

2021 Cat A - RESTORATION OF RHETOI-KOUMOUNDOUROU LAKE RE-ESTABLISHING INTERACTIONS: HISTORY, HABITATS, COMMUNITIES

Rheitoi-Koumoundourou Lake, Persephone's Lake in classical antiquity, stands next to the sea, between Athens and Elefsis, along the Sacred Way (Iera Odos), the route taken by the procession celebrating the Elefsinian Mysteries. Persephone's and Demetra's Lakes, also called Rheitoi, were sacred, their waters were thought to be chthonic and accessible only by priests.

Only traces of the area's history and mythology remain. Demetra's Lake has been replaced by refineries that have aggressively spread to the nearby towns of Aspropyrgos and Elefsis. The adjacent military base and highway have spatially and environmentally isolated the lake. Heavy industry has claimed the area with heavy implications in social and urban cohesion, environmental degradation and landscape fragmentation.

Landscape is being examined on 3 axes: as perceptual space, natural habitat and vessel of history and mythology. Using multiple restoration techniques, strategic planning and innovative architectural gestures, Rheitoi-Koumoundourou Lake is reinstated as an important historical site, major wetland and inclusive social space. The design opens the area to the public, restores the connection between the lake, the sea and mountain ecosystems, attracts fauna and flora by providing new habitats and conditions and conceptually recreates the ancient Sacred Way and the missing Demetra's Lake.

Phyto- and bioremediation, shoreline stabilisation and floating wetland systems are introduced in an effort to remedy the decade-long oil pollution and bank erosion. Two areas/routes act as an open-air museum, archaeological site, theme park and bird-watching spot. Observatories, floating platforms, view-framing spots, spaces that conceptually recreate history and Persephone's myth: the new spaces form a network of new uses, while providing connection with Poikilo Mt and its trails.