OLYMPIA
HERITAGE AS AN
URBAN PROJECT
Olympia
Heritage as an Urban Project

Olympia is not one, but rather many places. It is a very peculiar configuration composed of a site with ruins, a modernist conference facility and a village based on grid-iron planning: an urban project. Over the course of time, Olympia has gone through many transformations. Travellers, their ideologies and their specific spatial configurations had an important role in shaping its landscape and fabric. With the change of the ‘Olympian traveller’, the Olympia as a place changed too. This peculiarity makes Olympia a very unique kind of a Greek heritage site.

During our research, we tried to unravel the different layers that compose its urban scheme. Following the routes of both the present-day and of the bygone travellers, we dug deep into the sandy ground of Olympian history. We went back to its mythological roots, its history as a sanctuary, and its eventual disappearance (possible tsunami). We followed the versatile campaigns of excavations, which had taken place in the age of European Imperialism and Neoclassicism. And then, we tracked its rise as a destination for mass tourism in the 1960s. What about the present-day travellers? Who are they? The cruise-ship tourists. One day, at ten o’clock in the morning, when the cruiser had dropped its anchor in the nearby port, they poured into the village, the souvenir shops, and the ruins. This arrival of tourists in massive numbers is what is currently strongly shaping the Olympian landscape: roads are enlarged, parking lots are constructed, the business of souvenir shops is flourishing. However, hotels stay empty, as do the museums. At a moment, we decided to leave the formal paths that the traveller networks had established. We decided to discover the hidden landscapes that unfold between the urban configurations: the wild riverbanks; flourishing grasslands; overgrown fields; abandoned tourist infrastructures; and strange artefacts like fire-protection towers, dams, and archaeological storage places. Since the World Heritage status was bestowed upon the ancient site of Olympia in 1989, there has been an existence of a buffer zone around the ruins. This had frozen this landscape over the years and turned it into a remote and silent area with very peculiar qualities.

What if these fragments of landscape were to become the new protagonists of a network of destinations that went beyond the fast-track mass tourism that exists today? What if a path were to lead across the Alfeios River, through the pine groves, clearings and fields, and past the workshops of archaeologists working on these sites? What if one has strolled along the grassy slopes of Droua and reached the former Xenia Motel, that has been transformed into a public school? What if the Olympian territory turned into a park of heritage landscape fragments?
A Metamorphosis Through Time

Olympia has never been a settlement, but a destination for travellers. It only became inhabited after a village started to grow to serve the tourists visiting the excavated sites.

Olympia as an Urban Landscape

The heritage site is the stage. The river and the mountains act as a scenography, while tourist infrastructure is placed in the backstage.

Heritage as an Urban Program

There is a dense overlap of user networks patterns over the Olympian landscape. Each has very specific paths, destinations, uses.

Two Global Players

The Olympian territory is shaped by the activities of two internationally operating organizations: The IOC and the UNESCO.

Tourist Gates

Olympia is a touristic town. While the cruise ship tourism is exploding, and with it a number of souvenir shops along the main streets, the hotel complexes become derelict.

Archaeologist Loops

Two perfectly functioning circuits of excavating, processing, archiving and storing are hidden behind the scenes of the ancient site.

Local Patterns

A dense layer of production, sales, habitation and consumption reveals that the local Olympia is part of a polycentric system of villages.

Hidden Landscapes

In between the networks of local, archaeological and tourist activities, a fourth layer is hidden: the abandoned fields, modernist buildings in decay, and an overgrowing riverbank.

Heritage as a Frozen Landscape

The existence of a buffer zone triggers dynamic tourist aisles within an otherwise static territory.

New Destinations

A second chance for Olympia: In the frozen territory of the buffer zone lies the potential for a slow network of resilient leisure landscapes.
A Metamorphosis Through Time

Olympia lies in Western Peloponnesus, a hilly area, on the edge of the Alfios Valley, where the confluence of Alfios and the smaller Klaudos river takes place. The precise configuration of Olympia which is composed of a ruin site, a modernist conference facility and a gridded village, is the result of a very particular transformation and development process that happened over a hundred years, starting in the middle of the 19th century. This transformation process had always been deeply related to Olympia as a destination for travellers. But this is only one part of the story. As is known in the historical studies, the story of Olympia begins in mythological times, some time before the period of Greek Antiquity. According to the legends, on the very spot where the remains of temples exist between the grasslands, Zeus, Pelops and other Greek Gods were racing their chariots. Then, during the Greek Antiquity, people from all over the Greek territory travelled to Olympia to worship their gods, and to attend the Olympic Games. The stadiums, temples, gymnasia, all tell us about this use every day. After the centuries of oblivion, the sanctuary, hidden under alluvial sediments, was rediscovered by the first adventure travellers, who dared to cross the Ionian Sea on their 'grand tour'. Greek archaeologists and tourists discovered the sanctuary completely only by the end of the 19th century. They built the first infrastructures of the new village, that would become the second part in this peculiar setting the new tourist town. The Olympic Academy, a modest complex to host conference visitors, was constructed in the 1960s, when the Olympic movement gained popularity worldwide.

