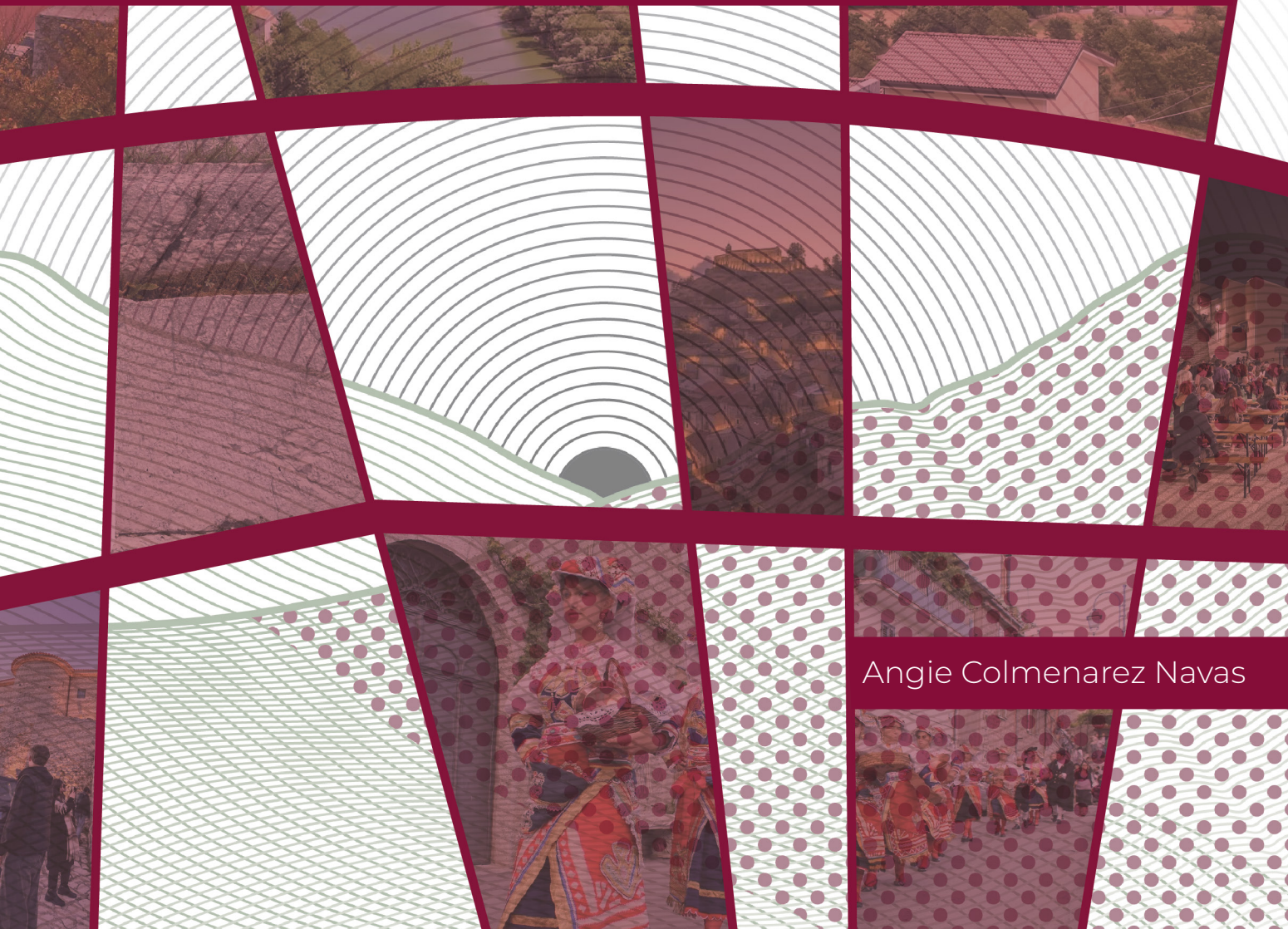
THE GENIUS LOCI OF LETINO

A change of perspective on projects for Inner Areas
The future thinking approach.



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ABSTRACT

This thesis emerged from the 27th edition of the Itinerant Workshop of Villard, focused on the depopulated inner areas of Castello del Matese and Letino (CAM), Italy. Departing from the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI), which measures the success of interventions primarily through demographic and economic indicators, this work argues that such an approach overlooks the lived experience of the communities that inhabit these territories. Drawing on Valeria Volpe's reading of depopulation as an inhabited process rather than a condition to be endured, and on Stefano D'Armento's call to treat demographic decline as a phase to be managed rather than reversed. This thesis proposes a shift in perspective: from repopulation as the primary goal, to the quality of life and sense of belonging of existing residents as the guiding principle of architectural design.

Taking Letino as a case study, and specifically an unfinished three-storey parking structure at the centre of the village, this work develops a context-sensitive design methodology grounded in Christian Norberg-Schulz's concept of Genius Loci. The three original categories of his framework: Visualize, Complement and Symbolize. This components are reorganized into a method for designing in remote places: **Visualize**, dedicated to reading the identity of the place through its landscape, settlements, history and culture; **Symbolize**, translating this analysis into a design concept; and **Complement**, addressing how the intervention will relate to the Genius Loci of the village, and adding a fourth pillar that is given by the proposal of a future-thinking approach, in where the project must be flexible in order to respond to different **Scenarios** that might occur in the village.

The result of this lecture is applied in the architectural proposal that consists of an interpretation of the use of this method in the case of Letino, in which the unfinished parking structure is converted into a three part systems that are interconnected, from top down, the piazza system that serves as a 24hrs public space that connects the piazza S. Giovanni with the primary school, the community hub and the covered parking lot on the ground floor. This project is conceived not to impose a new identity on Letino but to support the one that already exists, promoting connections and providing the village with a multipurpose space that will adapt to their necessities over time, avoiding like this the abandonment of this facility in case of a change of dynamic.

Resumen

Esta tesis surge de la 27ª edición del Taller Itinerante de Villard, centrado en las áreas interiores despobladas de Castello del Matese y Letino (CAM), Italia. Partiendo de la Estrategia Nacional para las Áreas Interiores (SNAI), que mide el éxito de las intervenciones principalmente a través de indicadores demográficos y económicos, este trabajo sostiene que dicho enfoque pasa por alto la experiencia vivida de las comunidades que habitan estos territorios. Basándose en la lectura de Valeria Volpe sobre la despoblación como un proceso habitado más que como una condición que debe soportarse, y en el llamado de Stefano D'Armento a tratar el declive demográfico como una fase que debe gestionarse en lugar de revertirse, esta tesis propone un cambio de perspectiva: del repoblamiento como objetivo principal, a la calidad de vida y el sentido de pertenencia de los residentes existentes como principio rector del diseño arquitectónico.

Tomando Letino como caso de estudio, y específicamente una estructura de aparcamiento inconclusa de tres plantas en el centro del pueblo, este trabajo desarrolla una metodología de diseño sensible al contexto, fundamentada en el concepto de Genius Loci de Christian Norberg-Schulz. Las tres categorías originales de su marco teórico, Visualizar, Complementar y Simbolizar, se reorganizan en un método para diseñar en lugares remotos: **Visualizar**, dedicado a leer la identidad del lugar a través de su paisaje, asentamientos, historia y cultura; **Simbolizar**, que traduce este análisis en un concepto de diseño; y **Complementar**, que aborda cómo la intervención se relacionará con el Genius Loci del pueblo, añadiendo un cuarto pilar dado por la propuesta de un enfoque orientado al futuro, en el que el proyecto debe ser flexible para responder a los diferentes **Escenarios** que puedan surgir en el pueblo.

El resultado de esta lectura se aplica en la propuesta arquitectónica, que consiste en una interpretación del uso de este método en el caso de Letino, en la cual la estructura de aparcamiento inconclusa se convierte en un sistema de tres partes interconectadas: de arriba hacia abajo, el sistema de la plaza, que funciona como un espacio público de 24 horas que conecta la Piazza S. Giovanni con la escuela primaria; el centro comunitario; y el aparcamiento cubierto en la planta baja. Este proyecto no está concebido para imponer una nueva identidad a Letino, sino para apoyar la que ya existe, promoviendo conexiones y dotando al pueblo de un espacio multiuso que se adaptará a sus necesidades a lo largo del tiempo, evitando así el abandono de esta instalación en caso de que cambie la dinámica del pueblo.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This thesis emerged from the 27th edition of the Itinerant Workshop of Villard, which worked on experimental design projects in depopulated inner areas. The focus of the workshop was on the municipalities of Castello del Matese and Letino (CAM), Italy.

The National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI) offers a definition for “inner areas” as those territories that are distant from essential services centers. These territories are characterized by marginalization due to inaccessibility to services, scarcity of opportunities, and a decline in population. The guiding principle of the SNAI is to reverse depopulation trends and improve the demographic situation by reducing emigration, attracting new residents, and increasing birth rates.

During the workshop, participants visited several Italian villages, for instance Ostana. These visits involved attending lectures and observing projects in these inner areas, with the aim of gaining insights for the development of the design proposals. Each village presented different approaches to regeneration.

These visits highlighted the diversity of architectural responses to the challenges faced by Italy’s inner areas. The results of these projects are reliant on the opportunities present in each to support the objective of the SNAI to repopulate and promote economic and opportunities development in these regions.

While the depopulation rates, as measured by the number of people residing in these areas, are a pertinent metric, they do not fully capture the complexity of inhabiting these communities. The seasonal flexus and the dynamics created by the community’s weekly routines are crucial factors that must be considered when assessing the experience of the inhabitants. Consequently, the experience of the inhabitants may deviate from the statistics reported by the ISTAT, for example.

The inhabitants of these communities have resided in these territories for multiple generations. Despite the absence of adequate services, they have managed to overcome this situation and establish a recurrent cycle aimed at maintaining their way of life in these regions. This phenomenon was examined in Volpe’s doctoral thesis, where she analyzed the manner in which these territories have been impacted by depopulation. She conceptualized depopulation not as a situation to be endured, but rather as an inhabited process.

These observations raised fundamental questions regarding the role of architecture in Italy's inner areas. How can architectural design support the development of an existing community? Should the objective be to attract new residents or should the priority be to improve the quality of life of existing residents, encouraging them to remain in the village and supporting long-term demographic stability? How does architecture respond to the context? How does one plan for an uncertain future?

At the workshop participants were introduced to the existing interventions and planned development projects. One of the projects presented was an unfinished three-storey parking lot structure located in the centre of Letino.

The observation of this unfinished intervention highlighted the necessity of comprehending the local context and dynamics, the fragility of the landscape, and the identity of a place "Genius Loci" prior to proposing new architectural interventions. The experience has also led to the realization of the significance of directing attention towards the opportunities presented by these territories, and of optimizing the utilization of the area's strengths.

The objective of this thesis is to understand how the Genius Loci of a place can be the guiding principle for the development of an architectural proposal. Within this framework, this thesis proposes an architectural intervention that caters to the needs and opportunities of this village that adapts to its dynamics based on the Genius Loci, community sense of belonging, and territorial analysis, as well as the need to understand the adaptability of the project for the changes that this kind of villages faces over time, and finally to show how this proposal can be used as a methodological reference for future interventions in Italy's inner areas.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used to develop the project consists of four parts, the first ones are an adaptation of three terms extracted from the Christian Norberg-Schulz's Genius Loci, in which he categorizes the ways in where man-made places relates to nature, first Visualize, that states the need of man to understand nature and to "express the existential foothold" meaning that they built what they have perceived before, second Complement, the addition of whatever is missing, and lastly Symbolize, in where he implies the translation of the meaning and understanding in nature into another medium.

For the purpose of this thesis, the three terms have been reorganized and reinterpreted as a methodology for design in remote places, in the following way: **Visualize**, this chapter is dedicated to the understanding of the identity of the place: all the elements that constitute it, the way the community interacts with the place and the role of Genius Loci within, **Symbolize**, Is the translation of the analysis into the project and the application of the Genius Loci as a tool for designing, and **Complement**, that would illustrate the results of an architectural proposal that responds to the Genius Loci of the place, and finally introducing a fourth pillar that is the future thinking approach in where we understand the variability of the dynamics of this kind of places and think about how this will change the functions of the project, through the imagination of different **Scenarios**.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Beyond SNAI

In the context of Italy there has been a growing interest in the development of inner areas, resulting in the creation of the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI) born in 2014 by the necessity to contrast the trend of depopulation and aging that these areas face. According to the SNAI these places are particularly affected by marginalization, in fact the name of these areas is related to their distance from services centers (education, health and mobility), classifying them by their distance as polo, belt, intermediate, peripheral and ultraperipheral.[1]

(1) Comitato Tecnico Aree Interne, Strategia Nazionale per le Aree Interne: definizione, obiettivi, strumenti e governance

The primary goal of this strategy is to reverse the demographic decline of these areas, by promoting the improvement of essential services, like the enhancement of infrastructure for a sustainable mobility, school and health systems, economic and social development, and the enhancement of local resources for development opportunities.

With the National Strategic Plan for Inner Areas (PSNAI)[2], They also express growing concern about the talent trap. This is related to the issue of lack of opportunities that these places have to offer to the young inhabitants, which results in them moving to bigger cities or other countries in search of a better quality of life. That is not only a particularity of the inner areas but a consequence of contemporary life that affects the whole country, as Filippo Tantillo expresses: currently the local community, where people are born, study, work and die in the same place, doesn't exist anymore.[3]

(2) Dipartimento per le Politiche di Coesione, Piano Strategico Nazionale per le Aree Interne

(3) Filippo Tantillo, Comunità, in Manifesto per Riabitare l'Italia

In architecture, there have been many interventions that align with this policy. It was even the topic of the 2018 Italian Pavilion in the Biennale of Architecture in Venezia "Arcipelago d'Italia" in which Mario Cucinella curated a compendium of projects that have followed this trend of developing in inner areas[4], with projects that existed also before the creation of the SNAI, but showcase the interest that has been put through many years in the development of these areas and their communities.

(4) Mario Cucinella, ed., Arcipelago Italia: Progetti per il futuro dei territori interni del Paese, Padiglione Italia

The role of the architect is an important one in the application of the strategy, in the category of creating spaces that will support these goals. Directing the focus to the support of different dynamics, from the development of establishments for basic services like the ones mentioned before, to projects to reactivate economic activities like sustainable tourism, artisan work, agriculture and local production.

Although the main focus is always to increase the population trend, in the past 10 years of the implementation of this policy there has yet to be

evidence of the success of this goal. In 2025, Michele Mariani made a paper in which he analyzes the outcomes of the SNAI, concluding that the strategy has had no significant effect on population growth, a result attributed to the structural, slow moving nature of demographic change, while finding roughly a two percent increase of local business, with no significant effect on the employment or housing prices. The research was carried out in various municipalities all around Italy that were part of the program.[5]

(5) Michele Mariani, "Dieci anni dopo: la Strategia nazionale per le aree interne è stata efficace?", Questioni di Economia e Finanza

The approach that the success of the development of these municipalities is measured in numbers, results in a disconnection between the policy and the experience of the people that actually live in these places. Valeria Volpe proposes a change of perspective in the matter of depopulation, in which she refers to it as "depopulation is not merely endured but also acted upon, manipulated, shaped, and, ultimately, inhabited". Referring that depopulated villages are not abandoned, and not a ghost town, but that the people that inhabit these places have created a new lifestyle in which they adapt to their condition, in where multiple dynamics might occur like seasonal move around, daily commutes to other villages or nearby cities, and the occasional tourist community.[6]

(6) Valeria Volpe, Abitare lo spopolamento. Leggere e interrogare una dinamica attraverso un'etnografia di Biccari (Fg), comune 'intermedio' dell'Italia Meridionale

Additionally, this argument of a shift in perspective is also backed up by Stefano D'Armento in where he explains that "population decline should be viewed as a phase to be managed, and even as an opportunity to replan the territory, by implementing strategies that accommodate the downsizing while simultaneously revitalizing communities."[7]

(7) Stefano D'Armento, Per un cambio di paradigma nelle aree interne. Dal perseguimento dell'inversione demografica alla pianificazione della contrazione. Dati e scenari dal Materano

Both these authors have a joint point of view that the demographic data is not the core aspect that has to be evaluated to determine the enhancement of these communities, but rather that there is a need to view the way of living of these places as an important factor that affects their dynamics. To anchor it to the statement of Filippo Tantillo, the contemporary way of living is one in where people migrates seeking a better quality of life, and this is not foreign to the inner areas, but in these place we encounter a different layer of dynamics, that Valeria Volpe explains it in her thesis, in were she pictures these "depopulated" villages as places of habitation, accepting movement as a biographic variable.

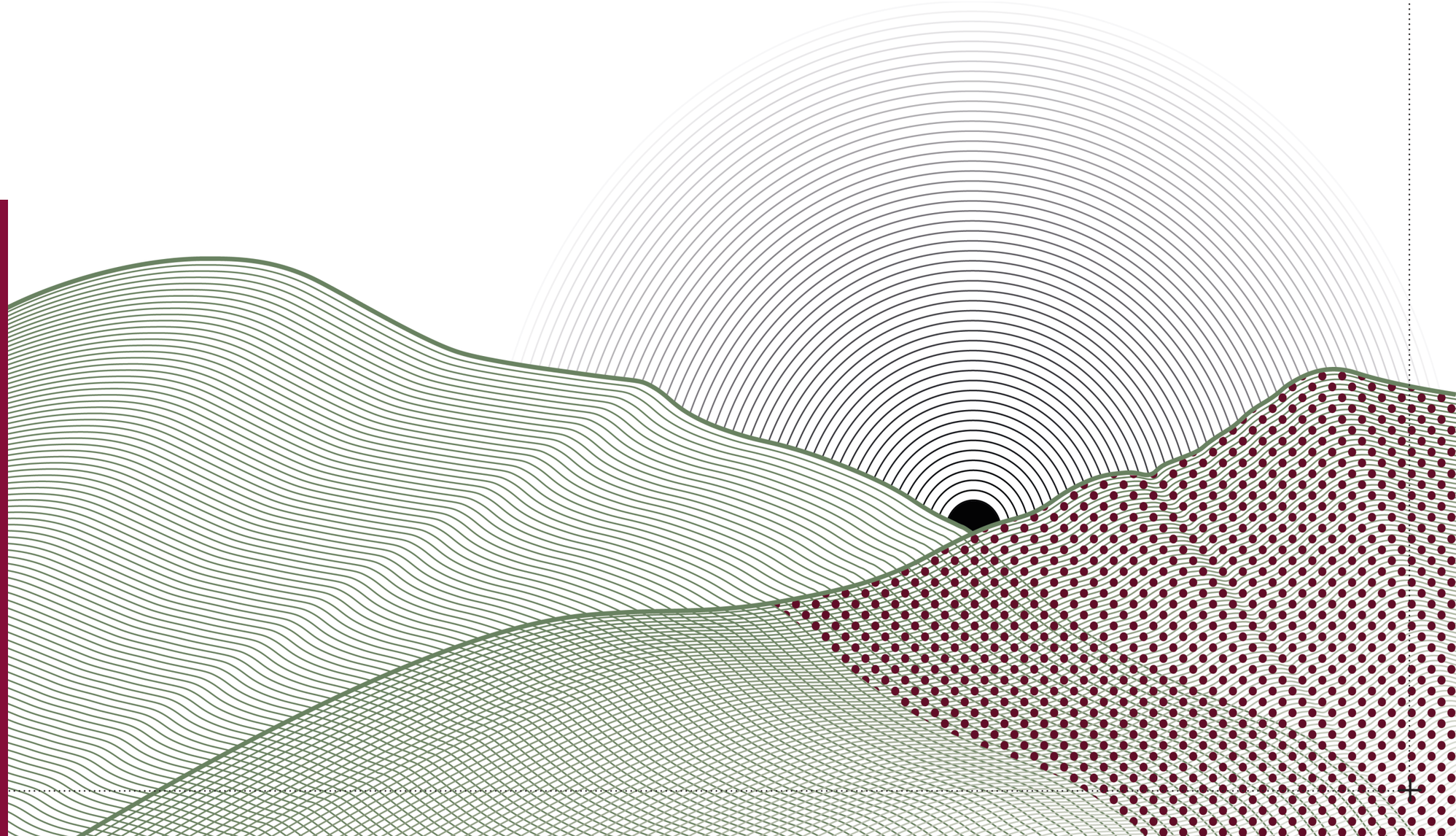
This shift in paradigm is what we wanted to address in this thesis, in which we considered that the main goal for this kind of intervention should be understanding the dynamics of communities that inhabit this depopulation process, their quality of life and their sense of belonging. Where the intervention is going to be guided by the Genius Loci[8] of the place, and not focused on imposing new communities or developing programs

(8) Christian Norberg-Schulz, Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture

that are going to utterly change the way of living of the inhabitants that have lived there for many generations, but analyzing the diverse future circumstances that might affect this project over time. Starting primarily by studying the Identity of the place and the community that is going to be developed consequently, begins the first chapter, "Visualize".

