ARCHITECTURE OF
TERRITORY
European Countryside

ARCADIA
ARCADIA

A Journey into the Pastoral
European Countryside

ACKADIA

During the Spring semester 2016, Arcadia, one of the most enduring pastoral utopias and ancient territories of Europe, was the departure point for the project on European Countryside, initiated by the ETH Zurich Architecture of Territory. The Arcadia semester was carried out with students from the architectural schools of ETH Zurich, NTUA Athens and University of Patras, along with collaborators, experts and guests.

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Book Colophon

Four different works on Arcadia were prepared by the students and the Architecture of Territory and are brought together in this book.

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European territory has become completely urbanised. The countrysides in the traditional sense have disappeared; the distinctions between the town and the country have been blurred. In contrast to the unambiguous urban transformations of cities, the processes of urban change in the countryside are massive, yet often unnoticed. Away from the public eye and professional scrutiny, these processes have created new urban identities and configurations in the formerly rural realm of Europe. The studio series European Countryside explores the terra incognita of the countryside, and its radical mutations. The project aims to reinvent contemporary countrysides, both as an urban territory and as a legitimate and critical subject of architecture profession. Initiated in Spring 2016 in Arcadia, the project selects several countryside case-studies from the European typological panorama of countrysides. Through these cases, a definition of countryside is being rewritten, and its contemporary potentials discussed and represented. These insights form the basis for projects on the countryside.
Arcadia Studio
Concept and Method

Arcadia is an archetype of European countryside, both pastoral ideal and territory in radical transformation. The research method comprises of a section through the territory.

1 Arcadian Villages
Mountainous Countryside

Countryside as territory of shrinkage: A reflection on the future of the villages of Arcadia, characterized by the loss of population and their partial reappropriation through tourism.

2 Olive Valley
Slow Agriculture

Countryside as territory of ecological agriculture: A vision for non-industrialized olive orchards of Arcadia and Ili, based on cooperatives and family-producers.

3 Olympia
Heritage as an Urban Project

Countryside as a landscape of heritage: A proposal for ‘un-freezing’ Olympia, a landscape overdetermined by heritage regulations and tourist monocultures.

4 Ili’s Local Coast
Seaside Countryside

Coastal landscape as countryside: A conceptual sketch for Ili’s quiet coastline, a unique situation on the increasingly noisy Meditteranean.
Arcadia is one of the most enduring utopias of the western mind. As an imaginary locus and a pictorial style, Arcadia originated in the pastoral scenery of Roman poets Ovid and Virgil, spreading throughout western painting and literature. The imaginary realm of Arcadia, where human beings, animals, and plants harmoniously coexist, remains one of the most powerful constructions of the idyllic countryside. The actual region of Arcadia is located on the mountainous core of Peloponnese, the largest peninsula in Greece. This is one of the oldest inhabited territories in Europe and one of the first sources of European culture: classical ruins, such as Epidaurus and ancient Olympia, still punctuate the landscape, with stone villages being scattered on the mountain tops. Peloponnese is a quiet territory, seemingly unaffected by the metropolitan growth of Athens and the gradual proliferation of new infrastructures and industries in the formerly rural landscape. The region’s low population density, remoteness, and low accessibility are unexpected, and could be seen as a potential in the European context: Arcadia and Peloponnese resist urbanisation, remaining an important interruption in the urban fabric of the continent. In reality, this countryside is very different than its pastoral ideal. Sites of cultural heritage, agriculture, ‘energy landscapes’ and tourism are radically transforming this territory, formulating new ways of living and producing. Our investigation focused on the character and potentials of the Arcadian countryside, positioning it as an important and typical case in the framework we defined as European Countryside.
The project is organized as an east-west section through the territory of Peloponnese, running from coast to coast, from Epidaurus to Olympia, through the mountains of Arcadia. Learning from the myths and the direct experience of the landscape, the studio explored four main themes.

1. Arcadian Villages. Mountainous Countryside examined the urban transformation of the remote villages of Arcadia, characterized by population shrinkage and their partial revival through tourism.

2. Olive Valley: Slow Agriculture looked into the production backstage of the olive oil, a Greek ‘national product.’ This viewpoint revealed its non-commercial character, with new forms of labour defined by migrant workers, and community and family-based production.

3. Olympia. Heritage as an Urban Project studied the ‘frozen landscape’ of Olympia—a UNESCO site exposed to urban transformation through high-frequency tourism.

4. Ili’s Local Coast. Seaside Countryside mapped a semi-rural, ‘quiet coastline’ of Arcadia defined by patterns of local seasonal living and agriculture, which constitutes an alternative to the international tourism.
The village of Arcadia punctuates the slopes of Maniakos, Parnonas and Lykeion Dey mountains. With their compact built structure and defined limits, each village constitutes an identifiable entity in the Arcadian landscape. Located at high altitudes, between 600 and 1200 meters, and surrounded by wilderness, these villages have acquired a special place in Greek political history. During the antiquity, the inaccessible heights of Arcadia triggered imagination and various mythic associations developed around it. Arcadia is the battlefield of Gargantua, the birthplace of Zeus, and the homeland of Pan and the Nymphs. Up to the modern era, the region has never been a united political entity, but was rather marked by the coexistence of independent city-states. After the fall of the Roman Empire, Arcadia became part of the Greek-speaking Byzantine Empire (Despotate of Iberia), still perceived as an intact and secluded region. Its inhabitants became proverbial hardmen symbolizing both pastoral lack of sophistication, and the gift of simplicity and lying in bliss. The imaginary of stilted paradise traveled to the west through the works of literature, most notably in the visions of a pastoral idyll of Virgil’s Eclogues (42 BC) and later in Jacob Samanazan’s Arcadia (1504). During the four hundred years under Ottoman Empire, the remote Arcadian mountains served as haven against Ottoman rule, where some measure of Greek self-government was preserved, eventually producing the revolutionary generation that won the Greek national independence in 1821. Since the 1950s, Arcadian villages experienced extreme depopulation as a result of intense urban-rural migration in the postwar Greece. Today, Arcadian villages compose a heterogeneous constellation. One finds touristic villages such as the Mainalon ski resort, with luxurious pensions in renovated stone houses; abandoned villages that exist only as transit points on hiking paths (Arkoudaremna, 0 km, and Limpovos, 0 km), and seasonal villages active only a few days each month, when they host weekend visitors or holiday guests (examples are Stemnitsa, which went to 191 inh. in 2001 from 411 inh. in 2001, and Dimitsana with 342 inh. in 2011, shrinking from 611 inh. in 2001—the figure equal the half of its population before the WWI). At mid-heights below 600 meters, agricultural hamlets looking views and other natural attractions of the peaks have also shrunk (examples are Kapelina with 50 inh., and Dalkos with 15 inh.). In the lower heights, wealthy agricultural villages are still growing (Triopos counted 506 inh. in 2011 compared to 651 inh. in 2001). With their history of remoteness and utopian imaginaries, the Arcadian villages today face several challenges radically altering their character. Still considered a remote part of Greece, Arcadia remains an unfortunate object of persisting stilted mythologies, often misinterpreted as area of intact nature and source of all Greek traditions. This understanding contributes to the further decline of the villages. The project on Arcadian villages focused on the Arcadian municipality of Gortynia, in which the various transformations have been traced and observed: the challenges of depopulation and the declining village economies; the reinvention of villages as touristic destinations; the lack of infrastructures, and the need for future plans. The project demystifies the stereotype of Arcadia as pastoral idyll and tries to reconstitute a contemporary map of Arcadia under urban transformation. These insights have formed the basis for a territorial strategy for the Arcadian countryside.
Olive Valley
Slow Agriculture

Despite great variety of agriculture in Peloponese, two types of fruit cultivation dominate the landscape: oranges in Argos and Lakonia, and olives in Laconia and Messenia. Tied to altitude and soil quality, the areas of specific cultivation (olive, orange, wine, etc.) are clearly delineated in the landscape.

The word agriculture shares root with Greek “agron” meaning “field.” A degree of untimeliness is still part of agricultural production in Greece and in Peloponese, due to small field sizes and small-scale individual producers, who often operate without formal land title. Compared to elsewhere in Europe the size of agricultural properties in Greece is exceedingly small: 4.4 hectares in average, being even smaller in Peloponese. By comparison, in Switzerland, despite the mountainous terrain and the small land subdivision, the average land property is 17.4 hectares.

EU policies and subsidies have decisive impact in regulating agricultural production in Greece; however, despite the fact that the EU allocates 2.5 billion euros in annual subsidies for production in the so-called “less favored areas” such as the small-scale production in Peloponese, due to the poor state of local politics and administration, much investment is wasted. The Almocia River valley and the surrounding hilly slopes covered with olive trees have served as the frame in this project to examine the transformation of olive landscapes in Peloponese. Due to its hilly topography, the area is designated as “less favored” for cultivation and receives EU subsidies.

Olives and olive oil are the most significant agricultural products in Greece, tightly connected to Greek cultural traditions, shaping both the Greek landscape and regional identities. The importance of olive farming is illustrated by the fact that municipal workers typically get time off every year for the olive harvest. Familes in Greece, regardless whether “rural” or “urban,” continue to produce olive oil for themselves. Artisanship surrounding the olive industry stands now in sharp contrast to the industrialization of agriculture in many parts of Europe. The traditional olive farming ecosystems have high levels of biodiversity due to the still-limited use of pesticides. On the other hand, it appears that for small-scale olive producers in is becoming increasingly difficult to adequately promote traditional farming methods and benefit from them. Complementing the family labor, in Greece and Peloponese the small-scale producers in agriculture have developed economic relationships with migrant workers. In remaining abandoned fields and century-old farms, migrant farmers, often from Albania, now help revire Greek countryside. Despite foreign work migration, a new type of urban-to-rural migration has emerged: more and more young professional abandon large cities to move to the countryside, in response to increasing urban unemployment and the financial crisis. In addition, the potential of agro-tourism hasn’t yet been fully explored. Traditionally, agriculture in Greece has been an autonomous field of labor and production, its new association with leisure and tourism may still appear incompatible with the popular understanding of the countryside. Climate, topography, and other natural conditions and hazards, property rights, traditions, national and international economic policies and migrations, are all powerful forces shaping the olive production landscape in Greece. In Peloponese, the predominance of family farms and cooperative organization structures for olive oil processing and trade, emphasize the highly local character of olive agriculture.

The project aimed to describe transformation processes shaping the countryside of olive cultivation. Interested in the potentials of the small-scale, family-based production for the future of European countryside, the project envisioned a new kind of “slow territory,” with new ways of liking and working in the olive groves.
The idea of the countryside as heritage landscape can be easily understood in Peloponnese: remains of antiquity scattered in myriad remote or peripheral locations, outside of cities. The sanctuary of Olympia, placed in a quiet and relatively secluded spot at the confluence of Alfeios and Rádós Rivers, is typical of this phenomenon.

The sacred site attracted visitors for centuries, even before the first Olympics, which took place in 776 BC. To provide security for athletes and spectators gathering from all over the Greek World, Olympic Truce was announced before and during the games. The architecture of the site developed in several stages over time, resulting in a heterogeneous structure. During the so-called golden age of Olympia, in 580 BC the extraordinary Olympic Stadium was embedded in the terrain, followed by the Temple of Zeus, with the gigantic statue of Olympian Zeus by Pheidias in 496 BC. Further buildings for Guthries were built, including the Palaestra and the baths.

In the 3rd century earthquakes and invading tribes damaged the site. The Olympic games continued to be held until 393 AD when Christian emperor Theodosius prohibited the worship of Greek gods. Repeated floods destroyed the settlement again in the early 7th century.

Though the site was rediscovered in the 18th century, the first excavations in Olympia took place in 1829, carried out by the French Expedition Scientifique de Mées. Subsequently, the excavations and the preservation of the Ancient Olympia have been the responsibility of the German Archaeological Institute in Athens, who received exclusive access. The first major excavation began in 1875, funded by the German government. In 1936, the year of the Olympic games in Berlin, a new systematic excavation was initiated by the Nazi Party and the ritual of bringing the Olympic flame to the venue of the games had been started. Lennart Molander commemorated the new ritual in the documentary film "Olympia", purportedly aiming to revive the ideals of the Olympics in the modern, western world.

Today, the Olympia heritage site lies under the jurisdiction of the Greek Ministry of Culture, which supervises the area for any acts of illegal excavations, and intervenes in case any new finds are revealed. The financial resources for the site are provided by the Greek state and the EU funds. The contemporary village of Olympia sprouts as a parasite adjoining the archaeological area soon after the ruins were discovered. To this day, the village life is based on seasonal tourist visits, mainly during the summer. The village main road is lined with restaurants, tourist agencies, hotels, two museums and a municipal building—not surprisingly, nearly all public buildings in Olympia now of high architectural value. The municipal building, the formerly Xanadu Motel, is designed by Aris Konstandinidis, one of Greece’s leading modern architects.

The wider municipal territory of Olympia today counts around 13,400 inhabitants, the village itself around 1000. In 1988, the ancient site was awarded the UNESCO World Heritage status. The need to protect the remains from possible floods led to the construction of extensive flood barriers along Alpheios. After forest fires nearly reached Olympia in 2007, fire protection infrastructures received major overhaul. The nearby Port Veletan serves several cruise lines in the Mediterranean and functions as jumping off point for cruise day trips to Olympia. In 2003 for example, nearly 950,000 passengers disembarked at the port, and were shuttled to Olympia and back, during their six-hour stop.

As a consequence of UNESCO regulations, many urban interventions have taken place within and around the site. The implemented buffer zone and other protection arrangements applying to built structure and traffic on the area, prevent any conflicts from the expansion of the sanctuary, but they also appear to hamper its development. The project analyzed and proposed new institutional strategies articulating new relationships between heritage and tourism in Olympia. Olympia was always a destination attracting visitors from afar, in the past athletes and spectators; today hundreds of thousands of tourists. The project focused on understanding the character of tourism in Olympia today and proposed ideas for Olympia’s future territorial development.
"Seaside Countryside" is a distinctive typology of coastal development of Peloponnese. Since antiquity, the coast of Peloponnese has been an area of commercial activity, but was also perceived as dangerous and unfit for habitation due to piracy, conflict and swampy land. Most historical cities had been located inland, at a distance from the coast.

In the mid 20th century, Peloponnese had still resisted beach tourism: the growing urban middle class in Greece still preferred to escape the city to the mountains for vacation and leisure. Only in the 1980s and 90s, coastal tourism began to flourish, mainly through public incentives, such as Xomia project, in form of large-scale tourist facilities designed and built at various locations throughout the country.