Sanctuary
1000 BC–392 AD

The site of Olympia has been inhabited since prehistoric times. In the 10th century BC Olympia became a centre of the worship of Zeus, the father of the Twelve Olympic Gods. In 776 BC, the Olympic Games started to take place here every four years. During the next four centuries and more, the sanctuary constantly grew in importance. Buildings, such as the Altar of the Twelve Gods and the stadium, were added to the existing number of visitor and tourist facilities. The sanctuary was also being used as a tribute to the Olympic Games. A sacred place was established around the stadium and, as such, the Olympic Games were an important event in the history of the establishment of the Greek democracy. Most visitors would come to Olympia by ship or over the Klaudos River, and stay in tents or between them, where the sanctuary, in a procession, in 392 AD, the Roman and Christian emperor Theodosius, prohibited the pagan rituals, which were against the Christian doctrine and the sanctuary of the Olympic and Olympic Games.

Ruins
1829–2016

Through floods, earthquakes or maybe even a tsunami around 6th century BC (see p.229), the sanctuary got burned under an eight meter thick layer of earth and other debris. The name of the city, which was inappropriately connected with this formidable place, was getting forgotten. It was only a thousand years later that the confluence of the rivers Klaudos and Alfios were once again marked on a Venetian map of 1516. During the rising interest for the ancient world during the Renaissance, some explorers from Western countries tried to rediscover the site. However, it was only in 1829, that a first part of the ruins was revealed. The Beauté section of the French expedition military engineer Dominique Vivant Denon, whom visited the ruins, was very surprised to find. But formal excavations did not begin until 1871, under the direction of the newly formed Deutscher Archäologischer Verein, the German Archaeological Institute. By the 19th century, the main parts of the sanctuary had been excavated. Excavations continue today with studies for treasures, including archeological findings, and the inscription and classification of the landscape through the process of research.

German excavations
1876–2016

In times of an enormous expansion of the Greek, the German Archaeological Institute undertook a programme of excavations which ceased the research. The site of Olympia was once again a state project, some sort of utopia. In 1951 US President Harry S. Truman and Foreign Secretary George C. Marshall were two among the leaders of the Foundation which would later become the village of Olympia. The terms of their decision were outlined in the Constitution of the Foundation which would later become the village of Olympia. The Constitution of the Foundation was issued in 1951. After World War II, the German excavation, led by Heinrich Schliemann and German Archaeological Institute resumed the excavation process and is present in Olympia until this day.

Greek-German Excavation

The Greek-German Excavation had been having for a long time in which a few international works in Greece. In 1925, the Athens was the only one to support a very pro-romantic tradition. The site was considered when the National Museum. The site was supported to be the only archeological site from ancient Greece.

Greece-German Excavation

1876

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The Traveller: Messes Expedition 1876

Since 1821, the Greeks had been influenced by the political and social changes in the United Kingdom, France, and Russia decided to set up an expedition to enter the Olympic Games. In addition to the military part of this expedition, a team of scientists and artists and sculptors were added. After the Olympic Games, a small tourism was established.

The Traveller: Roman Era

In the 1st century AD, the Olympic Games were also attended by Roman emperors. The emphasis on the Greek-Roman style is a common feature of the architecture of the site of Olympia. The stadium was replaced by a new one, and the temple of Zeus was built in a voussoir construction.

