

SETTLEMENTS, PUBLIC SPACES AND DWELLINGS

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Introduction - Each year the research activity promoted by the Ph.D. workshop is aimed at a specific topic, which is then open for debate and critical analysis by each PhD student individually, to develop their capacity for operating within any given planning context by developing theoretical tools, able to generate design processes and new research paths.

The International PhD of POLIS University, Tirana and Ferrara University in Architecture and Urban Planning is the framework for this research activity. With a focus on cities and architecture, the workshop, which is aimed at the 37-th and 38-th cycle PhD candidates, builds on the research work that has been done in the past and is still being done by POLIS University's Department of Scientific Research, Department of Applied Research within the FKZH, Faculty for Research and Development, and Observatory of the Mediterranean Basin (OMB) unit.

Issues and Transformations in the Finiq (Phoeniciae) Municipality

Like numerous other rural towns in Albania, the Finiq community struggles with identity loss, isolation, and declining population. The viewpoints of the settlements, public areas, and homes will be discussed in this part.

Like many rural villages in Albania, the Finiq community struggles with identity loss, isolation, and a declining population. In this section, these issues will be approached from the perspective of the

settlements, public spaces, and dwellings. The population of Finiq has been declining over time, which has resulted in a drop in social and economic activity. As fewer people use the town's public places, there is a decline in the quantity of services and amenities offered, another effect connected with the demographic changes. Because Finiq is situated in a remote area with few access points for private and public transportation, so its isolation is a serious cause for concern. Both residents' access to opportunities and necessities as well as visitors' ability to get to the town are hampered by this. The settlement of Finiq is close to Saranda, one of Albania's most popular summer tourist destinations and an important metropolitan center. It discusses viable options for the abandoned settlements to be revitalized as well as an affordable solution for the locals. Additionally, it poses a fresh problem to the community because they are still unprepared for the influx of tourists, which in Saranda nearly quadrupled in 2019 and 2020 as well as in 2021 and 2022. Additionally, there is an archaeological site for the ancient Phoenician city on Finiq Hill. Together with the picturesque rural setting, it is the town's primary tourist attraction.

Aim of the workshop

The main focus of the research which are I) Proposals for regenerative strategies at the level of urban planning where infrastructure, services, and natural systems can be included; II) Proposals

at an urban level for the Municipality of Phoeniciae and for the settlements that surround it; III) Proposals and specific projects for each settlement taken in particular.

For the Settlement Group, this section of the workshop aims to identify and research aspects like:

- The character of city transformations and the problematics of Phoeniciae?
- The urban factors and qualities stand at the core of these transformations and problematics?
- The ways that these transformations and problematics intertwine with city-making in the Phoeniciae context?
- The urban morphology, aggregations, typologies, and impacting factors
- Elements of Identity and Potential paths for suggestions and solutions towards the settlement's environment.

Methodology Used

The Methodology used during this project work was integrative and sustained in the three levels of analysis of the existing settlement, including: a) urban fabric, b) façades, and c) settlement aggregations. Considering Finiq as a town embedded in its landscape, it becomes evident that the main planning problems and the low quality of space within the village are determined, among other reasons, by: isolation of buildings, often without a clear relation and connection with the street, which is to be considered, at present, the main "public space" of the town; fragmented and spontaneous

aggregations of buildings.

disconnected open spaces, lacking mutual connections as well as plans for the intended use.

Connections within settlements

The primary communities of the Finiq Municipality, which were formerly part of different districts, now combined into a single municipality (the Finiq Municipality), were examined first in the analysis. Finiq, Mesopotam, Aliko, Livadhja, and Dshivër are these villages.

First, a study was conducted on the relationships between the various settlements that now comprise the Municipality of Finiq where the road connections, settlement size, number of fractions in each settlement, population, number of dwellings, etc., were examined. Subsequently, the relationships between individual settlements and the surrounding area were investigated, considering elements such as nature, geomorphology, and orography of this complex and diversified territory.

In the second layer of research, for the further examination of each settlement, the elements considered were the following: streets system, urbanized area, and location of main public spaces.

The road network of each village was abstracted through diagrams, showing the main and secondary routes. On top of these, a layer with the morphology of the urban area was overlaid, which differs from one village to another.