The coast of Ilia is part of low-lying plains on the west of Peloponnese, forming a frontland to the north-south mountain ranges. Pyrgos, Ilia's largest city, is located about four kilometers inland. The coastal topography was transformed profoundly over time, in antiquity the coastline had approximately eight kilometres further inland. The present-day coast formed through the build-up of alluvial soil, made cultivable in the second half of the 20th century through extended irrigation infrastructures.

Sited on a rocky cape, Katakolin is a unique point on the coast and has been a port settlement for centuries. From the end of the 19th to the mid 20th century, it functioned as the gate for export of Ilia's agricultural products, especially raisins, to Europe. In recent years, the Port Katakolin has experienced major makeover through cruise tourism-an ongoing development with uncertain consequences. The port now receives around 300 cruise boats annually, serving as the gateway to the archaeological area of Olympia, located twenty kilometers inland.

Urbanization of Ilia's coastline is heterogeneous and largely spontaneous. Illegal beach settlements, campsites, summer houses with olive orchards, and new seaside resorts catering to international tourists are lined up side-by-side. The extended coastal zone between the cities (Pyrgos, Amaliada) and the sea functions as a peri-urban landscape, filled by vegetable fields and farmhouses, water reservoirs and irrigation channels, and scattered leisure sites such as motorbikes trails and hiking paths.

Ilia's coast appears to develop without strategic land-use plans. The planning and building regulation in Greece generally focuses on the construction aspect of development, but not how to resist and the minimum plot size are widespread regulatory instruments. By contrast, zoning plans cover less than 3 percent of the Greek countryside territory, an important exception compared to most European countries, contributing to unauthorized construction. The proportion of unauthorized construction in Greece increased 45 percent between 1990 and 1995. Initially, the mechanism of self-built housing served as a response to the pressing housing shortage, but since the 1970s the practice spread beyond housing to include holiday houses and other tourist establishments.

The laissez-faire attitude and the policy of non-demolition since the 1950s can be interpreted as powerful elements of local and national politics and electoral games in Greece, which radically altered the urban landscape of the country. In contrast to congested touristic coast of the northern Mediterranean, the coast of Ilia is an interesting exception. Not a purely touristic destination, rather, it is appropriated by the locals. The seaside is here still an area of agriculture and second residence connected to nearby inland cities. On the other hand, various pressures including transport infrastructures and increasing tourist arrivals are threatening the local character of the coast and the preserved ecosystems.

Through maps, drawings and text, the project describes the specific local character of Ilia's coast, seen as an attractive mixture of local agricultural living, agriculture and protected nature areas. The "seaside countryside" is offered as a concept and potential for the future of the area-a proposed environmental program to envision an alternative territorial hierarchy, reestablishing the wholesale submission to international tourism, and strengthening the features of the local urban landscape.
ARCADIAN VILLAGES
MOUNTAINOUS COUNTRYSIDE
Arcadian Villages
Mountinous Countryside

Arcadia is not only one of the most ancient notions of paradise in the western culture, but it also refers to an actual geographic location—it lies in the central region of Peloponnese, the southern peninsula of Greek mainland, situated among the mountain ranges of the Menaion massif. Subject to myths and charged with imaginaries and concepts of identity, the region has a rich and idealised past. It is one of the oldest inhabited areas in Greece. The Arcadian villages, scattered in extreme topographies, are located at the altitudes between 700 and 1200m altitude. Playing an important role in Greek history, they were well known already during the ancient times. The archetypal Arcadian dweller is a poetic figure of ‘great independence and strength’, a skilled warrior and a tough herdsman. Arcadia today is facing complex challenges of urbanisation. Like other mountainous countrysides of Europe, it suffers from an extreme depopulation and demographic shrinkage. Migration, mainly to Athens, which had accelerated since the end of World War II, led to emptying out of rural territory into abandoned fields and pastures. It is no longer a productive region and no longer economically significant as before. Soon, the region will be entirely devoid of a permanent habitation. At the same time, in the city, Greek urban dwellers are particularly nostalgic about these villages. Arcadia has become the point of return, a retreat. Many Greeks still own their families’ old countryside houses and use them as weekend or holiday destinations, creating new patterns of inhabitation that are now shaping this countryside.
p.54
Arcadian Identities
Mythological stories of Arcadia and its actual history comprise a set of images, varying from an idealised past to the landscape as a symbol of the Greek contemporary national identity.

p.62
Anatomy of Shrinkage
Gortynia is the mountainous municipality of Arcadia. Once an advantage, its topographical setting now represents an obstacle in the development of the region.

p.82
New Patterns of Living
The countryside is losing population. Permanence is being replaced by mobility, changing the relationship between the inhabitants and the land.

p.104
Three Regions of Arcadia
Three distinct regions with different levels of urbanisation can be defined in the area.
Arcadian Identities Images and History

As a utopian space, Arcadia is one of the most powerful western constructions of the idyllic countryside. It evokes images of rural simplicity, a civility of contentment and peace, as described by the Roman poets Ovid and Vergil. But, aside from being an idealized mythological space, Arcadia is also an actual locus. However, its boundaries are not uniform. For example, there is a region described as an area where the Arcadian dialect is still spoken; there are old maps of explorers that depict the boundaries of the ancient district of Arcadia in the heart of the peninsula’s mountains; and there is even a contemporary administrative prefecture of Peloponnese that bears the name Arcadia, stretching from the central mountains to the east coasts of Peloponnese. Still, Arcadia has often been described in the common imaginary as an isolated space, an island-like condition within the mountains.

Leaving aside the preconceptions we bring as European tourists, and looking into Arcadia from the perspective of the recent history of the contemporary Greece, a different perception quickly emerges. During the Ottoman occupation, and again, during the civil-war a century later, the mountainous countryside served as a battleground. The mountaineous hideouts in the crevices and the foggy backdrop had more of a strategic value than a pure romantic connotation. This was the place where Greek independence was both fought for and disputed. Is this why this landscape is powered with symbolism for the Greeks: it played an important role in the formation of their contemporary national identity.

Mythical Nature

As late as the Hellenic era, the remote Arcadia symbolised a locus of pure, rural, idyllic living, far from the cities, located at low altitudes and near the coast.

The mythic sense of the region lingered in later ages, eliciting various myths and beliefs about nature and Gods living hidden there. According to the Greek mythology, Arcadia of Peloponnese was a version of paradise, the domain of Pan, God of Forest. The half-bird and half-horse creature, he lived in the virgin wilderness with his court of dryads, nymphs and other spirits of nature. Another myth narrates that Arcadia owes its name to the hero Actaeon, who was the son of Cadmus and Zeus, and who, himself, was born there on the banks of Lucius River. These stories change the landscape with pictures of freedom and originality, later inspiring the European Renaissance, the artistic production of Arcadia as an intact bucolic Utopia.

Resisting the Ottoman Empire

The neoclassical Pelopon- nese revolved the Ottoman Empire for a long period of time. Acting like a fortress, with fortresses and garrisons placed in strategic locations, Arcadia became the heart- land of the revolt and the place where the Greek War of Independence was de- clared on the 9th March 1821. Greek troops managed to defend the Ottoman forces, with the assistance of the by the Russian Empire, Great Britain and the Kingdom of France achieving independ- ence in 1822.

Landscape of National Identity

The sense of the Arcadia hardness, that of being a simple peasant-like, self-sufficient and -producing world, – was immobilised by the Greek Em- pire. The remoteness of the mountains was seen as free, wild and tough people, thanks to a semi-nomadic way of life. These people were regarded as genuine people the variously imagined Tumuli Villages

The shepherds originally built temporary huts during the winter months. These shelters started settling, building permanent houses and returning to the same place every year. This way, a relationship was established between some villages in the mountainous area of Greece and the coastal area of the island. These villages are visible in the past religious names of some villages. An exception is a mountainous village of Lada, which relates to the name of the coastal village Ladera.

Nomadic Pastoralism

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Extended Network of Craftsmen

Some of the extensively de- veloped from purely pastoral practice into a production. As a result, a network of production was formed, in which each village was specialized in a particular technique and a particular product. Vasilikos, which was developed by pine forests.

Trade Routes

As there are only few paths crossing the mountainous range of Peloponnese, these became strategic situations for trading. Merchants would pass directly through the village and buy products on the way, but also the craft- men of the mountainous villages after half a year of production to set their products in Athens or Istanbul.

Craftsmen and Traders

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A. jpg, Peloponnesus in Isolated 1984

Anatolia

Syria

Iraq

Lebanon

Assyria

from antiquity. 1966

Loropaining

Mountains

Cyclades

Aegina

Louros

Lefkada

Corfu

Levkas

Epiros

Volotina

Malaea
Arcadian Identities
Mythical Nature

In the translation of the phrase “In Arcadia, Ego” – “Even in Arcadia, there am I” – the usual interpretation of “ego” refers to death and “Arcadia” to the Afterlife. The epithet was meant to express an ironic contrast between the shadow of death and the usual idyllic rendering that the nymphs and satyrs of ancient Arcadia might be expected to have evoked.

Arcadia owes its name to the mythological hero Arcas, the son of Zeus and the nymph Callisto. After finding out that Callisto was pregnant, her stepbrother Zeus intercourse with her, turned her into a bear. Years later, during hunting, Arcas came upon a beast, pinning his arrow at it, ready to kill. Zeus, feeling sorry for the tragedy of the mother and son, placed Callisto in the heavens as the Ursa Minor constellation and Arcas as the Ursa Major constellation.
Arcadian identities
Craftsmen and Traders

Trade Routes to Athens and Istanbul

Craftsmen from the Arcadian villages would usually lead a life of production and trading, spending six months at home and six months on the markets of Athens and Istanbul. The intense trading movements of its inhabitants resulted in a good reputation of the region in the Greek and the Ottoman Empire. Their craft was demanded throughout the empire, particularly in Constantinople and the Patras, making their villages rich and influential.

In this map of the Ionian expedition of 1828, the craft villages Chelmos, Dianippos, Megaloura, Vlaherniko, and Langada appear as being a significant part of the commerce. These villages were rich and politically relevant, as they also played a central role in the national battle against the Ottomans and later in the war for independence, as they were a barrier against the British troops.
Anatomy of Shrinkage

Villages as Islands

In an extremely low overall density of less than 10 inhabitants per square kilometre, the Arcadian settlements appear as isolated dots scattered over the montaneous landscape. Due to the long distances between the villages, social relations with other settlements are often very limited, and for the most of the people, visible only in the festival season. People here usually celebrate by moving from one village to the next. Even today, after roads have already been paved, a sense of isolation prevails.

Excluded by the fast transportation network, Gortyna is located on a highly inaccessible mountain range that crosses the centre of Peloponnese. The urban fabric here extends mostly along the highways, of the coast that runs diagonally from Athens to Korinthos and down to Kalamata, passing from Tripoli. None of the existing roads are wide and straight enough to ensure a quick traffic flow.

An area as an administrative unit of Greece dates back to the Greek independence in 1830. The contemporary prefecture of Arcadia also includes a strip of land that extends down to the coast. Therefore, this montaneous region, which is commonly referred to as Arcadia, reflects today in the shape of the municipality of Gortyna. The municipality was established in 2011, formulated out of eight smaller municipalities during the administrative reforms of the Kallikreus programme.

Although often romanticised, the mountainous country today faces many challenges. Municipality of Gortyna, located in the heart of Arcadia, is radically shrinking and ageing. Composed of 135 very small and widely scattered settlements, ranging from two to over six hundred inhabitants, the overall population lessened for over half its size only in the last decade. Once seen as an advantage for trade and defence, the steep topography of the area has now become an obstacle for development. It makes Gortyna a peripheral region, shrinking not only in size, but also in its economical relevance.

Rough Topography

Steep topography is a regular feature in Gortyna. Its values and disadvantages create very distinct locations, forming characteristic morphologies and determining the economical success of the settlements.

Embracing the Land

Picturesque but restricting, the mountains could be described as closed territory with slow connections. Several visual connections between the villages are blocked by massive bodies of rock, whereas others are positioned as isolated enclaves.

Strategic Value of Topography

There are more and less favourable locations in the exploitation of landscape resources. Considering the few roads that were constructed, there are particular settlements located in proximity to the strategic area, protected from the vale network of roads. These villages strategic positions, weaker settlements with more than a thousand inhabitants.

Landscape setting

The type of vegetation is highly experienced on altitude. The forests are classified by their potential in land-use and production. Those in the lower regions are agricultural rainforests, isolated around halla-hills. At higher altitudes, the crops are shifted towards mountainous terraces of continuous and forest land. Livestock farming, and in the higher altitudes also lumbering, became the main source of income for the villagers.

Drainage of Population

Given Gortyna’s remote location and restrictive topography, the settlements in the mountains are suffering from a severe depopulation. Around 1900, the population of these montaneous villages was at its peak, measuring several thousands inhabitants, with villagers having an important economic and political role at the time. During and after the two world wars, the population gradually started moving to the big cities, such as Athens. The first waves of emigration to E.U. and Australia followed soon after. After the Civil War, the population shrinkage accelerated, finally reaching to realistic current statistic – a drainage of over half of the inhabitants only in the last decades.
Inaccessible Peaks

In Gorizia, settlements are dominated by their topographic setting. While eye of
an owl stares out from on the roads and settlements, forming a
universe, acting as a back
stage.

Landscape Rooms

The topographical conditions create a strong feeling of enclosure and define specific
visual horizons. As a result, several topographical rooms emerge in the landscape, in which the view rela-
tions between the stages and the points of orientation are very precisely defined.
These rooms are connected only by the narrow corridors, seen as closed spatial units.
New Patterns of Living

Isolated for a long time, the Arcadian mountains are perceived as the leftovers from pastoral times. However, looking at them more closely reveals that life in Gortynia is changing. As the rural population has been moving away, shrinkage has divided effects on the built environment and the land itself. At the same time, the area has been rediscovered by the urban dwellers, looking for the countryside lifestyle. Instead of permanent inhabitants, these shifts brought to the emergence of new patterns of living, marked by temporary residents. A fluctuating population moves between Athens or other hometowns and second homes on the Arcadian mountains, leading to an impression of a tidal, rhythmic population growth and shrinkage.

Scale of the Shrinkage

Gortynia has not only lost half of its population in the past decades, but also professionals like doctors, teachers and policemen. The shrinkage refers to people, public institutions, economical activities, knowledge and cultural heritage. It has complex effects, developing in a self-amplifying dynamic. The region becomes less and less self-sustainable, needing interventions from the outside to keep up its infrastructure. The rural way of life, connected with the close connection to the land, is disappearing.

Direct Structures

When departing countryside to move to the bigger urban centers, people take their properties with them. Most of the plots in this region are already low and are consistently dropping.

Abandonment of the Land

The migration of the rural population has a significant consequence on the landscapes. Formerly productive agricultural areas have changed into the image of deserted fields. Even small fields, turning into badly fenced lots. Old constructed stone terraces are crumbling, altering the colchico landscape view. There is a real state. With the abandonment from hand-ed arable economics, knowledge is lost and old culture of cultivation disappears, altering the value it might be in times of an increasing variety in seed production.

