

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
UNDERGRADUATE CAPSTONE PROJECT
IN
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
SUBMITTAL FORM

A PLATFORM OF LIVING HERITAGE

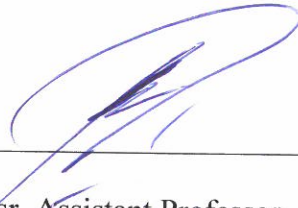
by

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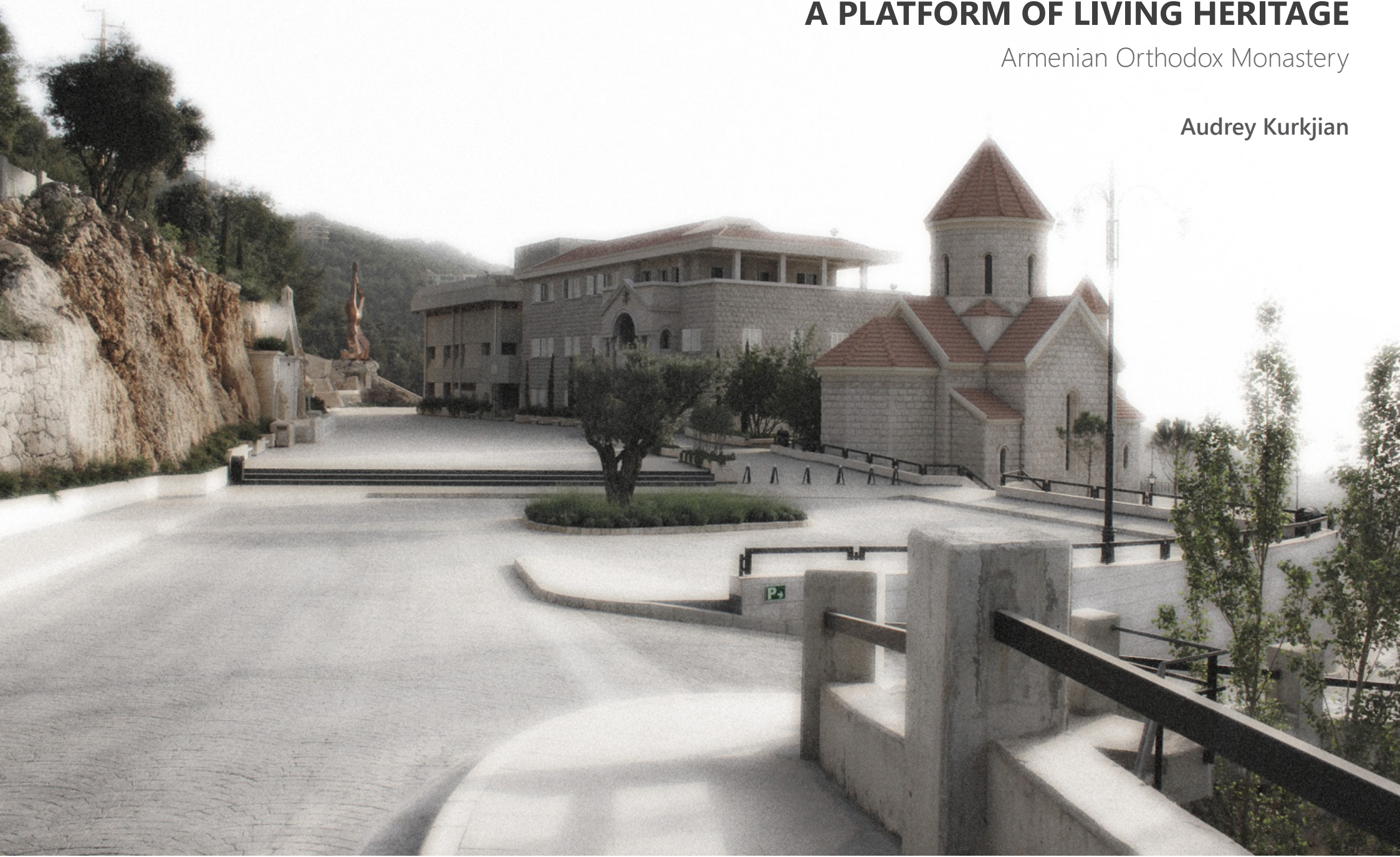
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A PLATFORM OF LIVING HERITAGE

Armenian Orthodox Monastery

Audrey Kurkjian



A PLATFORM OF LIVING HERITAGE

Armenian Orthodox Monastery

Audrey Kurkjian

Department of Landscape Architecture
Faculty of Agricultural & Food Sciences
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May, 2016

*To my great grandparents
and all the martyrs of the Armenian Genocide*

*"I should like to see any power of the world destroy this race, this small tribe of unimportant people, whose wars have all been fought and lost, whose structures have crumbled, literature is unread, music is unheard, and prayers are no more answered. Go ahead, destroy Armenia. See if you can do it. Send them into the desert without bread or water. Burn their homes and churches. Then see if they will not laugh, sing and pray again. For when two of them meet anywhere in the world, **see if they will not create a New Armenia.**"*

- William Saroyan (1908-1981)

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Starting with the Department of Landscape Architecture, I would like to thank my professors for their constructive feedbacks throughout the year, especially my main advisor Mr. Yaser Abunnaser who always encouraged me to work with passion and enjoy every step of the process. I will always remember his encouragements and belief that the project would be done even when my collected field data seemed lost.

I am profoundly grateful to my mother Taline for her untiring devotion and for accompanying me in both site visits of the Monastery and Bourj Hammoud. As well as my aunt Hourii who has introduced me to many craftsmanships and artists of Bourj Hammoud.

I would like to extend my thanks to both architects Vazken Chekidjian and Hagop Chamilian for providing me with all the necessary technical plans and information about the architecture of the Monastery of Bikfaya.

I owe my gratitude to the Armenian monk Shnorhk, who is in charge of managing the Monastery of Bikfaya. Throughout my site visits he has been very helpful for giving me a complete tour of the place. Executive director of the Armenian National Committee of the Middle East, Vera Yacoubian's significant knowledge about the Armenian diaspora was very useful for me to understand the evolution of the people's lives. Also, Arpi Manghassarian – owner of Badguer – whose Armenian patriotism and passion for sharing the stories of the Armenian culture to the public was the most inspiring in enriching my project.

Finally, this part of the project would not have been possible without the kindness and warm welcome of the Armenians themselves, who willingly posed for my camera and answered all my questions.



This booklet is an in depth analysis of the Armenian Orthodox Monastery of Bikfaya, accompanied by an ethnographic study of the Armenian communities in Lebanon. It focuses on understanding the role of the Armenian Church to the people and the significance of preserving the Armenian traditions and practices.

This study investigates the struggles the monastery is facing with time, in organizing the Armenian community and connecting it back to them. Also, many constraints have limited the place to attract the people, whereas many opportunities are available in promoting the area and helping the Armenian Church reconnect with the people and highlight the importance of preserving the culture.

With both these studies, it has been possible to come up with a list of programs that should be integrated in the monastery and different conceptual proposals that would solve the main problem, which is the disconnection of the community to the Monastery.

I will start by introducing the history and the culture of the Armenian people, in order to understand how they arrived to Lebanon. Then investigate their propagation and development in Lebanon, and how the monastery has evolved with time. The latter has justified the main problematic, which is the disconnection of the community to the Monastery. Based on this issue, it was crucial to interview and talk to different Armenian priests and monks in the church, as well as Lebanese Armenian citizens to understand their disconnection to the monastery. Then, it was important to closely analyze all the layers of the site and its surrounding, in order to find a solution to the constraints and highlight the opportunities. Later on, in the program development it has been clear what were the required functions and facilities to the site, and later propose different concepts. Be it focused on religion, communal activities or on eco-tourism, the site will work as an ethnographic landscape where individual and collective memories will be shared among the visitors who will engage in the process.

Therefore, the role of the Armenian Church will successfully be re-established; organizing the community and strengthening the preservation of the Armenian culture.

In 301 AD Armenia adopts Christianity as the states' religion, then during the 4th & 5th century the catholicosate was built as the institutionalization of Christianity. As the heads of the Armenian Church, their role was to organize and take care of the people. Christianity was the main core of the Armenian culture, that's why the Catholicosate was created as the religious institution of Christianity. Their main aim was to take care of the Armenian community and enhance their way of living. From the year 485 to 1189, Armenians went through many continuous upheavals pushing them to move from one state to another (Dvin, Dzoravank, Aghtamar, Arghina, Ani, Thavblour, Dzamendav, Dzovk, Hromkla, and Sis).

From 1293 to 1375 in order to reorganize the people and the community the Armenian Church became the National leader in charge of providing the people with foods, education and security. The Catholicosate settled in Sis the capital of the Armenian Kingdom in Cilicia where it remained for seven centuries. In 1441, the economy of the different Armenian states began to grow, with the increase of agricultural activities and food diversity, and all their traditional knowledge of carpet making, shoe making, wood crafting, painting, sculpting, sewing, jewelry productions. Later from 1823 to 1914 Armenia became part of the Ottoman Empire, and young Turks seize power in the Ottoman Empire. In 1915 the Armenian Genocide was initiated by the Ottoman Turkish government. The massacres lasted until 1921 when the French forces evacuated Cilicia. The rest of the Armenians were relocated in new cities leaving their homelands and found refuge mainly in Syria and Lebanon.



Fig. 01 The Origin of the Armenian Church
04

In 1930 the Catholicos established a church in Antelias. The survival of the Armenian people after the Genocide, which became the focus of the Church's concern, was soon changed into a community-building approach. In 1952, the Catholicate's summer residence and the Church of the Holy Virgin were built in Bikfaya, a rural area where one could get away of the urban setting. Later in 1960, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, a sculpture was built in Bikfaya symbolizing the pain of the Martyrs who suffered from the genocide. In 1977, the Seminary was transferred to Bikfaya, because Antelias became a heavily populated area and was no longer conducive to a quiet study. The transfer has proved to be very helpful, but the facilities there were far from adequate. The agricultural terraces grew and became rich in vineyards and apple trees. The monastery became lush and filled with an important amount of trees surrounding the buildings.

Since then they have developed their agricultural lands; first of all they planted apples, then pear and olive trees, later vineyards and vegetable crops. Since 1995, with the election of a new Catholicos (Aram I), a new period of dedicated services has begun in the history of the Armenian Church. In fact, the re-organization of the Theological Seminary, Birds' Nest (orphanage), Sanatorium (hospital), Old people's Home, the establishment of new departments on ecumenical relations, inter-religious dialogue, Christian education, youth, communication and information, Armenian studies, conferences and seminars, all indicate the growing expansion of the Catholicosate's mission of faith and the Church's active presence in the life of the Armenian community. In 2015 the renovation of the Monastery of Bikfaya was accomplished and the place officially became the Armenian Orthodox Monastery of Bikfaya.

The image is a horizontal timeline of six photographs, each with a corresponding year and description below it. The photographs show: 1) A church under construction in Antelias (1930). 2) A church with a group of people in front (1950). 3) A large sculpture on a hillside (1960). 4) A view of agricultural terraces on a hillside (1964). 5) A view of a church and surrounding buildings (1995-2014). 6) A view of a renovated monastery building (2015).

1930
Establishment of Catholicosate in Antelias

1950
Bikfaya Construction
Catholicosal Residence & the church of St. Atwatzatzin

1960
Martyr's Altar
50th Anniversary of the Genocide

1964
Growth of the Agricultural Terraces. Focused on Vineyards & Apples

1995 - 2014
New Period for the Church: Dedicated service & dynamic witness

2015
Renovation of the Armenian Orthodox Monastery of Bikfaya

The Armenians are among the world's first Christian nation and attribute their survival as a distinct people to their faith. Christianity united the nation during its long periods of foreign domination, and it enabled the Armenians to preserve their culture and national identity.

Mesrop Mashtots an Armenian linguist is best known for having restored and invented the Armenian alphabet by translating the Bible, and from that he was able to unite the people and create a nation called Armenia. Therefore, Christianity has strongly shaped the Armenian culture, with various traditional practices, such as the celebration of the different saints Gregory, Sarkis, Vartan, Neshan and many more who have accomplished heroic acts to the community.

The landscape of Armenia was filled with fertile lands which pushed the people to use them and take care of them. Therefore their foods were all based on what they could plant and harvest; and they even used herbs to cure themselves from many infection or diseases.

The pomegranate is the most significant fruit for Armenians, it is in fact the main symbol of their culture. Armenians believe that it brings fertility and wealth to the families. Many artists use its red color and shape in all their paintings, clothing, jewelry, and carpets.

The latter are all worked by the people themselves who are unanimously recognized for their skills. Armenians have always worked by hand and in groups for shoemaking, jewelry, watchmaking, and mechanics, among others.



Fig. 02 The Evolution of the Armenian Culture

After the Armenian Genocide, many things have changed for the people. In fact, the Armenians who stayed in the Middle East were able to avoid assimilation with the communities and maintain a cohesive Armenian society. However, for those who flew in the west they all became assimilated by losing their traditional practices.

In Lebanon for example, the Armenian community was able to integrate into the country while sharing the remaining memories and stories they kept with them. They have more focused on the food tradition which became very famous in the country.

Their artworks became noticeable in many houses, be it carpets, paintings or sculptures.

All the artists have designed their works around the theme of the Genocide as it was a shocking event in the history of Armenians; they produce tragic songs, paintings of the refugees expressing the pain as well as the endurance.

Finally, the language which is the basis and most important element that brings the people together, is disappearing with the generations, which I consider myself to be an example in this case since I do not speak the language as well as my parents.