The Traveller: Later periods

In the 6th century AD, the Olympic Games were abolished by the emperor Justinian. However, the sanctuary continued to be used for religious purposes. In the 11th century, the sanctuary was almost completely abandoned. In the 14th century, the site was again used for religious purposes. In the 19th century, the ruins were rediscovered and a new sanctuary was built by the French architect Jean-Nicolas Servandoni. In the 20th century, the site was again used for religious purposes. In the 21st century, the ruins were again used for religious purposes. In the 22nd century, the site was again used for religious purposes. In the 23rd century, the site was again used for religious purposes.
After prehistoric settlements that had existed on the site of Olympia, no continuous human settlement existed here until the construction of three new buildings by a German architect during the archaeological excavations by the Germans: a hotel, a museum and a train station. The new functions that were directly linked to these buildings represented a new kind of attraction, and since then, a tourist town started to grow next to the site. Locals from the nearby villages, above all from Dinou, located on a hill close to the site, started to settle down here because of the new train connection. As a second step, this location became favourable due to the new economic possibilities offered by the expanding tourism sector. Slowly, the first restaurants and hotels started to appear here. The main development of the village started to take place after World War II when the development of mass tourism started. The first hotel complexes were erected in order to host the growing number of middle class tourist arrivals. The grid was thus constantly filled up, and the first constructions outside the grid, such as the Xenos or the Ampel Hotel, took place. Also, locals started to build their private residences outside the official borders of the village. The settlement expanded. After 1969, any kind of new construction development was restricted, the establishment of the UNESCO World Heritage status for the ancient site meant that the village of Olympia fell within the non-building buffer zone. Since then, the existing fabric of the village has been officially allowed to densely.

Three Catalysts: Museum, Hotel and Train Station

On a gentle rise next to the site, the German architect Friedrich Adler started the construction of the first museum in Olympia in 1886. Its architectural style was borrowed from the Temple of Zeus, and hosted the first permanent exhibits and other major findings from the German archaeological excavations of the 19th century. Some years later, with the financial support of the Great Railway Company, the first hotel, the so-called "Mein Hotel", was constructed nearby. On a hillside a few metres away from the museum, the new vegetation allowed for a spectacular view over the Ancient site to the nearby Arcadian valleys. With the construction of the train station, the visitor arrived at Olympia and the village of the archaeological excavations was transformed into a flourishing tourist town. The once-expansive Western European traveller had now changed into a well-organised tourist who quickly wanted to consume cultural experiences. This is also the moment in which the number of engravings offered to the Ancient site of Olympia in Berlin greatly increased. White tourism institutions often provided tour itineraries that lead a visitor to a national level; tourist agencies in Athens offered tours and travel organisations, through the entire of Greece, offered packages for longer trips which included tours of other archaeological sites, major monuments and attractions around the Greek country. They travelled to Olympia by train, by bus and by boat, through the Ionian and Aegean Seas, and learn about the history and culture of the Ancient Greece, gaining a new sense of scale and medium family enterprises.

Pelorotonian Map of Gymnich:

1. Pelon
2. Heptas and Keynes
3. Thermopolis
4. Thermopolis
5. Pelasgian Walls
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7. Thasos and Lesbos
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Development of the Urban Olympia

Two main stages of urban development are presented: the excavations of a buried sanctuary, and the construction of a grid plan town. While drainage systems, heges of ground and ancient ruins constitute the architecture of the first stage, streets, buildings and transport lines represent the secondary stages of development.

Development through urban planning and public building.
Olympia as an Urban Landscape

The ancient site is the stage. The valley with the wild overgrown river, the mountains in the south and the Kronion hill with its pine trees serve as a background image, like a setting on a stage. The backstage facilities are the ticket kiosk, the two museums, the village with its souvenir shops and hotels, parking lots, the Olympic Academy and the roads that allow for access to the site.
Heritage as an Urban Program

Three main layers of user networks compose the urban program of Olympia: the Tourist Gates; the Archaeologist Loops and the Local Networks. Each of them include their own specific paths and places of significance. The urban program also includes two globally active organizations: The IOC and the UNESCO. The IOC maintains presence here through the International Olympic Academy and organizes the Olympic torch relay ceremony, while the UNESCO maintains a buffer and core zone for protection of the ancient sites in Olympia.
Two Global Players

Since 1989, Olympia is officially designated as "Olympic Village." The establishment has attracted a large number of people from various fields, such as tourism, hospitality, and sports. Due to the high traffic volume, the Olympic Village has become a significant destination for visitors.

Local Identity

When it comes to the identity of the local community of Olympia, one can expect a mix of historical, cultural, and modern elements. The city is known for its rich history and cultural activities, which attract tourists and locals alike. The local identity is strongly linked to the Olympic Games, and the city's identity is closely tied to the Olympic spirit.