VISUALIZE

The identity of the place



VISUALIZE - The identity of the place

This chapter is the first of the three modes structuring this thesis, Visualize, understood here as the work of reading and analysing the existing Genius Loci of Letino, as the first step to be used for the design intervention.

"The place is the concrete manifestation of man's dwelling, and his identity depends on his belonging to places."[1]

– Christian Norberg-Schulz

(1) Christian Norberg-Schulz, Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture, 6.

To define the identity of a place we interpreted this quote by Norberg-Schulz to understand how the connection between dwelling, and identity can be manifested in the extent of a community: a shared sense of belonging is cultivated by the enduring interaction between the people and their land. Understanding this connection is essential to reading a place like Letino and the dynamics that have shaped it over time and, in turn, to developing an architectural project capable of supporting its inhabitants rather than conditioning them.

To understand the identity of the community of Letino we first have to analyze the deep roots that are present in this village, and the elements that create the sense of belonging in the people that inhabit it, by studying the environment, the history, and the cultural landscape that has been developing over time in this place. However, it is also essential to understand the changes and challenges that this village has faced, and how the fragility of their territory and the contemporary circumstances affect the internal dynamics of the village.

Letino - The identity

The village of Lentino is a remote place that can be found in the core of the Matese's national park, in the province of Caserta, classified by the SNAI as a periphery area.[2] The particularity of this territory lies in the relationship of the natural resources with the different types of interventions that can be encountered in this area, evidence of the mark that human-kind has left in the land.

(2) Formez PA, Dossier Regionale Campania. La Strategia Nazionale per le Aree Interne. Programmazione 2021-2027, 9.

Letino is considered one of the highest municipality in the province with 1.200 meters above the sea level, in its tallest point.[3] The topographic conditions present in Letino constrained the settlements to a variety of circumstances that, not only, defined the Genius Loci of the place, but also created a number of issues that affect the quality of life of the inhabitants, for example, the marginalization in context to their access to services.

(3) Comune di Letino, Castello - Santuario di S. Maria del Castello

The high altitude and remote characteristics of the village contribute to the accessibility problem. In the territorial aspect, public transportation is almost inexistant. For connecting the village with not only service centers, like hospitals and schools, but also to other towns where people work and go to the market, locals have to rely on a personal vehicle.

Additionally, in the context of the village itself, the settlements have to manage the height difference in where they adapt their positions, openings and heights depending on where they are based on the mountain, blending together with the topography. This can result in a disconnection of the town, or an uncomfortable steep pathway along the streets or alleys. Although the conditions of the mountain have created some difficulties regarding the connections in different levels, the community that lives there has managed to adjust to these situations, in which their lifestyle is combined with the territory itself and the settlements have become part of the landscape.



(Figure 1) Letino, Luca Santese Cesura

The identity of Letino's landscape is a composition of multiple layers, besides the mountain and the settlements. In the skirt of the mountains we encounter the valley, which takes an important role in the definition of the context that compliments the village scene. This area is particularly left in disuse in its natural condition, but there are also some settlements scattered around, some are dedicated to goat farming, other to cultivating. In this valley there is also the presence of the Lete River that connects directly to the Lake of Letino. The lake together with the Lake of Gallo, located on the other side of the mountain, have become an essential resource of the land.

Additionally, the last layer that is implicit in this landscape is in its karst nature, the Matese massif in where Letino is located is made of limestone.[4] This creates a new layer of understanding, in which the condition of this landscape is manifested into the settlements as a vernacular material, interlocking the built environment directly with the mountain, creating a language in which the architecture responds to the image of the place.

Another part of the karst landscape that is hidden between the mountain and the lake of Letino is the Cauto Cave, that is the physical response of the influence of the lake into the limestone mountain. Due to the properties of this type of territory, the water infiltrated through the rock creates an imprint into the mountain over time.

All these natural elements compose a rich environmental context that explains how the settlements are related to the land, as well as the limitations and assets that this kind of landscape offers for the community. It is equally important, however, to examine the dimension of time, considering that the Genius Loci is related to the lived experience. To understand the identity that has shaped the village, we have to analyze the collective memory of this community.[5]

"One can say that the city itself is the collective memory of its people, and like memory it is associated with objects and places. The city is the locus of the collective memory."

– Aldo Rossi

The story of Letino's cultural landscape[6] comes from many different periods of community settlements, and the architecture of the village is a sign of this, the earliest visible trace of occupation of this lands is from the VII-VI B.C. by the samnites that were spread all along the Matese. This

(4) Regione Campania, Assessorato Agricoltura, Direzione Generale Politiche Agricole Alimentari e Forestali, Il territorio rurale della Campania: un viaggio nei sistemi agroforestali della regione attraverso i dati del 6° Censimento Generale dell'Agricoltura, 36.

(5) Aldo Rossi, The Architecture of the City, 130.

(6) Carl O. Sauer, The Morphology of Landscape



(Figure 2) Sanctuary for Santa Maria del Castello, Galleria immagini Letino

is evident by the remains of the megalithic walls that are at the top of the mountain, located strategically to protect the dwelling of the inhabitants.[7]

Later on in the Angevin period, along this walls there is evidence of six towers dated around the end of the XIII century and the beginning of the XIV one, and also raised along this wall, in the tallest point on the location of the village, the castle is dated first to the medieval times, that together with the walls have been restored.[8] This castle that in actuality is the Sanctuary for Santa Maria del Castello.

Besides these historic structures, the community that lives in this area has changed through time, the settlement of the village itself relocated a couple of times over its history, due to extreme conditions in the winter, moving to the area of San Pietro near the road to Roccamandolfi. Once again in 1500 due to landslides and exposure to the north wind, it relocated again to the place where it stands today.[9]

The climatic and environmental conditions have become part of the history of migration in this village, since these factors are closely linked to the establishment of a community. This pattern is even continued in the actuality with the seasonal migration, but in the present times is also due to the chase of opportunities in other places, higher education or work.

In this order of ideas, another factor that shapes a city is its political influence. Letino has a long history starting in the samnite era, as previously mentioned, and then followed by Lombard, Norman, Swabian, and Angevin dominion. The territory was controlled by the Pandone and Carbonelli families until feudalism was abolished in 1806, leading to the Napoleonic, Bourbon, and modern Italian state administrations, including a notable 1877 anarchist movement.

While the community grows, all these changes cultivated the identity of Letino, but furthermore the sense of belonging of the community, that at the end is filled with history and culture, this last element being unique to the place. Myths, rites and collective memory are elements that compose the cultural history of Letino.

The cultural components of Letino has roots that connect it as far as to Greek mythology, with the Lete River portrayed as one of the rivers of Hades in the underworld, by the mythology is said that the souls of the dead drank from the river to forget the memories of the pasts lives before they reincarnate,[10] being referenced in the work of many authors like Dante in the divine comedy, in the Faust of Goethe and in the VI book of the Eneide of Virgilio.

(7) Domenico Caiazza, Poleografia e popolamento della campania interna preromana, 369.

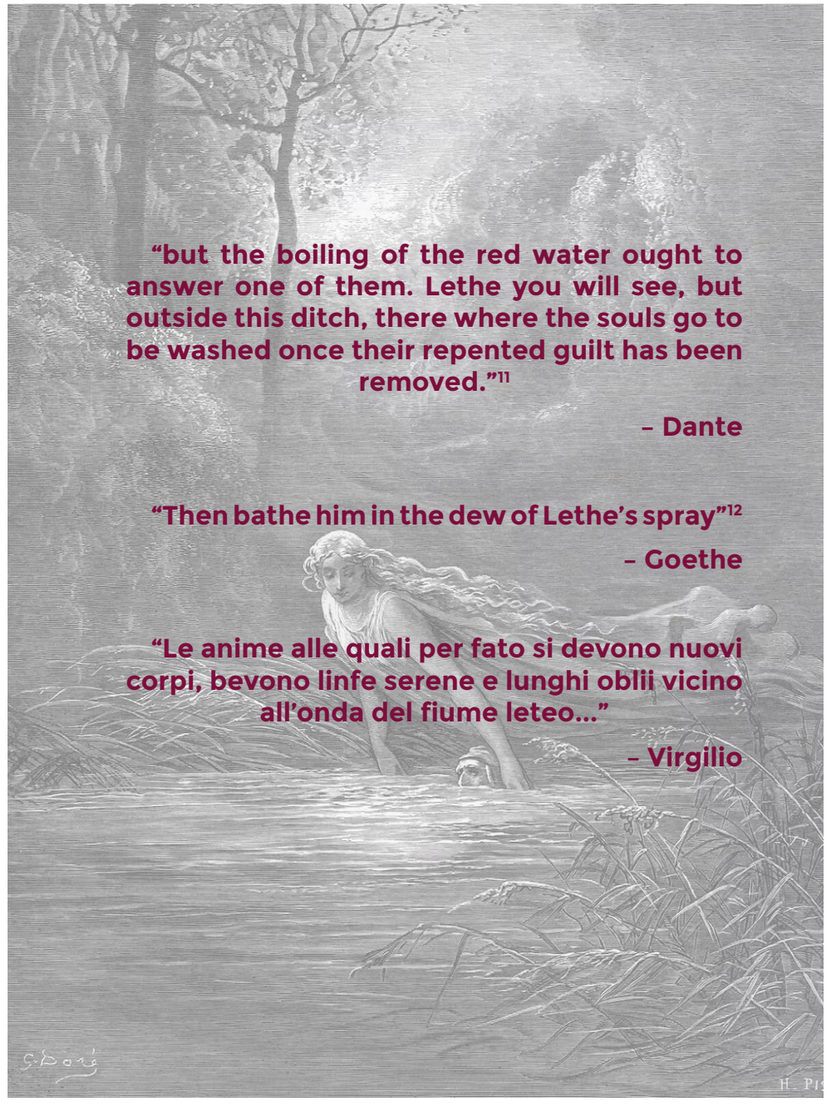
(8) Alessia Frisetti, La valle del Volturno nel Medioevo. Paesaggio, insediamenti e cantieri, 263.

(9) Comune di Letino, Storia del comune.

(10) Virgilio, Aneide, VI.710–715.

(11) Dante Alighieri, Inferno, canto 14, lines 133–136.

(12) Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Faust, second part of the tragedy, first act, Charming Landscape.



(Figure 3) Submersion in Lethe, Gustavo Dore

Besides the mythological relation of the Lete River, the current community of Letino has carried its cultural traditions for centuries. One of them is the use of the traditional women's costume, up until the early 2000 this was used daily by the older women of the village. This was used to demonstrate socio-economic status. Currently, the undertone of the costume has changed and now is only used in traditional events where they re-enact typical rituals. One of them is called "the wedding ritual", and it has taken place every August 12th since the 1960s.

The ritual starts on the day 15 before the wedding, in which the families get reunited to feast and give blessings to the couple, this is called the "parentage". Another phase of this wedding ritual is held in two parts, where women and men are separated to carry different parts of the bed or "rodda" (and other furniture) in a procession to the groom's father's house, where a celebration is held until late at night. [13]

This ritual is celebrated by all the inhabitants and some tourists that come to visit, but this is not the only tradition that has persevered the test of time in Letino. The community has a deep interest in keeping these rituals alive, and have created different organizations that promote these activities, like the Comuna of Letino, Pro Loco Letizia, la fondazione Stabat and l'associazione Jobba. The last one is the one that organizes one of the stable festivities of the summer in Letino "I riti".

I riti, or the rituals, consist of a four day festivity in the middle of July, where many activities take place, but the main reason for this festivity is to maintain and spread the traditions of this village.[14] The different activities are catered to showcase different traditions of Letino, like the gastronomy, music and theatrical performance of the daily life of the Letinese in the past.

Another festivity that has been held in Letino every third sunday of September since 1880, is the the feast of Santa Maria del Castello: a religious procession in where devotees from Gallo, Fontegreca, Capriati, and other surrounding towns come to worship the Queen of Matese.[15]

A tradition that is present not only in the festivities but also in the daily life of the Letinense is their gastronomy. As it has been stated before, the lands of the valley are used for cultivation, but specifically they cultivate potatoes and segale. These are the main ingredients for their traditional dishes that are "le patate ammaccate", the "pane con segale", and the "taglialetti e fagioli"[16]

Local production is one of the activities that moves the economy.

(13) Regione Campania, Inventario del Patrimonio Immateriale della Campania, 160.



(Figure 4) Invitation to summer events in Letino, Comune di Letino

(14) Amolivenews Abruzzo e Molise Notizie, I Riti di Letino, la tradizione diventa uno spettacolo di tre giorni.

(15) Comune di Letino, Festività di Santa Maria del Castello, Regina del Matese

(16) Caprarelli, Documentary, Letino e Catello del Matese, Tradizioni, Territorio e Rinascita


PROGRAMMA COMPLETO

Giovedì 16 Luglio
"La patata del matese: tra tradizione e innovazione"
A cura della Prof.ssa Enrica de Falco, Docente del Corso di Agraria dell'Università di Salerno
Interviene il Dottor Bruno Parisi - Ricercatore CREA-C di Bologna
Ore 21:00, Sala Consiliare del comune di Letino

Venerdì 17 Luglio
"Suoni antichi, i Bottari di Macerata Campania" in concerto
ore 21:00, Piazza della Repubblica

Sabato 18 Luglio
Trekking al tramonto A cura di Matese Discovery ore 17.30
Per Info e prenotazioni 3394183165

"Boreco" Musica tradizionale del Vesuviano al Sud Italia, in concerto
ore 21.00, Piazza della Repubblica
I Trillanti, in concerto
ore 23.30, Piazza della Repubblica

Domenica 19 Luglio - Località Licia
Stand Gastronomico a cura dell'Ass. Jobba

Aperitivo Contadino: intrattenimento musicale e gastronomico, giochi nei campi e giri a cavallo
ore 17.00

"I RITI: Radici, fatica e famiglia",
rappresentazione teatrale di vita contadina letinese di una volta.
ore 18.30

Premiazione della seconda Lotteria "I RIti".
per info su biglietti e premi segui la pagina IG dell'Ass. Jobba

I Taranta 3, in concerto
ore 20.31

Venerdì 17 e Sabato 18 dalle ore 19.30
Stand Gastronomici e Artigianato locale, Musica Itinerante,
Videomostra de 'I RIti – Rievocazione storica
del 1905 e Remake del 2022"

(Figure 5) I riti, complete program, Associazione Giovanile Jobba



(Figure 6) Traditional costume, Associazione Giovanile Jobba



(Figure 7) Activity in piazza S. Giovanni, Associazione Giovanile Jobba



(Figure 8) Concert, Associazione Giovanile Jobba



(Figure 9) Wedding ceremony ritual, Associazione Pro Loco Letizia



(Figure 10) Ceremony, Galleria Immagini Letino

Additionally to the crops, goat farming is also very important for the community. They have their own traditions when it comes to making cheese, and they share a recipe that has been passed down through generations.

All the activism that the letinense do to keep these traditions alive, shows appreciation and respect of their customs, and this is evidence of the sense of belonging that the community has over their land and their history. But as mentioned previously, because of their condition of being in a peripheral area, they face some problems related to the contemporary world.

The problems related to the marginalization, lack of services and opportunities influence the community, and according to the SNAI is the cause of the decline on the population numbers, that in the case of Letino the decline has been of the 9.65% from 2011-2020, with the last registered number of residents being 646 people.[2]

(17) Valeria Volpe, Abitare lo spopolamento: leggere e interrogare una dinamica attraverso un'etnografia di Biccari (Fg) comune "intermedio" dell'Italia Meridionale, 48.

The numbers just represent statistics and data of the population, but do not showcase the routine of the people that live in this place. They had to adapt to their new reality, where they commute to work, study, or in case of an emergency they have to travel 1 hour to the nearest health center (in Campobasso). There is also the factor of the seasonal migration, that Valeria Volpe explains in her thesis: these kind of inhabitants live this place in a transhuman or seasonal migration, in diverse scales, explaining that the numbers are just related to people that are registered in the municipality but not actually understanding the dynamics of their lifestyle.[17]

(18) Broghi del Matese, Il sindicato di Letino

Regardless of these negative situations that the inhabitants had to learn to manage, the maintenance of their village, physically and culturally, and their strive for improving their quality of life is a confirmation of their aim to keep this village and this community alive over time. For example, their collaboration with projects like “Borghi del Matese”: a project for the social and cultural regeneration of Letino, funded by the PNRR, and also by their association with the SNAI project.[18]

The identity of Letino is one of resilience, is the relationship of the natural elements with the settlements, the desire for spreading their traditions to new generations, the caring for the development of their village, the adaptability of their lifestyle to maintain their roots in their land, the connection and the meaning that people give to it is what defines the Genius Loci of the place.

Genius Loci - Why does it matter?

The study of the identity of Letino is the first step that we took in relation to the design process, to understand how dwelling in this place formed their Genius Loci (the spirit of a place, the connection and the sense of belonging of the inhabitants with their land) and apply this knowledge for the project itself. In the following section we go deep into the concept of Genius Loci, and why it matters for the design process.

The concept of Genius Loci first emerged in Roman times. They believed in an "attendant spirit of a person or place".[19] They thought that everyone and everywhere had a deeper meaning than the physical one, that is more related to the presence or the character of said entity that would accompany them throughout their lifetime.

This concept was studied by the architecture theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz. He defines the environment as a place that is composed of different parts altogether, and that the different conditions that local circumstances are inflicted upon the place, set different responses to their situation that is unique for each one of them.[20]

In addition, he structured the reading of the spirit of place, by four categories: Landscape, settlements, space and character. This integration of factors moves from the physical natural features, to the man-made ones, comparing them as 3D elements that define the space with the atmosphere of the place. All these elements together conform to the Genius Loci.

"But are not "functions" similar everywhere? Evidently not. "Similar" functions, even the most basic ones such as sleeping and eating, take place in very different ways, and demand places with different properties, in accordance with different cultural traditions and different environmental conditions. The functional approach therefore left out the place as a concrete "here" having its particular identity."

– Christian Norberg-Schulz

Understanding that every place is influenced by the environmental conditions and the people that live there, creating the unique atmosphere of the integration of both, suggest that architecture must respond differently according to the Genius Loci of the place. The functions should respond to the needs present in the community, and the architecture itself to their physical identity, in order to align the project to the spirit of the place.

(19) Encyclopedia Britannica, Genius.

(20) Christian Norberg-Schulz, Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture, 7.

(21) Goran Erfani, Reconceptualising Sense of Place: Towards a Conceptual Framework for Investigating Individual-Community-Place Interrelationships, 15.

The question of why does the Genius Loci matter in the context of inner areas, helps to understand why do these people stay in these remote places and how is this phenomenon connected to the sense of belonging. Goran Erfani studied the sense of place by conceptualizing it as the interrelation of the individual, the community and the place, concluding that "place identity refers to a brief summary of an individual's sense of self in relation to place".[21] Connecting this way the idea that the individual or collective experience of a place has a cognitive response in which positive or negative features manifest in their sense of self-identity, and this utterly influences the attachment to the place.

He connects the sense of place with what Norber-Schulz reviewed, in which the Genius Loci is guided by two planes: the meaning and the structure, the later one being the physical objective one, while the first one relates to the subjective perception of the individuals. This interrelation is where the sense of belonging is found and where the attachment to places might change depending on the person that experiences it.

(22) Edward Relph, Place and Placelessness, 59.

"The identity of a place is an expression of the adaptation of assimilation, accommodation, and the socialisation of knowledge to each other."

– Edward Relph[22]

(23) Valeria Volpe, Abitare lo spopolamento: leggere e interrogare una dinamica attraverso un'etnografia di Biccari (Fg) comune "intermedio" dell'Italia Meridionale , 40.

