

Rurban Sequences. Inquiries on Dropull's states of Liminality

THE OBJECTIVE AND RATIONALE OF THE PROJECT RURBAN SEQUENCES

International Workshop: Inquiries on Dropull' states of Liminality
February 08th-17th, 2019, Tirana & Dropull, Albania

International Doctorate in Architecture and Urban Planning
POLIS University, Tirana Albania – UNIFE Ferrara University, Italy

Academic staff responsible:

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Assistant: PhD. Eranda Janku

Introduction

This Workshop is a research activity organized under the framework of the Joint International PhD Program of POLIS and Ferrara Universities in the fields of Architecture and Urban Planning. Aimed at the 34th cycle PhD candidates, the workshop builds on the previous and ongoing research work of the Department of Applied Research, and Observatory of Mediterranean Basin (OMB) unit, within the FR&D, Faculty for Research and Development at POLIS University.

Each year the research activity promoted by the workshop is aimed at a specific topic, which is then open for debate and critical analysis by each students/ researchers individually, in order to develop their capacity for operating within any given planning context by developing tools, able to generate new architecture and design processes. Previous work includes "Durana" (2014), "Albanian Riviera" (2015), "When a River Flows"

(2016), "Projecting Shkodra" (2017), and "Prishtina, New European capital" (2018), etc. This year's topic concerns with the Municipality of Dropull in south Albania, in other words, a case of "the linear city" which has previously been object of a study and development plan by POLIS University.

During the last three years a mixed group of planning professionals and students have been gathering data and developing a Local Development Plan for the area. After the Territorial Reform of 2016, the territory of Albania was reorganized, reducing the 373 initial Municipalities (divided in Urban and Rural units) into 61 Municipalities (with mixed characters, Urban and Rural). This process not only has presented the local governments with new challenges - due to the new and larger areas falling under their responsibility - but it has also created units which are profoundly Rural, like in the case of Dropull, creating a series of conflicts because of the profoundly

Urban language of the Planning Law and its bylaws and guidelines. So there is a desperate need for developing and adapting new methodologies and instruments of planning also for large territories of rural, agricultural and landscaping character.

Furthermore, the Municipality of Dropull is located in the South-Eastern cross border area between Albania and Greece. With a surface of 467km², Dropull is organized in 3 sub-units (Dropull i Sipërm, Dropull i Poshtëm, and Pogon), and it's home to nearly 7,128 inhabitants of Albanian and Greek minorities. With a total of 41 villages, the Municipality of Dropull doesn't have a main capital urban center, but its inhabitants and economic activities are evenly distributed among the villages. With very rich landscape and touristic potentials, and divided in two main parts - along the valley of Drino River and in the mountains of Nëmërçka and Bureto - Dropull is characterized by diverse landscape typologies, and is rich in cultural heritage. Its present economy is mainly based on agricultural and farming activities.

Nevertheless, some of the biggest business districts in the country are located and operate along the main national road there. Dropull stands on the boundary between two countries (Albania and Greece), but also in the threshold between the Drino River valley/basin and the watershed area of mountain chains of Nëmërçka and Bureto.

This state of liminality (being an intermediate state, phase, or condition, in-between, but also transitional phase)

of the sequence of villages, is the main object of the workshop. It can also serve very well as an inspiration for the detailed design strategies that ought to be developed for the area, but also generate different research paths and stimulate critical discussion among the academic staff and PhD candidates, setting the foundations for the scientific contributions each student/researcher is required to present after the conclusion of the workshop.

Given the Rural character and the potentials that come with it, the lack of reference landmarks for the Municipality, and despite the richness of the territory, one of the main Strategic Objectives of the Local Development Plan was "to consider Dropull as a "linear city" with five main centers." The five centers are developed in proximity with main motorway and around five main villages, which have distinct characteristics and development potentials. Such potentials could be used as energizers for the development of the surrounding areas.

The concept behind the "linear city" also reads Dropull as a link between the two main regional hubs, Gjirokastra (Albania) and Ioannina (Greece), aiming to transform the role and weight of Dropull' territorial gravity from a mere area of transitioning status between two main/bigger cities, into a complementary network of settlements and services which uses all its local potentials and regional competitiveness to develop as a whole. This might sound a better and more logical alternative, rather than concentrating the

development strategies and investments exclusively in as single area.

Considering the hard (winter) weather conditions, poor infrastructure and difficult terrain, only 4 centers were investigated for the scope of the workshop: Dervicjan, Sofratikë, Jorgucat and Vrisera. The fifth center of Pogon will be introduced referring to the GNL, General Local Plan, and is considered exclusively within the proposed general strategy by the workshop.

A) Dervician

Dervician is located in the border between Dropull and the Municipality of Gjirokastra. It is the biggest village/town and it has served as an administrative center until 2018. Although agriculture is the main economic drive of the village, some of the main businesses are located in its vicinity. Due to massive migration trends in the past and present, there are many abandoned houses which withhold distinct architectural characteristics and reflect cultural values. The group of students/researchers assigned to work on the Dervician area will be responsible for developing a general strategy first, and later identifying and detailing acupunctural interventions on the topic entitled "Restoration and Housing".

B) Sofratikë

Sofratika is one of the biggest villages along the valley of the Drino River, characterized by scenic landscapes and fertile agricultural land. Agriculture and processing of local products in small workshops are the main economic drive of Sofratika, although several businesses populate the area along the national road. A series of old churches and the archeological site of Adrianopolis are located nearby and contribute to the cultural identity of Sofratika. The group of students assigned to work on the Sofratika area will be responsible for developing a general strategy first, and later identifying and detailing acupunctural interventions that fall under the topic entitled "Landscape and History".

C) Jorgucat

Apart from being the new administrative center of the Municipality, Jorgucat is seen as a strategic node. Jorgucat is located right in the center of Dropull, at the intersection of the road to Saranda Port and Riviera Region with the local roads that connect the valley of the Drino River with the unit of Pogon, in the mountains of Nëmërçka and Bureto. Therefore a series of strategic projects like the Multimodal

Station, the Regional Market and the extent of the business district, are planned to populate the center of Jorgucat and its surroundings. The group of students assigned to work on the Jorgucat area will be responsible for developing a general strategy first, and later identifying and detailing acupunctural interventions that fall under the topic entitled "Innovation Technology and Urban Regeneration".

D) Vrisera

Vrisera is the fourth and final center that will be object of the workshop. It's located in the cross-border area between Albania and Greece. Agriculture and farming are the main economic drives of the village and, given its strategic position, a new high speed road towards Saranda and Riviera is in program. The road will start in Vrisera, connecting Dropull with the Region of Ioannina and the touristic southern Region of Albania. Because of its strategic location, a new "Development Park" nearby Vrisera has been proposed. The Park will function as a Research and Business Area, creating connections between local products, new products, promotion of local potentials, development of cross-border projects, and training of the local population. The area has great landscape and heritage potential as well. The group of students assigned to work on the Vrisera area will be responsible for developing a general strategy first, and later identifying and detailing acupunctural interventions that fall under the topic entitled "Tourism Development and Brand Design".

E) Pogon

Pogon is the main village of this region deep into the mountainous area, and in the crossroad that connects local roads to Zagoria area (Albania) and Zagori area (Greece), with Gjirokastra. The General Local Plan considers it as one of 5 main administrative subunits of Dropull, and strengthens its potentials of heritage, tourism, agriculture and animal farming. Pogon is a good platform for hosting, assisting and pushing further up in the mountains hikers, bikers, skiers and tourists of adventure. It is a perfect base for supporting the industry for collection of tea, herbs and medicinal vegetation.

Topics for each village

- a. Restoration and Housing – Dervician
- b. Landscape and History – Sofratike
- c. Innovation Technology and Urban Regeneration – Jorgucat
- d. Tourism Development and Branding Design – Vrisera

e. Mountain tourism, Animal farming and Herbal medicine - Pogon

Teams of researchers

- a. Nikolla Vesho (POLIS) + Veronica Vona (Ferrara) + Doris Andoni (POLIS)
- b. Emel Peterci (POLIS) + Martina Suppa (Ferrara) + Blerim Nika (POLIS)
- c. Joan Konomi (POLIS) + Fernandez Ilaila Garzia (Ferrara) + Ilaria Fabbri (Ferrara)
- d. Johana Klemo (POLIS) + Laura Boffi (Ferrara) + Aida Ciro (POLIS)
- e. All together groups.

The Main Objective of the Workshop:

As main objective each group must elaborate a strategy in the scale of the village developing acupuncture interventions. All the groups will work under the same general municipal strategy, developed under the framework of the Local Development Plan by POLIS University.

Methodology:

The workshop is structured in a way that promotes the merger of different expertise to address the diverse aspects related to the Dropull context. The following steps will be used as a pragmatic approach to combine theoretical knowledge, physical environment and existing data:

- 1 - Introduction to the area
- 2 - Site visit and fieldwork
- 3 - Theoretical lectures + Case studies
- 4 - In class work + Project discussion
5. Final presentation and publication

Expected results:

- a. Graphical materials
- b. Presentation + exhibition
- c. "RURBAN SEQUENCES. Inquiries on Dropull' state of Liminality" – an individual scientific papers draft

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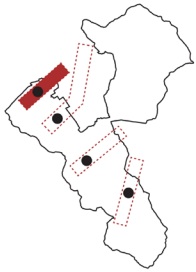
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Polis University - The General Local Plan of Dropull, (2019), – Polis team: Besnik Aliaj, Sotir Dharmo, Eranda Janku, Amanda Terpo, Sherif Lushaj, Godiva Rembeci, Dritan Shutina, Ledian Bregasi, etc.

Polis University - The General Local Plan of Zagori, (2013), – Polis team: Besnik Aliaj, Sotir Dharmo, Ledian Bregasi, Ledio Allkja, Eranda Janku, Kejt Dhrami, Dea Buza, Fiona Imami, Mario Shllaku, etc.