Intersections of streets were identified,



Fig1 / Housing Typologies in Finiq
source / PhD candidates



Fig4 / Housing Typologies in Finiq
source / PhD candidates



Fig2 / Housing Typologies in Finiq
source / PhD candidates



Fig3 / Typologies of Finiq
source / PhD candidates

as well as the location of public spaces, in mutual relation. No specific relation between these two elements was identified, but the tendency observed is that most of the public spaces or buildings are located next to significant crossroads. Mesopotam exemplifies the condition of these small rural settlements, where even the urban area is fragmented, as it is split into two different parts.

As a preliminary discourse, this analysis shows that these villages had no specific planned urbanization and their development was carried out in a spontaneous way by the inhabitants, taking into account the characteristics of the territory, especially the morphological structure of the land. The first hypothesis show sustains the findings that there is a main road that suggests a sort of linearity within the settlements. This characteristic can be traced in all five villages listed above, so, reading the territory and its history from a Muratorian perspective, it can be considered as a "matrix" road from which the urbanization started, as the infrastructure precedes the structures (Muratori, 1967).

Finii Urban Strips

The methodological approach used within this research activity included the urban analysis on the selection of four "strips" within Finiq, to perform a more in-depth analysis at a closer scale, looking at the organization of the building blocks. These strips have been selected so each of them integrates one of the public

buildings of Finiq or one of its main commercial activities:

Strip A incorporates Finiq's elementary public school;
Strip B the town hall and cafe;
Strip C contains a local market; and
Strip D is developed around Finiq's Holy Church of the Dormition of the Virgin.

These buildings or businesses have been chosen on account of their role in creating aggregation and gathering places, thus fostering social interaction between residents.

In addition, these strips run across and intersect the main street, each comprising both sides of the town, allowing for the analysis of the street front and the inner urban fabric, thus leading to a comprehensive examination of the settlement's environment.

This includes the urban and landscape features of this area, the relation between built and public space, the types of aggregation among buildings, the accessibility to different areas of the town, the architectural and design features of the dwellings, as well as the social and economic activities that create opportunities for the future revitalization of this and the surrounding settlements.

The analysis of the urban fabric of Finiq town was carried out by tracing the main lines generated by the configuration of the streets and those axes along which buildings aligned, recreating a recognizable evolution of the urban grid. In these diagrams, the layout of the main