With this phrase E. Relph evidences the relation of the identity of a place as a process that changes with the people that live in it. In the context of the "problem" of depopulation in the inner areas of Italy and relating this concept to the thesis previously mentioned of Valeria Volpe, in which she defines depopulation as a process that is lived, in which the variable of demographic movement takes an important role,[23] we understand that the identity of a place is not a static phenomenon but rather a fluid one that is defined by the dynamics of the people that inhabit it, the changes they go through and their sense of belonging that persists over time.

(24) Vito Teti, La restanza , chap. 3.

Directly addressing to the inner area discourse and the relationship of people with their land, the concept of "restanza" is introduced by Vito Teti, in which he takes a particular interest in the reasoning behind this decision, he explains that the choice of staying in a place where only few people remain, is a response to an emotional connection that changes through time.[24]

“A place is a network of relationships, of bonds that may be controversial and ever-changing, yet indispensable.”

– Vito Teti

He also explains that this decision of staying is founded over the existential identity that is linked to a place, that we can correlate with the concept that we were discussing before with Erfani of attachment to the place through the identification of one’s self in it. In the inner areas this phenomenon of staying is particularly evident, where people choose to stay and to live though the depopulation, while fighting for their regeneration, in which the core reason relies on the sense of belonging.

Meanwhile, in the architectural field it is a complicated feature to apply. The recognition of the existence and importance of the Genius Loci does not mean to simply replicate the existing architecture, but to understand it so we can create new interventions to regenerate these areas that cater to the needs, values and sense of belonging of the community.

“It is essential to the quality of the intervention that the new building should embrace qualities which can enter into a meaningful dialogue with the existing situation. For if the intervention is to find its place, it must make us see what already exists in a new light”

– Peter Zumthor[25]

(25) Peter Zumthor, Thinking Architecture, 18.

This statement made by Peter Zumthor shows the delicate balance in this approach of design, making emphasis on the necessity of the understanding of the surroundings and the emotions that are rooted on the past that gives meaning to a project, rather than the contrary idea of abruptly contrasting the Genius Loci of the place, that would utterly fail in its purpose of finding place.

Consequently of this arguments, the study held previously of the Identity of Letino served the purpose of understanding the physical and emotional layers that create the Genius Loci of the place, to later be applied as the principle guide for the architectural proposal, that will help the development of the project to have a base that will adapt to its surroundings and the sense of belonging of the community. This last part is an important factor in the sustainability of the project.

(26) Yeremia Ariyanto et al., Cultural Aspects as a Foundation for Sustainable Architecture: Lessons from Vernacular Practices

This approach to the design process is a more human focused solution that relates to sustainability. The focus shifts from purely technical solutions to a contextualized one that responds to community identity. This ultimately benefits sustainability initiatives by responding to people’s needs for connection and sense of belonging.[26] Following this logic, Ariyanto et al. also state that a stronger sense of belonging may contribute to greater long-term engagement with the architecture, since a weak cultural fit has been shown to produce disengagement and even rejection of a building.

Finally, the answer to our question of the significance of the Genius Loci for architectural designing, comes from the understanding of the need of connection and the integrations of the spirit of the place with the new intervention in a way that it won’t set out of place, ruining the identity of the place, and finally responding to the sustainable principles by responding to the need of identity and sense of belonging of the people.

This analysis would conclude with the materialization of the Genius Loci of Letino, translating it to the graphic representations that will represent and contextualize the Genius Loci of the place.

GENIUS LOCI

Through the territorial analysis lens

Genius Loci - Macro analysis

From the Identity that conforms the Genius Loci of Letino, that we studied in the previous section, we categorized and divided into four layers of the physical elements that are present in this area for its graphical understanding.

Layers of the Genius Loci

Natural Resources



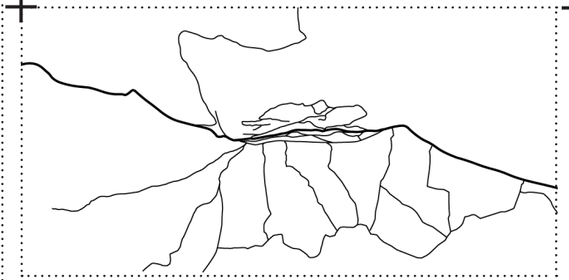
Lakes · Mountain · Valley

Risk areas



Earthquakes · Landslide

Main acces + roads



Main road · Secondary roads

Settlements



Settlements · Voids

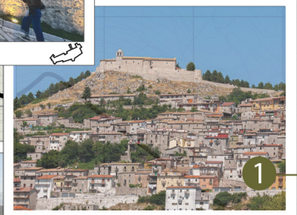
Genius Loci map - Legend

- Buildings
- Churches
- Historical center
- Main road
- Secondary roads
- Underground river
- Rivers
- Earthquake risk
- Landslide risk

Genius Loci map



SETTLEMENTS



Santa Maria del Castello



CENTRE



LANDSCAPE



BOUNDARIES

SANTA MARIA DEL CASTELLO

MONTE LA MACCHI



Piazza San Giovanni



SETTLEMENTS

SANTA MARIA DELLE GRAZIE



LANDSCAPE



LANDSCAPE



LANDSCAPE



Chiesa di San Giovanni Battista



SETTLEMENTS

100m

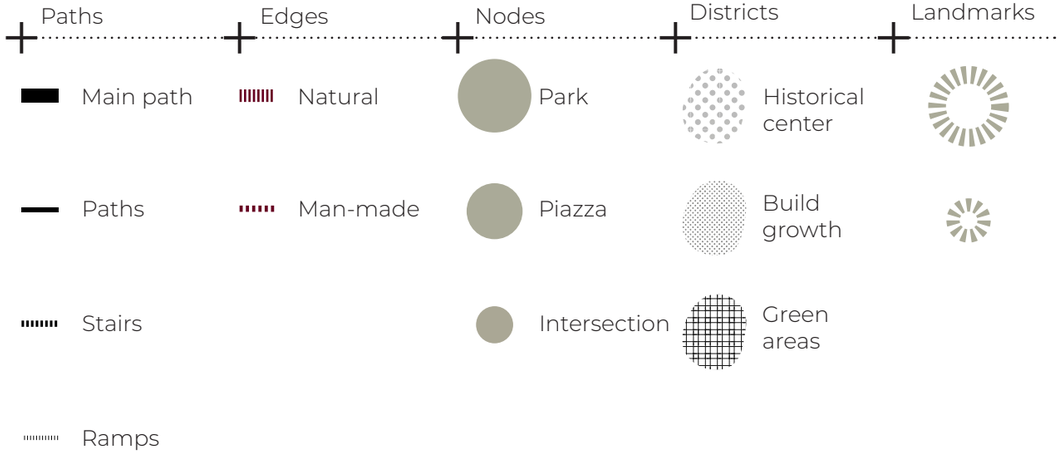
Dynamics of Letino - Mezzo Analysis

Dynamics of the village:

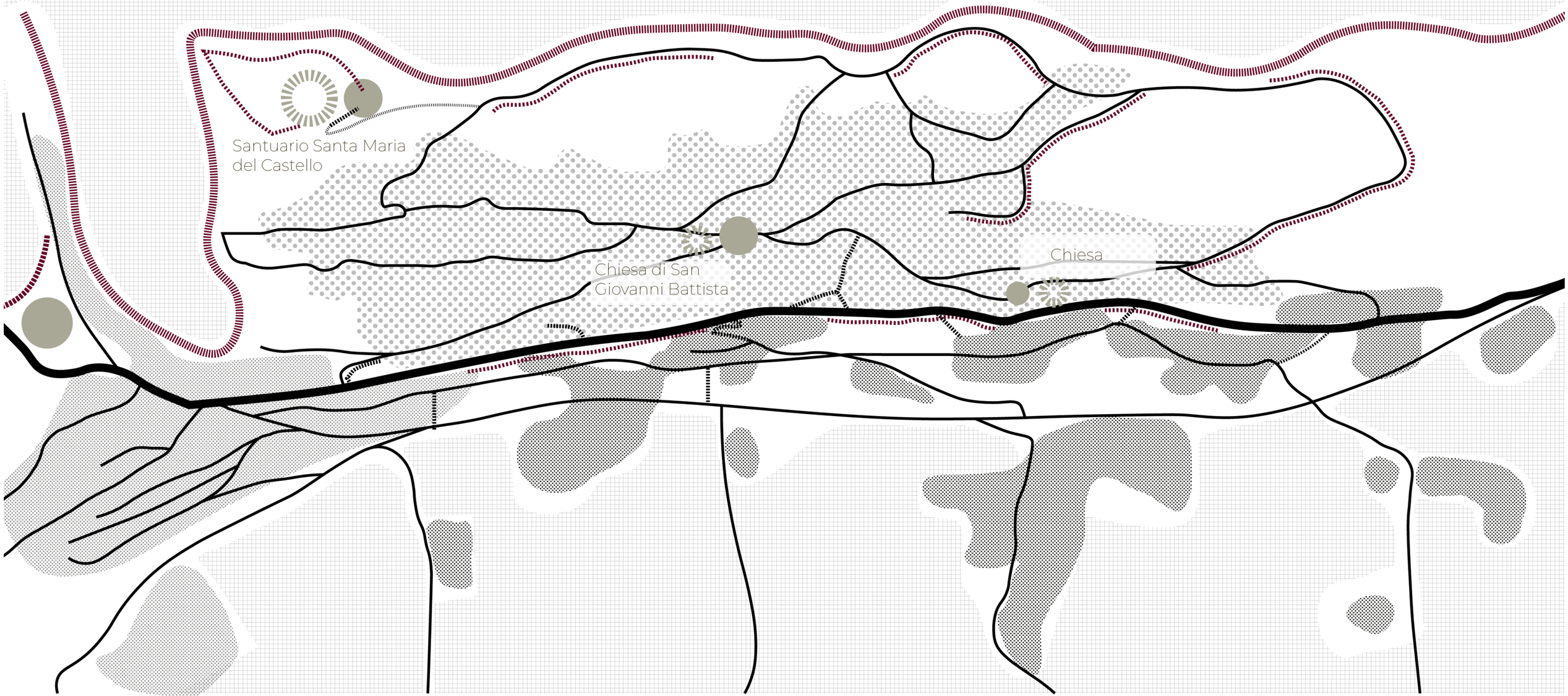
To understand the patterns of this dynamics we utilized the graphic tool for reading a place that was invented by Kevin Lynch in the image of the city,[27] thanks to this graphic composition we can understand the different components that act upon the village in the level of architecture and public spaces that condition the daily life.

(25) Kevin Lynch, The Image of the City

Kevin Lynch composed this tool to understand the dynamics of a city, but for the purpose of this thesis we reinterpreted these five elements for the scale of a village, in this way understanding the dynamics of how does the fabric of the village works, the disconnections imposed by the moutain, the paths that were created to be able to connect between the village itself and with the exterior, how does the settlement are stablished in the land and the nodes that this creates, and lastly the landmarks that guides us inside the village fabric.



The image of the village

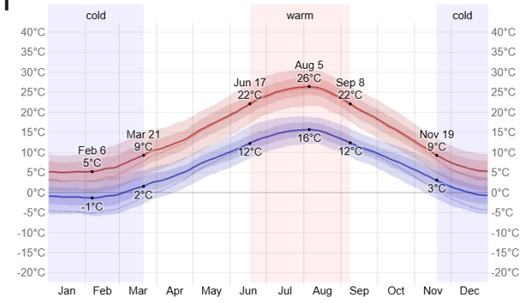


Dynamics of the community:

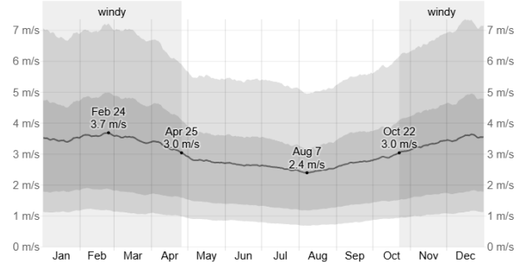
In this part we analyzed the routine, the movement and the activities that occur in this area, layering the different components that will let us understand their lifestyle, the enviromental conditions that affects them and the different activities that took place in the village like basic needs, entertainment, gatherings, religion, and rest.

Weather conditions:

Average High and Low Temperature

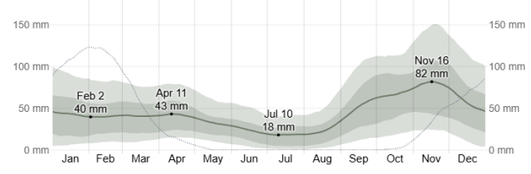


Average Wind Speed in Letino

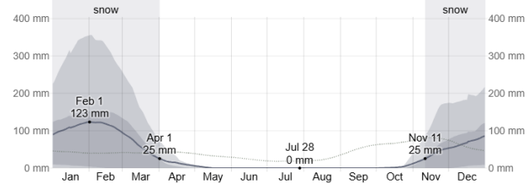


In these graphs we can understand the correlation between temperature and wind speed, in where we can see that during the winter there is more wind than in summer, but the highest temperature that the village is exposed to in average is of 26°C which means that during the summer, although there is no wind, the temperature is comfortable for the inhabitants, also the lowest cold is of -1°C in the month of February

Average Monthly Rainfall in Letino



Average Monthly Snowfall in Letino



In the other hand Rainfall and Snowfall are factors that will also contribute to the comfort of the inhabitants, in the winter months there is presence of both snow and rain, which will mean that in these times of the years is important to have refuge for the inhabitants, and during the summer there is presence of rainfall but not as abundant as during winter.

Graphics source: © WeatherSpark.com

Touristic activities - by month



This calendar helps us understand the activities that happens in the village during the year for the enjoyment of the community but that also attracts tourist, and to understand the periods in which this happens, the majority of the activities are around the months of summer, that some of them are traditions that are kept from generations in this time of the year, but in the point of view of tourism is the best time of the year to go to Letino due to the weather, while in December the activities are related to the celebration of christmas.

Dynamics of the community map - legend

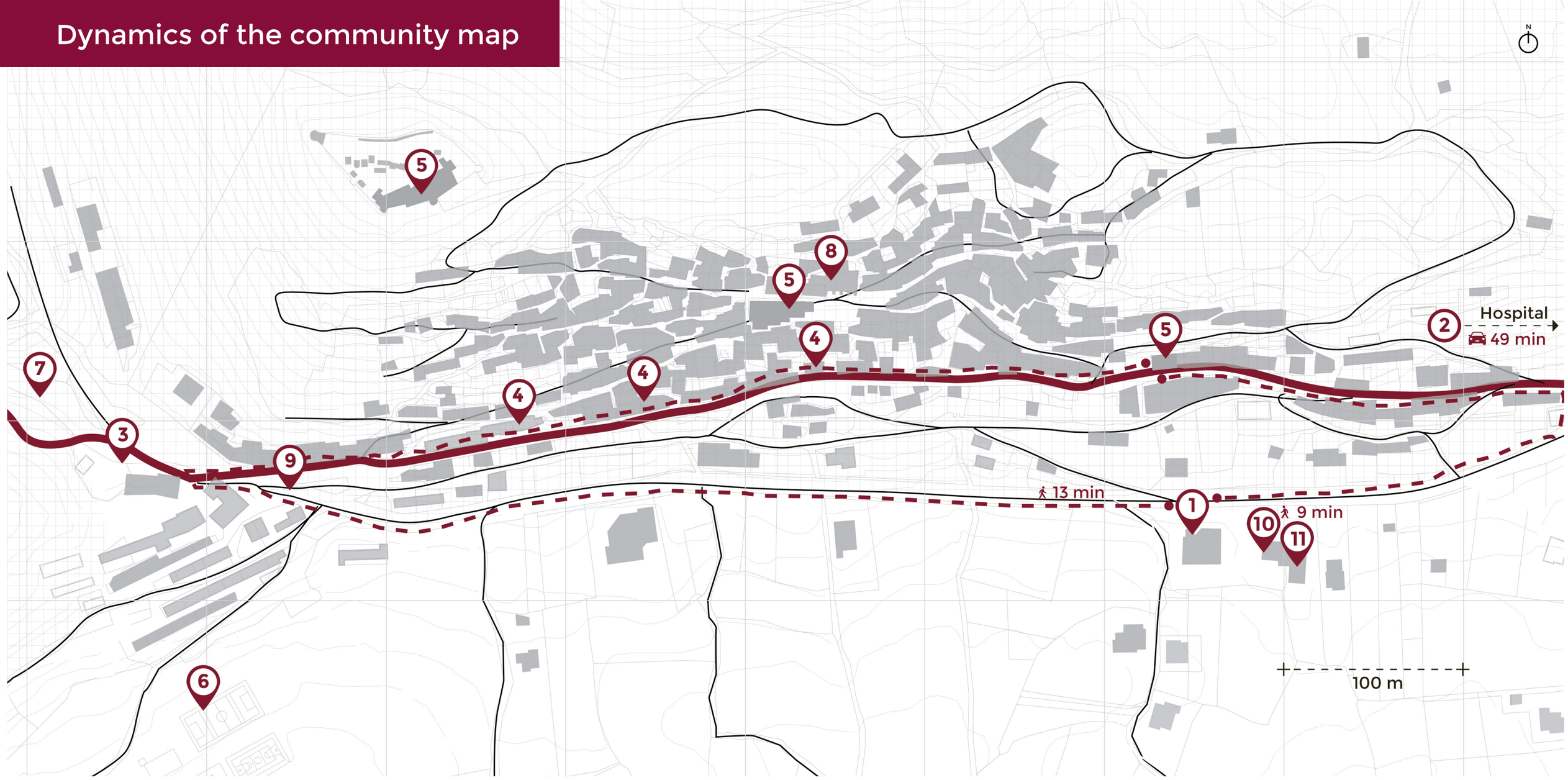
Movement

- Main vehicular road
- Vehicular/pedestrian paths
- Walking distance from piazza S.Giovanni to the school

Services

1. School
2. Hospital
3. Pharmacy
4. Market
5. Church
6. Sports facilities
7. Park
8. Comune
9. Waterpoint
10. Public health Emergency
11. Cultural organizations

Dynamics of the community map



Morphology of the village - Micro analysis

In this part we wanted to understand the physical characteristics of the settlements, their materiality, elements that compose it, how are the connections between themself, what are the different responses to the street and how it is related to the mountain, the different voids and the public areas.

