

PATH OF MEMORY

Open design concept contest for a complex arrangement of Paneriai
Memorial to victims of holocaust and all victims of Nazism

- 2014 -

Explanatory letter



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Introduction

The *Paneirai memorial to victims of Holocaust and all victims of Nazism* it's a symbol of holocaust as well as a warning to human civilization about something that we can't let happen anymore. The importance of places like the Paneirai Memorial is represented not only by the number of findings, but in their role to remember us about terrible mistakes done by human beings.

It is a place that tells several stories: stories of men, women, children and their massacre, stories of war, prisoners and innocents sacrificed in the name of an ideology of hate and death. Paneriai is a place that tells stories from the *invisibles* of a war parallel to the World War II.

This place has to be preserved and comprehended. In its present configuration, the Paneriai Memorial can't really make understand the tragedy that had happen: visitors can't fully understand the history of this memorial, they can't feel those strong emotions which sign our memories and give us a warning for the future.

The proposed project idea, described in the following chapters, is based on the idea of restoring the emotive and psychological meaning of this place, without changing the historical authentic elements and by restoring the artificial elements of the memorial like pits, ditches and fireplaces and introducing *architectural objects* that allow to recreate those images, unconscious and metaphysic, that give a deeper understanding of the events.

The concept

Genocides, in history, are always signed by the act of *journey*: a forced march characterized by hardships and humiliations that, as the time went by, become a prelude of death. A feeling that grows inside victims hearts while they are getting closer to their unknown destination. A journey through a metaphoric *path* in the darkness recorded in some sad and cruel pictures from that time: men, women and children amassed in a train wagon, people that were looking the surroundings through the barbed wire, queues made of prisoners marching in the cold to reach their death place with the knowledge of what is going to happen but with no hope to escape from what they were afraid of, with no hope to escape the death.



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The *Paneriai memorial to victims of Holocaust and all victims of Nazism* tells this moment: the last chapter of the journey of imprisonment of these people arrived in this camp, the last steps in this path of humiliation for body and soul; the beginning of a terrible ending... the darkness.

Therefore, the proposed project wants to represent the stories of these men and their path of death. The story of their arrival to the camp, the story of their march to the killing site, the pits and the terrible scenes of the graves. In the proposed project all the park is rearranged as a *sequence of moments* that tells the extermination of all these innocent victims.

Looking to the terrible atrocities that have been repeated in history and worldwide, probably our civilization didn't learn enough from the past. The purpose of the proposed project is to preserve the Paneriai Memorial historic importance helping to diffuse this important collective memory.

To represent the tragedy of death camps is never easy, often an image can be more powerful and meaningful than a commemorative target, as it can touch everyone feelings. The proposed project aim to create a *place of memory* where the historical events are represented in a new configuration that coexist with historical authentic elements. This new proposed configuration is shaped to give to visitors strong feelings like anxiety and uneasiness in order to leave a deep sign inside them and to imprint the consciousness of the atrocities against humanity perpetrated in this territory.

The proposed project tries to decline these intentions using the instruments of architecture and focusing on the following points:

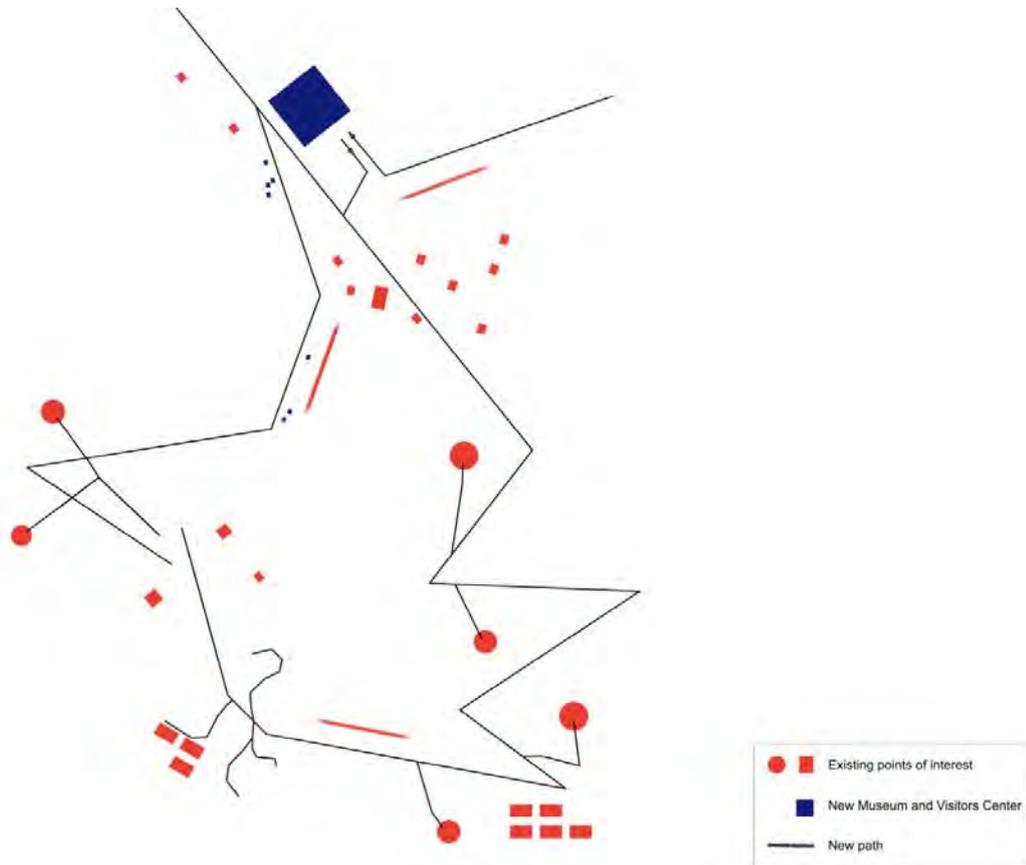
- the victims' ordeal, forced to walk to their killing place;
- the fence as a place surrounded by barbed wire from where is not possible to escape;
- the path as connection of important commemorative places and as metaphoric representation of the journey of death lived by the victims.

According to the focused points, the proposed project wants to recreate a *path* that make relive the anxiety felt by prisoners, connecting all the different places of historical interest in a sequence of events, like in the victims' ordeal. The path has its beginning and its end in the new Visitors' Centre which becomes part of this sequence and it configures itself as the introduction and the epilogue of the tragic story of Paneriai victims' fate.

The proposed project is not changing any historical elements of Paneriai Memorial and is neither trying to reconstruct them. The project tries, through reversible actions, to create psychological and emotional effects and to provide an opportunity to visitors of the memorial to feel and understand the tragedy, fostering a sense of moral responsibility. On the technical aspects, the proposed project is able to guarantee the preservation of the historical elements.

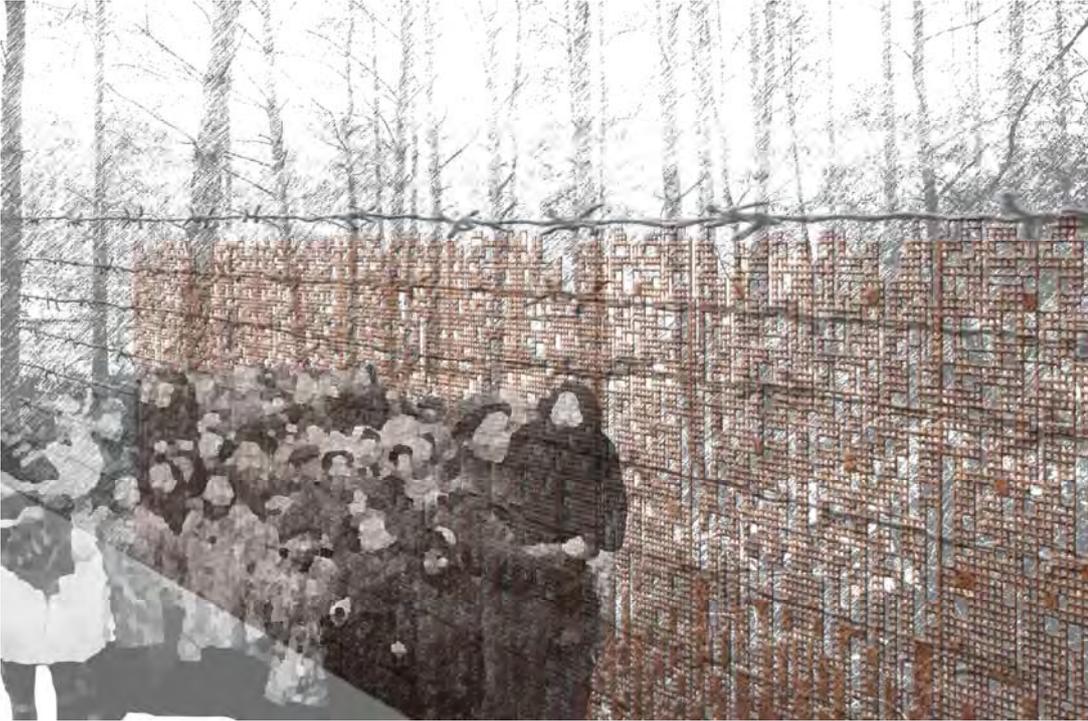
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The *Paneriai memorial to victims of Holocaust and all victims of Nazism* becomes, in the proposed project, a sort of *open air museum* made of spatial and emotional monuments and made of architectural actions. The existing historical elements, as well as the new ones, are connected together in order to create a single museum connected by a new path. The following image shows a schematic map of the Paneriai Memorial where all the points of interest are joined by the new path.