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1 / Dervican_Restoration and Housing

Doris Andoni, Nikolla Vesho, Veronica Vona

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This is a strategy for preservation and renovation of Dervician housing stock. Dervician is a rural village with a strong historical value. It is possible to recognize in it different aspects that represent a great potential, but the lack of connection and valorisation between the different parts is leading the village to depopulation and architectural decay. In this situation, the idea that emerged during the workshop was to find the main strengths and vulnerabilities of the village, identify where the historical and cultural aspects were already integrated, even if not valorised, and where the connection is lacking.

'Re-connection' is the project key word.

The project performs an analysis of several aspects, according to restoration requirements, according to which no intervention can be realised without a precise historical and material knowledge of the object, both in the case of buildings and urban tissue. Therefore, three different types of settlements have been identified, two historical settlements and a contemporary one. They both contrast and merge with one another. A second field of analysis concerns the social issues. There is a lack of social identity in Dervician accompanied with the abandonment of houses.

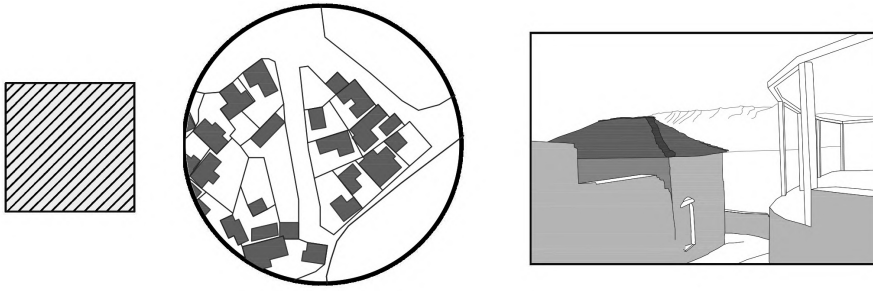
There are three main directions of intervention: First, there is a need to develop guidelines of town planning and development in a detailed level, such as:

what intervention should be allowed in the historic part of the town; where new houses can be built; what kind of housing typology should be designed and built; what kind of materials should be used; how the old houses can be restored; how the streets should be paved; and what kind of greenery should be planted.

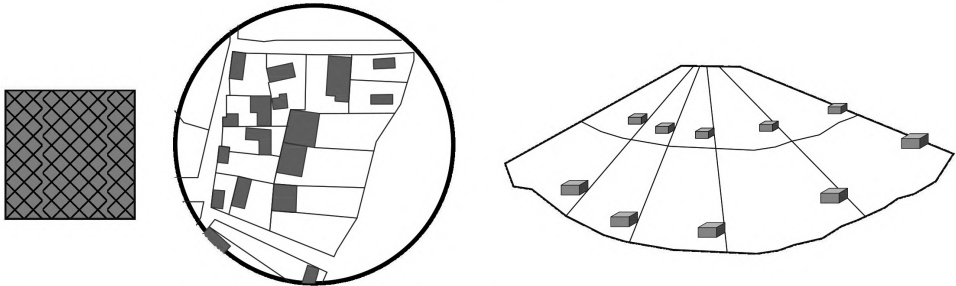
Second, local administration should be trained and stimulated to stay in Dervician. There is a risk, as in other towns, that when students go to study in the main cities, they end up staying there and don't go back to their hometown. Therefore, in town job training associated with some small incentives may give better results.

Last, but not least, the use of existing national programs like "Urban renaissance" for investing and improving the centre of the towns, and housing programs like "improving living conditions of poor and vulnerable groups" are a priority.

Finally, the project consists of an analysis of the typological, architectural and constructive features, with the aim to recognise the specific buildings characteristics that should be preserved. Thus, while from a typological point of view, two different types of residential buildings have been identified, several architectural features that represent an historical value and are typical of the border between Greece and Albania, have been detected.



Historical village - organic pattern according to terrain model



"Soviet" village - planned pattern according to terrain model



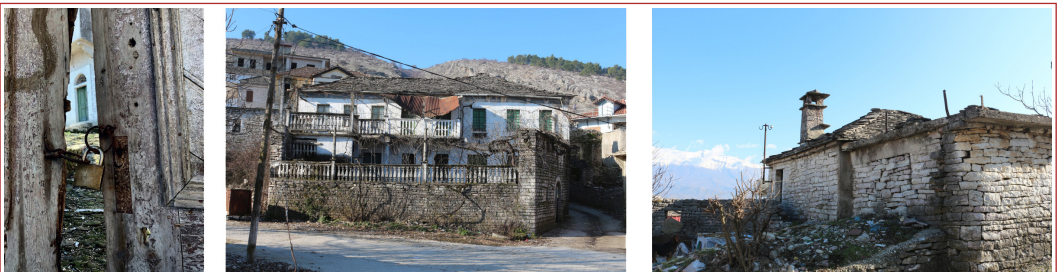
"Post '90" village - NO RULE

Fig. 1 / Analysis / Pattern Identification, morfological land use
Source / Doris Andoni, Nikolla Vesho, Veronica Vona



