



# News Beyond Borders

MAPPING FOR MAISON DES FEMMES D'OULED MERZOUG MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2019

## Global Citizenship



ROB CUYVERS

The world faces environmental, social, economic and political challenges. These must be addressed at all levels through a global lens. Sustainable Development, made explicit by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and Global Citizenship are essential. Global Citizenship refers to a broad, culturally and environmentally inclusive worldview that accepts the fundamental interconnectedness of all things. Borders become irrelevant and solutions to today's challenges go beyond a narrow 'here-and-now' vision.

“to support the  
development  
of international  
competences”

Global Citizenship urges aspects of social responsibility, interculturalism and global engagement. Creating awareness, transmitting knowledge and enabling experiences with respect to these aspects is the underlying purpose of the postgraduate certificate 'Building Beyond Borders'. As the postgraduate addresses Global Citizenship from the perspective of the sociotechnical system of architecture and the construction industry, its primary purpose is to support the development of international competences needed to build beyond borders as a Global Citizen.

By its practice-oriented set-up and approach backed by theory and science 'Building Beyond Borders' offers a unique possibility to contribute, now and later, to the SDGs and to enhance competences in Global Citizenship. In 'Building Beyond Borders', participants really explore and practice sustainable architecture abroad.



Portait of a women in front of a earthen wall in the village of Ouled-Merzoug

NICOLAS COECKELBERGHS FOR BC ARCHITECTS & STUDIES

## A Postgraduate program called Building Beyond Borders

The postgraduate certificate 'Building Beyond Borders' is a project-based experiential programme committed to education and research on sustainable architectural processes and solutions worldwide. The aspirations of the programme are to strengthen the capacity of students and professionals in the building industry, and to support/push innovation in sustainable building in its broadest scope (Planet, People, Prosperity, Politics) for the 'here-and-now' and for the 'later-and-elsewhere'.

“a living-Lab  
set-up in which  
experiences and  
experiments are  
key”

'Building Beyond Borders' is put into practice by studying, designing and building in/for unknown/unfamiliar urban and natural environments, different climatic and geographic zones or societies with other cultures, traditions and habits, and various sociotechnical architecture and

building industries. Designing and building out of the comfort zone requires to explore other processes and new ways of building. The programme produces highly sustainable projects. Each year, a local community service project that makes a big difference for a community at large is designed and built. This project is the leitmotif of the academic programme.

The methodology used is a living lab set-up in which 'out-of-the-box' thinking experiments as well as real-life experiences, experiments and realizations are key. This way, the programme distinguishes itself from traditional education and everyday design and build processes, and facilitates new approaches and processes towards innovative architectural solutions.

Backed by theoretical insights and case studies, all aspects of the design and construction process are carried out by participants over the course of a full academic year. Participants explore, experiment, and design and build while collaborating with local communities, multidisciplinary experts and building professionals. In doing



MARIE MOENS FOR BC ARCHITECTS & STUDIES

View from the future site of the women's house

so, participants conceive and realize built works of architecture which are exemplary, and which contribute to science and society.

The postgraduate certificate frames the opportunity to empower and enrich skills for developing sustainable architecture by providing a working structure, an international network and real-life Design/Build projects. The educational programme contributes to practice and science by developing innovative building solutions addressing sustainability, explicitly for projects abroad and implicitly for

projects at home.

The faculty of Architecture and Arts of Hasselt University offers this comprehensive programme to graduated students and professionals – anyone who wants to have the experience and knowledge to design and build sustainable architecture from the ground up, within a given context with its challenges and opportunities.

*Dr. Ir. Elke Knapen, academic coordinator; Dr. Arch. Bart Janssens, academic coordinator*

## A house for women



BY BC ARCHITECTS & STUDIES

The state of the current economy has left many young architects wondering if what they learned in modern education is relevant and useful in today's world. In a global perspective, around 90% of the world's population cannot afford an architect, who is trained to design from behind his computer and prescribe mass-produced materials. The pre-industrialized concept of a master-builder might just come back. It reflects the idea of an integral approach to urban design and architecture, embedded in local context, local materials and local craftsmanship. Through contemporary ways of sharing time, knowledge and effort in between cultures, the master-builder becomes a common place of designing and building, on site and through Internet, in between cultures. This commonplace is materialized in the design & build studio Building Beyond Borders: "A HOUSE FOR THE WOMEN OF OULED MERZOUG".

