



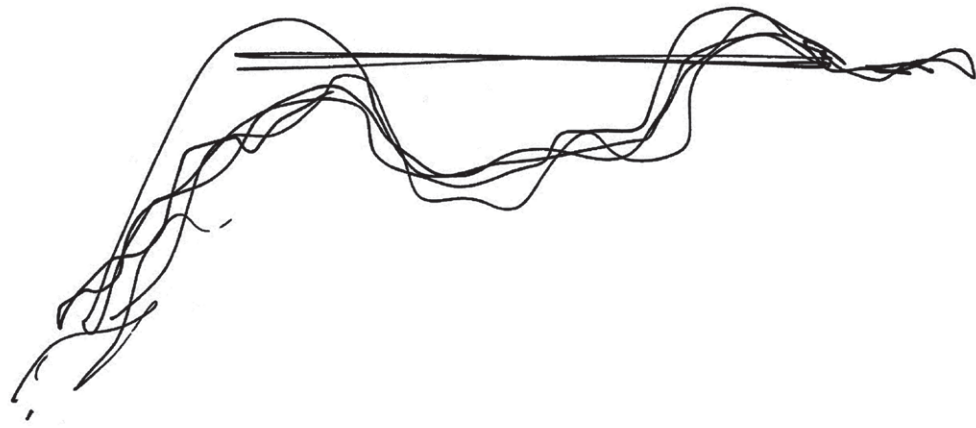
Aerial photography May 2016

Designing a Rivergarden

Near Geneva, the Aire river flows through valleys historically devoted to farming. From late 19th century the river was progressively canalized. In 2001, the State of Geneva opened a competition with the idea of restoring the river to its original shape and meanders by destroying the canal. In our winning entry we proposed instead to combine the clear territorial cut of the canal with a parallel new vast divagation space for the river. In the process the canal became the pointer for the transformations, a reference line giving the possibility to understand a before and an after. A becoming which superimposes both situations and accept that something began which was already there.

The official justification for the competition brief was an ecological one, in which the legitimated necessities of environmental improvements neglected any design values or considerations. A clear opposition of nature and culture. Our project attempts to propose an alternative path, where the urgent ecological shifts are incorporated in a larger cultural change.

The complex organization of the design associates the new river space and a linear serie of gardens in the former canal. In reality the whole design becomes a linear garden. Facing the whole watershed, the original morphology of the mountains and the traces of human modifications, this long rivergarden organizes the situations, the views, the confrontations, the presences in a true Einsensteinian montage, aiming at introducing into this fragile and precious territory questions, worries and hopes, through shocking juxtapositions renewing attention and emotion.