As the points of interest have been identified and the new Visitors' Centre has been placed (it will be better explained in the next chapter), the identity and the nature of the new path has been created as an element capable to arouse feelings like anxiety, oppression and uneasiness in order to recreate, in a lower scale, the sensations felt by men forced to march in the forest to reach the death. The victims, that were feeling starvation and fear, they could not be *in contact* with the surrounding forest. They were forced by their enforcers to move in the forest. Like absent entities, they were close to the environment but unconnected from it. Therefore the new path is designed to be a narrow space delimited by perforated cor-ten steel panels, that gives a filtered perception of the surrounding environment. Places that become, in a metaphoric way, like barbed wire fences which remind the *sensorial blindness* of the prisoners.

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This *blindness* disappears only in correspondence with the *places of death*: places where prisoners reach their final destination, the pits, where the cor-ten wall opens to allow a direct vision of these cruel places.

The analogy with the prisoners' blurry view of the surrounding, it's connected to the fence they were forced to live in: train wagon, barracks, the barbed wire of the death camp. The perforated walls of the new path give the feeling of physical (but not visual) disconnection from the surrounding environment. These walls represent something impossible to surmount, something sharp and *invisible*.

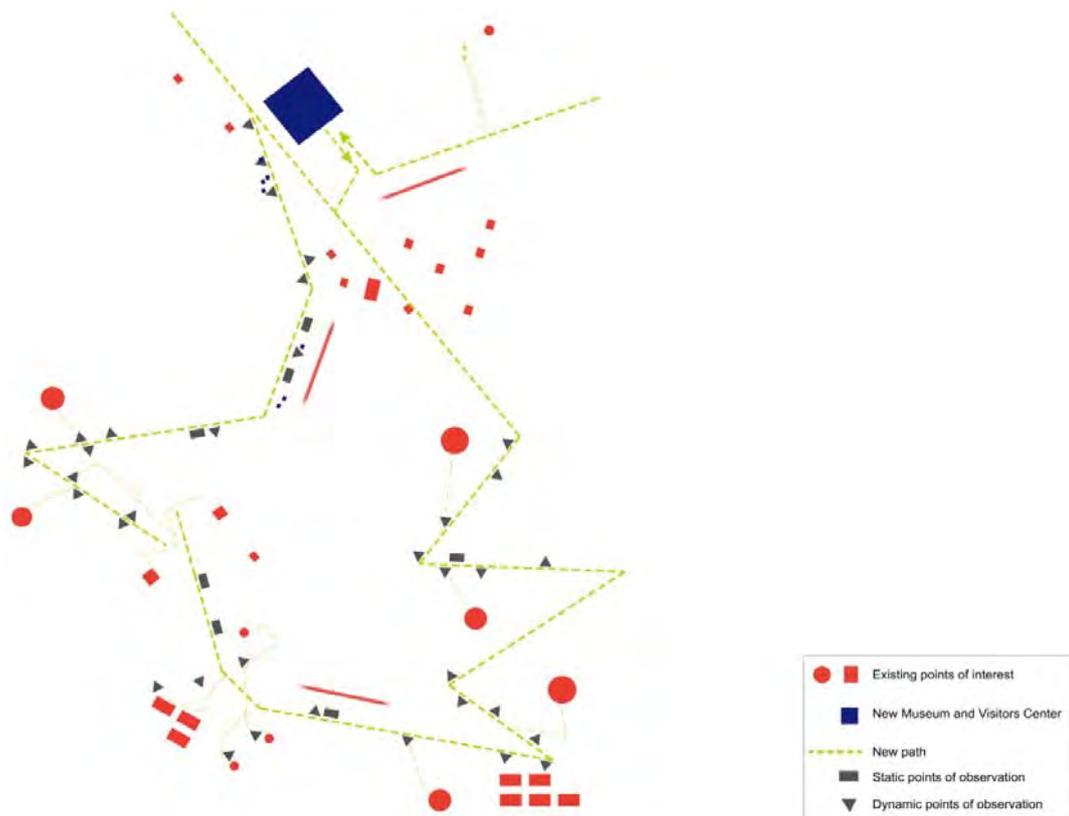
The place becomes important as strong are the feelings that it can arouse. The tragedy of more than twenty thousand victims it's a collective loss, it's a common tragedy made of many single losses, each victim turned to be a mere number for his killer, each victim was dying alone yet simultaneously with many other victims. But those victims were not only numbers: their lives and their fears are clearly represented in pictures of that time as well as the cruelty of dozens of death body gather together.

For these reasons the proposed project tries to minimize the number of text and tries to create strong emotions to awake feelings thanks to the architectural configuration of the different spaces. Only emotions can create a place of memory, only emotions can create a place that takes its strength from the opportunity given to its visitors to fully comprehend the perpetrated atrocities. Therefore the proposed project aims to create a place where consciences can be awoken and educated by the cruel silent voices of those who have lost their life in this territory. A higher understanding level reached by silence and observation.

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To give this experience, along the path there are some moments where is possible to think about the cruel crimes and about the broken lives: *static point of observation* where to stop, take a chance to better understand and to observe (like in the new museum or next to the pits); and *dynamic point of observation* from where focus the attention on defined areas of interest along the walk through the park.

The following scheme represents these *dynamics* and *static* observation points along the park.