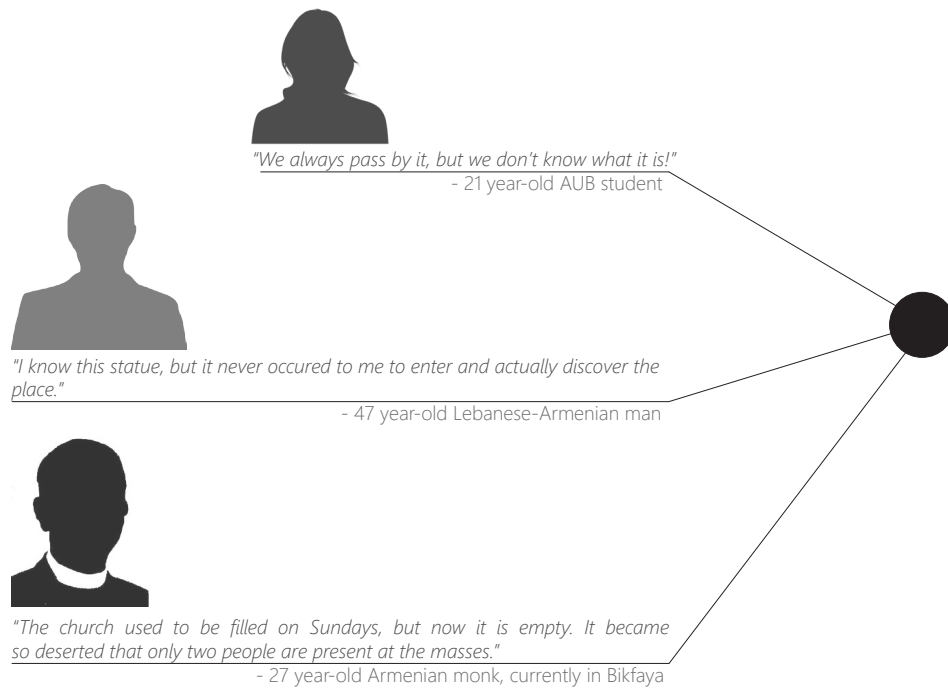


Fig. 03 Deterioration of the Monastery's Character

The Main Issue: Disconnection of the people to the Monastery

With time, the Monastery's character and ideology were fading away due to the lack of care and activities. In parallel, the Armenian diaspora is trying to integrate into the Lebanese community, because the people consider themselves to be Lebanese citizens for being born and raised in the country. In fact, Vera Yacoubian – the executive director of the Armenian National Committee of the Middle East – told me when I interviewed her, that "they cannot preserve totally their culture if they are not living in their homeland. Many things are changing, for example nowadays we do not speak the language as well as our grandparents do". The people are losing their traditions and remaining memories of the past. The Armenian churches and monasteries became less frequented and talked about. In fact, people pass by the monastery in Bikfaya without knowing what it is and what its main purpose is. This led to the main problem of the project: the disconnection of the Armenian monastery from the community.

Also, the renovation of the monastery was only focused on the buildings and the outdoor plaza, which created a barrier with the surrounding vegetation. This has led to a disconnection between the layers of the site: the built, the agricultural terraces and the forest, all are separated from each other. The visitors come only to admire the martyr's sculpture, without knowing or noticing the hidden stories and uniqueness of the site. Therefore, the place acts as a museum landscape rather than a living and interactive heritage.



Orchestral Concert, July 2015



The Martyr's Plaza during an Ordinary Day



Ceremony of the Commemoration of the Genocide, 2015

Fig. 04 Contrasting Spaces



The Chapel's Plaza during an Ordinary Day

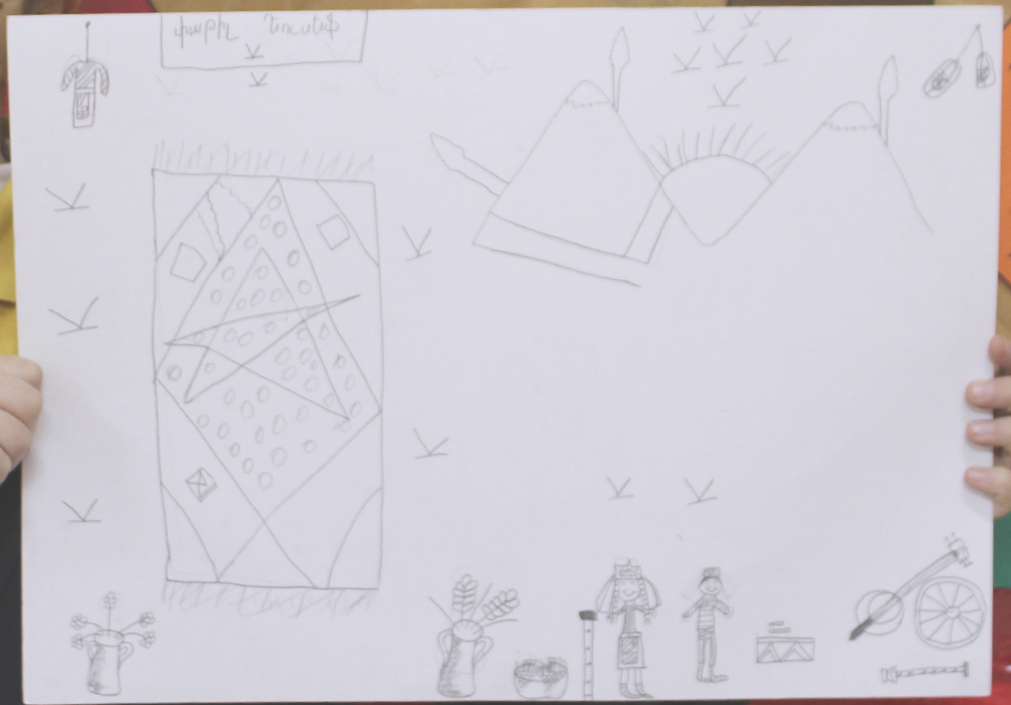
Project Statement: A Cultural Platform

In order to solve these issues, my aim is to reconnect the Armenian Orthodox Monastery to the community and redesign the site itself to make it work as an entity. The main area of intervention will be the agricultural terraces, which will act as a platform of cultural activities. The latter will revitalize the Armenian culture, and transform the space into a place where people will share their stories and cultural practices, and have a sense of belonging to that land.



Fig. 05 The Main Area of Intervention





In this section, I discuss the different articles and books that have helped me come up with a theory that supports my project statement. I have used the article *Ethnographic Landscapes* by Michael J. Evans, Alexa Robert and Peggy Nelson, a book by Jala M. Makhzoumi entitled *Landscape in the Middle East: an Inquiry*, and the first chapter of the book *Landscape Narratives: Design Practices for Telling Stories*, by Jamie Purinton and Matthew Potteiger. These references clarify the idea that people's stories and collective memories can shape a landscape into not only a cultural landscape, but an ethnographic landscape.

The Different Perspectives of a Landscape

According to the German school of geography, in the 19th Century, the meaning of landscape was equivalent to a specific space, and concerned with the physical characteristics of a geographic spatial entity. However, in the 1960's the definition has broadened and became more focused on the individual identity as well as observing the landscape as a place. Therefore, according to Jala M. Makhzoumi the interplay of 'space' and 'place' is the key to understanding the idea of landscape. 'Space' is an impersonal view of landscape focusing on the geographical characteristics, whereas 'place' is a subjective view of the landscape taking into consideration the experiential meaning of the life of the people. As an extension of this perspective, landscape is an expression of culture (Makhzoumi, 2002).

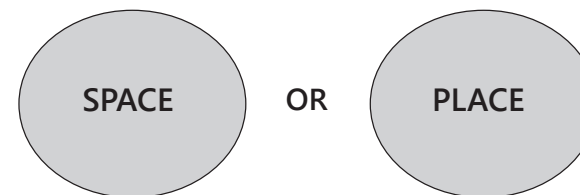


Fig. 06 The Meaning of Landscape

Ethnographic Landscapes and the Concept of 'Storytelling'

According to both cultural anthropologists Michael J. Evans and Alexa Roberts, and cultural resource specialist Peggy Nelson, it is important to think of landscape not as collections of material objects placed in geographical space, but as social and cultural constructions of the people who use them. In fact, landscapes are symbolic to the meanings and definitions people create through their physical environment. More specifically, cultural communities construct landscapes as reflections of themselves. In the process, the social, cultural, and natural environments are meshed and become part of the shared symbols and beliefs of members of the groups.

The Applied Ethnography Program have recognized the ethnographic landscapes as a category of cultural landscapes for purposes of the service wide Ethnographic Resources Inventory database, and defined that landscape to be: *"a relatively contiguous area of interrelated places which contemporary cultural groups define as meaningful, because it is inextricably and traditionally linked to their own local or regional histories, cultural identities, beliefs and behaviors."* (Evans, Roberts & Nelson, 2001)

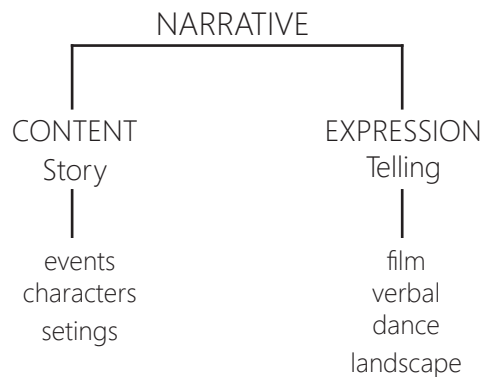


Fig. 07 The Distinction & Relationships Between Story and Narrative

Those cultural elements are called narratives which determine the significance of a given geographic space. In fact, as Purinton and Potteiger explained in their book: *"We live within worlds of stories, and we use stories to shape those worlds."* In various ways, stories "take place". For the designer, then, it is a matter of not only learning how to tell stories in landscapes, but developing a critical awareness of the processes and implications of narratives: *"whose story is told and what values and beliefs in here in the telling?"* (Purinton & Potteiger, 1998)

Case Study

A perfect example of an ethnographic landscape shaped by the Armenian diaspora in Lebanon, is Bourj Hammoud, a town located north-east of the capital Beirut.

In fact, in the 1920's, the place was a large empty plain which hosted thousands of Armenian refugees who escaped the massacres of the genocide. The Armenians settled in that land, and through their individual and collective memory, they were able to preserve and celebrate what was lost in their past.



Fig. 08 Bourj Hammoud: An Ethnographic Landscape



They overcame the misery of the refugee camps and turned the fields of Bourj Hammoud into a vibrant part of the city. Today the town took the name of "Little Armenia" for reflecting the Armenian cultural traditions of craftsmanship, gift for trading and commerce which led to the development of a vivid economy, and of a variety of artisans that produced numerous specialized goods. This small town highlights the people's pride and patriotism to their Armenian homeland; it is in that place that Armenian literature took root again, and where the culture was reborn in a way.

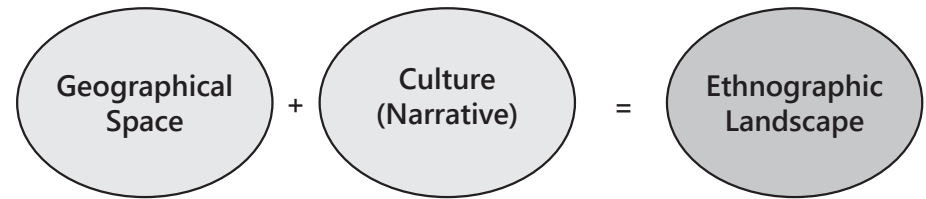


Fig. 09 Transforming a 'Space' into a 'Place'



Fig. 10 The Hidden Stories of the Armenian Community in Bourj Hammoud



The idea represented by the theory in the previous section, will allow a better understanding of how to approach the site. Inspired by the article *Ethnographic Landscapes*, which the authors have stated that the only way to identify ethnographic landscapes, is through the knowledge of the people who give them meaning in the first place. Therefore, in order to understand the disconnection between the Armenian community and the monastery – which is the main issue – an ethnographic study of both communities should be conducted. This section represents the many elements that I have closely analyzed throughout the first four months of the project.

The Armenian Diaspora in Lebanon

I have mapped the Armenian communities in Lebanon in order to locate the major and the minor communities and the few families that are left in some areas. In order to understand what the Armenian culture means to them, I have interviewed different people in those areas and spent time with them. I have asked them questions like what are the traditions they still follow, and whether Christianity is an important aspect of their culture.



Fig. 11 The Proximity of the Armenian Communities to the Site

The Surrounding of the Monastery

I have then looked at the closest town to the monastery which is the Bikfaya roundabout. This fact is an opportunity to the Monastery as many people notice it on their way to the Bikfaya town. I have studied the land uses around the site, in order to locate any opportunities and threats; in fact the surrounding of the site is mainly residential which is suitable to the place.

However with time, with the increase of urbanization the place became threatened by the many constructions that are happening around the place. The road leading to the site is not well constructed, it looks like a dirt road especially that there is an abandoned hotel in the beginning of the street which is not very welcoming or attractive; also there are no signs that indicate the location of the site.