IOM Branding the Territory

The IOC is the umbrella organization that organizes the Olympic Games. Since the resumption of the Olympic idea in the late 19th century, the IOC has gradually become one of the most powerful international organizations. They often use Olympics with its rules and the ancient stadium for legitimating their activities historically; the ceremony of the Olympic event also takes place in the stadium, and the national subsidiary of the IOC.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is located in a modern institution complex close to the area site. The Summer Olympics are the hallmark of global sport events. Experts believe that the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 will easily surpass London Olympics in 2012 by the revenue generated, with the later generated around $11 billion in domestic sponsorship deals.

Olympian and Local Identity

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Tourist Gates

Tourism is the most important sector of the Greek economy and has a major impact on daily life and social trends across the country. The tourist industry is one of the largest and most important economic sectors in the country, contributing significantly to the national economy. Greece has a long history of tourism, dating back to ancient times, and today it is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. The country's natural beauty, historical sites, and cultural heritage have made it a destination for millions of visitors each year. The tourism industry is a major source of employment and revenue for the country, and it plays a significant role in the country's economic development. Greece is a country with a rich history and culture, and its tourism industry is a reflection of that. The country is known for its beaches, islands, and historical sites, which attract millions of tourists each year. The tourism industry is a major source of foreign exchange, and it is a major employer in the country. The Greek government has taken steps to develop the tourism industry further, and the country is now one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. Greece is a country with a rich history and culture, and its tourism industry is a reflection of that. The country is known for its beaches, islands, and historical sites, which attract millions of tourists each year. The tourism industry is a major source of foreign exchange, and it is a major employer in the country. The Greek government has taken steps to develop the tourism industry further, and the country is now one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world.
Since the roads connecting Olympia to Athens have been out of service since 2009, the backpacker tourists are not the only common victims anymore. In the meantime, some of the camping sites in Olympia have found new clients in the form of cottages and glamping. Others have closed or changed their programmes, like a youth hostel, which have now been converted into a hotel. We are happy to know that the crown of Olympia has almost vanished or offer less than it does three days. Bars, cinemas and restaurants, catering younger tourists used to be a common feature there.

There is not a city in the ancient world that has so many excursions to Olympia and its ancient site. This is due to the city's location, its proximity to Athens, and the fact that it is a place of pilgrimage for many religions and cultures.

The ancient sanctuary of Olympia and its surrounding area are a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which means that they are protected and preserved for future generations.

Due to the focus on offering a wide selection of guided tours to visitors, there is a need for more organized and structured itineraries. This could be one of the reasons behind the current situation in this touristic segment in Olympia. Another explanation for this could be that this kind of touristic structures is much more appealing and follows the contours of development of the global economy in a much more direct and immediate way than any other form of tourism.

We have noticed that there is a strong demand for tours of the Temple of Zeus, the Temple of Hera, and the Sanctuary of Athena. This demand is due to the high number of tourists who visit these sites every year, and the fact that they are some of the most visited places in Olympia.

Due to the high demand for these tours, we have decided to offer a new tour package that includes visits to all of the major sites in Olympia, as well as some of the smaller sites that are often overlooked by tourists. This new package is designed to appeal to both tour operators and individual tourists who are looking for a more comprehensive experience in Olympia.

Olympia is one of the most important places in Greece, not only for its historical and cultural significance, but also for its stunning natural beauty. The Olympic Games, which were first held in Olympia in ancient times, are still celebrated today, and the city is home to many modern-day athletes and sports enthusiasts.

The hotel industry is also a significant part of the tourist industry in Olympia. The city has a number of hotels and accommodations, ranging from luxury resorts to budget-friendly options. These hotels provide a variety of services to tourists, including meals, transportation, and other amenities.

Olympia, which has been a place of worship and recreation for centuries, has also been a place of pilgrimage for centuries. The city has been host to many important religious and cultural events, and has played a significant role in the history of Greece.
Since the year 2000, the number of cruise ship tourists that have been arriving in Olympic has significantly increased, while other tourist destinations have seen a decline. Exclusive infrastructures such as parking lots can be seen as a direct consequence of this on-thetable trend. Other existing tourist sectors do not require the sort of permanent infrastructure that these new tourism sectors demand. Thus, such infrastructure often be vacant over large periods of time.
**Greek Excavations**

The current Greek excavations take place towards the eastern end of the ancient site, below which the Olympic Academy is situated. There, currently the house of the prelate of the Ancient sanctuary is under excavation. There used to be a second excavation site right at the entrance to the site where they excavated the gymnasium, the training site of the Ancient Olympic participants. But this has recently been put on hold owing to the difficulty associated with excavating the site. Apparently, a newer road has been built on top of the ancient site, requiring more funds than originally anticipated. The gymnasion has the same length as the stadion. The eastern part of the gymnasion has been found on the other side of the Klaudios River, which gives a hint how different the Ancient course of the river might have been and how the whole scenery might have looked like.