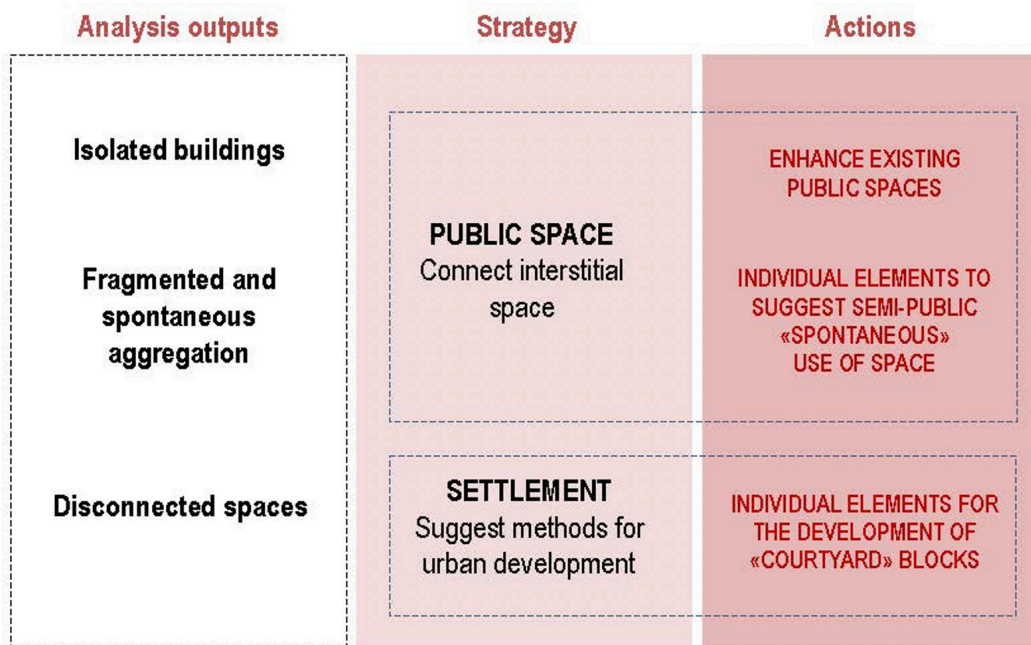


Fig5 / Project Work Framework
source / PhD candidates

pedestrian and vehicular streets was included. As it was expected for this type of recently developed urban settlement - mainly featuring small detached houses and few public or commercial buildings. From this analysis, it was possible to conclude that the main street can be considered as the evolution axis of this town, along which buildings have been organized according to a recognizable and regular structure. In contrast, farther from the main road, buildings are scattered following spontaneous and organic aggregations, resulting in a more irregular and fragmented urban fabric. Such study of the urban morphology led to the identification of a large number of "urban empty spaces", created by the irregular distribution of buildings, which stand out due to their fragmented configurations and lack of interconnections. These are often located

at the back of the main street, thus lacking mutual relation and communication with the main street front.

Typologies of Aggregations

In addition, along with the understanding of the overall structure and organization of the urban settlement, to identify those areas that may need development or improvement, further research was conducted on the building and façade "typology", which was intended - in a non-traditional sense as the relation between the "empty and filled" volumes reflected on the composition of the main façades, thus including the categorization of "finished" and "unfinished" parts of buildings. Many of the dwellings in Finiq and other Albanian towns are characterized by "unfinished volumes", either on the ground floor or first floor, that are planned to be completed over



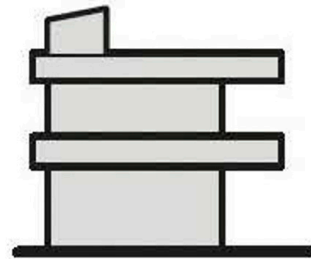
Fig6 / Project Work: Strips Analysis
source / PhD candidates

01

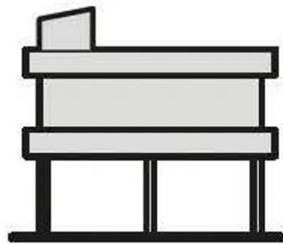


Standard dwellings - one or two levels

02

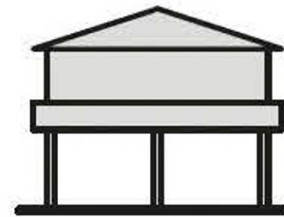


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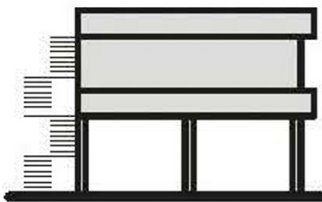


Ground floor unfinished

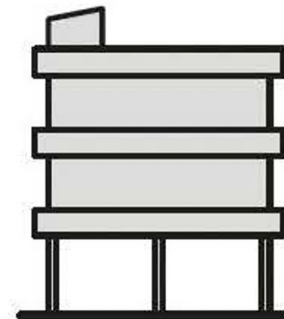
04



05

Ground floor unfinished variations
(external stairs / three levels)

06

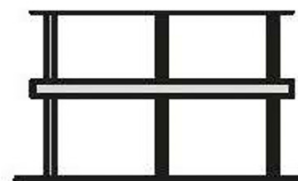


07

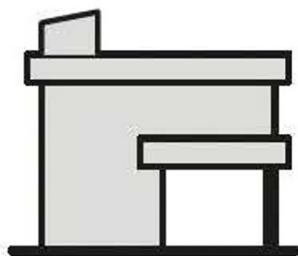


Unfinished - structural frame

08

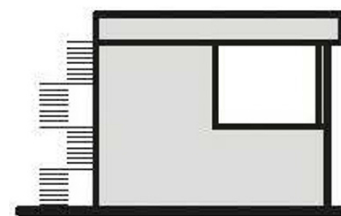


09



Porch or balcony

10



time.

This study led to the identification of "typologies" that, on account of their "empty" structures and pending their completion, might be suitable for the temporary allocation of public or semi-public functions.

A third level of analysis was performed on the typology of aggregations among buildings along the main road and at the farther back of the village. This examination investigated the different arrangements of buildings and clusters of buildings, as well as their mutual relations within the "strips".

Aggregations were classified according to whether open spaces are surrounded by buildings, in the form of courtyards, which convey a greater sense of enclosure and privacy; another category could be open courtyards, where "empty spaces" are partially enclosed by buildings but still have some connection to the outside and, often, to a secondary street; finally, some aggregations do not have a recognizable structure or organization, meaning they do not fit into either of the previous categories and may have a more organic, spontaneous or informal appearance.