Tidal Inhabitants

There are several new types of social groups that are replacing the original inhabitants of this area. Only a few of them, like migrant workers or students from the Silvaneth School in Stamata, come here to look for work, while the rest mostly arrive purely for leisure. As a result, the Arcadian countryside increasingly acts as a garden; one finds the tourists, both Greek and foreign, attracted by the pastoral stereotype of the Arcadian nature; there are people who come here to spend their weekends, and pensioners who have a home here, in addition to their city residence. Apart from maintaining a connection with the places of origin, these second homes also function as an economic security: most of the Greeks decide to be homeowners instead of renters, especially in a time of financial unrest and crisis in the city.

Closing Institutions

Gortynia is strongly urbanized, making it even more difficult for the people to maintain the small nuclei that kept the settlements alive a few years ago: at a distance of about 100m, originating from the coastal village network. The wealthy past is reflected in the quality of stonework of its buildings – especially in the small towns, which are solidly made of large and carefully jointed stones. The old nucleus of Gortyn has been a focal point but has lost its role as the main center in the area.

System of Subsidies

In contrast to the escalating property prices in the Greek state, the EU has been willing to offer incentives to a region that is suffering from the maintenance of the rural regions of Europe. Apart from structural funding for sewage and road infrastructure, there are never program LEADER, or more recently ELSA, that focus on local renewable energy and infrastructure developments.

The New Cycles of Inhabitancy Generally Apply to All Settlements of Gortynia. There are no clear types of villages, as the transformation process from old to new still evolves. Nevertheless, different tendencies can be described when observing the different regions according to altitude and land use.

The Touristic Village

Easily accessible from the fast road infrastructure, the touristic villages are located at an altitude of approximately 100m, originating from the coastal village network. The wealthy past is reflected in the quality of stonework of its buildings – especially in the small towns, which are solidly made of large and carefully jointed stones. The old nucleus of Gortyn has been a focal point but has lost its role as the main center in the area.

The Pushing Village

The villages of the Allian Valley are a special case in Gortynia. Not really located on the mountainous territory, but below the altitude of 600m, their situation differs from the touristic and recent villages. These are located on productive ground and are still managed and inhabited by olive and other farmers.

The Pulling Village

Less favorable in terms of accessibility and usability per 600m and 100m altitudes, the villages in the process of losing its most common typology. The population of these villages is rapidly moving, being replaced by weekend The Productive Villages

The villages of the Allian Valley are a special case in Gortynia. Not really located on the mountainous territory, but below the altitude of 600m, their situation differs from the touristic and recent villages. These are located on productive ground and are still managed and inhabited by olive and other farmers.
New Patterns of Living
Tidal Inhabitation

The Locals

Few locals are left in the vili-
sages of Gortynia. Some still
work either as headstock
farmers, or in the fields, but
most of them rely on other
sources of income. Many
return to live in their
native places.

Many pensioners who grow
up in the countryside still
maintain a strong connection
to their place of birth. After
they retire, they seek the sim-
er life as self-sustaining
farmers. In winter, they
usually return to the villages,
and they might even do some
farm work.

The Pensioners

The Weekenders

Having a second home is not
only a privilege for the rich
but a rather common situa-
tion in Greece. Usually, it is
a family-owned inherited
farmhouse. Owning some land
and a house in the country-
side also gives Greeks fami-
lies a feeling of safety, as the
value is considered to be
stable in times of crisis. For
some people, in the case of
unemployment, it can also
serve as a temporary option
for self-sustenance.

The Tourists

Tourists are the group with
the shortest time spent in
habitation. Most of them
come as couples and only
spend one or two nights in a
village. In most of the cases,
they have no special connec-
tion to Arcadia and come
here for outdoor activities
like hiking, skiing, and visiting.
Greek townspeople prefer
the winter season for weekend trips, while for
foreigners usually prefer
summer.

The Migrant Workers

There are two types of migrant
workers, which are
common in Gortynia: the
harvest workers and the con-
duction workers. Most of
them come from Aitrame,
and in most of the cases, they only
come to work during the
harvesting season, returning
to their home country after
wards. Only a small number
of them bring their families
and stay in the villages. They
are generally not integrated
into the village society.

Since 1970, there is a school
of Silver Quill School in
Aitrame. The school is
working on rekindling the tra-
nitional village craft, teaching
students from all over
Greece. Usually, they stay
here for three years to obtain
degree, while some of the
students stay here for a year
or two longer. They form a
young and vital part of the
Aitrame community. During
holidays, most of
them return to Athens or
their hometowns.
Today, most of the inhabitants are looking for business opportunities in the tourist sector. It has many hotel beds as it has residents. Nevertheless, the population has decreased from 800 to 250 people in 50 years due to the decline of the agricultural economy and the growth of the tourist industry.
New Patterns of Living
The Pulastic Village

Markos
Being almost completely abandoned by the rural population, Markos village can be seen as a future model for most of the settlements in its setting. It has potential for tourism. Its agriculturallands are overgrowing, showing no signs of productive use. During weekdays, the village is nearly empty, while on weekends, the local farmers return, and the village comes back to the village.

Historical identity
Visitors from long-village

Accessibility
Road at the village

Landscape setting
Landscape before integration

Seasonal water flow

Classification
Weather pattern village

In months

Climatic data

Markos
New Patterns of Living: The Productive Village

Kapellas

Kapellas is located in the Axios Valley, and its agriculture productivity is higher than the surrounding areas. The village enjoys a warmer climate and has access to a variety of natural resources. Despite its small size, Kapellas has a rich agricultural heritage and a strong sense of community. The landscape is characterized by lush greenery, with fields and forests bordering the village.

During the harvest season, the village comes alive, with people working together to gather the crops. The process is slower than in the countryside, and the village maintains a close-knit community.

Local population:
- April: 50,000
- September: 60,000

Harvest season:
- April: 50,000
- September: 60,000

Landscape setting:
- Green fields with scattered trees
- Forests and meadows
- River and tributaries

Local industries:
- Agriculture
- Tourism

Additional features:
- Traditional houses
- Market days
- Village festivals
The new patterns and seasonal cycles of living formed by the new inhabitants are reflected in the infrastructure that serves the area. The extensive road lengths can be categorised by the different possible traffic speeds. Shorter time spans of inhabitation (like weekenders) are linked to faster and more intensively serviced networks, whereas the more traditional rural patterns of living are linked to slower networks. Additionally, the distribution of state services and local institutions reveal distinct patterns, leading to the conclusion that Gortyre is mainly composed of two different types of regions: one with high levels of tourist activity and high frequency and a more marginal region, characterised by a poor coverage of public and commercial services.

Since the population decline in this region is accelerating, more and more public institutions need state and EU funding to stay in service. Although a network of basic supply is maintained, the least populated region is considered to be a seasonally driven service area (20 km). Therefore, one can speak of several regions or internal worlds that are hardly interlinked with each other.

In Gortyre, there are no permanent or shopping centres, people have to go to either Inishowen or Tír Chona. There are fewer markets in some of the larger villages and a few smaller shops. Electricity is currently supplied by the local authority, while those with tourist-dependent work are supplied by travelling merchants, like the old times. Once or twice a week, a car passes with produce for daily need. However, many villagers also produce their own food. Turf and coal are also consumed in the larger villages. A number of young people, who work in the original rural society, don’t play such a central role.

Recently created by local volunteers, the Minnow Trail is a hiking path in eastern Gortyre that reveals old paths and walking routes dating back to the ancient Celts and Old Irish times. The Minnow Trail is a combination of cultural heritage, offering sustainable development in the growing tourist economy. Tourist traps focus on authentic settings, integrated to local environments, offering high-quality services for the tourist willing to pay more. Some also offer activities like traditional food or traditional cooking lessons.
Rewriting the Land

Arcadia’s rural past is clearly inscribed on the surface of the land – a constructed, pastoral landscape, shaped by its agricultural uses and structures. How, the traditional relations between the inhabitants of the villages and the land that surrounds them are breaking, as the new inhabitants approach the countryside with estrangement. The extensive abandonment of the land implies its low economical value. The perception of the territory turns from a rural one, with specific knowledge and clear concepts of usefulness and property, to the punctually highlighted wilderness of a luxury landscape, interrupted from time to time by seemingly deployed signs of urbanised development.

Overgrowing Plot Lines

Property had been defined mostly by landowners and was spatially significant as writing on walls of terraces. This informally was common for a long time, as local families already managed the fields and the village population had been stable. Today, there is an archaeological area, a fort which in combination with the overgrowing forest, creates the confusion over physical boundaries. This area is very little visited because most plots are covered by the forest. While the fields are abandoned and the stone terraces washed away, the former field structures become impossible to be seen. This area of the property is turning into a forest agave.

Burials and memorial structures

Changing Perceptions

Farmers use to have a mental map of water, terraces, and fields. During harvest, the corn would be carried up to the threshing circle, located on hillocks with the correct wind conditions. The shepherds on the other hand used to have the borders of property and village territory clearly inscribed in their minds. Today, with the borders, it could cause a conflict between the villagers. The map of the territory reveals other values: sites, points of natural beauty or invisible activities and how to get there.

Dropped Structures

Wind and solar power, telephones, and access to other contemporary developments in the landscape. From the viewpoint of the old farmers, mountains are an obstacle to be crossed, so that roads and optic fibres could be organised to make living according to the urban standards of the new inhabitants.
Three Regions of Arcadia

Considering the natural, infrastructural and social conditions presented, three main tendencies in the Municipality of Gortynia could be defined. These tendencies are spatially manifested in three distinct regions, offering different perspectives for development in the future. Roughly defined by the altitude ranges of 0–600m, 600–1000m and above 1000m, there is a productive agricultural region, a shrinking, pulsating in-between region and a region of touristic interest.

The first region is part of the olive groves of Alfeios: a dense pattern of small scale plots following the Alfeios River to Pigos. This region is productive but family-managed and not oriented towards exports. It has agricultural potential but is not yet completely industrialised. The settlements are medium-sized and rural, mostly without public services and commercial activities. The second, the ‘pulsating region’ is composed of smaller settlements. Due to the altitude, agricultural production is limited to nut trees and livestock farming. It is a zone of mismanagement and shrinking infrastructure with basically no services for locals, as weekend and holiday population becomes dominant.

The third, the ‘touristic region’ offers a diverse landscape with views, hiking trails and cultural heritage sites. Most of the larger settlements and services are located here, as a consequence of its wealthy and powerful past.
Arcadia: A Chance for the Commons?

The conditions of neglect and land abandonment, together with population drainage, should not be seen as irreversible, but rather as an opportunity for reinvention. As the old layers inscribed on the land are fading, field property lines are gradually disappearing and property issues are characterised by disinterest and confusion. This situation can be understood as a valuable opportunity for rethinking and renegotiating the territory. The land is freed from ownership fragmentation, providing the opportunity to open up the discussion for an overarching communal strategy to redefine land use and settlement organisation. This land should be seen not as an abandoned infertile territory but rather as a land reserve, which must be prepared for re-appropriation. Nevertheless, one has to accept the fact that the rural patterns of living are being replaced by new ones. Younger generations may not be interested in spending their life in one place. The management of the commons in this area, therefore, is a complex task that has to enable short time spans of inhabitation, like seasonal stays or interim years, as much as a long time commitment.

Defining an area in Gortynia as a case study, the proposal will rethink the status quo of land ownerships and put forward the idea of the commons as a potential for the area. The proposal addresses three parts: first, it examines the potential of the agricultural land, which is addressed through the ‘productive commons’; second, it reframes the role of the settlements as spaces of communal life and manufacturing; finally, it deals with the urbanised perception of the countryside as a landscape and place of idyllic freedom, initiating the idea of commons that is dedicated to leisure and retreat. As a reference to the successful countryside intervention, the Swiss village of Vrin will be discussed here.
Vils is a small community in the Swiss canton of Graubünden. In the 1960s, the village's mountainous and peripheral setting caused a gradual population shrinkage. A local project was launched in the 1960s, setting up the foundation of Pro Vils as a management institution. A broad land-use plan restructured the pastures and forests, improving their productivity.

Additionally, the architect Gian Casinella, who grew up in Vils, made a series of building interventions within the village. Processing mills and low-cost housing units were built to counteract the decline of the local population.
Arcades: A Chance for the Commons?

Elements of the Commons

The success of the tilo suggests a strategy that consists of two main elements: one being the radical restructuring of the agricultural landholding and the creation of productive commons, and the other including the implementation of productive units and renting spaces within the village belt. Additionally, with accepting the new patterns of living in the contemporary world, social justice and tenure should also be considered.
A radical land allocation turns the current fragmented plot structure into a common agricultural ground. This new agricultural territory is founded on a cooperative organisation, formed by the representatives of each village. Livestock farming is re-emphasised and working conditions opened for people living to spend time by the countryside.
The Village Belt

Processing units are introduced into the existing village network. Workshops for leather making and craft making, butcheries for the market, and opining mills create products of added value that can be sold in the area and receive a higher number of visitors. The income generated is distributed in the community and forms the basis of the economic self-sufficiency.
The Leisure Commons

The common ground should not only be a place of produc-
tion. Countryside could be also seen through the
phases of leisure, and this per-
ception is also in line with the
emerging patterns of living.

The desire for leisure, the
countryside is also seen
as a place of freedom,
undeveloped and sublime.

in the city.
Olive Valley
Slow Agriculture

The semester started with the question: What is ‘countryside’? We intuitively decided to define it as an environment with interwoven agriculture and production. We refused the idea of a bucolic idyll and started with understanding better the main characters which play a central role in its definition.

Our attention was focused on Alfeios Valley, a semi-mountainous area in western Peloponnese, between the Arcadian villages and Pyrgos’ seaside. The preconception that organized production could shape the identity of this countryside was constantly on our minds, but the fourteen-days-long field-trip showed a much more ambiguous reality, where informality and confusion characterised both the object and the method of study.

Alfeios Valley turned out to be exactly the opposite of a generic industrial agricultural landscape. As a matter of fact, our frame of study revealed a heterogeneous patchwork, in the words of Gilles Clement, a ‘third landscape’—the leftover space consisting of forests, bushes, abandoned paths and fields, mixed with the olive orchards.

Topography shapes the physical and the social elements of the territory. The physical elements such as the streets, the villages, the fields and the mills—in a word, the productive chain of agriculture—resist mechanization and stay slow. The social elements mainly refer to landowners—old, permanent population (agriculture workers, state employers and public facility workers) and seasonal ones (land owners and manual workers from the cities). Even if we say that a general decline in different production aspects took place from the 1960s onwards, this area still stays alive.

