



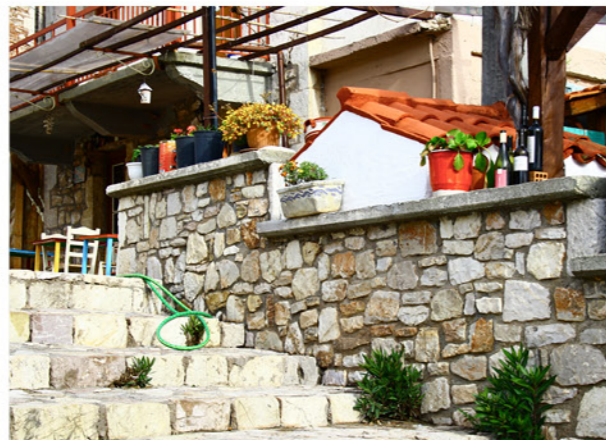


ARCHITECTURE OF  
TERRITORY  
European Countryside

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# ARCADIAN VILLAGES MOUNTAINOUS COUNTRYSIDE



ARCADIA  
Spring 2016

## Arcadian Villages Mountainous Countryside

Arcadia is not only one of the most ancient notions of paradise in the western culture, but it also refers to an actual geographic location—it lies in the central region of Peloponnese, the southern peninsula of Greek mainland, situated among the mountain ranges of the Menalon massif. Subject to myths and charged with imaginaries and concepts of identity, the region has a rich and idealised past. It is one of the oldest inhabited areas in Greece. The Arcadian villages, scattered in extreme topographies, are located at the altitudes between 700 and 1200m altitude. Playing an important role in Greek history, they were well known already during the ancient times. The archetypal Arcadian dweller is a poetic figure of 'great independence and strength', a skilled warrior and a tough herdsman.

Arcadia today is facing complex challenges of urbanisation. Like other mountainous countrysides of Europe, it suffers from an extreme depopulation and demographic shrinkage. Migration, mainly to Athens, which had accelerated since the end of World War II, led to emptying out of rural territory into abandoned fields and pastures. It is no longer a productive region and no longer economically significant as before. Soon, the region will be entirely devoid of a permanent habitation.

At the same time, in the city, Greek urban dwellers are particularly nostalgic about these villages. Arcadia has become the point of return, a retreat. Many Greeks still own their families' old countryside houses and use them as weekend or holiday destinations, creating new patterns of inhabitation that are now shaping this countryside.



Arcadia as a retreat

p.54

## Arcadian Identities

Mythological stories of Arcadia and its actual history comprise a set of images, varying from an idealised past to the landscape as a symbol of the Greek contemporary national identity.

p.108

## A Chance for the Commons?

Introducing the proposal for renegotiating property, a future strategy to reorganize life and usage of land in Arcadia is developed.

p.62

## Anatomy of Shrinkage

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

p.82

## New Patterns of Living

The countryside is losing population. Permanence is being replaced by mobility, changing the relationship between the inhabitants and the land.

p.104

## Three Regions of Arcadia

Three distinct regions with different levels of urbanisation can be defined in the area.

# Arcadian Identities Images and History

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

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

## Mythical Nature



'Arcadia,'  
T. Eakin, 1883

Already during the Hellenic era, the remote Arcadia symbolised a locus of pure, rural, idyllic living, far from the cities, located at lower altitudes and near the coast. This romantic view of the region inspired imaginations ever since, triggering various myths and beliefs about creatures and Gods living hidden there. According to the Greek mythology, Arcadia of Peloponnese was a version of paradise, the domain of Pan, God of the forest. Half-goat and half-man, he lived in the virgin wilderness with his court of dryads, nymphs and other spirits of nature. Another myth narrates that Arcadia owes its name to the hero Arcas, who was the son of Callisto and Zeus, and who, himself, was born there on the banks of Lucius River. These stories charge the landscape with pictures of freedom and originality, later inspiring the European Renaissance, the artistic production of Arcadia as an intact bucolic Utopia.

## Landscape of National Identity



'Greek War of Independence,'  
T. Vryzakis, 1852

### Resisting the Ottoman Empire

The mountains of Peloponnese resisted the Ottoman rule in a long period of time. Acting like a fortress, with monasteries and strongholds placed in strategic locations, Arcadia became the heartland of the revolt and the place where the Greek War

of Independence was declared on the 25th March 1821. Greek troops managed to defeat the Ottoman forces, with the assistance of by the Russian Empire, Great Britain and the Kingdom of France achieving independence in 1832.

### Civil War Battleground

Almost a century later, the same landscape became once again a space of national conflict. The power vacuum left after the end of WWII led to a polarised struggle between the left and the right, making this region one of the first battlegrounds

of the Cold War. The fight between the Greek Communists and the Greek government army mirrored the world division on East and West. This tension left Greece with an anti-communist establishment.



Arcadia as a retreat:  
Places of resistance

## Nomadic Pastoralism



Film stills, private video,  
1930s

### Territory of Shepherds

The ideal of the Arcadian herdsmen, that of leading a simple pastoral life – unsophisticated but happy – was immortalised by Vergil's Eclogues. The inhabitants of the mountains were seen as free, wild and tough people, living in a semi-nomadic way. The farmers migrated

towards the more fertile areas of Elia during the harvest season to earn additional money. At the same time, shepherds moved to the coast in the winter, and back to the mountains during summer to avoid the spreading of diseases that high temperatures brought.

### Twin Villages

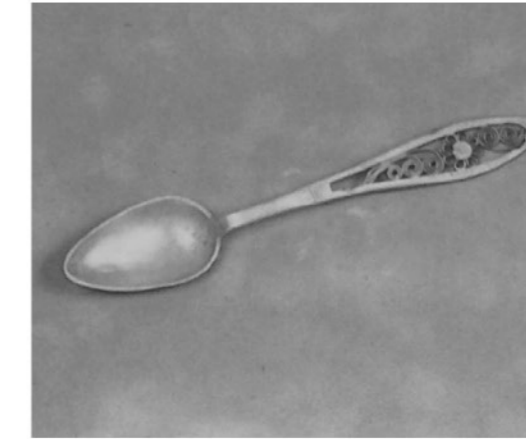
The shepherds originally built temporary huts during winters in Elia. Later on, they started settling, building permanent houses and returning to the same place every year. This way, a relationship was established between some villages in the moun-

tainous area of Gortynia and the coastal area of Elia. These relations are still visible in the paired names of some villages. An example is a mountainous village of Lasta, which relates to the name of the coastal village Lasteika.



Bipolar living:  
Connection to Elia

## Craftsmen and Traders



A spoon, Folklore Museum  
in Stemnitsa

### Extended Network of Craftsmen

Some of the settlements developed from purely pastoral places into centres of craft production. As a result, a network of production was formed, in which each village was specialised in a particular technique and a particular product. Valtessiniko, which is surrounded by pine forest,

became the woodcarvers village, Vytina became a centre for textile production, while the reputation of the Langadian stonemasons spread all-over Greece and Istanbul.

### Trade Routes

As there are only few paths crossing the mountain range of Peloponnese, these became strategic locations for trading. Merchants would pass directly through the

village and buy products on the way, but also the craftsmen themselves left the village after half a year of production to sell their products in Athens or Istanbul.



Craft network:  
Central villages



Defining  
Arcadia

- 1 Prefecture of Arcadia
- 2 Arcadia according to Travels of Anacharsis
- 3 Arcadia according to the spoken dialect
- 4 Gortynia



Mountains as islands.  
'Travels of Anacharsis the Younger in  
Greece,' Jean-Jacques Barthelemy, 1794



'Et in Arcadia Ego,'  
Nicolas Poussin, 1637-38

In the translation of the phrase "Et in Arcadia, Ego" – "Even in Arcadia, there am I", the usual interpretation of "I" refers to death, and "Arcadia" to a utopian land. The sentiment was meant to

express an ironic contrast between the shadow of death and the usual idle merriment that the nymphs and swains of ancient Arcadia were thought to have embodied.



'Arcas Preparing to Kill His Mother,' Hendrik Goltzius, 1574-75

Arcadia owes its name to the mythological hero Arcas, the son of Zeus and the nymph Callisto. After finding out that Callisto was pregnant, Hera, the jealous spouse of Zeus, turned her into a bear. Years later, during hunting, Arcas

came upon a bear, pointing his arrow at it, ready to kill. Zeus, feeling sorry for the tragedy of the mother and son, placed Callisto in the sky as the Ursa Major constellation and Arcas as the Ursa Minor constellation.



The Celestial Map,  
Albrecht Dürer, 1515



Trade Routes to  
Athens and Istanbul

Craftsmen from the Arcadian villages would usually lead a life of production and trading, spending six months at home and six months on the road travelling to the markets of Athens and Istanbul. The intense trading

movements of its inhabitants resulted in a good reputation of the region all over Greece and the Ottoman Empire. Their craft was demanded and they would return to Arcadia, making their villages rich and influential.



Expédition scientifique de Morée,  
1829-38

In this map of the Morea expedition of 1828, the craft villages Dimitsana, Stemnitza, Magouliana, Valtessiniko and Langadia appear as important figures. At the time, these villages were rich and

politically relevant, as they also played a central role in the national battle against the Ottomans and later in the war for independence, assisted by the French and the British troops.



# Anatomy of Shrinkage

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

## Villages as Islands

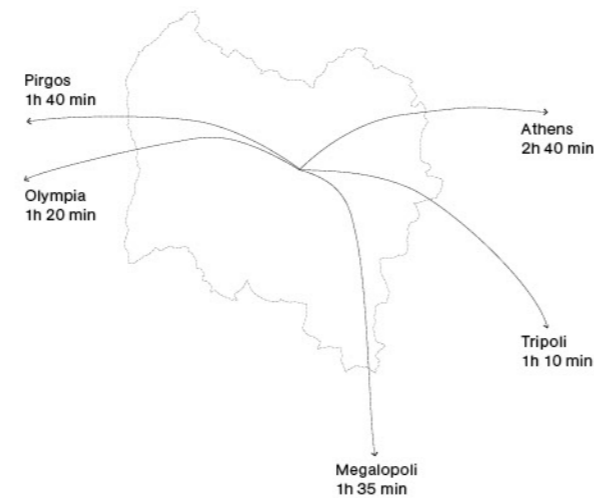
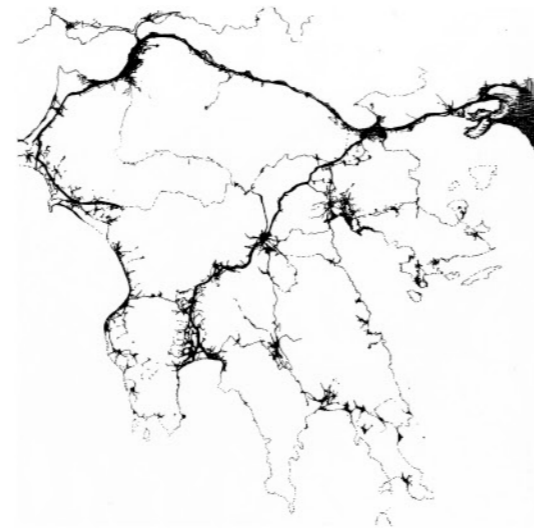
In an extremely low overall density of less than 10 inhabitants per square kilometre, the Arcadian settlements appear as isolated dots scattered over the mountainous landscape. Due to the long distances between the villages, social relations with other settlements are often very limited, and for the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



Scale Comparison  
Athens - Gortynia

## Remote Centre of Peloponnese

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



Gortynia  
Driving distances

## Administrative Divisions

Arcadia as an administrative unit of Greece dates back to the Greek independence in 1833. The contemporary prefecture of Arcadia also includes a strip of land that extends down to the coast. Therefore, this mountainous region, which is commonly referred to as Arcadia, reflects today in the shape of the municipality of Gortynia. The municipality was established in 2011, formulated out of eight smaller municipalities during the administrative reforms of the Kallikratis programme.



Gortynia: Former and actual administrative units

## Rough Topography

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

### Embedding in the Land

Picturesque but restricting, the mountains create an enclosed territory with slow connections. Several visual connections between the villages are blocked by massive bodies of rock, whereas others are positioned as

'rooms,' surrounded by mountains. There are steep, narrow valleys, settlements surrounded by dense forest, and giant slopes dropping down to Megalopolis and Elia, creating stunning open views.

### Strategic Value of Topography

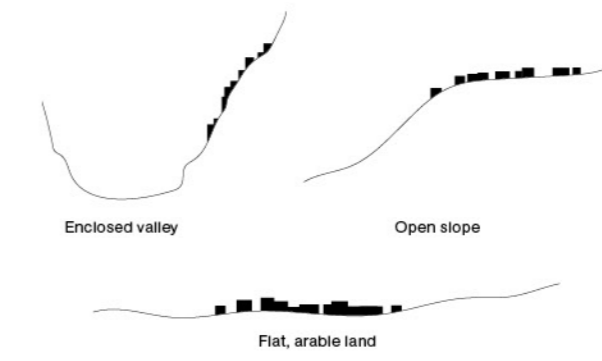
There are more and less favourable locations in this constellation of landscape 'rooms'. Considering the few routes that were used to cross the mountains, the constellations located in proximity to the strategic arteries profited from the wide network of trading. These villages turned into bigger, wealthier settlements with more than a thousand inhab-

itants. In times of war, the mountains also turned into a landscape of conflict. Topography created hidden retreats and strategic defences. Dimitsana is one such case, sitting on a steep hill that approaches inner Arcadia. The mist hanging in the valleys created even further confusion, making the mountains a territory hard to occupy.

### Altitude and Landscape Economy

The type of vegetation is highly dependent on altitude. As a result the villages can be categorised by their potential in land-use and production. Those in the lower regions are agricultural hamlets, positioned around

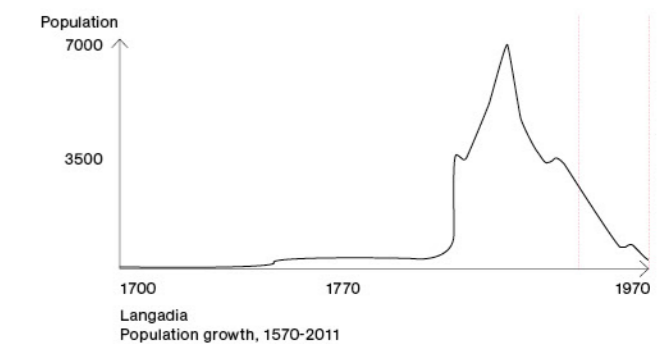
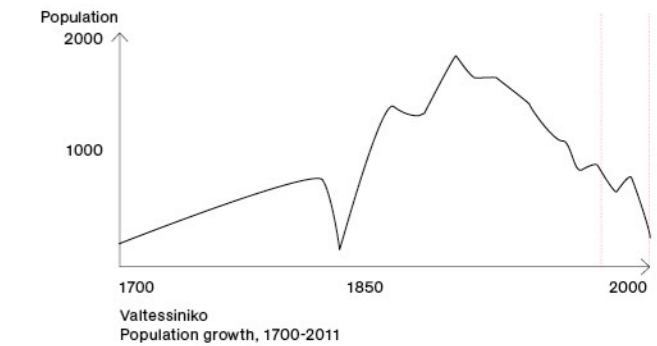
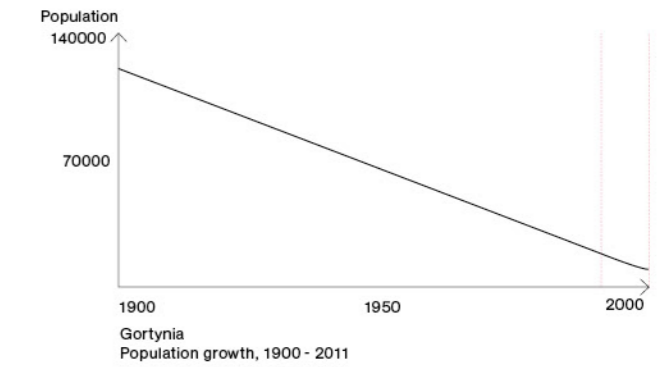
fertile riverbeds. At higher altitudes, the crops are limited due to the little availability of continuous and fertile land. Livestock farming, and in the higher altitudes also lumbering, became the main source of income for the villagers.