Materials:

Natural Walls



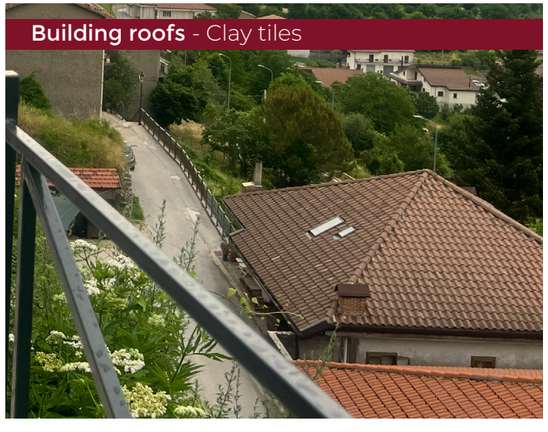
Building Walls - natural stone masonry



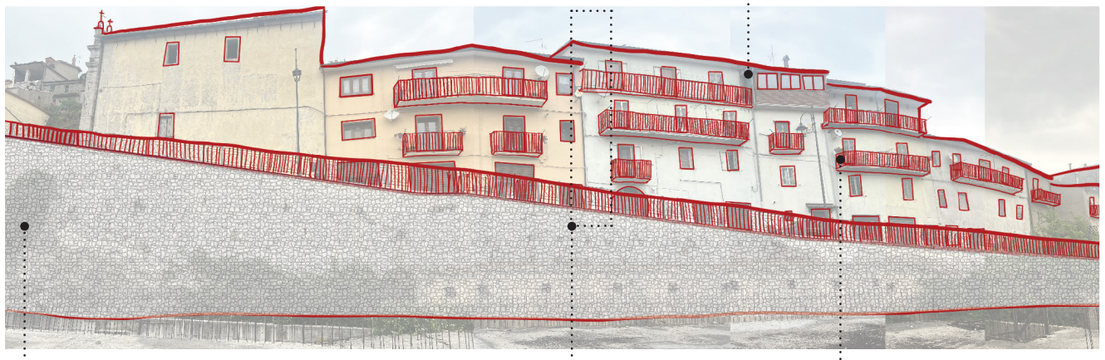
Floor tiles



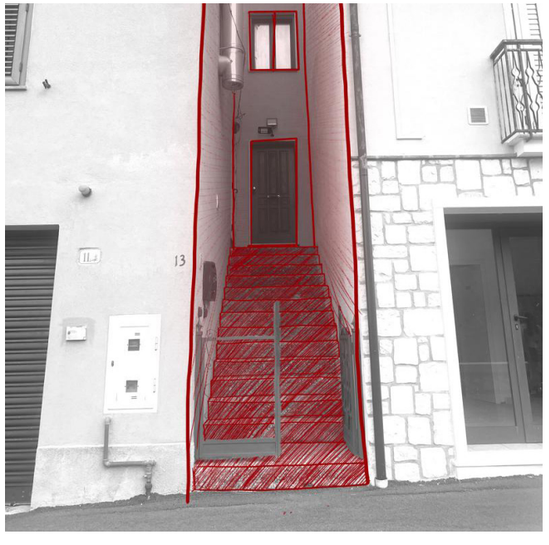
Building roofs - Clay tiles

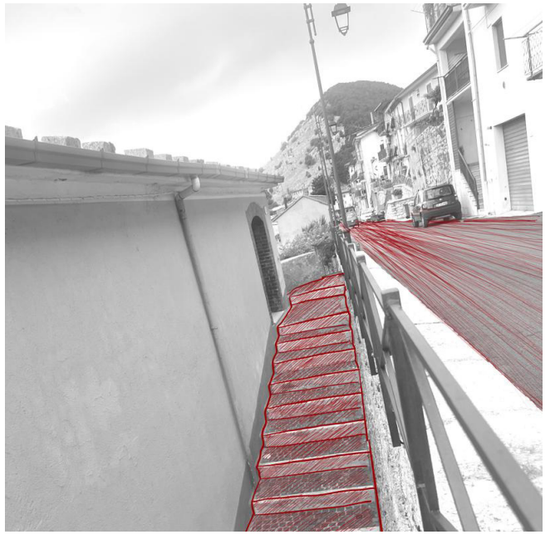


Composition of the facades:

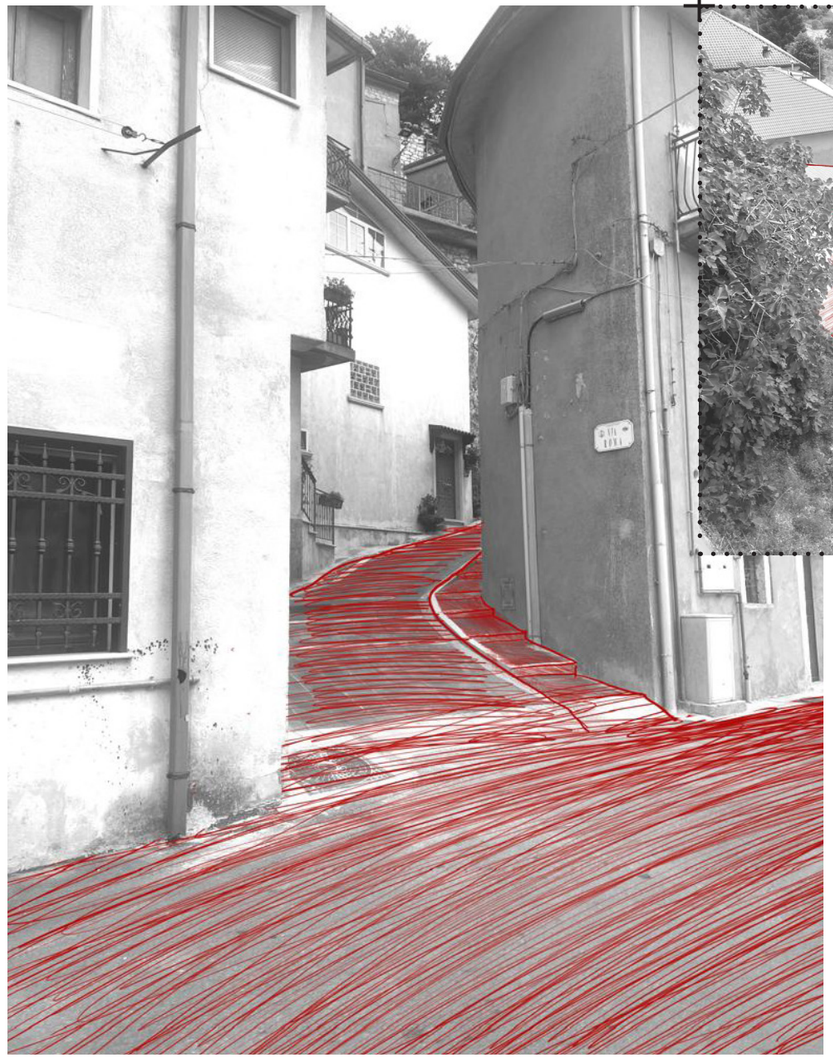


Voids between buildings/access points:





Relationship between the buildings and the mountain:









CASE STUDY OSTANA

How different interventions respond to the same village?

CASE STUDY OSTANA

The case study of Ostana was introduced to us during the Villard workshop. This village is considered the smallest municipality in the region of Cuneo, Piedmont, with 14 sq. Km.[27] During the visit, the professors showed us the projects that they developed for this community.

These projects are the Porto Ousitano, the Lou Pourtoun, and the Wellness and Sports Center, designed by the architects Massimo Crotti, Antonio De Rossi, Marie-Pierre Forsans between the years of 2011 and 2019.[28] What caught our attention was the different approaches of services that were developed for the community. This led us to inquire further on how the response of the inhabitants was to these interventions, how the structures are used today, and what they bring to the well-being of this village.



(Figure 11) Porto eusitano, By the author

(27) Cristiana Oggero, Il fenomeno dei nuovi abitanti in Valle Po: il caso di Ostana.

(28) Sarah Ador, Du mélèze entre les schistes: Ostana, Italie

The case study of Ostana is a particular example of success in repopulating a community within an Inner Area that was considered depopulated at the end of the 20th century. Only 6 residents were registered as permanent residents and by 2020 this number increased to nearly 80 people.[29]

The development of these projects is primarily due to a desire of the remaining community to reformulate this place in order to revive it.[30] Understanding their rights to remain in this land, a series of interventions took place since the 80s to enhance the well-being and take care of their cultural landscape, in which the original approach was focused on the conservation in a very restrictive way not allowing the development of new projects but only focusing in restoration of their heritage and cultural legacy, that ended being counterproductive to their goal, so by the beginning of the 2000 they opted to change their approach to a more flexible one, in where the focus was into projects for social innovation but always maintaining the cultural landscape of the village.[31]

The way that these interventions came to be, aligns with the idea that we explored before, where we understood how humans are related to their land and this sense of belonging is what fuels the need for development of a place. However, the interventions need to be related to the cultural landscape and respect the Genius Loci of the place so the identity of the municipality is not lost in their purpose of growth.

The projects themselves were guided by the different needs that this town had resulting in tourist accommodation, personal services, sports, cultural activities, and recreation, for their growing and constantly changing community. The first intervention was the Porto Ousitano, which is the entrance to the village where economic activities such as the promotion of local production, sales, tourist services, and sports activities, took place.

The second one is the Wellness and Sport Center, that was catered to serve spaces for the development of the community but also to attract tourists, in which the functions of the center consisted in indoor sport facilities, relaxation spaces for the tourist and welfare services for the locals.

The last intervention is the one called Lou Pourtoun, that serves as a cultural center, with spaces dedicated to offices, coworking, lectures, as well as economic activities like a bar, and finally a flexible space that could be used by many activities.[30]

These projects display many of the types of interventions that can take place in the context of Inner areas that serve the purpose of enhancing the well-being of the community as well as to support a touristic system

(29) Margherita Valcanover, Ostana e Topolò: hardware, software e welfare nelle comunità di "ritorno"

(30) Massimo Crotti, Ostana, alta Valle Po. La rinascita di un borgo alpino

(31) Antonio De Rossi et al. Progetti sociospaziali. Infrastrutturazione di welfare, costruzione strategica e rigenerazione: le esperienze di Ostana, Saluzzo e Salemi

that will attract this new type of community. While the development of these projects has made a significant improvement in the lifestyle of the community, until the point of a growth in population, at the time of our visit we noticed that the structures like the Porto Ousitano and the Lou Pourtoun that have a more flexible approach for economic, cultural and touristic services approach are more used than the wellness and sports center that has a more restrictive program. In the flexible spaces, many activities take place during the year, such as courses, ceremonies, conferences, exhibitions, and festivities, and also host the needs of the tourist and the locals on a regular basis.[32]

From our investigation it was announced that the Wellness Center was to be opened on 2021 but there is no evidence of the utilization of this space, which aligns with what we observed on the visit. There is also no information regarding what might have caused this in opposition to the more flexible spaces that were projected in the same area that were successfully introduced to the lifestyle of the inhabitants. We interpreted that the failure of this project is due to its rigid program, and other factors like the high maintenance of the establishment, lack of management or demand for this space are other hypotheses of why this happened.[33]

This case study showed us the importance of understanding the needs of the communities, and the limits that a rigid program poses over a growing community in Inner Areas, where the dynamics vary through the years. The more flexible spaces are more proactive for the activities that these villages are more prone to host. Additionally, this case study opens the conversation about the goal of architecture: it should not be the finished product the one promoted or analyzed in articles, but how this building interacts with the community that it serves.

(32) Comune di Torino, Culture.

(33) Viso a viso, Benessere e salute



(Figure 12) Wellness and sport center, By the author

PREEXISTENCE

The parking lot project



(Figure 13) Parking lot facade looked from the bottom, By the author

During the Villard workshop we were presented with the project of the restructuration of a three story parking lot, which was originally designed to meet the village's need for covered parking for tourist cars and buses. Located in a central area of the village, next to Piazza S. Giovanni, where we can find an old church from 1871. The piazza is currently used not only as a public space for gatherings and events like "I riti" but also as an intersection of vehicles and parking space.

Previously to the site visit we were provided with the existing plans of the parking lot project, that consisted of evacuation plans with the floorplans and sections, but not construction or structural details, which made it difficult to understand the structural system to know the limits of the intervention.

Once we visited the site, we could observe the actual state of the building, arriving to the next conclusions:

- The state of the building is in abandonment, the structure was never finished and only two floors were built rather than the original three that are shown in the plans.
- By the analysis of the structure and the plans provided we considered it to be a reinforced concrete frame system.
- The ground floor of the parking lot, even though it is found in an abandoned state, is still informally used by the inhabitants as parking space, showing the actual need of this space for the community.



(Figure 14) Ground floor from the inside, By the author

- By the plans and the site assessment, we can interpret some of the decisions that were made in the design process to respond to the placement:
- The shape of the building follows the street and the contour lines of the mountain, optimizing the space for the parking lot to fit more cars, even though this shape resulted in a very uncomfortable distribution.
- Another design decision observed was the need of integrating the parking lot to the context by the use of local stones for a facade work, this intention that ends up being in our opinion a forced decision for integration rather than an architectural one.
- The scale of this structure suggests an imposition over the morphology of the town, being a massive building of around four times the size

of the buildings in the area, this creates a very disruptive factor in the overall style of the village.

- The building was originally designed to have connections from the ground floor until the height of the street that is behind that connects with the piazza, but because of its unfinished state it rather created a disconnection, in both physical and visual way.



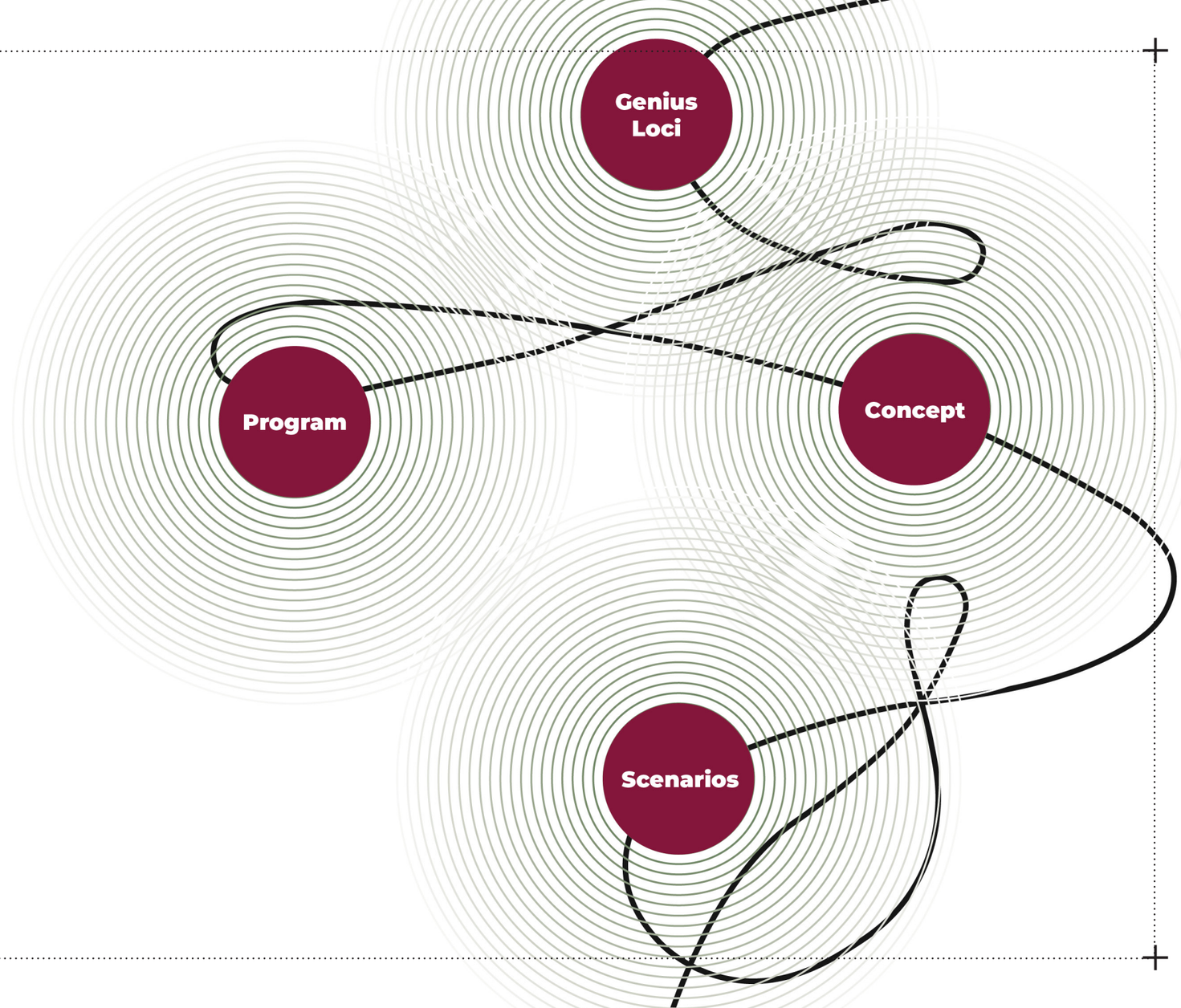
(Figure 15) Roof from Via Guglielmo Marconi, By the author

By the analysis made in site and with the inquire of how to create a project that responds to the Genius Loci of this thesis, the project of the restructuration of the parking lot was the perfect case study for the application of this methodology, the strategic placement of the building it represents and important connection point from the piazza until the bottom part where the school and emergency building are found.

With this intervention we wanted to show how a building can be adapted to serve a purpose that is connected to the needs of the community, and the role of architecture in the promotion of the sense of belonging by responding to the Genius Loci of the place, and finally how this proposal can adapt to the changes that the dynamics of the community might faced by seasonal events or long term changes that we hypothesized.

SYMBOLIZE

A translation of the analysis into a project



SYMBOLIZE - A translation of the analysis into a project

This chapter consists of the second mode of the methodology explained in the introduction, Symbolize, in which the interpretation of the Genius Loci is going to be translated into a guideline that explains the reasoning behind the architectural project of this thesis.

During the first chapter ”Visualize” of this thesis we developed the first steps in the process of this project. We analyzed the Genius Loci of Letino and the meaning behind the staying and perseverance of this community over their land, coming to the conclusion that the sense of belonging is a factor that connects the people to their land, that it is something that is fluid and changes with them and their dynamics, but their connection to the place they lived is an unbreakable bond, making them either stay in this place or adapt to a new lifestyle where they come back periodically.

In the following part we are going to go step by step in how does this design approach takes place in the process for the architectural proposal:

GENIUS LOCI

The initial step in this process is to comprehend the Genius Loci of the place, acknowledging it as a resource that must be preserved throughout the course of the project, that in our case being this the core value of our project we dedicated the first chapter fully to this analysis, with the next order of ideas:

To achieve this we have to study the different layers that compose the Genius Loci of a place and how does it affects it:

(page 21) All the parts that compose their unique natural environment, in our case these elements are: The Karst mountain, the valley, the lakes, and the cave.

The settlements, the interaction with the natural environment, the vernacular characteristics of the buildings.

(page 22) Time, from the origin of their roots, also relating it to the history of the historic buildings, to the current circumstances that changed their lifestyle.

(page 24) Culture, this last part is also related to history, and is where we explore all the elements of the cultural landscape, and the relationship of the people with the land, that helped cultivate the sense of belonging.

(page 34)

After understanding all the theoretical parts of the Genius Loci, as architects we proceed to use graphical tools for the better comprehensive reading of this areas, all the elements of the Genius Loci in the territorial aspect, as well as the dynamics of the community and their vernacular building style, the tools that we used were:

In the territorial macro level, a synthetic mapping of the different physical layers of the Genius Loci, then at the mezzo level we analyzed the dynamics of the area with the technique of Kevin Lynch to read the city in this case the village, and also the dynamics of the community, mapping the different places where the daily life of the inhabitants take place, and finally in the micro level we used a combinations of drawings and pictures to understand the elements of the settlements.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

After studying the village and gathering a full comprehension of the village dynamics and Genius Loci, it is necessary to do an analysis of the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats (SWOT) of the village in order to create a baseline of their needs. This tool then would be used to create the program of the architectural proposal that will be focused on enhancing their quality of life.

S

- Community activism
- Sense of belonging
- Cultural appreciation
- Established Genius Loci
- Optimal weather in summer seasons for scaping the heat

W

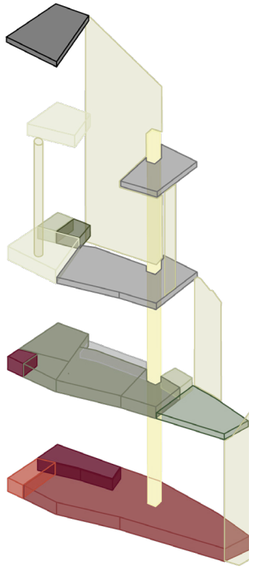
- Marginalization
- Disconnection due to the mountain
- Limited availabilty of services
- Snow and rain in colder seasons

O

- Informal use of an unfinished parking lot
- SNAI and PNRR interest
- Touristic attractions

T

- Earthquake risk
- Landslide risk
- Population decline rate



Connections and public spaces for community activities development

Community focused activities

Promotion of traditional activities

Activation of economic activities

Spaces for cultural events adn community gatherings

Catering to their needs and refuge of weather conditons

Public space

- Belvedere
- Piazza al aperto e coperta
- Play area
- Inner courtyard

Vertical connections

- Stairs
- Elevator

Community hub

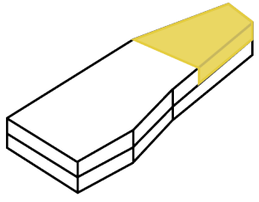
- Community cafeteria
- Bathrooms
- Kitchen
- Flexible spaces
  - Courses
  - Festivities
  - Comunal gatherings
  - Tourist accomodations
  - Exhibitions

Parking lot

- Parking spots for vehicles
- Parking spots for motocycles
- Storage rooms

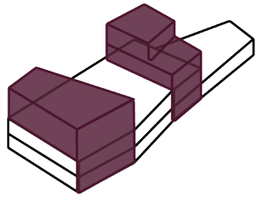
DESIGN CONCEPT

The next step will the definition of the design concept itself, in terms of form and materiality, understanding the opportunities of the plot and integrating it to the Genius Loci of the place, to then complement the project with all the information that is needed for an architectural project, that is going to be developed in the next chapter.



