The Cultural Commons of Phoenice
Landscape as the natural and cultural heritage commons.

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Introduction

Phoenice 's development emerged through a gradual process of organizing existing residential areas, leading to its rise as the primary center and eventual capital of the Chaonia region by the mid-3rd century BC (Budina, Dh., 1986). In the Roman time, the city was primarily situated on the southern slope of the hill but eventually expanded into the surrounding wide fields, which were typically used for agriculture. The agricultural divisions of the territory, are noticed to have influenced further the maps of the early 20th century designed by the Italian architects and planners, requested at the time by the Albanian government. The fortified town on the higher parts of the hill, since its primary purpose was the protection, dominated over the open and unfortified urban expansion. This character of the town is supported by the traces of territorial divides that were recently discovered during surveys conducted around the hill. Research indicates that in the 6th century AD, the town entered a new urban phase where the city relocated to the higher section of the hill. This occurred because to the hydric instability of the area, leading churches, chapels, and medieval homes to repurpose the gigantic ruins of the Kaonian and Roman cities (Lepore, 2016, p. 63). The regional geography shows a dispersed population that favored high areas positioned to avoid the instability of the valleys. Lepore (2016) stated that this settlement form served two main purposes: territorial control and economic growth. According to the conceptual history of landscape urbanism, it is common to view urbanism and landscape as being in opposition, or to see nature as only offering brief respite from urban life influenced by buildings and infrastructure. Some theories argue that landscape architects are the urbanists of our day due to the growing recognition of landscape as a key element in understanding modern urbanism, driven partly by environmental concerns since the early 20th century (Waldheim, 2016, p. 3). According to Waldheim Ch. 2002, the concept of "landscape as urbanism" was initially developed by landscape architect James Corner during his collaboration with Stan Allen in the mid-1990s. Corner suggests that by creatively rearranging categories in the built environment, we might break free from the limitations of post-industrial modernity and overcome the shortcomings of the planning profession. The issue of identity loss is a prevalent concern in many communities in Albania, and it is particularly prominent in the case of Phoenice. The evolution of settlements over time showcases a historical and physical continuity that has gradually weakened its association with the local identity and legacy. The historical continuity is evident in the agricultural use of the lower regions of the territory, where remnants of Roman-era drainage canals have been discovered through archaeological digs and studies. The first documented excavation in the region of Phoenice were made by Luigi Maria Ugolini, whom conducted the initial archaeological research during 1926 up to 1927. The archeological excavation not only uncovered important evidence of the old settlement but also laid the stage for future investigations in the area. The primary objective of the recent archaeological expeditions, carried out collaboratively by the University of Bologna and the Albanian Institute of Archaeology, was to investigate the complex interconnection between the village and its surrounding environment. The commencement of these missions took place in the 2000s and they are currently continuing in the format of summer schools.

The study and data assist in establishing a cultural and spatial continuity over three distinct timelines: (1) prehistory and antiquity, (2) late antiquity, (3) medieval ages, and (4) 1900s. To facilitate meaningful historical comparisons, the PhD student created a periodization system during the workshop. The vocation, which has evolved over ages from the Roman period to the Middle Ages and up to the present century, was the essential feature to must comprehend and honor. The challenge faced was the reduction in population and the poor quality of urban spaces, which are the two main factors that shape the urban reality in the Municipality of Finiq.

The Phoenice municipality is primarily agricultural in nature and depends on the division of fields at the individual property level, as mandated by law no. 7501/1991[1], which pertains to agricultural land.

Aim

Within the scope of this project, the primary goal was to evaluate the existing conditions and connections among the landscape, heritage, and settlements. The aim was to strengthen historical continuity and deepen the relationship between all elements as art of the natural and archeological heritage, while also honoring their historical purpose. This study primary objective was define to enhance territorial expansion by highlighting the distinct separation between high and lower villages that have evolved over the course of centuries, with the aim to formulate potential strategies that can potentially address issues related to shrinking, isolation, and identity, with a focus on the landscape and heritage perspective.