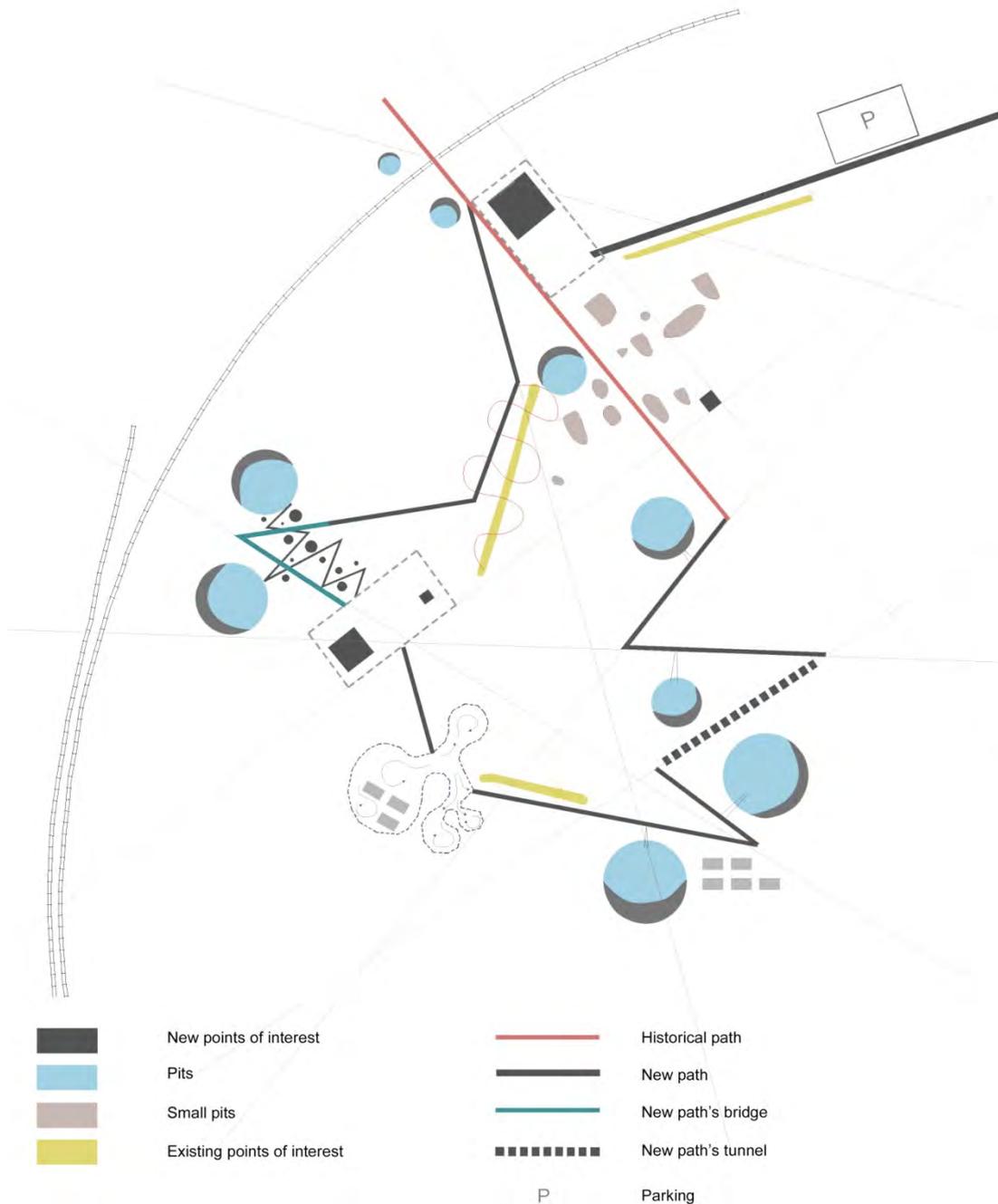
Starting from these concepts, the project takes the shape of a path that, starting from the entrance of the site, brings visitors to the new Centre in which is possible to visit the exposition area. In this building visitors will be prepared, from a historical and psychological point of view, to visit the Paneriai Memorial Park. After visiting the new Centre, visitors will move along the historical road to reach the beginning of the new path and starting the visit of *open air museum* of the *Paneriai memorial to victims of Holocaust and all victims of Nazism*.

Starting from this point, the projects its declined following two different layers: one is made by the new path that is connecting the historical points of interest and that takes different configurations according to the existing orography of the site and according to what has to be showed; the second one is made by the sequence of historical elements of the Paneriai Memorial, restored according to the competition request, which become like different steps of this new path.

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The rearrangement of the points of interest, that will be better explained in the next chapter, is obtained by the reconfiguration of the surrounding areas of the different pits, by the rearrangement of the *commemoration site* and by the creation of a new area around the points of interest n. 6, 9 and 19.

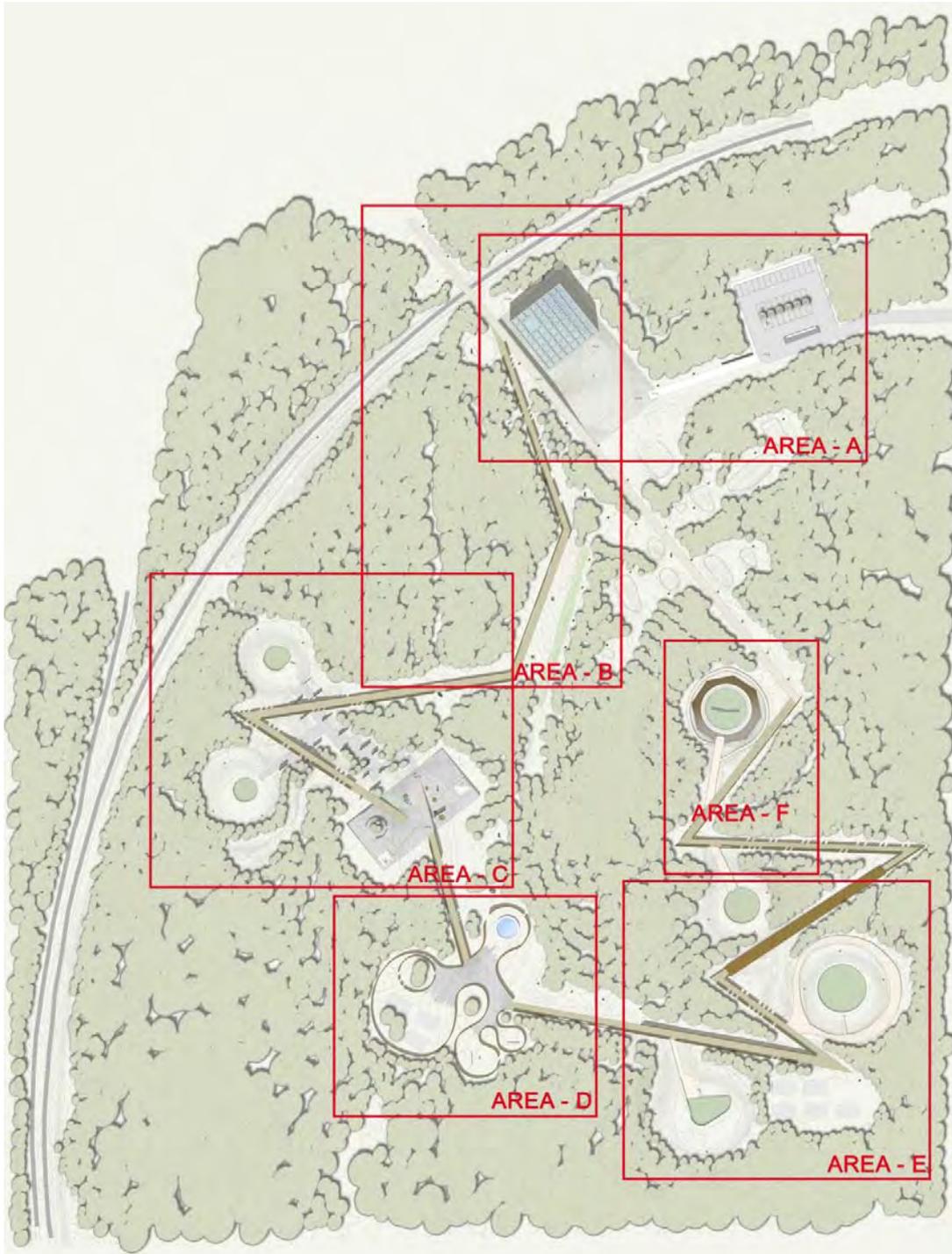
The following pictures represent the concept of the project.



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The project

This chapter describes the project divided in different area as showed in the image below.