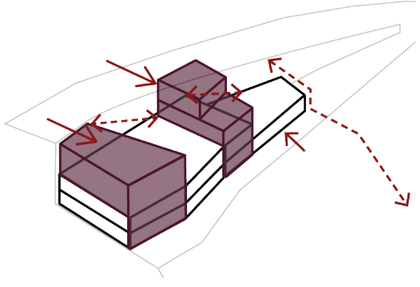
Step 1.

Reduction of the scale of the parking lot.



Step 2.

Fragmentation of the structure fallowing the patterns of the morpholgy of the buildings that we analyzed before.



Step 3.

Connections, between the uper and lowest part of the mountain and between the building itself.

(page 76)

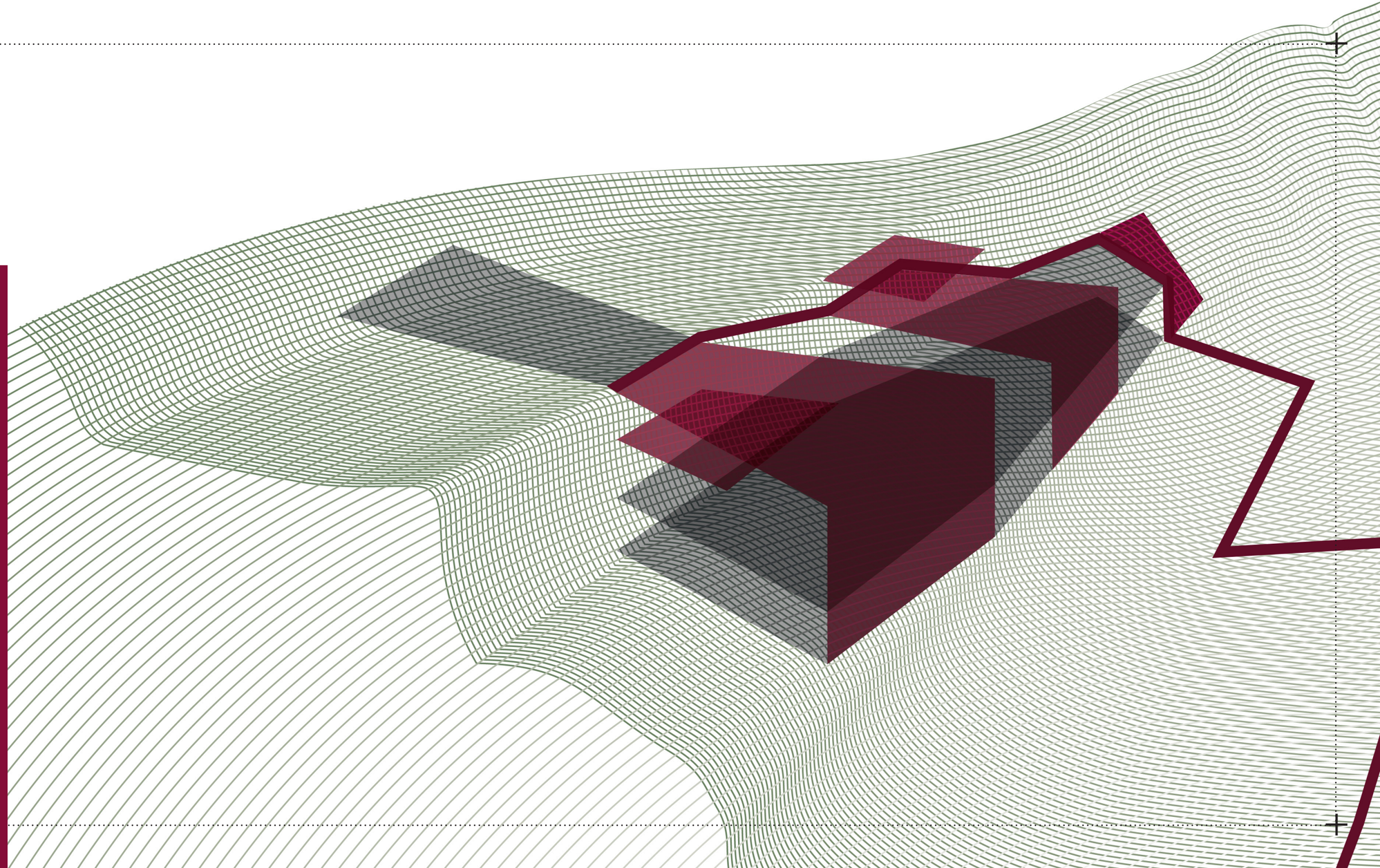
SCENARIOS

After understanding the ever changing nature of this kind of communities, the dynamics changes based on their needs and the opportunities of development for their lives, and also the uncertainty of the future, it is pertinent to develop a future-thinking approach to the design process, the study of the different scenarios that might influence the functionality of the building.

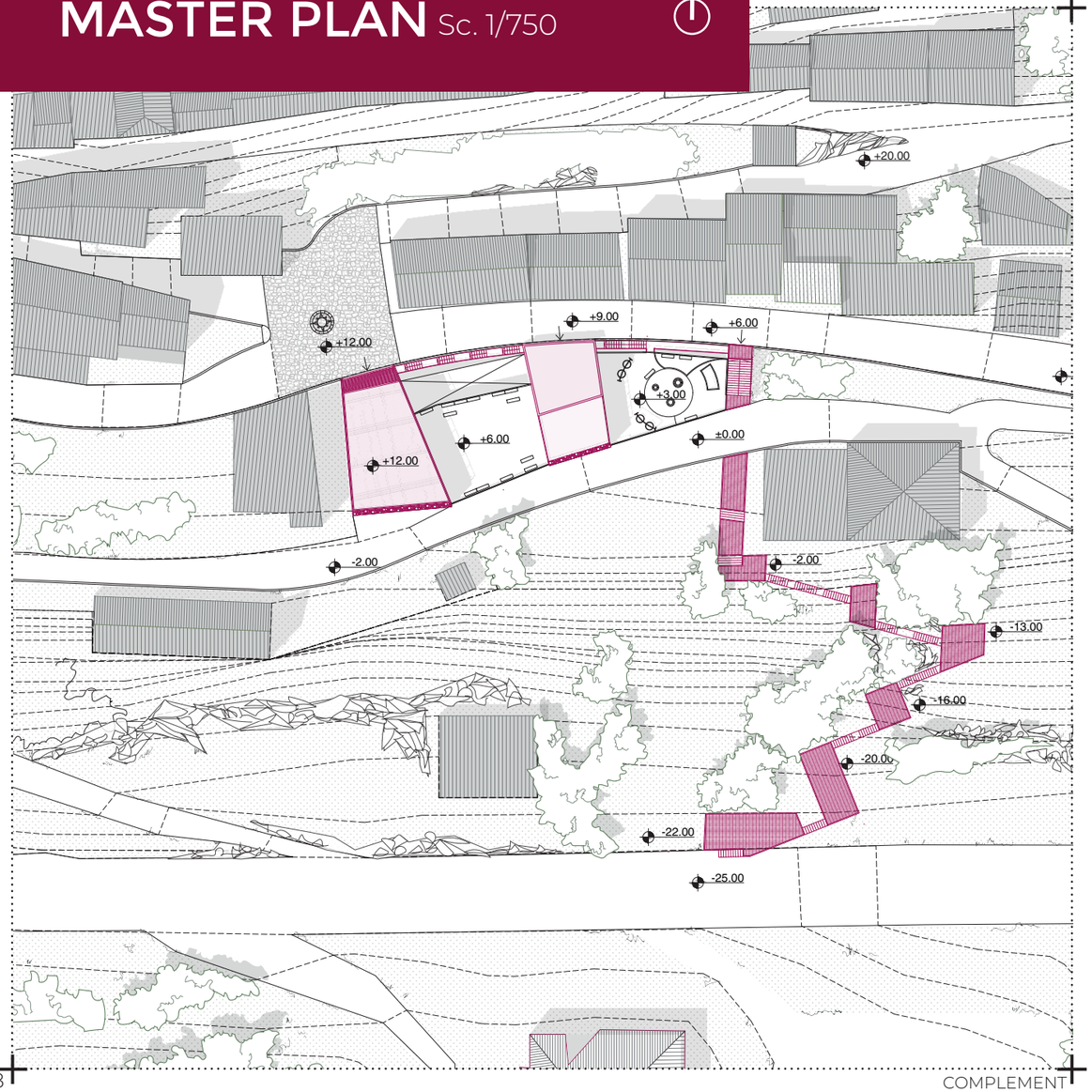
Having this approach in mind while designing, allows the architect to think about the spaces between the architecture as ephemeral and flexible, and to not design in such a strict way that the building won't be able to change with its community. This last option resulted in the disuse of the architecture and a waste of time, resources and space.