Landscape settings

## Drainage of Population

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





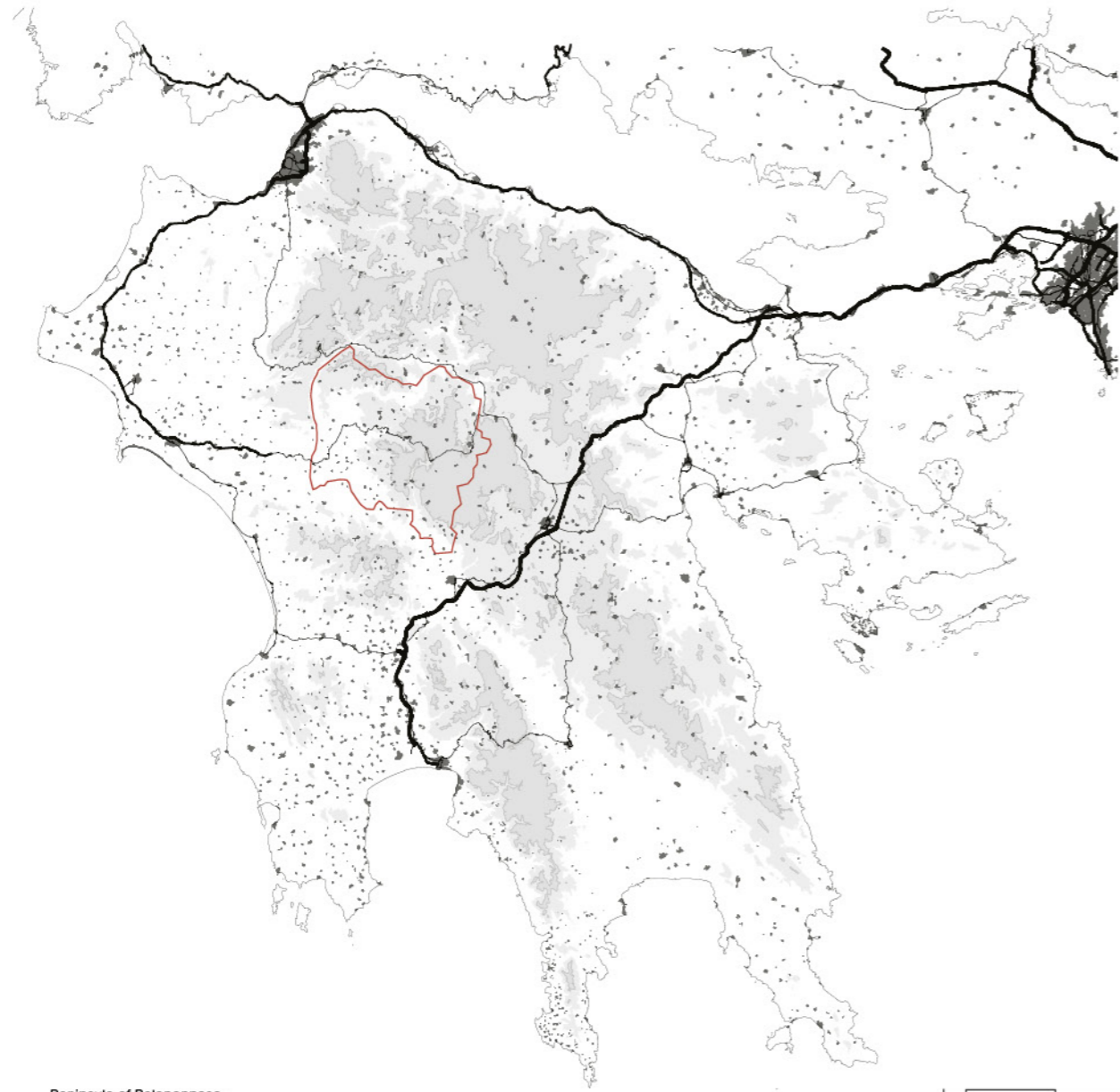
Administrative boundaries of units in Peloponnese

0 5 km



Municipality of Gortynia Administrative units

0 5 km

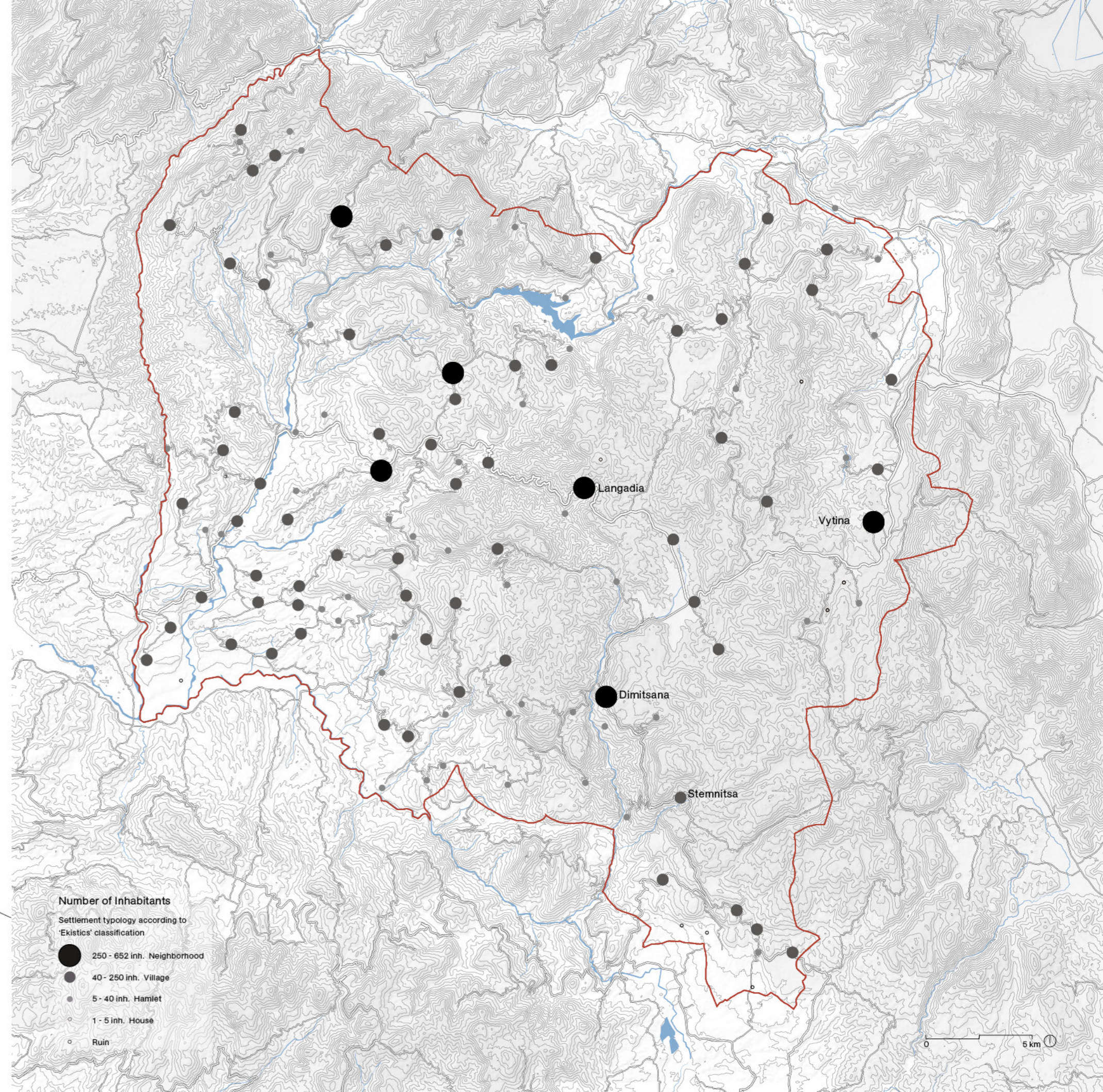
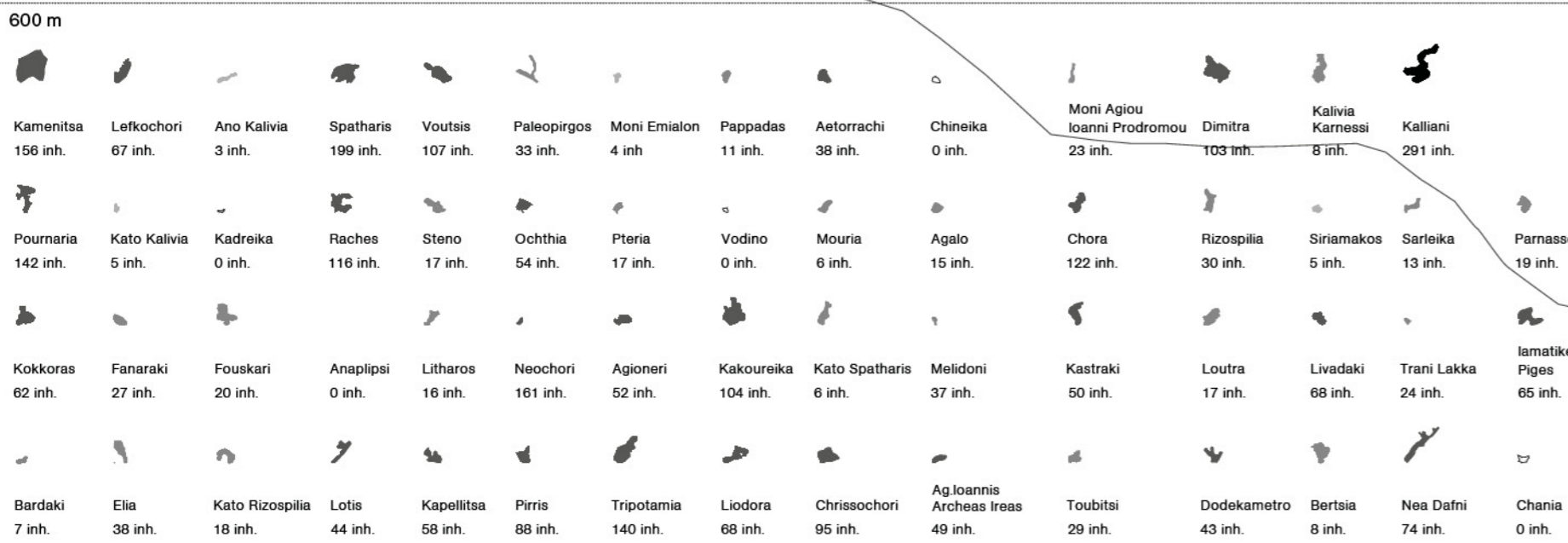
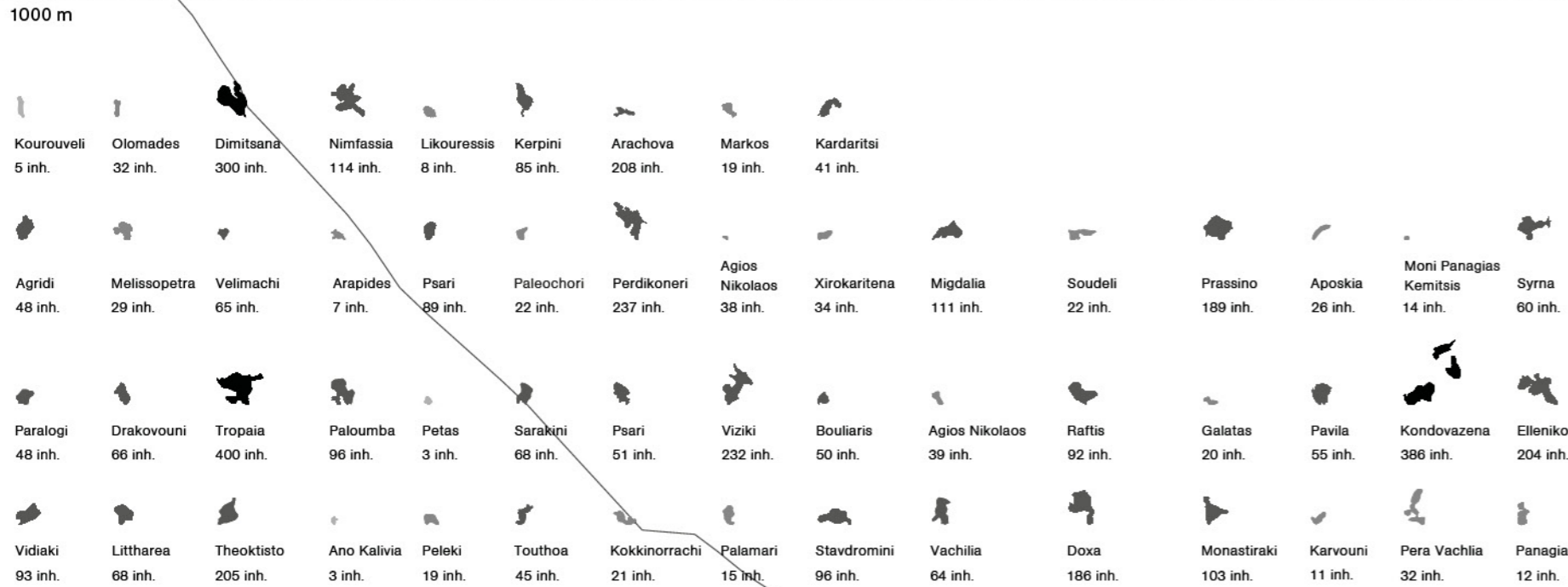
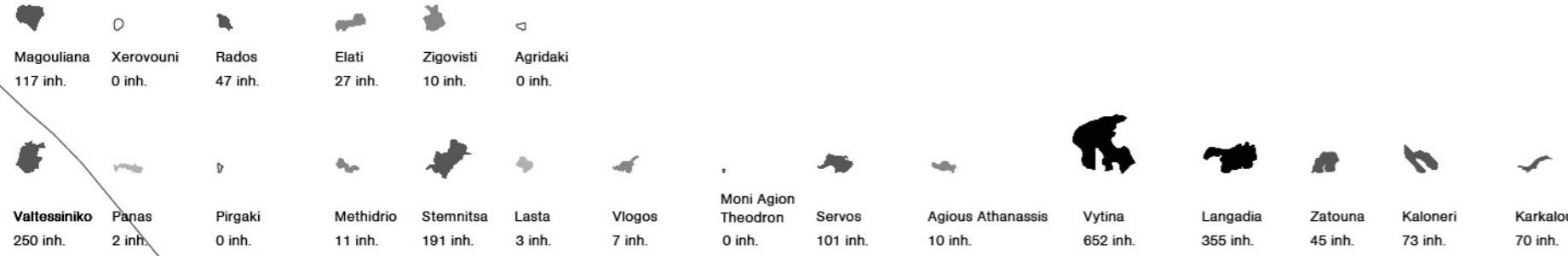