Positive existing connection

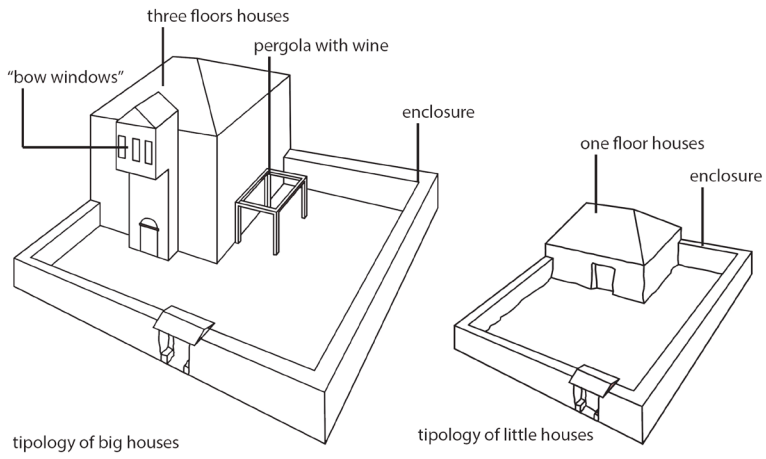
Non - existing connection



Housing Problems

Fig.2 / Housing Problem
Source / Doris Andoni, Nikolla Vesho, Veronica Vona

Typological distinctive features



Architectural distinctive features

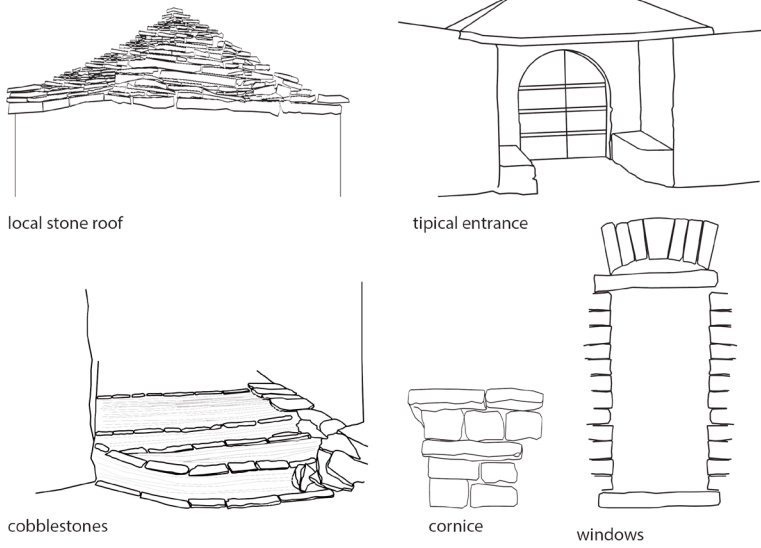


Fig.3 / Housing Problem
Source / Doris Andoni, Nikolla Vesho, Veronica Vona

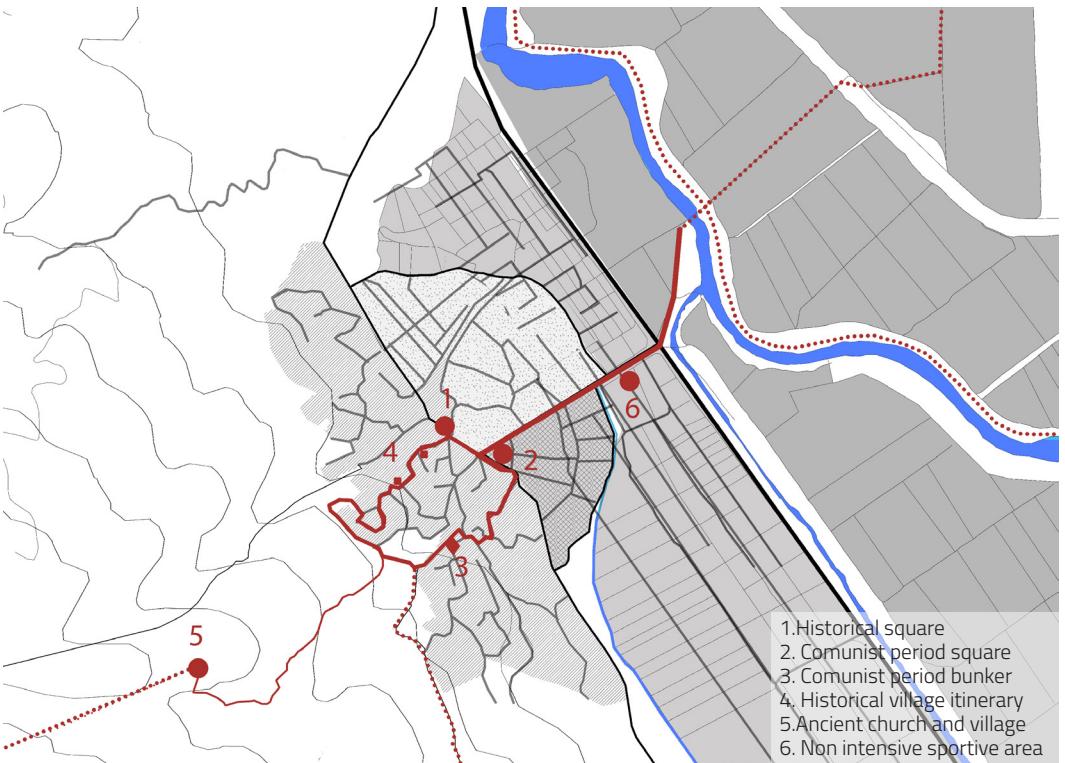
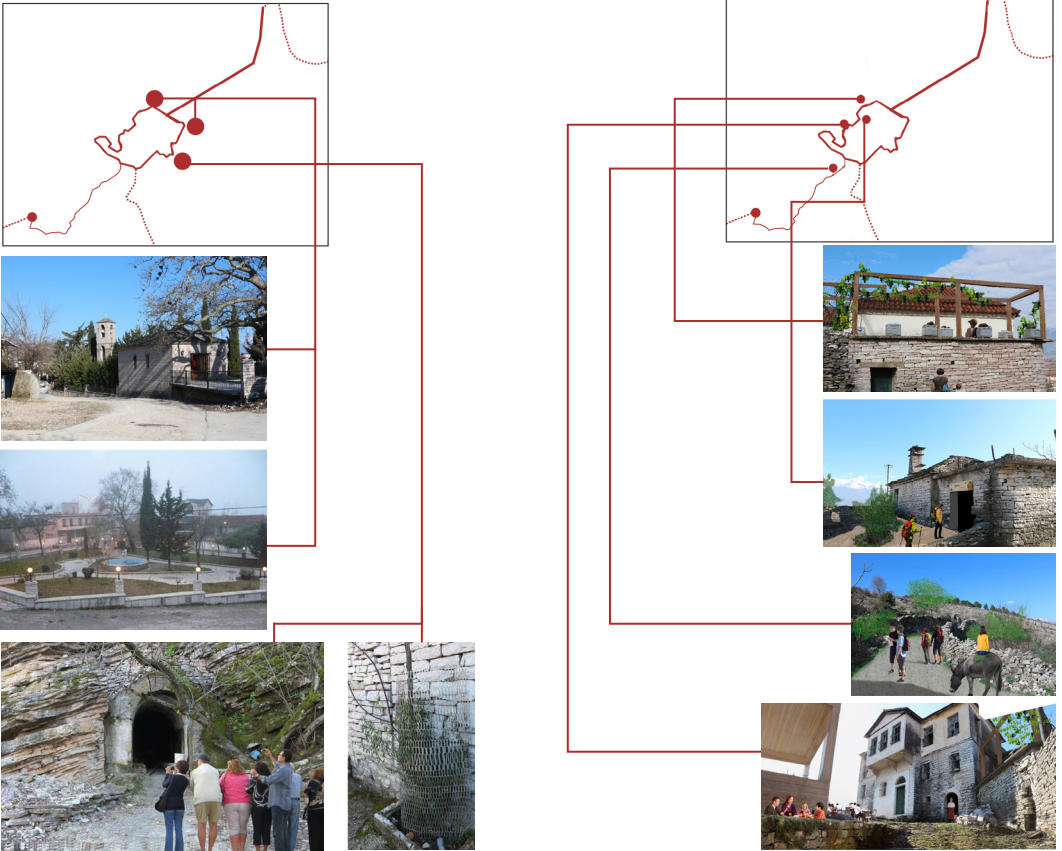


Fig.4 / Strategy
Source / Doris Andoni, Nikolla Vesho, Veronica Vona

Reinforce relationship between historical village and the "soviet" village

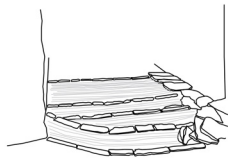
- Join the Historical the "Soviet" village in a pedestrian route inside Dervičan that guides tourists in discovery of the different historical moments the different soul of the village

- Reuse the abandoned houses with new functions conncted to tourism, trekking and local products.



Reinforce historical village

Restore the architectural characters where they are damaged or delete



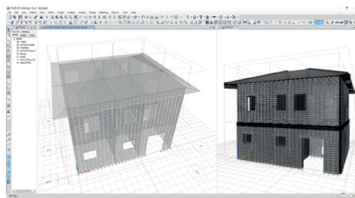
Remove the concrete paving and restore the cobblestones



Restoration of damaged elements



Restore or improve structural consistency



- a) Diagnosis and site investigation
- b) Maintenance
- c) Apply Traditional methods
- d) Be reversible, if technically possible (ICOMOS)
- e) Modern specialized technologies

Create relationship between historical village and the new expansion

- Regulate the morfological aspects of the planning:
 - a) to PLAN the growth
 - b) to ADAPT the planning to the terrain model



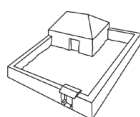
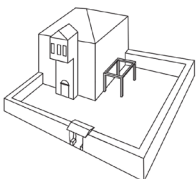
In the mountain use the Organic Pattern according to the ancient roots (reinforcing them if necessary)



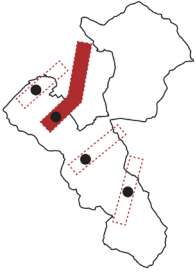
Respect the serial planned path of the field where present

- Don't push down the historic city by too high building

- Design the new building respecting the historical materials and typological and constructive characters **WITHOUT IMITATING BUT PICKING THEM IN A CONTEMPORARY KEY**



- The use of the enclosure
- The use of the pergola
- The slope of roof
- The entrance
-



2 / Sofratikë_Landscape and History

Blerim Nika, Emel Petërçi, Martina Suppa

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This article discusses the idea of different independent landscape dimensions in the "liminality" state. The co-existence of the natural, rural, archeological and socio-economic structures, according to the French ethnologist Arnold Van Gennep, indicate how the concept of "liminality" today has affected the experience of the region, tourism and migration of people.

The claim is that what is understood in reality as a "liminal" state, it stands for a transit situation that should be shaped by innovative and creative ideas in order to influence the generation of different projects that would bring the city back to life. In the workshop projects presented here the context under investigation is divided in layers, which reveal the potential to transform the village of Sofratika.



Fig.1 / Innter connection
Source / Blerim Nika, Emel Petërçi, Martina Suppa

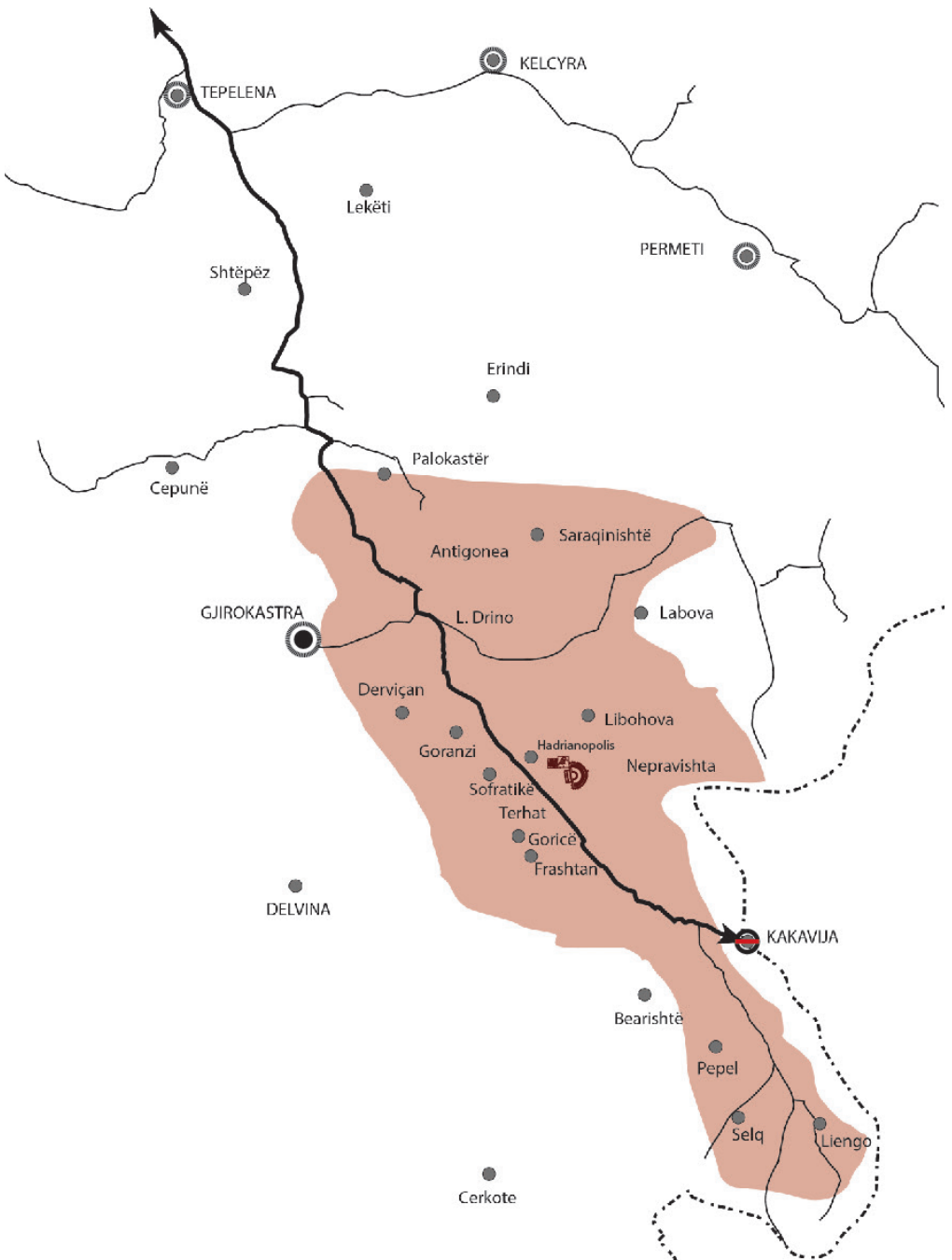
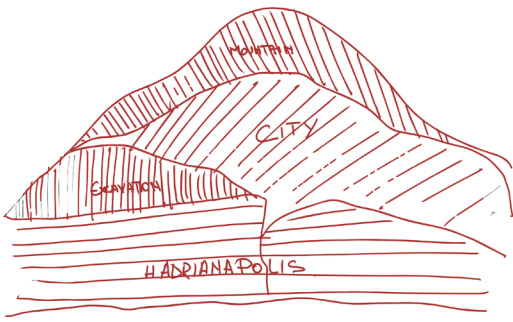
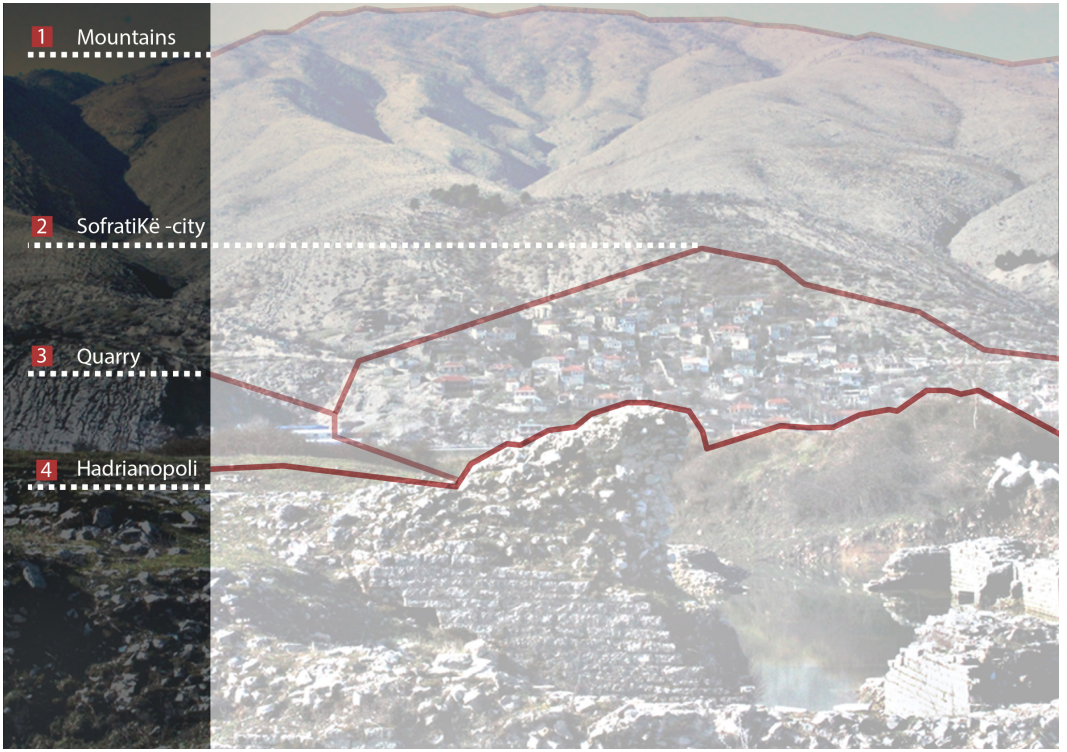


