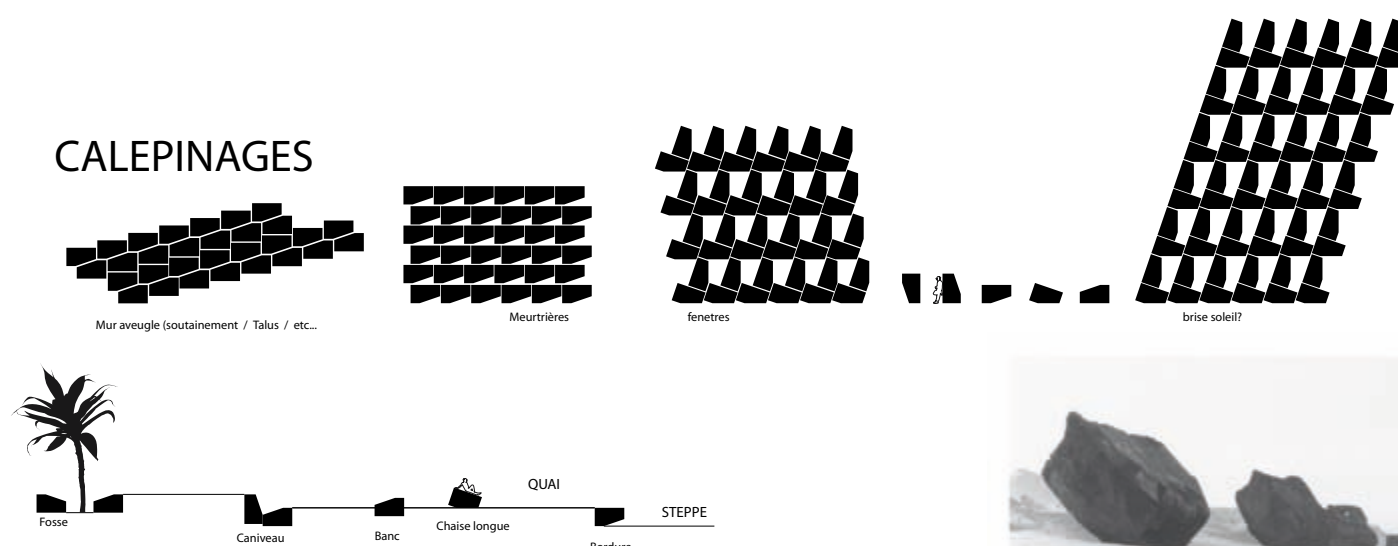
ACAMAS is an enormous building, its ground surface being a perfect square with a side length of 100m. Its facade is made of polished inox induced with phosphor. Thus, by day as well as by night its surroundings take advantage of the sunlight captured by ACAMAS. His dwelling is built up of limestone blocks of exceptional proportions quarried during urban construction works in Syracuse. The building's envelope protects ACAMAS from the impact of the sun's direct light and keeps the inside temperature cool, even in the middle of the summer. ACAMAS shelters the TEMAS, theaters, concert halls and others studios.

His huge tummy shelters a promenade cut into the rock offering shade during hot sunny days. This is where concerts can even take place outdoors, and one can get some fresh air during the intermission of events taking place on the inside. ACAMAS also hosts a community college, the amphitheater of which is situated in his eye, and offers a most enjoyable situation for observing the sea.

Finally, an open-air cinema has come to settle on the back of ACAMAS. The films are projected directly onto the surface of the stone mantle.