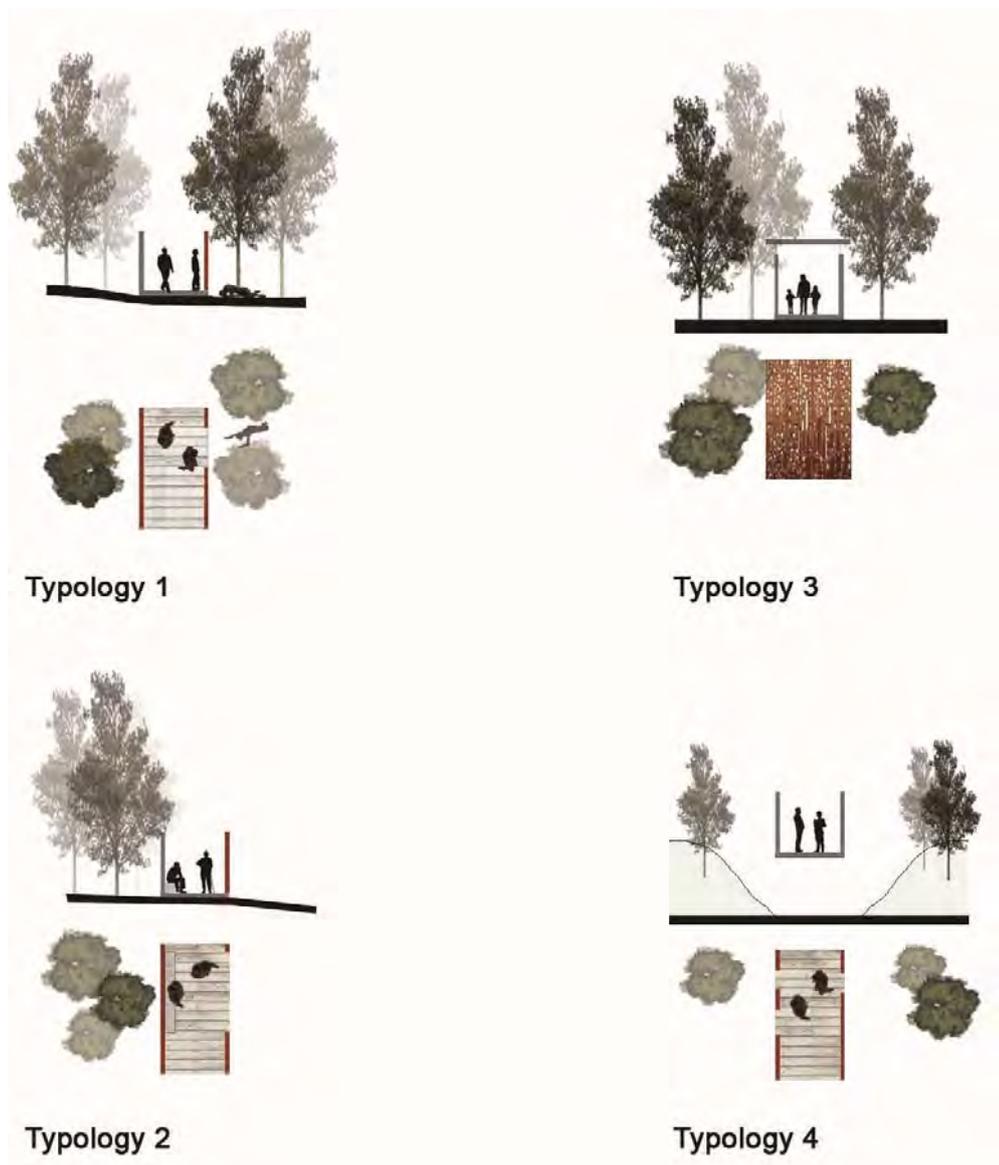


All these areas share the common metaphor of *victim's journey* that is well known thanks to the images of that time. This metaphor is represented by four main different kinds of path design that give different feelings and emotions:

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- Typology 1: the path is delimited by perforated cor-ten panels on both sides. The walls open only next to some point of interest or to show an art creation placed in the park, creating the *dynamic point of observation* mentioned above.
- Typology 2: the path's walls open on one side creating a *static point of observation*. In these points sits and explanatory panels are expected.
- Typology 3: the path becomes a *tunnel* that can be used to create temporary expositions by a sequence of panels and pictures.
- Typology 4: the overhead path allows to create a completely new point of view of pits and graves and to overcome a significant slope. It invokes the metaphor of the difference in height between executioners and victims that will be explained in the next paragraphs.

For all the four typologies, the floor is made by wooden boards and the lighting is included in the lower portion of the wall (as described in the next paragraph). The following image is a schematic representation of these different typologies.

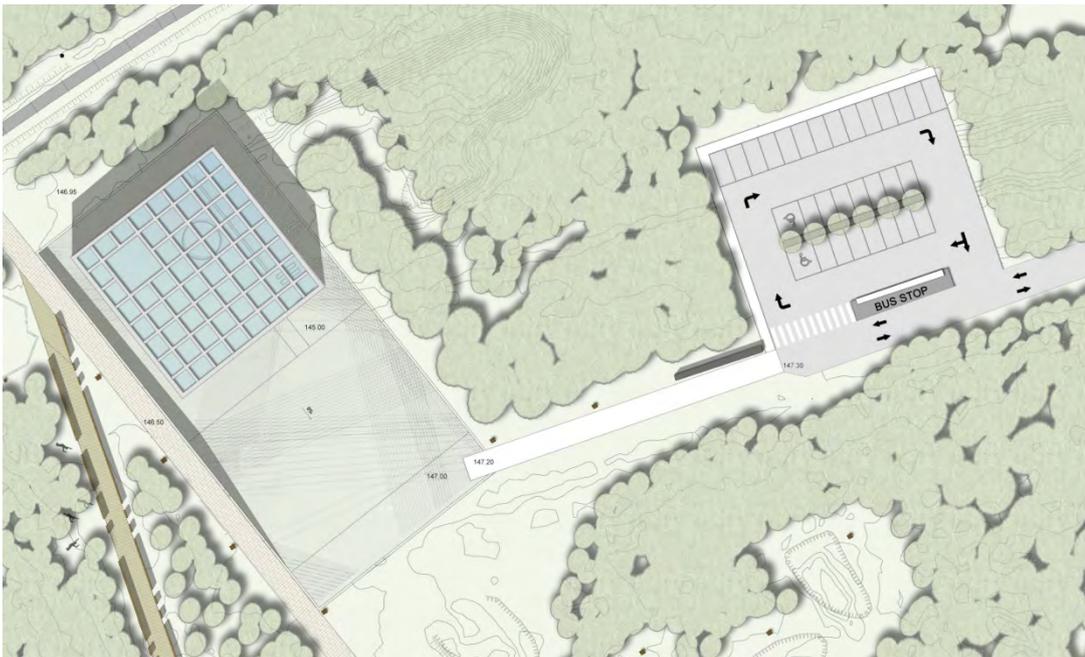


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Each of these typologies has been used in the proposed project to compose the new path of the Memorial Park, except the entrance road to the *Paneriai memorial to victims of Holocaust and all victims of Nazism* and the historical road inside the park.

Area A: The new Visitors' Centre

The Visitors' Centre and the new parking are placed, according to the technical specification of the design contest, next to the Memorial entrance.



The parking plot is placed on the existing parking area in order to use this part of land without trees. The new parking plot is designed for approximately 30 parking and it has a bus stop for public and private transports. The parking is designed to guarantee the necessary space for the bus to move inside it.

The Visitors' centre is placed at the end of the entrance road and it is aligned to the historical road inside the park. The visitors centre's mission are: to preserve the commemoration site with the remaining original and authentic objects and to introduce visitors to the atmosphere and historical importance of Paneriai Memorial spreading the *memory* of this territory.

The *Paneriai memorial to victims of Holocaust and all victims of Nazism* should not be designed only for those who already know the history of this place and that come here only for a cultural interest (even if important). The Memorial has to be designed for all the kinds of visitors, to make them fully comprehend the atrocities of the past events, atrocities that should never be repeated.

People, especially tourists, usually are not prepared to visit sites like the Paneriai Memorial. Often these sites are placed on the *things to see list* of their tour, among

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all the other touristic places. The aim of the designed building is to prepare visitors on a historical, cultural and psychological level, to understand the death camp of Paneriai. Therefore, in an architectural way, the building has to be something strong that has a unique character.

Architecture space, in the contemporary debate, became a palpable experience where its borders, edges and geometries touch the cultural and political identity of a place. Volumes, voids and passages reproduce with their shape the external condition of a political and social fight. We expect from them to represent the place and the meaning of these fights, also when they are about cruel time of human being history.

At the same time we expect a place that hides, in its deeper part, all the *objects* of fear that is probably needed to be showed to the community in order to not repeat yesterday's mistake. Space becomes an invisible metaphor that helps mind to recreate the *places of the events*.