Methodology

The research question of the project, from a methodological perspective, was: How can the form of the territory and the settlement be perceived and analysed, to provide a deeper understanding of the relation built during time between landscape and human heritage? Regarding the utilization of the terrain, our methodology involved analyzing it in two distinct sections: the lower layer of the city (lower settlement) and the top layer (high settlement). This argument is based on the premise that characterization has been valid since ancient times. The first step was gathering the theoretical material from bibliographic sources as a basis. The collection of the old maps through authors, came during the first phase of the study. After which, a field visit was performed that carried out the empirical inquiries. Notes from observation, where discussed during the

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1 / Law No.7501/1991, "On the land" had the main objective to redistribute the collective land under communist regime, into the users of the land living and working in the area: http://qbz.gov.al/eli/ligj/1991/07/19/7501
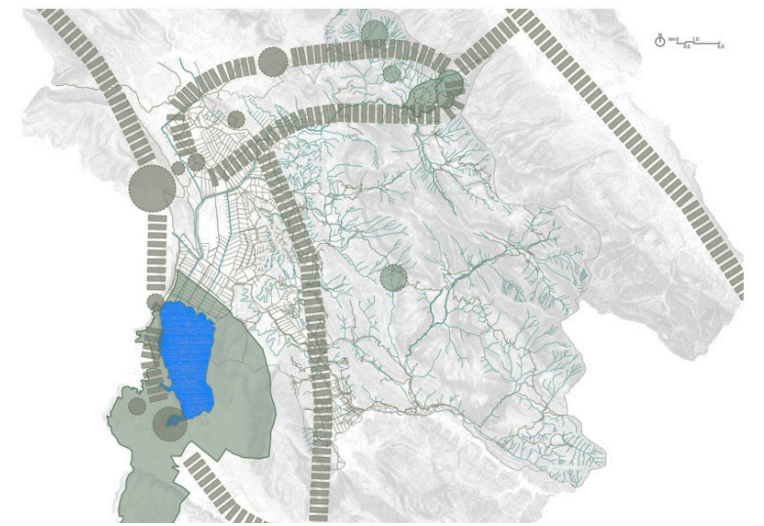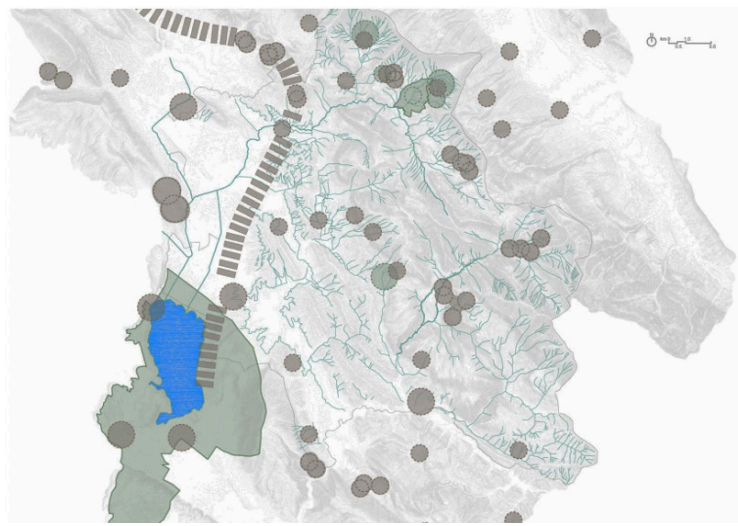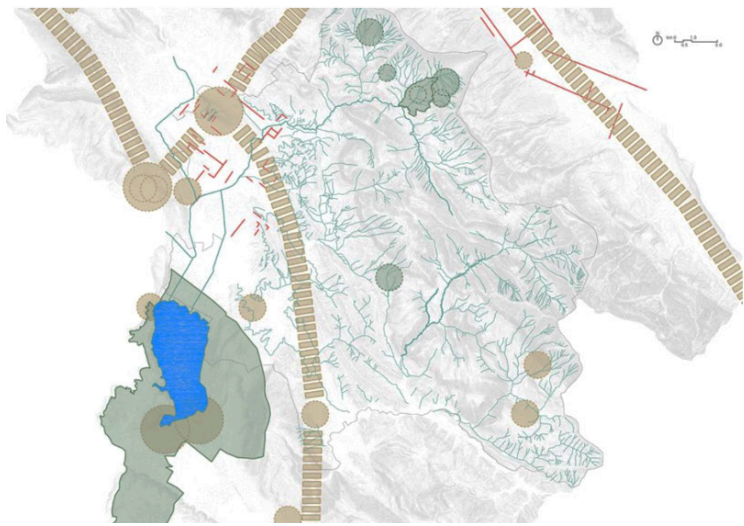
process of evaluation of the physical environment. Traces from the cultural heritage materials where identified and analyzed further, designed the methodology of the Artistic representations of landscapes.