In a global  
perspective,  
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The design & build studio explores with the students this integrated approach. The project is located in Morocco and is a real project concerning a real demand. The project is given to the design & build studio by the "association des Femmes d'Ouled Merzoug" and is funded and developed with "BC architects & studies".

Moreover, the intention is to design a sustainable house for the women of Ouled Merzoug so that they can develop in a sustainable way local economies beneficial for the village. The design & build studio research the urban and spatial fabric and organizations, analyse the cultural context, develop a sustainable vision for the house of the women in a feasible high-quality architectural project and ultimately build the project in close collaboration with the local community.



# Prelude

@ UHasselt

## Talking with the students



BINIAM HAILU

Once the Building Beyond Borders (BBB) program kicked off on September 19th of 2018, every following Wednesday was packed with various relevant preparatory lectures and activities. Prior to the departure week of the field study prospection to Ouled Merzoug, Morocco, students were also presented with various relevant inputs. I have tried to speak with most students and noted their reflection on the program and the preparatory tasks we undertook;

### What was your motivation to join the program?

I was particularly interested in the combination of designing and being closely involved with the building process. I wanted to gain more knowledge about sustainable architecture with a hands-on approach. All this in combination with an extended experience abroad made me want to join the program.

It’s been years that I planned to take a course related to natural materials, design/build and cooperation, and when I finally found BBB and had a look at the program I realized that it was exactly what I was looking for and I couldn’t miss it.

On paper the program inspired me. The integration between community, sustainability and ecological building processes was of great interest. I was also keen in gaining more understanding of the architecture design process.

My goal was to be able one day to go abroad and attend a post degree course/ master and learn everything about sustainable design processes involving people, natural materials and techniques, and working practically on a

construction site to apply the learning by doing method. After two years of researches I came through the BBB program on February 2018, which for the first time seemed to be what I had been looking for years.

The last couple of years I have been looking for opportunities to broaden my knowledge about social and ecological architecture. I volunteered in several places and joined workshops about ecological building techniques and humanitarian architecture. This program combines many of the things I am interested in so it seemed like a very nice program to me.

### What were your expectations?

I expect to learn more about the materials, techniques and about architectural design and

do I have a lot of knowledge about sustainable/ecological building. I expected a close cooperation with fellow students and professors exchanging thoughts and insights about a wide range of topics.

### How did you find the preparation/course work/before the trip to Ouled Merzoug?

Preparations for the field trip started of a little bit hectic. I felt like I didn’t know where this preparation work was getting us. After a while things started to get more clear and turned out to be an interesting exercise. Although all the lectures were very interesting and often just inspiring, I sometimes missed a direct link to our very specific project in Ouled Merzoug.

The lectures before going to Ouled Merzoug were interesting

Very interesting, but very demanding as well. Some courses could have been more specific to prepare us for the field trip.”

### Which one/s did you find most relevant and why?

The mapping exercise. After this workshop and thinking about the huge variety of mapping techniques, I kind of had an epiphany on how I could approach the mapping in Ouled Merzoug.

I liked the lesson from the Anthropologist because she talked about aspects of experiencing spaces that made me think a lot about how we design buildings.

The most enjoyable and helpful course was about inter-cultural understanding and behavior. I felt it helped the group start to get to know each other, more personal

### Were the preparation really helpful during your stay in the village?

The lectures of Han Verschure ,Reflection on sustainability, opened up the mind, preparing for the site visit and follow up internship.

I think in general the combination of the courses beforehand was helpful for getting in the right mindset before leaving.

The lessons by Sebastian and Kristien Van Pocken gave me some interesting inputs on how to relate to people in Morocco and on how to look at building from a sociological point of view.

I feel it was helpful in that it raised questions for me.

Merzoug. During our workshop with the women, it turned out to be a very interactive medium to communicate with them. In the end we had quit a clear overview of all the impressions we experienced during our field trip, whether it was personal encounters or more objective information.