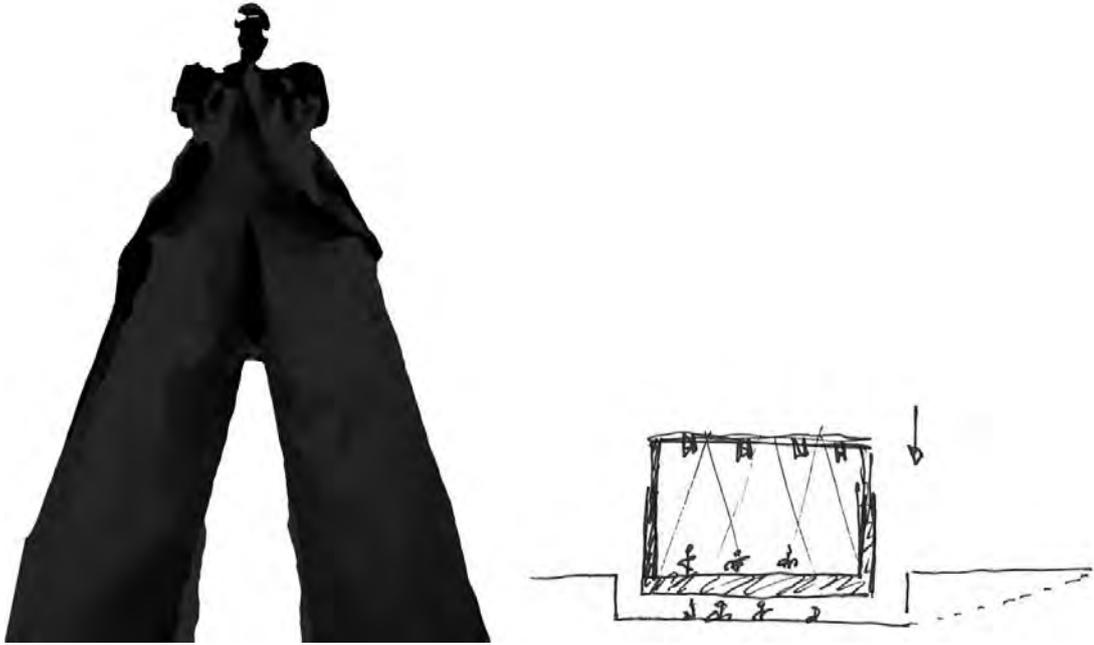
Inside the new designed building the visitor is like estranged from himself, brought inside a game of dark and bright places that simultaneously invade themselves. The paradigm of *universal transparency* hides, as Foucault observed, a deep fear, the fear of facing «*dark spaces, dark drapes that block the full visibility of things, people and truth*» (translated by the writer from A. Vidler, *Il perturbante dell'architettura. Saggi sul disagio nell'età contemporanea*, Einaudi, Torino, 2006, pp. 188-190). A contraposition that gives life to a parallel work between light and infinity, based on the phenomenology of darkness. Like Etienne-Louis Boullée's obsession for darkness: the most powerful instrument to bring that basic fear that Burke was considering as source of sublime.

According to that, the designed building becomes a top lighted cube-shaped volume where coexist an always changing relationship between light and dark. Relationship that hides the allegory of the fight between good and evil and that tries to represent, in a figurative way, the image of people oppressed by Nazism's crimes.

The new Centre is an architecture that talks about death. Therefore, the new Visitor's Centre uses the strength of a compressed and buried architecture that tries to shape the suffer that it's representing. It tries to express the extreme sadness of mourning by naked and empty walls, without any kind of ornaments. This new architecture has to offer itself to the visitor as a sequence of shadows that talk about a buried space, shadows that emphasize the effect of a *dark* architecture.

The zenithal lighting and the height of the ceiling produce the same instinctive and unconscious reaction for all visitors: to glance up toward the ceiling. This action recalls the supine position of the victims in front of their murders. A subordinate position not only because the victims were inside a pit, but also because the height of the murders was emphasized by the prospective distortion.

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This effect prefigures the death of prisoners' bodies in the darkness and the death of the souls of those who committed these terrible crimes. This double aspect is empathized in all the project's symbology: the pure shape of the cube falls inside the ditch that contains the square; its inside emptiness and the objects that remains the places of the tragedy. An architecture that wants to remember to the visitors the death that victims have been suffered: shapes of graves and feelings of being inside a physical and mental abyss.

The intention is to create a sort of simulacrum of the buried body: the building, with its huge dimensions, placed on a lower level, wants to give the feeling of oppression, surmounted by an enormous weight.

The new designed architecture is not created to represent a standing figure, as Le Corbusier and Vitruvio suggested, but it shaped as lying body (represented as space in negative). This lying figure is then relieved, in a metaphoric way, by the zenithal light of the exposition room. A monument that represent an ambiguous space, in the middle between death and life, like the shadow of a living death. A message of terrible crimes perpetrated by a rational and ruthless enemy, a message that has to be remembered.

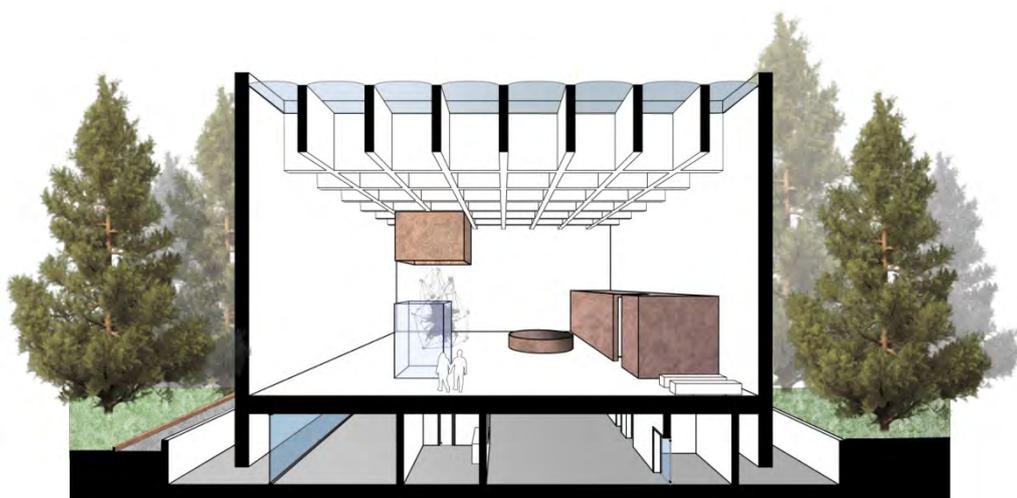
Here come a game between architecture, as art of representation, and the death as representation of a double meaning (physical and moral), so to reinforce the effect of fear and terror. Topic mentioned by Kofman when he speaks about the idea of *Freud's Uncanny* (from the German *Das Unheimliche*, "the opposite of what is familiar").

The building is articulated between the absolute emptiness of its pure finishes and the deepness of its relationship with light, shadow and void. The building translates this loss in a spatial uncertainty, measured by the huge height of the ceiling and by object that seems to flow inside this space.

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The composition moves between the Foucaultian interpretation of light and dark phenomenology, and the meaningful power of the transparent ceiling. The panoptic principle of the exposition room's open space shows how important is the binomial relationship between transparency/opacity to give to this space an evocative power. The building, where a dark and low-ceiled ground floor coexists with a light full and high-ceiled exposition room, shows the ambiguous presence of death in life, a dark space inside the bright one.

Inside the building the visitor is surrounded by a deathly void overwhelmed by the monumentality of the designed volume. This idea was used by many great architects as Boullée, Ledoux and Rem Koolhaas. The entrance to the building is like a cut on the main façade that leads the visitor to the public area of the ground floor. Here there are the hall, the ticket office, the bookstore, the cloakroom and the coffee shop. In order to optimize the technical system, toilets separate the public area from the administrative side. The administrative area, according to the technical specification, is made by the director's room, the staff room, the meeting room and the workshop - warehouse facilities. The first floor is dedicated to the exposition room that has been designed as an open space in which is possible to arrange different exposition as well as cultural events and activities. This space is characterized by the emotion effect create by the height of its ceiling (as mentioned before) and by two different elements that tries to recreate, in a metaphoric way, spatial situations that the visitor will live in the Memorial Park. One is the circular void that represents the pits, it offers the opportunity to place artistic installation. The other one is the suspended element of the ceiling that recreate the effect of overwhelming light and that can be integrated with art installations too. The flexibility of the exposition area allows to arrange different configurations of this space: from a free exposition with several object freely positioned on the floor, to a more conventional exposition with panels and exposition cases where to place historical finding.

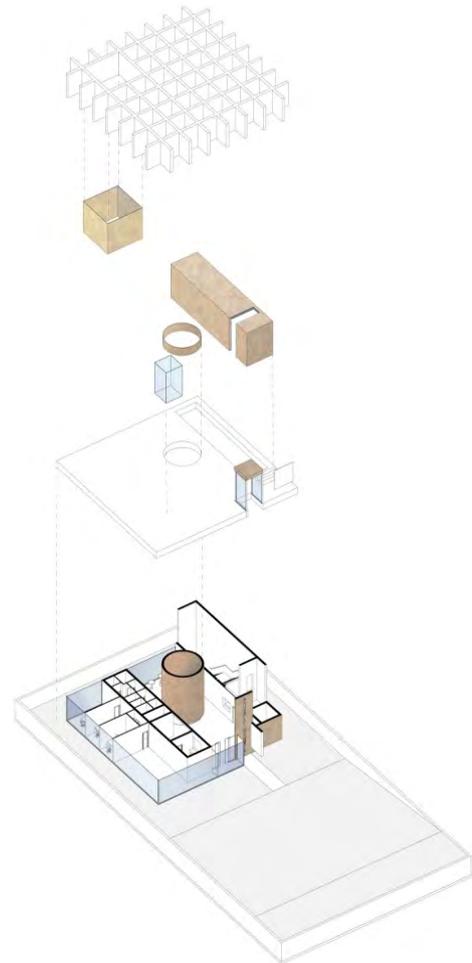


For more details is possible to compare the given information with the drawings of the submitted competition panels.