Analyses and main findings

The distinction between a high settlement and a lower settlement, established at an elevation of 30 meters, has enabled us to differentiate these two primary regions (Fig2). More than thirty meters above the surface, there are established ecosystems, residential regions, and military zones that have been around for millennia. This is also the cultural heritage strata, which mostly is found in the hilly landscape. A significant portion of the land below 30 meters is found to have been always used for agricultural purposes and still is. In addition to that, it encompasses the water basins and rivers that go outside the boundaries of the municipality (Fig5).

So based on the above-mentioned analysis (Fig1), the conclusion about this part can be summarized into three main strata- ages:

1.   Ancient age[2]: 1. During ancient times, low-lying areas with rivers, lakes, and flat terrain were utilized for agricultural purposes, while highlands were reserved for fortifications, temples, and centers of authority.

2.   Medieval age: In the medieval era, power was concentrated in religious institutions such as monasteries located in elevated areas or on hillsides.

3.   XX century: In the 20th century, agricultural areas were located in low-lying terrain, while villages were built in open areas. Defensive structures were constructed on the

hills. Each altimetry elevation is distinguished by unique anthropic and natural landscapes. The distinction is further emphasized by the chromatic abstraction of the terrain, deliberately selected for this specific objective. Therefore, we have conducted a chromatic survey of the area, examining representative sections of the land. The agricultural and natural environment at low altitude has the most vibrant and vivid colors in the region (Fig3). The mountainous and hilly regions consist of paler and more subdued hues, encompassing a variety of gray tones. Based on these findings, we have established the connection and consistency between landscapes, cultural assets, and the presence of significant human settlements throughout a period of time. The focal focus of our effort lies in fortifying and enriching this connection that has been established throughout time (Fig4). The issues surrounding isolation and identity are resolved by improving continuity. Appreciating the area's historical and ongoing significance may enhance the residents' and tourists' understanding of the importance of their surroundings. This, in turn, may contribute to address the issue of population decline. We perceive the resolution of this problem as a direct result of solving the initial two constraints, isolation and identity. Operationally, we have