## CALEPINAGES



1 MODULE - 1000 POSSIBILITES





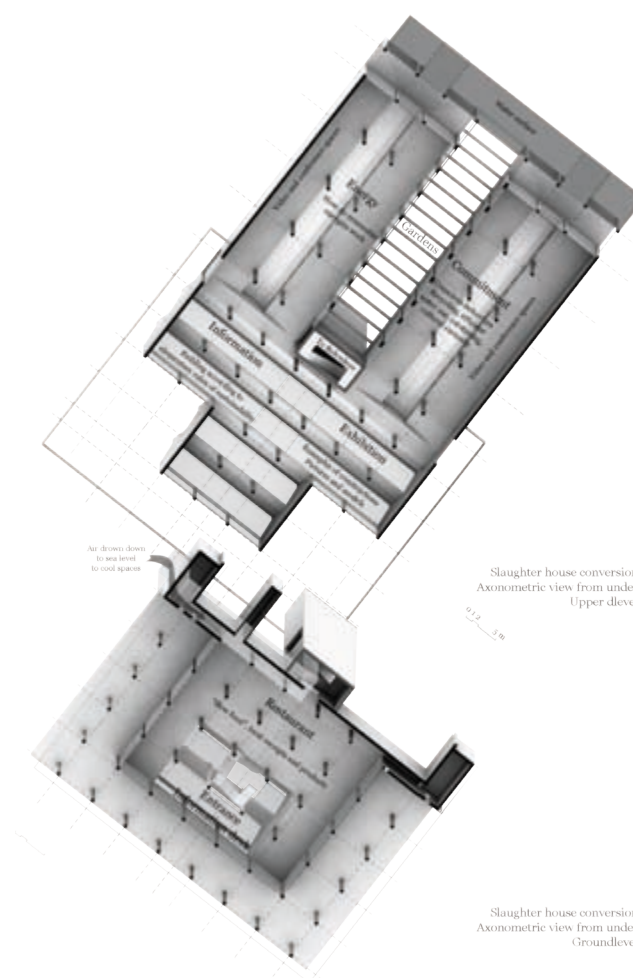
## Cyclopes do care about climate warming!

Nobody knows how old Steropes the cyclop is, but even the Greeks believed he is almost as old as the world. Steropes is contemplative, he always watches how the elements interact, and how the humans learned the use of them. But he is now a little in panic, what is pretty extraordinary, when one knows Cyclops have a different perception of time and don't know the hurry. In a really short time (one century) he saw how humans did change their relation to nature from slaves to master. He's pretty worried about the fact that human activity will change with no point of return the face of his mother Earth.

After a long thinking he decided to act, to go out from his gloomy cavern even if he is a little scared about (humans don't like him). In Syracuse he decided to teach back people how to get more harmony with the environment. He chose an abandoned slaughterhouse and plans to convert it into an educational environmental center.

He knows how hot Sicily is so he decided to build a high tower to catch the power of Aeolos, the wind. He got inspired from the Persian way of building, so called *windcatchers*. Connected with a tunnel that goes until sea level, combined with the action of Helios, the sun, on its rear, the tower pumps air and leads it thanks to the difference of pressure levels into the spaces. He believes that in such a way no air condition will be needed. On its top he places a rainwater tank. He takes of the roof and plans sheds, which face to south will host photovoltaic panels. He opens wide windows facing north, to get natural light without getting its heat. The feeling of space and light is even greater thanks to a double height room at the entrance, facing the sea.

While thinking about the slaughter house he sees all the cars going to the Scala Greca. Why don't people simply take the train to reach the center? The new train tunnel goes straight threw car jams. Pulling a piece of the ground, he creates a parking so that people entering the city leave their car to take the train at the station close to the tunnel entrance he's planning. To be sure some people in the region get committed with the dangerous health problem of his mother earth he creates the same way, pulling the ground, a sustainable research center. His roof could host solar panels. He's almost finished, the old train tracks have no use anymore, what about cleaning a little, so that pastors and their sheep, joggers and lovers can easily go along the coast, without meeting any car, just the sea, the sky and the rock as frame.