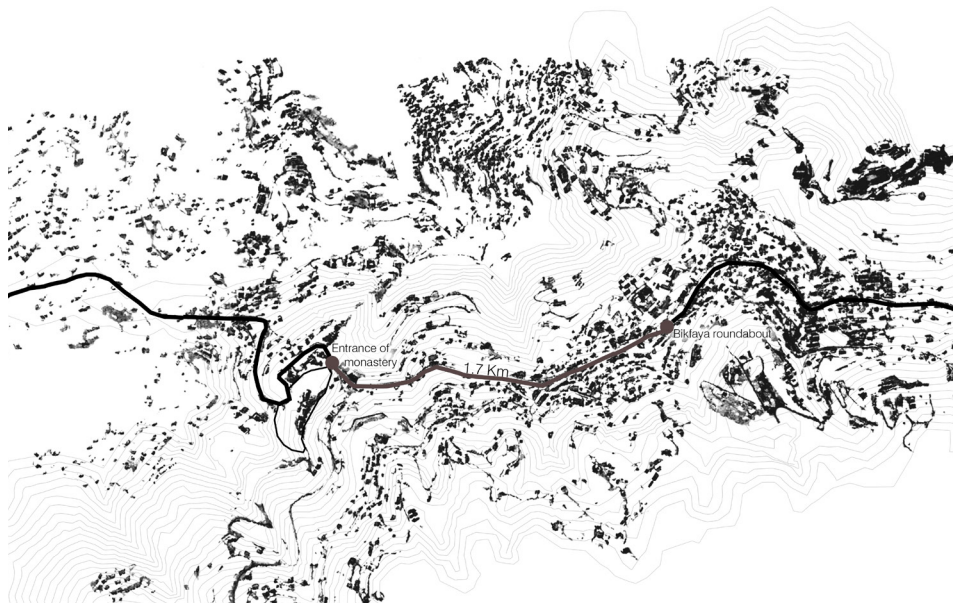


Fig. 12 Bikfaya Main Road: Connection between the Site and the Town
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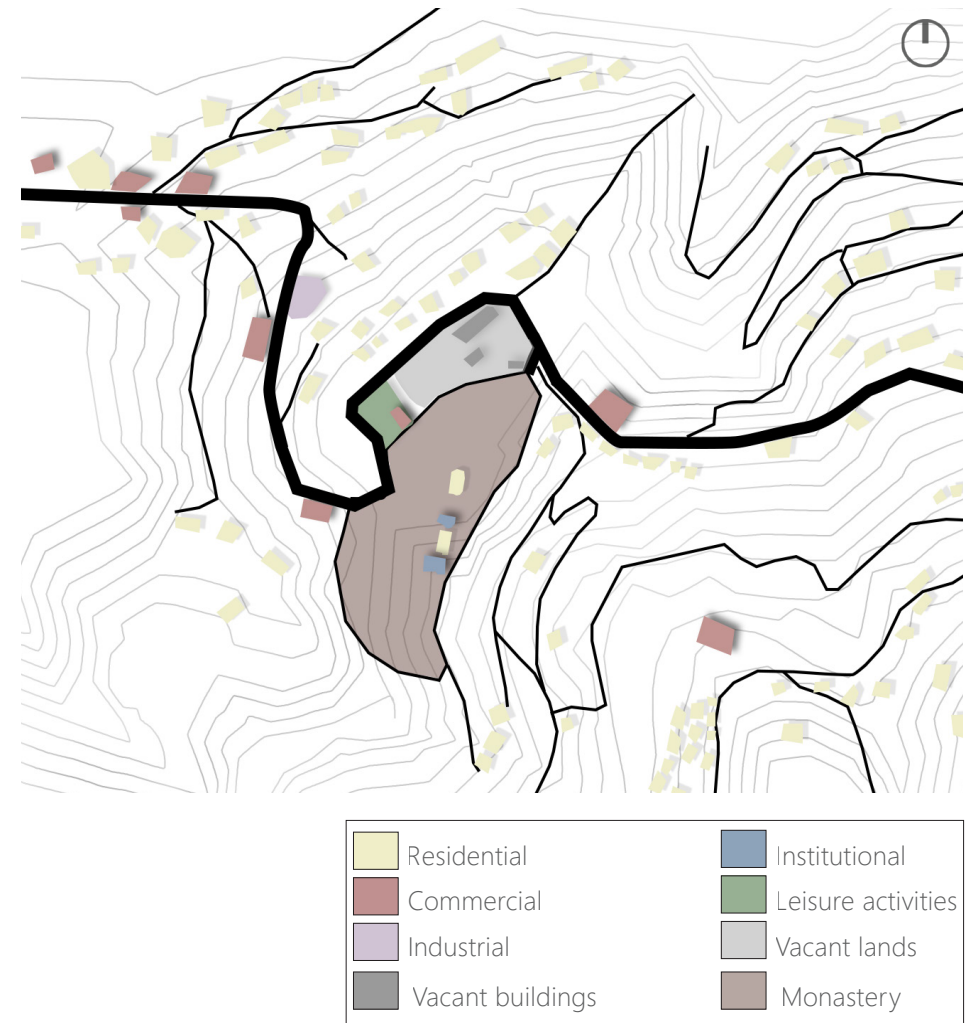


Fig. 13 Land Use: A Heavily Residential Area

The Sacred Hill

As a symbol of strength and protection to their people all the monasteries of Armenia sit on top of a hill with a wide view of the surrounding rural landscape. Similarly, the Armenian Orthodox Monastery of Bikfaya is located on a steep slope overlooking the city and the sea.



Khor Virap Monastery, Mount Ararat Plateau, Armenia



Goshavank, Nor Getik, Armenia. A Medieval Armenian Monastery (12th - 13th Century)



Armenian Orthodox Monastery of Bikfaya, Lebanon

Fig. 14 Similarities between the Armenian & the Lebanese Monastic Landscapes

However, this divided the place into different levels: entrance, buildings, forest and terraces.

The steepness of the slopes varies according to its percentage. Therefore the pedestrian movement from a level to another is not fluid and sometimes a constraint, especially that there are objects on site that act as a barrier. It is clear then, that the site is not well maintained in the vegetated area, which does not attract the people to go there.

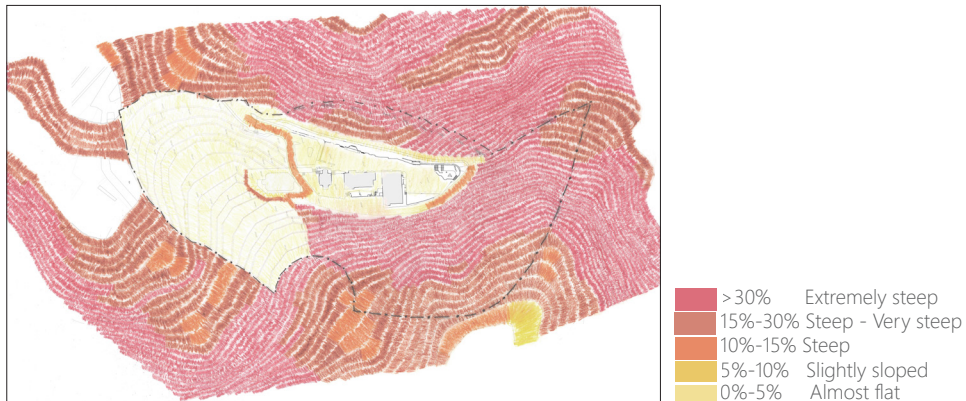


Fig. 16 Topography of the Site: Steep Hill

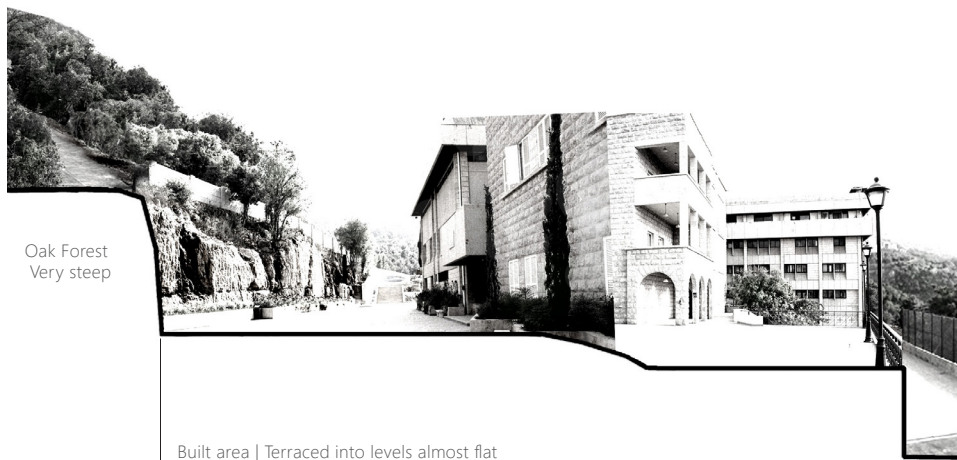


Fig. 15 The Division of the Site into Different Levels
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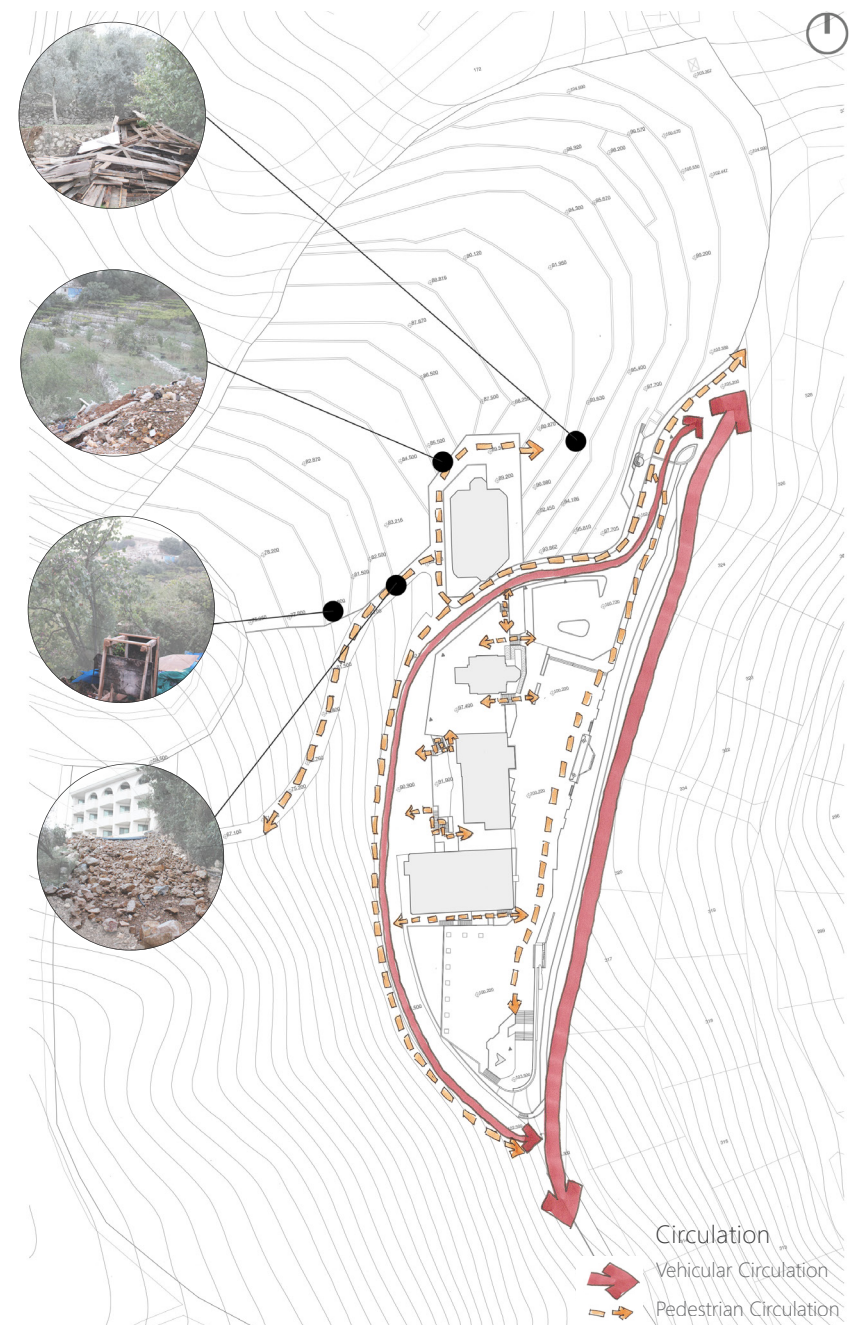
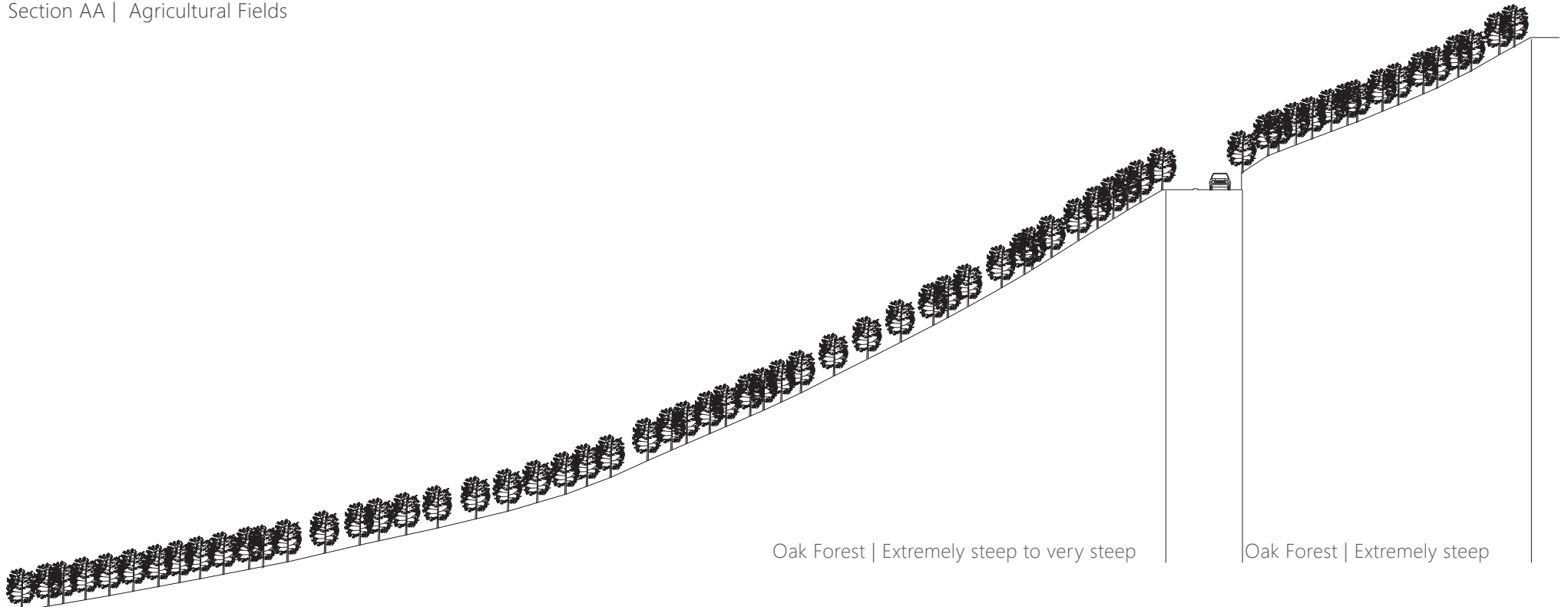


Fig. 17 Constraints: Obstacles Encountered around the Fields



Section AA | Agricultural Fields



Section BB | Forested area

Fig. 18 Constraints: Unvariable Circulation between the Different Layers of the Site

On the other hand the topography of the site acts as an opportunity, for it offers a variety of views; whether it is a view of the site, or within the site or from the site to the surrounding. Surveying the viewpoints will later on help me come up with a concept of creating a path that connects those different points, which is meant to lead the visitors through the site following a specific sequence.