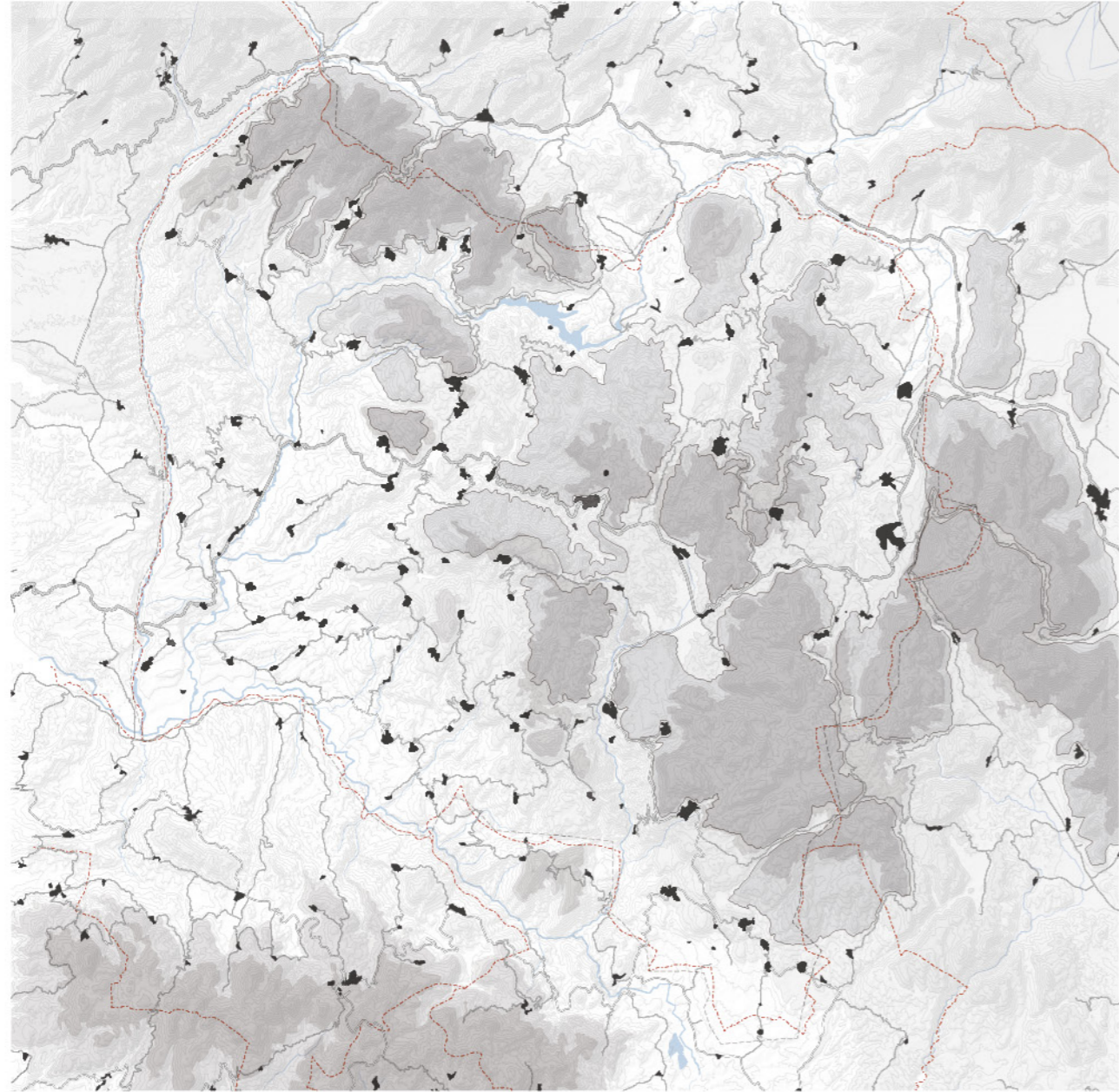
Peninsula of Peloponnese:  
The mountain ranges and  
road infrastructure



Gortynia  
Settlements and infrastructure

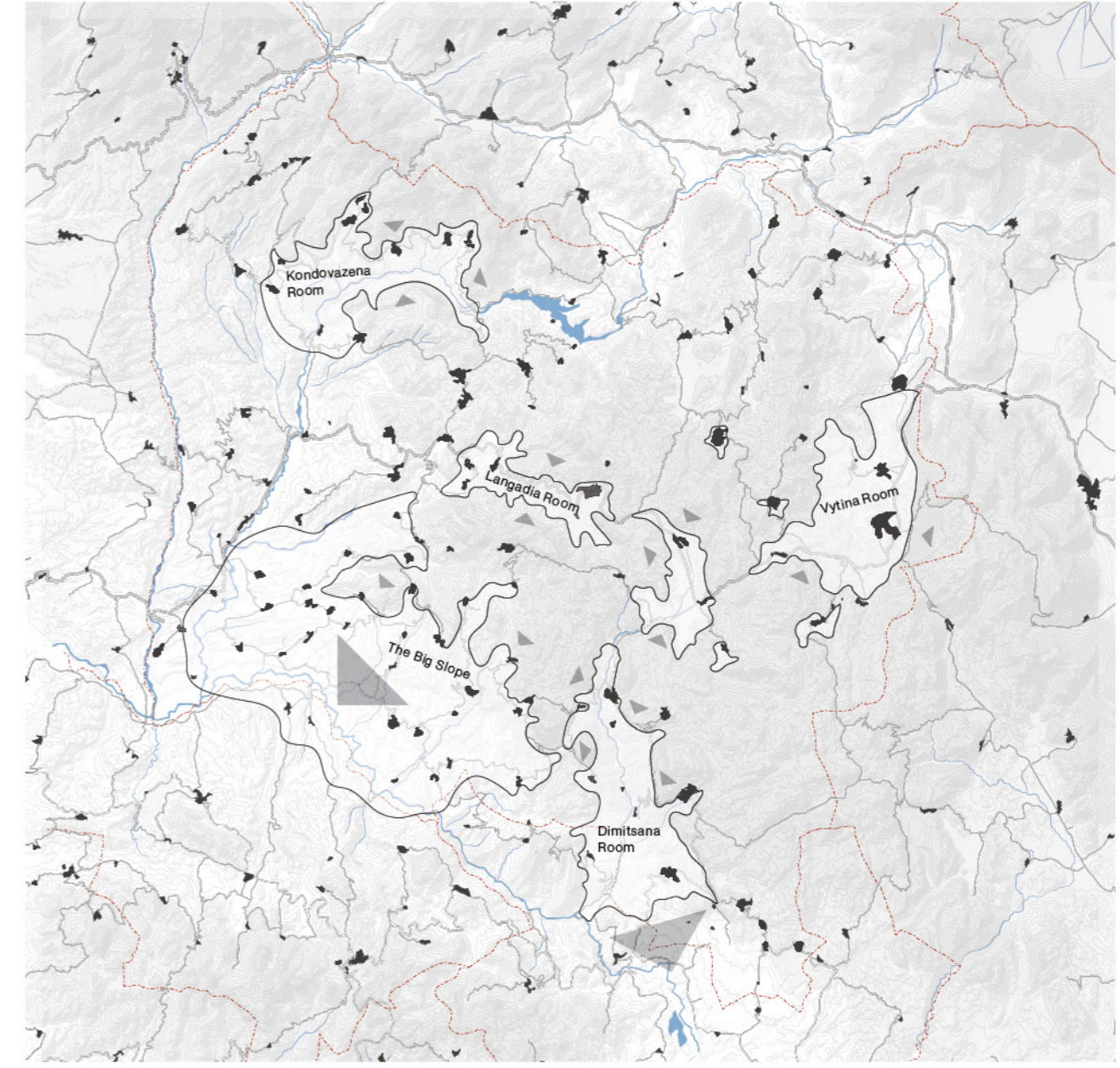
Villages as Islands  
Altitude and Population





### Inaccessible Peaks

In Gortynia, settlements are dominated by their topographic setting. While eye of an observer stays fixed on the roads and settlements, what is above remains unseen, acting as a backstage.



### Landscape Rooms

The topographical conditions create a strong feeling of enclosure and define specific visual horizons. As a result, several topographical rooms are recognised in the landscape, in which the view rela-

tions between the villages and the points of orientation are very precisely defined. These rooms are connected only by the narrow corridors of roads and can be seen as closed spatial units.

Rough Topography:  
Embedding in the Land



1 Dimitsana  
Strategic setting



2 Dimitsana  
Room in the landscape



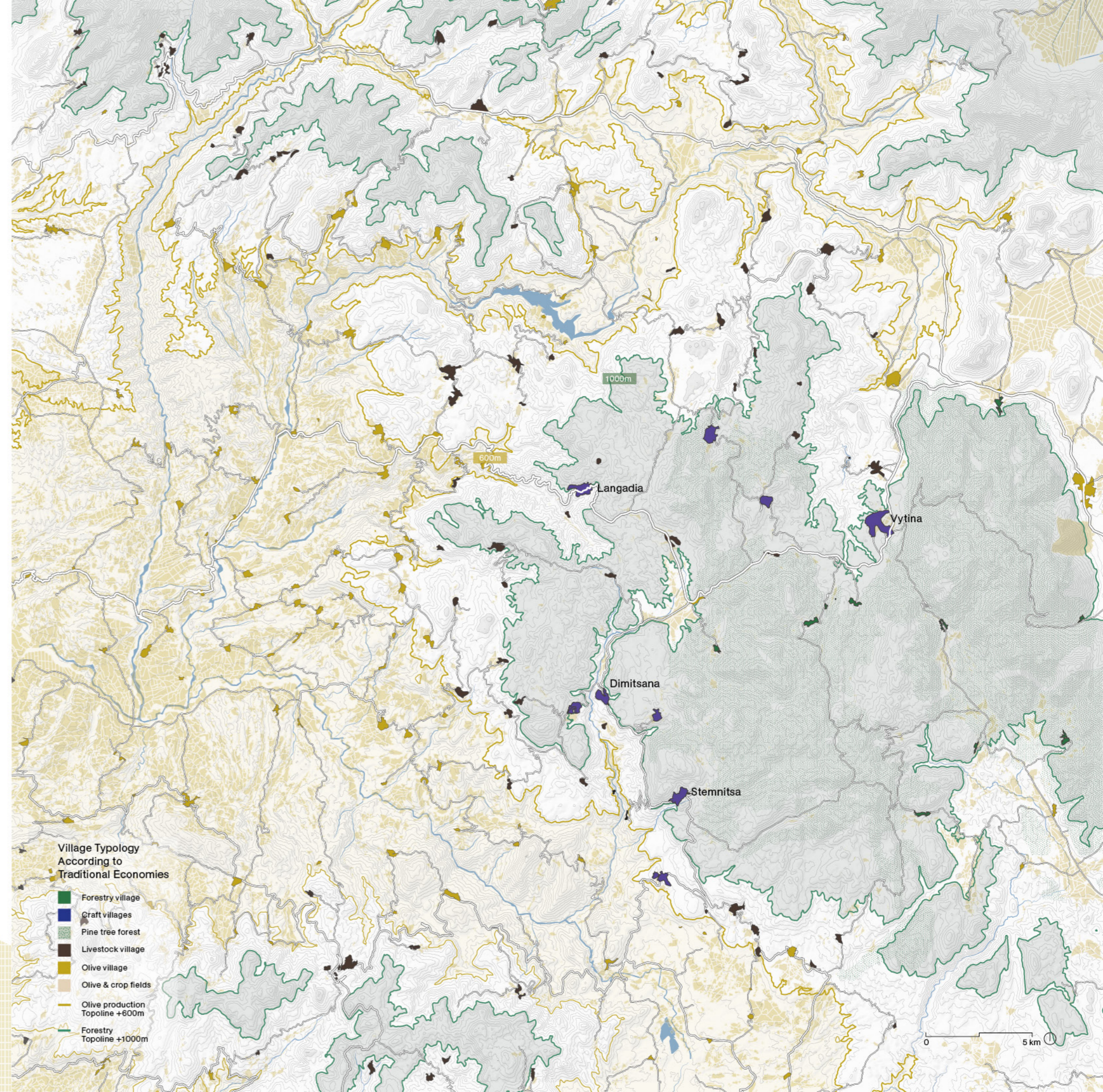
3 Langadia  
Scenic setting



4 Langadia  
Room in the landscape



Altitude Thesis



1000 m



Pine tree line at  
1000 m altitude

600 m



Olive tree line  
at 600 m altitude



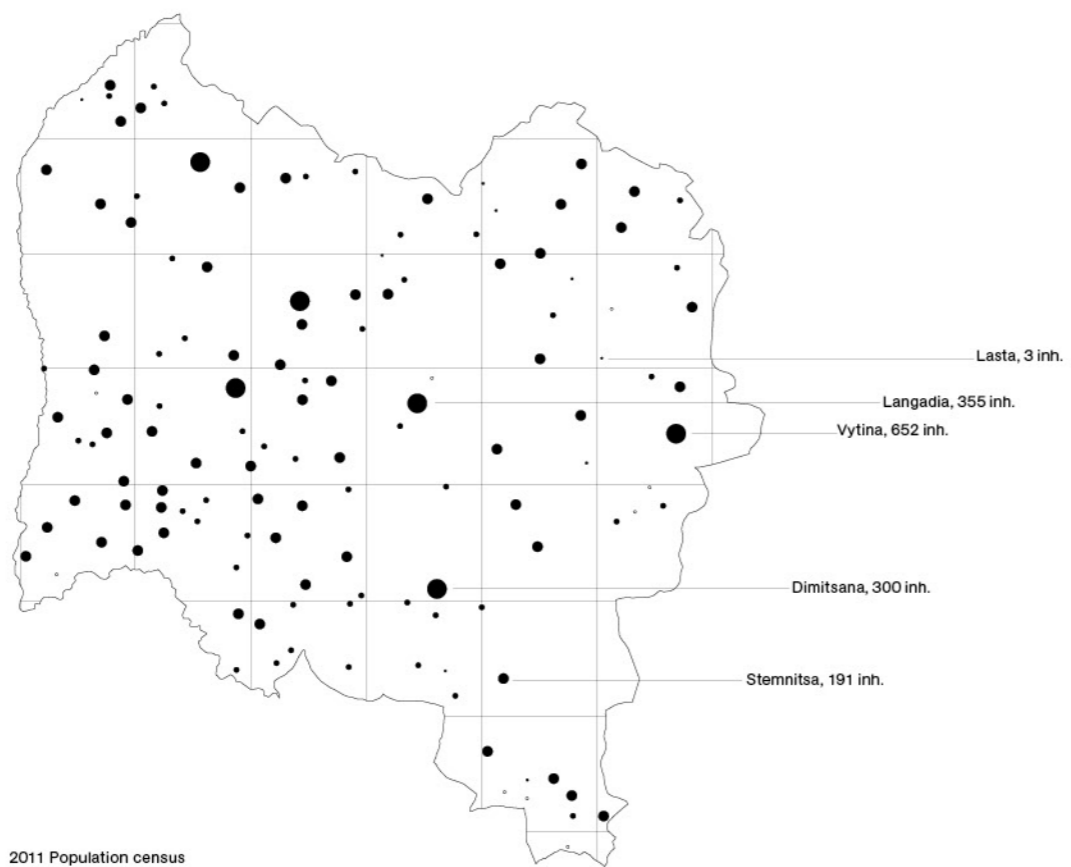
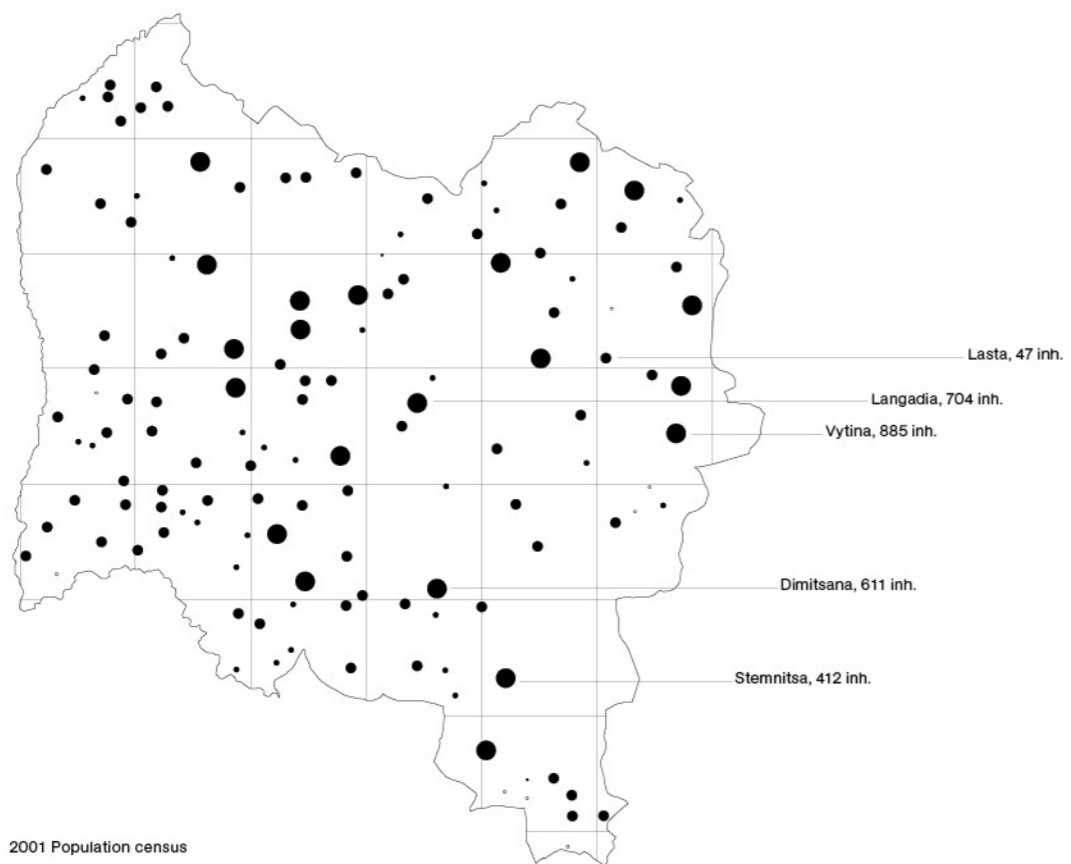
1 Valtetsiniko  
A village inside the forest