We learned that it is not possible to separate countryside from urbanity and vice versa. We experienced the striking beauty of living in a “non-comfortable” environment.
Slow Agriculture: Why so Slow?

Topography and household farming practices give rise to conditions far removed from the ones we are used to in the cities.

The Street: Off-Road(s)

The street network acts as a slow buffer rather than a fast connection.

The Village: A City Fallback

The villages appear virtually as islands in the landscape of the countryside. Villages are empty throughout the most of the year, except for summer and harvest months when people from cities come here for retreat.

The Field: A Diverse Ground for Production

Once vineyards and nowadays olive groves, scattered fields of the Alfeios Valley appear as 'rooms' in the landscape.

The Mill: A Public Facility

The mill exists independently from the village. During harvest months it becomes around-the-clock public space.

Slow Agriculture: The Elements of the Territory

Slow streets and shrinking villages, disconnected one from the other, scattered fields and the olive mill, acting as a public place among them, form peculiar conditions in the Alfeios Valley.

Eleopolis: Working & Living in the Olive Groves

In Eleopolis, we see slowness as a potential.
Alfeios Valley is a physical entity, but it is also a social frame whose economic basis completely relies on the agricultural sector. Vineyard once used to be the predominant cultivation type here, nowadays it is the olive groves. This area has been largely resistant to any form of mechanization due to its adverse topographical conditions and a general lack of entrepreneurship in agriculture. Internet connection was established in the area over ten years ago, but a majority of the local inhabitants from the area did not profit much from it. The labour is still mostly manual and the road infrastructure doesn’t allow for fast and efficient movement. The result is a series of elements that shape the territory in a very unconventional way, far removed from what people are used to in urban settings. Streets adapt to the topography and quietly sit on the ground. These villages have a very peculiar dimension which is very close to the size of an average field (<4 ha). The agriculture fields and the forests merge, producing a dense landscape, unreadable at first glance and asking to be slowly discovered over time. The olive mill as a community infrastructure historically evolved through the system of barter. On the one hand, all these territorial elements have limited further economic development of the region, while on the other hand, they promoted an incredible potential for resistance. This opens up capacities for a whole new discussion on the future of the region.

Topography as a Constraint for Agriculture...

Topography, together with soil quality and climate, is the major factor that influences the agricultural production. High altitude areas (above 600m) that are steep sloped (<15%) are usually considered less favourable for agriculture. These regions are highly resistant to mechanization and require rough and often complicated handwork. Because of this, EU provides additional subsidies to encourage farmers to keep working in these scarcely profitable, but still highly diverse and rich areas.

In the Region of Peloponnesus

A major north-south axis acts as a divider to the climatic and agro-ecological agents from the west to the east. Therefore, the so-called region of Peloponnesus, a high precipitation concentrated region, has been divided into three different zones based on the type of landscape: the western zone with conditionless or fruitful trees (e.g. Argos), the semi-mountainous area (e.g. Euboea), and the eastern valley (e.g. Alfeios Valley).

Alfeios Valley

The Alfeios Valley consists of all the aforementioned conditions in Peloponnesus. In Euboea, in addition to already existing semi-precipitation, a new kind of landscape has emerged. The river acts as an irreplaceable mirror between the north and south sides of the valley. In the northern parts of the valley, there are olive groves planted until about 600 meters of altitude. The case is different to the south, where the river’s landscape is more influential. In this area, the river’s slope matches perfectly with the olive cultivation. As a result, Alfeios Valley is the region with the highest olive production in Greece.

The agriculture sector, and in particular, the cultivation of olive groves, represents a major resource for the economy of Peloponnesus. In spite of its major share in olive production (39% of the national production), Peloponnesus doesn’t benefit completely from this potential. The scattered nature and small-size of the olive fields discourages any considerable investment in the development of infrastructure. Additionally, the idea of olive oil being a family business fails to inspire entrepreneurship.

International Competition

After Spain and Italy, Greece is the world’s third-largest producer of olive oil. In contrast to these two countries, it is very hard for Greece to produce high-quality oil. The traditional way of producing olive oil doesn’t allow for mechanization. The field sizes and patterns that one can find in Jordan or in Tunisia for industrial production could not be possible in Greece.

Labour Portrait

In the rest of Europe, Greece and Peloponnesus have registered a significant decline in the number of people working on rural areas. In the Rest of Europe, countries like Spain, Italy and France have registered a strong switch to mechanization, Peloponnesus still remains highly dependent on manual labour. This wouldn’t be a change. A vast majority of farmers are older than 55 and work in the fields by themselves or with their families. Since the 1970s, there is a trend of younger people moving from the countryside to earn extra money working in the agriculture sector. A major proportion of the labour force is composed of immigrants from Albania that are badly treated legally.
The Peloponnesian topography can be classified into three different categories, with dominant cultivation systems: fruit trees in the higher plateaus, like apples and walnuts; olive groves in the semi-mountainous areas; and berry trees, orange trees, and vegetables in the plains where most of the inland water is present.
In AlNis Valley, the olive groves represent the most common cultivation form. A series of olive cultivation types, such as pomegranate, corn, and walnut, are also close to the olive trees.
Athens Valley contains different biogeographical conditions and areas located above 500m that physically define various landscape zones. Some zones are flat meadows, while others are more forested or have a tundra-like appearance. The map illustrates the diverse topography and ecological zones within the valley, highlighting areas of interest for further study.
The Street: Off-Road(s)

The road network in Alfeios Valley operates as a network of slow connections, mainly used for movement between the villages and the agricultural fields. There are only two main roads providing a connection to the seaside and to the mountains.

**Highway**

110 km/h

There is only one existing highway in Peloponnese, the Monass motorway leading from Athens down to Kalavrita. It was opened in 2012. Another highway leading to Kalavrita from Athens through Patras is planned. These roads are in good conditions and are able to provide a secure and fast way of moving around.

**Main Road**

60 km/h

Two main roads connect the Alfeios Valley to the cities like Pyrgos and Tripoli. One in the north through Vassilaki, the other one in the south passing Kalavrita. These two roads are safe and well maintained.

**Secondary Road**

40 km/h

Mostly with a single lane, these roads lead from the two main roads towards the smaller villages in the valley. One has to always be aware of possible obstacles like livestock, stones or bushes on their way. In these hilly landscapes the roads can become very steep and curvy inhibiting fast driving.

**Tertiary Road**

20 km/h

Tertiary roads are not accessible by any type of vehicle. These are mostly dirt roads leading to the small farms and huts in the fields. Tertiary roads are still maintained in order to provide access for the farmers.

**Path**

5 km/h

Paths are unofficial connections between small fields, accessible only with a tractor. They usually mark the borders between two properties and provide connections with individual olive fields.
The street hierarchy defines different levels of accessibility, from the vehicles that can be easily accessed via the main street to that of the vehicles that can only be accessed only by foot or by tractor.
The Village: City’s Failback

The settlements in the Attica Region struggled for a long time with the problem of an incredible population shrinkage. From the 1940s onwards, the inhabitants started leaving their native villages in order to move to the big cities like Athens or Theosaloniki and even further afar. This process of migration continued until the 2008 financial crisis broke all the hopes of success in the larger cities of Greece. Some young people even returned after studies, hoping to build up their own business in the countryside. Mostly, it was the retired people who moved back to their home villages searching for a calm and decent lifestyle away from the bigger cities. Most of them own some olive fields from which they are able to earn a living. Although ready for retirement, these men continue to work in their fields with the help of their younger family members from the cities. This seasonal movement is an important factor in the villages, where, during the summer and harvest months, the population doubles and fills the entire village. On the other hand, these villages are half-empty during the off-season. The only place where you can find some public life at this time is the cafeteria. This is something you can find in nearly every village. It is where the old village folks come together to discuss over a cup of a good Greek coffee.

Dependency on the City

These settlements are still dependent on the nearby cities of Pyrgos and Zarkos. Hospitals, hotels, high schools and other cultural amenities like cinemas and concert halls are only accessible in a minimum one hour car drive to the closest town. Additionally, a lack of efficient public transport connections is apparent. This is the major reason why youngsters leave for the city. This strong orientation towards Pyrgos, doesn’t allow for more effective sharing between village clusters. Considered not attractive, the residents have always assumed that there is no reason to go to the other side of the valley. Could the model of the “Ring cluster” be applied to a larger scale in order to redefine the relations between the “Head village”?

In this case, would new public programs be necessary to make this form of organisation functional?

Two Cluster Typologies

These villages differ a lot in their infrastructure and number of inhabitants. Some of them are bigger, have more facilities and are better connected to the main roads. Others consist of only few houses, being completely dependent on the bigger villages.

Centralized Cluster: The Peeling Hamlet

A hamlet is a settlement that is unable to survive without a head village. The people from the hamlet are mostly farmers living close to their homes. In addition to their regular earnings, they receive subsidies from the European Union to maintain their farms. These settlements do not have public facilities like restaurants and markets. Food or medicine could be found only in the closest main village. The accessibility is usually very low and the road to the hamlet is usually steep and rough. In the meantime, it takes up to 35 minutes of driving to reach the nearest village.

Centralized Cluster: Resisting the Head Village

A head village is a settlement which can mostly survive by dependency. Major facilities like markets, restaurants, doctors and schools are provided here. Very rarely does the head village need the city. Even if most of the inhabitants are already retired, there are still young people who work and live in these villages. We meet people working in gentrification, crafts or even informatics, showing a wide diversity of occupations. Head villages are well connected by main roads, which allows them to maintain their houses. There are even buses that can take you to the city in less than one hour.
Mr. Nikolaos (77), Retired

What do you do for living?

Since I don’t earn much through the rent, I still work on my farm. I take care of the sheep, some cows and slave times. For me and my wife, this is a full-time job and quite tough for our age.

Do you receive any subsidies from the EU?

For my olive trees and the sheep, I receive about 6000 euros of subsidies per year from the European Union. Out of this amount, I have to directly pay 800 euros in form of taxes to the Greek government. Without these subsidies it would be difficult to survive here.
Mr. Konstantinos (55), Retired

What was your profession?

Until my retirement 20 years ago, I was working regularly in the olive fields. I was helping with the harvesting, cutting trees during the off-season and from time to time I worked at the olive mills. At this moment, I own about 100ha of olive fields. Every harvest, my family comes to help me as I am getting older and I require help for making one of the best oils in the region.

What is your favourite place here in Kalithea?

The taverns were just sitting in, for sure. This is where we all meet together and drink some nice Greek coffee.
Mr. Vassilis (55), Farmer

What is your profession?

Since many generations, my family is in the olive oil business. I have over 200 acres of fields which my employees cultivate for me. I support the oil directly by buying and refining.

Do you enjoy living here in Lidoros?

I have a nice house here in the forest where my whole family lives. The olive fields are in the area and I have some good old friends living just next door. Being here is just perfect for me.
The different characters of the villages in Aliakos Valley imply different relations they have among themselves and with the city. The most exposed locations are those beyond small urban centers like Pyrgos and Zacharo, while closer inspection reveals a movement from the periphery toward the city—villages like Kallirrhoë, Dassia, and Ippokali. The group of ui...
The Field: Irrational Landscape

The olive fields characterise the image of Alleios Valley. The cultivation in the area remained quite traditional throughout the years, without use of pesticides and following the cycles of soil regeneration. The incredible biodiversity of natural species remained with the image of a landscape "on movement", reminding of Gilles Clement's concept about gardens. Apart from the fire of 2007 that strongly changed the relation between forest and olives in favor of the latter, very slow and small changes can be observed over time: densification of olive plantations, refinement of field perimeters through small paths, and a general shift to organic agriculture.

Terracencas are the traces of a previous cultivation type that is not anymore visible nowadays: a vineyard. Even if they facilitate the movement through steep fields, they don't allow the water to flow away. Topography, of course, plays a central role in the distribution across fields and accessibility that is far from being comfortable. What appears from the outside as a unified pattern of cultivation, is actually highly fragmented through different areas defined by natural limits like cliffs, rivers, and forest. In addition to this, a chronic paralization, obtained due to dowries and heritage, makes field property very small and thus not so profitable. Nonetheless, the non-intensive agriculture approach makes the trees of the Koroneiki olive variety the best olive producers in the country.

Alfeios: Uneven Pattern

Comparison of the Alleios Valley with the famous olive fields in Kalamata, or even the huge olive production in Spain, points to the significant differences. In the valley, the fields are organized in a grid only divided with small access roads. In Kalamata, the pattern is also organised geometrically but the landscape contains other elements like forests or other forms of cultivation. In the Alleios Valley, fields appear in a random arrangement, they are not easily accessible and there are not so many forests.

Abandoned Huts

Alleios Valley once had a very different appearance than the one we associate with it nowadays. Vineyards were the main agricultural typology in the area, while small huts for the storage of agricultural tools and equipment dominated the landscape. Gradually, people started turning their fields into olive plantations, and the huts lost their utility mostly turning into ruin, and newly into wood storage spaces.

Formalizing Ownership

Greece does not have a very precise cadastral map. In order to receive subsidies from the European Union, they use something called the olive catalogue. In this catalogue every farmer marks their farm on a Google Earth basis. Through this, the government can ascertain the exact ownership of every farm and avoid farmers claiming a bigger share than they are actually entitled to.

Small & Scattered Land Property

The fields of cultivation in our area are especially small and scattered. It can happen that a farmer has more than ten different fields scattered in a wide area, with each not bigger than 1.5 ha. Some of these fields have only few trees and make harvesting and maintenance more complicated. Additionally, this dispersion discourages farmers from investing into technology, keeping the agriculture in this area on the level of traditional handbook.

Natural Barrier Group Olive Groves

The Alleios Valley has many smaller valleys that run parallel to it. The areas between these valleys are defined by groups of olive producers and are accessible through roads and paths. There is almost no physical connection between these groups due to the presence of trees and dense forests.

From Tuffla to Small Fields

After the fall of the feudal system introduced to the Ottoman Empire, the farmers claimed the land they were cultivating. Due to the growth of the olive trees, the plots are becoming smaller. The local government longed once to their ancestors, brings a certain level of nostalgia among the farmers. This nostalgia reflects farmers from exchanging or selling that fields in order to have more efficient cultivation.

From Vineyards to Olive Groves

Vineyards once represented the high agriculture type in the Alleios Valley. Since Greece entered the European Union, small vineyards and olive groves have diminished. Around 40 years ago, the decision of many farmers started, resulting in obsolete huts and the rise of the olive groves as a cultivation type.

Olive Catalogue

In 2009, the first internet connection was provided to the villages of the Alleios Valley, such as Malia. Among the many initiatives of the locals, the village of Tuffla started the Alleios Valley Olive Catalogue. The project aims to map all the olive varieties found in the valley, to better promote the local olive oil.