By categorizing and studying these different "typologies", it is possible to gain insights into the overall organization and usage of the settlement's environment, and potentially identify opportunities for urban design or planning interventions.

Strategies and Suggestions for the Future of Finiq

On the grounds of the above-mentioned analyses, one possible strategy would be that of starting from the connection of the resulting spaces to increase the "urban porosity".

The implementation of this strategy is twofold.

First, it considers public spaces: the aim is to connect the most relevant interstitial spaces - revealed across the analysis - to generate continuity and quality within areas of public use.

Secondly, it tackles the urban morphology of the settlement itself, suggesting methods for the future development of the urban area, so that even isolated private buildings could be encouraged to foster their relation with the common open spaces, thus benefiting from this interaction.

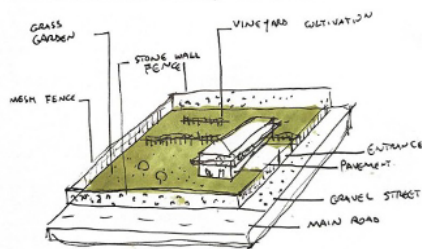
Hereafter some suggestions will be presented, addressing potential actions to be taken to implement the strategy

described above. The methodological approach that has been applied to the analysis of the urban aggregate is here replicated for the definition of urban "strips" to be used as samples for the identification of revitalization key strategies and interventions for the town, and the impact of urban regeneration on the social and economic well-being of the local community.

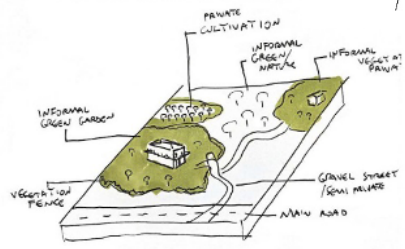
First, it is apparent that improvements are needed to the public spaces that are currently in place or the places close to the structures that are described as civic "hubs" for gathering. In certain cases, basic routine maintenance suffices, while in others, more organized projects might be a better fit. For example, the lack of a true public plaza is one of the most important problems of Finiq Center. It is possible that the building next to the Town Hall, which dates back to the communist era and was reportedly abandoned by the populace, will be removed to create room for a new square. This form of intervention needs appropriate funding, which can be looked into in other studies. Second, to promote revitalization, low-cost and quickly practicable timely actions could be pursued in certain areas. For instance, putting individual elements of cultural, social, historical, and environmental value or renovating some remaining spaces that have been selected from those with the greatest potential using straightforward fixes (such as flooring, lighting, etc.) may even encourage unplanned revitalization initiatives from the neighborhood. With the completion of certain agreements with building tenants or private owners geared towards the development of local products of this area, such as traditional food and others, some of these places may eventually become public spaces.

Simultaneously, certain punctual components can serve as objects that define a transitional level between public and private domains. The previous analysis identified numerous non-spatially defined blocks, which currently make up the majority of the settlement's inner areas and are the source of fragmentation and ambiguity in land-use and ownership. These significant "landmark" elements could be used as generators to define a long-term planning strategy to encourage the completion of these blocks. By conforming enclosed areas between buildings, these components, sometimes