Fig.2 / Archeological Map Drinos Valley
Source / Blerim Nika, Emel Petërçi, Martina Suppa

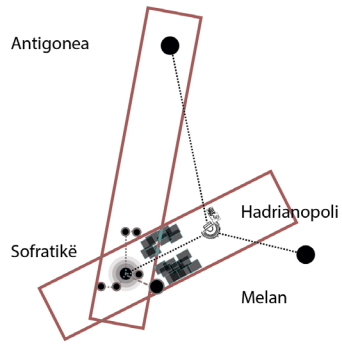
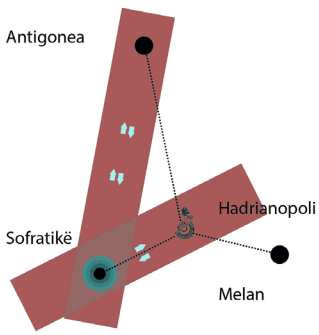


2 STRIPES/ 2DIRECTIONS

+

4 CLUSTER SYSTEMS

+



Sofratikë ➔ Hadrianopolis

Sofratikë ➔ Antigonea



archeological system

historic system

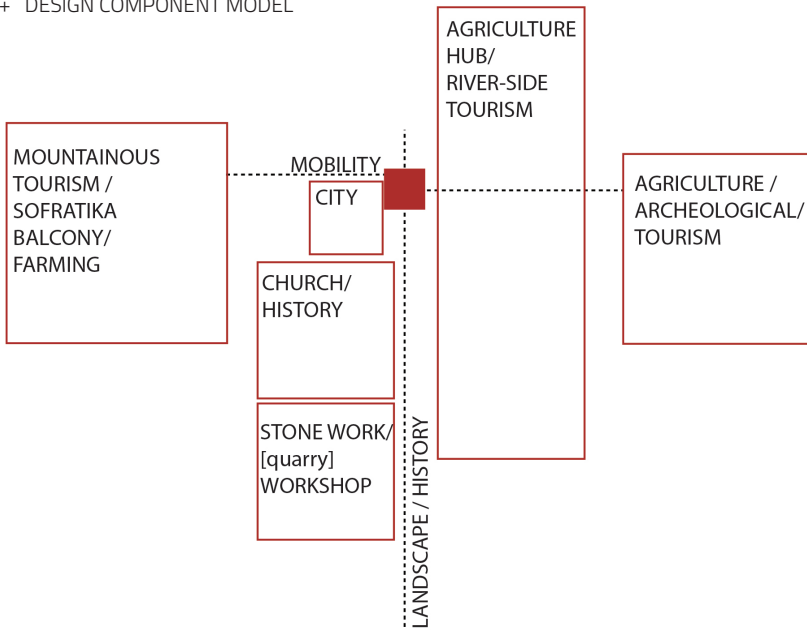


economic activities



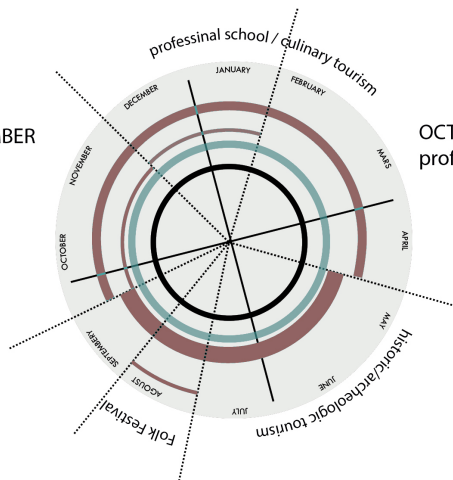
agricultural landscape

+ DESIGN COMPONENT MODEL



DECEMBER/JANUARY
culinary turism/religious turism

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER
wheat cultivation

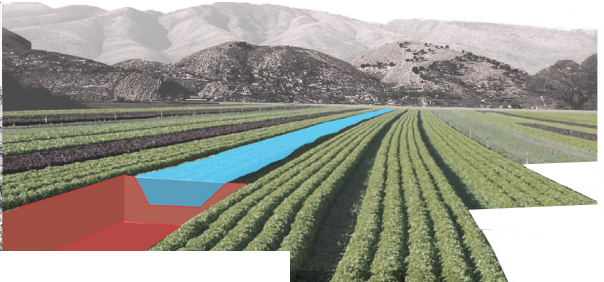
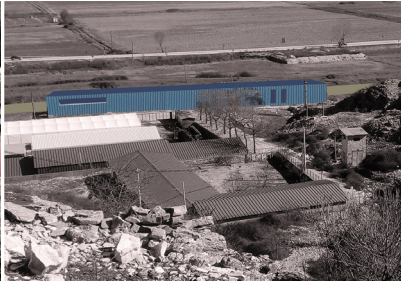
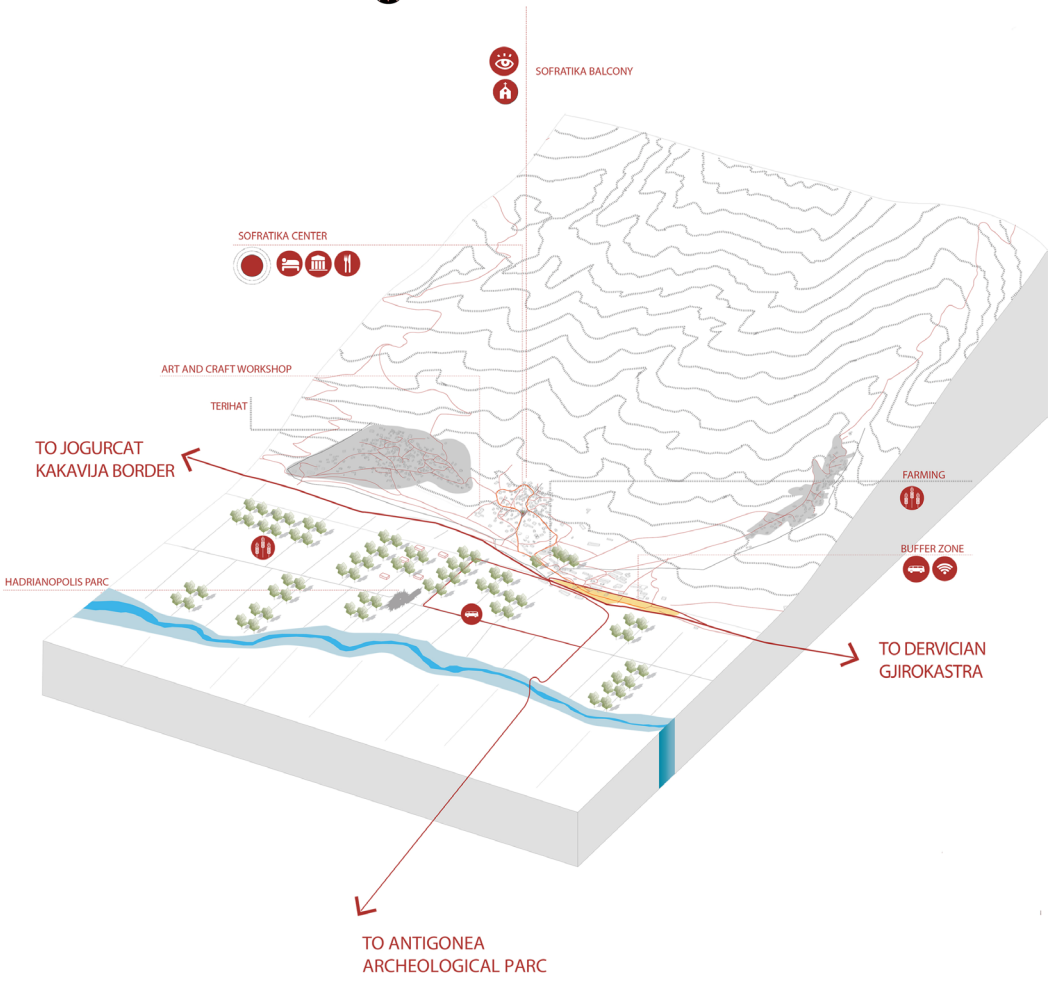