### What are your thoughts and reflections on the anticipated outcome of the BBB program?

Because of the fact that we are still ‘designing’ a proposition for the program of this project, I think it’s hard to reflect on the outcome of this program. In a way, I don’t want to narrow my perspective on the outcome or result of this project, because I’m not sure where the quality will be in the end result. Whether it is the building itself or the spin-off projects linked to the infrastructure or a general sense of empowerment of the women of Ouled Merzoug.

I think the building in itself will be welcomed greatly by the women. I think the process is too short. I am not exactly sure what my personal outcome will be and not to sound too pessimistic right now I will withhold judgment.

Great experience! Personal enrichment, learning a lot in a short time

I genuinely believe the women (and the community of Ouled Merzoug) will be very glad to have a building that represents them. The building will enable them to gather, expand and share their knowledge and craftsmanship, as well as provide them a safe and pleasant environment to be together.

### Finally, how was your day with the women in Ouled Merzoug?

The boy, Salah Mohamed helped us a lot as translator! Without him the important information would not have reached us!

We were ambitious and had prepared a lot of questions and tools to find out what the women really need, but we didn’t have enough time to do as planned. But we have managed to get as much information as possible with all the limitations.



Students of the building beyond borders program

KJELL KEYMOLEN FOR BBB

the knowledge of working with vernacular building materials.

I expected to learn the different steps necessary to undertake when you do a project abroad. Starting from studying, getting to know an area and people, up to design and execution but in a very practical and hands-on manner.

I tried to start the program with an open mind since I don’t have any experience in similar projects nor

and useful to set the context and add different perspectives. I feel that the preparation of the field trip was somewhat disorganized and chaotic.

I found all the preparation too theoretical, with just little information about Ouled Merzoug. I was expected some historical lessons about Morocco in general, about Moroccan architecture and culture.

level, started opening up some conversations about ethics.

I found it interesting the lesson by the sociologist Kristien Van Pocken who spoke about sociocultural aspects of buildings because it gave me a new point of view. Furthermore, follow up activities were helpful to know a little bit better each other within the group.

I think so, mostly because we connected with the locals and we understood what is their daily routine and how they use the space of the house, etc.. I think we will be definitely more confident in showing our thoughts on the design of the women center, and they will be more open to the discussion.

Yes, we tried to use our technique /role as an intuitive diary during the whole stay in Ouled

## Learning from brussels

Before departing to Ouled Merzoug, students of building beyond borders conducted several visits to womens’ centers in Brussels. These visits were carried out to gain insight as to what a women center could possibly be, what should it constitute and how it could be designed.

### Q : What were the centers’ purpose and who uses them?

We visited two centers in Brussels Scharbeek and Molenbeek. The centers are open for every women from different countries and are new to Belgium. But they are primarily used by Moroccan woman, mostly mothers.



Students’ visit to womens’ center, Scharbeek Brussels

BINIAM HAILU FOR BBB

And they are used to get the woman accustomed to Belgian culture and etiquettes using different tools.

### Q: What were the relevant insight gained for the visit in Morocco and the design you are working on?

Although found in different culture and context, these centers were highly relevant in giving us an idea as to what a womens center could be. What we understood from our visits is that this centers are places where women of different background come together to share experiences, support each other, learn language, other academic and technical skills as well. They are also places where they take time-off from their normal routine and have a time for themselves.

From what we saw, the spaces are appropriated to accommodate

various functions. The women organize themselves in different groups to perform various tasks during the week at different times.

Thus, the takeaway for us was, the center in Morocco should also be designed to be highly flexible to accommodate programs that we can’t foresee ahead of time. Picking up a few Arabic words before our departure was also invaluable, as it is nice to greet someone in ones’ language if not more. Eventually we were even able to record a video with the woman explaining what they do in the center and asking the women in Ouled Merzoug what the center should be for them in Arabic. This eventually helped us a lot during our engagement with the community in the village to find out a lot of needs and wishes of the women.



Mapping workshop

As part of the preparation to the field study prospection, a one day workshop was organized at the open air museum of Bokrijk on representation techniques for analysis, design and execution.

The workshop was organized and delivered by arch. int.-arch. Saidja Heynickx, arch. Iwert Bernakiewicz. The focus was low-tech, accessible and user-friendly representation skills, specifically focused on the visualization of on-site aspects both tangible and non-tangible.