Fig. 19 Opportunities: A Variety of Viewpoints

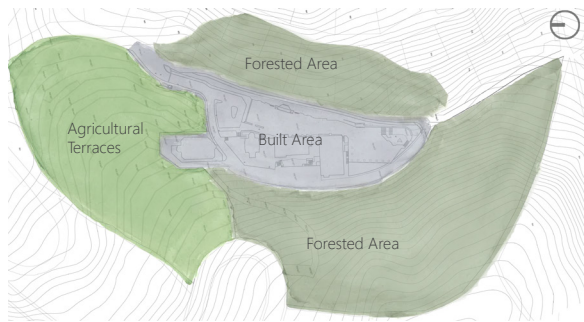


Fig. 20 Plan View of the Monastery: A Patched Landscape

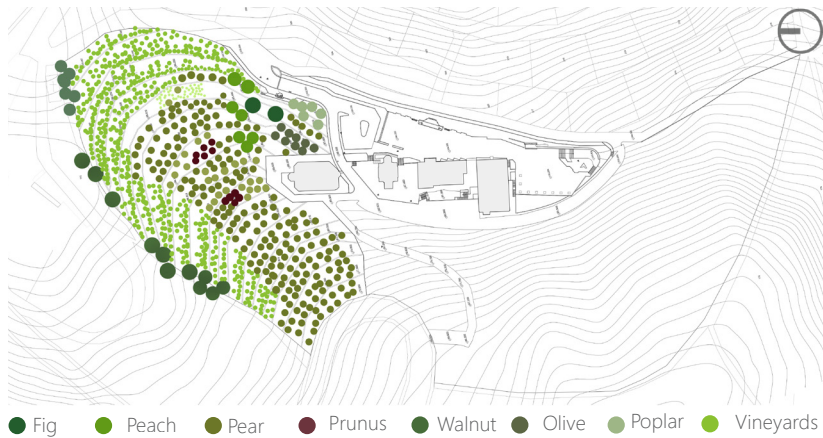


Fig. 21 Type of Trees Used in the Field: Mediterranean Vegetation

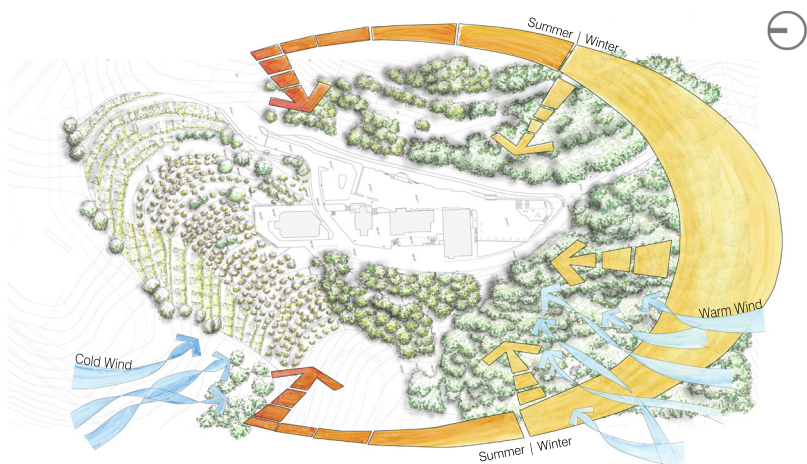


Fig. 22 Ecological Layers: Mediterranean Climate

The Three Patches of the Site

Looking at the site itself, it is composed of three different layers that do not blend together: the built area (composed of the buildings and the circulation around them), the agricultural terraces and the oak and pine forests that frame the site from the east to the south side.

The Agricultural terraces have their own character and act as a refuge to the monks, but they are not well taken care of because of the lack of staff, and the unfavorable circulation within the fields. I have looked at the environmental and ecological layers of the terraces, in order to understand what kind of production is being done and what could be added or enhanced. The main fruits and vegetables used are: apple, pear, walnut, almond, olive, grapes, fig, peach, apricot, pumpkin that they harvest to eat, and as for the flowers and lavender they use them as medicinal herbs and drink tea to cure from any headache.



Fig. 23 The Landscape Character of the Agricultural Fields

As for the oak and pine forests surrounding the buildings are not very frequented and used for it being placed on a steep slope where the circulation is not suitable. This preserved a calm and serene atmosphere to that area.

In the built area, there are a few trees planted, such as the olive, the cypress and the poplar. These trees live best in such environment, as they are mediterranean vegetation. Also there are pomegranate trees which symbolizes the Armenian landscape. Therefore, even the landscape expresses a dual identity for the Armenian diaspora in Lebanon.



Fig. 24 Two Types of Forests: Framing the Site & Extending Around



Olive



Pomegranate



Fig. 25 The Mood: A Disconnection from all the Surrounding
24



Fig. 26 Lebanese & Armenian Landscape: A Dual Identity





Fig. 27 Agricultural Fields vs. Outdoor Plazas: An Unbalanced Care



Fig. 28 The Memorial Wall & the Martyr's Sculpture: the Only Elements of Attraction

The built area after its renovation transformed the place into a museum landscape. The place became frequented and visited only at specific events: summer concerts, August 15th and sometimes Christmas events; visitors such as Lebanese Armenians and many foreigners coming from the US and Armenia interested in observing how the Catholicosate is preserved in Lebanon. Therefore there is a gap between the people coming for a holiday or a normal day. The outdoor activities are very different between the built area and the agricultural terraces, there is a higher need to take care of the fields and less for the events, but unfortunately the attention to such events is much more valued.

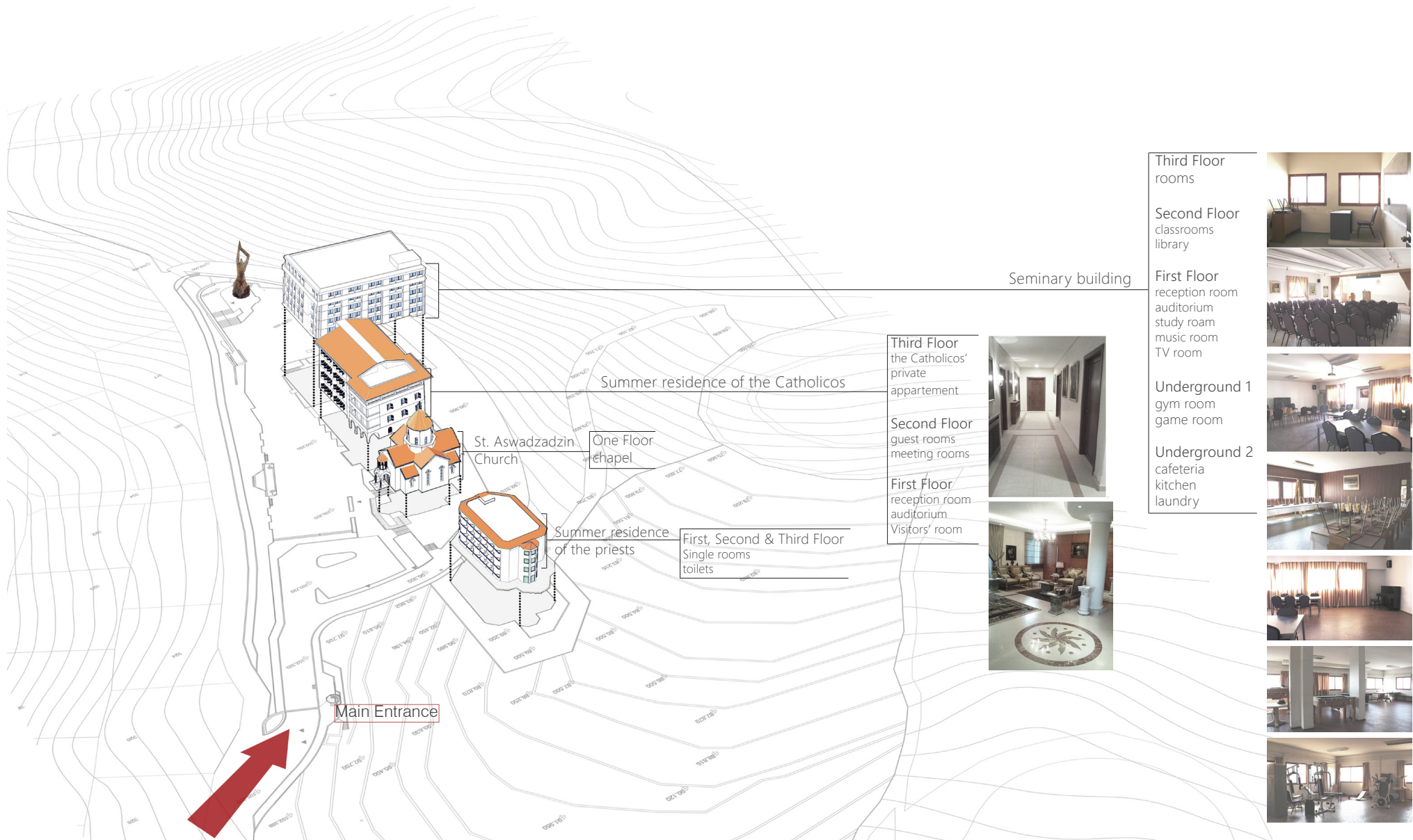


Fig. 29 Life of the Monks: Structured & Disciplined
26

The Life of the Armenian Monks

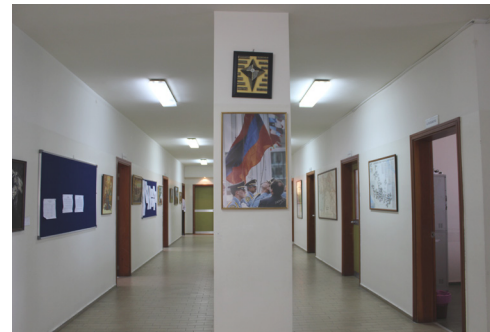
Going into the building, I have studied and recorded the different activities done by the students in the seminary. The building has different levels and each one has its own function: reception, the classes, the rooms, the cafeteria, gym, TV room... In fact, the schedule of the students is very well structured making them all well-disciplined. Their ages vary from 12 to 20 years old, they are all from Armenian families, but most of them are Syrian refugees either orphan or homeless. It is important to note that as they have lived difficult lives and endured a lot of hard times, the strict rules of the life of a monk are bearable and they do not see them as a constraint but as a relief of the pain they had to endure during their 'normal' life. The students are young, full of energy and have their personal passion: either for music, painting, gardening, sports, or even reading... they have a lot of personal stories and thoughts they want to share and would love that people come and visit them, they feel proud when people are interested in discovering the monastery, and become very happy whenever I visit them.



Music Classes



Armenian literature class



A nostalgic hallway of old Armenia



Saturday's basketball game

Conclusion

Looking at all the opportunities and threats described previously, the role of the church is not being well transmitted; the Catholicosate is not giving its full attention and care to the monastery as it should. The place has many hidden stories that it should be shared and told to the Armenian communities and any other community that would like to learn about the Armenian culture. Also, from the in depth ethnographic study of Bourj Hammoud, I was able to understand what the Armenian culture symbolizes to the people and how the memories of their lost country have shaped their lives.