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The following table shows dimensional information of the designed building:

Area	Designed surface (m ²)	Requested surface (m ²)
Ground Floor		
<i>Area nearby the entrance</i>		
Hall	70,20	60,00
Cloakroom	20,00	20,00
Public WC	23,00	20,00
Ticket	12,60	20,00
Bookstore	15,00	
Coffee shop	25,00	20,00
Total	165,8	140,00
Distribution spaces	15,00	/
<i>Administrative area</i>		
Director's room	13,20	12,00
Staff room	17,40	16,00
Meeting room	22,60	20,00
WC	5,10	2,00
Warehousing facilities, workshop	63,70	60,00
Storage	7,80	/
Total	129,8	110,00
Distribution spaces	8,00	/
First Floor		
Exposition area		
Exposition	450,00	450-500
Distribution spaces	30,00	/
TOTAL PROGRAMME	745,60	700-750
TOTAL PROJECT	798,80	/



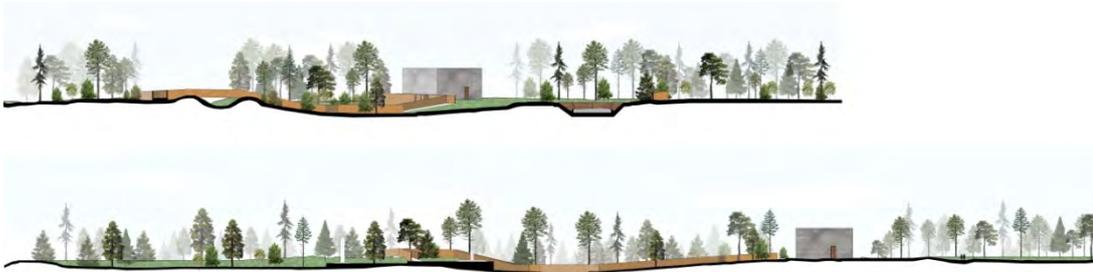
The façade of the building it's designed to be in a figurative thin equilibrium between the basement and the top. Here the mass of the monument, empathized by material chosen for the façade, dissolves the visitor presence in an oppressive metaphoric representation of graves.

Visitor will seems to be devoured by the dimension of this space: like in Roger Caillois' thesis, there is one level common to the spatial condition of the devoured subject and the experience of the dark space, as described by Eugène Minkowski.

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A space lived in depersonalization conditions and feeling of being absorbed. According to Caillois, the Minkowski's description is close to his self-induced depressive experience and explains the fear for the darkness.

The following large scaled sections show a building that even with its monumental height it's not higher than the surrounding trees.



Area B

The Area B is the beginning of the path of the *Paneriai memorial to victims of Holocaust and all victims of Nazism*.



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From the Visitors' Centre people take the historical road toward Nord direction and they can visit the following historical sites:

- *The Memorial to Armia Krajowa fighters and all Poles massacred in Paneriai.*
- *n. 8: Site of murder and grave of Enzys Jagomastas, a publisher from Lithuania Minor, and his family.*
- *n. 12: The site of the main gate of the Red Army aviation fuel depot, where Nazi victims were held.*
- *n. 13: Sites of guard buildings.*
- *n. 14: Main road to the fuel depot and site of massacres.*
- *n. 7: Site of massacres and graves of Lithuanian Territorial Defence Force soldiers.*

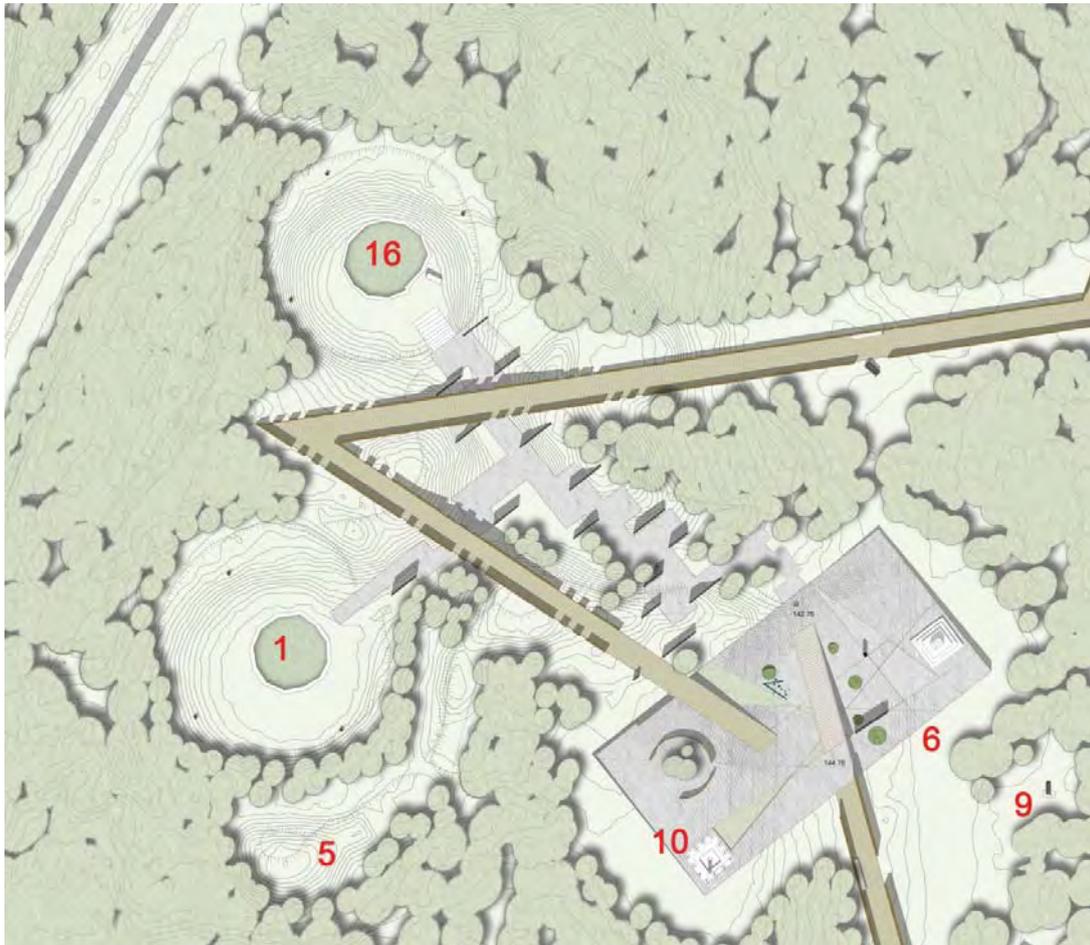
The project gives the possibility to visit these historical sites by using the typology of path n. 1, with a wall opened only next to the points of interest or to show the art creations placed in this area and creating the dynamic point of observation, and by the typology of path n. 2, with a wall opened on one side that create a static point of observation. In these points sites and explanatory panels are expected.

The art creations placed in this area refer to the extermination of the Jews told by a huge number of pictures. Their positions inside the park (in areas without historical elements) refer to the fact that many of them died in the channels because of the struggles, the blows, the weather and the fear.



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Area C



In the Area C people can visit the following historical sites:

- *n. 1: Massacre and mass grave pit.*
- *n. 16: Pit of corpse burners.*
- *n. 5: Sites of massacres and graves of victims.*
- *n. 10: Obelisk to Nazi victims, 1948.*
- *n. 6: Site of massacres and mass graves of Jewish specialists.*
- *n. 9: Grave of Doctor Hilaris Feigus.*

According to the competition request, in the proposed project is expected to demolish the existing museum and to restore the natural environment in that area.

In the Area C there are two important places of memory: the area of pits n. 1 and 16 and the new commemoration square.