2 / Ancient age includes: (1) prehistory and antiquity, and (2) late antiquity
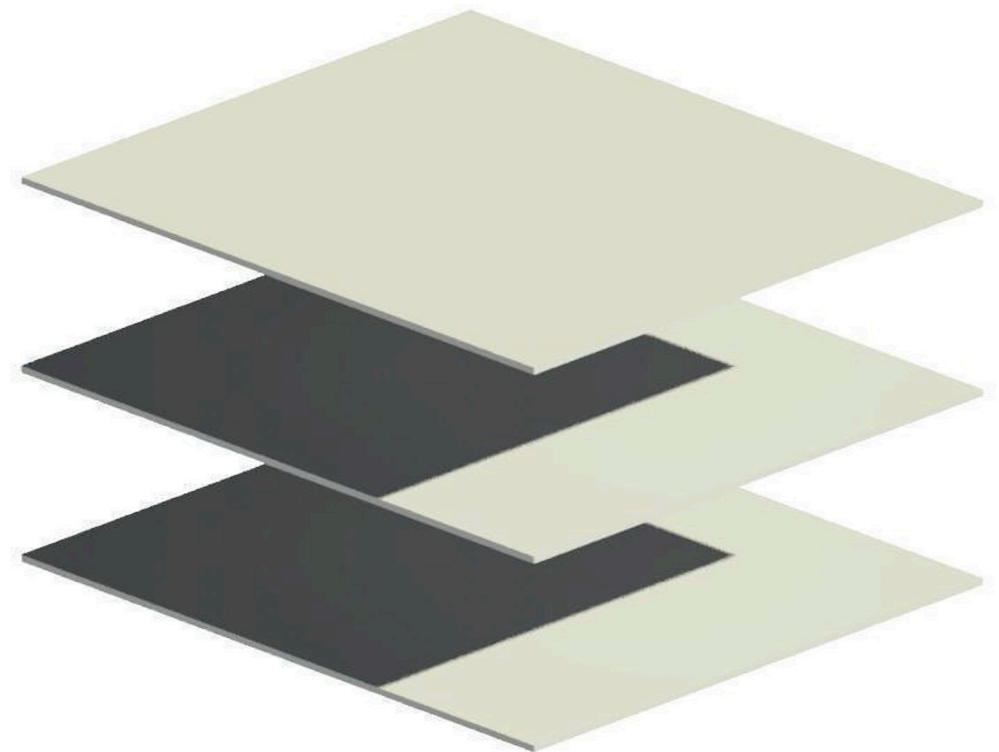
categorized the natural and historical legacy into distinct levels. Upon analyzing the neighboring villages, we have categorized them based on their sceneries and histories, specifically focusing on their continuity. Our approach was to acknowledge and honor the inherent characteristics of the terrain, and to engage with it in a way that amplifies its unique personality.

The analysis presented in Fig5 examines the placement of towns in Finiq municipality. It demonstrates that the notion of the hypothetical horizon line corresponds to their position. The majority of the communities are situated on elevated slopes of hilltops, while the lowlands are primarily used for agriculture.

The primary goal of this workshop, related to our theme, was to formulate specific recommendations at the urban level for the Municipality of Finiq and its surrounding settlements. In response to the research workshop question, we have formulated many strategic proposals to address and resolve the issue.

Strategy proposal
The project found as strong elements the itineraries and landmarks. Those resisted the shiftings of the territory during floods, and human interventions. The traces used to define the main routes, fell back in the centuries, thus they were considered as corridors to be strengthen. Seeking to improve and revitalize existing pedestrian trails in the area, the strategy aim to enhance the links between key community locations (landmarks) (Fig6). The primary objective of continuing existing paths was to improve the significance of major locations and pathways for the neighborhood, the cultural and geographical identity of the community. Intervention is defined as the process of reclaiming locations and relationships that are essential components of their cultural and ecological heritage.

Moreover, the improvement of localities may act as an attraction for tourists and events, leading to an economic revitalization of the countryside.

Our primary focus has been on examining the connections between Finiq, Karahaxh, and significant religious sites. Many of these sites are recognized as cultural heritage monuments. Among them, the most prominent is the monastery of Saint Nicholas in Mesopotam, which continues to be widely utilized by the community for religious ceremonies and festivals. Additionally, we also investigated the cave Church of Saint Mary and the remains of the church of Saint Michael.

The connection between the village of Finiq and Karahaxh
Karahaxh is a tiny village that is home to a Greek minority. In 2015, it became part of the Finiq municipality. At present, the area has become known for its abundant water sources and a plethora of restaurants that specialize in serving delectable foods that are representative of the local cuisine. The initiative aims to establish a local market as a central point for the village, focusing on offering goods directly derived from local agriculture. Furthermore, it is imperative to restore and establish a renewed connection between Karahaxh and Finiq.