During the workshop students were presented with a wide range methods and tools of mapping and representation followed by



Mapping Workshop and Exercise at Bokrijk

BINIAM HAILU FOR BBB

exemplary cases and discussions. Following this, students took the afternoon to explore Bokrijk and map whatever caught their interest.

Having done this, everyone got together once again to read and reflect upon the mappings produced. The results were astounding, ranging from the built structures to the non-tangible elements of the environments. buildings, objects, infrastructure, process, activities, sound and more were captured and represented in this exercise.

Engaging in this most students have gained invaluable and nuanced way of looking and understanding mapping along with various ways and techniques it can be done.



“After this ‘workshop’ and thinking about the huge variety of mapping techniques, I kind of had an epiphany on how I could approach the mapping in Ouled Merzoug.”



Departing to a different culture

The Building Beyond Borders program entails a group of international students not only to visit Ouled Merzoug,Morocco for a site excursion and mapping, but also for an extended stay in the village for the construction phase to follow. Undoubtedly such endeavors are fantastic adventure, which will enrich ones’ life and provide a valuable experiences and lessons. But, working and living in a country with a different culture, language and history is far from easy, and very often this process of adaption and understanding

the local context is severely underestimated, particularly by students from the global North.

Thus, it was imperative to get inter cultural understanding and behavioral etiquette of working in a different culture.

Delivered by Sebastian Van Hoeck (UCOS ), students attended a one day interactive workshop to prepare with the necessary insight and tools for a meaningful and productive stay in the village.

“...it was imperative to get inter cultural understanding and behavioral etiquette of working in a different culture...”

Anthropological perspective

**What are the most essential elements to address /consider when building abroad in a different context from an anthropological perspective?**

Kristien Verdonck ... Houses are much more than shelter. A lot of meaning is embedded in their shape, structure, building materials and aesthetics. They represent the culture of their inhabitants, or the way these people interpret their environments. Houses can show the social status of a family, but also its kinship structure. They are tangible expressions of intangible relationships and cultural ideas. They can even be seen as an extension of the human body. A house can only be a home if this cultural alignment is felt by the person inhabiting it.

**What do you think will be the socio cultural significance of building a women center in Morocco?**

Kristien Verdonck ...I am not familiar enough with the locality of Ouled Merzoug - yet! However, the example of the Ghanaian ‘Sirigu Women’s Organization for Pottery and Art’ (SWOPA) shows that the women’s center could be a great source of empowerment for women and of revaluation of artisanal crafts. By producing and performing their culture partly for tourists, the women of SWOPA have successfully revived local skills and artistry, and are also interacting in a global culture with a great deal of agency.

**What do you think of the BBB program and its cultural impacts will be?**

Kristien Verdonck ...The program does not present a one-size-fits-all procedure to building, but instead offers a set of principles and techniques that can be adapted to local conditions and resources. By including an anthropological angle, students are given tools to also include cultural specificities into their designs. Through this culture-sensitive approach, their future building projects will help sustain both biological and cultural diversity.

**The building process is to be carried out in collaboration with the community, what**

**social significance do you see in this if any?**

Kristien Verdonck ... I think this is the most interesting aspect for the students, and crucial for a successful design and building process. The exchange of knowledge and skills while building the women’s center will be a very valuable experience, and a great source of learning for community members, students and staff alike. And of fun! Furthermore, the act of building will help community members to connect to the new building and thereby embed it into the existing locality.



Students’ visit in Ouled Merzoug

KJELL KEYMOLEN FOR BBB

A participatory design

**What is the relevance of participatory design and building approach in rural communities?**

Oswald Devisch ...as there are less public projects in rural communities, it creates a good platform for public debates, gives people an opportunity to initiate discussions and reflections on what is going around them, about futures of their villages. And public projects such as building a school, a public square ...could be instrumental in bringing people together to work in collaboration.

**What measures could students/ architects take in their actions to ensure capacity building?**

Oswald Devisch ... images of alternative futures could be highly relevant in sparking new ideas, coalitions,...providing those or developing them along the way with different stakeholders,local authorities, residents would make it their image as well, and that could possibly bring about new projects and developments

**What are do you think are key aspects/measures to be considered to make all parties of a participatory design process beneficiaries?**

Oswald Devisch ...maybe you don’t do it with just one project, instead you keep them involved in long and multiple projects, and also availing a clear goal initially, and possible outcomes so as not to expect different outcomes and an open communication through out the process in different relevant

mediums is important as well, collective reflection at the end is also highly important.