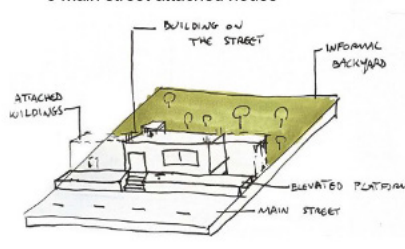
1. fenced house, secondary road access



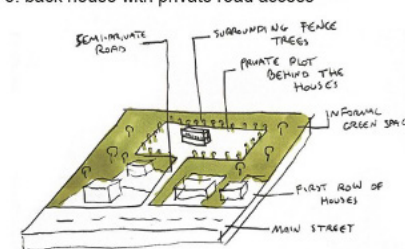
2. Isolated non-fenced house



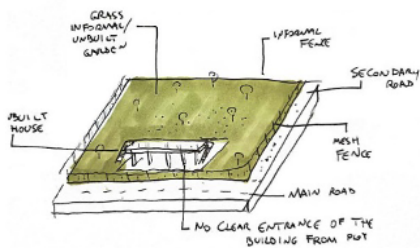
5 main street attached house



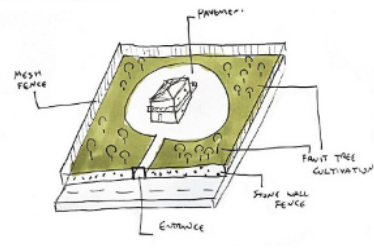
6. back house with private road access



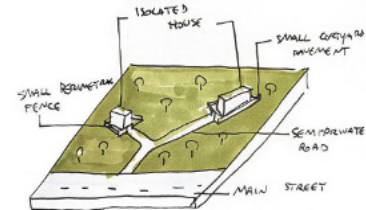
3. Unfinished, informal fence



4. Fenced detached



7. Isolated house



8. Public building

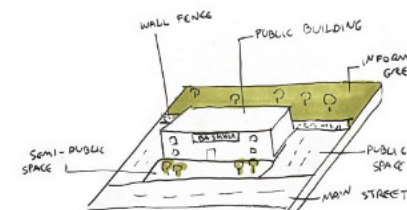


Fig8 / Dwelling and public building typologies source / PhD candidates

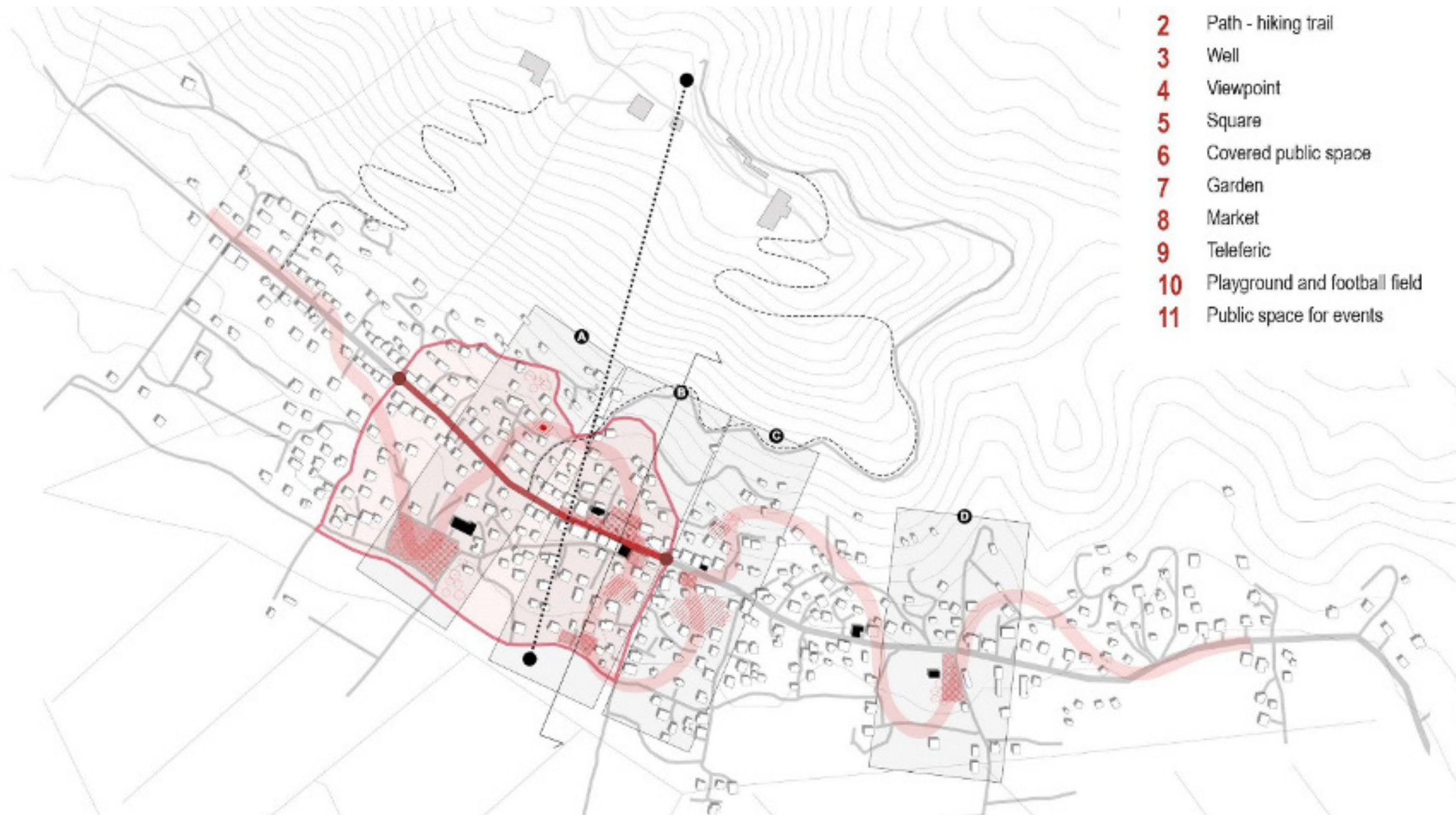


Fig10 / Masterplan proposal source / PhD candidates



Fig11 / Process during the Workshop Project source / PhD candidates



Fig11 / Process during the Workshop Project source / PhD candidates



Fig13 / Final Presentations source / PhD candidates



Fig14/ Final Presentations source / PhD candidates

known as “generators,” can direct the urban growth of a community towards a courtyard block typology, provided that the surrounding space is minimally redeveloped.

To upgrade the recommended individual interventions to a more strategic vision for Finiq, certain urban-scale interventions could be offered, extending beyond the “strips” to the entire community. Finding a way that offers an alternative to the main road’s linearity for vehicles can be done along the route between the “empty spaces”. our would establish a new link between areas with semi-public and public vocations, opening up avenues and pathways for a friendlier and more enjoyable exploration and experience of our community. Along these lines, locals may be given economic chances and could come up with ideas for exhibitions or small markets to draw attention to their businesses.

Identifying and characterizing public places through the design of a new pavement is a cost-effective and straightforward method of achieving this goal. In this approach, these already erratic and unloved locations could be given a new identity.

Furthermore, it is imperative to prioritize the revitalization of the current ring road that circles the most populous area of the hamlet. It might be feasible to convert a central portion of the main street into a pedestrian-friendly area by modernizing these roadways and making them appropriate for automobile traffic, at

least during certain seasons of the year, especially when taking future tourist flows into account.

Furthermore, by making use of the fact that many buildings, even those that are not abandoned but are still in use, have unfinished or unbuilt ground floors or first floors, several recommendations for architectural interventions can be made based on the analysis of the various façade “typologies”. This type of area, akin to the ground floor of Le Corbusier structures hanging on pilotis, might be developed into a resource for this town, lending the street fronts character and uniqueness.