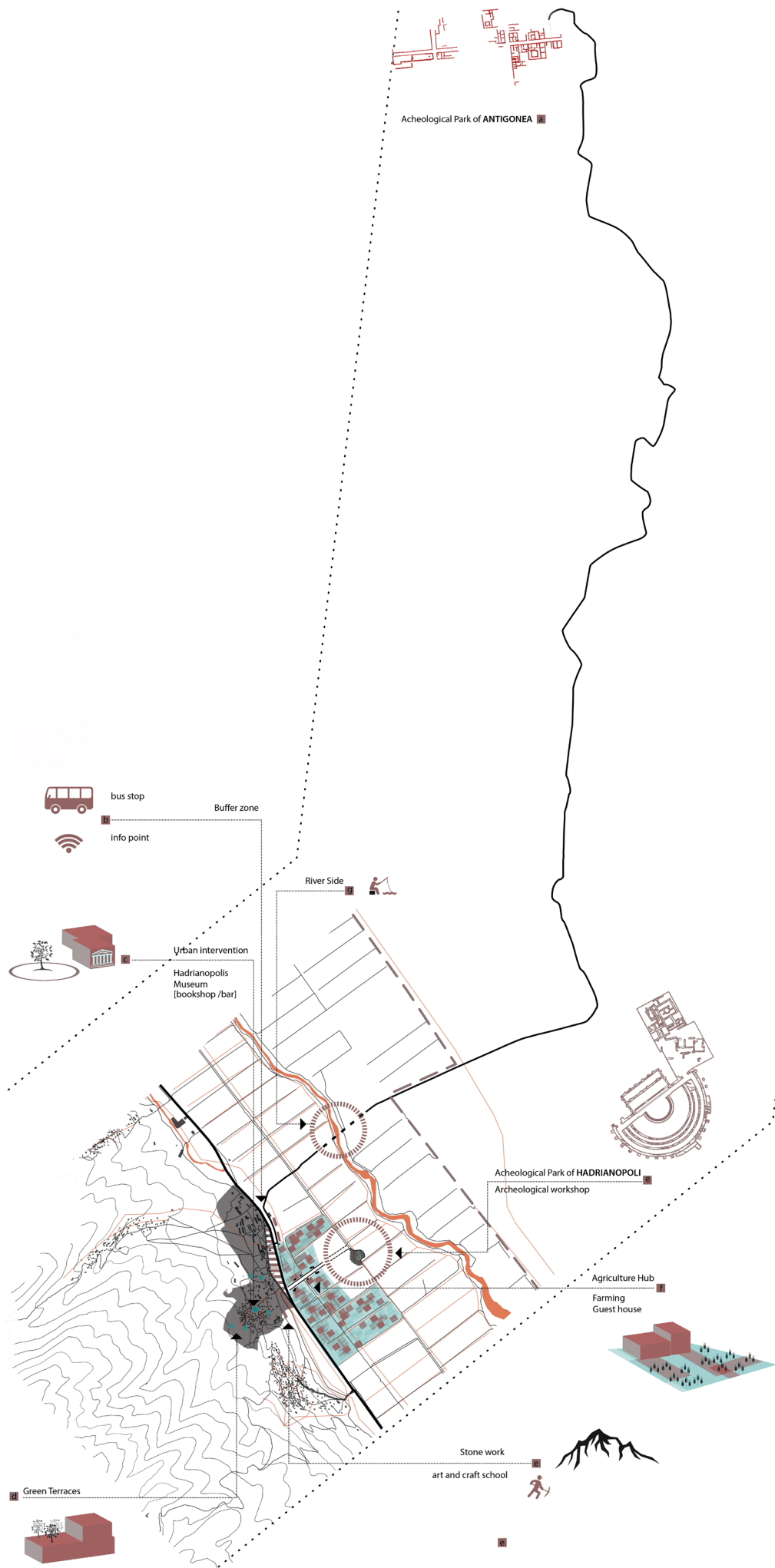
OCTOBER/APRIL
professional school/

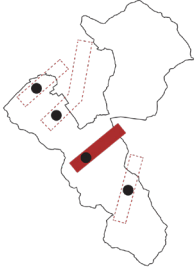
SPRING TIME/
MAY/SEPTEMBER
archeologic / culinary turism
cultural / turism

Fig 3 / Revitalize Strategy
Source / Blerim Nika, Emel Petërçi, Martina Suppa

- NATIONAL ROAD
- SECONDARY ROAD
- CENTER NODE
- 🛏 TOURIST ACCOMODATION
- 🏛 HISTORIC RESORT
- 🏠 RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS
- 🍴 RESTAURANT
- 👁 PANORAMIC VIEW
- 🚶 STONE WORK
- 📶 INFO POINT
- 🌾 FARM







3 / Jorgucat_IT and Urban Regeneration

Ilaria Fabbri, Joan Ikonomi, Laia Gemma Garcia Fernandez

Jorgucat has a strong potential to be transformed, first because of its geography, being right in the center of Dropull Municipality, at the intersection of the road to Saranda with the local roads connecting Gjirokastra to the Greek border, and second, because it houses the administrative center of the nearby villages.

Apart from these specific features, Jorgucat shares the great challenges affecting the other main villages of Dropull: depopulation, poor access to services and little public transport connectivity, and general lack of urban energy. Moreover, if compared to some of the nearest villages like Sofratika, for instance, Jorgucat's development could scarcely take advantage of the archeological site remains. Therefore, since the upcycling of the cultural heritage is not probably the specific feature of this center, its revitalization should start from something different.

In Jorgucat there is a high number of private lands that could be reused for agricultural crops. After close-up research on the area, our proposal seeks to bring

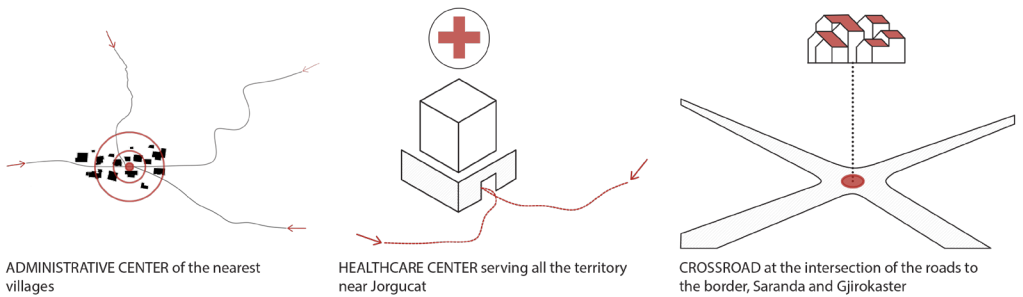
back prospective economic business to the village. To achieve this we focus on better public spaces and better infrastructures through the improvement of the existing infrastructure, and the revitalization of public spaces and monuments of cultural heritage. New sustainable businesses may be created through economic activity diversification and by supporting local products and services.

This project promotes the human and social capital by supporting rural networks, traditions, sports, and rural lifestyle. We propose acupunctural interventions at different levels: that of public infrastructures, local paths for tracking routes for tourist attractions and sports infrastructures, a local market that encourages local products, and the heritage sites.

With these small interventions in the Jorgucat area, we seek to promote sustainable economies, and at the same time bring back the young people to the village by creating opportunities, encouraging social relationships, and better infrastructure creations.