The connection between the new and the ancient: Finiq - Phoenice
Regarding Finiq, the objective is to revitalize and reconstruct the historical Roman pathways, as illustrated in the map found in Lepore (2016, p.72), which organized the settlement in a grid-like pattern. The primary axis of Finiq aligns with one of the principal historic routes. Only some part of the axis parallel to this is conserved. Two or three perpendicular pathways intersected and linked both horizontal lines, establishing a hierarchical structure among the

*Fig3 / Abacus of the landscape types
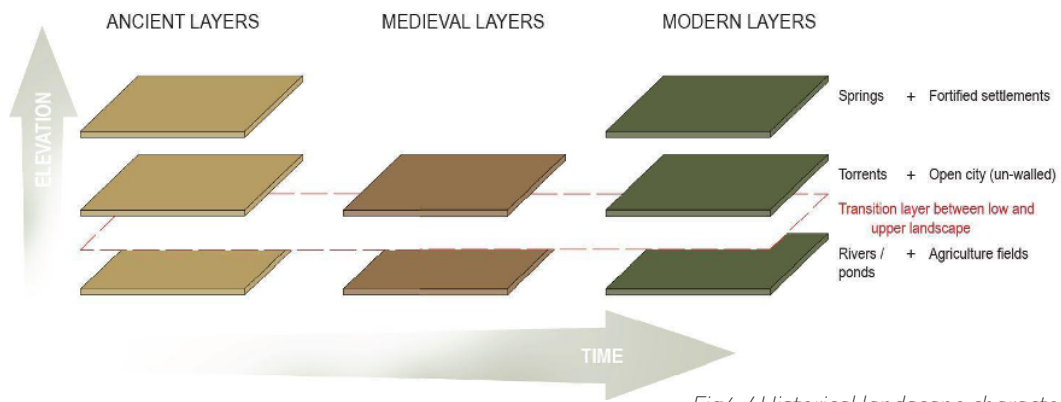source / the authors*

Fig4 / Historical landscape character
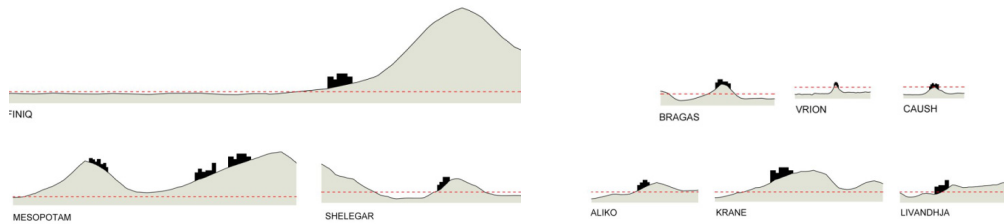*source / the authors*

Fig5 / Altitude of the settlements in Finiq Municipality - analysis of location referring to the hypothetical horizon line established in the framework of the project
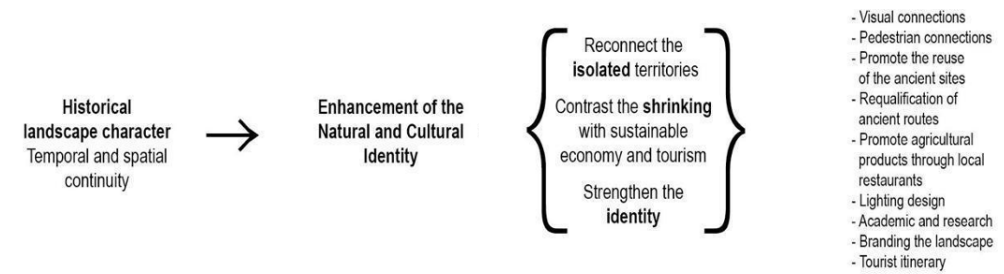*source / the authors*