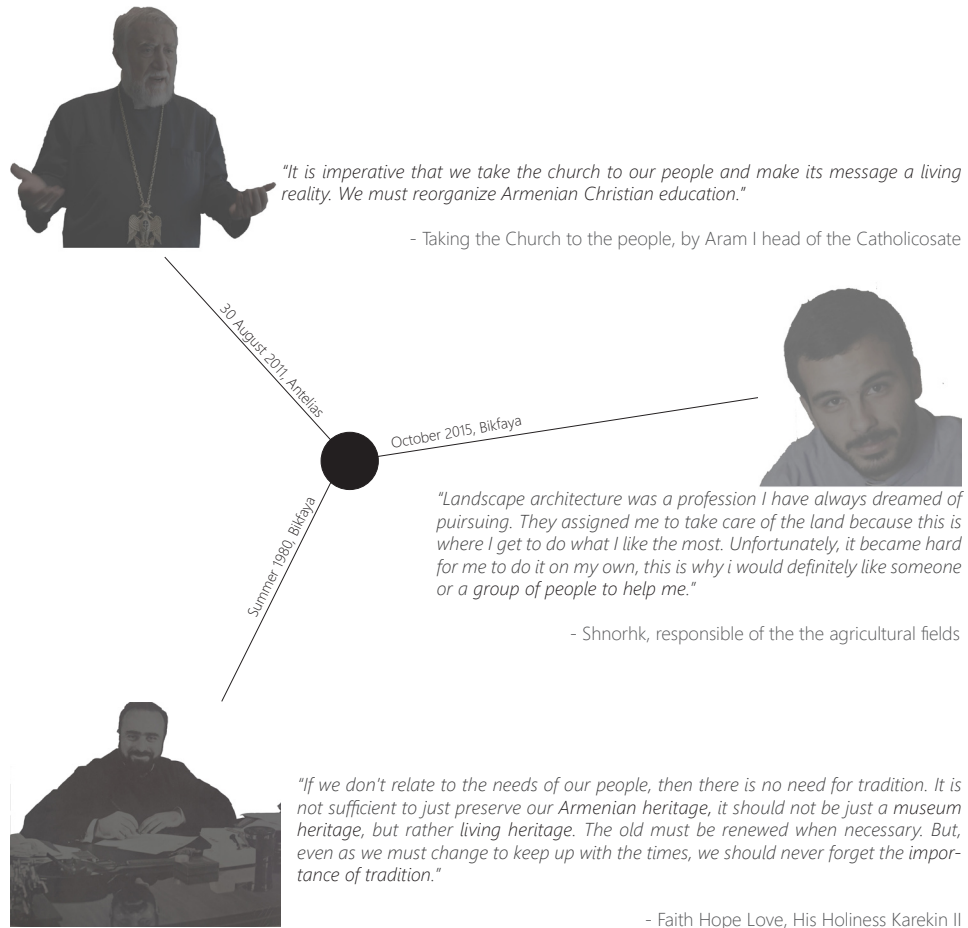


Fig. 30 The Unheard Voices of the Armenian Church

G. AYANIAN & SONS
 DANTZIGUIAN DEMCO
 ALUMINIUM DEMERJIAN
 STEEL
 H.G. YESSAYAN LENA KELEKIAN
 & Co ARTISTIC MONUMENT
 CITIZEN CLOCK ARCHITECTURE & ENTREPRISE
 RALPH MADKOUR & ASSOCIES
 MEMBERS OF THE
 ARTS CLUB OF BEIRUT METN



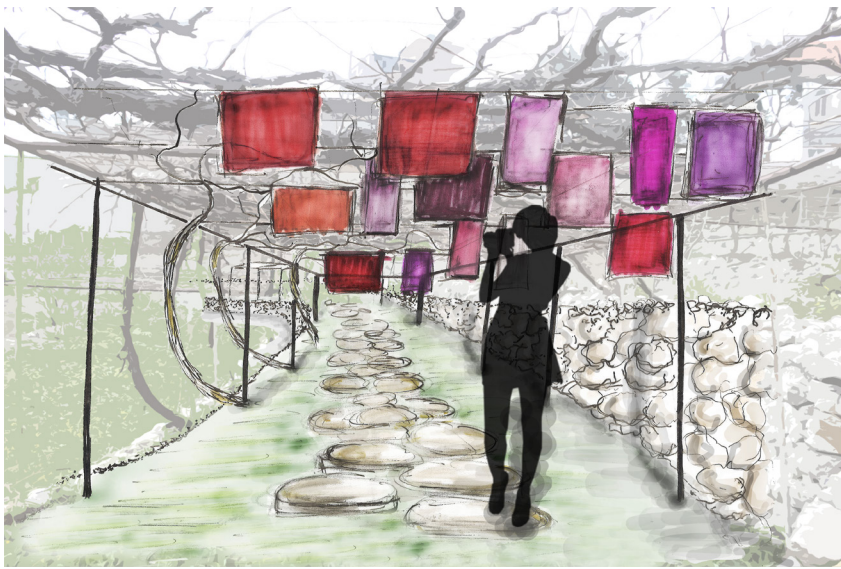
In this section of the project, I have prepared a list of programs and activities that are crucial for the reconnection of the Armenian community to the monastery.

There should be: a sign on the road to lead the visitors to the place, a good circulation connecting the hardscape and the soft scape, more vegetation to create an inviting and dynamic feeling of a monastery, create a natural barrier from the threatening urban sprawl, a parking for the visitors, an information center introducing to the visitors about the programs proposed, an area of molasses and honey production, a market place which will accommodate space for all the kiosks selling traditional foods, artworks and books, and a cemetery in the forest where the people can find their refuge and remember their loved ones.

In order to preserve the church's role and mission and connect with the Armenian community, the people should not feel their visit of the monastery as an obligation as many people consider the Sunday's prayer to be so. The place should invite the people to come and be involved in the many traditional activities, because the culture is a personal interpretation that should be shared with others in order to be sustained.

Name of Place	Area	Users	Functionality
01 Existing Built Area	7,000 m2	The students of the seminary, the head of the Catholicosate & any other visitor	The place is composed of the seminary school, a summer house for the head of the Catholicosate, a church, a martyr's plaza & a summer house for the priests and monks who would like to join
02 Forested Area	19,000 m2	The students of the seminary & the monks responsible of place	This area covered with oak and pine trees is not much used for its steep slope. However a small storage room is present where the students and the monks living there keep their dog and poultry
03 Agricultural Fields (Intervention Area)			
3.1 Proposed spaces			
- Parking	1,250 m2	The Catholicos, priests, teachers, & visitors	Provides space for 50 cars
- Information Center	40 m2	Visitors of the terraces: Armenian community & any other community	Provides the visitors with all the information needed about the program of the terraces
- 'MAYRIG' Market	150 m2	Visitors of the terraces: Armenian community & any other community	Sunday's market selling food and artworks
- 'BARDEZ' Plots	100 m2	Volunteers to help the monks	Fruit picking: apple, pear, olives & raisins; storing them to produce the molasses. Planting & harvesting vegetables in the plots
- Circulation	1,000 m2	All users	Consists of ramps and stairs, suitable for all users
- Seating Area	150 m2	All users	Large & small benches, depending on the space
3.2 Existing Agricultural Area	7,450 m2	The monks	Reunite with God
TOTAL AREA OF SITE	36,200 m2		

Fig. 31 The Program of the Monastery



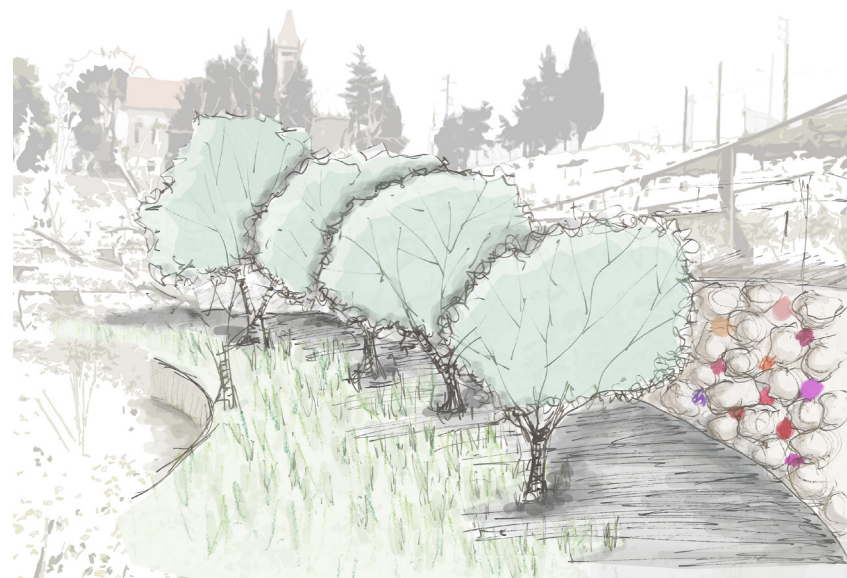
'PENANEGAR': Collective Memories



'BARDEZ': Reconnecting with God



'MAYRIG': An Engaging Process



'HOKI': Memory wall



Fig.33 'Mayrig': An Engaging Process | Communal Monastery



The 'Mayrig's' preparing the traditional foods



Case Study: The river building



Indoor/Outdoor gathering spaces

Approach

Mayrig is the diminutive form of the word Mayr, which is the Armenian word for mother. In the old Armenian culture the mother symbolizes the strong women gathering and working together by hand, whether it is the food preparation, the sewing of the clothes or the craftworks. Therefore this concept consists of engaging with the Mayrig's works in order to learn the traditional practices of the Armenian culture. The concept is a focus on communal activities that consist of all the Armenian practices: such as the food preparation, the handy crafts, the music and the literature. Those activities will occur in the agricultural fields and extend through the built area and the forested area where all these three layers will be connected with a trail taking the people through different moods of the site and different themes of the events. The monastery will have to blend with its surrounding and be open to the almost urbanized area, which will attract the viewers to come and participate in the events.

Design Elements

The design involves Sunday's markets with kiosks, and people participating in the production zones. The market zones are divided into the four main themes of the Armenian culture: the food, the music, the arts and the language.

Case Study

Grace Farms, Connecticut, U.S | OLIN landscape architects
 The design has transformed the horse farm into a spiritual and community retreat. The main focus of the project is to highlight the beauty of nature through a welcoming environment that fosters relationships, wellness, and reflection.



Fig.34 'Khatchkar': Memories and Stories Engraved | Religious Landscape

Approach

This concept's focus is to create a strong barrier from the threatening surrounding urbanization, in order to preserve the monastic atmosphere and mood of the place. The Catholicosate will reconnect with the Armenian community by providing to them a retreat and spiritual landscape. The place will include private spots for meditation in the forest, and as for the agricultural fields the religious aspect will be more highlighted and the presence of the symbolic Armenian cross stones – 'Khatchkar' in Armenian – will remind of the Armenian monastic landscapes. Also, to create a sense of attachment to the place, the visitors will be able to engrave on the stones, the names of their loved ones who have suffered from the genocide.

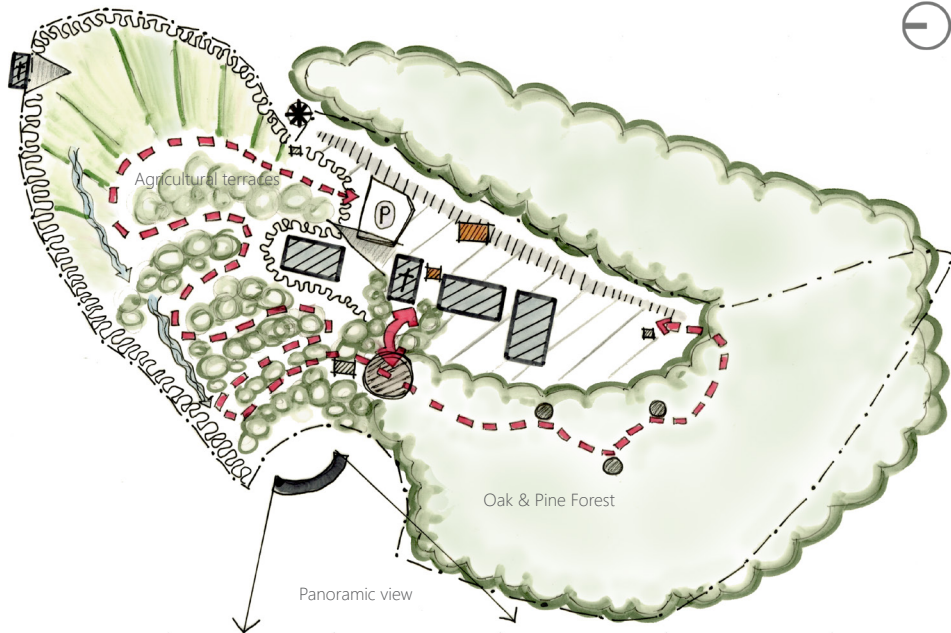
Design Elements
















The proposed concept consists of the following elements: a cemetery, stones, water features and outdoor spots for meditation.

Case Study

Arnos Vale Cemetery Bristol UK

As an initiative to restore the cemetery, Nicholas Pearson Associates' main aim was to design a landscape that provides a contemporary facility for the community to enjoy. The cemetery officially opened in spring 2010 offering venue hire, amenity value, education, open days and guided walks, conservation activities, in addition to its revival as a working cemetery.



-  Existing outdoor chapels
-  Memorial wall
-  Existing buildings
-  Existing structures
-  Proposed meditation areas
-  Proposed Cemetery
-  Buffer zone
-  Limits of site
-  Main pedestrian circulation
-  Connection between two levels
-  Water feature
-  Important viewpoint
-  Main Entrance
-  Built area
-  Proposed parking



Case Study: The Master Plan on the left, highlights the circulation of the park and its relation to the topography. As seen in the two pictures above the hidden historical monuments are connected by a clear organic trail taking the visitors through a discovery of the cemetery and its narrative.