Fig1 / Site Map
 Source / Ilaria Fabbri, Laia Gemma Garcia Fernandez, Joan Ikonomi



JORGUCAT WEAKNESS

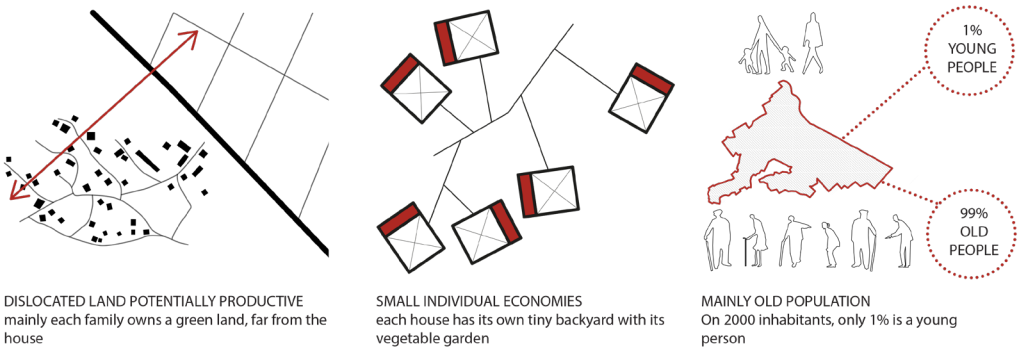
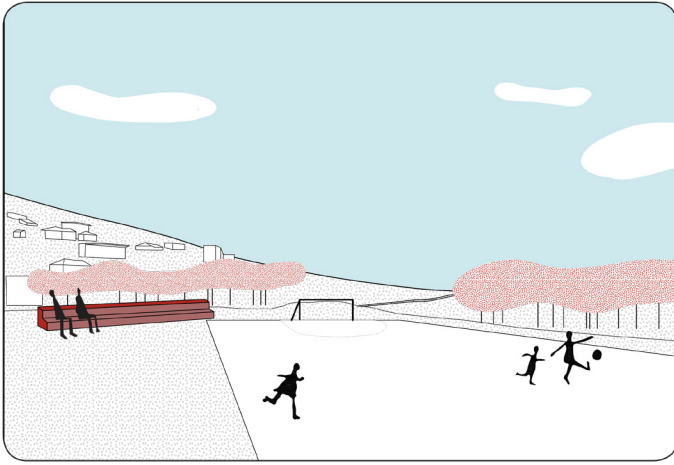
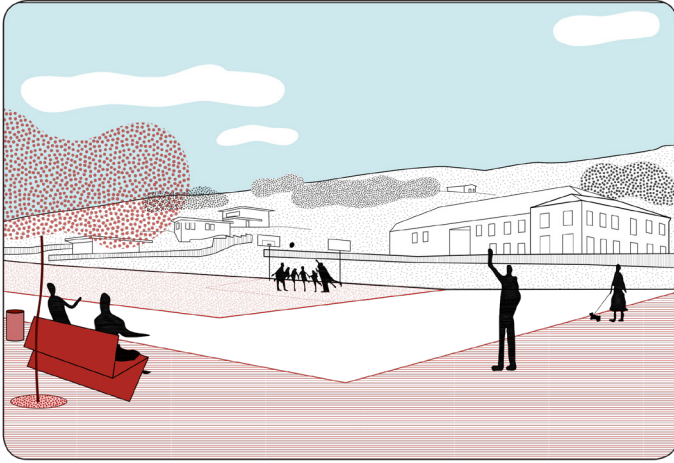


Fig2 / Jorgucat Strenght
 Source / Ilaria Fabbri, Laia Gemma Garcia Fernandez, Joan Ikonomi



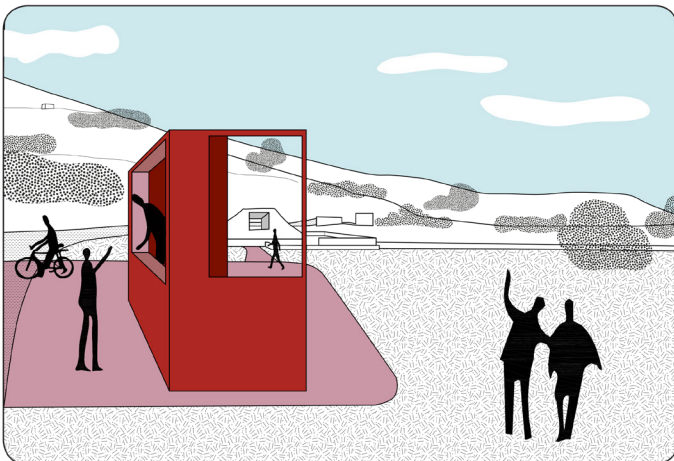
FOOTBALL PITCH AREA Sport facilities improvement and green refurbishment



BASKETBALL COURT AREA Sport facilities improvement with urban furniture and green spaces



COMMUNITY SERVICE STREET community market shelter for local products selling and urban refurbishment



TOURISM INFOPOINT AND BIKE RENTAL entering Jorgucat, and starting point of trekking routes

1:20 000 URBAN STRATEGY

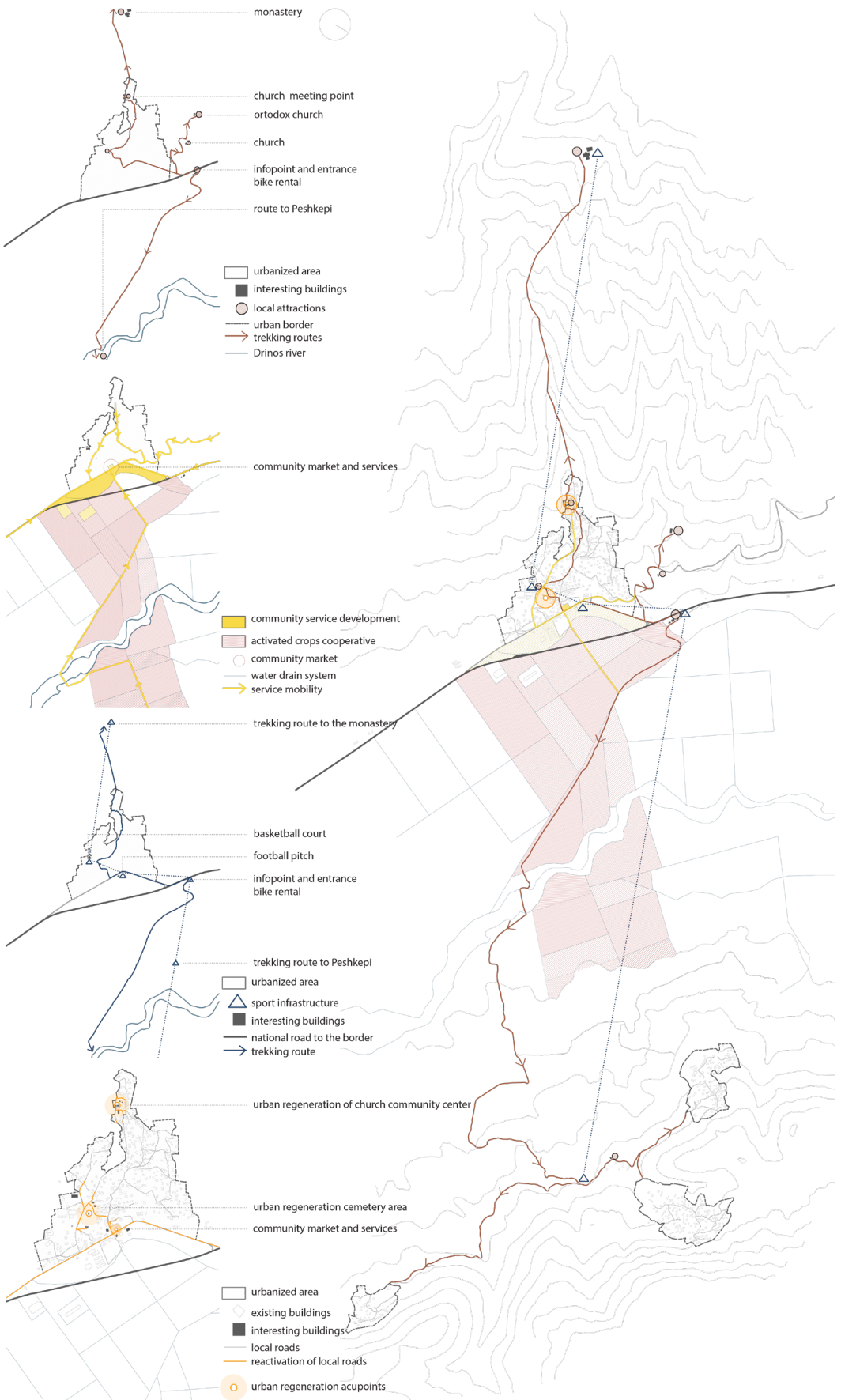


Fig4 / Urban Strategy
Source / Ilaria Fabbri, Laja Gemma Garcia Fernandez, Joan Ikonomi

