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WORKSHOP 1

**GREECE – Developing “Water Codes” in Larissa City Centre: the “Sculpted River” of Larissa
Municipality of Larissa, Greece**

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Large-Scale Urban Landscape Sculptor, Sculpted Architectural Landscapes, Greece

**Inhabited sculpted spaces – The holistic design process of urban landscape interventions to
develop the tools needed for the Democratean “Ευεστῶ”: well-being, synaesthesia, pleasure of
living.**

Since 1970 leading international researchers, professors and experts in matters of landscape have distinguished in the total art projects of Nella Golanda the early characteristics of the European Landscape Convention of 2010.

In 1983, Prof. Brian Goodey (Urban Landscape Design, Oxford Brookes University) presented at the Congress of the Council of Europe, with the subject “*Urban cultural life in the 1980s: reports and essays from the Council of Europe twenty-one towns*”, in Strasbourg, presented “*Paleo Faliro’s square - A place in the sun*”, a pilot project created by Golanda, in Paleo Faliro, Athens, Greece, in collaboration with the local authorities.

Ten years later, in 1993, in the City of Prague, the Council for Cultural-Co-operation, organised a European Conference with the subject “*Culture in Towns*”. Golanda was the official representative of Greece sent by the Ministry of Culture in order to present the three following projects carried out in collaboration with the technical Departments of the relevant Municipalities of Paleo Faliro, Glyfada and Larissa and funded by the then Ministry of Public Works. These three holistic large landscape designs:

“The Flisvos Sculptured Quay” 1984-1986 and “The Aixoni Quarry Sculpted “Theatre” 1984-1992. Additionally she presented the study and the designs of the project “Developing Water Codes in the centre of the city of Larissa – The Sculpted River” which started in 1992. All these projects were focused on the culture of the landscape qualities code in Greece, the human scale and the shared “reality” of the *inhabited sculpted spaces*.

In this Congress, the introduction of Golanda’s presentation was as follows:

“When I designed a public space, my deep and instinctive desire was that from this new space the emotion I had felt in architectural and structured spaces should emerge; spaces that reflect the landscape and the love for detail, spaces where I walked in my childhood. I believe that the most serious events that marked my life is that as a child I played, ran, saw the sky, the nearby mountain, the horizon of the sea, the beauty of Greek vegetation, and the development of the rocks through the structural mirror, as the inhabitants of this place since ancient times up to some years ago. For thousands of years, from the classical temples to the most humble buildings, the inhabitants always felt the joy to experience the miracle of living in human-scale. I could say that as a child I lived in an open-air museum: Greece.

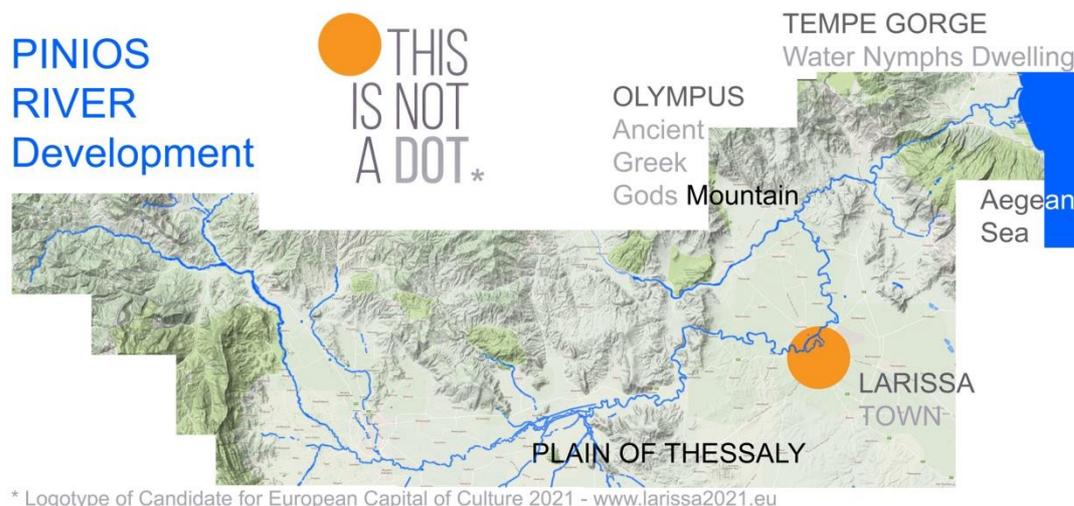
“Since 1970, my work was based on the qualities of the Greek landscape through holistic design – Total Art interventions. I believe that, by living inside artworks, we exploit the opportunity to become members of urban life.