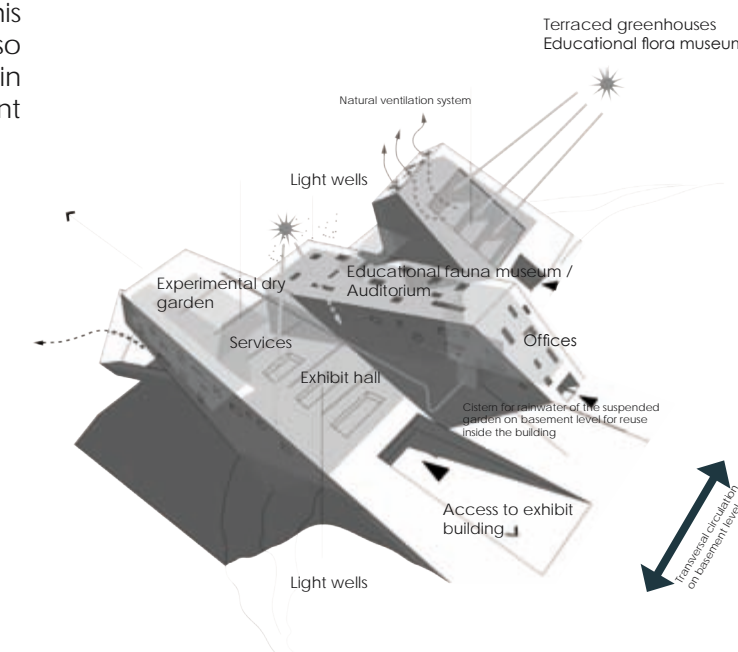
## Polyphem,

the shepherd cyclop, drowns his sadness and his anger in a forward crest of syracuse, away from his neighbours. Some people say is still living under his father goodwill eyes, in his huge quiet cave thinking of Galatée and Ulysse.

The polyphem building is a huge amalgam of earth, grass and stone. Design to face the facinating immensity of the sea. Three blocks emerge from the cliff to create strange and movemented spaces where scales are out of control. Despite its closed appearance, multitude of light wells make of the inner spaces a delightful experience of quietness.

Thus, visitors are in a perfect spirit to learn more about the regional fauna and flora inside and outside the building with the two museums and the terraced greenhouse, just as the outdoor dry garden which interacts with the more protected garden of the canyon.

This bulging is a starting point for the discovery of the coast and allow exhibitions and conferences in this natural cooled structure. Water recuperation is also integrated in the gently sloap to provide the building in his water need to make of this building a real fragment of the Syracuse's territory.