'Khatchkar': Cross Stones

Fig.35 The Transitional Walk | Eco-Tourism

Approach

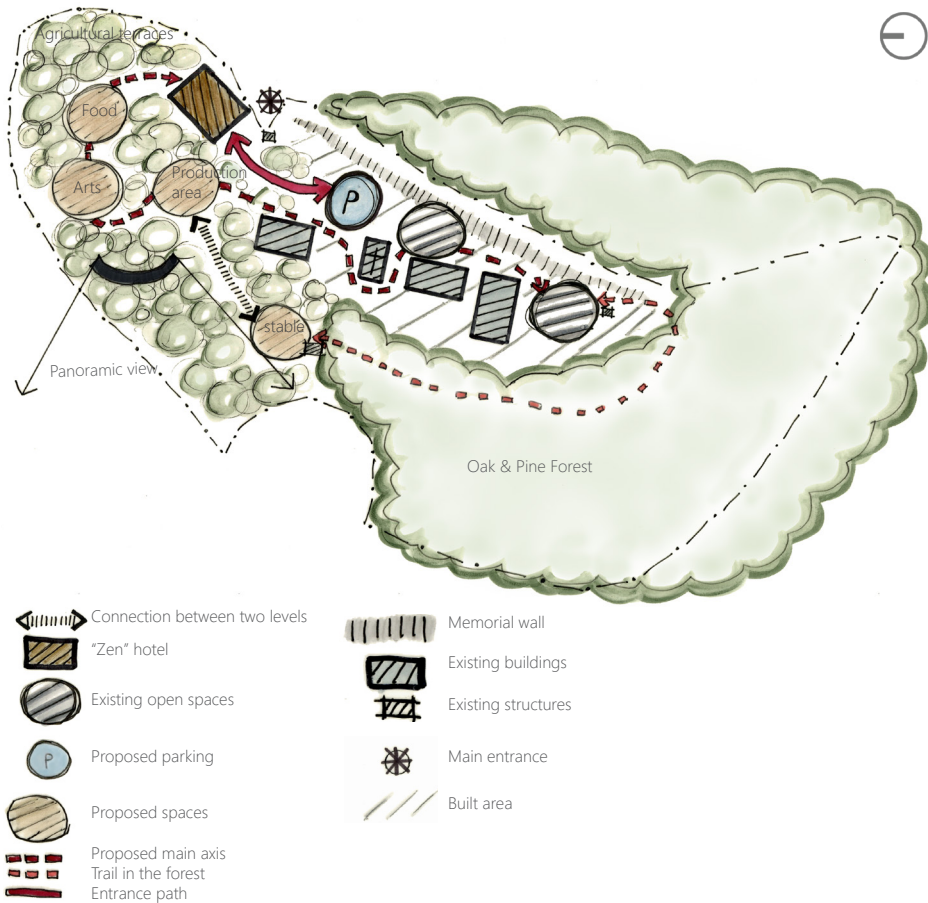
The third concept proposed is to attract and reconnect not only with the local Armenian community but the ones living abroad. In fact, the place will promote an eco-tourism program available for all people to go to the monastery and spend a couple of days of relaxation and detoxification of the polluted atmosphere in which they live in. The monastery will be composed of small private rooms, a food court, and the people will have to chance to participate in the maintenance and care of the fields. A trail will take the people through the monastery leading the people to discover the different layers of the place while telling them the complete story of the Armenian culture. The agricultural fields will symbolize the life with all the activities it will promote, the forest will represent death for its spiritual and Zen atmosphere, and as for the built it highlights the strength and the rebirth of the Armenian community with the presence of the Martyr's sculpture and the memorial wall.

Design Elements

The main element of this concept is the trail for it provides the visitors a tour through all the layers of the Monastery: the traditional activities in the agricultural fields, to the tombs in the forest, to finally arrive to the Martyr's Plaza.

Case Study

The eco-tourism program in this domain has attracted many people from different countries for the diverse activities and events it proposes. The place focuses on the protection and development of the natural and cultural heritage of Lebanon.



Case Study: Taanayel domain, Bekaa, Lebanon

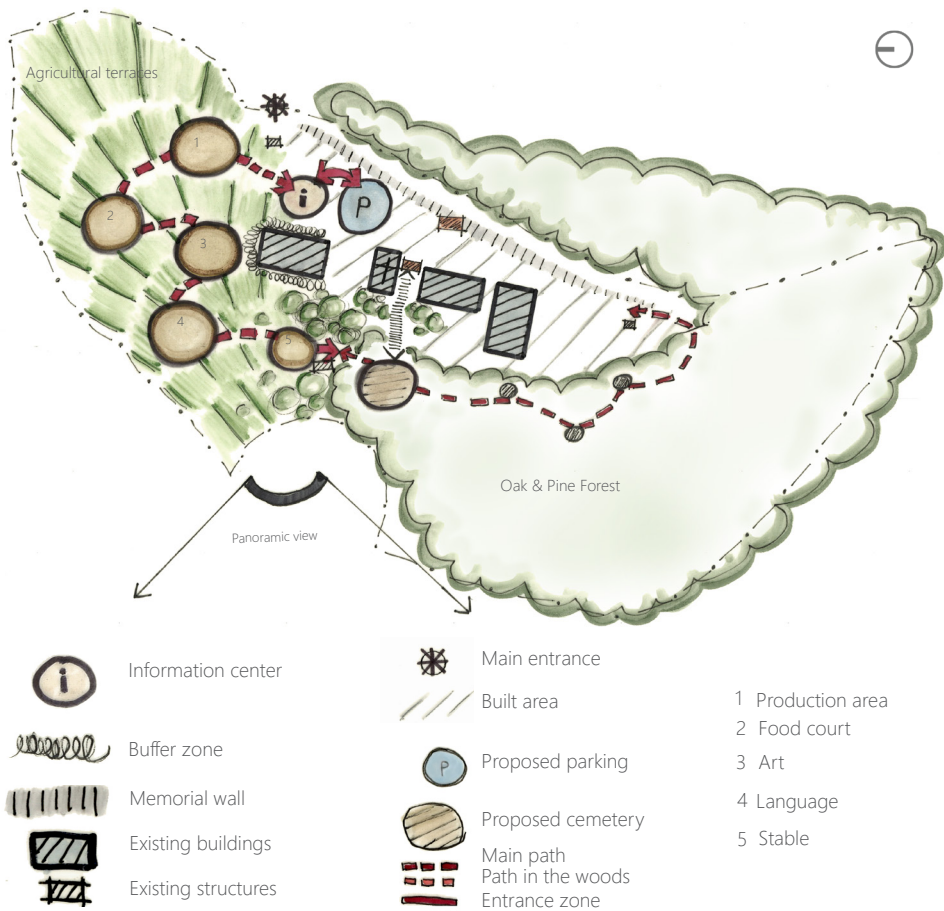


Fig.36 The Armenian Orthodox Monastery: Discovering the Hidden Stories

Approach

The final concept combines many elements of the different concepts proposed previously. In fact, it consists of highlighting the different layers of the site and their different levels; starting at the agricultural fields which will represent life with all the activities and interactions between the visitors and the monks. People will learn from the monks' way of taking care of the fields and give their own input at the same time. Anyone will be able to share their personal way of practicing the Armenian culture, from the "mayrig" (women) preparing the food together, to the talented artists sharing their stories through their paintings, sculptors, jewelry, costumes, music and dances. Going to the forest at a lower level the atmosphere represents a calmer atmosphere and will symbolize death for the presence of the cemetery. In fact, this area highlights the respect and importance Armenian traditions have towards the deceased people, for it being a period of life. Arriving at the highest point of the monastery, the sculpture of the Martyrs symbolizes hope, rebirth and strength of the Armenian diaspora. Finally, I would like to cite a traditional ending of Armenian fairy tales: "Three pomegranates fell down from heaven: One for the story teller, one for the listener, and one for the whole world."

Design Elements

The agricultural fields will contain a food court, traditional production spaces, a language zone for books and an artworks' market (music, jewelry, paintings, and sculpture). As for the forest, a more enclosed and serene place will provide the visitors with a cemetery and small meditation spots.



Activities in the fields

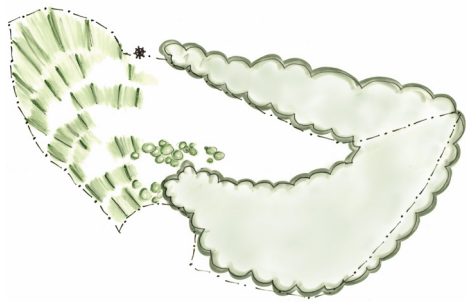


Religious trail in the forest

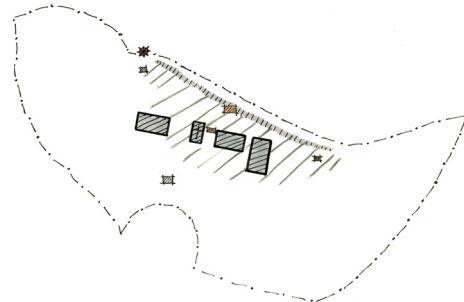
Case Study

Franciscan Garden Guild, Washington DC, US

The Franciscan Monastery consists of a church, Mount Saint Sepulchre and of several gardens that are populated with tombs, sculptures, grottos, altars, and a chapel. The mission of the monastery is to preserve and promote the gardens to provide visitors and pilgrims with a garden sanctuary where they can seek, find and unite with the Creator.



02 Forested & 3.2 Existing agricultural area



01 Existing built area



3.1 Proposed spaces



3.1 Proposed spaces: Circulation

Fig. 37 Proposed Spaces



Engaging with the Community | Case Study



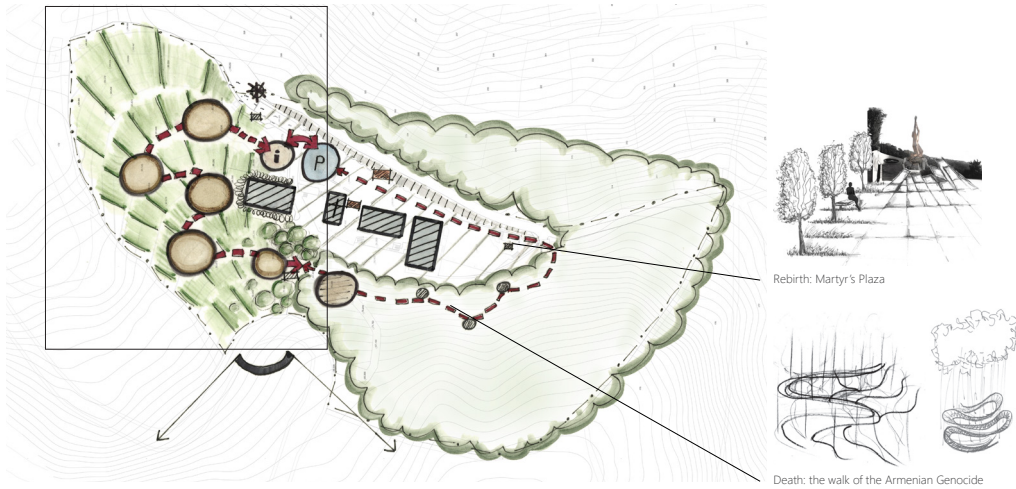
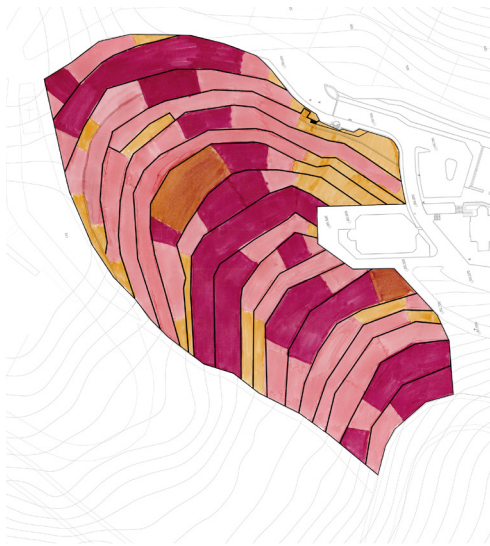
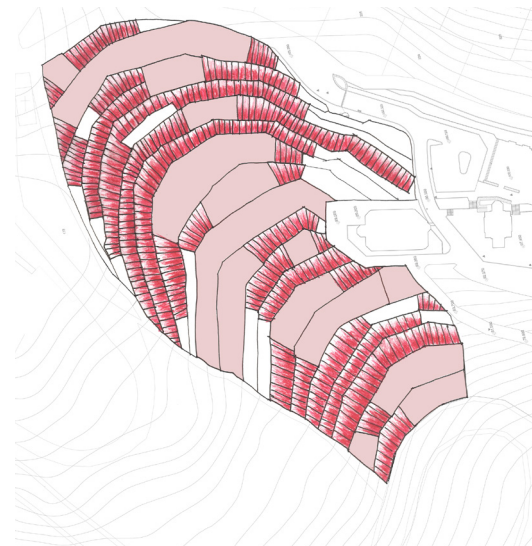


Fig.38 Concept Diagram | The Story of the Armenian Culture through the Cycle of Life



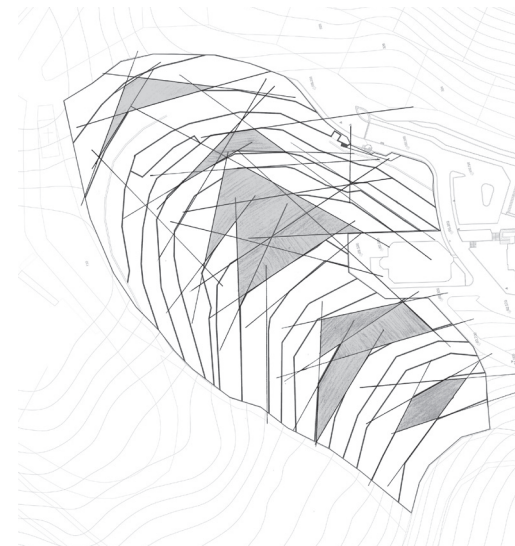
Analysis | Width of terraces

Width	Potential usages
[0-5m]	No intervention & narrow paths
[5-10m]	Transition zones & secluded areas
[10-15m]	Market place, open gathering spaces, harvesting & production area
[15-20m]	