2 Pirris  
An agricultural village







Gortynia Population Census

- 250 - 652 inh. Neighborhood
- 40 - 250 inh. Village
- 5 - 40 inh. Hamlet
- 1 - 5 inh. Scattered houses
- Ruins

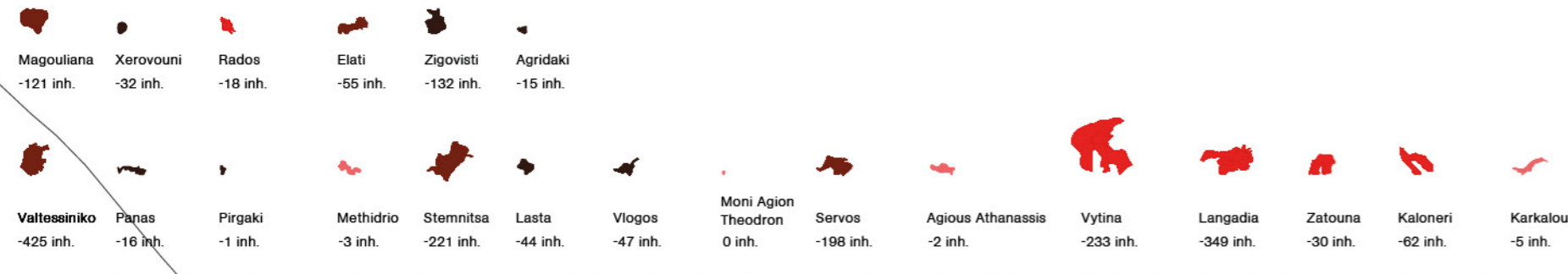


1 Valtessiniko, 1960:  
1055 inhabitants

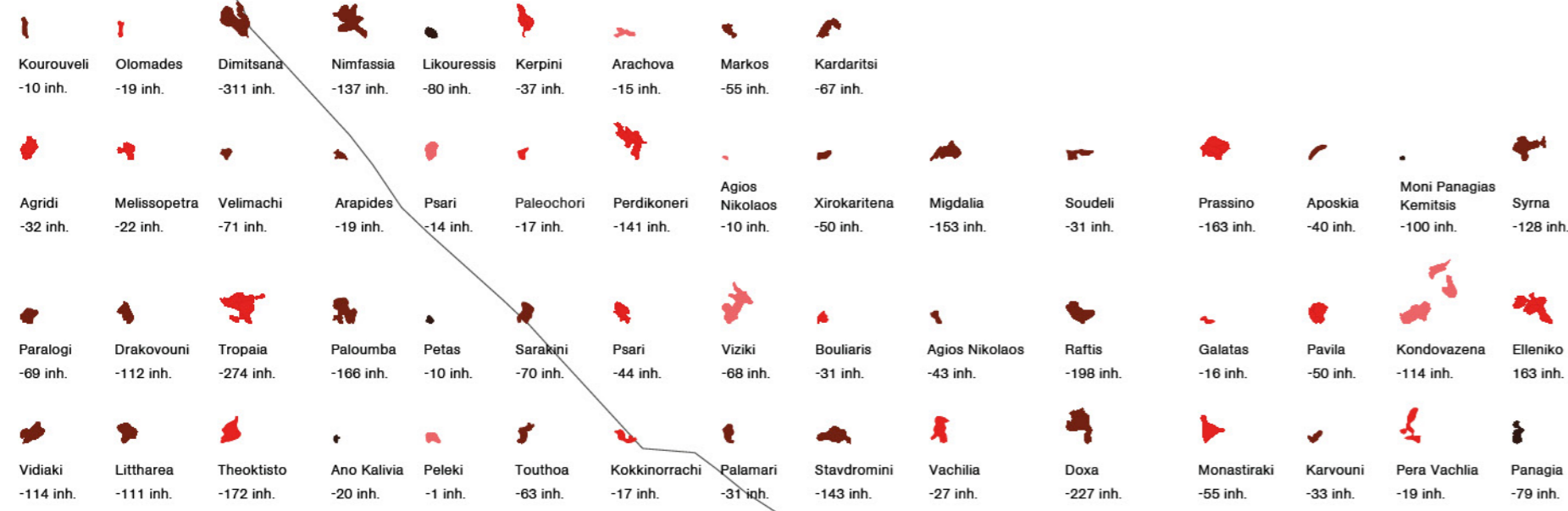


Valtessiniko, 2016:  
ca. 250 inhabitants

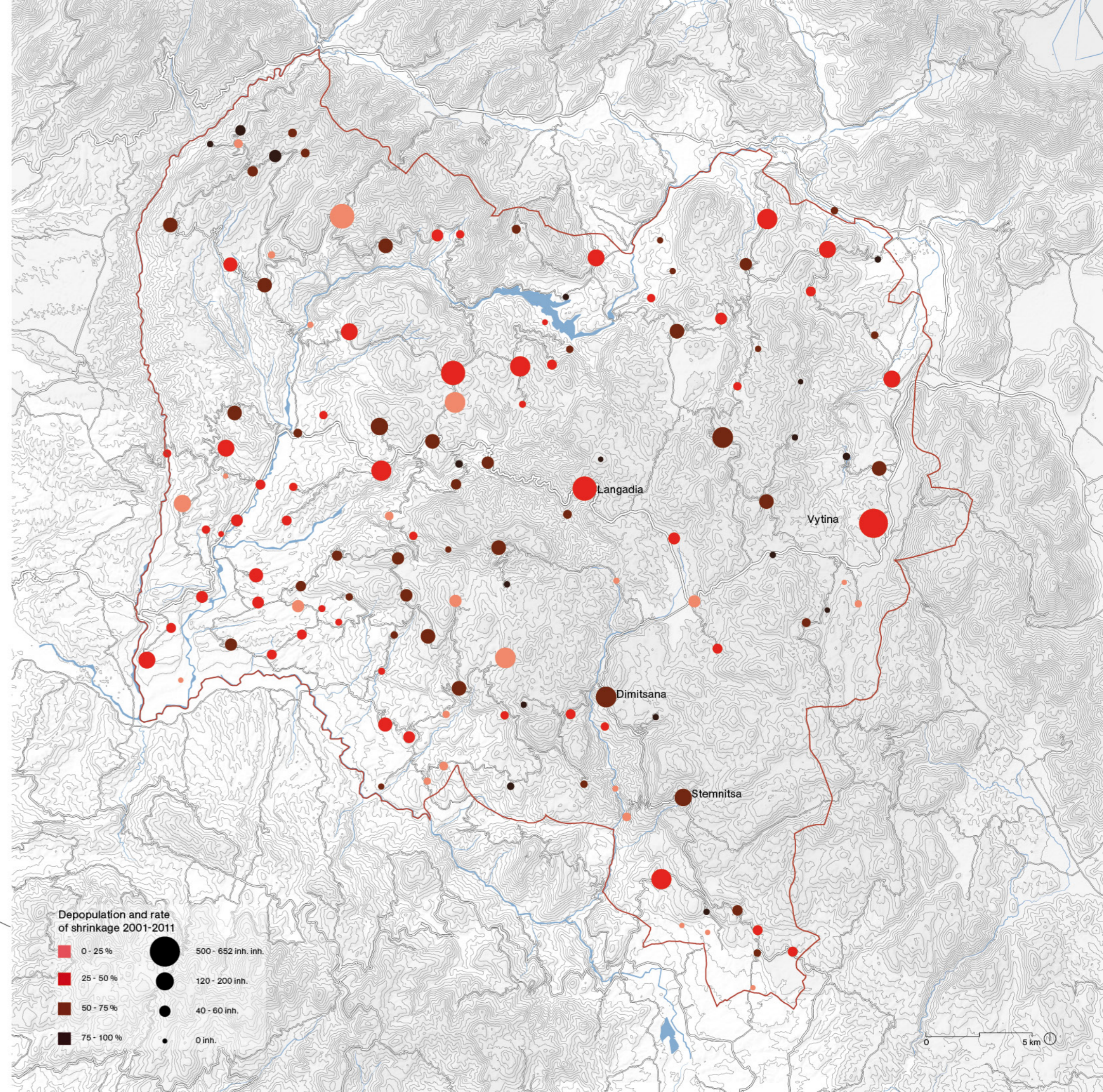
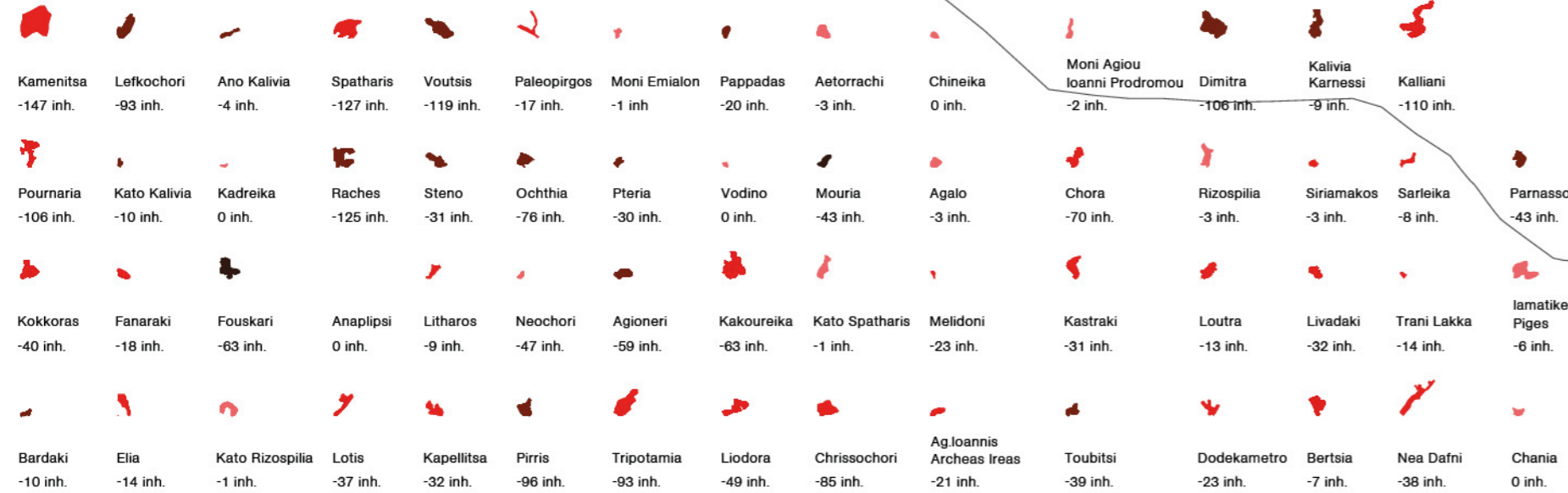
Drainage of Population  
2001-2011



1000 m



600 m



# New Patterns of Living

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

## Scale of the Shrinkage



Markos  
Main road

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

### Derelict Structures

When departing countryside to move to the bigger urban centres, most people leave their properties abandoned. Real estate prices for this region are already low and are constantly dropping,

making it almost unrealistic to sell a property here. Those, usually secondary, houses that are not maintained, start to fall apart, forming a consistent pattern of ruins throughout the settlements.

### Abandonment of the Land

The migration of the rural population has a significant consequence on the landscape. Formerly productive acres and pastures that have shaped the image of Arcadia, are abandoned, turning into bushy fallow lands. Old constructed stone terraces are crumbling, alter-

ing the crafted landscape back to its original state. With the estrangement from historical landscape economies, knowledge is lost and old culture of cultivation disappears, regardless of how valuable it might be in times of a decreasing variety in seed production.



Zigovist  
Closed school

### Closing Institutions

Gortynia is strongly under-served, making it even more difficult for the people willing to stay here. Most of the settlements used to have at least one school, but at the moment, there are only five villages in the entire area that provide educational infrastructure. This has been a

conscious political decision in the past, brought in order to lower the state expenses: under the dictatorial rule in Greece, people were strongly encouraged to move and concentrate in larger settlements.

### System of Subsidies

In contrast to the stance adopted by the Greek state, the EU has been willing to invest large amounts into subsidising the maintenance of the rural regions of Europe. Apart from structural funding for sewage and road infrastructure, there are newer programs like LEADER, or more recently CLLD, that focus on bottom-up developments.

These approaches put trust in the local actors, who know their region the best and should democratically take part in its reshaping. Some examples for such grants are renovations of the livestock barns or building of the processing units. Opening up of guesthouses and small local businesses is also being promoted.

## Tidal Inhabitation

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

## Village Portraits

The new cycles of inhabitation generally apply to all settlements of Gortynia. There are no clear types of villages, as the transformation process from old to new still evolves. Nevertheless, different tendencies can be described when observing the different regions according to altitude and land use.

### The Touristic Village

Easily accessible from the fast road infrastructure, the touristic villages are located at an altitude of approximately 1000 m, originating from the craft village network. The wealthy past is reflected in the quality of stonework of its buildings – especially visible on the unusually large number of Orthodox churches. The

preservation of the village texture gives an impression that nothing had changed in the past centuries. Many villages have small folk museums presenting the village history and folklore culture. The touristic villages benefit from their landscape setting, which makes them attractive to visitors seeking active nature holidays.

### The Pulsating Village

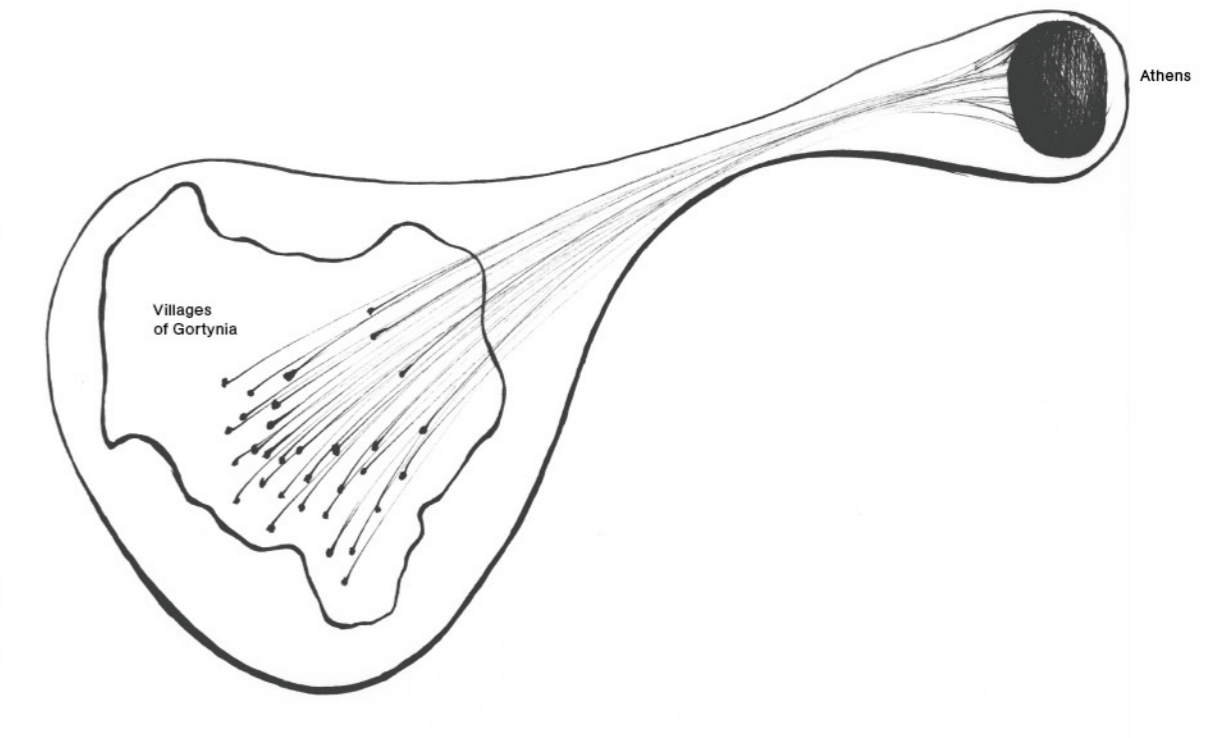
Less favourable in terms of accessibility and usually positioned between 600m and 1000m altitude, the village in the process of emptying is the most common type. The originally self-sustaining local population is rapidly leaving, being replaced by weekend

visitors and pensioners; it is not a place of production, but rather a place of retreat and leisure. Traces of agriculture and livestock farming can be found only in a very few places.

### The Productive Village

The villages of the Alfios Valley are a special case in Gortynia. Not really located on the mountainous territory, but below the altitude of 600m, their situation differs

from the touristic and vacant villages. These villages are located on productive ground and are still managed and inhabited by olive and other farmers.