COMPLEMENT

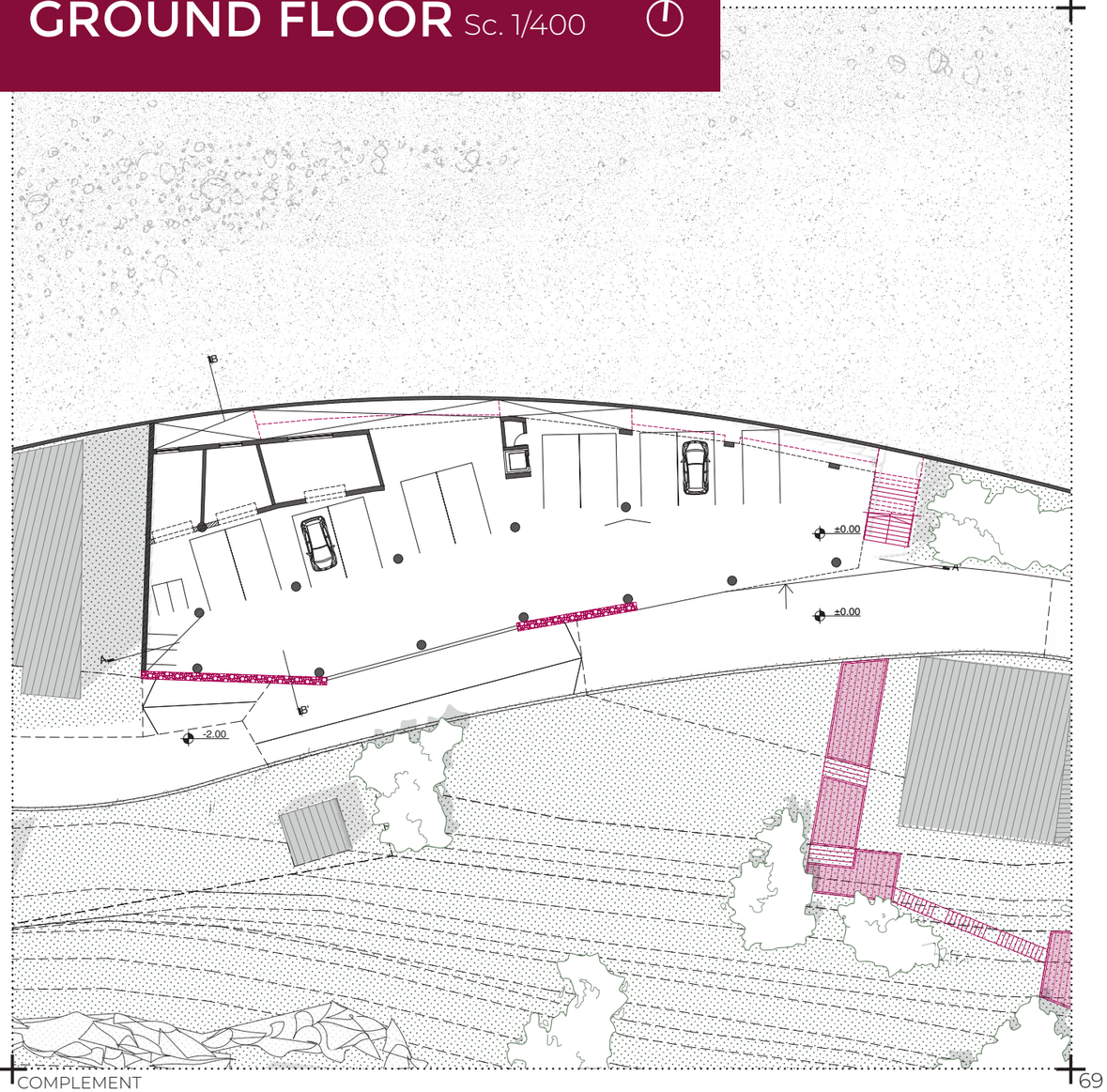
The architectural intervention



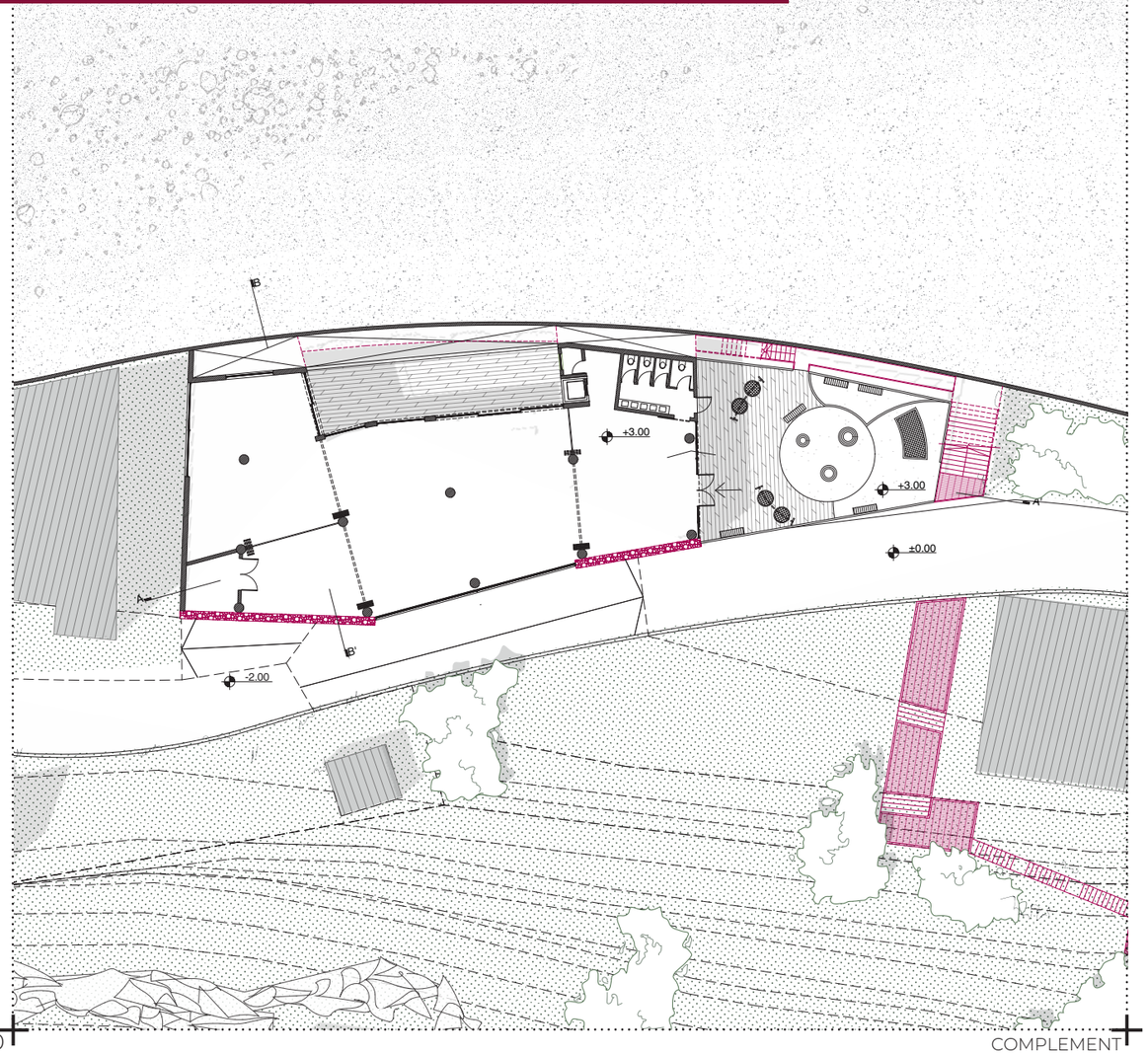
MASTER PLAN Sc. 1/750



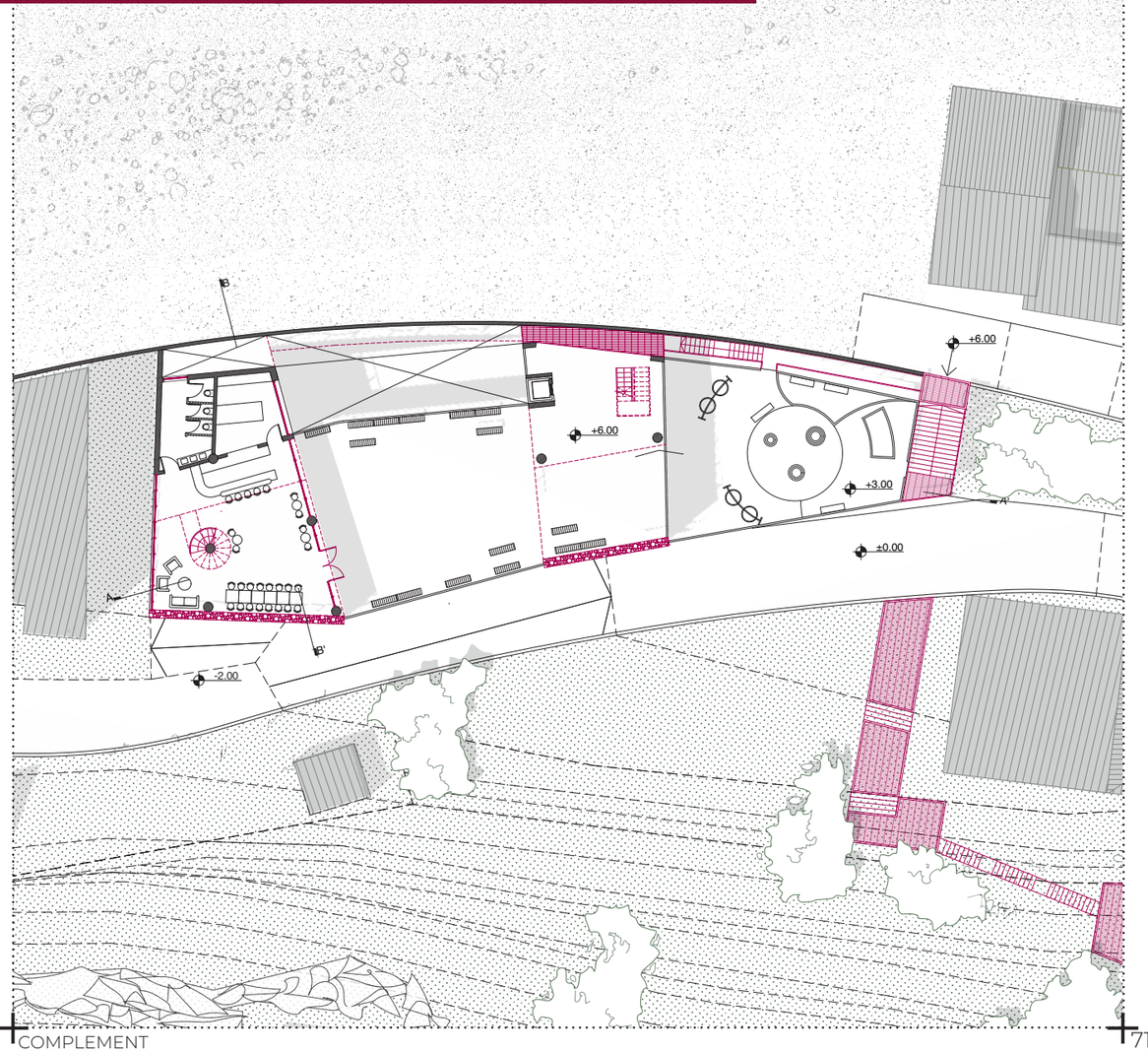
GROUND FLOOR Sc. 1/400



FIRST FLOOR Sc. 1/400



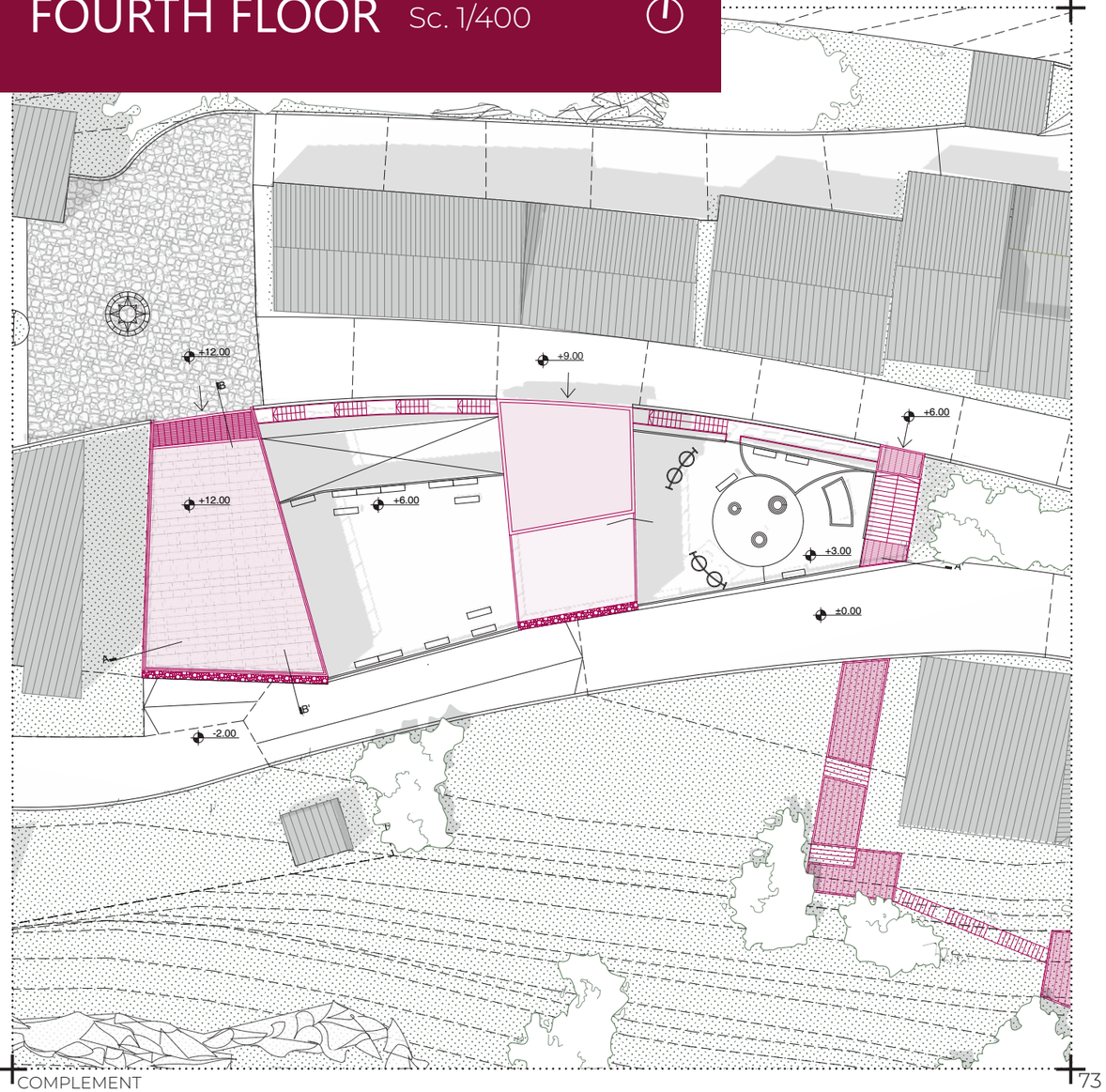
SECOND FLOOR Sc. 1/400



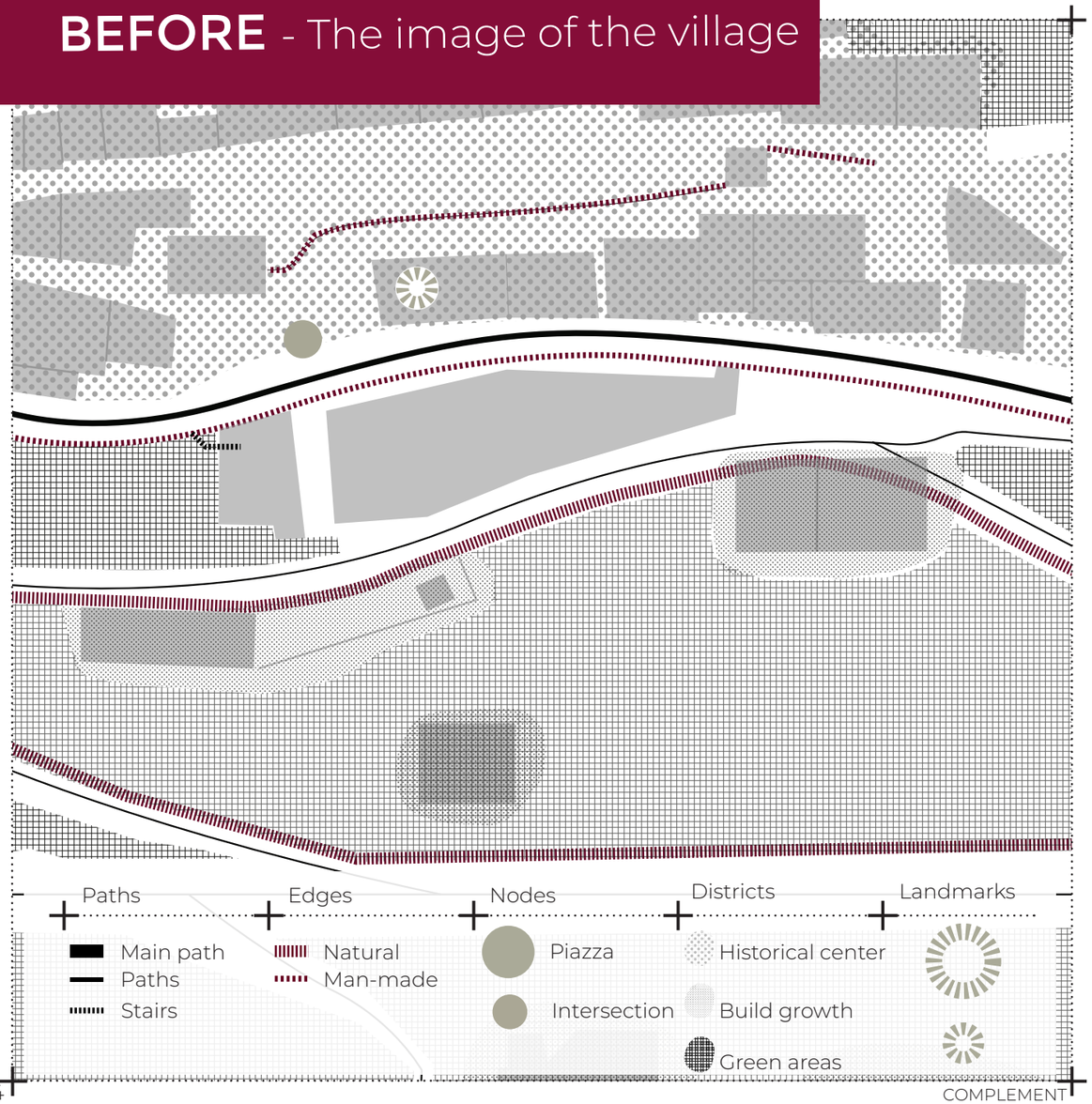
THIRD FLOOR Sc. 1/400



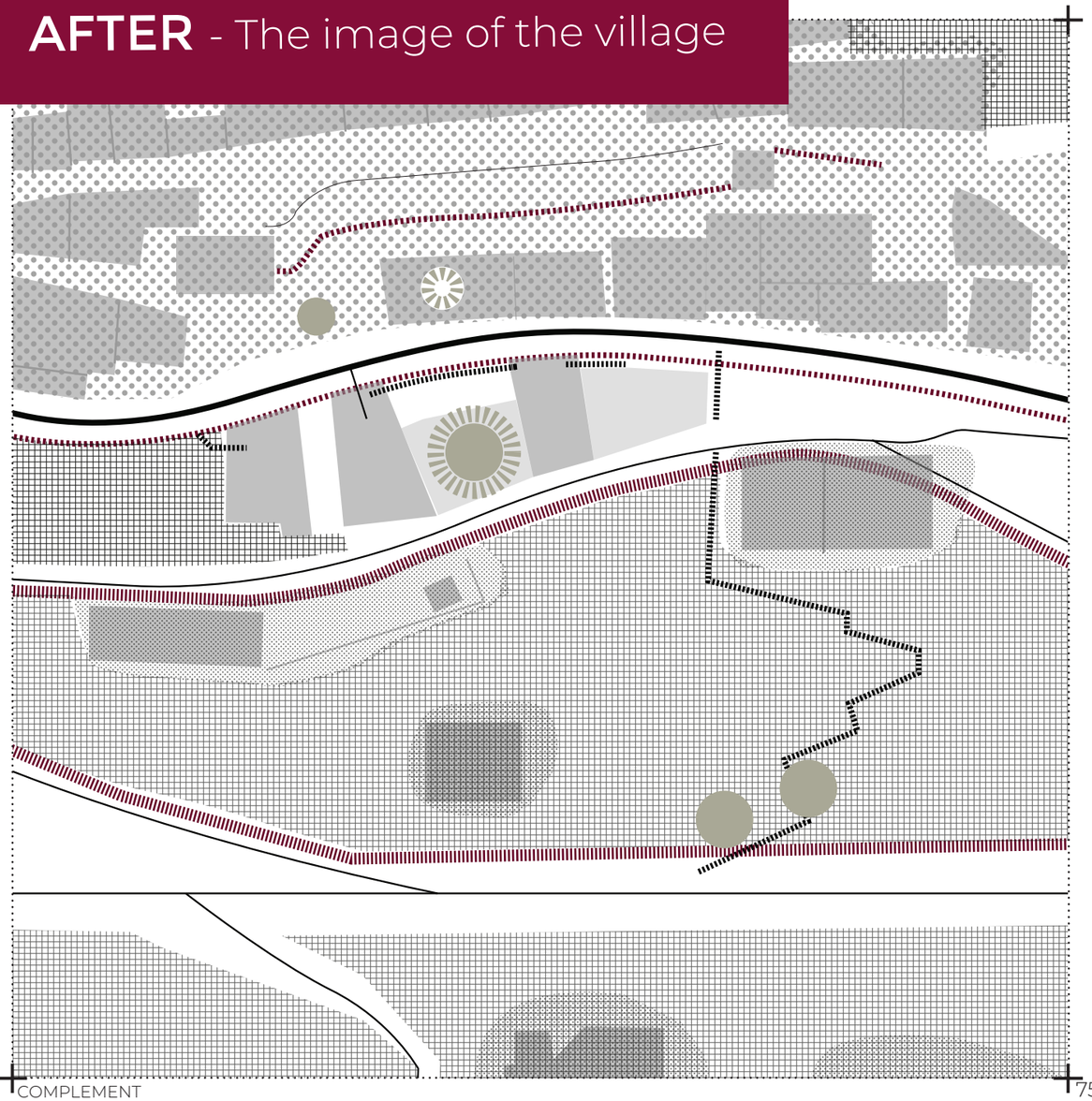
FOURTH FLOOR Sc. 1/400



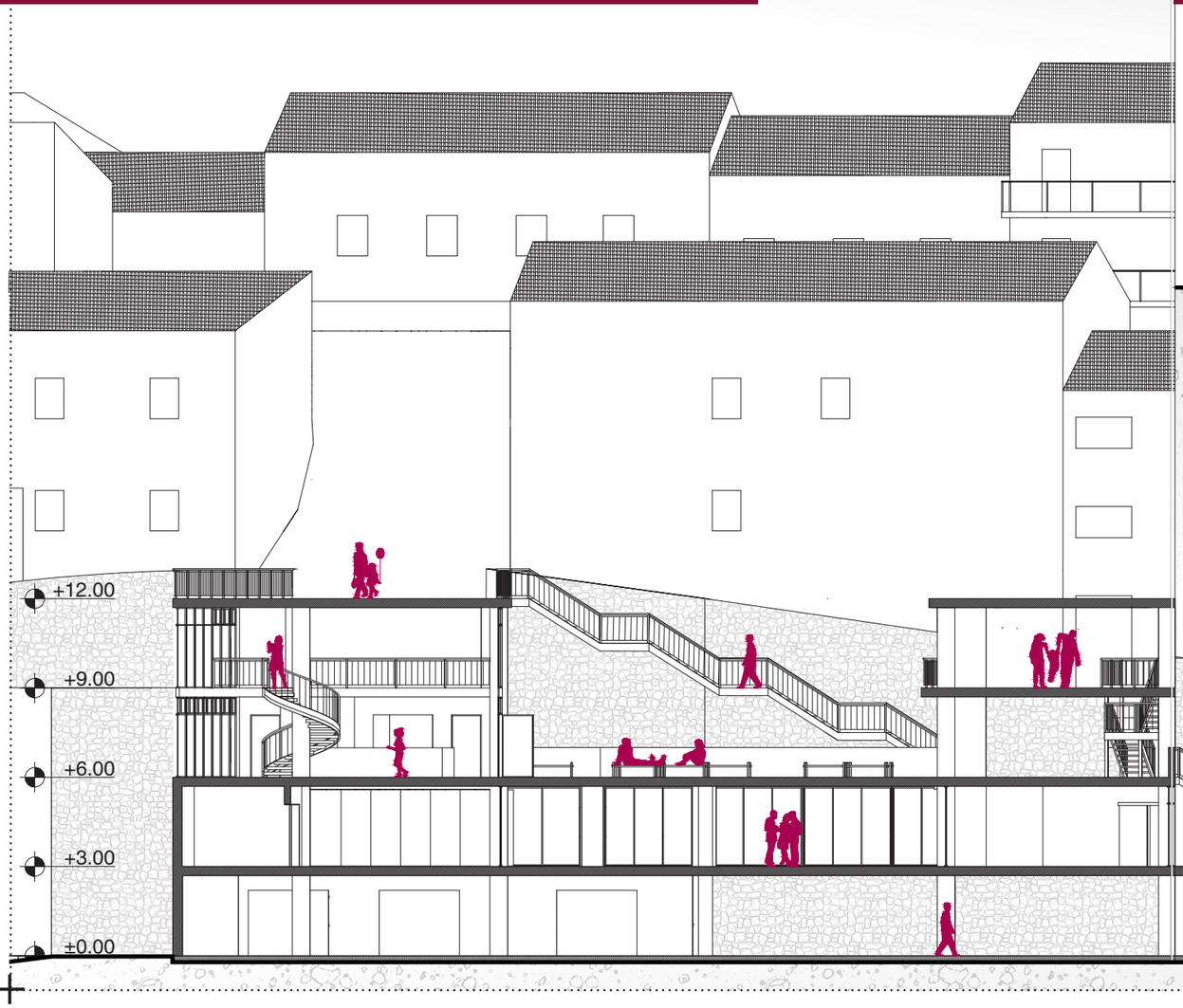
BEFORE - The image of the village



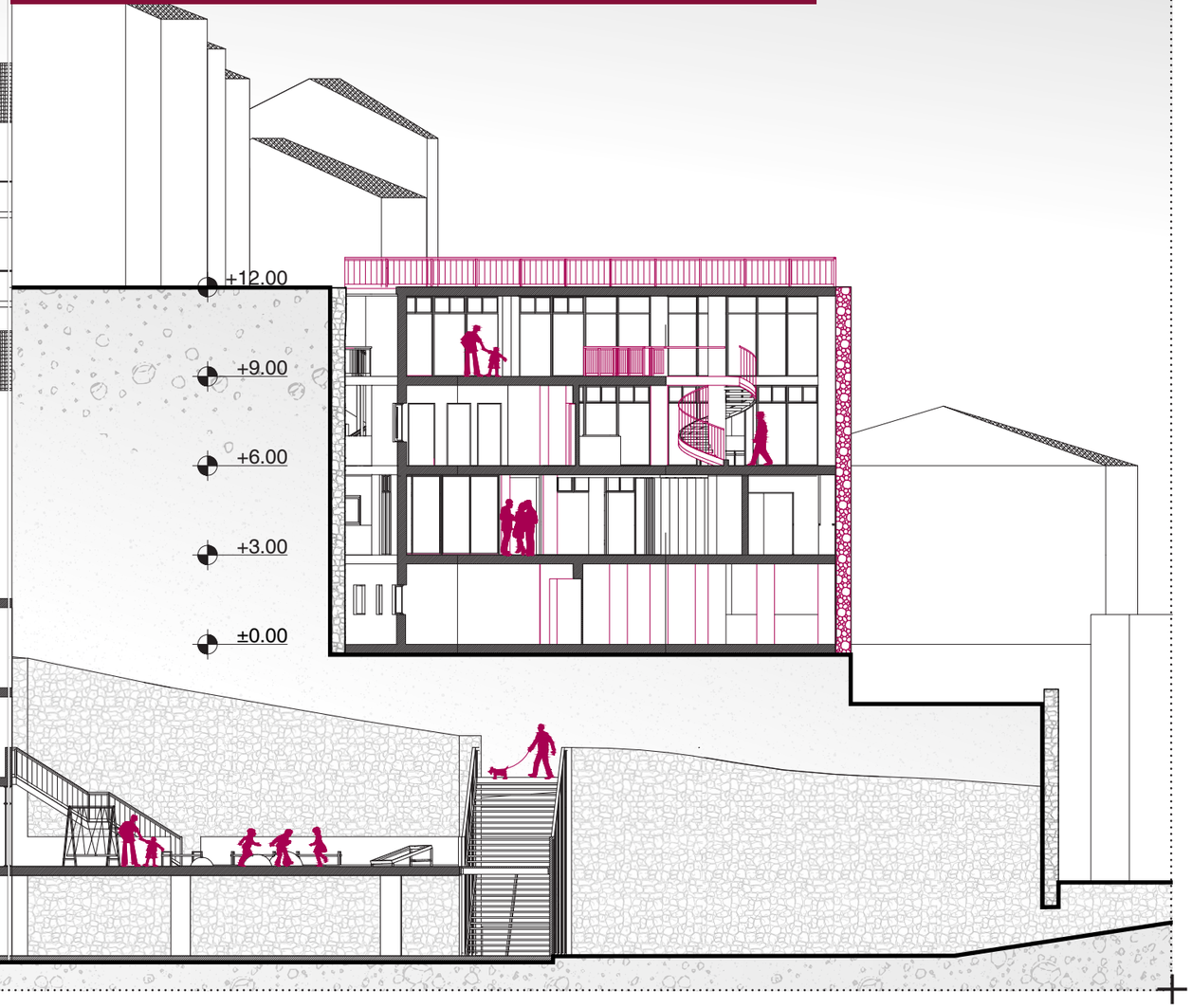
AFTER - The image of the village

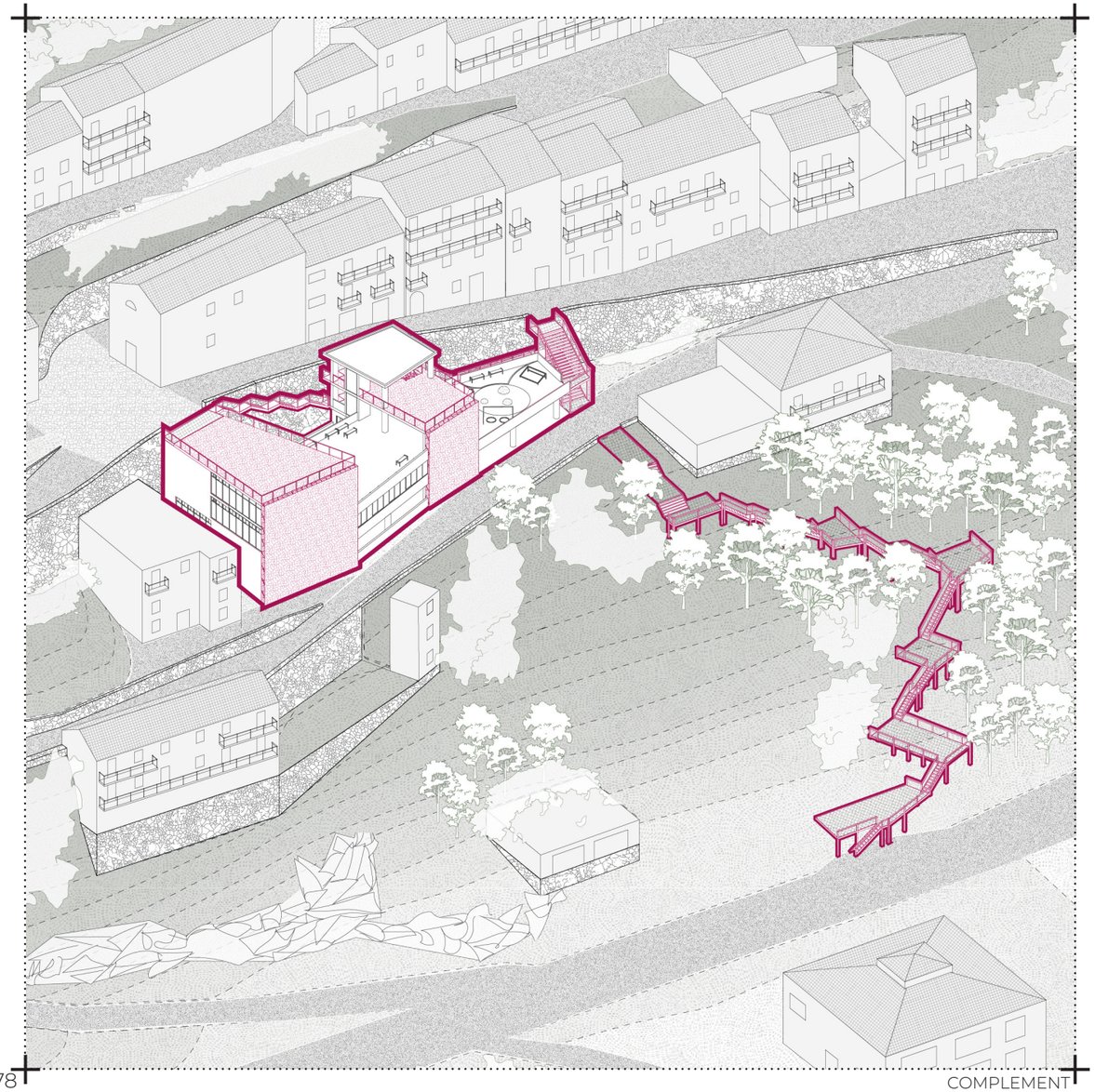


SECTION A-A’ Sc. 1/200



SECTION B-B’ Sc. 1/200









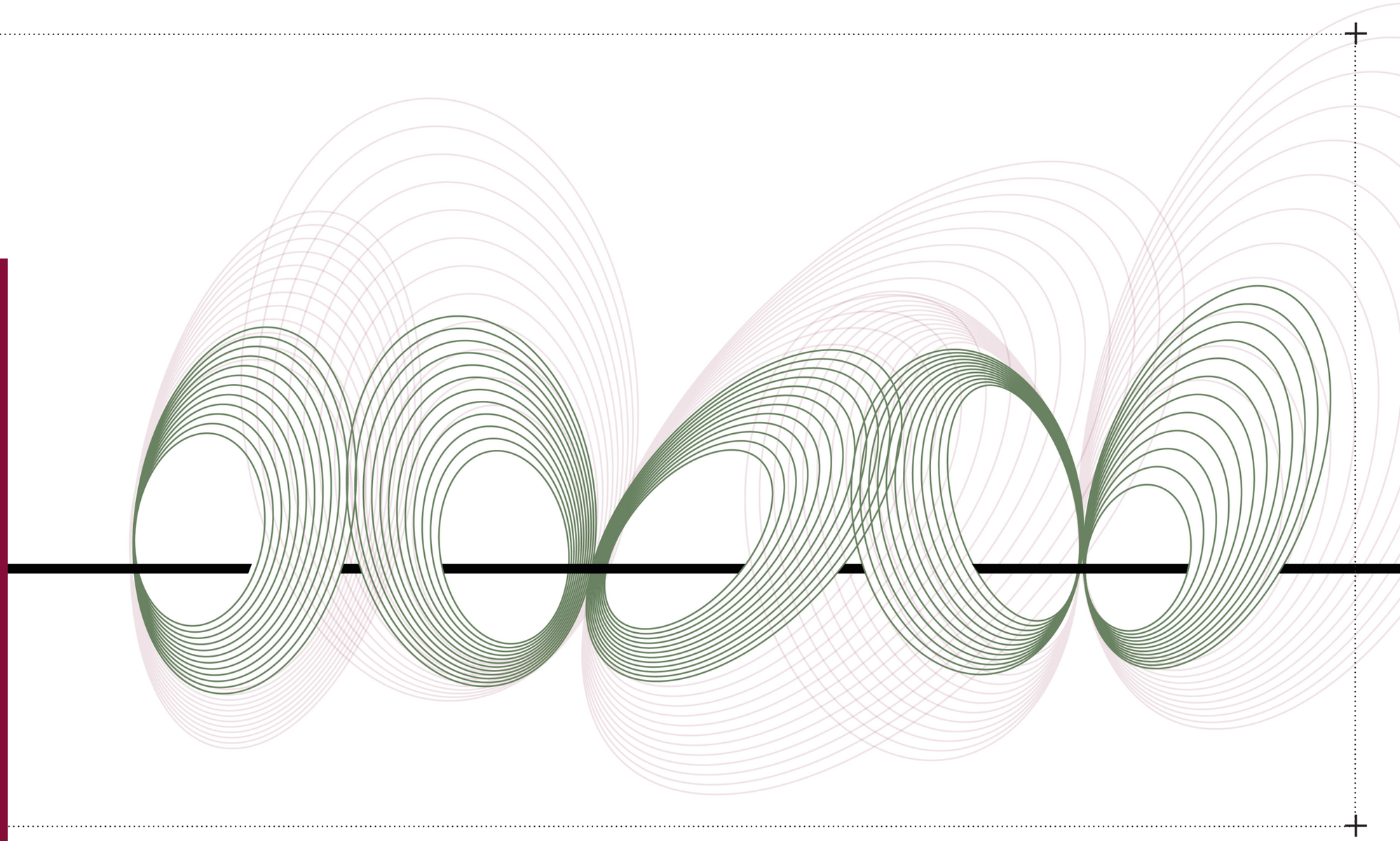






SCENARIOS

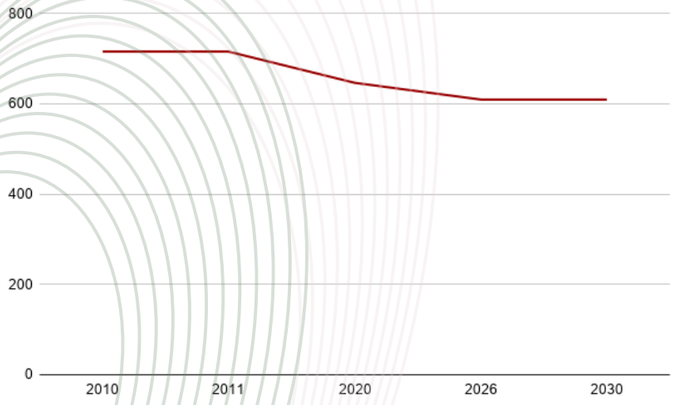
Future-thinking approach



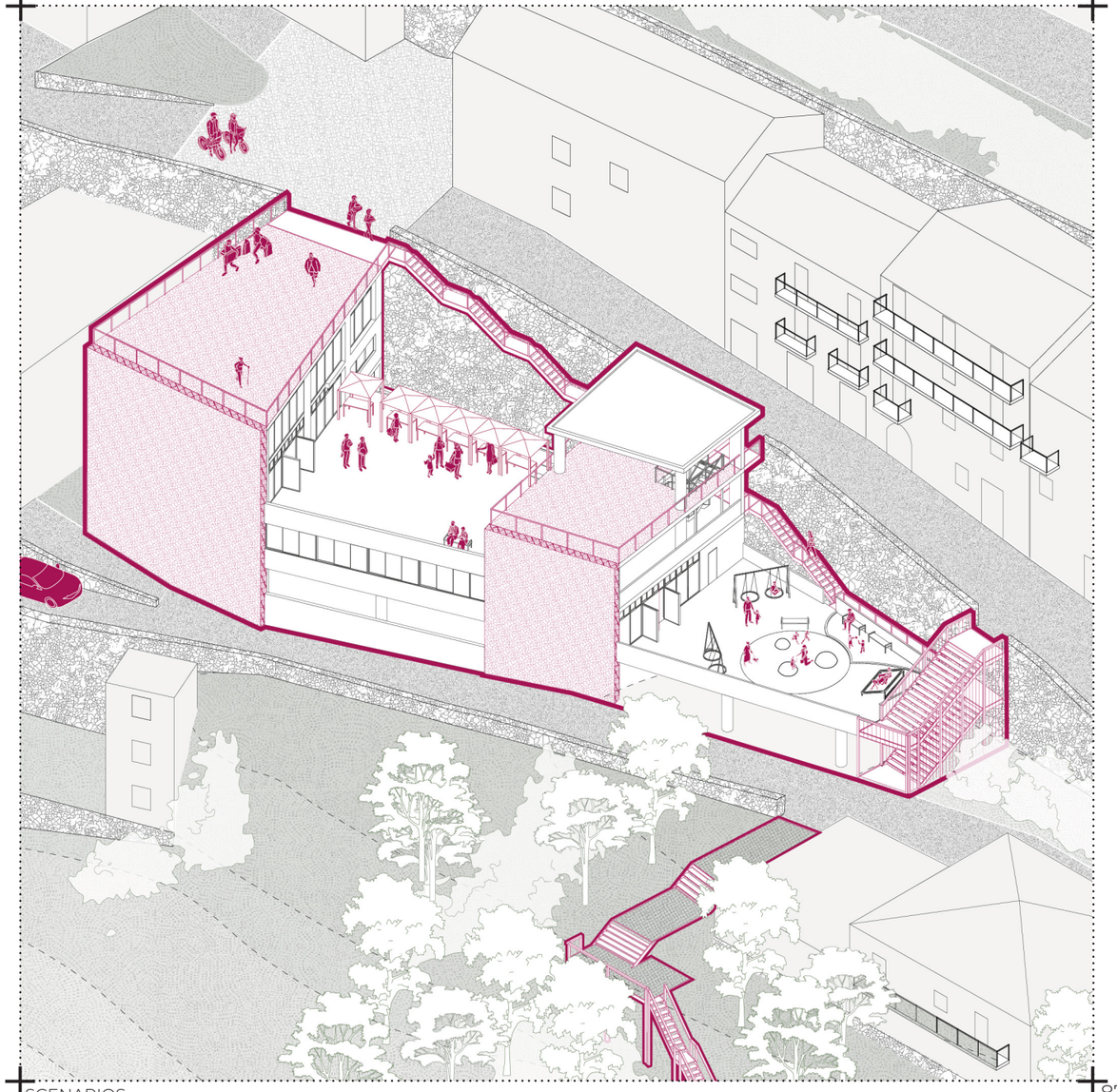
1 - NO CHANGE IN POPULATION

This scenario in which the population number stays steady functions as the base point for future comparison.

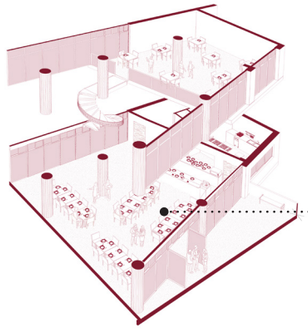
This scenario is used as a base point because we represent the use of the building as intended at the original design, in where we took into consideration the current state and dynamics of the community, in where the building is a community hub where the locals can develop different events, like concerts, gatherings, ateliers, gym, celebrations, exhibitions, parking, a multipurpose space that can blend into the necessities of the town and the visitors