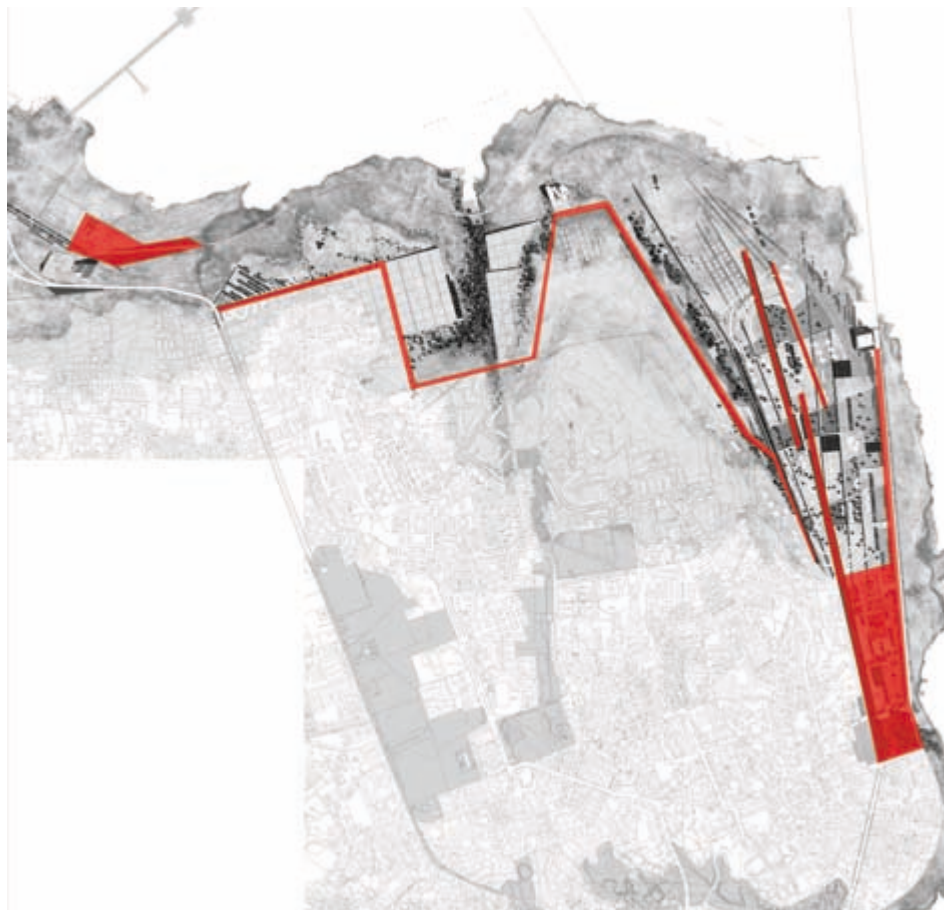




## The project's process

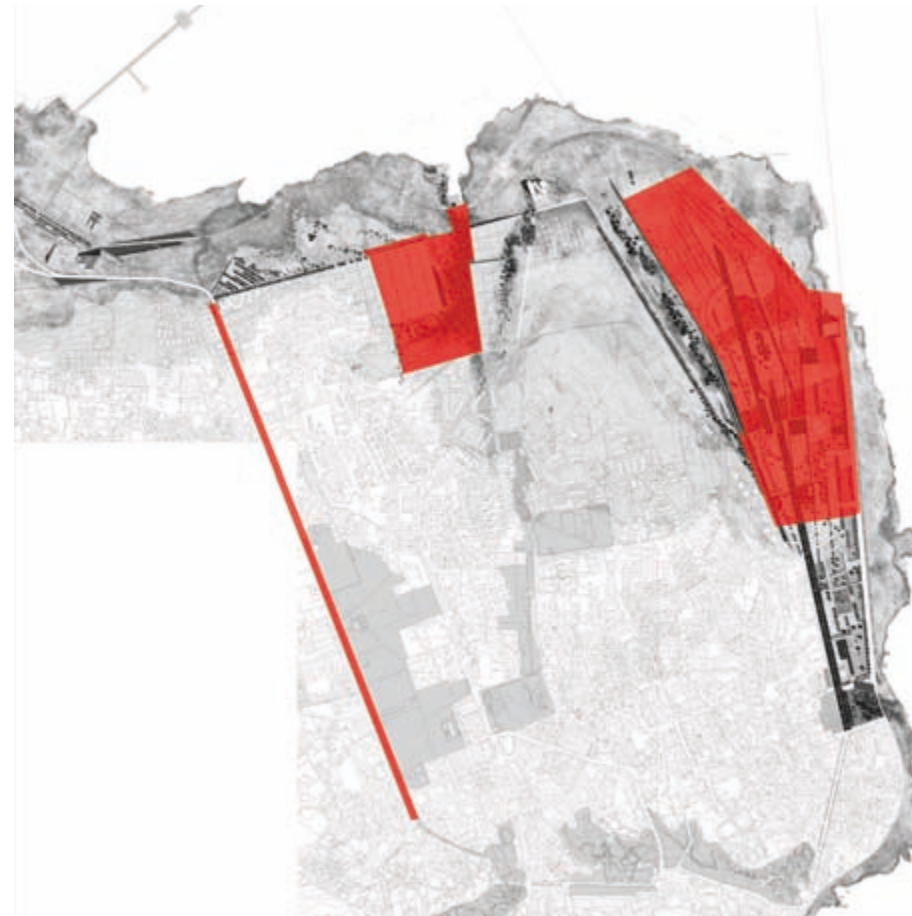
### Phase 1 : Interventions that will enable progressively establishing a relation between the city and the sea

- Partial rehabilitation of the Ex-Mattatoio site.
- Refurbishment/transformation of the former railroad track
- Park of sports facilities, swimming pool and adjoining first section of the Quay in Grotta Santa
- Renovation/creation of principal road infrastructures.