Tidal movement of population:  
New bipolar relationship  
between Athens and Gortynia



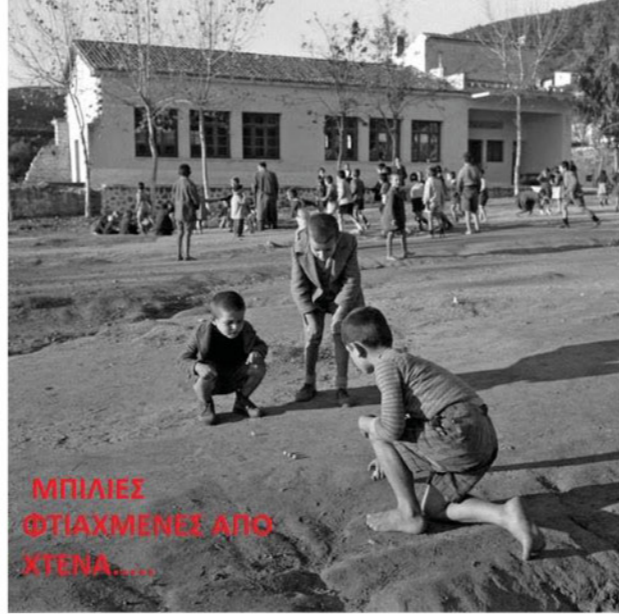
Αντώνης Τλάς Τσολιάς στην Ανακτορική Φρουρά



Κεφαλόβρυσο Βαλτεσνίκου 1954, Προσωπική εργασία  
Ορθιος δεξιά Νίκος Π Βασιλικός, δεξιά με το καπέλο Βασίλης Χ Ρέπτας.



'Εκδρομείς κάτω από τον βράχο στην Μονή Αγίου Νικολάου 10ετία ..40'



ΜΠΙΛΙΕΣ  
ΦΤΙΑΧΜΕΝΕΣ ΑΠΟ  
ΧΤΕΝΑ.....



# New Patterns of Living

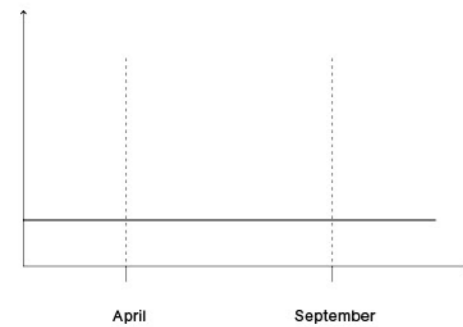
## Tidal Inhabitation

### The Locals



Few locals are left in the villages of Gortynia. Some still work either as livestock farmers, or in the fields, but most of them rely on other sources of income. Many receive remittances from their relatives in the city.

Also, there are EU subsidies for local businesses. Some work in the city and drive back up to the mountain villages after work. Alternatively, the growing tourist industry creates new jobs.

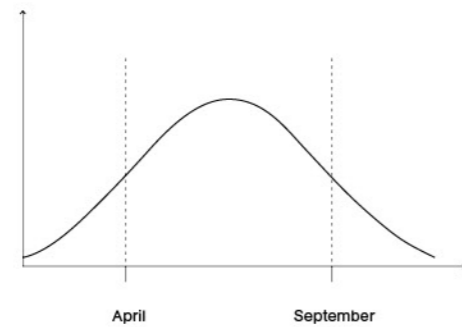


### The Pensioners



Many pensioners who grew up in the countryside still maintain a strong connection to their place of origin. After they started receiving their pension, they are no longer tied to the bigger cities, and prefer instead to spend half

of the year back at their old houses in Gortynia. Being retired, they seek the simple life as self-sustaining farmers. In winter, they usually return to the cities, as the mountains can be very harsh.

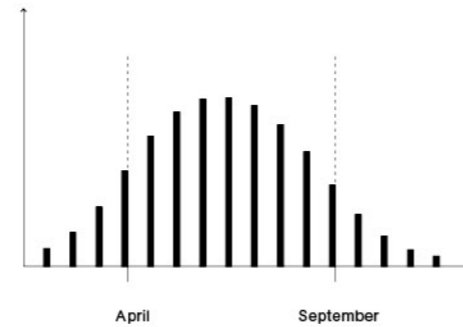


### The Weekenders



Having a second home is not only a privilege for the rich but a rather common situation in Greece. Usually it is a family home inherited from parents. Owning some land and a house in the countryside also gives Greek fami-

lies a feeling of safety, as its value is considered to be stable in times of crisis. For some people, in the case of unemployment, it may also serve as a temporary option for self-sustainment.

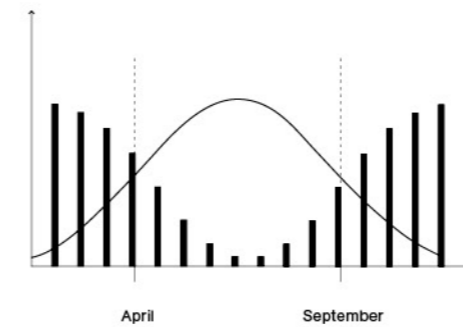


### The Tourists



Tourists are the group with the shortest time span of inhabitation. Most of them come as couples and only spend one or two nights in a village. In most of the cases, they have no special connection to Arcadia and come

here for outdoor activities like hiking, skiing, horse-riding and rafting. Greek tourists prefer the winter season for weekend trips, while foreigners usually prefer summers.

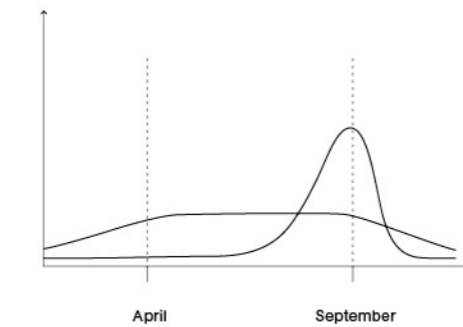


### The Migrant Workers



There are two types of migrant workers, which are common in Gortynia; the harvest workers and the construction workers. Most of them come from Albania. In most of the cases, they only come to work during the

farming season, returning to their home country afterwards. Only a small number of them bring their families and stay in the villages. They are generally not integrated into the village culture.

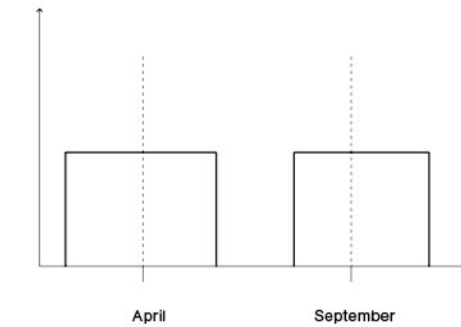


### The Students



Since 1976, there is a school of Silver-Gold Smithery in Stemnitsa. The school is working on reviving this traditional village craft, hosting students from all over Greece. Usually, they stay here for three years to obtain

a degree, while some of the students stay here for a year or two longer. They form a young and vital part of the Stemnitsa community. During holidays, most of them depart for Athens or their hometowns.



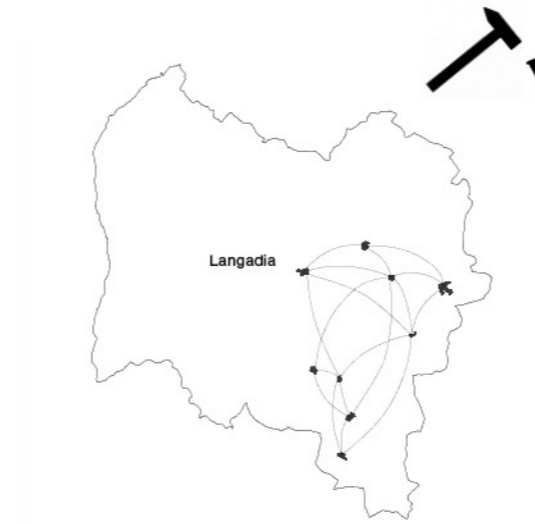
Seasonal patterns of tidal inhabitation



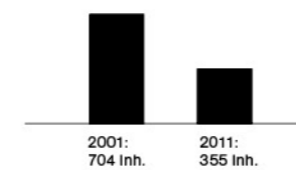
Langadia

Located at exactly 1000 m on an extreme slope in the midst of a spectacular landscape setting, Langadia is one of the primary touristic destinations. It originates in the network of craft villages as a stonemason village.

Today, most of the inhabitants are looking for business opportunities in the tourism sector; it has as many hotel beds as it has residents. Nevertheless, there are no new permanent inhabitants.



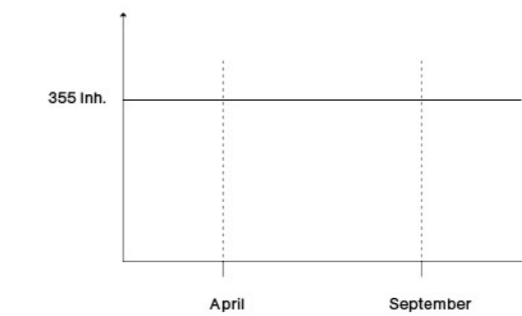
Historical identity:  
Stonemason village in the network of craft villages



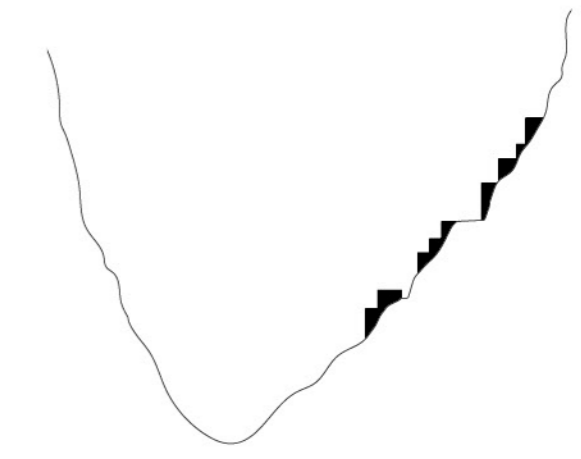
High shrinkage of permanent population: 50% in 10 years



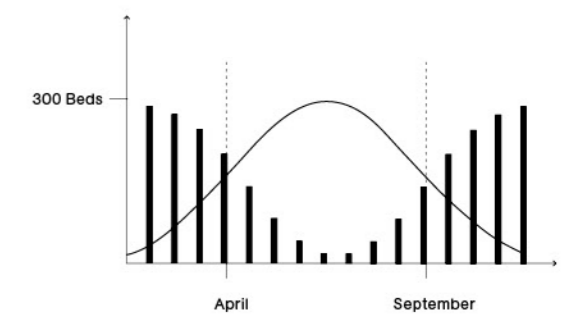
Accessibility:  
Located on the fast track



Local population:  
Supported mostly by tourist industry



Landscape setting:  
Steep, with a view



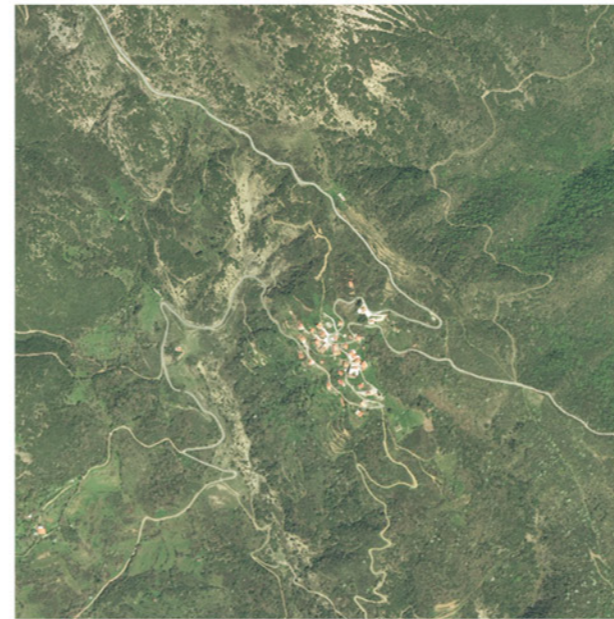
High touristic frequency:  
One bed per inhabitant



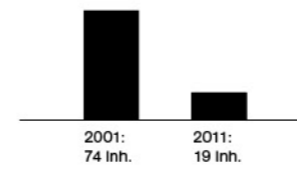
**Markos**

Being almost completely abandoned by the rural population, Markos village can be seen as a future model for most of the settlements in Gortynia. Still attractive in its setting, it has a potential for tourism. Its agricultural lands

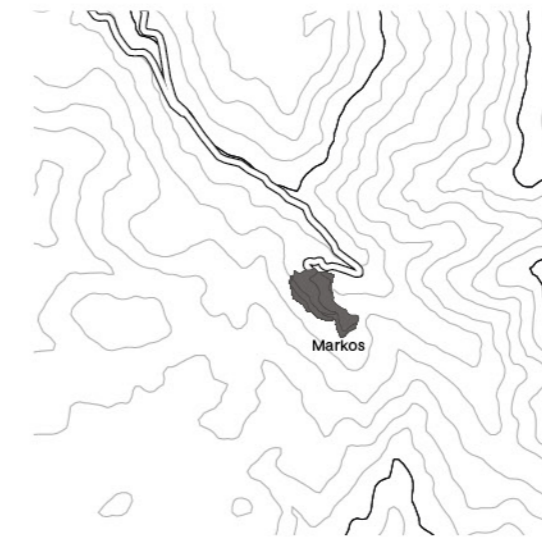
are overgrowing, showing no sign of productive use. During weekdays, the village is nearly empty, while on weekends, the local tavern opens and life comes back to the village.



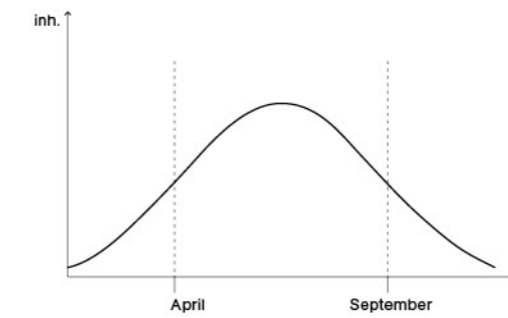
Historical identity:  
Livestock farming villages



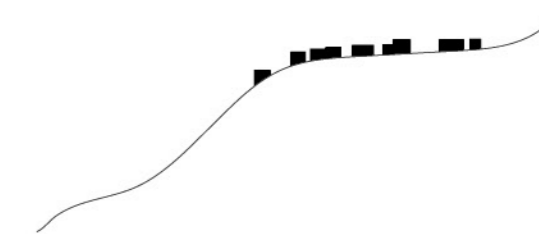
Extreme shrinkage of permanent population:  
74% in 10 years



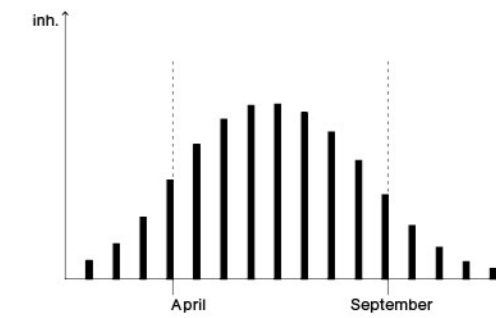
Accessibility:  
Dead-end of a slow road



Deserted winter time:  
Pensioners' village



Landscape setting:  
Slope towards  
Megalopoli



Calm during the week:  
Second home for city dwellers



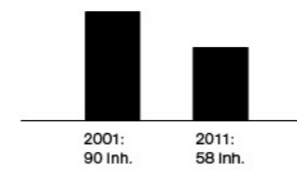
**Kapellitsa**

Kapellitsa's location in the Alfeios Valley helps its agricultural productivity – the topography here is mostly flat and easily manageable, followed by a fertile riverbank. Even here, population is shrinking, although in a

slower pace than in the mountains. During the harvest season, the village expands for several weeks, when the harvest workers arrive. Kapellitsa can be described as a slow and local village.