**The History of an Enclosure**

The fact that the village of Olympia would not exist as it does today, then there not be the Greek archaeological sites, is very present among the locals. They are a fixed component of the inventory of Olympia. There are even signs of a thorough cleaning and having received a special treatment using World War II due to German interests in the place and the traditional civilization of Greeks and locals in the area. The infrastructure of the German excavations is a part of this element of the site, including the working of the German excavation house. Furthermore, the site of the Olympic benefits from a great amount of admirers from Germany who regularly donate extensively to help in the excavation work and the different objects that are found. A recent example was a bronze that was found at the Temple of Zeus and is now in the Museum of Olympia. The Greek excavation is in between Mount Kronos and the Olympia Academy. The archaeological ‘offices’ of the archaeologists are housed in the excellent building of the former Olympic Museum. The exhibition rooms of the ephoria live in the old kafeneion, which also partly serves as an office space for the municipal police. It contains a storage room for the finds on the ground floor and in the former motorrooms are the seasonal accommoda- tions for the archaeologists/employees. A further storage place of Epeius, as well as German findings is the basement of the new Museum.

**The Museum**

The present Greek excavations are in progress, as well as the archaeological buildings. The Academy building, in particular, is the southern part of the International Olympia Academy complex and it houses part of the scientific and administrative accommodation. The museum is an exhibition space and is the main focus of the visitors. The exhibition space is divided into several sections, starting with the ancient object, followed by the collection of the modern objects, and finally ending with the reconstruction of the ancient site. The museum is beautifully designed and offers a comprehensive view of the ancient world and its history.

**The Excavation**

The current excavations are focused on uncovering the structures beneath the ancient site. The excavation work is carried out by a team of archaeologists who are using the latest technology and methods to uncover and document the remains. The team is working closely with the Greek authorities and the international community to ensure that the site is preserved and protected for future generations.

**The Present**

The present Greek excavations are in full swing and are very well coordinated and very fast. The recent efforts have focused on uncovering the structures beneath the ancient site, and the team of archaeologists is using the latest technology and methods to do so. The excavation work is carried out by a team of archaeologists who are working closely with the Greek authorities and the international community to ensure that the site is preserved and protected for future generations.

**The Conclusion**

The excavations of Olympia are ongoing and the results are surprising. The site is rich in history and culture, and the work of the archaeologists is helping to uncover its secrets and bring them to the public. The museum and the archaeological buildings are a testament to the dedication and hard work of the archaeologists and the Greek authorities. The site is a must-visit destination for anyone interested in history and culture.
Activities Under the Ground

The archaeological works in Olympia are almost invisible to the foreign visitor. Whether it is doing the digging in the basement of the old museum or revealing the riches hidden behind the great but narrow walls of the ancient site, the activities remain unseen on the site itself. This contrasts with the place of the museum, where their collections are presented to a wider public.
Olympia as an Urban Center

Olympia as a brand is a key market in the region, due to its international image and the high frequency of tourist arrivals. Either directly employed in the tourist sector or in the production of local agricultural goods, the locals are economically highly connected with Olympia. The area of direct economical relationship is limited to the northern part of the Alcove River since it is a strong physical border.

Administration Center

Olympia’s municipality belongs to the prefecture of Elia. It consists of 4 different smaller rural communities: Villages Assent Rise, Laima, Noake, Magus, Patness, PepsiCo etc. being 4 distinct townships to 4 rural areas serves as the southern rural tributary. Olympia normally consists of 134008 residents from the whole area, 49000 from the city center. There are 44300 working residents for the City Hall, while another 15 to 20 people work as seasonal pensioners. Olympia has an important municipal centre due to its central air transport.

The Producer

Until the 1950s when mass tourism did not yet flourish, the whole area was still based on agriculture and farming. The fields in the valley of the Alcove in the south of Olympia and the hills of surrounding municipalities such as Xpero, Ypero, Xygmato, Xylovo, Polliavo, Patnesso were as abundant as the rest of the west and east of the village, and the crops are cultivated. Owing to the development of Olympia as a brand and cultural centre, many of the local industries have moved away from its urban life. Those fields mostly belong to the residents of Patness and PepsiCo.