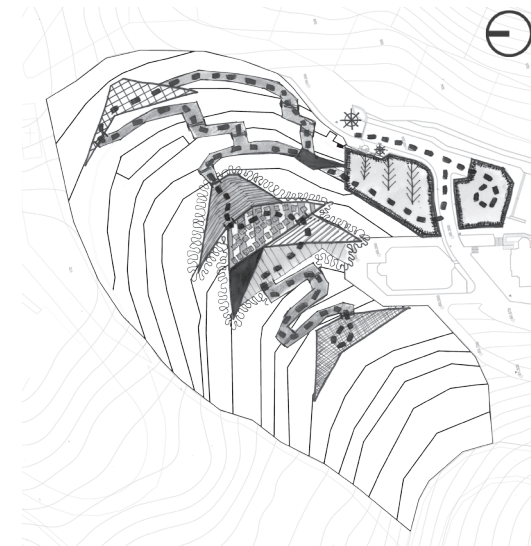


Opportunities: Identifying the areas

- Potential spaces of intervention
- Transition zones



Experiencing the geometry



Zoning of Spaces | A Balanced Division

- Harvesting Area
- Vineyards
- Production Area
- The wall of memories
- Market place

Fig.39 Analysis of the Terraces
40

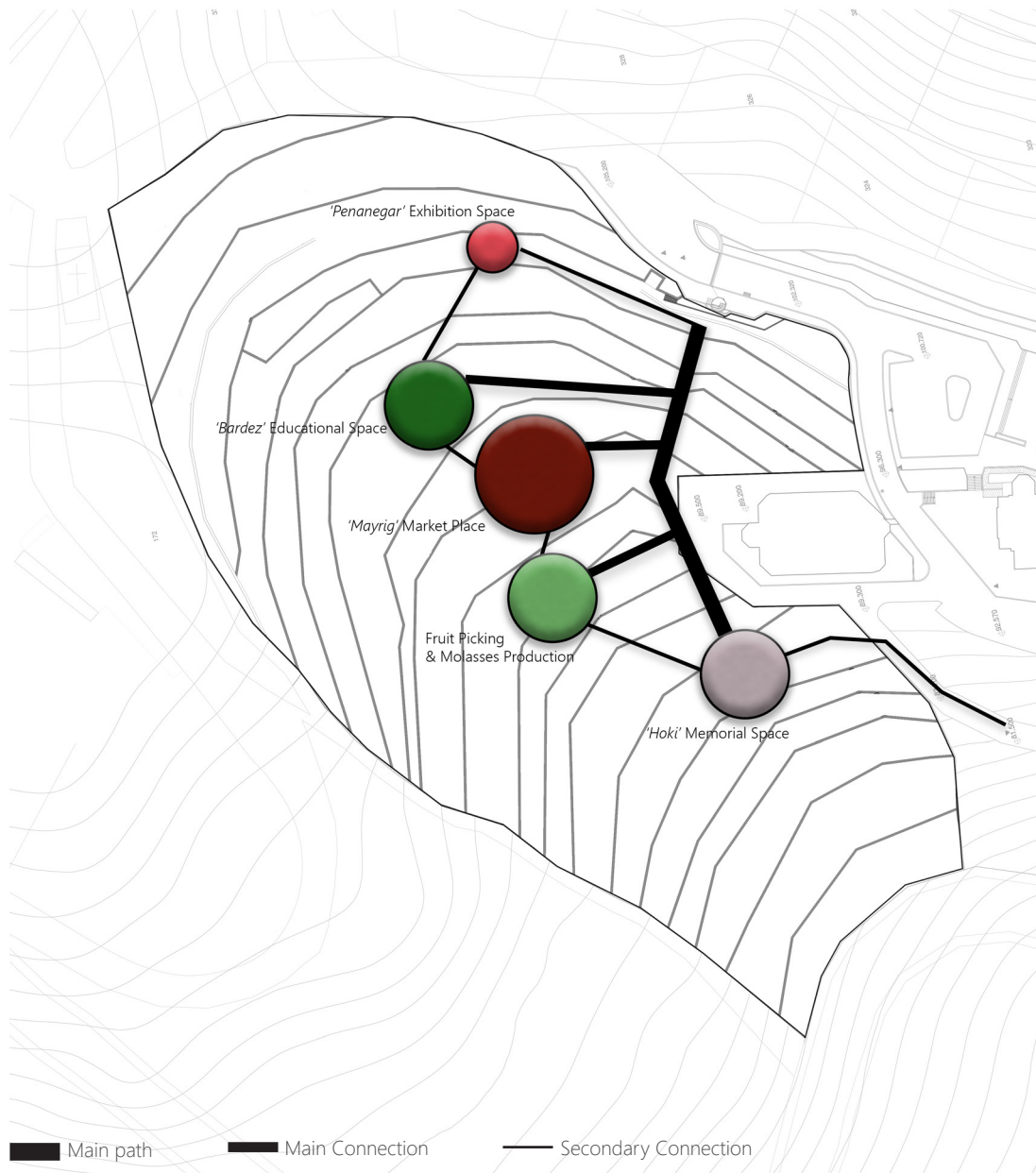


Fig.40 Concept Diagram | Area of Intervention

Site Details

The overall site is 36,200 m² composed of three different layers: the terraces the forest and the built area. The project is restricted to the site itself, more specifically the main area of intervention will be the agricultural terraces.

Design Approach

The design approach is to work with the existing forms. The lines of the terraces helped shape the paths between them for they smoothly move around.

Process

After studying the existing width of the terraces, it has been possible to associate the adequate terrace with the proposed activity. Going through different scenarios of placing the spaces in their right places, whether they should all be centered in the middle of the terraces or scattered all over. I have come up with a balanced conclusion which is to create a central and dynamic space separated from two secluded and calm activities.



The site will work as an ethnographic landscape where individual and collective memories will be shared among the visitors who will engage in the process. A list of cultural programs and traditional activities that are crucial for the reconnection of the Armenian community to the monastery will be proposed. Therefore, the role of the Armenian Church will successfully be re-established; organizing the community and strengthening the preservation of the Armenian culture.

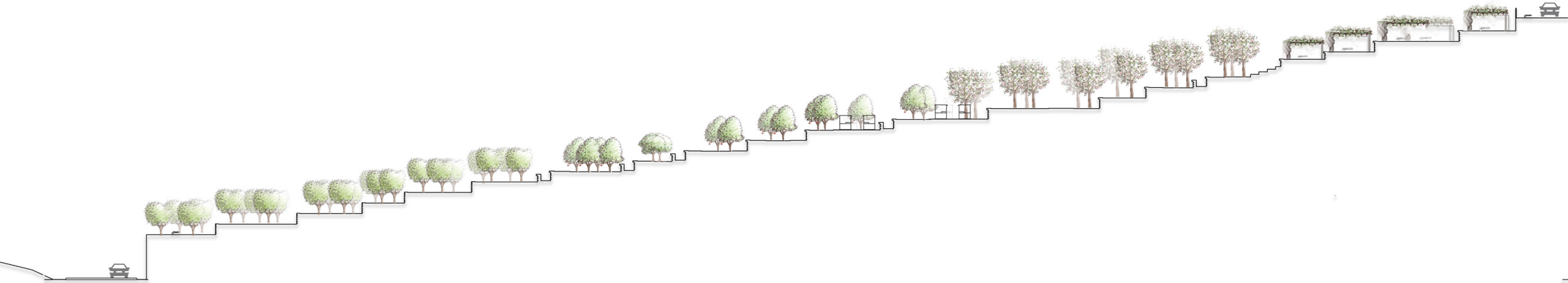
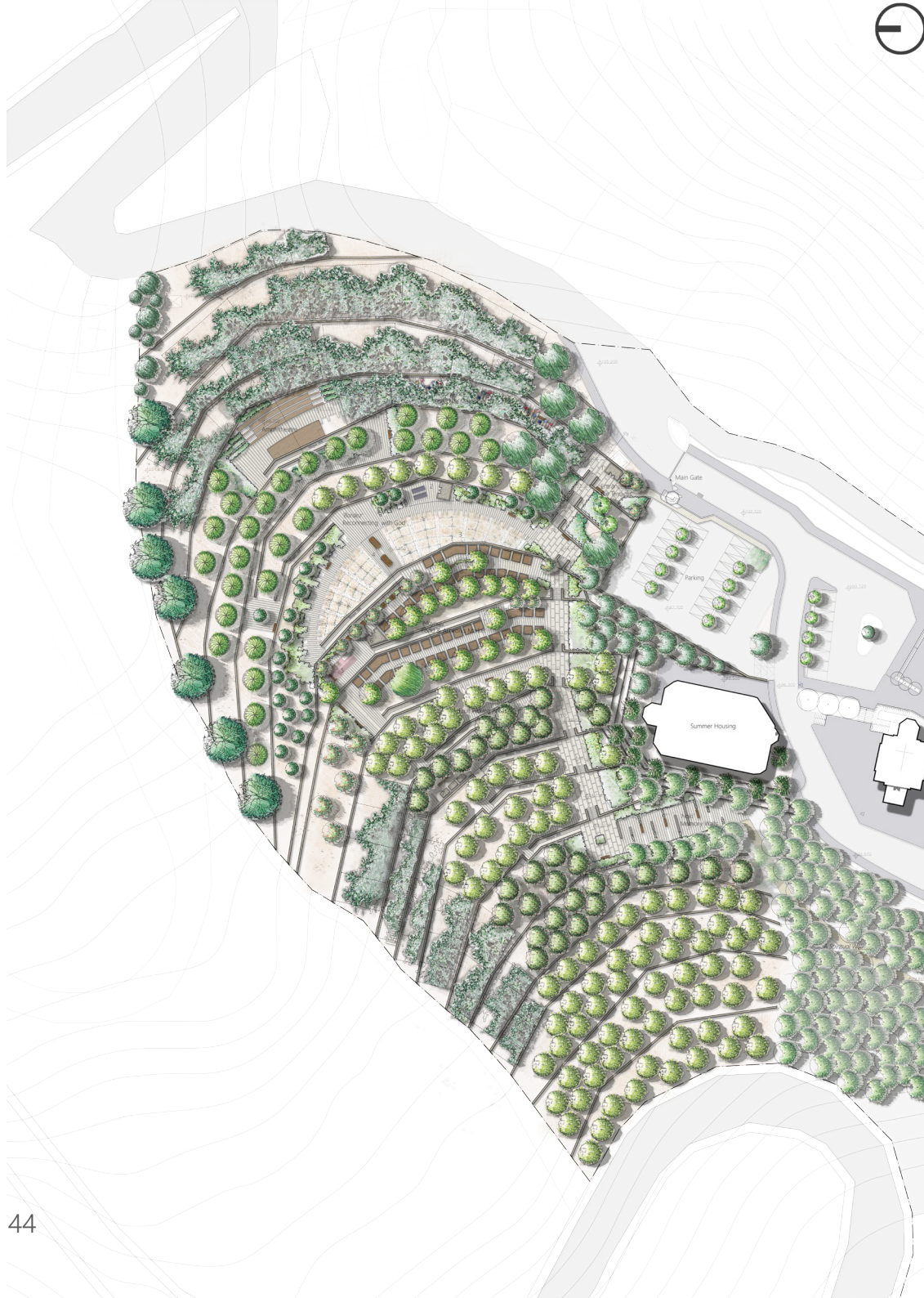


Fig.42 Section AA | Across the whole Site

Fig.41 Master Plan



The Journey in the Terraces

The journey starts with an optional walk under the vineyards where an exhibition of images and photography will be held. This memorial walk ends with an open amphitheater where many concerts and outdoor prayers can occur.

The main and dynamic spaces are the central spaces, composed of markets of food and artworks of the Armenians, harvesting plots for crops and fruit picking orchards leading to the production of grape molasses.

The ending of the journey narrates the different stories of the Armenians who have survived or not the genocide. From that the visitors will be able to continue to the spiritual walk in the forest.