Graphical representation of the hypothesis.

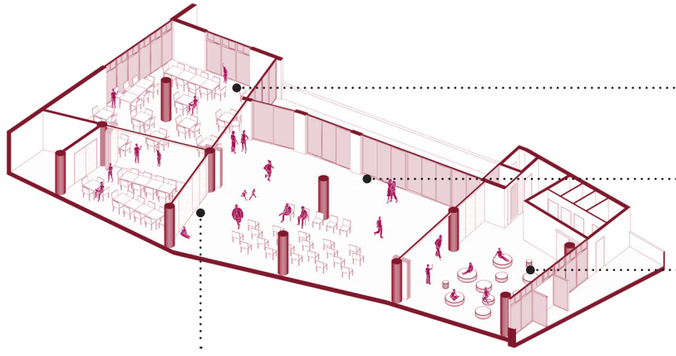


Second- third Floor - commercial space



Cafeteria + Community dinning area

First Floor - adaptable rooms



Flexible rooms for daily activities and courses

Gathering space for meetings and events

Waiting area - living room

Operable walls to adapt the spaces as needed





2 - SEASONAL TOURISM

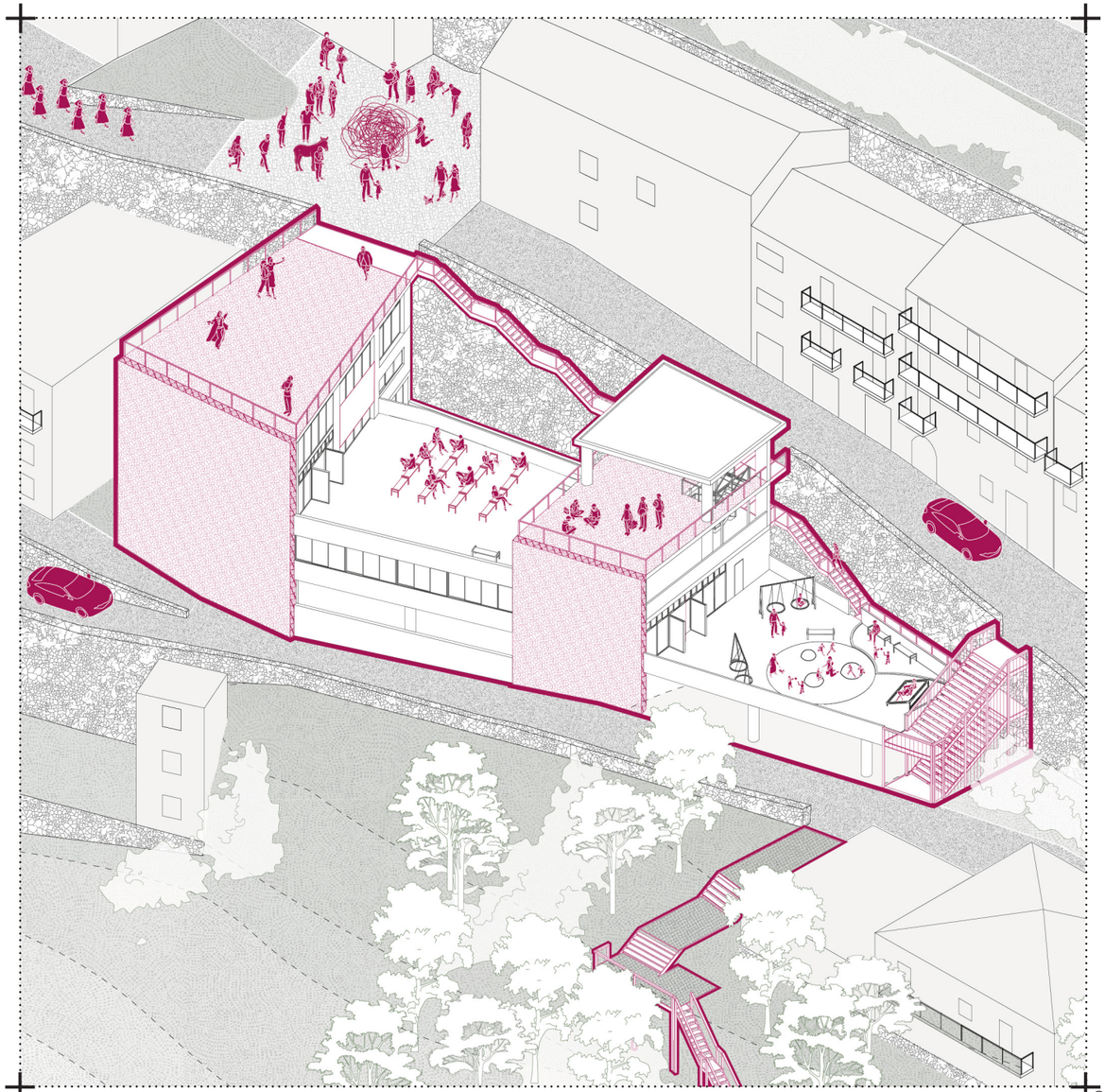
This scenario is based on the tourism season, that by the graph we can see that the best time for tourism in this are is the summer times, this is a current situation of an ephemeral community that comes once a year to escape the heat and enjoy the different events held by the community that were previously studied.

This function is one that is foreseen also as a current state of the community needs, this is because as they held many cultural events they also have to prepared to receive each year a large community that are attracted by this, in this way the building by its nature can adapt for this use as well, transforming it in a temporal hostel, and with spaces dedicated to give courses and experiences to spread the culture of Letino to this newcomers.