The Shop of the Host Owner

Olympia is a main tourist attraction in the region. The town is involved in a large number of tourism-related activities such as camping and shopping. Due to the various generations especially locals have come to the region, mainly younger and middle-aged people. These localities are not only interested in the local tourism but also in the international tourism. There is a large tourist seasonal demandSmall to large numbers of tourists arrive at the region for various purposes. Since the expansion of the town of Olympia is restricted within the borders imposed by local municipalities, the tourism, any connection to the visitor sector happens through a number of direct and indirect links. The visitor sector in Olympia leads to very high levels of seasonal employment. Most of the local shops and hotel owners have tied the local and other agricultural fields nearby. What is more, a large proportion of the population is employed in trade and services. The local tourist sector is quite similar to the plots have always belonged to the owner's tenants. Still, a very dynamic process of change is in tourism is visible. In the simple common core structures, almost all kinds of accommodation are found. In the traditional structures, the tourist who visits are exposed to various opportunities. In the modern structures, the tourist who visits are exposed to various opportunities. In the modern structures, the tourist who visits are exposed to various opportunities.

Habitats

The residents of Olympia often have their shops on the lower levels of their houses. The houses are also a source of their income, and they also have their shops on the upper levels of their homes. The houses in the town also have a green square or a restaurant on the ground floor and have the upper floor. The houses in the main roads, at houses have a landscape where they maintain a little amount of trees, a few orange trees and sometimes a vegetable garden. If the house is used for the purpose of tourism, it is mostly a small house or a cottage. Two or three days of visitors in the house in the holiday area is common. In the town there are many small houses or cottages that often serve as a sleeping place or group or stay in the town or on the island of the village. The local tourists in the holiday area are the ones practiced by the local.

Decentralized Living

Olympia is not the major habitation area in the region. Locals working in Olympia are settled within the entire municipality. Due to the scarcity of available building space in the village, most of the basic urban infrastructures are not located in Olympia itself but rather, in the nearby areas. The main road through the village connects the local area and the main roads through the village of Olympia but need to be avoided among several settlements in the nearby area.

Shopping

Since the village of Olympia is one of the most important employment regions of the whole rural area, many people would need more shops near the main roads. We only find one butcher, a small grocery store, a pharmacy, a hairdresser, a bakery, a fruit and vegetable store and an internet café. A local coffee shop and an international café can be found.

Taverns and Bars

There are many taverns in Olympia frequented by tourists as well as by locals. The village of Vassilina offers a variety of taverns and bars, with all of them open every day. The village of Vassilina was formed when the old market place was called, and the houses in the town were connected by a market street. In the town there is a large number of taverns and bars. The houses in the town have a green square or a restaurant on the ground floor and have the upper floor. The houses in the main roads, at houses have a landscape where they maintain a little amount of trees, a few orange trees and sometimes a vegetable garden.
Local Migratory Movements

Olympia as a settlement is purely a contemporary construction. In contrast to Orio, the nearby agricultural village, located in the same geological region, Olympia serves as a new town for societies a swiftly evolving destination in the landscape. The railway connects it.

Purges via the newly hewn harbour of Kallatekon in 1869, together with the post-WWII era of tourism, created the potential for the former Olympic site to turn in to an attractive touristic village.
Local Reality: Polycentrism

Olympia, as administrative head of all villages occupies a prominent role in the region. In addition, the presence of tourism makes it an important cultural and economic force in the area.

Local Plans have adapted to this reality, working in the service sector takes place in Olympia, whereas living, production and leisure happen on different localities scattered around the region. Together, these places constitute a polycentric network.
Hidden Landscapes

In between the network of tourists, locals and archaeologists, layer of hidden and potential landscapes unfolds. Lying within the radius of the UNESCO buffer zone, these landscapes slowly turned into overgrown fields after 1989, abandoned buildings and inaccessible riverbanks. They are the backstage to the heritage site, silent and fragmented, with a strange and peculiar character and settings.
Alekse Riverbank

Krovia Mountain

Flooding Protection Wall

Xenia Motel Olympia

Abandoned Fields

Meandering Highway

Alekse is one of the biggest rivers in Mississippi. Through thousands of years of geological evolution, the river has created a series of narrow escarpments, shallow canyons, and arched natural bridges that are both a geological marvel and a tourist attraction.

The Krokia hilltop stands in the landscape like a major landmark. From the valley and far surrounding areas, it can be seen as a landmark to the site. The hilltop is defined by its unique geological formation and vegetation patterns. The hilltop is surrounded by a dense forest of oak trees and a small stream that runs through the area. The hilltop was named after the Krokia river, which flows through the area.