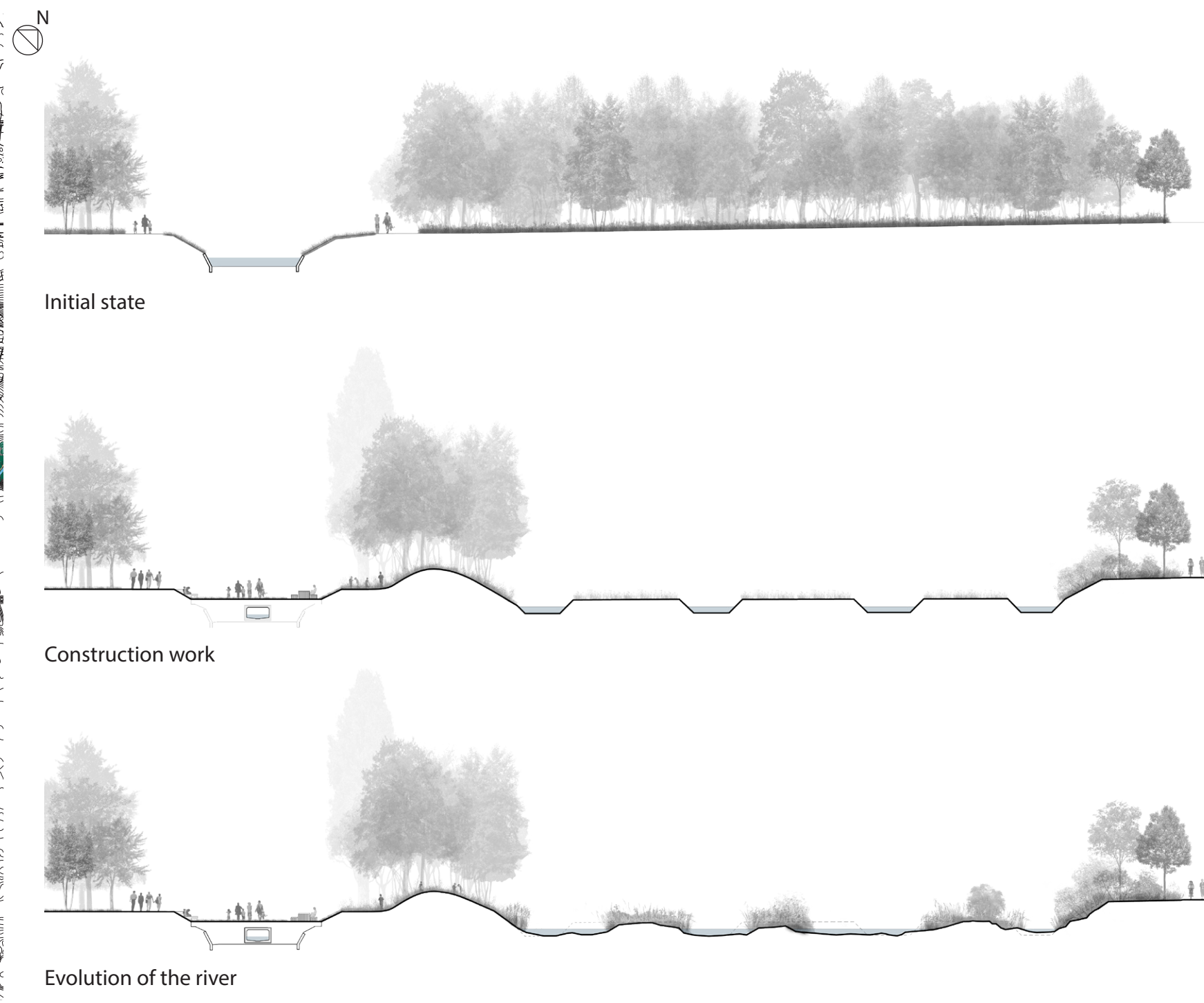
This open-air laboratory character is at its maximum with the design of the new riverbed. There, conscious of the useless effort to design a fixed river bed– we instead risked a launching pattern. This diamond-shape diagram, based on the percolation principle with dissipatives forces shapes, opens a complex serie of undetermined channels for the flows.

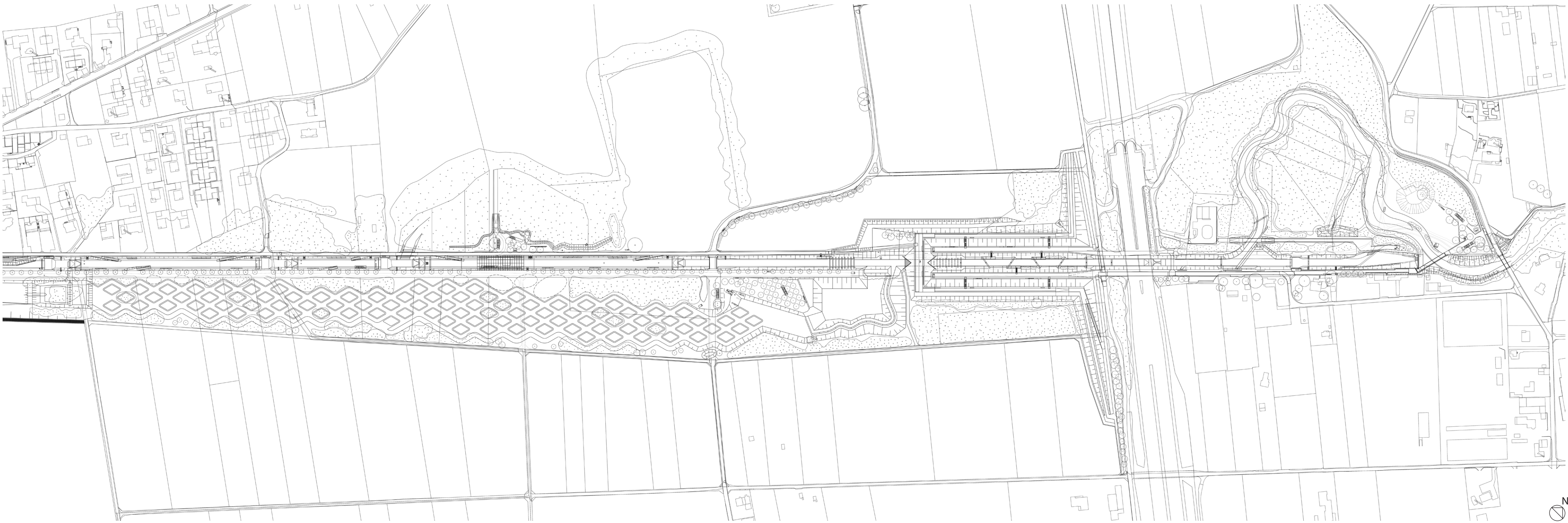
The result is spectacular. One year after the flows invaded the new river space, the results are beyond our most optimistic expectations: the river flows displaces diverse materials, sediments, gravels, sands and the initial geometrical matrix of lozenges gives birth, with a very surprising path, to an extreme diversity of the fluvial geomorphology.