“The Total Art design of a new landscape includes the visitor’s experience; it is not isolated, it belongs to the whole world. It is no longer kept in museums, nor is it the property of an individual. Art is completed in the shock of modern life in a subtle embrace that inspires people to participate in the values of the natural and historical surrounding, not realising that they are living and breathing art”.

The Larissa experiment

The wider landscape qualities – “The flow of the mythical Thessalian River Pynios”

Thessaly is a geographical space with large scale alterations and extremely archetypal landscapes. Today, the great Pinios river of the Thessaly landscape covers a system of flows more than 200km long,¹ providing its main navigable part in statutory recreation activities, the most important of which are rafting and kayaking. It springs from the mountains of Epirus, runs across the plain of Thessaly and ends, through the various mountainous and lowland and flows into the Aegean Sea. The habitation of the Thessaly plain is lost in the Pre-historical Age. It is a fertile plain surrounded by the highest mountains of Greece: Mount Olympus, the mountain of the Gods, Mount Kissavos, a wonderful mountain which ends in the Aegean Sea and Mount Pilion, as well as the route of the Pinios, which is characterised as the river with the silver waters in folk tradition, and ending in the Aegean Sea as it falls from the Tempi Gorge. The Tempi Gorge is a ravine which was created thousands of years ago by a vast earthquake, transforming Thessaly sea into a fertile plain.



This valley took mythic dimensions in our imagination as the nymphs of Pinios were living; one of the most loved one was Stilvi (sun shines, a chaotic form of light on the waters, in Greek). Mount Olympus was the kingdom of the ancient gods, and the nymphs were a continuation of all this mythical survival. Pinios, after passing from the valley of Tempi, filled with pagan landscapes and narrations of our childhood, reaches the Pinios Delta, where all these large mountain volumes meet the Aegean Sea. Larissa is located in the middle of the plain of Thessaly.

In the 1980s the municipal authority, headed by the great reformist city Mayor, Aristides Lambroulis, decided on an archaeological excavation of the residential hill located in the city centre, in order to discover the magnificent Ancient Theatre of the 3rd century BC, which was as big as the ancient theatre of Epidaurus.

“The emergence of this just excavated in the city centre Ancient Theatre, led me to propose the re-establishment of the lost relation of the city of Larissa with its natural and historical landscapes”.

The project has been proposed by the urban scale sculptor Nella Golanda and promoted by the Municipality of Larissa. The project aims to create a new landscape identity for the city of Larissa based on the lost physical and historical landscape of the newly excavated ancient Theatre of the third century

1. 213 km according to the 1st Revision (21/12/17) of the River Basin Management Plan of the Aquatic Thessaly Department (ELO8) issued by the Special Secretariat of Water Policy, Ministry of Environment & Energy.

BC, in the centre of the town. It intends to do so by involving local communities and revealing the memories of a distinctive agricultural landscape such as the plain of Thessaly with the Pinios river and its surrounding famous mythical mountains. The project (started on 1982 and completed 1998) achieved the implementation of the principles defined under the European Landscape Convention (2010) through local urban planning.