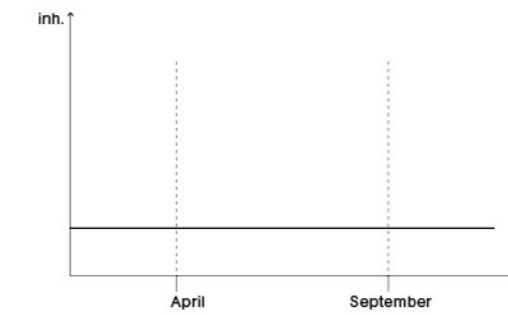
Historical identity:  
Agricultural village



Moderate shrinkage  
of permanent population:  
36% in 10 years



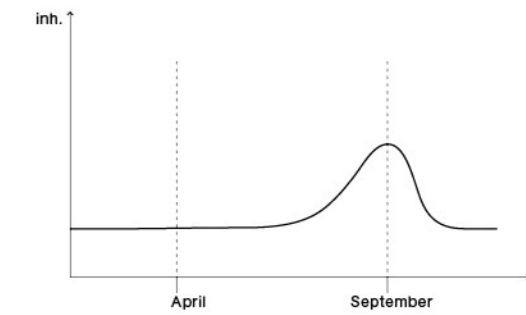
Accessibility:  
Located near the  
fast track



Local population:  
Self-sustaining farmers



Landscape setting:  
Steep, with a view

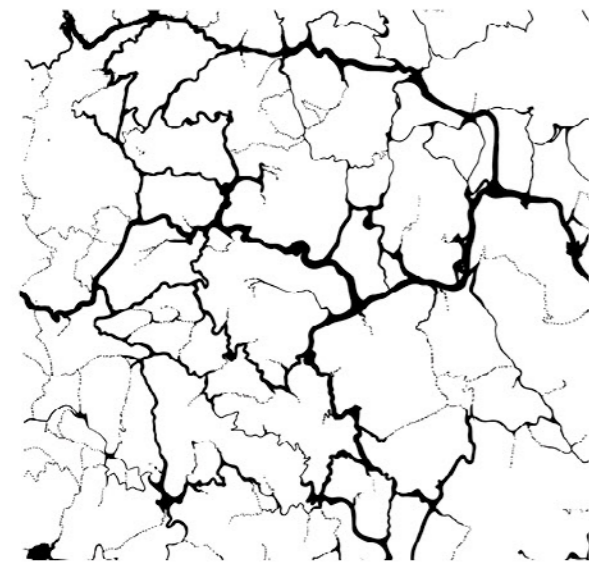


Harvest season:  
Population doubles through  
migrant workers and family members



# Differentiation of Networks

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

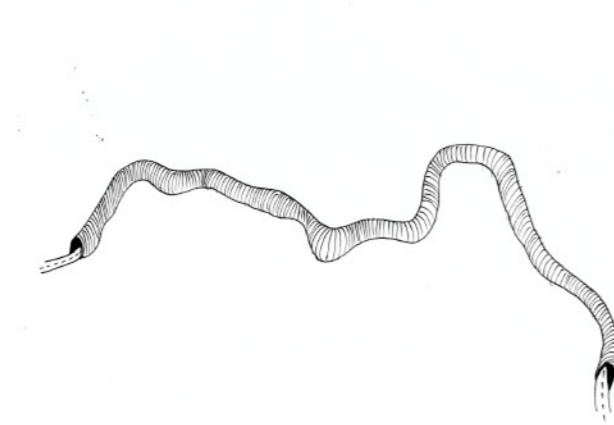


River roads

## The Fast Track: Outside Connections

The primary road running through Gortynia leads from Tripoli to Olympia and Pirgos, serving as the main axis of movement to bigger settlements outside the mountains. Faster than the usual roads, speed is still limited to

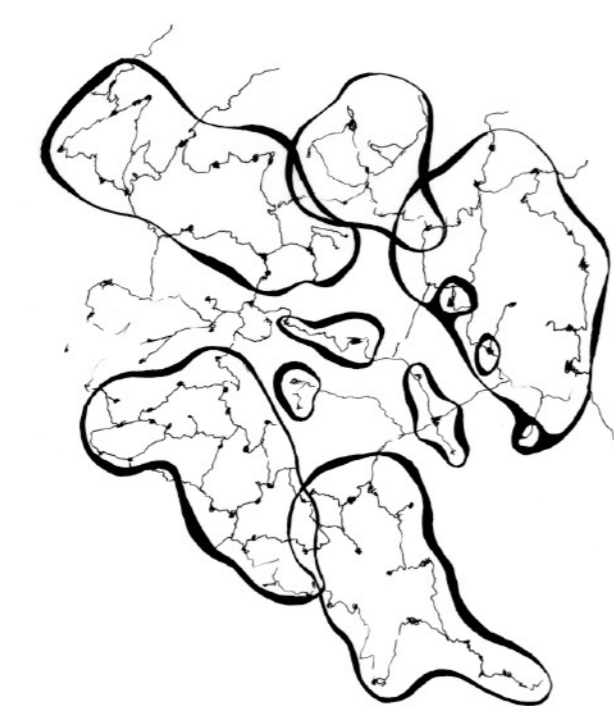
60 km/h, due to long winding parts and narrow lanes. Nevertheless, it makes touristic short trips and weekend visits to this remote piece of countryside possible.



## Slow Networks: Internal Worlds

Branching from the Fast Track, the local road network is widespread and slow. Topography and foggy conditions allow for speeds of around 40 km/h. Visits to other villages and grocery shopping happens in smaller

regions determined by what is considered to be a reasonable driving time (30 min). Therefore one can speak of several regions or internal worlds that seldomly interact with each other.



## Capillaries: Gravity of the Land

Extending from the local road network, there are many shortcuts and paths. Most of them can only be travelled by foot, bike or on a horseback. It is possible to drive through some of these paths using rugged terrain cars. They form the subtle

network, a remnant of the rural activities of previous decades, when they were still used for agricultural purposes and when the connection of the village with its surrounding land was still vital and close.



## Public Services: Thin Pattern



Tropeia one of Gortynia's hospitals

Since the population decline in this region is accelerating, more and more public institutions need state and EU funding to stay in service. Although a network of basic supply is sustained, the medical care coverage is poor, rated as one of the

poorest in entire Greece. Transportation is also a critical issue. A public bus network connects many of the more remote settlements to Tripoli twice a day, but it is impossible to move inside the area without a private vehicle.



KTEL bus network and public institutions

## Commercial Activities: Local Supply



Stemnitsa Bakery car

In Gortynia, there are no supermarkets or shopping centres; people have to go to either Megalopoli or Tripoli. There are farmers markets in some of the bigger villages and a few smaller shops, located mainly in the more touristic part of Gortynia. Remote villages are supplied by travelling merchants, like

in the older times. Once or twice a week, a car passes with products for daily need. However, many villagers also produce their own food. Tavernas and cafés are also concentrated in the larger settlements, which in the original rural society didn't play such a central role.



Bakery car routes, shops and tavernas

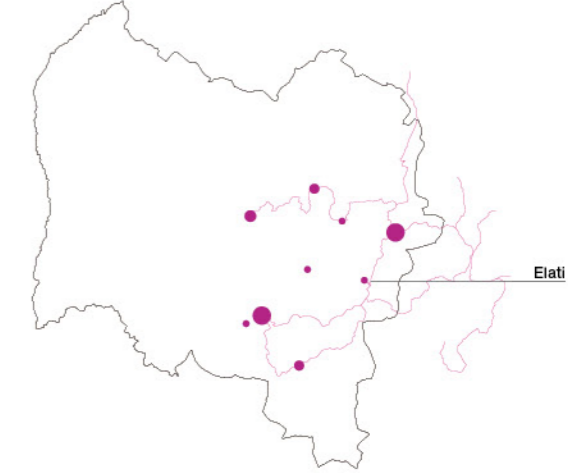
## Touristic Networks: Rising Economy



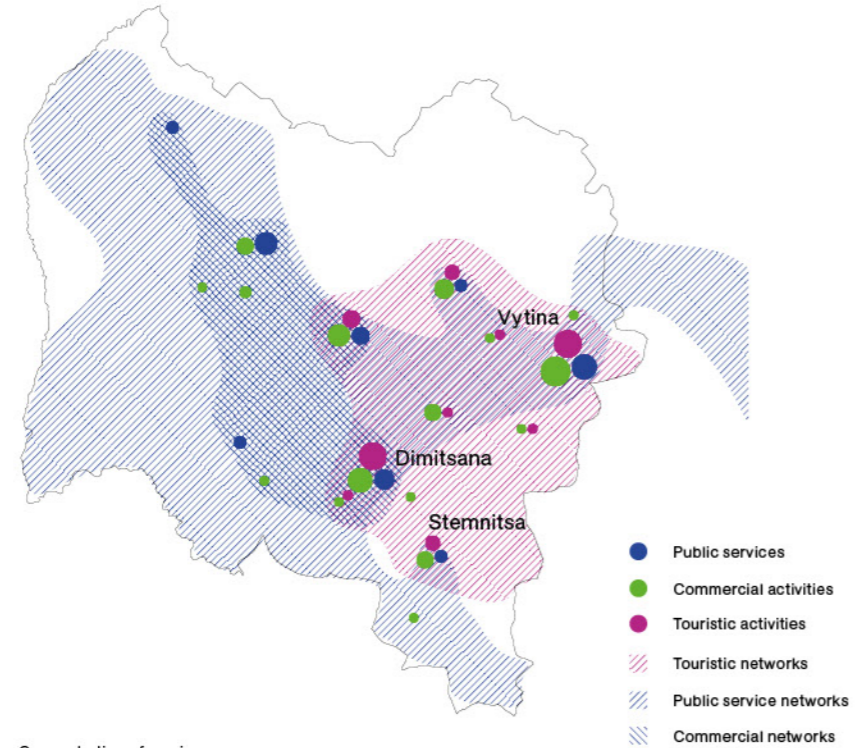
Elati Four-Star-Hotel

Recently created by local volunteers, the Menalon Trail is a hiking path in eastern Gortynia that revives old paths and trading routes dating back to the Ancient Hellenic and Ottoman times. It is part of the Greek Paths of Culture Program, aiming for sustainable development in the growing tourist

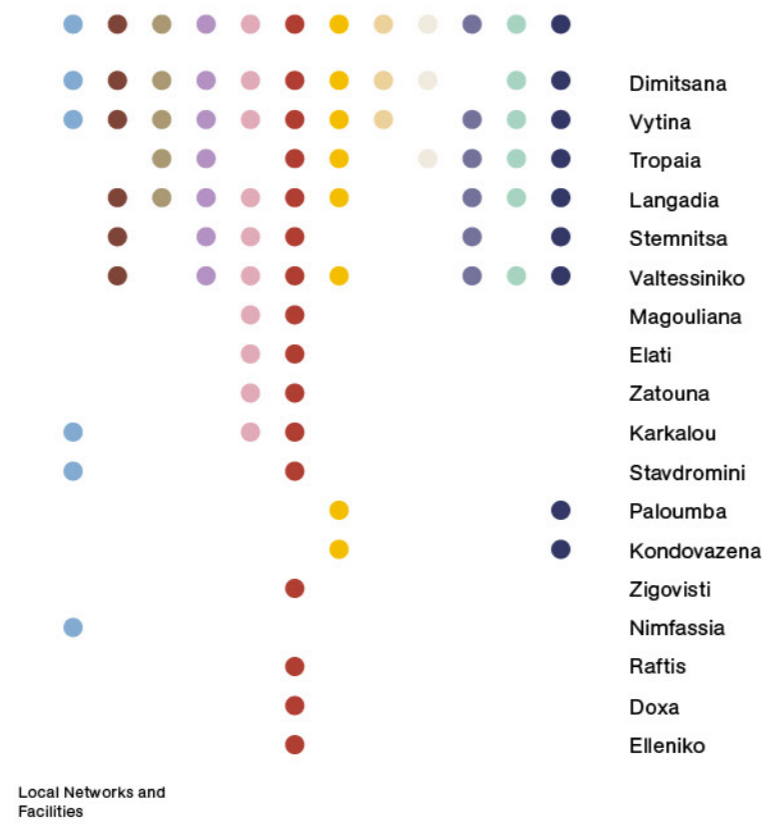
economy. Guesthouses focus on authentic settings, integrated to local environments, offering high quality services for the tourists willing to pay more. Some also offer activities like horse-riding, knitting lessons or traditional cooking lessons.



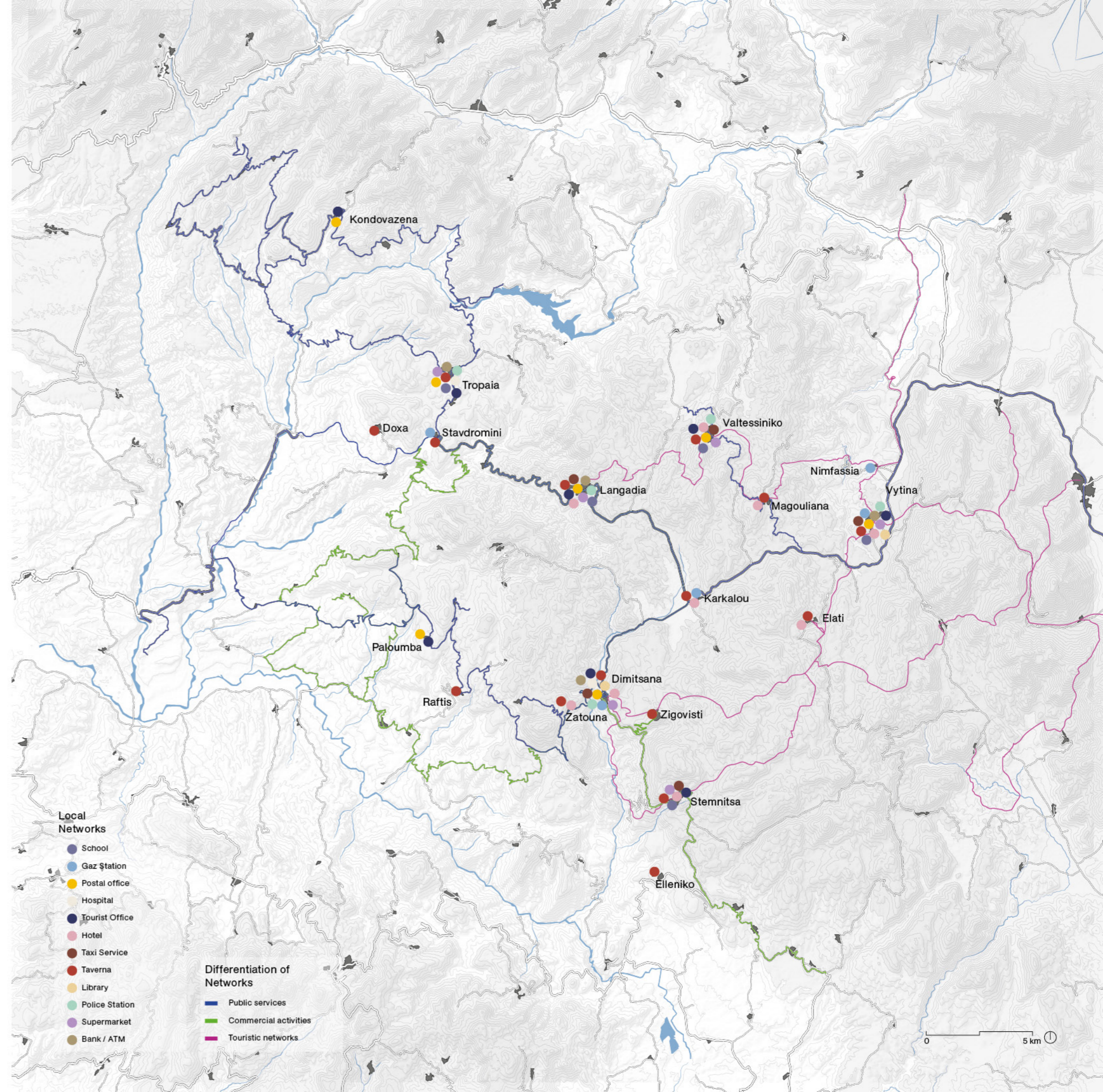
Menalon trail and guesthouses



Concentration of services and local networks



Local Networks and Facilities



Local Networks

- School
- Gaz Station
- Postal office
- Hospital
- Tourist Office
- Hotel
- Taxi Service
- Taverna
- Library
- Police Station
- Supermarket
- Bank / ATM

Differentiation of Networks

- Public services
- Commercial activities
- Touristic networks

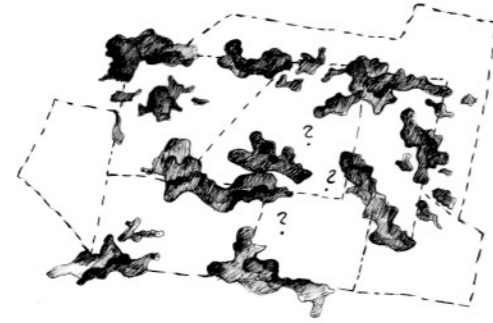
# Rewriting the Land

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

## Overgrowing Plot Lines

Property had been defined mostly by landmarks such as prominent trees or stone-walls of terraces. This informality was operative for a long time, as local families steadily managed the fields and the village population has been stable. Today, there is still no cadastral plan of the area, a fact which in combination with the over-

growing forest, creates the confusion over physical borders of the property. Not only pastures are covered but also the plot lines. While the fields are abandoned and the stone terraces washed away, the former field structures become impossible to trace. A territory of private property is turning into a terrain vague.