Additionally, non-vehicular connections to the ancient Finiq ruins at the summit of the hill are suggested. Walking around the south face of the hill provides access via two pathways or hiking trails. In addition to providing direct access to the archeological site, a cable car also serves as an excellent vantage point for taking in the surrounding terrain.

Conclusions and Recommendations

For the group of Settlements, Public Spaces and dwelling the work started with deciphering the urban structure’s concealed identity by analyzing the Finiq territory.

A “missed typological block” is visible as the town disappears from the second and third row of buildings as it morphologically lies on the strip.

This phenomenon contributes to the

creation of spontaneous empty spaces, that suggest this hidden spirit of the town, created imaginatively by connecting them.

The analysis of the built environment with the methodology of “strips” including the relation with public-private suggested a separation in transversal macroblocks. The morphology of the terrain shows potentiality as it offers many interesting viewpoints and visual corridors.

In terms of infrastructure within the settlement there are presented potentials in the use of the rings as connections to give opportunity to the urban spaces to be developed in pedestrian character, in seasonal terms.

Pedestrian routes and hiking routes should connect the new public spaces to the archaeological site.

A “co-evolutive” strategy could create a new but existing identity of the town.

The above-mentioned recommendations are all recommendations for interventions that could be developed in the upcoming years. This is because the plan has several interventions rather than a single draft. These interventions can be implemented in different periods based on need, budget, or other constraints, even if they are all a part of a bigger, cohesive project. During the research work, one of the focuses was investigation of identity elements in Finiq. There is a “hidden spirit” that lies in the empty and fragmented spaces. It’s a millennial town, therefore something stronger than the constructions exists there.

The form, the space, and the time of the context coexist in a lost identity, that by intervening surgically we can strongly expose. Tourists and local people could finally act in a “co-evolutive” manner to reinvent the amazing town of Finiq.

The project work of this group and suggestions aim to develop this concept by implementing these spots with services and public spaces and buildings, also aiming to enhance the connections and the collaboration between inhabitants and institutions as the key to success.

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