Fig.44 Section BB | The Entrance to the Terraces



Fig.45 Section CC | The Amphitheater

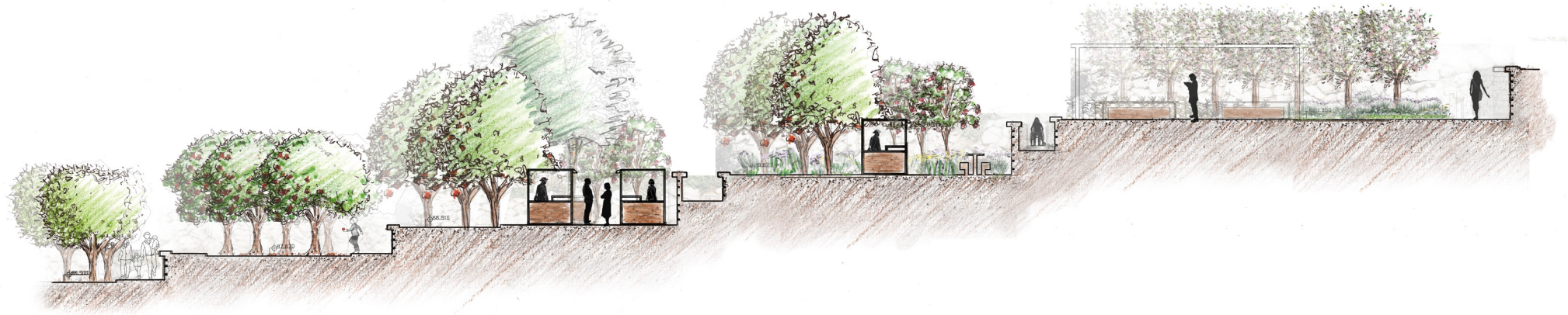


Fig.46 Section DD | The Central Space



Fig.47 Section EE | The Final Experience in the Terraces

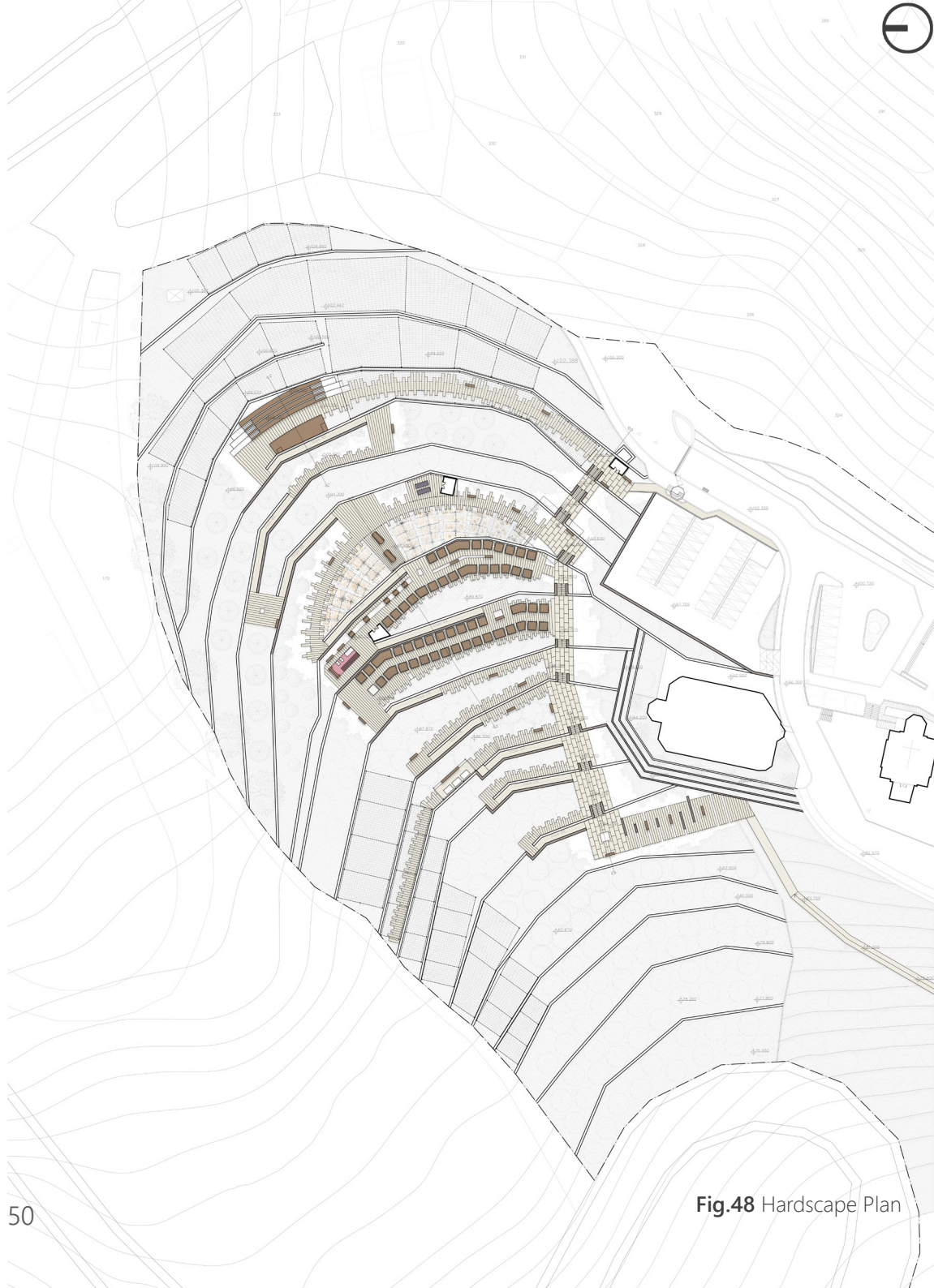






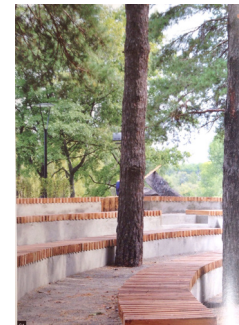


Fig.48 Hardscape Plan

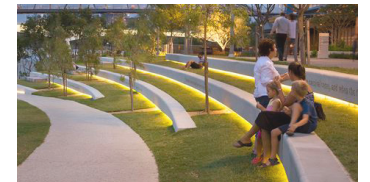
Fig.49 Hardscape Palette

		
Structures Rough surface Limestone	Ground paving Smooth surface Limestone	Tables, Benches & Kiosk Rough wood
		
Harvesting Plots Clayey topsoil	Working area table Metal	Playground material Red fake rubber

Inspiration Images



Wooden amphitheater



Smooth lighting design



Wooden table & bench



Use of 3 main colors and materials:
Green, white & brown



Integrated stairs

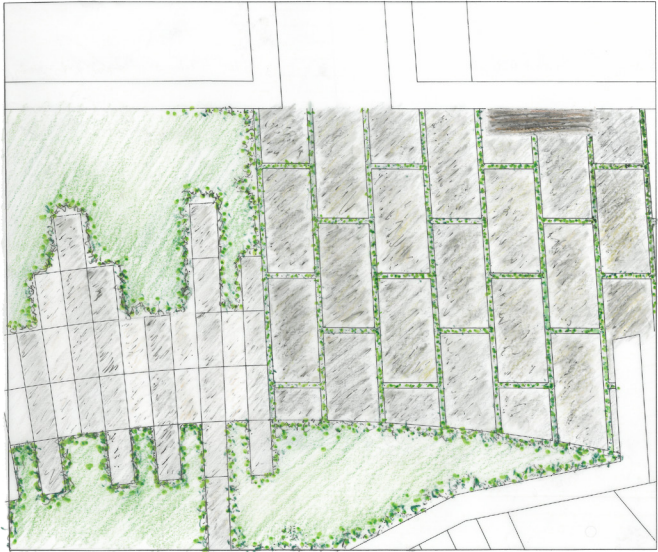


Fig.50 Plan of paving pattern | Limestone



Fig.51 Old VS. New Wall

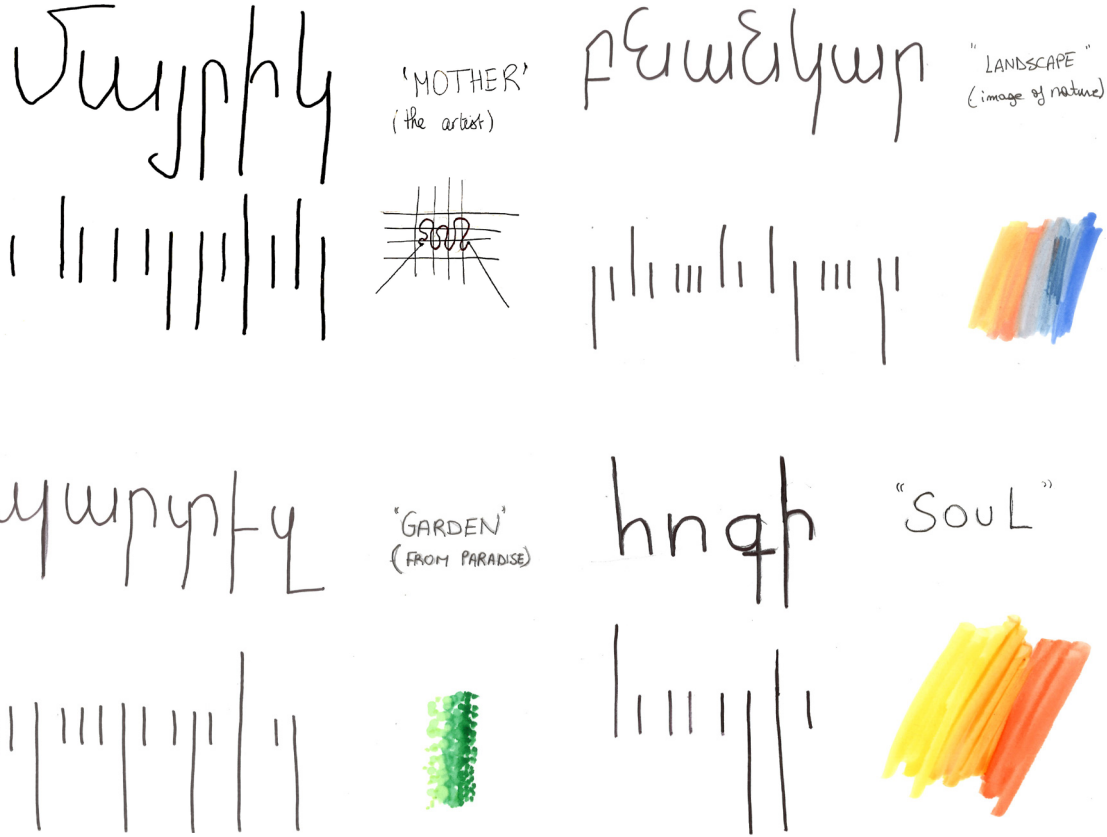















Fig.52 Letters as Paving Patterns



Trees legend

-  *Cupressus sempervirens*
-  *Juglans regia*
-  *Ficus Carica*
-  *Prunus persica*
-  *Prunus dulcis*
-  *Prunus armeniaca*
-  *Populus alba*
-  *Punica granatum*
-  *Pyrus communis*
-  *Malus domestica*
-  *Pinus pinea*
-  *Olea europaea*
-  *Quercus ilex*

Ground Covers | Color Themes




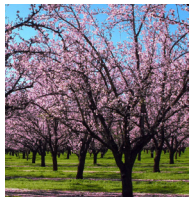
	'Vivid'
	'Light'
	'Dark monochrome'

Fig.53 Softscape Plan

Fig.54 Trees Palette | Fruit Trees



Prunus armeniaca
Apricot Tree
Height 3-5m/ Spread 3-6m



Prunus dulcis
Almond Tree
Height 2-3m/ Spread 3-4m



Prunus persica
Peach Tree
Height 3-5m/ Spread 5-7m



Pyrus communis
Pear Tree
Height 3-5m/ Spread 3-6m



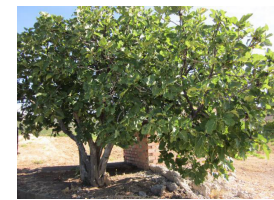
Malus domestica
Apple Tree
Height 3-4m/ Spread 3-4m



Punica granatum
Pomegranate Tree
Height 3-4m/ Spread 3-4m



Pinus pinea
Pine Tree
Height 2-3m/ Spread 3-4m



Ficus Carica
Fig Tree
Height 5-6m/ Spread 5-10m



Olea europaea
Olive Tree
Height 2-3m/ Spread 3-5m



Juglans regia
Walnut Tree
Height 20-25/ Spread 10-15m



Populus alba
Poplar Tree
Height 10-20m/ Spread 3-4m



Quercus ilex
Oak Tree
Height 5-6m/ Spread 5-8m



Vitis vinifera
Vines
Height on trellis/ Spread 2-3m

Fig.55 Ground covers palette | Medicinal Herbs



Nigella sativa
Black cumin
Height 30cm (max)



Pimpinella anisum
Anise
Height 30cm-1m



Lavendula officinalis
Lavender
Height 30-40cm



Rosmarinus officinalis
Rosmary
Height 30cm-1m



Matricaria chamomilla
Chamomille
Height 30-40cm



Cymbopogon citratus
Lemon grass
Height 30-40cm



Thymus vulgaris
Thyme
Height 20cm



Origanum syriacum
Zaatar
Height 30cm-1m

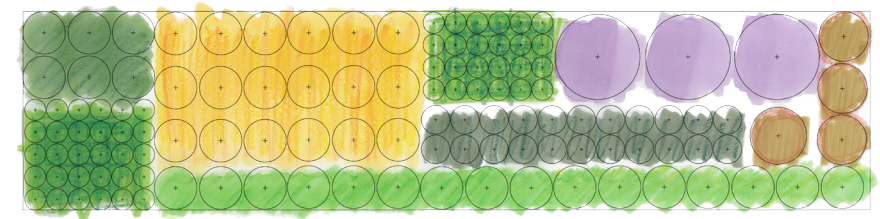
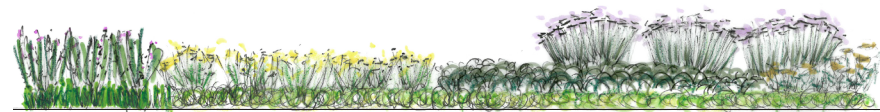


Fig.56 Plan & Elevation | Light Theme





A Platform of Living Heritage

The main trail all along the site, will unite the different layers creating a cycle through life. Blending the forest, the built area and the agricultural terraces all together will highlight their value and their importance in relation to history.

More specifically, the terraces will comprise of all the previously mentioned activities that will attract the Armenian community mainly, and any other community that would like to discover the stories of the Armenians. Therefore, the place will become a platform of living heritage instead of a museum heritage, that will reconnect with its community in order to preserve it.

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