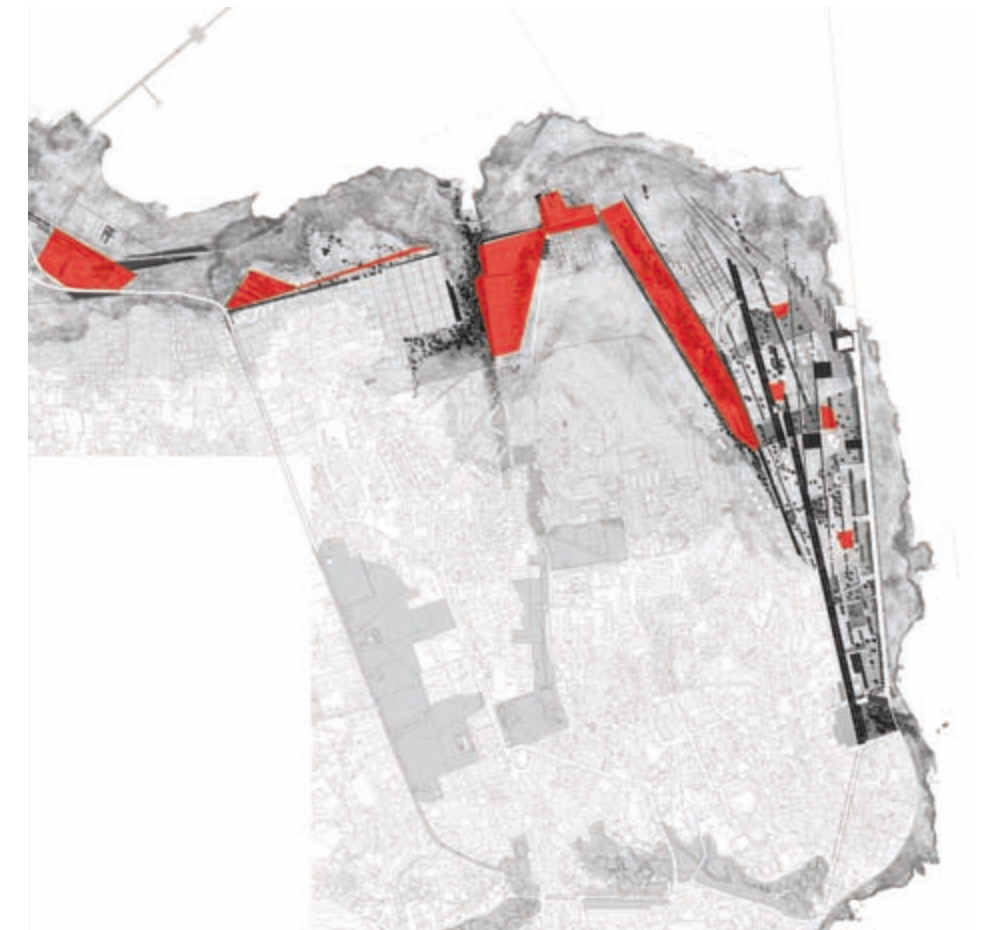
### Phase 2: Materializing, establishing new activities

- ACAMAS cultural center (Temas) in Mazzarona district
- Establishment of second section of the Quay towards Mazzorona
- Core interventions for valorizing Mazzarona and Grotta Santa district,
- Creation of the Santa Panagia Canyon Park
- Creation of the first Terrace for future urban development at Santa Panagia
- Polyphem's sheep herd



### Phase 3: Reinforce, develop

- Steropes, sustainable energies research center at Ex-Mattatoio
- Polyphem, agrobiological research center
- Second Terrace for future urban development at Santa Panagia
- Park of the Plateau rim
- Supplementary facilities