The monitoring of the processes at work is now a key mission of the design team: to observe, measure and confront all the processes at work in the river bed -with the most advanced technological tools– in this huge laboratory. And a first conclusion is that we have to accept this paradox: the more defined the launching grid given to the river, the more the river will be free to design.



General plan

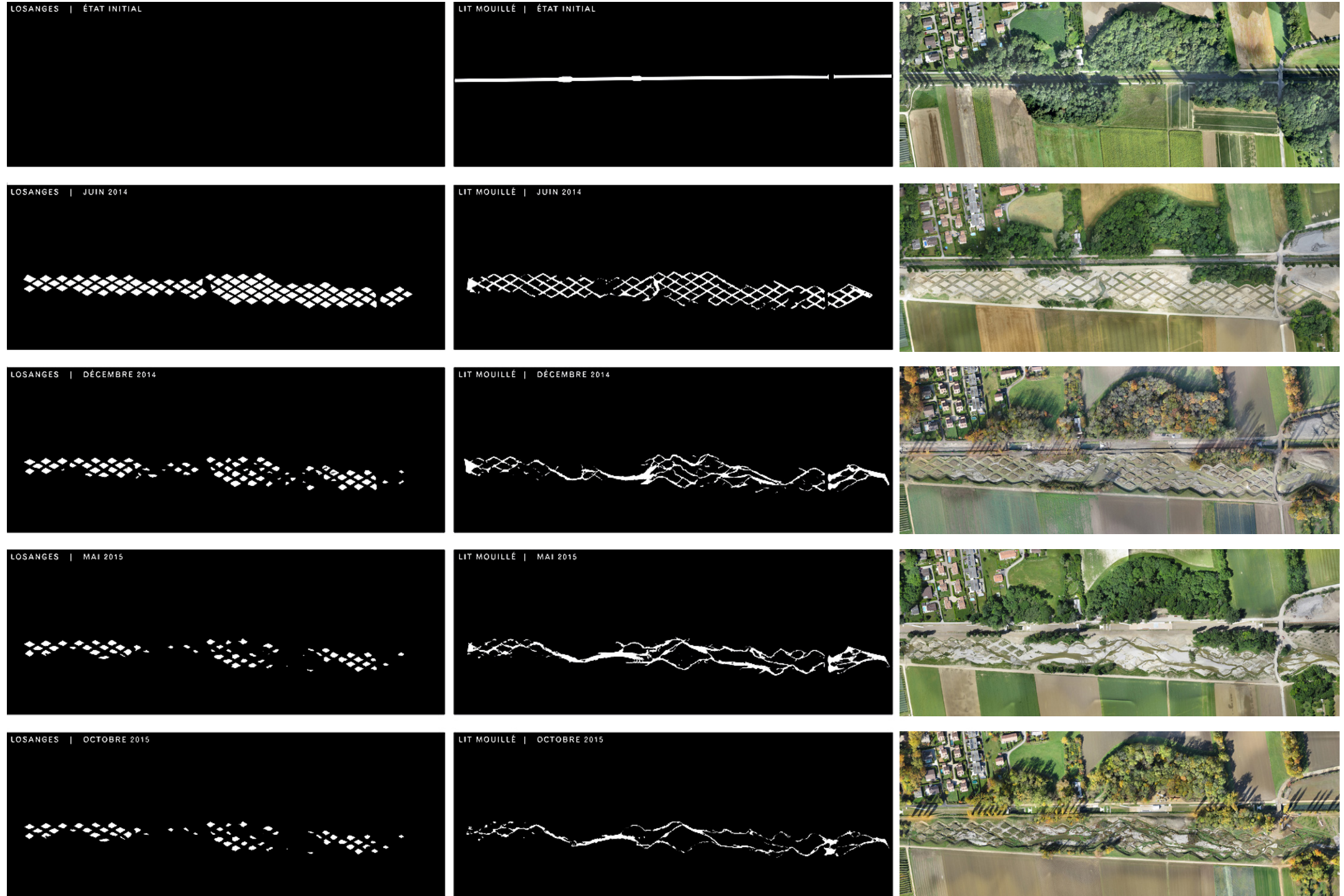




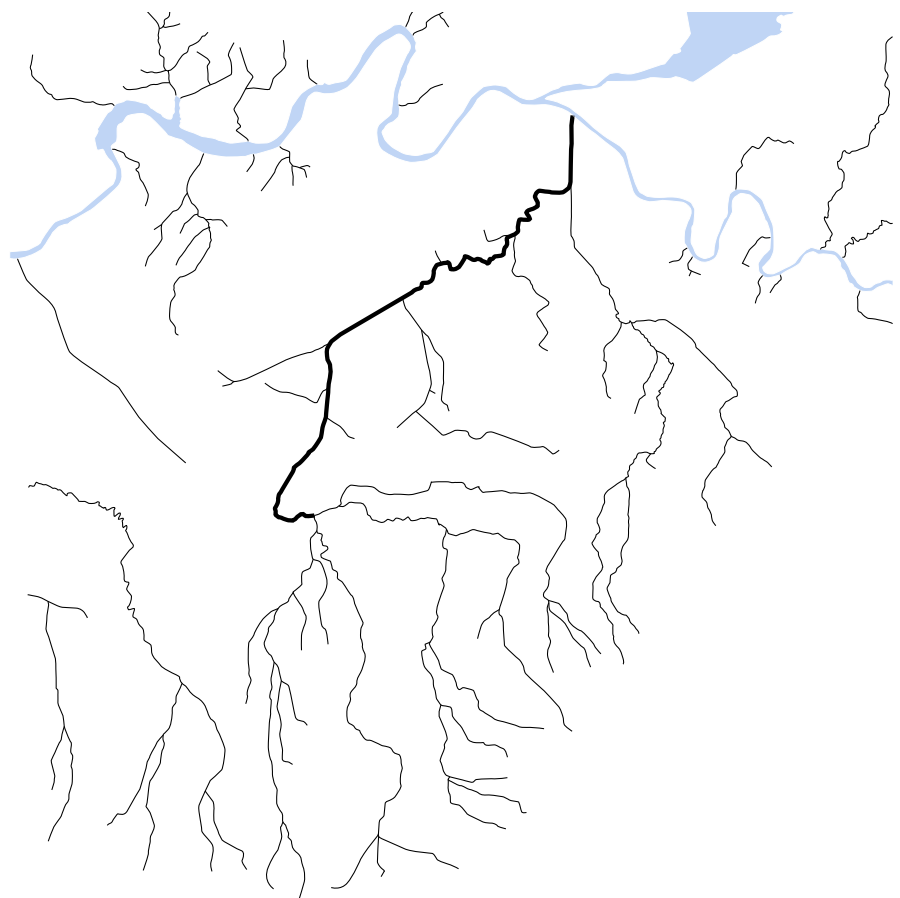
Construction plan



Construction of the river



Morphological evolution of the river



Watershed and affluent



Watershed



Dry period



Water floods



Social uses



Project informations

Location:	Plain of Aire Bernex, Confignon, Onex, Perly-Certoux Geneva Switzerland
Lat.Long:	46°10'02.1N/ 6°05'01.4E
Altitude:	420msn
Client :	State of Geneva
Site area:	50 Ha
River lentgh :	5km
Competition:	2000-2001
Desing period:	2001-2016
Construction:	2001-2016 (in 3 phases)
Cost :	Euros 65'000'000
Photographers:	Jaques Berthet Fabio Chironi

Architects : Georges Descombes and Atelier Descombes & Rampini Rue du Beulet 4 CH 1203 GE courrier@adr-architectes.ch	Hydraulic engineering : B+C Ingénieurs SA Rue des Grand'Portes 2 CH 1213 Onex mail@bcng.ch
Applied biology: Biotec SA Rue du 24 Septembre 9 CH 2800 Delémont biotec@biotec.ch	Structure engineering: ZS Ingénieurs civils SA Rue des Grand'Portes 2 CH 1213 Onex info@zssa.ch



The restoration of River Aire, Geneva, Switzerland