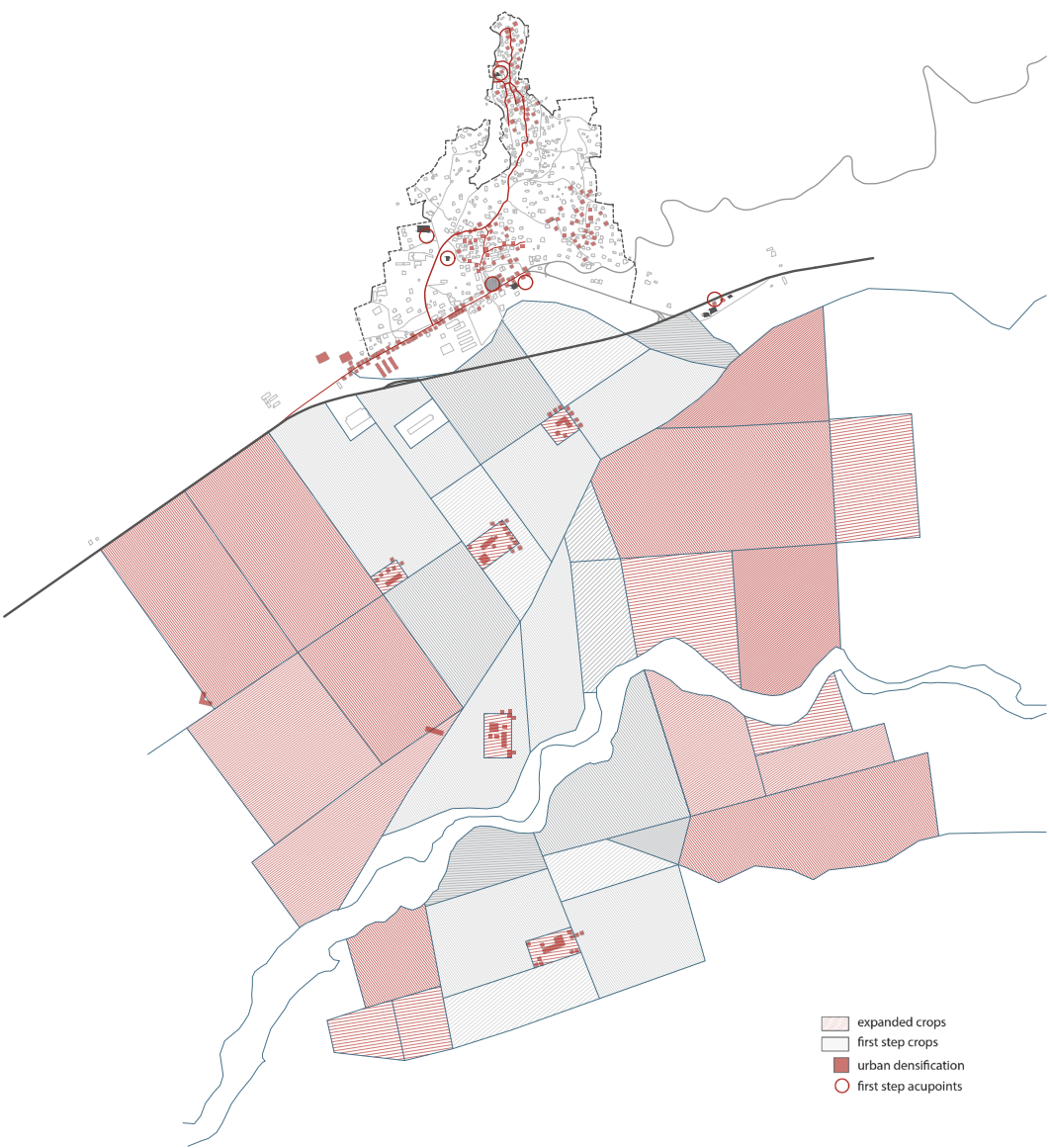


Fig5 / 2060 Strategic Development Plan
 Source / Ilaria Fabbri, Laia Gemma Garcia Fernandez, Joan Ikonomi

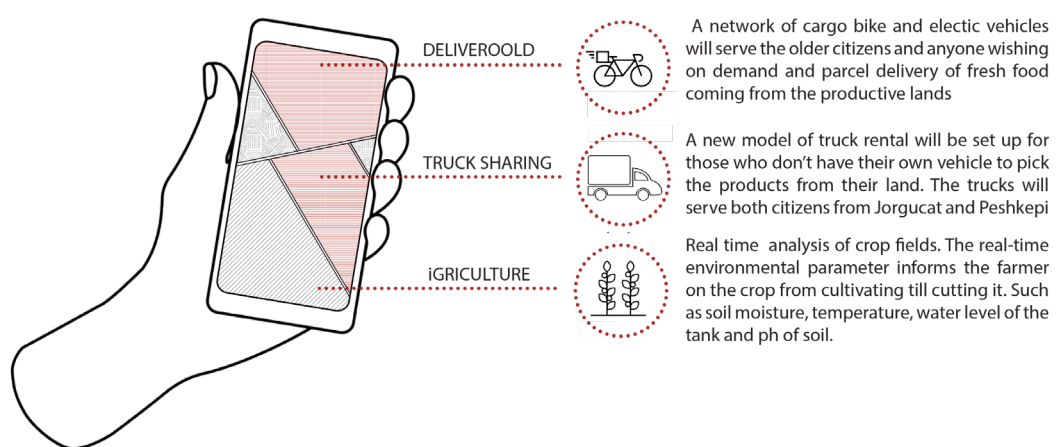


Fig6 /IoT Potential Implications
 Source / Ilaria Fabbri, Laia Gemma Garcia Fernandez, Joan Ikonomi

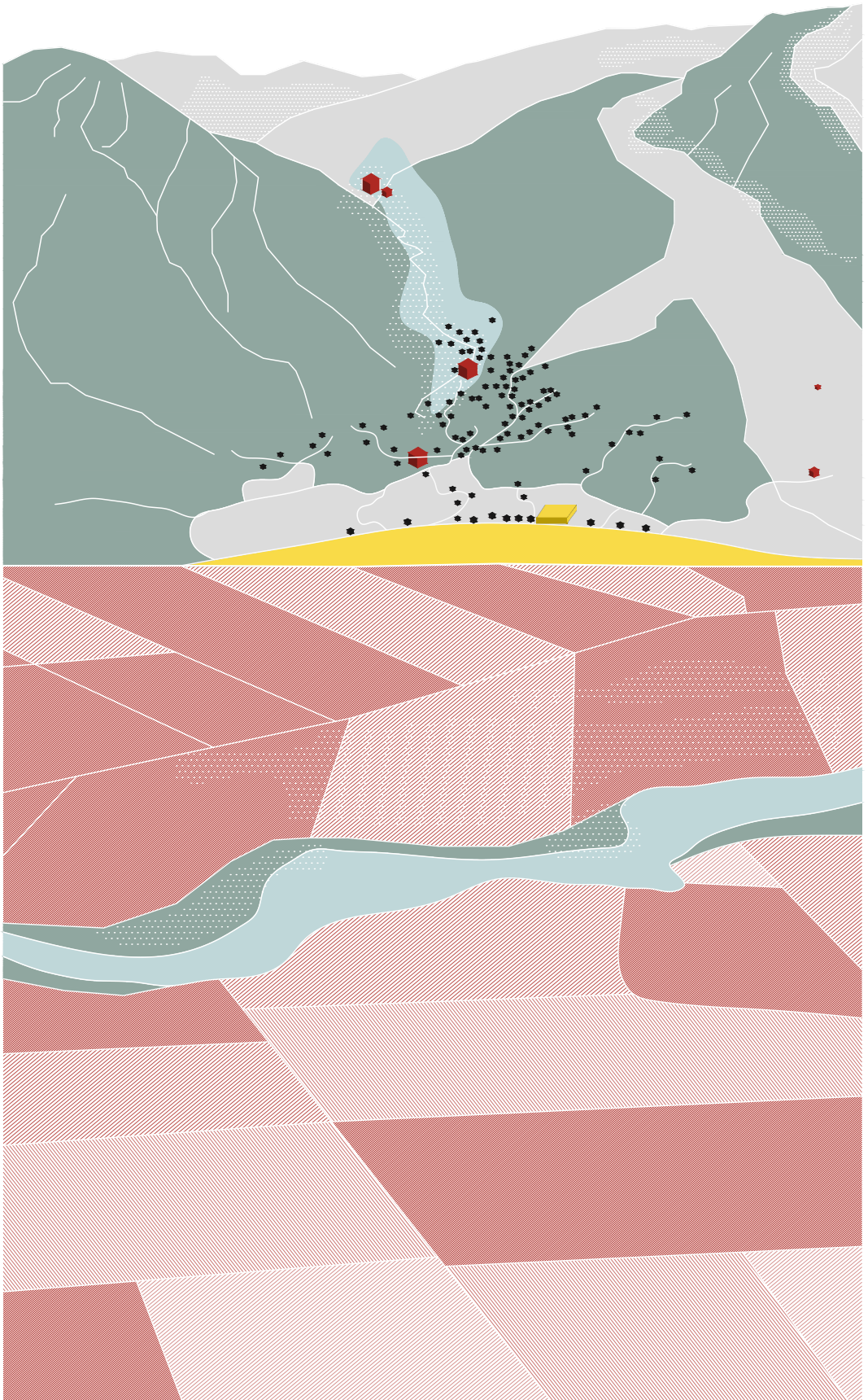
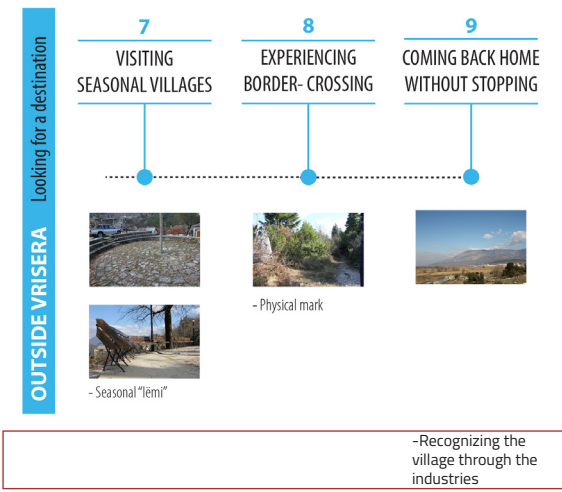
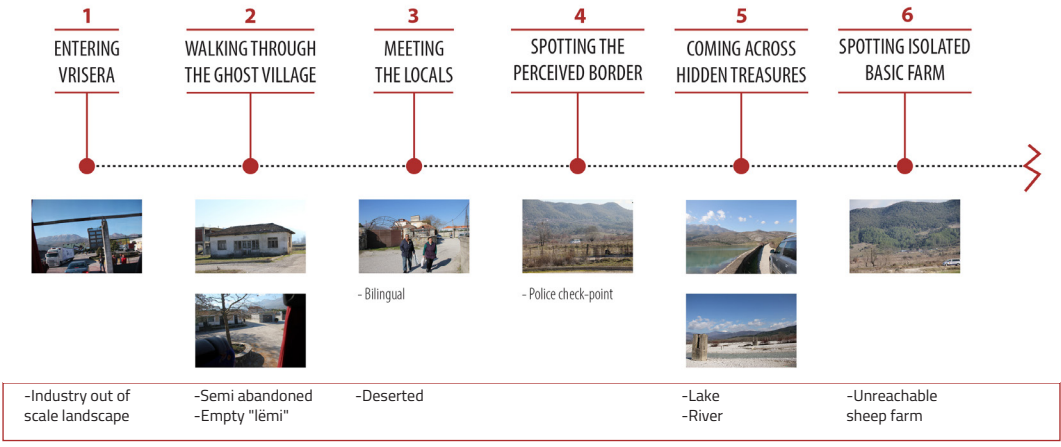


Fig7 / View of Jorgucat and the Valley
Source / Ilaria Fabbri, Laja Gemma Garcia Fernandez, Joan Ikonomi



AS A TOURIST

How might we attract people to Vrisera by exploiting existing businesses and unlimited spaces?