# Cyclopes

## awakening the myth



### The Cyclopes are back!

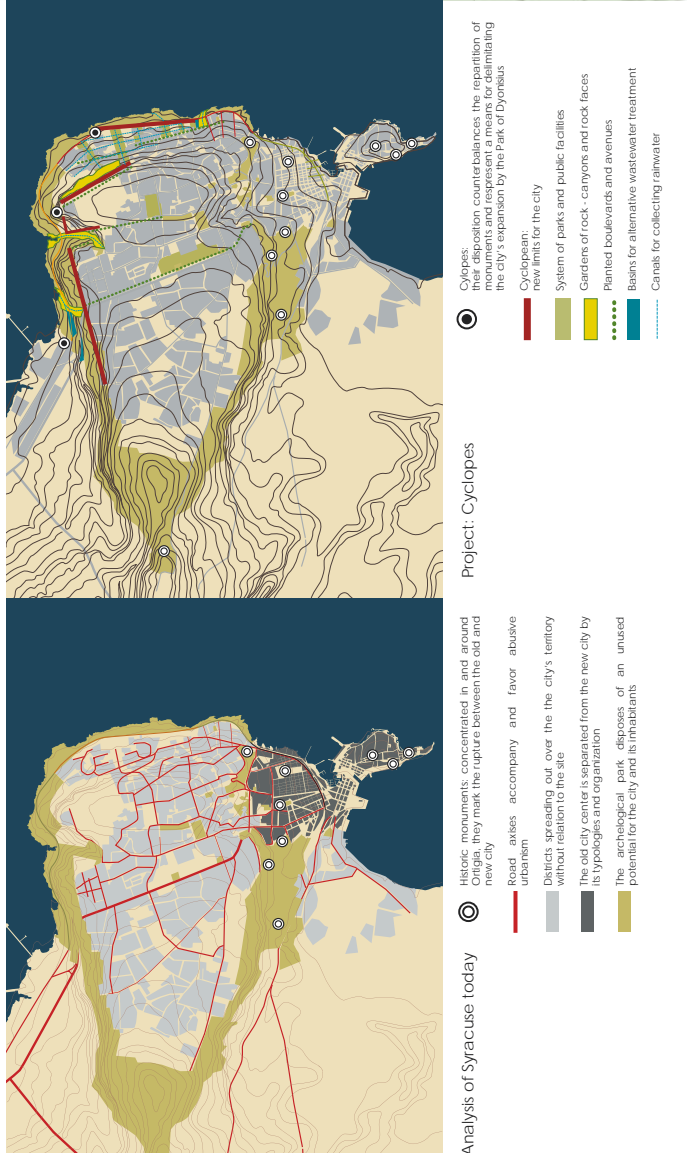
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