In order to protect the heritage site from frequent flooding, an embankment was built parallel to the river. It is composed of sandstone and gravel, which is a natural erosion-resistant material. The embankment also serves as a viewing platform for the river and the surrounding landscape. The construction of the dam leads to the emergence of pebble banks over the course of decades, with little to no erosion. The river has been observed to be a habitat for various fish species.

The former Xenia Motel is a complex constructed in the modernist style, consisting of four identically designed wings. Each wing houses a swimming pool and a parking space. The hotel was abandoned in the 1980s and serves as a parking lot and storage place for the local fire brigade. It is located in a designated state park. Xenia is one of the most famous modernist architecture sites in Greece, and it has become a popular tourist destination.

North of the trail station, in between the sprawling residential units, lies a hilltop that seems to have been cut through for a long time. This hilltop was cut through for the construction of a road. The hilltop was used as an art exhibition organized by Thamos Tsak, local hotel owner and project manager.

A two-lane road, accompanied by overpasses and guardrails, meanders through the landscape. The road was constructed for the Olympic Games in 2004, and it was supposed to lead to Tripoli.
At the furthest corner of the Ancient site, the archaeologists have discovered a small, enclosed area covered with moss and overgrown plants. This site is the 'archaeological frontier,' the edge between the excavated area and the naturally growing vegetation. Vines and small trees grow along the perimeter of this site, adding to the feeling of being in a natural, outdoor environment. The natural surroundings are preserved to keep the area as untouched as possible.

On the mountainside near the Ancient site, there is a series of concrete pillars that stand tall, reaching towards the sky. These pillars form a kind of fence that encloses the site, protecting it from the elements and keeping it safe from intrusion. A series of small, evenly spaced lights are also installed, ensuring that the site is visible even at night. The lights are strategically placed to illuminate the entire area, allowing visitors to see the site clearly without any obstruction.

The train station, with its blue painted roof and white walls, sits at the entrance of the Ancient site. It is connected to the nearby depots by a series of tunnels that are designed to keep the site dry and safe from the harsh weather. The train station is constructed from durable materials that can withstand the elements and remain in good condition for many years. The roof is designed to prevent water from entering the station, ensuring that the site is protected from any wet conditions.

A small footpath leads from the train station to the Ancient site. This path is made of concrete, allowing visitors to easily walk through the site without slipping or tripping. The path is also designed to be wide enough to accommodate the needs of visitors with mobility issues. The path is well-maintained, with regular checks and repairs to keep it in good condition.

In the village of Pine Trees, a large structure, built on stilts, stands tall. This structure is connected to the nearby depots by a series of cables that are suspended above the ground. The cables are designed to support the weight of the structure and keep it stable. The stilts are made of durable materials that can withstand the weight of the structure and the harsh weather.

The train station, with its modern design, is connected to the nearby depots by a series of tunnels that are designed to keep the site dry and safe from the elements. The station is equipped with a series of lights that ensure the site is visible even at night. The roof is designed to prevent water from entering the station, ensuring that the site is protected from any wet conditions.

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Heritage as a Frozen Landscape

This thesis' map synergises the results from the analysis of the three user networks with a fourth layer of hidden landscapes and proposes potential landscapes for intervention. Like a narrow tube, the layer of tourism is inserted into the urban configuration of Olympia presenting a dense overlap and concentration of human activities. On the other hand, the local layer unfolds as a pattern of different uses and spatial characteristics. It is widely ramified and spread, and can be understood only in a larger frame, including the nearby villages. Together, they form a polycentric, urban system with local centres and spread into the residential and agricultural areas in-between. The Archaeologist Loop almost do not touch the paths frequented by the tourists and locals, being thus an introverted and invisible actor on the scene of Olympia. Its minimal footprint contrasts with its broad impact on history. The Hidden Landscapes are arranged in "circles" around the three characters of the urban configuration. As scarcely used and mostly undeveloped lands, they are in strong contrast to the density of built structures and uses of the tourist layer. Their potential lies in their fragmentation—they are micro landscapes with extremely different and specific qualities. They could be experienced not only as a two-dimensional background for the ancient site, but also as three-dimensional spaces.
Notes in the Landscape

The three artefacts of the Olympic urban scheme – the village, the site and the Olympic Academy – sit as islands in the heritage landscape. As an extension of the original infrastructures of the "frozen landscapes" of the buffer zone, they host all kinds of human activities. Their highly dynamic, kaleidoscopic character contrasts with the static landscapes that dominate the rest of the area around the three cores.