Barren Landscape

Throughout the summer of 2007, a series of fires broke out in several areas across Greece. The most destructive, which 50 years later is still a pain for the locals, started in the village of Tuffla and extended to the entire region of the valley and a large area in the forest. The fire's crown acted as a levelling force, destroying almost everything in its path.

Greek Independence from the Ottoman Empire 1821
Inclusion of Greece in the European Economic Community 1981
Internet Connection Reaches Alleios Valley 2003
Big Fire in Petroleum 2007

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The olive fields in Jaks are organized in a regular grid, spreading all over the plantation. In Kastoria, the grid is also present, but the site presents different conditions, and plantations can be seen as well. The olive patterns in the fields are quite different: the fields are randomly organized. There is no planed grid and there is a significant presence of the forest between the fields.

The forest has an important status in the Kastoria Valley. Dense lines with fields are appearing only in the form of the ‘rosette’ in the forest, especially on the northern side.
Abandoned Huts

A abandoned hut in the middle of the olive field.

Until the late 1960s olive yards were the main agricultural cultivation type in the area. In order to take care of the grapes, many storage units were built. Nowadays most of them are abandoned or occasionally used to store wood. These buildings represent the only built-up area in the fields and are accessible by carts.
Topography and street network shape and serve precise areas of the olive production.

There is a significant presence of steep, narrow flat fans from shear bands between the olive fields.

Natural Barrier Groups
Olive Groves
View from a hill overlooking the olive groves.

Steep valleys are forming clear borders between the olive fields.
The Mill: A Public Facility

From the informal ground of cultivation to a formal receptor, the cultivated olives are brought to the olive mills for processing. Here the olives are pressed, then the raw oil is separated from water and refined through a centrifugal process. The farmers bring their olives to the closest mill where they pay for the service through share (10-12%) of the produced oil, instead of paying in cash. The portion of oil that the farmer doesn’t need for himself, is sold to the mill usually at the rate of about 2-3 euro per litre.

A well-equipped mill then trades the oil and sells it across Europe. However, the most of the mills in Alfeios Valley, instead of selling bulk oil to Athens and Italy, making less profit in the process. The mills occupy the built environment as structures independent from the dynamics of the villages. Five out of eight mills in the Alfeios Valley area are located along the two main streets that cross parallel to the valley and connect the Arcadian mountains to the coast of Pyrgos. This is done in order to assure accessibility for the large number of people that visit the area during the harvest period.

In the past, the mills used to lie closer to the river to take advantage of the mechanical power from the water flow, but due to the frequent floods of the river, they are more often relocated higher up towards the villages.

Family-Business Mill

Most of the mills present in the Alfio Valley were founded in the 1970s. From then on, the successive generations took up the activity of their ancestors and implemented it with new machinery, provided through the EU subsidies. Subsidies would usually cover up to 50% of the total investment. Still, the owners needed a secondary off-season revenue stream. That is the reason why you can seldomly find mills with construction material storages, solar panels or gravel digging in this area. During harvest, these spaces of production transform into round-the-clock working spaces.

Bio Mill: a Model

In 2014, a new olive oil mill opened up in Kalamata, a bigger village close to the Alfio Valley. In addition to the conventional machines that mills normally own, it also has a machine used for extracting energy out of olive’s kernel, as well as a laboratory for bottle labelling. Meetings organised with farmers where knowledge about bio-cultivation is shared, represent important activity in the process of production. As a matter of fact, in order to compete abroad, these mills need quality certifications from the EU. Being able to export its own branded olive oil not only means that most of the profit stays local, but also that these companies compete on a market, different than the one where big industrial companies rely more on quantity rather than quality.
Mr. P. Papadopoulos (M&I), M&I owner

What is your profession?

I am the owner of an olive mill since 2007. The mill belonged to my father since 1972, and to this day I run a small business with solar energy. I built up solar panels in my garden, with the help of EU subsidies, and sell the electricity produced through the solar business to the island of Crete. It helps in earning some extra money during the off-season.

How much oil do you produce and who do you sell it to?

I press olive oil for about 1100 families in the area of Athos valley and they pay me with 10% of their monthly salary. I am a local farmer who lives in the mountains. Unfortunately, the meat and cheese we produce are not of the highest quality. Did you ever think about creating your own olive oil brand?

As you probably know, the investment for your own brand is really high. You need real machines, high quality and knowledge of the market, but above all, you need a level of energy. I prefer to keep my mill how it is for now and stay out of trouble.
Bio Mill, a Model

Mr. Papazangopoulos (35), Mill Owner

What is your profession?

After studying economics, I worked for a big olive oil company based outside of Athens. Some years back I decided to return back to my hometown Kalamata and open my own mill in 2013. Since then, this has been my full time job.

How much oil do you produce & who do you sell it to?

I press olive oil for about 600 barrels in Attica Valley, then at home organic farms and later good care of their plants. I brand this oil in my mill and sell it directly to Europe and America.
Slow Agriculture: Territorial Elements

The villages of Afalos Valley face an uncertain future. Hamlets are perishing and the main villages are still dependent on the major cities of Pyrgos and Zacharo. Even when the street network is in a slow but stable condition, there is no public transport which would encourage the exchange between the villages or provide a faster connection to the cities. The fields that are grouped around the access streets and shaped between the valleys do not benefit from cooperative thinking or common infrastructure. Every farmer takes care of their own field and their own machines, they only share the public access to streets. The olive mills, which are mostly well positioned near to the main roads, do not profit from their location. They are mostly enroled industrial buildings which do not reveal their function openly to the people passing by.
Having started with a series of problems concerning our study framework, we decided to keep using those problems as productive tools rather than questions to answer. We imagine the countryside as an environment where 'slow living' can both resist urbanisation and be fortified by fast digitalisation. In a time that allows us to be connected through the internet and quickly move from one place to another, a physical, static presence in the city is not needed anymore. Therefore, we think that the countryside can develop, not as an alternative but rather as a condition for itself, where living and working are no longer separated.

We tried to tackle this issue in our case-study with a strategy that can be roughly divided into three parts:
- Initiate a local structure independent from the city. In this constellation, head villages are emphasised and their role is enhanced through implemented public facilities
- Rethink connectivity so as to support a local network and connection to big cities
- A new modus for living and working: with a coexistence of agriculture activities with a new pattern of living.
Agronica aims to overcome the gap between the city and the countryside, allowing agri-
cultures and nature to exist side by side in an urban
context. By merging agricultural and urban
infrastructure into a system of architectural struc-
tures (pools, walls, platforms) working together as a
system. This way, a sense of unity between ur-
bane and agricultural territory is created, with
the system adapting and evolving as the condi-
tions change without creating permanent configura-
tions.
Head Village Stability: Public Infrastructure for Locals

The four main villages of Kalithies, Diseslaxi, Vasaliki and Xindoria do not have any shared infrastructure. Even if big squares like the one in Diseslaxi or terraces like in Kalithies do exist, most of the time they are not used and are lying empty. In order to strengthen the local connections of the place and make inhabitants less dependent on the city, we propose a cultural hub in each village using simple architectural elements like a public roof.

Public Programs for a Self-Sustained Urbanity

Based on the specificity in each of the villages, we would like to come up with a unique character for each of them. Kalithies, with its beautiful views, specialty restaurants and full-service market, is aimed at attracting people. Diseslaxi has a big public square of the center of the village on which we imagine a public roof to support the market. Vasaliki has a well positioned club next to the main street. Along with providing a place for cultural activities, this club could be more open to the public in order to attract clients and share knowledge with them. Xindoria is post-industrial, a moving district, an existing market and the presence of a river next to it, so it drives us towards in creating a village for leisure.

Fast

City Line Bus

To make the living in the fields possible, one needs a fast connection to the main cities of Pyrgos, Pottor or even Athens. We propose a first city-line bus which would make a stop from city to city. This bus would pass through Kalithies, Diseslaxi, Xindoria and back to Pyrgos. Through this connection, big institutions like hospitals and schools could be accessible to the people from remote region. It would be imaginable to live in the fields of Athens Valley while working in the city like Pyrgos or Zographou.

A Prototype for a New Way of Living

The house in the fields should not provide a luxuriant living. The size and form of these architectural hubs should be kept at a minimum to avoid the emergence of big infra. Through reconciling them to come-up only on sq.

Public Storage for Agricultural Equipment

To strengthen the local agriculture production, a public storage in form of shelters is proposed in these, one can find farming machines, tools, and water supply for the fields. This facility is not private but an open source and available to all the farmers. Next to the storage we propose a public square from which connects the local farmers to the new inhabitants. People could meet for a coffee or trade their farming products.

Working and Living in the Olive Groves

The dependency on a car to move around makes life difficult, especially for the younger people in the area. An efficient public transport system is a basis for strengthening the existence of Athens valley as an entity. Keeping pace with the friendliness towards the environment, we imagine these vehicles to run with electric motors and solar energy.

Not everyone wishes to live in big cities anymore. More and more people are looking for a calm and simple way of life like the one they can find in the countryside. A diverse set of professionals like information scientists, artists or even architects could potentially live in areas like this. Fast digital connections enable people to work in their gardens while the actual office is based for away.
Public Program for a Self-Sustained Urban Fabric

Public roof as a market on the main square of Oulades

Cultural patterns in front of urban stave rock

Winning and Living in the Field
Working and Living in the Olive Groves
Working and Living in the Olive Groves

New living and working in the olive groves

Agriculture

Olive cultivation

Cattle pastures

Map showing new developments in olive groves.
Afkios Hiking Map
OLYMPIA
HERITAGE AS AN URBAN PROJECT
Olympia is not one, but rather many places. It is a very peculiar configuration composed of a site with ruins, a modernist conference facility and a village based on grid-iron planning: an urban project. Over the course of time, Olympia has gone through many transformations. Travellers, their ideologies and their specific spatial configurations had an important role in shaping its landscape and fabric. With the change of the ‘Olympian traveller’, the Olympia as a place changed too. This peculiarity makes Olympia a very unique kind of a Greek heritage site.

During our research, we tried to unravel the different layers that compose its urban scheme. Following the routes of both the present-day and of the bygone travellers, we dug deep into the sandy ground of Olympian history. We went back to its mythological roots, its history as a sanctuary, and its eventual disappearance (possible tsunami). We followed the versatile campaigns of excavations, which had taken place in the age of European Imperialism and Neoclassicism. And then, we tracked its rise as a destination for mass tourism in the 1960s. What about the present-day travellers? Who are they? The cruise-ship tourists. One day, at ten o’clock in the morning, when the cruiser had dropped its anchor in the nearby port, they poured into the village, the souvenir shops, and the ruins. This arrival of tourists in massive numbers is what is currently strongly shaping the Olympian landscape: roads are enlarged, parking lots are constructed, the business of souvenir shops is flourishing. However, hotels stay empty, as do the museums. At a moment, we decided to leave the formal paths that the traveller networks had established. We decided to discover the hidden landscapes that unfold between the urban configurations: the wild riverbanks; flourishing grasslands; overgrown fields; abandoned tourist infrastructures; and strange artefacts like fire-protection towers, dams, and archaeological storage places. Since the World Heritage status was bestowed upon the ancient site of Olympia in 1989, there has been an existence of a buffer zone around the ruins. This had frozen this landscape over the years and turned it into a remote and silent area with very peculiar qualities.

What if these fragments of landscape were to become the new protagonists of a network of destinations that went beyond the fast-track mass tourism that exists today? What if a path were to lead across the Alfeios River, through the pine groves, clearings and fields, and past the workshops of archaeologists working on these sites? What if one has strolled along the grassy slopes of Drouva and reached the former Xenia Motel, that has been transformed into a public school? What if the Olympian territory turned into a park of heritage landscape fragments?
A Metamorphosis Through Time

Olympia has never been a settlement, but a destination for travellers. It only became inhabited after a village started to grow to serve the tourists visiting the excavated sites.

Olympia as an Urban Landscape

The heritage site is the stage. The river and the mountains act as a scenography, while tourist infrastructure is placed in the backstage.

Heritage as an Urban Program

There is a dense overlap of user networks patterns over the Olympian landscape. Each has very specific paths, destinations, uses.

Two Global Players

The Olympian territory is shaped by the activities of two internationally operating organizations: The IOC and the UNESCO.

Tourist Gates

Olympia is a touristic town. While the cruise ship tourism is exploding, and with it a number of souvenir shops along the main streets, the hotel complexes become derelict.

Archaeologist Loops

Two perfectly functioning circuits of excavating, processing, archiving and storing are hidden behind the scenes of the ancient site.

Local Patterns

A dense layer of production, sales, habitation and consumption reveals that the local Olympia is part of a polycentric system of villages.

Hidden Landscapes

In between the networks of local, archaeological and tourist activities, a fourth layer is hidden: the abandoned fields, modernist buildings in decay, and an overgrowing riverbank.

Heritage as a Frozen Landscape

The existence of a buffer zone triggers dynamic tourist aisles within an otherwise static territory.

New Destinations

A second chance for Olympia: In the frozen territory of the buffer zone lies the potential for a slow network of resilient leisure landscapes.
The site of Olympia has been inhabited since prehistoric times. In the 10th century BC, Olympia became a centre of the worship of Zeus, the father of the twelve Olympic Gods. In 776 BC, the Olympic Games started to take place here every four years. During the roman period, the city and the sanctuary commonly grew in importance. Buildings, such as the main stadium, were added to the surrounding area to house the visitors and to attend the Olympic Games. A sacred space was established, containing springs, and as such, the Olympic Games were an important event in the history of the establishment of the Greek democracy. Most visitors would enter to Olympia by ship over the Kladeos River, and stay in nearby towns between the sanctuary and the city. The athletes and priests came here through the Holy Road, which connected Elis, a big city and the capital of the region in the ancient times, with the sanctuary, in a procession. In 393 AD, the Roman and Christian emperor Theodosius, prohibited the pagan rituals, which are consistent with the destruction of the sanctuary and the Olympic Games.

Sanctuary 1000 BC–392 AD

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Ruins 1829–1966

Through floods, earthquakes or maybe even a tsunami around 1600 AD (see p.229), the sanctuary got buried under an eight meter thick layer of earth and other debris. The name of the sanctuary, which was inappropiately connected with this phenomena, was getting forgotten. It was only a thousand years later that the confluence point of the rivers Kladeos and Alfeios were once again marked on a Venetian map of 1556. During the rising interest for the ancient Greek during the Renaissance, some explorers from Western countries tried to retrace the site of the sanctuary. It was only in 1829, that a first part of the ruins was revealed. The Beaut’s sketch of the French military expedition to Greece by Louis Dalmont, was very important, as it showed how to make a quick travel for treasuries. But formal excavations did not begin until 1870, under the direction of the newly formed Deutsches Archäologisches Institut. By the begin of the 19th century, the main part of the sanctuary had been excavated. Excavations continue today for searching for treasuries, archaelogical findings, and the rise and shape of the landscape through the process of research.