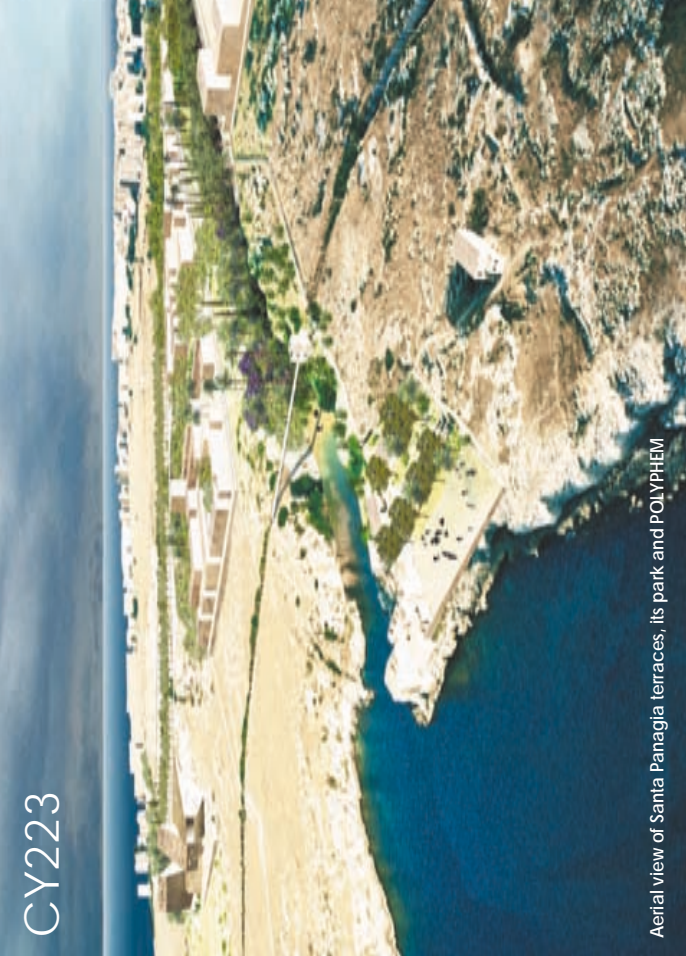
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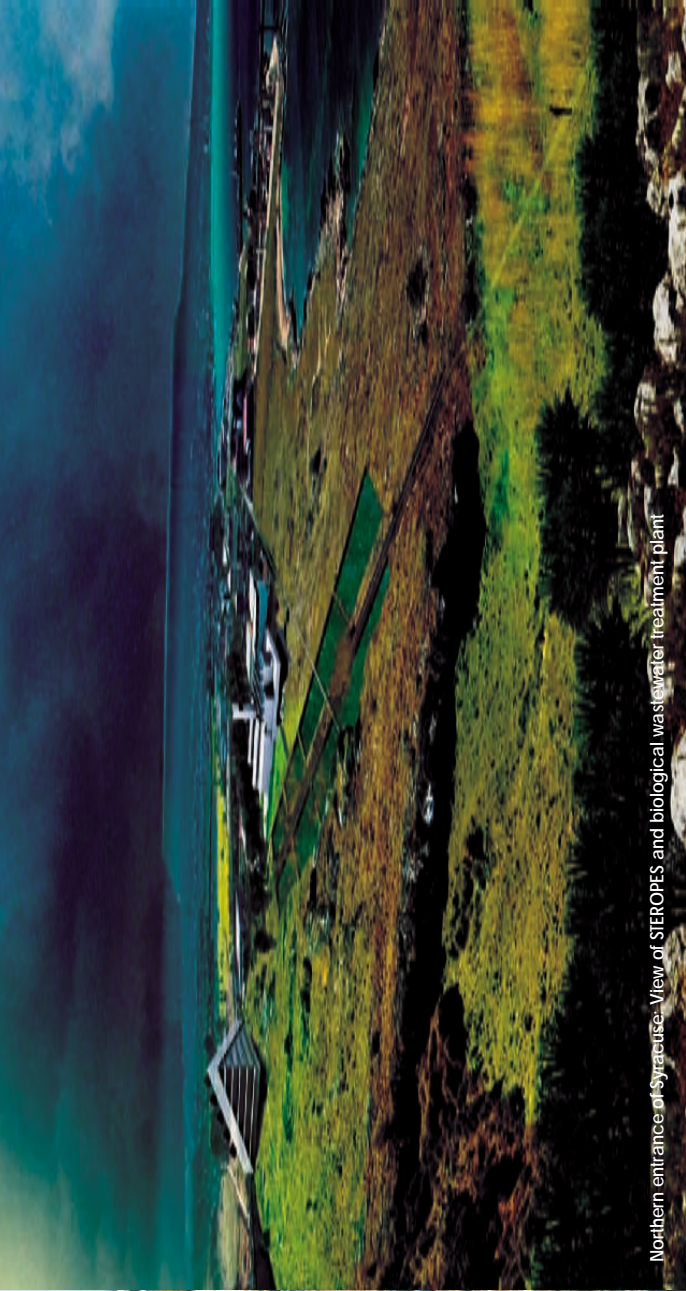