The path, that as mentioned before connects all areas of the Memorial Park, pass over the two pits with two boardwalks. This solution permits to preserve the height of the land following the slopes. The two boardwalks are done with the typology of road n. 4 described in the previous paragraph.

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The solution expects that the pits can be visited from two different conceptual and metaphorical positions: from the one hand, the position of the murders by using the boardwalks, from the other hand, the position of the victims, from the bottom.

The visit of the pit from the bottom is the symbol of the prisoner journey that is moving toward the site of his murder. A place that they recognized to be the site of the end, of their death. For these reasons the last stretch should be heavier to accomplish for them. A series of walls represent metaphorically this difficulty to proceed, with their own legs, towards their grave.



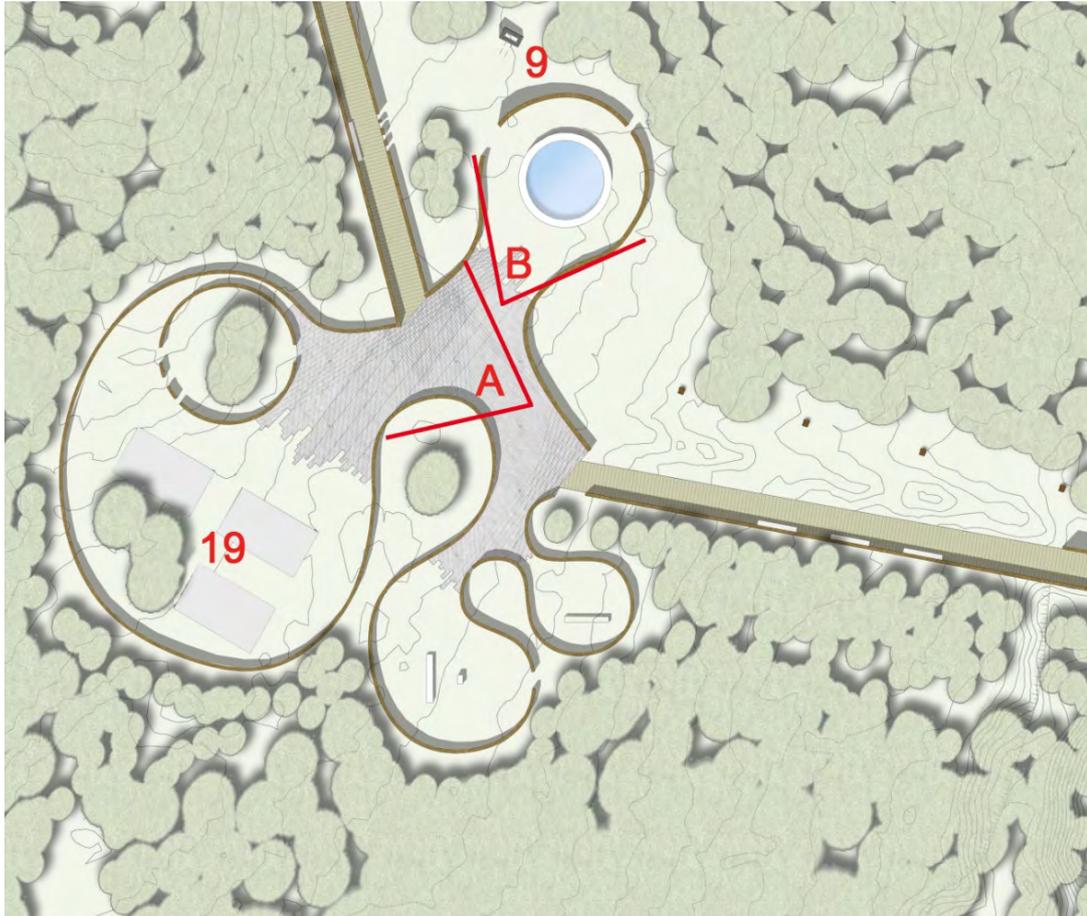
The area of the commemoration square is expected as a unique space where people can have public ceremonies. For this reason the entire area is a *global square* where the two monuments appear acquiring a greater importance compared with today's configuration.

The topography provided with the competition documents shows that between the monument n. 10 and n. 6 there is a difference of height of about 2 meters. This difference is passed with a slope given to the pavement and with a ramp aligned with the main path that permits to arrive to the monument for Holocaust victims.

The square lightning will be explained, from a technical point of view, in the next paragraph. From an architectural point of view its design is connected to the main composition of the square.

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Area D



In the Area D people can visit the following historical sites:

- *n. 9: Grave of Doctor Hilaris Feigus.*
- *n. 19: A smaller massacre and mass grave pit.*
- *Several areas in which the victims were probably piled in.*

In this area the path offers the possibility to see some glimpses of the park using the road typology 1 (static observation) and 2 (dynamic observation). It finally opens through an organic shaped area that encircles the site n. 19 and allows people to have particular views of the other points of interest in this part of the park.

Inside of this organic shape, that follows the natural topography of the land in this area, there is a new artistic space of commemoration and memory. The space is bounded by the wall of perforated cor-ten steel panels and wants to give the idea of being trapped inside a fence.

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The following picture shows a view from the point A in the plan.

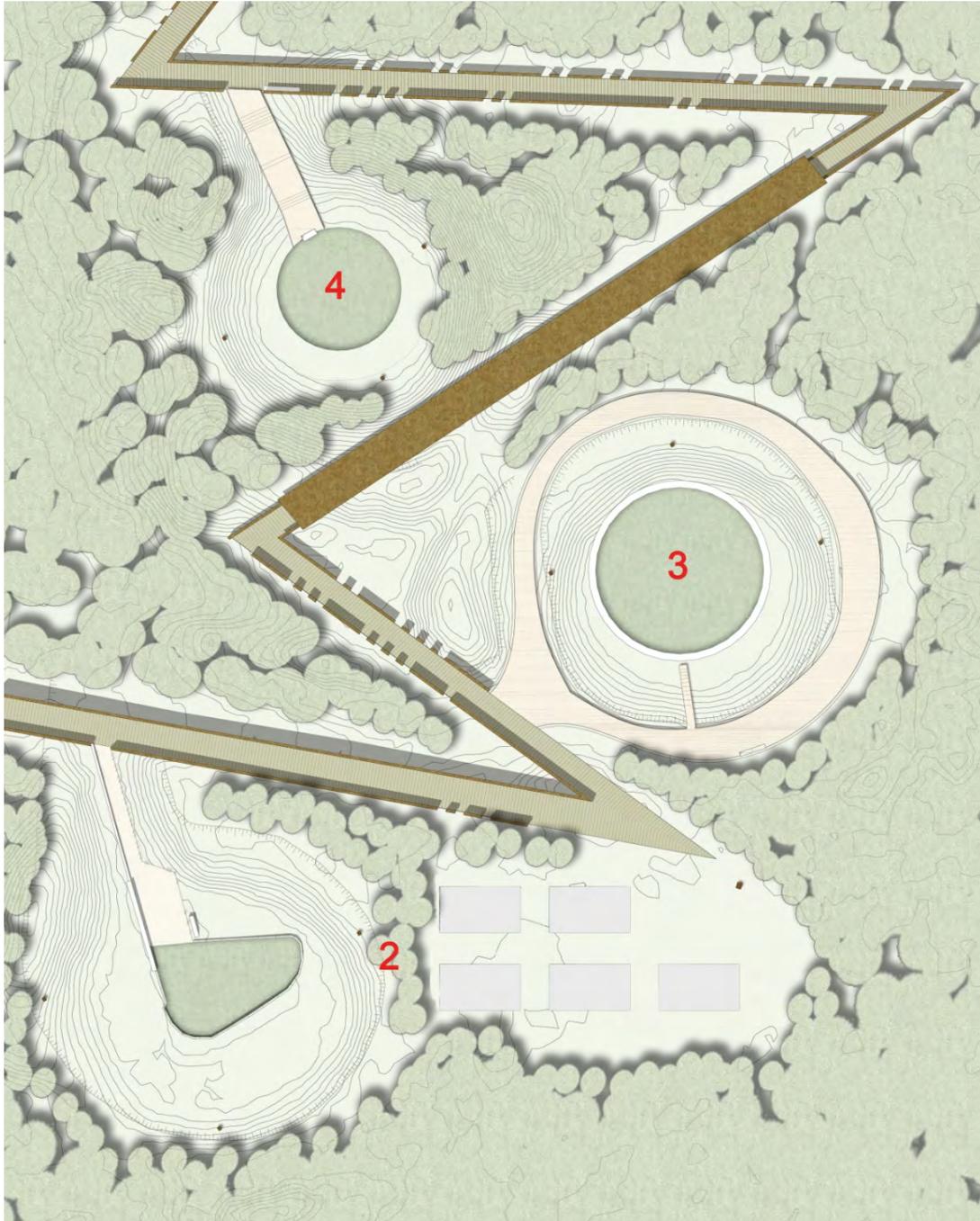


The following picture shows a view from the point B in the plan. On the background there is the passage to the Grave of Doctor Hilaris Feigus.