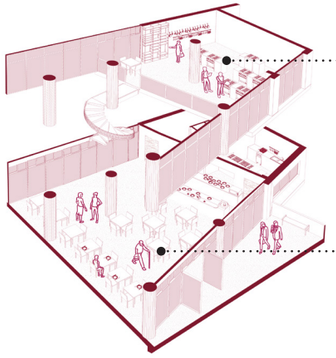
Tourism Score in Letino



Graphics source:
© WeatherSpark.com



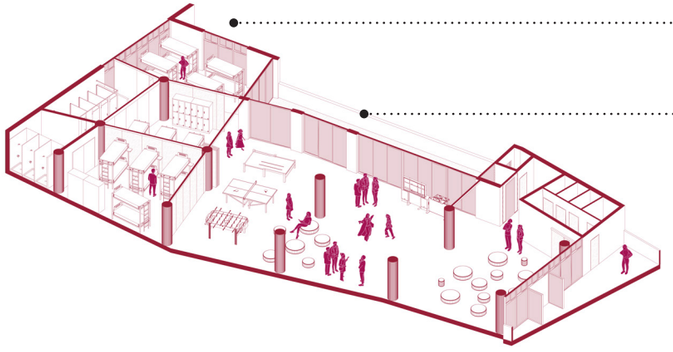
Second- third Floor - commercial space



Teaching room for traditional products

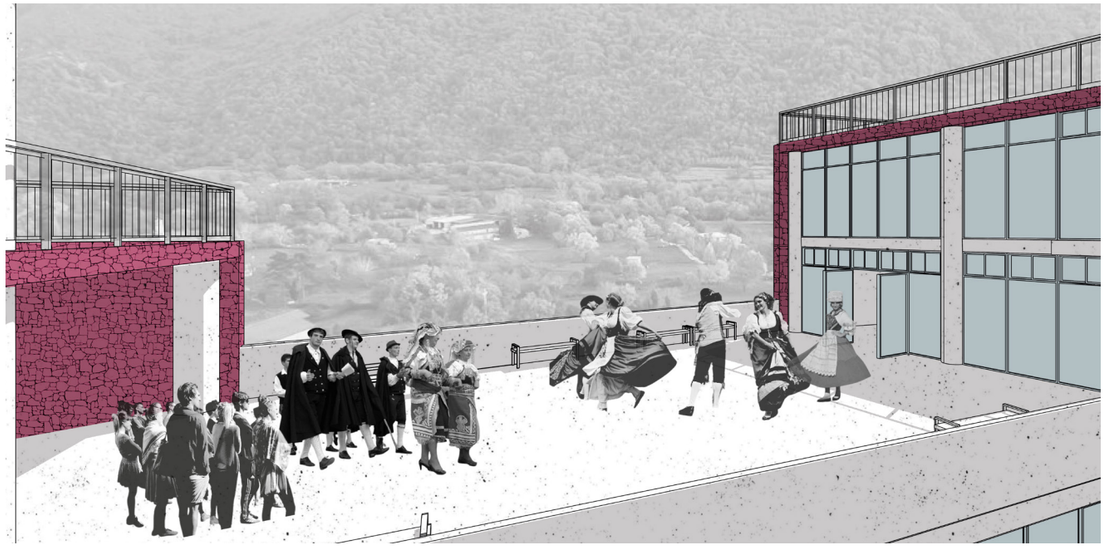
Cafeteria

First Floor - hostel



Shared rooms

Common room - living area



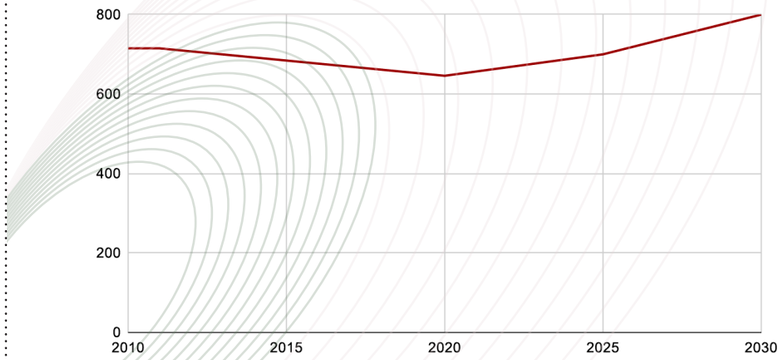


3 - POPULATION RISES

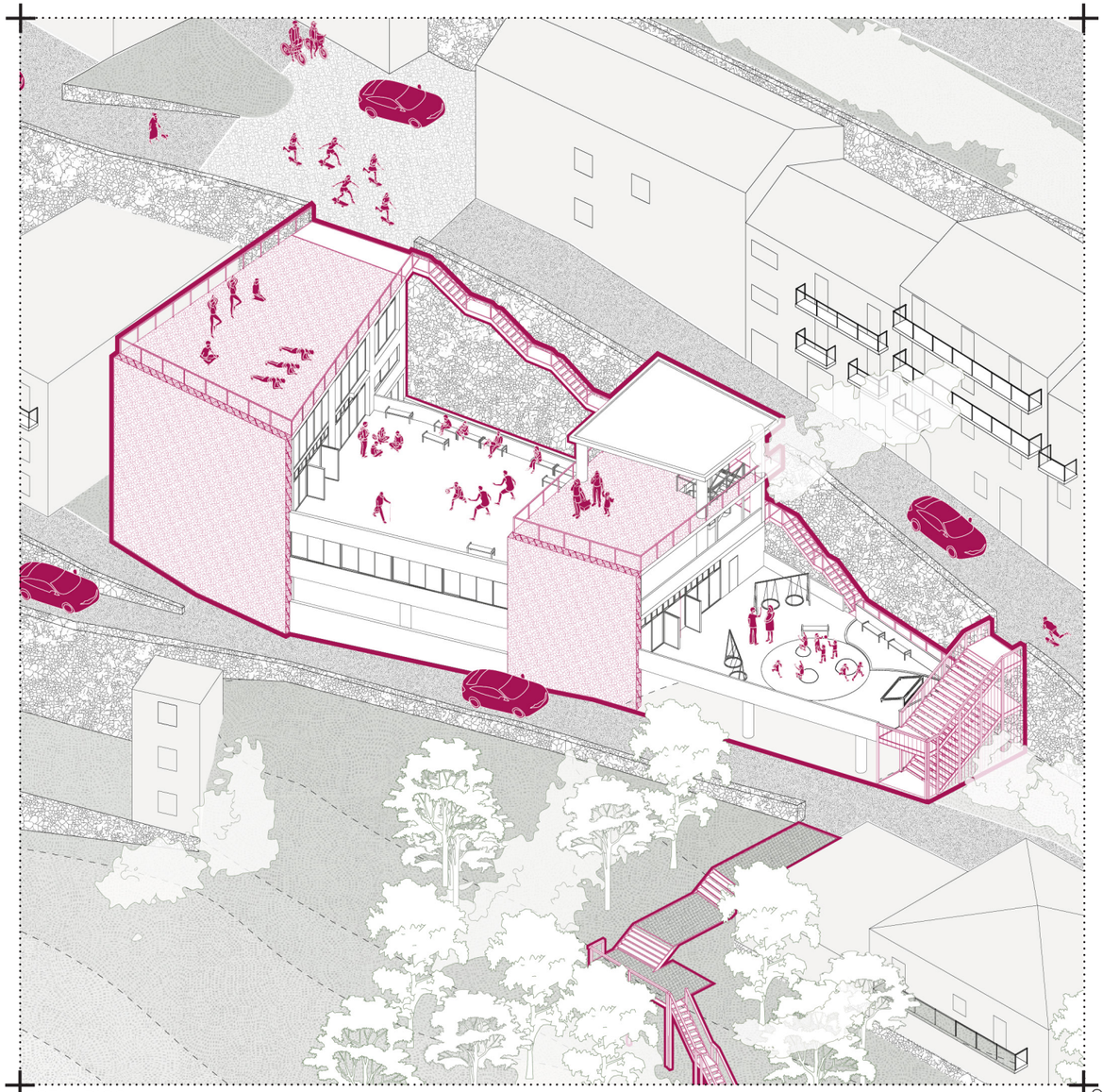
This scenario is based on the hypothesis that the SNAI program has taken actions into the improvement of the basic needs of the village, and the improvement of the overall well-being resulting in an increase of population.

In this case the building must adapt to the new necessities that a rise of population in this village might cause, for example the need of more space for education, commerce, and some needs that are basic for any community like gathering spaces or parks for kids, for their enjoyment and their development.

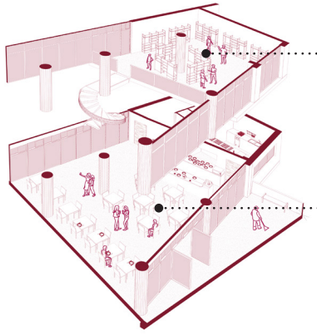
In this proposal we changed the functions to be able to use the previous space as an expansion for a middle or high school, and to serve as a commercial space for the local products.



Graphical representation of the hypothesis.



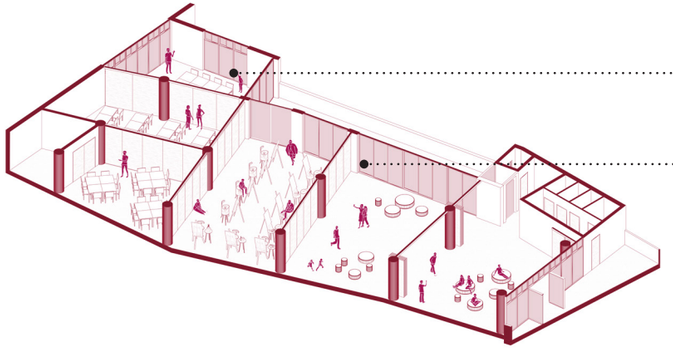
Second- third Floor - commercial space



Commercial area for local products

Cafeteria

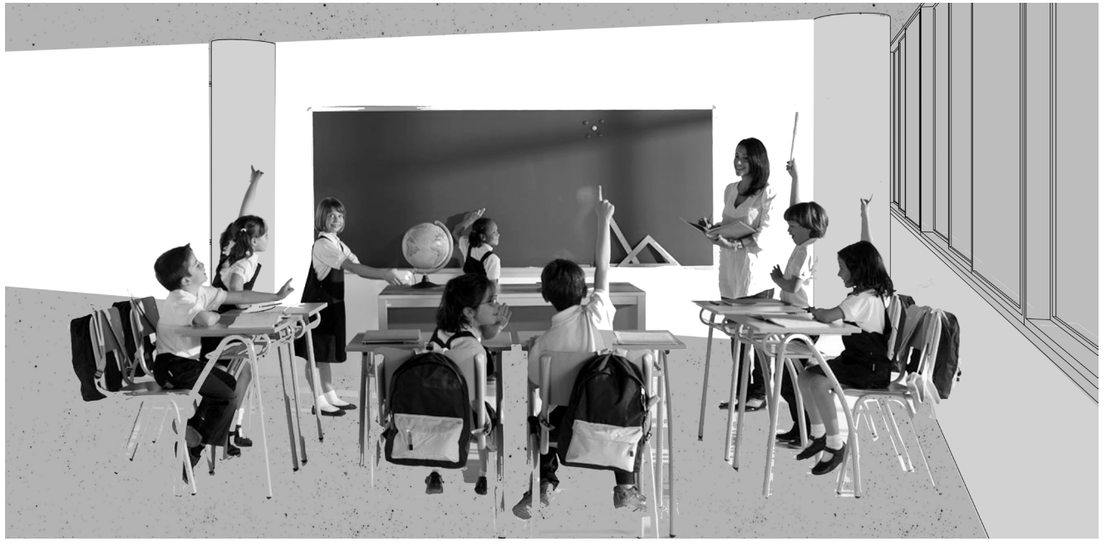
First Floor - school



Classrooms

Break area

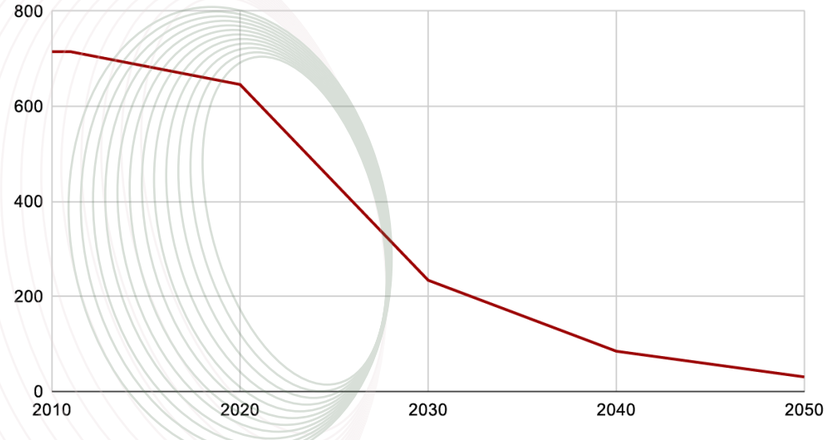




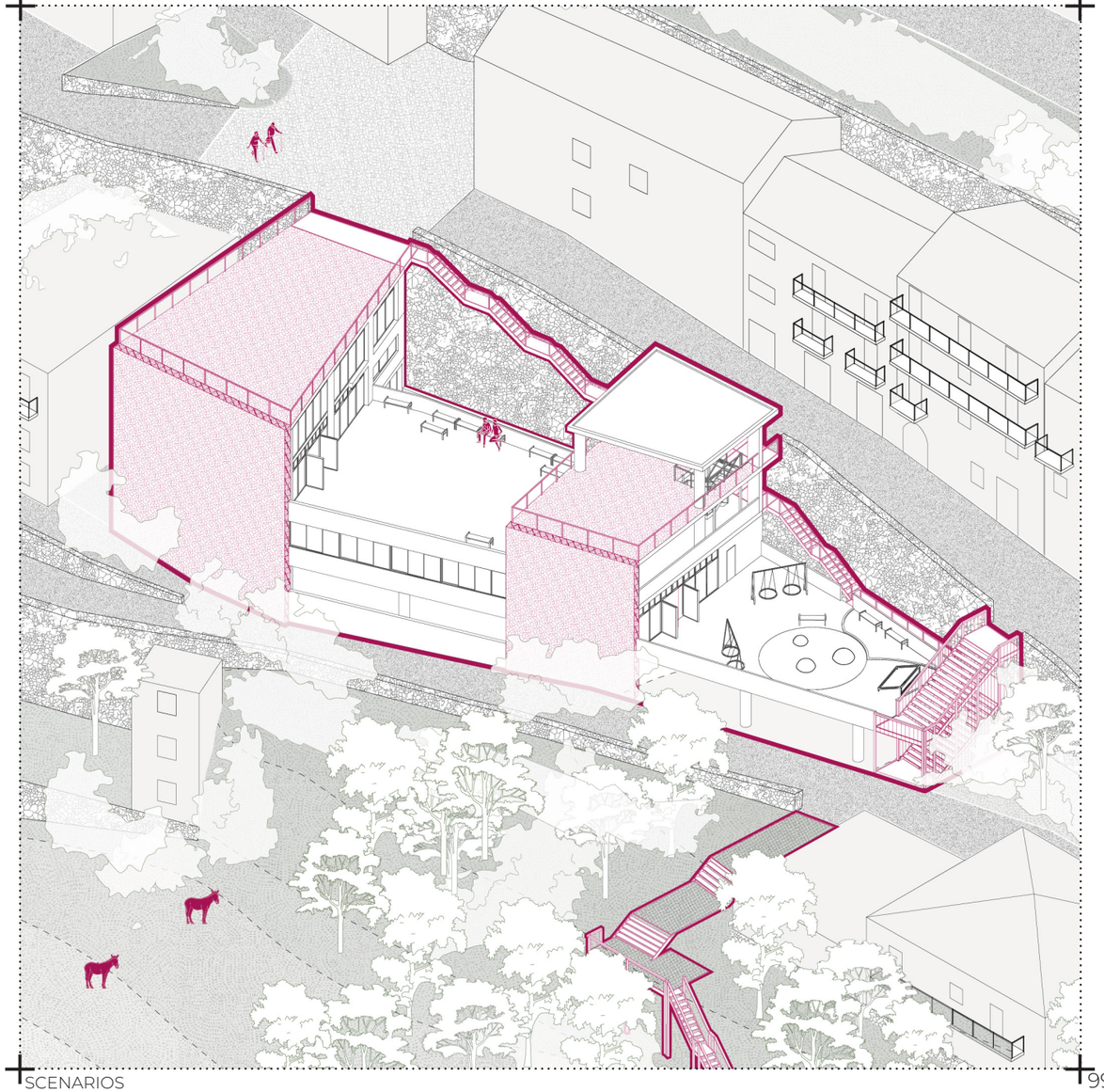
4 - ABANDONMENT

This scenario is based on the data explained previously of the depopulation curve that SNAI provides, in which the population declines 9.65% each year, arriving to an extreme point where by the prediction of the curve by 2050 there is going to be only 31 people living in this area.

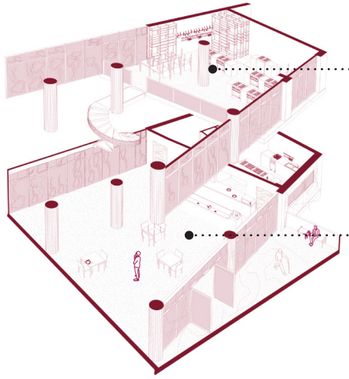
In this radical scenario we see how the building is going to react to the lack of maintenance and functions that the remaining community will need, as the actual state of the building, previously any intervention, we can see that they still use the ground floor as the parking lot that was previously designed for, and even if the structure was never finalized, the need that they have for a covered parking shows by the use of the space in an informal way, to safeguard their vehicles and shelter from the weather, in this scenarios we took the same consideration and result for the parking space to be continuously used by the remaining people, the rest of the building we hypothesis that will be used as a storage from the old furniture and the spaces will be occasionally used by in a casual way without many activities happening.



In this graph we can see the future prediction of the population if the curve keeps lowering every 9.65% each year.



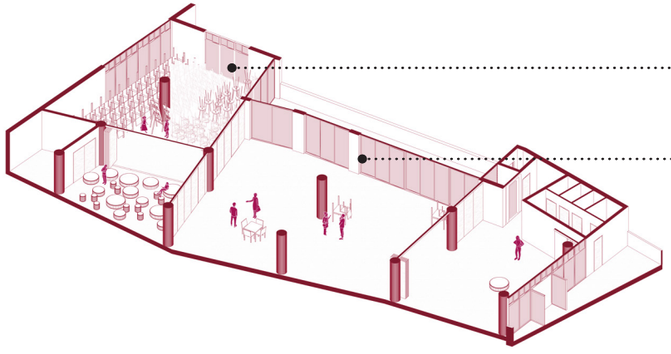
Second- third Floor - shelter



Storage

Shelter

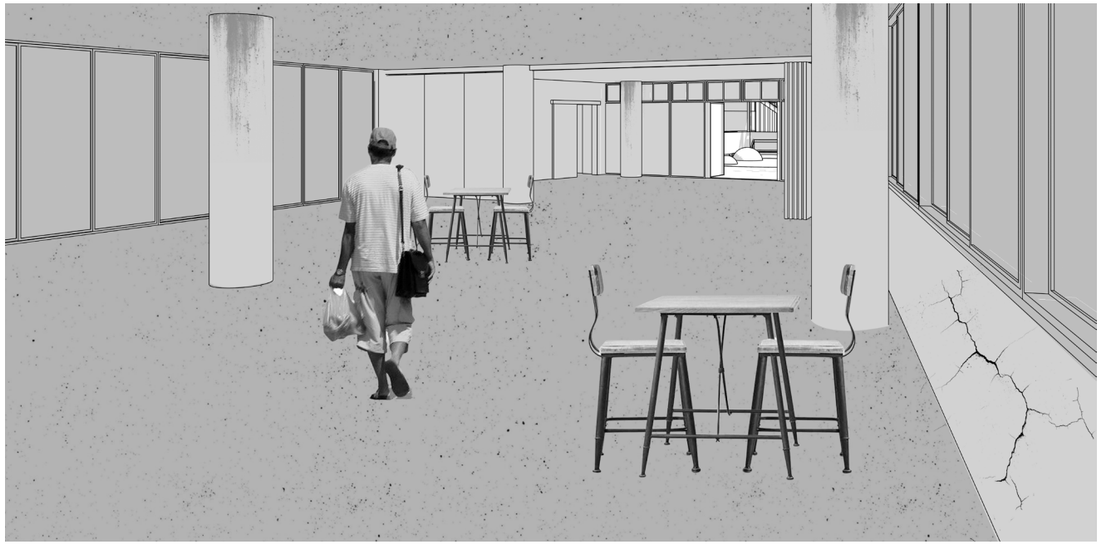
First Floor - shelter



Deposit

Shelter area





CONCLUSION

Conclusions

This thesis started with the question over how architecture responds to the context of Inner areas. During the process of the analysis we understood the impact that the sense of belonging has over a community, in which even facing marginalization and lack of services they choose to stay in this place. The spirit of the place is related to this identity that the people have formed over generations in this area, the meaning of place is one that is given by the communities through their history, traditions, and connection to their land.

In this order of ideas the inner areas, are places where the community is rooted in traditions and with a formed identity that has to be preserved to not affect the sense of belonging, into the architectural field, we understand the context not only as the physical implications that surrounds the lot, but also all the elements that conforms the Genius Loci, the importance of understanding the cultural landscape, the environment and how does the community dynamics work into these factors is one that will shape the architecture.

Architecture should respond to the community and their Genius Loci rather than imposing an external logic that will disrupt this image, an example of this is the existing parking lot in Letino, understanding the need of an intervention in this area have to take into consideration how the dynamics of these kind of communities unfold, and in this way provided an architectural project that will adapt to their needs and foster the Identity of the place.

By creating an adaptive architecture that provides spaces for the well being of the community, with time will be more useful, in the sense that the intervention will not be abandonment because it will transform with the changing needs of the community. In this way the core of the design is focused on the improvement of the quality of life of the communities and demographic stability, rather than imposing a new community in this area, and rather sees it as a possible side effect not as the core goal of the design.

Finally, we wanted to discuss how architecture is often portrayed as a final product responding to a specific use, with little attention paid to how a building actually interacts with a community once construction concludes. Projects in inner areas are often the ones that experience this occurrence, returning to the example of the Arcipelago d'Italia that showcases many projects that took place in areas in this condition, but when we took a deeper look into the projects there is no follow up of how the architecture is used by the community that was designed for.

In the case study of Ostana this is one of the things that were interesting about the projects held in this area, showing that more flexible spaces are the ones that are most used by the community. With this in mind is why we introduced the future thinking approach, and the importance of that in the root of the design process we take into consideration the need of flexible spaces that adapts to the changes that the communities in the inner area might face over time.

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