Greek–German Commission 1876

The British scholar and archaeologist Sir Charles Thomas Newton, who had been a proponent of the idea of the existence of the sanctuary and the Olympic Games, was appointed by the Greek government to supervise the restoration work. In the end, it took twenty years until the excavations could start, after the signing of the French–Commission in 1876. They were carried out under the direction of Emil Freyden, Frederick Charles and Dr. Beazley. The work on the excavation continued for several seasons, until the status of Olympia was found. There was a big difference in the way the site was restored. While the excavations in the sanctuary were carried out in a relatively careful manner, the restoration work was done in a more hasty and less thorough manner. The site was declared a museum, and the excavation work was halted. The site was opened to the public, and the construction of the site was completed. People who would later become the village of Olympia, and the Olympic Games station. After World War I, Greek archaeologists resumed the excavation work and are present in Olympia until this day.

For the Olympic Games only the sanctuary and its surrounding area were restored. The site became increasingly connected on the image of the big temples and their surroundings, with a major interest in sculptures and their acquisition. But the honor donor herself never invested a lot of the famous stature of the temple of Zeus was discovered in any event that was not an event of the village of Olympia, the Olympic Games station. After World War I, Greek archaeologists resumed the excavation work and are present in Olympia until this day.

A Metamorphosis Through Time

Olympia lies in Western Peloponnese, a hilly area, on the edge of the Aetolian Valley, where the confluence of Alfeios and the smaller Klaedos river takes place. The peculiar configuration of Olympia, which is composed of a ruin site, a modernist conference facility and a grated village, is the result of a very particular transformation and development process that happened over a hundred years, starting in the middle of the 19th century. This transformation process had always been deeply related to Olympia as a destination for travelers. But this is only one part of the story. As it is known in the historical studies, the history of Olympia begins in mythological times, some time before the period of Greek Antiquity. According to the legends, on the way where the remains of temples exist between the grasslands, Zeus, Pelops and other Greek Gods were racing their chariots. Then, during the Greek Antiquity, people from all over the Greek territory travelled to Olympia to worship their gods, and to attend the Olympic Games. The stadium, temples, gymnasia, all tell us about this use of art. Even during the centuries of oblivion, the sanctuary, hidden under artificial soil, was rediscovered by the first adventure travelers, who dared to cross the ionian Sea on their ‘grand tour’. The Greek archaeologist Schliemann had excavated the sanctuary completely only by the end of the 19th century. They built the first infrastructures of the new village, that would become the second part in this peculiar setting the new tourist town. The Olympic Academy, a modernist complex to host conference visitors, was constructed in the 1960s, when the Olympic movement gained popularity worldwide.
After prehistoric settlements that had existed on the site of Olympia, no continuous human settlement existed here until the construction of three new buildings by a German architect during the archaeological excavations by the Germans: a hotel, a museum and a train station. The new functions that were directly linked to these buildings represented a new kind of attraction, and since then, a tourist town started to grow next to the site. Locals from the nearby villages, above all from Olympia, located on a hill close to the site, started to settle down here because of the new train connection. As a second step, this location became favourable due to the new economic possibilities offered by the expanding tourism sector. Shortly, the first restaurants and hotels started to appear here. The main development of the village started to take place after World War II with the development of mass tourism. The first hotel complexes were erected, in order to host the growing number of middle class tourist arrivals. The grid was thus constantly filled up, and the first constructions outside the grid, such as the Xenia or the Amaryllis Hotel, took place. Also, locals started to build their private residences outside the official borders of the village. The settlement expanded. After 1969, any kind of new construction development was restricted, the establishment of the UNESCO World Heritage status for the ancient site meant that the village of Olympia fell within the non-building buffer zone. Since then, the existing fabric of the village has been officially allowed to densify.

Three Catalysts: Museum, Hotel and Train Station

On a gentle rise next to the site, the German architect Friedrich Adler started the construction of the first museum in Olympia in 1885. His architecture style was borrowed from the Temple of Zeus, and isolated the museum from the town of Olympia as well as from other major findings from the German archeological excavations of the 19th century. Some years later, with the financial support of the Greek railway company, the first hotel, the so-called Hotel Adler, was constructed on the very same hill, only a few metres away from the museum. The new vegetation allowed for a spectacular view on the Ancient site to the newly aristocratic visitors. With the construction of the train station, the village of Olympia, now a real town, started to grow outside the traditional landscape. And this growth was enabled by the call for the development of the village of Olympia, that followed its grid through a master plan, established by the German authorities in 1911.

The Traveller: The Tourist 1950s–2016

At a time when it had become evident that, in the historical site of Olympia, tourism was to become a key industry, in the 1950s an influential Greek society began courting the Olympic Games. The 1950s, however, were the time when the first post-war generation gradually started to turn into active consumers. The Olympic Games attracted many more tourists, thus ensuring a significant increase in revenue and visitors arriving in Olympia, often passing through Olympic villages. They travel to Olympia by car and bus, by a cruise boat through the Ionian and Aegean Seas, and by plane. In this stage, the village of Olympia continues to grow, with new realisations of production and medium family enterprises.
Development of the
Urban Olympia

Two main stages of urban development are presented: the excavations of a burial sanctuary, and the construction of a grid plan village. While drainage ditches, heaps of ground and ancient ruins constitute the architecture of the first stage, streets, buildings and thoroughfares represent the second stage of development.
Olympia as an Urban Landscape

The ancient site is the stage. The valley with the wild overgrown river, the mountains in the south and the Kronic hill with its pine trees serve as a background image, like a setting on a stage. The backstage facilities are the ticket kiosks, the two museums, the village with its souvenir shops and hotels, parking lots, the Olympic Academy and the roads that allow for access to the site.
Heritage as an Urban Program

Three main layers of user networks comprise the urban program of Olympia: the Tourist Gates, the Archaeologist Loops and the Local Networks. Each of them include their own specific paths and places of significance. The urban program also includes two globally active organizations: The IOC and the UNESCO. The IOC maintains presence here through the International Olympic Academy and organises the Olympic torch relay ceremony, while the UNESCO maintains a buffer and core zone for protection of the ancient sites in Olympia.
Two Global Players

UNESCO N°517

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee is an agency of the UN that lists places of importance (such as buildings, cities, complexes, deserts, forests, islands, lakes, monuments or other natural landscape features) as being of cultural or physical significance. Since its founding in 1972, 191 state parties have notified the convention, making it one of the most powerful international instruments for historical preservation. While each World Heritage site comprises part of the legal territory of the state where it is located, UNESCO consults in the interest of this international community to preserve each of the sites. World Heritage sites are prized tourism assets. In 1998, the sanctuary of Olympia was declared as a UNESCO World Heritage. It is the number 517 out of 1001 UNESCO World Heritage sites worldwide. Since then, Olympia is officially considered as a place of global cultural importance. Therefore, new preservation regulations were implemented here. UNESCO defined an area of strict protection, the so-called core zone, which includes the Ancient site itself as well as an area of prominent findings (approx. 66 ha). Around the core zone, a buffer zone has been included. This includes areas of direct visibility from the site where construction activities are completely forbidden, apart from extension of existing buildings. The zone of Olympia constitutes approximately 14800ha in land area, its boundaries reflect the surrounding mountain peaks. Since the implementation of the UNESCO heritage status, the size and location of the zones hasn’t changed.

ICG Branding the Territory

The ICG is the umbrella organisation that organises the Olympic Games. Since the resumption of the Olympic ideals in the late 19th century, the ICG has gradually turned into one of the most powerful international organisations. They often use Olympia with its ruins and the ancient stadium for legitimising their activities historically; the ceremony of the Olympic torch relay takes place in the stadium, and the national subsidiary of the ICG. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is hosted in a modernist conference complex close to the area site. The Olympic Games are the hallmark of global sporting events. Experts believe that the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 will easily surpass London Olympics in terms of revenue generated, with the later generated around $1.1 billion in domestic sponsorship deals.

Olympia and Local Identity

When it comes to the identity of the local community of Olympia, one always comes across the Olympics. Almost every city in the world has an Olympic stadium placed on a site dedicated to the place where the Olympic Games are first held or to a site with historical significance. Several villages have emerged as tourist towns serving the site, or, in the case of Olympia, a village spanning a wide area which the ancient identity would be located on does not exist.

The Interdependency of the Local Communities and the Olympic Games

The Olympic Games have always been a venue of political process. Between 1973 and 1993, the Olympic Village was transformed into a political pressure group. The leaders of this factor were demanding economic benefits for the Olympic Games on the territory of the host country, and the Olympics did not come to an end. The principles of the Olympic Games and the new Olympic movement have been the driving force in the history of Olympic Games development. The Olympic Games have always been a venue of political process.
Tourist Gates

Tourism is the most important sector of the Greek economy, with the tourist destination being one of the most popular in the world. The country has been attracting tourists for centuries, due to its rich cultural heritage, beautiful beaches, and picturesque landscapes. Today, tourism contributes significantly to the country's economy and is a major source of employment for many Greeks.

Preparations for Mass Tourism

Between 1960s and 1970s, the Greek government initiated a series of measures to boost tourism. These included the construction of new airports, the improvement of public transportation, and the development of new tourist destinations. The government also offered incentives to private investors to build new hotels and resorts.

Rise of the Middle Class Tourism 1960s-1980s

The middle-class tourism of the 1960s and 1970s was characterized by a greater emphasis on comfort and convenience. This was reflected in the expansion of the hotel industry, the development of new airports, and the improvement of public transportation. The government also invested in new tourist destinations, such as the Aegean Sea and the Ionian Sea, which attracted tourists from both domestic and international markets.

Crisis and Post-Crisis 2000s-2010s

The 2000s saw a significant decline in tourism to Greece, due to a combination of economic and political factors. This was followed by a period of recovery in the 2010s, as the country began to recover from the economic crisis. Today, Greece remains a popular destination for tourists from around the world, and the government continues to invest in new tourism infrastructure to ensure its long-term sustainability.

Tourist attractions of the ancient era, 1997

The Parthenon, Acropolis, and other ancient sites are still major attractions for tourists. The government has invested in the preservation and restoration of these sites, to ensure their continued importance for future generations.

Greek ship mary in Corfu

Tourism is a vital sector for the Greek economy, with the Greek government investing heavily in new tourism infrastructure to attract and retain visitors. Today, Greece remains a popular destination for tourists from around the world, and the government continues to work to ensure its long-term sustainability.

Tourists by the thousands visit the Acropolis, 2010

The Acropolis of Athens is one of the most iconic sites in Greece, and is a must-visit for tourists. The government has invested heavily in the preservation and restoration of the site, to ensure its continued importance for future generations.

Olympia, Greece

Olympia is another iconic site, and the birthplace of the modern Olympic Games. The government has invested in the preservation and restoration of the site, to ensure its continued importance for future generations.
Since the year 2000, the number of cruise ship tourists that have been arriving in Olympic has significantly increased, while other tourist destinations have declined. Extensive infrastructures such as parking lots can be seen as a direct consequence of this on-the-rise fast-track tourism. Other existing tourism sectors do not require the sort of permanent infrastructure that cruise ports demand. Thus, such infrastructures often be vacant for longer periods of time.

Tourist Gates
1. Pre-arrival site
2. Parking lot
3. Parking lot 2
4. Parking lot 3
5. Parking lot 4
6. Olympic road
7. Thessaloniki Olympic Museum
8. Thessaloniki Olympic Museum
9. Train station
10. Camping site
11. Swimming pool
12. Olympic stadium
13. Aquarium
14. Olympic mountain
15. Parking lot
16. Introductory
17. Introductory
18. Olympic Pavilion (hotel)
19. Hotel
20. Hotel
21. Ski resort and cable car area
22. Olympic stadium
23. Olympic stadium
24. Conference hall
25. Financial district
26. Eco-friendly area
The current Greek excavations take place towards the eastern end of the Ancient site, below which the Olympic Academy is situated. There, currently the house of the presides of the Ancient sanctuary is under excavation. There used to be a second excavation site right at the entrance to the site where they excavated the gymnasion, the training site of the Ancient Olympic participants. But this has recently been put on hold owing to the difficulty associated with excavating the site. Apparently, a newer road has been built on top of the ancient site, requiring more funds than originally anticipated. The gymnasion has the same length as the stadium. The western part of the gymnasion has been found on the other side of the Kadoer river, which gives a hint to how different the Ancient course of the river might have been and how the whole scenery might have looked like.

The History of an Enclosure
The fact that the village of Olympia would not exist as it does today, had they not been the German archaeologists, who are still very present in the area, are a key component of the inventory of Olympia. There are even fragments of Greek pottery and items imported from other places in the ancient world, such as from the Mediterranean and the Near East. The excavations of the German team were also a source of inspiration for the modern Olympics.

The Greek-German Excavation Convention was the catalyst for the ongoing German involvement in excavation at the Ancient site of Olympia. The German Archaeological Institute in Olympia is the most experienced expert on the Ancient site. Their processes of excavation work follow a perfectly organized cycle, adapted for more than 1,000 years of excavation efforts. The archive with rich findings in the base of the new museum is a witness to the long and intense archaeological activities at the site. The archive space is not only restricted by its capacity. The climate conditions are unstable and unsuitable for the sorting of found objects. Here, most of the findings at the archaeological site stay locked away from the public view.

The present Greek excavations are on the southern part of the International Olympic Academy complex, which contains the gymnasium, the sanctuary, and the theatre. The excavation is on excavating the house of the Archon of the sanctuary of Olympia. The eastern part of the Gymnasium, the theatre and the gymnasium, are the areas that are being excavated. The German team, which comprises of archaeologists, geologists, students, science museums, and scientists, all live in the so-called German Villastrasse. The villa is a series of houses built in the 1870s by the German excavator architect of that time, Albert Malaise.

The procedure of excavating, sorting out and archiving is very well coordinated and very efficient, as it is coordinated and well-planned. The recent results of the excavations will be presented on the ground floor and in the visitor center, which is the first of its kind in Olympia. The recently excavated finds are being exhibited in a new museum, which is currently under construction.