**What do you think is the relevance of the building beyond borders program for the community of Ouled Merzoug and the women beside the building itself?**

Oswald Devisch ...this is rather specific and am not sure if I can give you an answer on this,...but speaking of projects that I worked on,it is about the infrastructures you put in place, so you enhance the social structure and relations, a place where people could come work together, collaborate...And then you could start a participatory process, so having a physical space could be a good starting point.



Spatial Mapping

Running trough the streets of Ouled

I like to run. I need to run. But in Ouled Merzoug, it took me some time to find an opportunity. Until...

For our last full day in Ouled Merzoug we had some free time in the morning where we could go into the village on our own and spent some extra time mapping Ouled Merzoug.

When I was reflecting back on the past couple of days and thinking about what would be the best way to spent this morning, I wanted to explore the city in the same way I explore and experience a city in Belgium.

For me I explore places by going for a run. At home I usually go running 2about 3 times a week and here I haven't ran since I came here. Which felt as a lost opportunity to me. So when we were given this free morning, this was the moment for me to put on

my running shoes and go explore the village my way. Of course there had to be a way that I was able to map my run and to be able to use this data afterwards. Luckily I brought my sports watch with me. This watch tracks your run with a gps signal. While you are running it tells you how far you have ran, at what speed you are running and the frequency of your heartbeat. When we got back to Belgium, I was able to make a map with the data collected from the sports watch but I also could see the hight differences at each point. This tells me that the lowest point in the village is located at 1164m above sea level and the highest point on my running tour was at the new kasbah, which is located at 1193m above sea level.

Emily Haest



Suddenly I am running through the riverbed When I took this path, I didn't realize this isn't part of the road.

There are also 2 young boys trying to catch up with me. They are smiling at each other. They don't understand what I am doing. When I'm at the main road, the oldest boy is running next to me. It is nice to have some company along the way!



"Let's have a look at the new kasbah" I think to myself, "there might be a cool view over the village at the top". So I run up the hill and when I get to the top, I can see the Atlas mountains in the distance, the Palmeraie on my left and I have a good overview of the different paths to our building site. But when I want to go back to the main road, I realise that there is only one way from the kasbah to the road. So I decide to go off trail and take a shortcut down.



I don't want to run the same way back to my starting point, which is the main road. So, when I recognize the path leading up to the school, I take my chance and climb up hill. The views are really amazing here. I could stay here for a while but there are some more tracks to cover. Going down on the other side of the hill, I don't really find a pathway leading down to the main road. Earlier this week, when I was following my family, going to the school seemed much more easy.



I am passing by some local villagers who are busy with their daily routines. I don't know if anyone in the village ever goes running for fun, like I am. They stop doing what they were doing. They must think to themselves "what is she doing?". Between them, they giggle a bit and they continue their daily routines as soon as I have passed.



This is the point that I have to say goodbye to my new, little friend. It was nice having him next to me all this way. I think that he was running with me for about 2 kilometers. That's pretty far for a boy of his age.



I think a lot when I am running. This time I am thinking "How far should I go? Maybe I'll just run to the other side of the bridge. This way we will have a good reference point for the altitude lines of the village". Looking back I don't think that we have used this reference point, but at least I have had a few extra running meters.

Map of running through Ouled Merzoug

EMILY HAEST



Stories from surveying

Welcome to the hill-site

Before leaving for Morocco the Building Beyond Borders-team made a plan to carry out the field research as efficient as possible.

We knew we would only have one week for this prospection visit and therefore we knew we would encounter an intense experience. Once we arrived in Morocco, we received the pleasant news that each student could spend a day experiencing the daily activities of the women from Ouled Merzoug. This meant getting up early in the morning to start making bread, followed by all the activities the women do during the day. This would give us a first glimpse of the activities of the women for whom we will build a women’s centre. Although it would only be one day, I knew it would be amazing and so my enthusiasm grew. However, we were informed that

“we could all follow a women during her daily activities... only the girls though, no worries, the boys can measure the site”

this wonderful experience was reserved for women only: “only girls though, but no worries the boys can measure the site”.