Fig6 / Strategy diagram
source / the authors

Fig7 / Proposals for enhancement of ancient gates and remains of communist bunkers
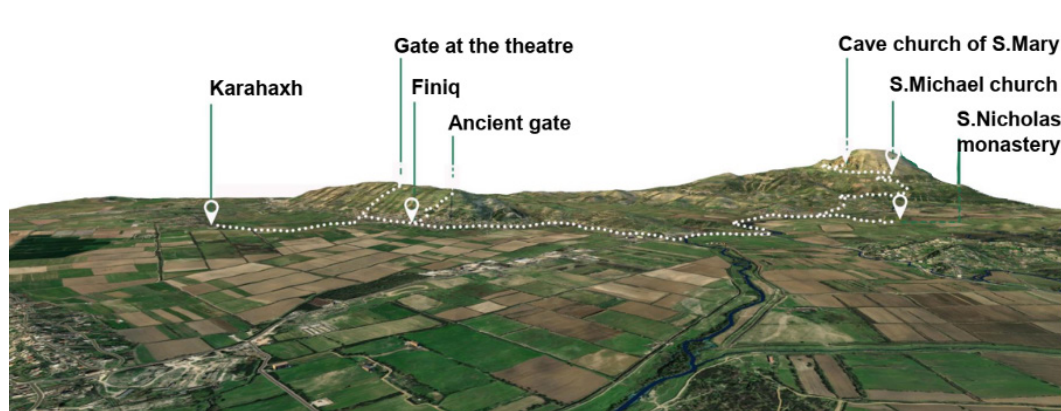*source / the authors*

Fig8 / Proposal for enhancement of existing local trails improving visual and physical connection between Phoinike and its setting
source / the authors

internal paths of the city. Currently, these paths mostly serve as internal access roads for some houses. Furthermore, the two routes that historically linked the fortified city of Phoenice with the lower section of the city will be restored, including the revival of the ancient gates of Phoenice. The initial linkage would occur between the primary street of Finiq and the theater of the ancient town. The alternative route always originates from the primary street of Finiq in order to reach the remains of the historical primary entrance of the ancient city.

The objective is to establish a direct link between the current town and the town of ancient times, facilitating access to the archeological site for both local inhabitants and, eventually, tourists (Fig7).

The project also includes provisions for re-purposing the archaeological site, not just by improving it with internal pathways but also by identifying new functions, in order to transform it into a vibrant hub for the community rather than a mere ancient artifact. For instance, theaters can be repurposed for several performances, while communist bunkers and their subterranean corridors can be reimagined. Additionally, there are numerous vantage places throughout the walls that provide a privileged perspective of the entire plain and the surrounding topography.

The connection between Mesopotam - Monastery of Saint Nicholas

The design concept aims to revitalize and reinforce the link between Finiq and the monastery of San Nicola by establishing pedestrian pathways that connect the two distinct areas (Fig8). Presently, the monastery serves as a venue for the community to partake in religious ceremonies. However, the intention is to convert it into a cultural hub that can host various cultural activities and be accessible to everyone, including tourists.

Conclusions

The objective of our project was to improve the current routes for pedestrians in the region, with the goal of strengthening the links between important community destinations. By enhancing these routes, we seek to enhance the cultural and geographical character of the community while restoring important elements of its cultural and natural legacy. In addition, we expect that the improvement of paths for pedestrians and links between important locations will bring about the revitalization of local areas. This, in turn, will attract tourists and events, leading to economic

revitalization that will benefit the country-side and its inhabitants.

This comprehensive strategy involves rejuvenating antique Roman roadways and restoring ancient passages and gateways to guarantee easy access for both residents and visitors. Moreover, our project aims to transform archeological sites into vibrant centers that go beyond simple restoration, serving as dynamic focal points for the community. This entails identifying novel purposes for historical sites, such as employing theaters for performances and refurbishing communist bunkers for cultural events. Ultimately, our main focus is on safeguarding and strengthening the cultural and religious ties, as seen by our initiatives to improve the bond between Finiq and the Monastery of Saint Nicholas. Our dedication lies in transforming religious places into inclusive cultural centers, guaranteeing their ongoing importance for both the local population and tourists.

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