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Activities Under the Ground

The archaeological works in Olympia are almost invisible to the foreign visitor. Whether it is doing the feeting in the basement or the
reveling the relics hidden behind the great butler's trig of the ancient site – their activities remain unseen on the site itself. This
contrasts with the place of the museum, where their work is presented to a wider public.
Olympia as an Urban Center

Local Patterns

The local network is much closely meshed than the tourist-massive "toursist gateis". The relationship between Olympia and its residents to the surrounding villages connective network of marketplaces. The Municipality of Olympia is the most important political and administrative centre in this region. Due to its developed tourism, it also represents the largest regional labour and goods market. Almost all villages and their residents in the area are either directly or indirectly economically dependent on products. From the entire region are sold in here and distributed globally under the Olympia brand name. Especially during the tourist season, people from all over Peloponnese come here to seek seasonal employment. On the other hand, Olympia also depends on the surrounding villages for their resources, their agrarian production, workforce and construction space. Due to the zoning restrictions imposed by UNESCO, many of the urban functions are outsourced. Olympia is an administrative, touristic and therefore economical centre, that has become almost fully saturated with structures within its legal building zones.

Until the 1950s when mass tourism was not flourishing, the town was still an agricultural and farming field. The fields in the outskirts of the Afrocuris in the south of Olympia and the fertile surrounding areas were utilized. The town, Nafplio, was known as "the town with the large market". The olive oil and local wines were sold at the market hall that of the town market in Olympia, grazing the area. Today, olive oil and wine are still sold at the market, especially around important festivals or events. The town market hall is located toward the local market and the city hall of Nafplio.

The Old Town is the heart of the local community. It is a traditional market with a variety of local products, including olive oil, wine, cheese, and other local specialties. The market hall is located in the heart of the town, surrounded by beautiful local architecture. In the market, you can find fresh vegetables, fruits, and herbs, as well as local cheeses and meats. The market hall is a popular place for locals and tourists alike, offering a glimpse into the rich agricultural heritage of the region.

In the surrounding villages, we find pump local places, especially in the countryside, which provide a peaceful escape from the hustle and bustle of the city. Even in Nafplio, there are a few villages that are the perfect place to escape from the crowds and enjoy the local atmosphere. From Nafplio, we find villages on the eastern edge of the local conditions.

### Local Patterns

**Olympia as a brand is a key market in the region, due to its international image and the high frequency of tourist arrivals. Either directly employed in the tourist sector or in the production of local agricultural goods, the locals are economically highly connected with Olympia. The area of direct economical relationship is limited to the northern part of the A1100000, which is a strong physical border.**

**Administration Center**

Olympia’s municipality belongs to the periphery of Elis. It consists of 40 other smaller municipalities. Villages include Assos, Piso Alikes, Laganas, Kamaritsa, Peristera, Olous, Kyparissia, and more. This area is rich in agricultural land and provides a viable source of income for the residents. The local roads are well-maintained, ensuring easy access to the various villages.

**The Shop of the Hotel Owner**

Olympia as a major tourist destination has a large number of hotels, restaurants, and other hospitality businesses. The hotel owner’s shop is a central location where guests can purchase local products and souvenirs. The shop offers a variety of items, including local olive oil, wine, cheese, and other culinary delights. The shop also serves as a meeting point for locals and tourists alike, fostering a sense of community and welcoming atmosphere.

**Decentralized Living**

Olympia is not the major habitation area in the region. Locals working in Olympia are settled within the entire municipality. Due to the scarcity of available building space in the village, most of the basic urban infrastructures are not located in Olympia itself but rather in the main town or in the surrounding villages. People are often commuting to other areas, such as the supermarket along the highway or the big school complex of Patras.

**Shopping**

Since the village of Olympia is one of the most important employment regions of the area, the local stores and shops would expand more shops and meeting the locals needs. We only find one butcher, a small grocery store, a local bakery, and a few restaurants in the village. There is a large fruit store and a supermarket in the nearby town. Olympia is not a local commercial center. The center of local consumption is the supermarket along the highway or the big school complex of Patras. People are going to Patras for the main commercial activities in the northern main road of Olympia, an almost complete separation between the local shops and owners and the foreign customers is visible. We observed during our day walk a few local visitors and a few visiting stores, passing other areas for meeting the local needs.

**Tavernas and Bars**

There are many tavernas in Olympia frequented by tourists as well as by locals. The local tavernas are usually called "Tavernas" or "Bars". The place in Olympia and all the other villages in the area are a popular stop for locals and tourists alike. The tavernas offer a variety of traditional dishes, such as souvlaki, gyros, and other Greek specialties. The atmosphere is lively and welcoming, with locals and tourists alike enjoying the local cuisine and culture.

**Habitations**

The residents of Olympia often have their houses in the lower levels of the local hill. The houses are typically small and compact, designed to make the most of the available space. The houses are usually made of local materials, such as stone and wood, and are well-insulated to provide comfort in the harsh climate. The houses are also built to be self-sufficient, with the use of local products and resources, such as olive oil and wine. The residents of Olympia are known for their hospitality and warmth, welcoming visitors with open arms and a generous spirit.

**Local Patterns**

Local patterns include:
- Agricultural fields
- Market hall
- Local stores and shops
- Tavernas and bars
- Habitations in the lower levels of the local hill
- Distinctive local cuisine and culture

**Cultivation**

Olympia's agriculture is diverse and includes olives, grapes, and vegetables, providing a variety of fresh produce.

**Local Flavours**

The local cuisine is rich and flavorful, with dishes that showcase the region's fresh ingredients and traditional cooking techniques.
Local Migratory Movements.

Olympia as a settlement is purely a contemporary construction. In contrast to Orosia, the nearby agricultural village, it is the site of a large tourist attraction, the meat site of a trained and trained destination in the landscape. The railway connects to Purgas and to the nearby harbour of Kysteblo in 1663, together with the post-WWII renewal of tourism, created the potential for the tourism industry, transforming Olympia into an attractive tourist village.
Local Reality: Polycentrism

Olympia as administrative head of its villages occupies a pivotal role in the region. In addition, the presence of tourism means it is an important destination for key national markets. The local life plans have adapted to this reality: working in the service sector takes place in Olympia, whereas living, production and leisure happen on different locations scale across the region. Together, these places constitute a polycentric network.
In between the network of tourists, locals and archaeologists, layer of hidden and potential landscapes unfolds. Lying within the radius of the UNESCO buffer zone, these landscapes slowly turned into overgrown fields after 1989, abandoned buildings and inaccessible riverbanks. They are the backstage to the heritage site, silent and fragmented, with a strange and peculiar character and settings.
At the northernmost corner of the Ancient site, the archaeologists seem to have only discovered some scattered tombs, houses, and a stele. To the northeast, the city walls were covered with moss and overgrown long grass. Towards its back road, the "archaeological frontline" - the edge between the excavated over and the naturally growing terrain towards the north. A small herd of cattle grazes here, protecting the site from the discourses that are being devoted to it. At the southern end of the Ancient site, there is a stele-like structure on the outskirts of a road. The stone columns of the temple are still visible today, where the stone walls merge with the natural, forested scenery. Filed on their way.

On the mountains that lie towards the north of the ancient city, a chain of the protection towers stands like a chain of skyscrapers in the distance. The stone columns of the temple are still visible today, where the stone walls merge with the natural, forested scenery. Filed on their way.

The train depot, with its blue painted roof and striking appearance, stands out in the landscape. The train depot was built in 1950, and the stone columns of the temple are still visible today, where the stone walls merge with the natural, forested scenery. Filed on their way.

At the southern end of the Ancient site, some tombs are aligned on concrete plinths and look like people on a chair. These are part of the archaeological site, and the concrete plinths are used in various ways. However, the concrete structure protects the Ancient artefacts from the decomposition of the concrete through humidity. They were constructed in the 1950s under the guidance of the German archaeologist Ernst Fischbeck. This room is located in the German Schoolhouse, which is located in the German Schoolhouse. A light field structure protects the monument and the stoneworks from rain. Hidden in between the green belt of Olympia, a modern theatre offers a spectacular view onto the landscape, the Kronos hill, and the Ancient site. A small footpath leads from the road to Oenoe, along the slope to this open-air space. High pine trees frame its scenery. In Koskrites, a village north to Olympia, a winery site between fields of vineyards. The building not only hosts a winery, but also a restaurant and a hotel. The walls are surrounded through pipes. The wine bottles are furnished with the label "Olympia: The vegetation in this area is low dense, some areas on the peaks, and dry vegetation is found on the slopes."
Heritage as a Frozen Landscape

This thesis’ map synergises the results from the analysis of the three user networks with a fourth layer of hidden landscapes and proposes potential landscapes for intervention. Like a narrow tube, the layer of tourism is inserted into the urban configuration of Olympia presenting a dense overlap and concentration of human activities. On the other hand, the local layer unfolds as a pattern of different uses and spatial characteristics. It is widely ramified and spread, and can be understood only in a larger frame, including the nearby villages. Together, they form a polycentric, urban system with local centres and spread into the residential and agricultural areas in-between. The Archaeologist Loop is almost do not touch the paths frequented by the tourists and locals, being thus an introverted and invisible actor on the scene of Olympia. Its minimal footprint contrasts with its broad impact on history. The Hidden Landscapes are arranged in “circles” around the three characters of the urban configuration. As scarcely used and mostly undeveloped lands, they are in strong contrast to the density of built structures and uses of the tourist layer. Their potential lies in their fragmentation—they are micro landscapes with extremely different and specific qualities. They could be experienced not only as a two-dimensional background for the ancient site, but also as three-dimensional spaces.
How should the urban development of Olympia evolve in the future? What kind of development is contingent in a territory that mainly consists of a static buffer zone? How can we face the dynamics that arise from an unilateral dependence on mass tourism? What are the opportunities that these buffer zones might offer? No big development is possible besides the interest for personal residence, which in the case of Olympia is low, and the plots are too small for agricultural production. In the arsenal of preservation there seems to be no consideration of how the effects of this territorial lag should be managed, how the preservation and the buffer zones could stay alive, and yet evolve. It is the chance for a new, particular leisure landscape of destinations: the places of the frozen landscapes of the buffer zone with their strange and peculiar settings, small and fragmented, wild, hidden and resilient. These landscapes—as opposed to the fast-track prefabricated tourist experience—can focus on offering a personal experience. A new future slow tourism could hold onto the specificities of these landscapes and a foreboding nature, that preclude a standard tourist experience. It could constitute a second chance for Olympia as an opportunity for a more stable and resilient form of tourism, based on existing potentials and affiliated with local production. Through the connection of these new destinations of the Olympian territory, a park of heritage landscapes could arise. Olympia is not the only frozen landscape in the Greek territory. It is one out of seventeen World Heritage sites in Greece, each comprised of a core zone, and most of them additionally of buffer zones, defined around the actual heritage sites.
A Shuttle Station and new Networks

A layer of roads for bicycles, paths for strollers and trails for explorers connect new places of interest with each other and with already existing destinations. Besides the places of the hidden landscapes, spots of local production, such as wineries or honey farms, will become part of this network. As a first step towards a park for the heritage landscape, the infrastructure of cruise ship tourism in Olympia has to be optimised in order to reduce their footprint. The implementation of a shuttle service between the port in Katakolon and Olympia will make the extensive parking lots obsolete – which can then become a part of the new park. Small interventions in the landscape fabric such as clearings or slides will create rooms in the thickly overgrown landscapes and establish viable connections with the new destinations.
Frozen Territories
of Greece

Since 1996, seventeen historical and natural sites have been included in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Site. An additional fifteen sites are currently on the tentative list. Most of these sites are provided with a buffer zone. We can assume that all of them are ‘frozen landscapes’, an outgrowth of the heritage apparatus, and potential parks for the heritage landscapes.

- N°781 Temple of Apollo Epicurius at Bassae, 1987
  Core zone: 55 ha
  Buffer zone: 140 ha

- N°783 Archaeological site of Delphi, 1987
  Core zone: 51 ha
  Buffer zone: 51 ha

- N°784 Acropolis Athens, 1987
  Core zone: 3.04 ha
  Buffer zone: 110 ha

- N°786 Paleo-Christian and Byzantine monuments of Thessaloria, 1988
  Core zone: 6.53 ha

- N°791 Sanctuary of Asklepion at Epidaurus, 1988
  Core zone: 1.064 ha
  Buffer zone: 3.565 ha

- N°792 Medieval city of Rhodes, 1988
  Core zone: 65 ha
  Buffer zone: 1.003 ha

- N°794 Archaeological site of Mystras, 1989
  Core zone: 54 ha
  Buffer zone: 1.003 ha

- N°795 Archaeological site of Olympia, 1996
  Core zone: 1,585 ha
  Buffer zone: 1,585 ha

- N°797 Delos, 1990
  Core zone: 301 ha

- N°798 Minoa of Knossos, ancient Lefkandi and Naxos of Chios, 1990
  Core zone: 2.7 ha
  Buffer zone: 5.910 ha

- N°799 Pyramids of Herakleion and Herakleia, 1992
  Core zone: 4.60 ha
  Buffer zone: 4.602 ha

- N°800 Archaeological site of Aigai (modern cities: Iraklion, 1992
  Core zone: 1,821 ha
  Buffer zone: 4,912 ha

- N°801 Old town of Corfu, 2007
  Core zone: 75 ha
  Buffer zone: 162 ha

UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Greece: Core zones and buffer zones.
ILIA’S COAST
SEASIDE
COUNTRYSIDE
Ilia’s Coast
Seaside Countryside

The development of tourism in Greece is an interesting and complex case study. In the 1950s, the Greek government fostered the belief that, instead of driving the country’s economic development through industrialisation, the main economic policy should rather focus on tourism. This strategy did not derive from the local economic traditions, but instead, it emerged as a result of the growing demands of the international leisure and travel industry. It started from the premise that Greek tourism would be based on the economies of ‘history’ and ‘scenic landscape’, emphasizing the coexistence of archaeological monuments with nature. The construction of infrastructure, including ports, highways and airports, was an essential prerequisite for the economic strategy based on tourism. The areas with an ‘intact’ landscape became a synonym for modernisation and touristic development. Still, not all the regions developed in the same way. Some of them stayed blind spots to the international mass tourism, and these are the places where a ‘local kind of living’ could be found.
One of these regions is the coast of Ilia, a region to which international mass coastal tourism seems to be just arriving.
Local Coast

With the development of international tourism, beaches with local character, like the ones of Ilia's coast, are rarely found.

Coastal Settlements and Urban Networks

The juxtaposition of international tourism with local lifestyle is visible both in its infrastructure and in the patterns of local and international tourist influx seasons.

Coastal Landscape in Transformation

Last century's emphasis on agriculture has radically transformed Ilia's coast. Today, international tourism adds up to this transformation.

Local Coast under Pressure

Real-estate pressure for the development of coastal tourist facilities leads to the continual land deterioration and drying-up of lakes in the area.

Accessing the Local Landscape

The vulnerability of the local settlements and of the coastal landscapes of Ilia signals an urgent need for rethinking the relationship between tourism, locality and landscapes in the region.
Coastal tourism is transforming the majority of inhabited coastal areas around the world. The signs of this transformation can be seen and felt almost everywhere on the coasts of Europe, especially in the Mediterranean. Traditional local settlements as well as ‘natural’ coasts seem to be quickly disappearing, with mass tourism facilities replacing them. Relatively few regions, such as the western Peloponnesian coast, have averted the affects resulting from this kind of development, due to a limited accessibility and poorly developed infrastructure. As a result, these regions offer more local qualities and possibilities, in comparison to the coast developed for mass tourism.