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Area E



In the Area E people can visit the following historical sites:

- *n. 2: Massacre and mass grave pit.*
- *n. 3: Massacre and mass grave pit.*
- *n. 4: Massacre and mass grave pit of Vilnius ghetto inhabitants*

The new path permits to the visitors to see some glimpses of the park using the road typology 1 (static observation), 2 (dynamic observation) and 3 (tunnel). It allows to access inside the area of the pits n. 2, n. 3 and n. 4.

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After the visit of the pit n. 3, the visitors continue their tour inside the artistic installation of the tunnel in which they can also visit a permanent exposition of panels, fixed on the wall, that tells the story of the holocaust by using some historic photographs. From a metaphorical point of view this tunnel refers to the condition of the prisoners piled into the pits and the condition of those that tried to escape from the site.

After the tunnel the visitors arrive to the pit n. 4 (Massacre and mass grave pit of Vilnius ghetto inhabitants). The slope of this pit is upholstered with cor-ten steel panels covering that protect the internal historical walls from the placer mining of the land around the slope. The lightning of this pit is on the bottom part of the cor-ten covering and around the pit as explained in the following paragraph.

Area F

In the Area F people can visit the following historical sites:

- *n. 15: Fuel storage area, where clothes of murdered people were kept.*
- *n. 17: A large massacre and mass grave pit.*

The new path permits to the visitors to see some glimpses of the park using the road typology 1 (static observation) and 2 (dynamic observation). It allows to access inside the area of the pits n. 17.

The slope of the pit n. 17 is upholstered with a cor-ten steel panels covering that protect the internal historical walls from the placer mining of the land around the slope. The lightning of this pit is on the bottom part of the covering and around the pit as explained in the following paragraph.

On the upper part of the pit, the proposed project expect to realize a paved path that permits to walk around the pit

The main path allows the visitors to arrive to the historical road of the park. This road will be restored in its original form and it will be extended to the Visitors' Centre area. From this part of the road people can visit the site n. 15 that is parallel to the path.

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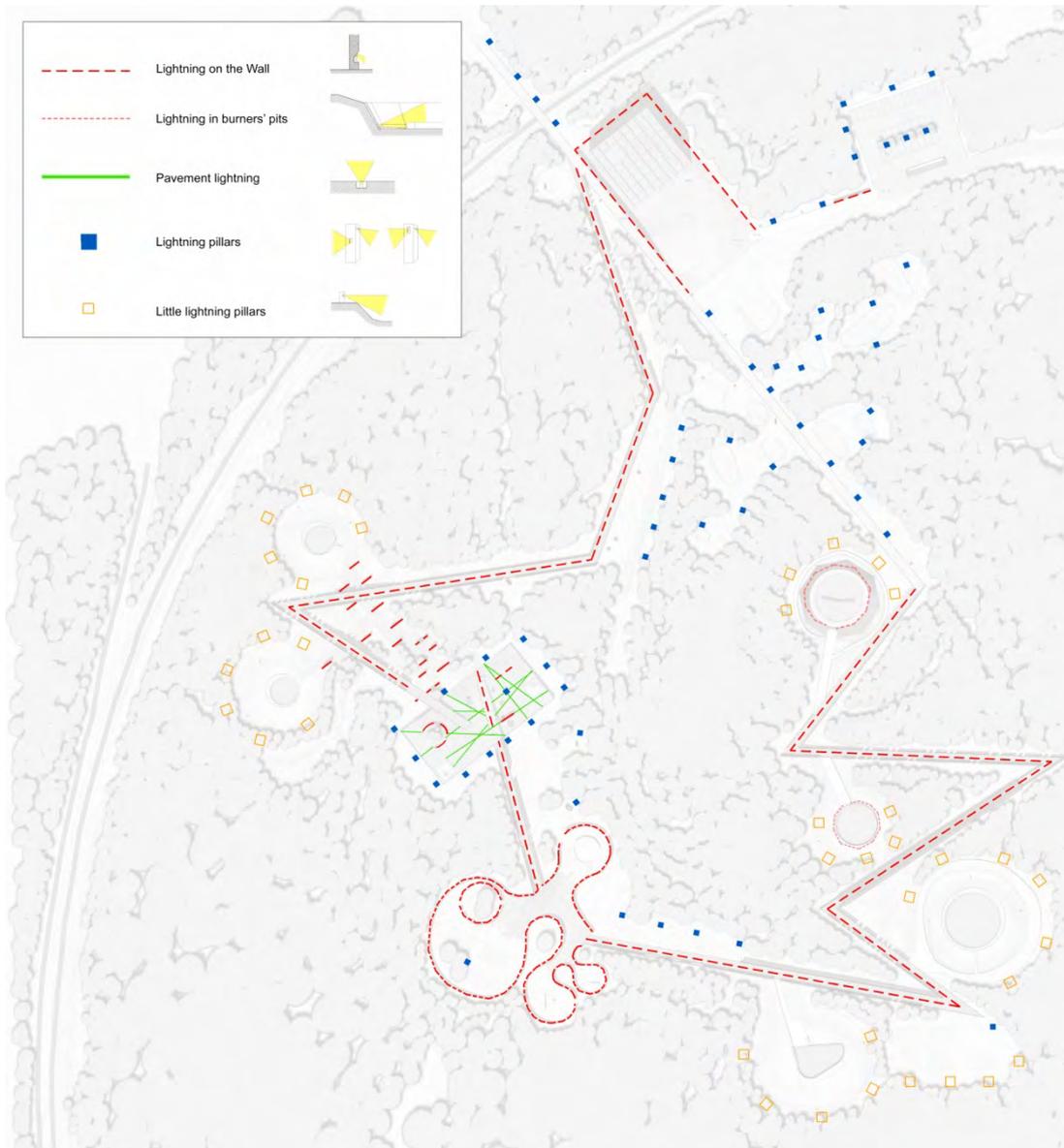
Lightning

The proposal expected to use different typologies of lightning depending on the position in the park. The table below shows the main typologies of lightning used.

LIGHTNING TABLE		
Typology	Description	Picture
Lightning 1 <i>Lightning on the wall</i>	Stretched lighting on the bottom part of the cor-ten steel panels wall and on the benches adjacent to the wall.	
Lightning 2 <i>Lightning in burners' pits</i>	Stretched lighting on the bottom part of the cor-ten steel panels covering pit n. 4 and 17.	
Lightning 3 <i>Pavement lightning</i>	Stretched lighting on the pavement.	
Lightning 4 <i>Lightning pillars</i>	Square based lightning pillar (b=30 cm and H=350 cm)	
Lightning 5 <i>Small lightning pillars</i>	Rectangular based lightning pillar (b=6 cm and H=70 cm)	

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The following plan shows the position of each typology of lightning.



Preservation of the authentic historical features

The proposed project wants to preserve the historical authentic elements of *Paneriai memorial to victims of Holocaust and all victims of Nazism* through actions which aim to protect them from the effects of time.

The area next to the historical elements are designed to preserve the authenticity of the Paneriai Memorial. The depth and width of pits, slopes of embankments and ditches are preserved. Existent supporting stone walls are expected to be preserved from the slope washout.

PATH OF MEMORY

According to guidelines of Annex N.5, places of interest have been identified among the other areas to preserve and to be included in the visitors' journey (as mentioned in the previous paragraphs).

Relationships with the natural and historical environment

The designed project propose a complete rearrangement of the site by restoring those elements which had been destroyed by time. The historical elements, for example the old existing road, become part of the proposed project and they are expected to be restored using natural techniques.

The new path tries to find its way through the vegetation and the land orography, pandering to the slopes with a minimum impact.

Materials as stone, wood and cor-ten steel are expected to be used. Their materiality and their colour can be perfectly integrated with the surrounding forest giving the feeling of a single solution in harmony with the natural and historical environment.