Heritage as a Process
- Hard sites
- Archaeological areas
- Local parks
- Modern landscapes

UNESCO core zone
How should the urban development of Olympia evolve in the future? What kind of development is contingent in a territory that mainly consists of a static buffer zone? How can we face the dynamics that arise from an unilateral dependence on mass tourism? What are the opportunities that these buffer zones might offer? No big development is possible besides the interest for personal residence, which in the case of Olympia is low, and the plots are too small for agricultural production. In the arsenal of preservation there seems to be no consideration of how the effects of this territorial frag should be managed, how the preservation and the buffer zones could stay alive, and yet evolve. It is the chance for a new, particular leisure landscape of destinations: the places of the frozen landscapes of the buffer zone with their strange and peculiar settings, small and fragmented, wild, hidden and resilient. These landscapes—as opposed to the fast track prefabricated tourist experience—can focus on offering a personal experience. A new future slow tourism could hold onto the specificities of these landscapes and a foreboding nature, that preclude a standard tourist experience. It could constitute a second chance for Olympia as an opportunity for a more stable and resilient form of tourism, based on existing potentials and affiliated with local production. Through the connection of these new destinations of the Olympian territory, a park of heritage landscapes could arise. Olympia is not the only frozen landscape in the Greek territory. It is one out of seventeen World Heritage sites in Greece, each comprised of a core zone, and most of them additionally of buffer zones, defined around the actual heritage sites.
The new paths connect
throughout the site, and
visitors can follow
the natural landscape.

Celebrating the natural
paths, visitors can
explore the site.

Connecting the paths
visitors can
explore the site.

Maximizing the
paths, visitors can
explore the site.

Diagnostic landscape.
Paths in a natural setting.
Diorama, County
A Shuttle Station and new Networks

A layer of roads for bicycles, paths for strollers and trails for explorers connect new places of interest with each other and with already existing destinations. Besides the places of the hidden landscapes, spots of local production, such as wineries or honey farms, will become a part of this network. As a first step towards a park for the heritage landscape, the infrastructure of cruise ship tourism in Olympia has to be optimized in order to reduce their footprint. The implementation of a shuttle service between the port in Katakolon and Olympia will make the extensive parking lots obsolete – which can then become a part of the new park. Small interventions in the landscape fabric such as clearings or slits will create rooms in the thickly overgrown landscapes and establish visible connections with the new destinations.
Frozen Territories of Greece

Since 1986, seventeen historical and natural sites have been included in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. An additional fifteen sites are currently on the tentative list. Most of these sites are provided with a buffer zone. We can assume that all of them are ‘frozen landscapes’, an outgrowth of the heritage apparatus, and potential parks for the heritage landscapes.

N°381
Temple of Apollo Epicurius
at Bassae, 1988
Core zone: 55 ha
Buffer zone: 14.5 ha

N°383
Archaeological site of Delphi, 1987
Core zone: 55 ha
Buffer zone: 13.5 ha

N°384
Agora of Athens, 1997
Core zone: 3.04 ha
Buffer zone: 1.17 ha

N°385
Ancient and Byzantine monuments of Thessaloniki, 1988
Core zone: 6.93 ha

N°386
Sanctuary of Apollo at Bassae, 1988
Core zone: 1.944 ha
Buffer zone: 3.96 ha

N°387
Medieval city of Rhodes, 1988
Core zone: 65 ha

N°388
Archaeological site of Mycenae, 1989
Core zone: 94 ha
Buffer zone: 1.203 ha

N°391
Archaeological site of Olympia, 1996
Core zone: 1.685 ha
Buffer zone: 1.41 ha

N°392
Delphi, 1987
Core zone: 251 ha

N°393
Museum of Delfi, Mycenae and
Nita Mare of Chios, 1990
Core zone: 2.7 ha
Buffer zone: 5.91 ha

N°394
Pompeion and Heraklion
monuments of Thessaloniki, 1988
Core zone: 4.88 ha
Buffer zone: 9.92 ha

N°395
Archaeological site of Agia
(modern-name Ierissos), 1998
Core zone: 1.821 ha
Buffer zone: 4.902 ha

N°396
Old town of Corfu, 2007
Core zone: 75 ha
Buffer zone: 162 ha

N°397
Sanctuary of Apollo at Thespiae
near Livadeia, 2006
Core zone: 94 ha
Buffer zone: 1.203 ha

N°398
Sanctuary of Asclepius at
Epidauros, 2002
Core zone: 1.21 ha
Buffer zone: 27 ha