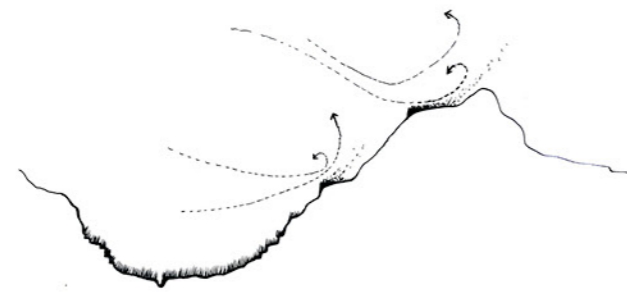


Blurring of property borders

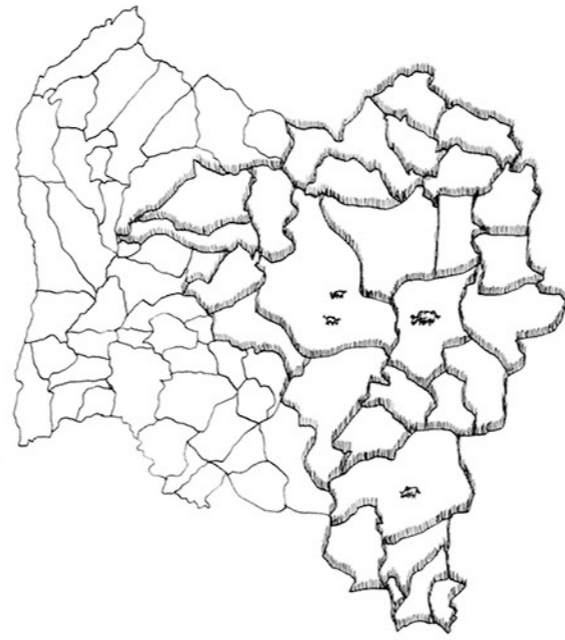
## Changing Perceptions

Farmers used to have a mental map of water, fertility, and topography of the area: during harvest, the corn would be carried up to beating circles, located on hilltops with the correct wind conditions. The shepherds on the other hand used to have the borders of property

and village territory clearly inscribed in their mind: would his animals cross these borders, it could cause a conflict between the villages. The map of the tourist reveals other values: sites, points of natural beauty or possible activities and how to get there.



The farmer's map



The shepherd's map

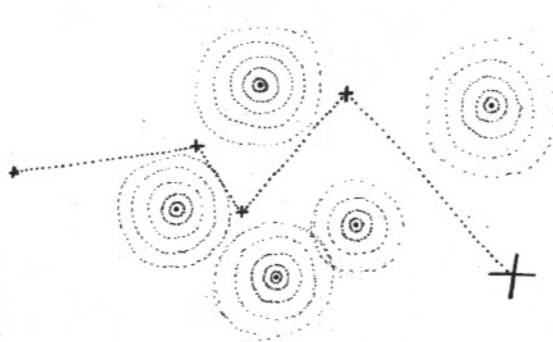


The tourist's map

## Dropped Structures

Wind and solar power, telephone masts and quarries hint contemporary developments in the landscape. From the viewpoint of a civil engineer, mountains are an

obstacle to be crossed, so that roads and optic fibres could be organised to make living according to the urban standards of the new inhabitants.



The technocrat's map





Land around Stenitsa,  
Orthophoto image, 1970



Land around Stenitsa,  
Satellite image, 2016



Vanishing traces: An abandoned settlement in Gortynia



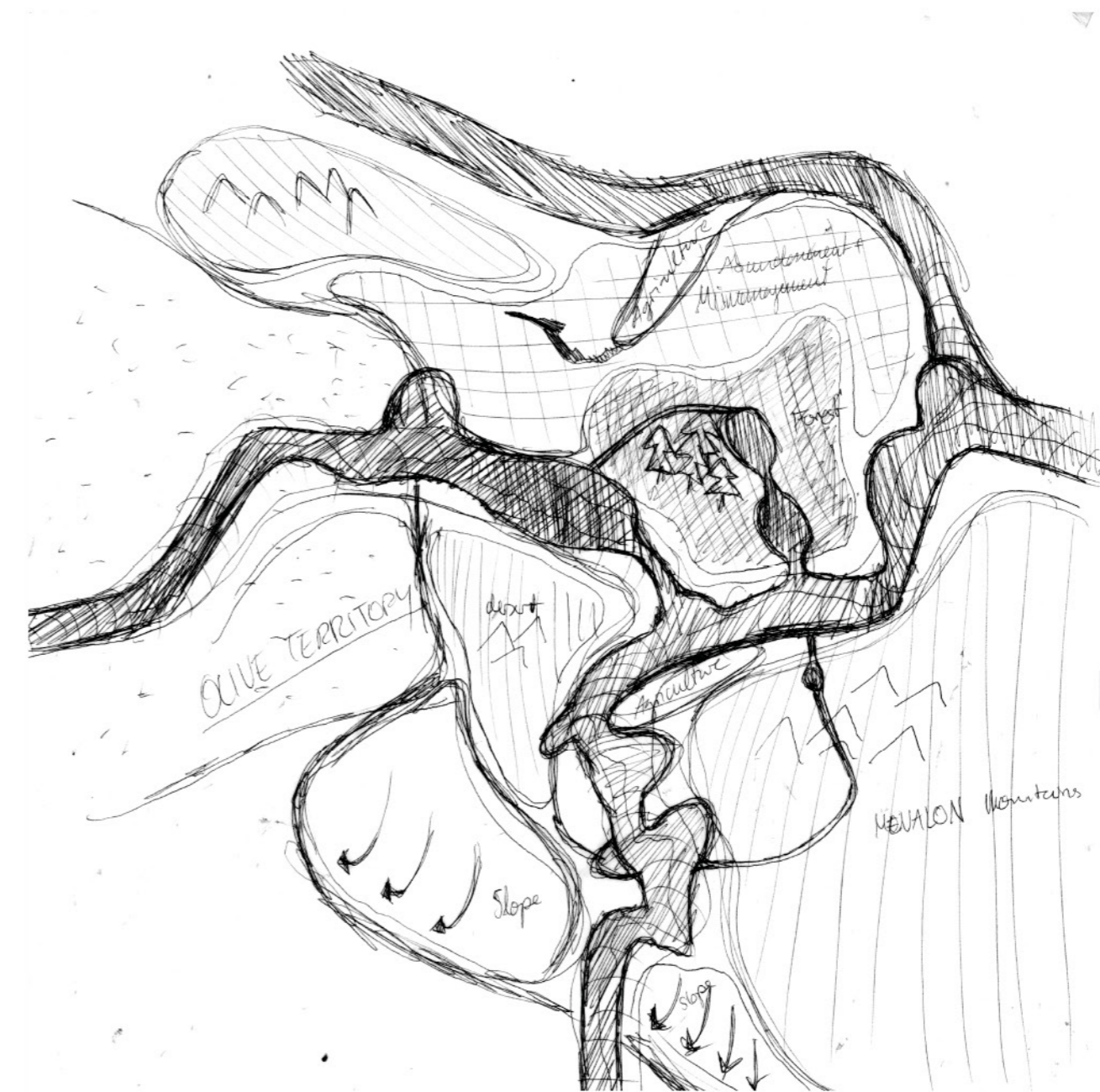
Abandoned terraces and "alonia" (corn-circles) at Magouliana

# Three Regions of Arcadia

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

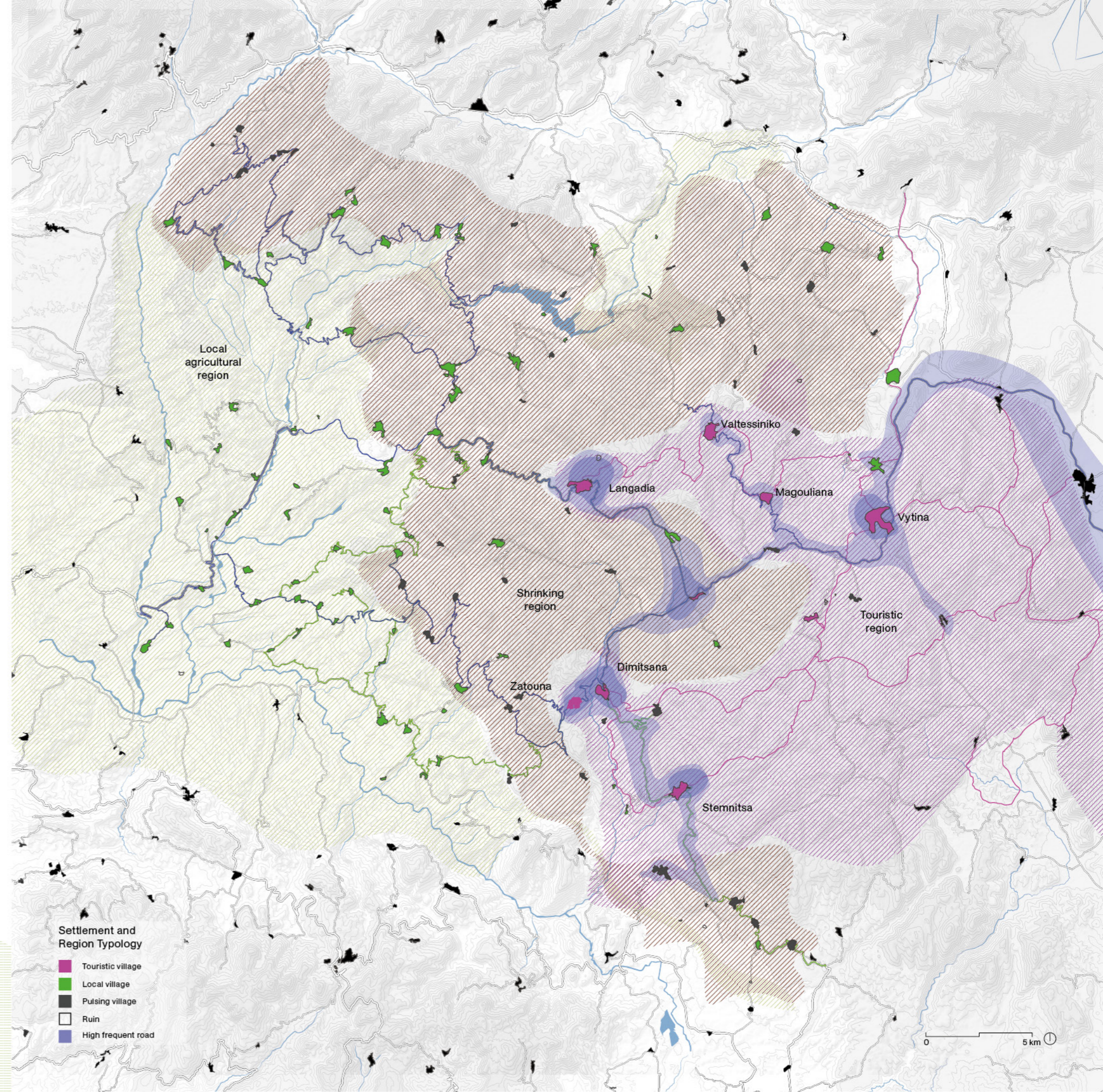
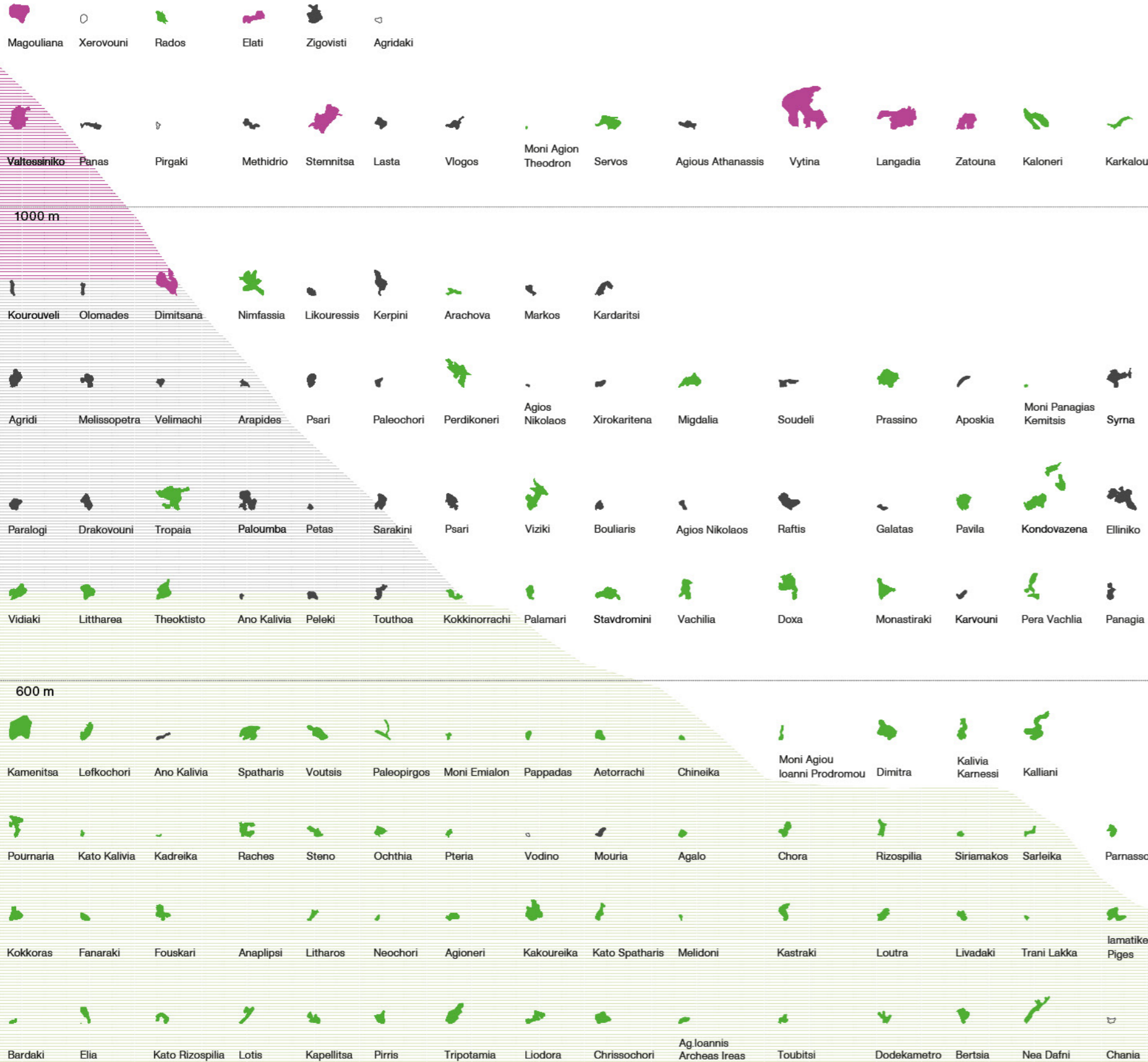
The first region is part of the olive groves of Alfeios: a dense pattern of small scale plots following the Alfeios River to Pirgos. This region is productive but family-managed and not oriented towards exports. It has agricultural potential but is not yet completely industrialised. The settlements are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

The third, the 'touristic region' offers a diverse landscape with views, hiking trails and cultural heritage sites. Most of the larger settlements and services are located here, as a consequence of its wealthy and powerful past.