Fig1 / Blueprint of the turistic tour
Source / Aida Ciro, Johana Klemo, Laura Boffi

VRISERA INNOVATION PARK

> Relationships among actors as users & stakeholders of Vrisera Innovation Park

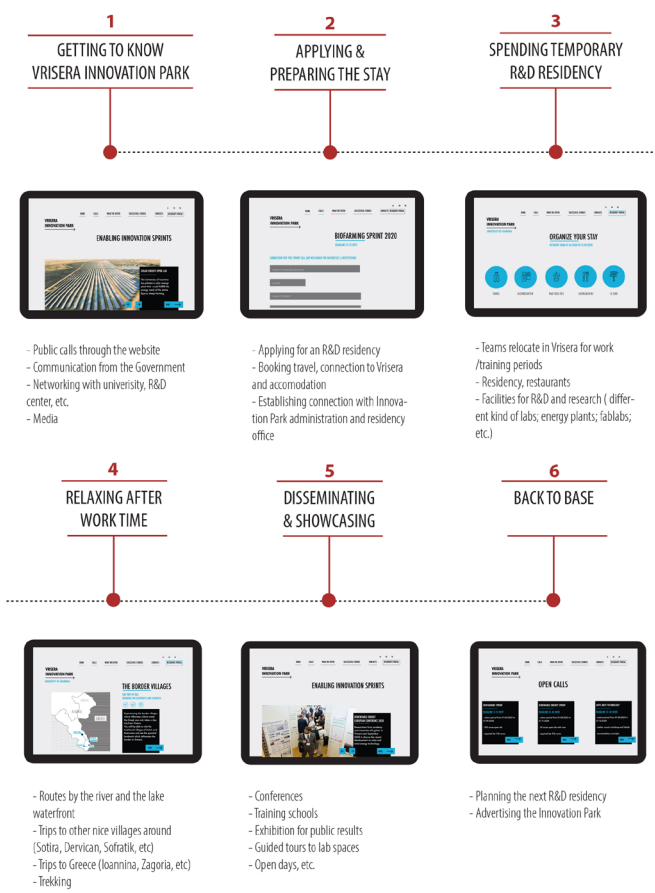


Fig2 / Identity
Source / Aida Ciro, Johana Klemo, Laura Boffi

0- 4 months

5- 6 months

7- 19 months

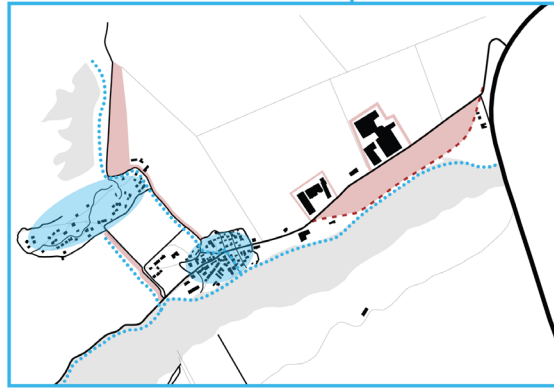
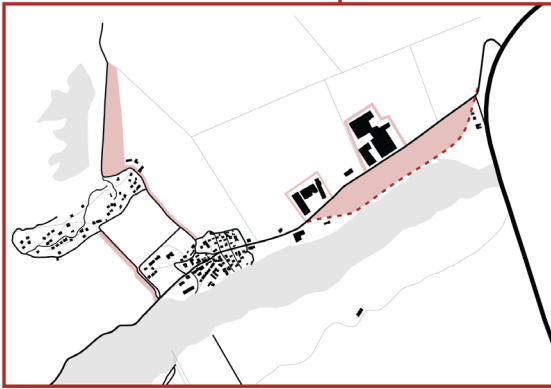
20- 28 months

Surveying & designing

A green gate to Vrisera

Fundraising

Upgrading & building



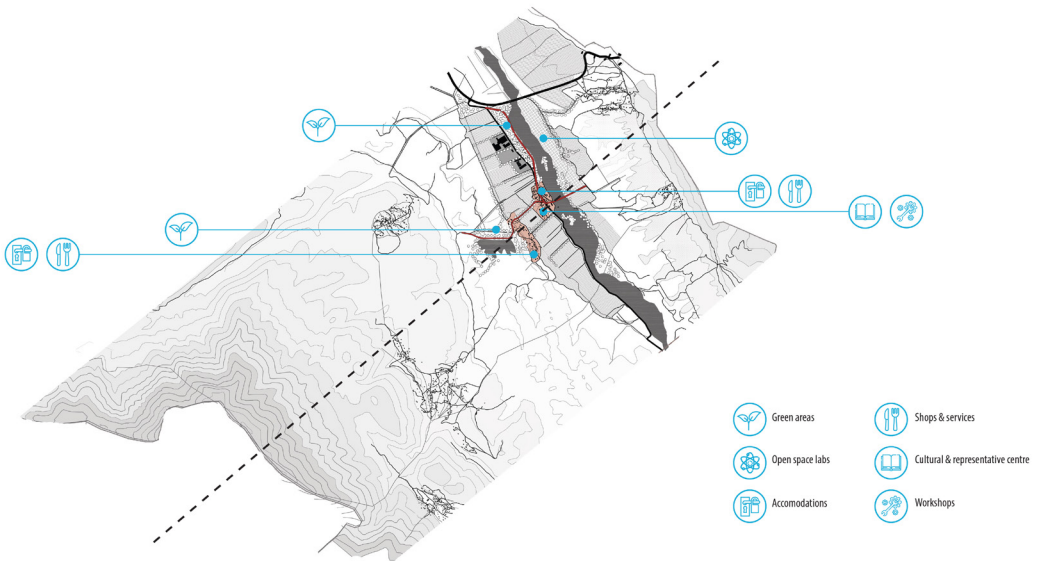
----- New entrance and local road

Green areas and paths

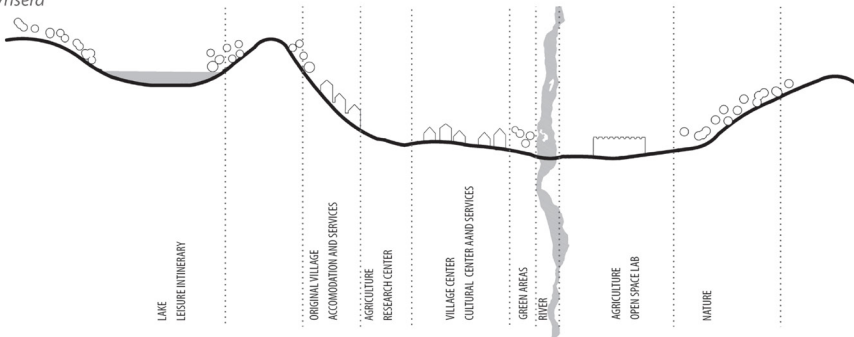
..... Leisure and cycling paths

Accommodations, shops and services

AGOPUNCTURAL INTERVENTIONS



> A cut through the new Vrisera



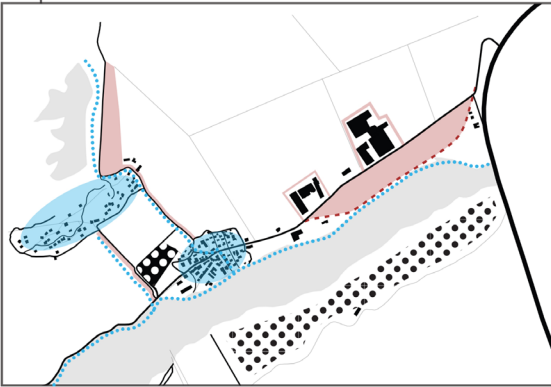
ROADMAP

29- 44 months

Providing the R&D facilities

on going

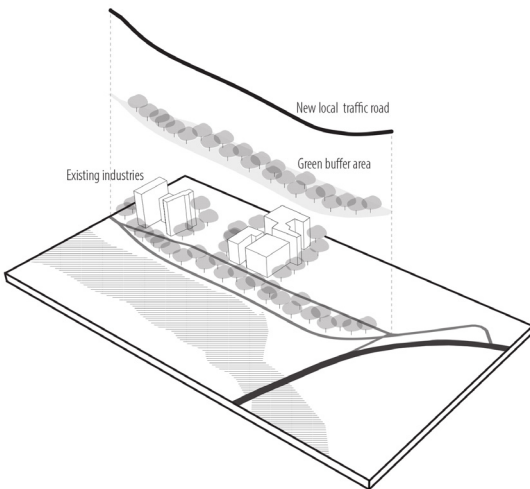
Communication & visibility



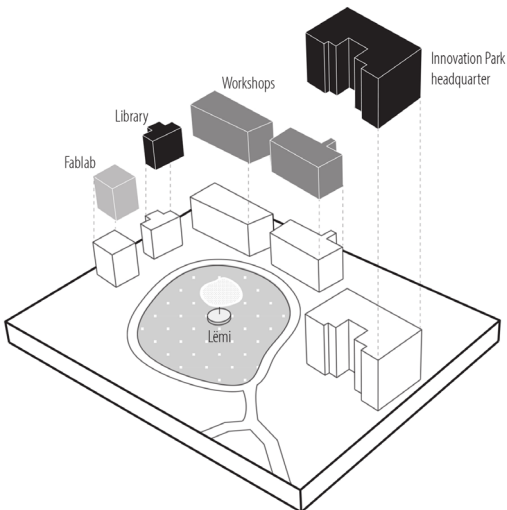
Innovation Lab headquarter, exhibition space, library



Open space labs (energy plants, agriculture, farms, etc)



Agopunctural intervention as green areas to embed the industries



Agopunctural intervention as a new cultural and representative in Vrsera