Coastal tourism in Europe is mostly international, particularly in the Mediterranean. Taking Costa Brava in Spain as an example, one can see that international tourism manifests here in a form of high density development. On the other hand, the western coast of Greece seems to be an interesting case, as it still offers international coastal tourism, but with a much lower density.

In the Greek context, the western Peloponnesian coast could be characterized as more ‘local’. This can be explained by the relative inaccessibility of the coast. At the same time, eastern Peloponnesian coast, which can be better accessed from Athens, experienced an aggressive transformation into a tourist hub.
Historical Evolution of Urban Settlements

XIX Century Destination for Seasonal Migration

The coastal region of Ilia has traditionally been one of low density, owing to a prevalence of disease and infestation. This can be attributed to its warm and humid climate, as well as to the great frequency of conflict with foreign boats. Additionally, its location and topography offered little protection from foreign invasion. The sparse settlements occurred mostly on hilly terrains close to rivers, that connected the settlements with the sea. After the Greek Revolution and the subsequent liberation from Ottoman Occupation in the 19th Century, the coastal area became more safe, leading to new settlements springing up along the coast. Fertile but unexploited plains turned into agricultural land. Railways became the primary export good of Ilia and they were shipped all over Europe from Port Katasolion. The profitable export of agricultural goods in the 19th century, led to the growth of the regional centres, Amaliada and Pyrgos. The discovery of archaeological sites in Olympia opened the region for tourists in Ilia. It still remains the main arrival facility for tourists in Ilia.

1883–1902 Introduction of Commuter Railways

After the liberation from the Ottoman occupation, the coastal land was repurposed for agriculture. Attracted by the cultivable fields, people from Arcadia started settling on the hilly coast. The migrants spent the winter seasons living and working in Ilia because of its warm weather and cultivable land, returning to Arcadia during the summer season. For instance, people from Lasta, an Arcadian village, would seasonally commute to a newly built settlement, Lastekia.

In 1883 the first railway line was constructed. It connected Pyrgos with Katasolion and was mainly used for the transport of agricultural goods. Seven years later, it was opened to the public. The route, which connected Pyrgos with Amaliada and Athens, was inaugurated on March 29, 1883. Later, in 1902, the route was extended towards south, connecting Pyrgos with Kyriopoli. Shortly after, in 1891, the route between Pyrgos and Olympia was inaugurated.

1920–1960 Entering the Automobile Era

As automobiles became more affordable, Ilia's road network started expanding. This led to the emergence of sprawls across the region. In particular, the popularity of the 'second homes' close to the beach was one of the main agents of the change in physical and social landscape. Additionally, the new road network led to intensified urbanisation in Pyrgos and Amaliada, cities that emerged at the time as regional centres.

1967–1969 Agriculture as a State-Run Project. Lake Drainage

The region along former Mounta lake was known for fishing. During the 1970s, this area was reclaimed and drained by the Greek state, in order to be exploited for agriculture. The drainage strategy was hand in hand with the construction of a new irrigation system for the coastal region, with the water supply from the Acheron river. As a consequence, the landscape of boats and fishery was slowly replaced by agricultural landscape.

1978–2016 Infrastructures for International Tourism

Port Katasolion was constructed for the transport of agricultural goods. However, since the discovery of ancient sites in Olympia, travellers started pouring to Katasolion. Thus, the port was extended and adapted in order to receive and serve cruise ships during the 1980s. Following this trend, the National Road E55, that connected Ilia's coastal regions with the International Airport of Patras, was built in 1976. This stimulated the construction of resorts on the beach.
Searching for the Local Coast

By looking at the coast of land, we can identify certain characteristics of what can be labelled as a 'local coast'. The coexistence of these characteristics aids the development of various local occupations along the coastal line. Nonetheless, there are only two kinds of international occupations that seem to be rather isolated from the rest of the coastline.

Types of the Local Coastline
- Nature protection
- Leisure activities
- Agriculture
- Fishing
- Second residences
- Ruins
- Archaeological areas
- Shore plants

Type 1: Legal Second Houses
Type 2: Village Oysterfishery
Type 3: Coastal Agriculture and Fishery
Type 4: Nature Protection
Coastal Settlements and Urban Networks

International Coastal Settlements

The coast of Ilia has maintained a very strong and predominantly local character, even though Port Katakolon has been one of the major cruise ship ports of Greece, with a large annual influx of international tourists coming to visit the heritage sites of Olympia. The coexistence of the local and the international is also reflected in the overlap of the networks they create. While the urban network serving international tourism is characterized by a linear configuration, defined through entrance gates and specific destinations, the local networks are much more complex structures with common services and activities.

Local Coastal Occupations

Port Katakolon is the entry point for international tourists arriving by cruise ships, looking for the emblematic ancient Olympia. The beach resort is the main destination for these tourists.

Type 2: Villas in Orchards

Villas are the most common type of second homes in coastal settlements. For centuries, the mansions of Phoca have been strongly influenced by the urban networks. Many of the villas are surrounded by pine trees and produce fruits and vegetables. Many of these are used as a weekend retreat for local tourism.

Type 3: Coastal Agriculture and Fishery

For centuries, the mansions of Phoca have been strongly influenced by the urban networks. Many of the villas are surrounded by pine trees and produce fruits and vegetables. Many of these are used as a weekend retreat for local tourism.

Type 4: Nature Protection

The forest near Kourio is a coastal dune and is designated as a special protection zone. On a normal weekday, it is common to see people walking dogs or jogging here. During summer, people build temporary huts out of wood from the beach to shelter themselves from the sun.
Introducing Seasonality

In Ili, it is possible to differentiate seasonality in patterns related to international tourism and local living. The ‘international pattern’ consists of mass tourism, that concentrates in specific locations. This pattern is generated mostly during the summer months and reaches its highest frequency during the initial weeks of autumn. The ‘local pattern’ is maintained by locals from the nearby villages that use their seaside second houses during these months. During summer, most of the local people live in their second houses, as the beach provides a more comfortable temperature than inland villages. In winter, these villages are partially inhabited during the weekends.

Two different versions of international tourism are identifiable on Ili’s coast. The first type refers to the drop-in cruise ships at the Katakolon port that bring up to four thousand passengers per ship. The drop-in lasts approximately for six hours, just enough time for visiting the Olympia heritage sites. Consequently, the shops and touristic facilities in Port Katakolon are opened only during these hours. On the other hand, tourists looking for more exclusive beach holidays, arrive mainly at the Aghios Kirykos Island and are driven through national road 535 directly to their resorts. The resort provides all the needed facilities. As a consequence, souvenir shops can be found along the streets leading to the resort.

The local pattern refers to the small villages with populations between 200 and 800 inhabitants, whose residents, in order to fulfill their basic life needs, create a network of service sharing between the old coastal villages, smaller inland villages, and beach centres. However, their autonomy is possible only up to a certain degree, as they still depend on the bigger centres, Parga and Amfissa. This dependency mostly refers to the access to places of higher education, health care, shopping malls and other similar amenities.
International Pattern

Helmut (62), Engineer
Hanna (62), Secretary

"This is the second time we have taken the route with the cruise ship, that’s the reason we would like to ship.

In our experience, people from our cruise ship have gone there today (3) really being to train or a cruise ship because things everything is planned for you. We don’t have to worry about taking the wrong train or bus. That’s why we try to repeat this every year."

Port Katakalan

The stop in Katakalan is one of the few places with a cruise ship that is docked, allowing only international tourists to stay up to 4 hours in the city.
Local Pattern

Nikos (35), Farmer

"I live here in Skouraourhi, I used to work on a olive ship, but being a farmer gives me more freedom to enjoy the sea. I have a lovely house on a second house on the beach, so everyone else have kids. I go there sometimes on weekends but I am mostly there during the summer."

Skouraourhi

Skouraourhi is one of the old head-villages. All services here are located on the main road which heads up to Myrta. It represents a local centre for the area coming to offering access to daily services.
Coastal Landscape in Transformation

Type 1
Coastal Dunes:
in Transformation

Due to the unique biodiversity they offer, coastal dunes act as natural barriers that protect interior areas from water intrusion and from high sea waves. Together with the beach, they are considered to be public spaces. However, coastal dunes are at risk of disappearing if the construction of touristic beach facilities continues uninterrupted.

Type 2
Fertile Flats:
Ground for Touristic Growth

Fertile grounds are located close to the coast and have been nicknamed “Goldmine #2”, because of their ultra-fertile soil. These fields are under tremendous real-estate pressure and their value has increased manifold because foreign investors from countries like USA and Switzerland are interested in building beach resorts here.

Type 3
Hilly Coast:
Protected Stability

Since the ancient times, the shoreline has been constantly retreating, leading the ancient city of Pheas to submerge in the rocky coast. Today, because of its character of an archaeological protected site, the hill has remained almost completely unaltered, with forest covering up the ground almost in its entirety. Still, few of the mountain trails, used by shepherds and hikers, remain.

Type 4
Dried Lake:
Blocked Transformation

The large site where Mousa lake stood almost 50 years ago, spanning at approximately 5 square kilometers, is owned today by the Greek state and being used as a garbage landfill. The drainage of this lake has led to a fast drawdown of the water table in the region and a deterioration of the groundwater quality. Additionally, it led to a diminishing agriculture production, owing to the soil erosion and an increasing abandonment of the fields combined with an enormous surge in electricity consumption.

Type 5
Alfeios River:
A Tool for Transformation

The Ladamos and Fiskas irrigation dam was constructed during the 1960s. It redirects approx. 70% of the water stream for agricultural purposes and blocks most of the silted sediments. This has caused the retreat of the shoreline by up to 400 meters leading to the destruction of illegal settlements, as well as erision of river banks.
Landscape Conditions

The main characteristic of Kula’s coast is the extensive agricultural production, which differs depending on the different layers of landscape conditions. The overlapping of these layers refers to two major conditions: one at the north and the other at the south of port Katalaon. In the northern part, the combination of a flat terrain, good irrigation infrastructure, sedimentary soil, and private land ownership, ensures ideal conditions for good agricultural production. The land towards south of port Katalaon is also characterized by a flat terrain, but unlike in the northern part, it is predominantly 2m below the sea level. The previous existence of the lake Mouna left a very unique soil condition.
The coastal landscape of the region has experienced various transformations, often due to urbanization and land use changes. Agricultural production and tourism have increased, leading to more and more fragmented coastal areas. Uncontrolled urbanization and commercialization have contributed to the disappearance of the coastal dunes in some areas.
Dried Lake

Salt Water Intrusion

The drainage of the marshy lake during the 1950s has caused the water table to drop down drastically. As a result, salt-water intrusion has been facilitated. It has not only deteriorated the groundwater aquifer, but has also led to deterioration of the local soil conditions and to the abandonment of several agriculture fields.
The History of the Lake Opera Potentials:

1. Streets connecting the lake with the remnant settlements are a remnant area.
2. The lake is part of the development of sectoral boulevards.
3. Traditional fishermen’s villages.

Perspective plan shortly before urban development, ca. 1960

Fishing hut on former lake
Shorel in the 1950’s

Fishing in lake area, circa 1900
Local Coast under Pressure

Looking at the tendencies of transformation of Ili’s coast, it seems that large-scale touristic facilities would be arriving here soon. This will fuel the expansion of the existing network of services and infrastructures for international mass tourism, which is mainly concentrated along the connections with the arrival area. They are being owned and managed by private investors. Therefore, a further fragmentation of the landscape will probably involve resorts replacing fields. As a consequence of this expansion, public access to the beaches will be greatly affected, as the beaches will become privatized, at least unofficially, with possible flattening of the dunes to allow for tourists to access wider beaches. Simultaneously, the ongoing deterioration of land in the area occupied formerly by the Lake Mounia is causing a slower, yet profound fragmentation of the coastal landscape. After the drainage of the lake, problems with underground water intrusion started to appear, affecting the fields in the area around the former lake and later extending the affected area up to the fields near the city of Pyrgos. The abandonment of the fields is one of the results of the ongoing deterioration particularly because agricultural productivity has significantly dropped.
In an attempt to counteract the ongoing fragmentation of the coastal landscape, pressured by the tourism real-estate industry on the one hand and the ecological deterioration from drainage of Lake Mouria on the other, the project aims to strengthen the coastal landscapes by designating some areas as protected nature zones.

Situated on publicly owned land, the project seeks to integrate the fragmented coastal landscape as one and uninterrupted landscape entity.

One of the interventions involves a network of paths that interconnect several fragments of dunes along the coast. The existing local activities in the ecologically protected areas of Ilia are supported, stimulating the local population towards a more diverse use of the landscape for new kinds of activities. Another intervention consists of a partial refilling of the former Lake Mouria, that would avert a further deterioration of the agricultural areas around the lake. The deactivation of the drainage pumping station and the recovery of the connection of the lake with the Alfios River are the key aspects that will help complete the restoration and prevent saltwater intrusion. The project, instead of solely focusing on the protection of eco-systems in the region, aims at considering the protected nature areas as potential public spaces. On a larger scale, these interventions can be integrated and even replicated through a series of interventions along the western coast of Peloponnese.
The unofficial occupation of the coastal dune by large-scale touristic facilities is an ongoing process of displacing local and seasonal communities, as well as changing the landscape's interspecies life. This project aims to revitalise the coastal landscape in order to increase the potential for local activities, and to re-establish the connections between the coast and the local community, as well as between the coast and the wider community of local and foreign tourists alike.
Refilling the Lake

The refilling of the lake provides a solution for the currently abandoned fields, representing an opportunity for the entire region. The lake’s historical and cultural significance is re-emphasized, fostering a sense of heritage and identity.

An artistic expression of the refilled lake area.
Unless stated otherwise, all diagrams and photographs are original to this book. Original photographs are the work of instructors and students of Architecture of Territory during the spring semester 2016. All satellite images are taken from Google Maps and Google Earth.

The maps presented in this volume are based on the digital map data collection which was assembled by ETH Zürich Assistant Professorship of Architecture and Territorial Planning, M. Tópovský, in the period of 2015–2016, at ETH Zürich.

The most significant digital data sets, retrieved in 2015–2016, are: Open data catalogues for Greece, The European Environment Agency (EEA) Data Service, The European Topic Centre on Land Use and Spatial Information, Eurostat, ArcGis Topo navigator, Open Street Map (OSM) and other commercial geo-referenced information purchased in 2015–2016. We apologize for missing credits, which were not submitted by the authors of respective chapters by the date this book was printed.

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