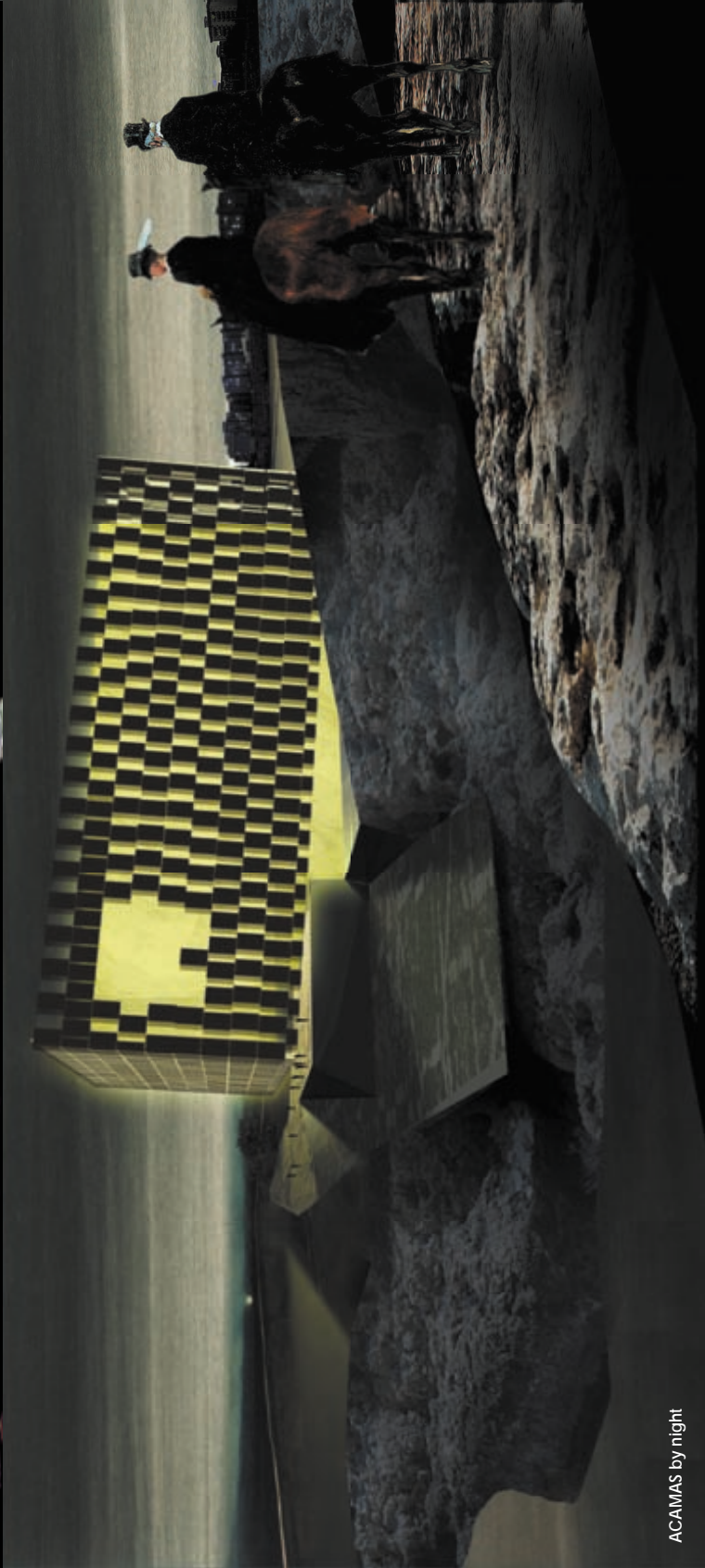
Aerial view of Santa Panagia Terraces, its park and POLYPHEM



Northern entrance of Syracuse. View of STEROPES and biological wastewater treatment plant



Coastal railway hiking trail



ACAMAS by night



Santa Panagia Canyon Park, view from the suspension bridge looking south



Santa Panagia Terraces, Tomnara and Polyphem