First analysis sketch,  
after field trip impressions

### Three Regions of Arcadia



# Arcadia: A Chance for the Commons?

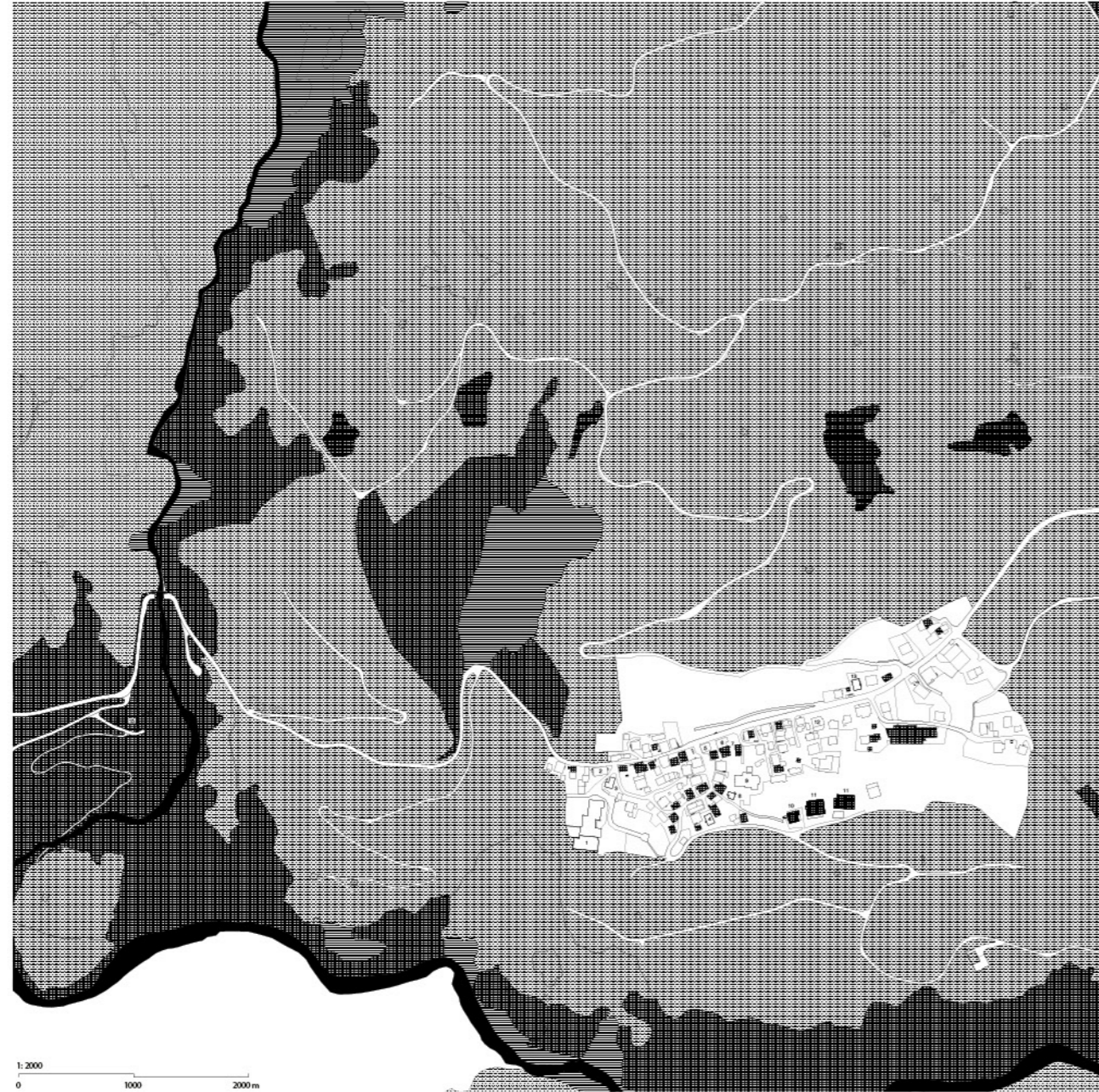
The conditions of neglect and land abandonment, together with population drainage, should not be seen as irreversible, but rather as an opportunity for reinvention. As the old layers inscribed on the land are fading, field property lines are gradually disappearing and property issues are characterised by disinterest and confusion. This situation can be understood as a valuable opportunity for rethinking and renegotiating the territory. The land is freed from ownership fragmentation, providing the opportunity to open up the discussion for an overarching communal strategy to redefine land use and settlement organisation. This land should be seen not as an abandoned infertile territory but rather as a land reserve, which must be prepared for re-appropriation. Nevertheless, one has to accept the fact that the rural patterns of living are being replaced by new ones. Younger generations may not be interested in spending their life in one place. The management of the commons in this area, therefore, is a complex task that has to enable short time spans of inhabitation, like seasonal stays or interim years, as much as a long time commitment. Defining an area in Gortynia as a case study, the proposal will rethink the status quo of land ownerships and put forward the idea of the commons as a potential for the area. The proposal addresses three parts: first, it examines the potential of the agricultural land, which is addressed through the 'productive commons'; second, it reframes the role of the settlements as spaces of communal life and manufacturing; finally, it deals with the urbanised perception of the countryside as a landscape and place of idyllic freedom, initiating the idea of commons that is dedicated to leisure and retreat. As a reference to the successful countryside intervention, the Swiss village of Vrin will be discussed here.



## The Commons

The Commons refers to old strategies to efficiently manage land through a communal-decision making process. Long dismissed as utopia, it has been brought back into discussion by leading economists like Elinor Ostrom.





The village of Vrin  
and surrounding land use

- |                            |                          |                  |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| 1 Multipurpose hall        | 9 Church with bell tower | ■ water          |
| 2 Pasternaria              | 10 Mazlaria              | ▨ forest         |
| 3 Community house          | 11 Stables               | ▨ pasture        |
| 4 House Caminada           | 12 Volg supermarket      | ▨ steep land     |
| 5 Restaurant 'Della Posta' | 13 House Caviezel        | □ buildable land |
| 6 Post Office              | 14 ALIG Carpenters       |                  |
| 7 Telephone Box            | 15 Sawmill               |                  |
| 8 Stiva des Morts          |                          |                  |

Vrin is a small community in the Swiss canton of Graubünden. As in Arcadia, the village's mountainous and peripheral setting caused a gradual population shrinkage. A model project

was launched in the 1980s, setting up the foundations of Pro Vrin as a management institution. A broad land melioration restructured the pastures and forests, improving their productivity.



The village of Vrin,  
project collage

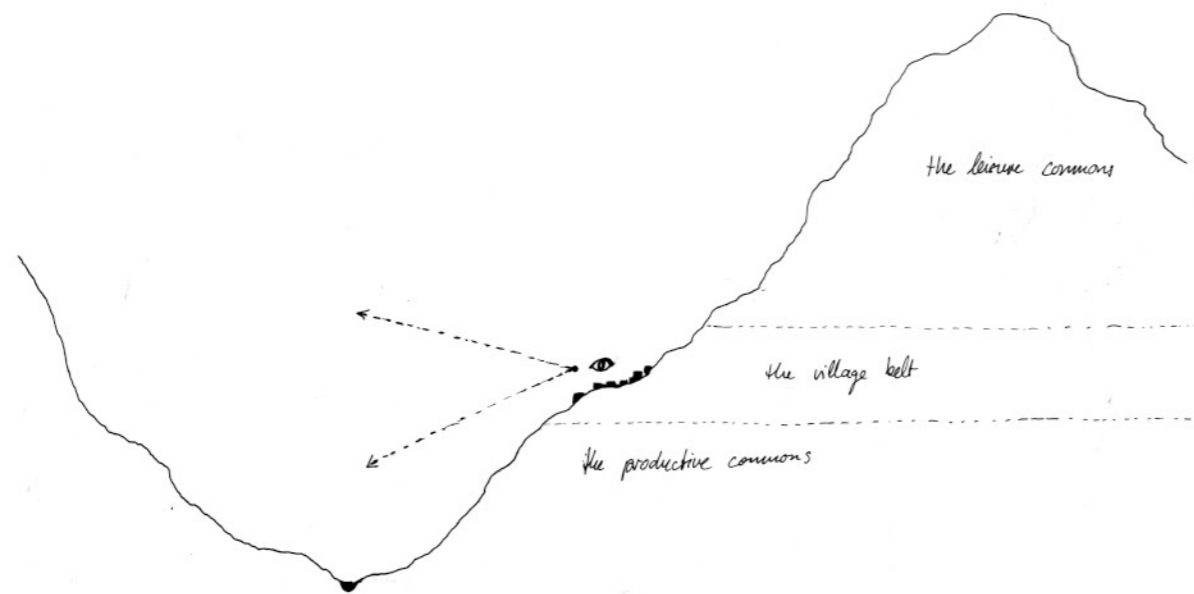
Additionally, the architect Gion Caminada, who grew up in Vrin, made a series of building interventions within the village. Processing units for wood and livestock products were built and commu-

nity institutions like a meeting hall and a chapel for traditional funeral rituals (Stiva des Morts) was added. These measures have encouraged a stabilisation of the local population.

Arcadia: A Chance for the Commons?

Elinor Ostrom  
Eight Principles for Managing the Commons

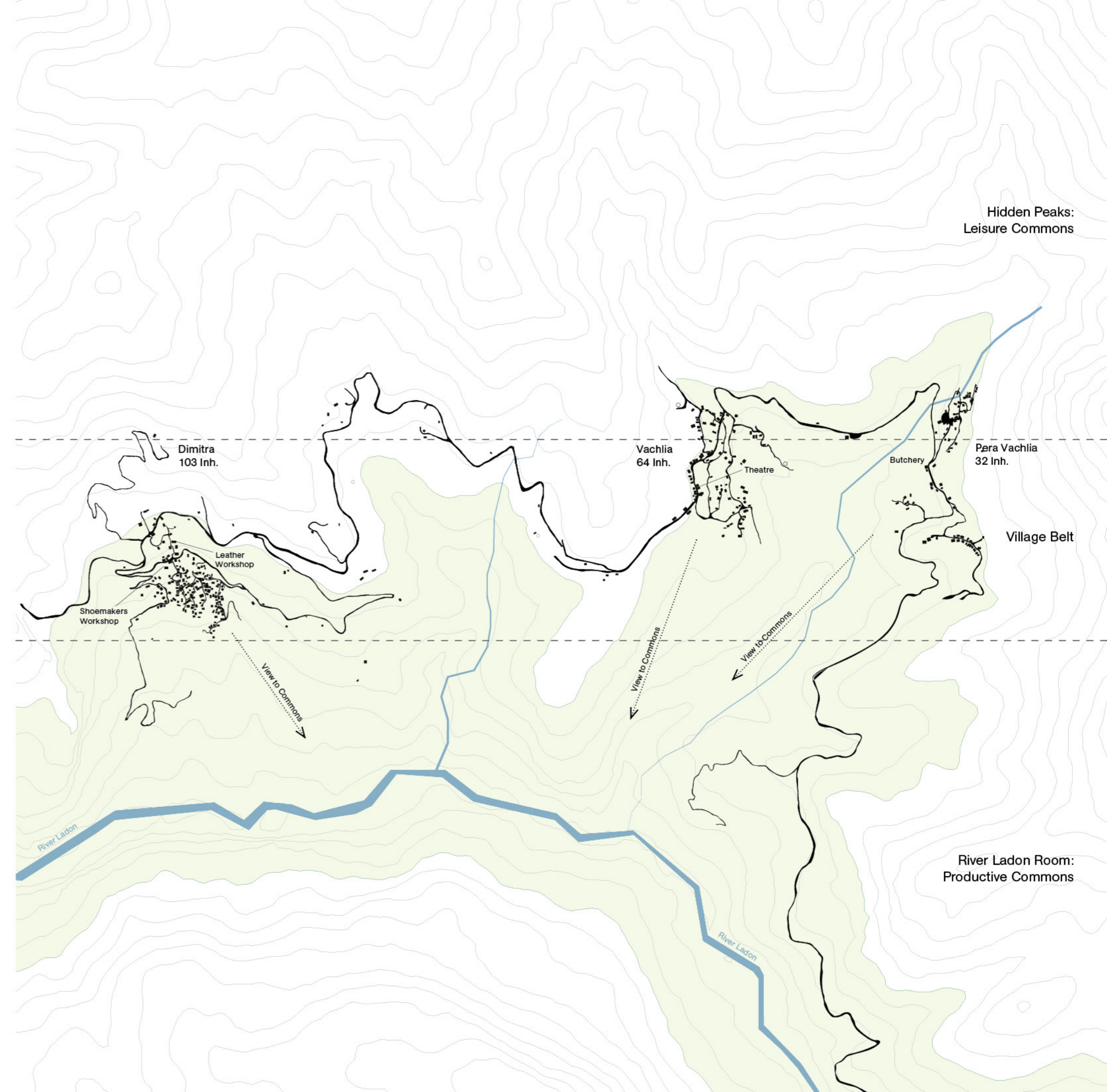
1. Define clear group boundaries.
2. Match rules governing the use of common goods to the local needs and conditions.
3. Ensure that those affected by the rules can participate in modifying the rules.
4. Make sure the rule-making rights of community members are respected by the outside authorities.
5. Develop a system, carried out by community members, for monitoring the members' behaviour.
6. Use graduated sanctions for rule violators.
7. Provide accessible, low-cost means for dispute resolution.
8. Build responsibility for governing the common resource in nested tiers from the lowest level up to the entire interconnected system.



Elements of the Commons

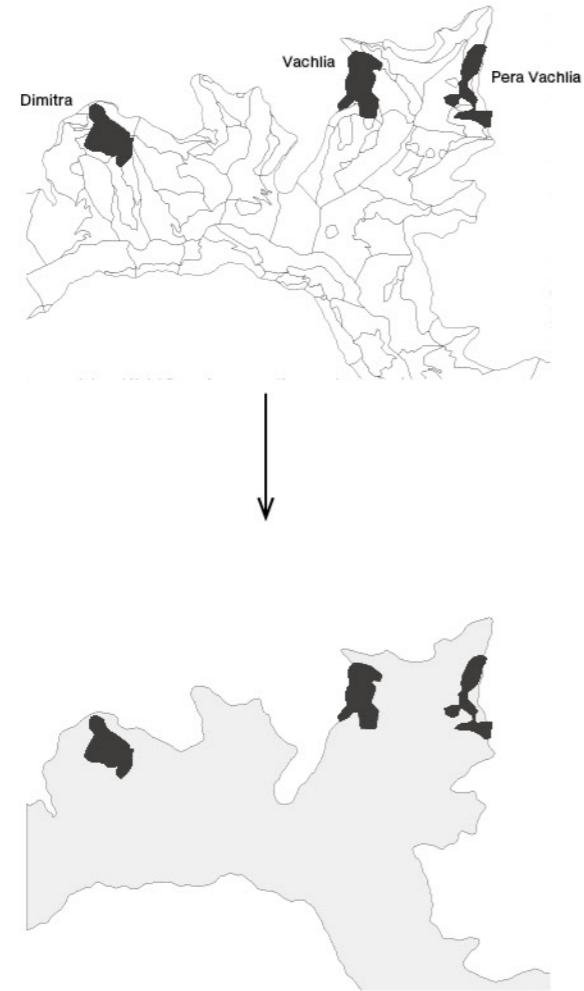
The success of the Vrin suggests a strategy that consists of two main elements: one being the radical re-structuring of the agricultural land - in our proposal called 'the productive commons', and the other including the im-

plementation of productive units and meeting spaces within the village belt. Additionally, with accepting the new patterns of living in the countryside, space for leisure should also be considered.



Arcadia: A Chance for the Commons?

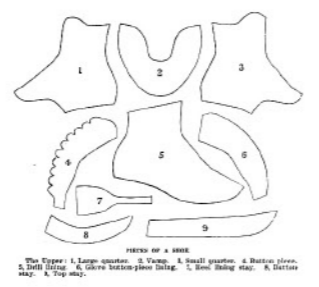
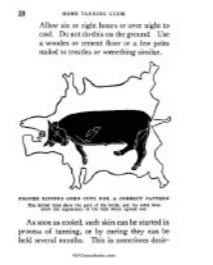
The Productive Commons



A radical land melioration turns the current fragmented plot structure into one common agricultural ground. This new agricultural territory is managed collectively by an organisation, formed by the

representatives of each village. Livestock farming is reintroduced and working positions opened for people willing to spend time by herding in the countryside.





The Village Belt

Processing units are introduced into the existing village network. Workshops for leather making and crafting, butcheries for the manufacturing of meat products and spinning mills create products of added value that

then can be sold in the areas that receive a higher number of visitors. The income created is distributed in the community and forms the basis for economic independence.





The Leisure  
Commons

The common ground should not only be a place of production. Countryside could be also seen through the prism of leisure, and this perspective constitutes a part of its contemporary understanding. Accepting these

emerging patterns of living and the desire for leisure, the countryside is also envisioned as a place of freedom, an unbound antidote to the life in the city.