Golanda aims to create a new identity for the city of Larissa, based on the enhancement of the ancient Theatre of the city. The two main squares of the town, the Post Office square (Tahidromiou, 1992-1996) and the Central square (Sapka, 1996-1998) are included in a holistic design approach, in order to reveal the temporal historical character of Larissa. In order to achieve these goals, she proposed the design of the “*Sculpted River*”, marking the lost relation of the city with its river Pinios and emphasising the different landscape types of Thessaly, the uplands and the lowlands, along its route. The *Sculpted River* “flows towards” the Ancient Theatre and enables the development of the mountainous and lowland flora of the region.

The key proposals, as identified in her Master Plan, seek to promote the historical identity of the city of Larissa and to re-establish the connection of the city with its river by a selective number of redesigned public spaces. Within these proposals, in 2006, the two central squares were connected with a pedestrian construction towards the Ancient Theatre. These holistic designs create an art consciousness among the users and especially the children, increasing awareness of the value of landscapes.

The aim of Golanda’s Master Plan was to increase people’s awareness about the lost relationship of the city of Larissa with its historical and mythical Pinios river, to re-establish this connection and also to prepare the city centre to accommodate the revealed ancient Theatre, which is located a few metres from the central squares.

The two central city squares (more than 13,000 m² each) are 150 metres apart and another 150 metres from the excavation site of the Ancient Theatre. They are characterised by a comprehensive urban landscape intervention which enables the city of Larissa to welcome the revealed Ancient Theatre, by using a structured urban centre, where various rhythms and qualities have the possibility to develop, “in the sculpted river’s flow”, through holistic design interventions, in a large-scale, spatial, natural and historical landscape.

The Master Plan was commissioned and supervised by the Municipality of Larissa, Technical Service Department: the Architects were Ms Vayoula Tsopanoglou and Evaggelia Giovri, under the Direction of Special Projects of the Greek Ministry for the Environment Physical Planning and Public Works.

All funds for the master plan and the implementation of the project were obtained from the Sectoral Operational Programme for Thessaly and from European programmes.

Public participation

The challenge is to enhance public awareness of the historical landscape of Larissa and to achieve sustainable development based on a balanced and harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activity, culture and the environment. It aims to alter the landscape character of big cities and to raise consciousness among the citizens of the local historical characteristics of their town. A further challenge is to educate people, especially children that the landscape is a key element of individual and

social well-being and that its protection, management and planning entail rights and responsibilities for everyone.

As the years go by in Larissa, especially after the development of the “Sculpted River” which unifies in one whole and integrates the Ancient Theatre into the historic centre of the city, very encouraging side-effects began to appear in the city. These side-effects had to do with the emergence of the wider landscape which colours everyday life with festivals dedicated to the Pineides Nymphs, new associations such as “Women and the River”, “The Sculpted river of Larissa and *Hippocrates*”, “Friends of Pineios” and other cultural institutions. In the last two years, and especially after the 15th Venice Architecture Biennale in 2016, where the video of Larissa was presented and with the Greek candidacy at the Council of Europe for the 5th Landscape Award, the city of Larissa took off! At all levels of education from Nursery School to High School, educational programmes have been held based on this video. Generally, we can say that a creative activity flourished in relation to the beauty of landscape and history. Conferences have been organised focusing on “the importance of water in urban planning” as well as research into Greek cities with rivers, and, a few years ago, in a public survey, Larissa was considered to be the most beloved city by its inhabitants.

In 2017, in the exhibition catalogue of Golanda’s seven large-scale urban landscape interventions, the well known professor of art history and critic, Denys Zacharopoulos, writes: *“You could say that Golanda works more as an archaeologist of the future and not as an architect of the past. She notes those elements that act as links between raw and processed materials, stillness and movement, decay and revival times, structural remains and the geophysical environment. Her work is a palimpsest, where the text and the context are involved in the same language, which is the visual language that defines the communication between man and the natural landscape through the works, the state, and the setting for his life. For all these reasons, it is not accidental the international recognition and multiple awards of her work, but also the inability to leave her hometown in order to transfer her projects elsewhere; projects that can only exist in a particular natural environment and place”*.