Eventually it took us almost three days to measure the site. John drew all the measurements on the computer at night so that we knew which parts we had to check the next day. After three days, we thought we had mapped the whole site, ready for design. However, once back in Belgium we encountered some contrasts with the measurements. Luckily for us, Danny would leave for Ouled Merzoug the next day, so we gave him some checkpoints he had to make to confirm our measurements.

With a great pleasure, I’m taking you back in time to our experience on the hill, where we spent three days, from sun-rise to sun-set, on the project site.

By reading our stories you might get a glimpse of an amazing, warm and friendly culture.

by Kjell Keymolen



Nicolas and John with our helping friends during tea-break

KJELL KEYMOLEN

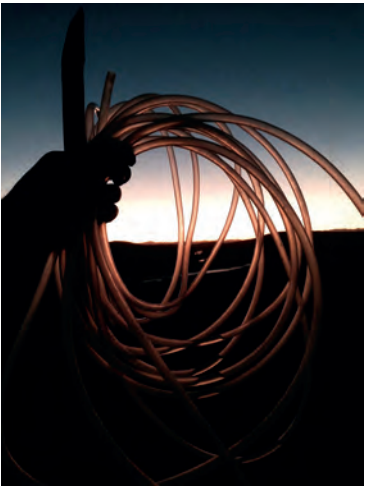
Visitors on site

Our starting point for measuring the site is the concrete platform. Here, we have a view over the hill-site and organise our briefings in the morning. Today, before starting, we got company from our local friends. Amin is a clever boy that wants to understand why we measure with a plastic tube, filled with water. He observes the instruments we use while accompanying us with paint. While Arnaud holds the first end of the tube and I hold the other end, screaming the measurement to John to write it down, Amin marks our point with green paint. We explain Amin the theory of the communicating vessels by showing it in practice, but eventually we end up playing with water and loosing an important part of our measuring tool... After our playtime, we have our first friendly encounter with one of the neighbours of the site, who gives us a barrel of water to refill our plastic tube. In the afternoon we are invited to his house to drink tea to escape the heat of the afternoon sun. After the break we continue measuring the hill-site until we are accompanied by other neighbours, bringing tea and

cookies for their visitors on the hill-site of their village. The more time we spent on the hill, the more we feel welcome on this beautiful site.

plan visible on page 49

“feeling blessed with a well deserved tea-break”



KJELL KEYMOLEN

Our tool for the communicating vessels

Views from the office, reflection after a day of work

We measured the hill-site until sunset. We did not leave earlier as not to miss this beautiful natural spectacle. The hill-site is situated in the middle of the town, in the ‘Laksar’ district. The hill has an amazing viewpoint. From this specific point, there is an overview of all the layers of the village: the town, the road meandering through town and the Palmeraie, pierced by the river which is expanding its width during rainy season. Spending our time here, we realise the qualities of the site. We start to understand which point of views are interesting to concentrate on and which are not. Spending our time here gives us the possibility to talk about ideas for the women’s centre. The first concepts in our minds originated on this spot.



view on the layers of the village

KJELL KEYMOLEN

“it’s taking time but it is satisfying”

The surrounding neighbors water, electricity and sewage

At a certain point we were looking for which measures we had to take to ensure water and electricity on our site. The nearest electricity pole seemed the ideal starting point to find out how the neighbouring houses are supplied with water and electricity and foresee their sewage system. The house next to this electricity pole is still under construction. This is an adobe house with only one, well orientated window. When we approached the house, we were greeted by a friendly man, sitting against the wall in his ‘garden’. He invited us for tea but since we were in a hurry to finish up

our measurements for the day, we kindly rejected. Nevertheless, he informed us about the last connection he had bought to install electricity in his house and the sewage for which he had installed a septic tank next to his house.

The last day in Ouled Merzoug we needed to check the distance from the electricity pole to our hill-site. Again, we were invited to the man’s house, who sat in front of it. He offered us tea and pomegranates and invited us to have a look at his construction site. By using palm trees and

reed for the roof, adobe bricks and clay-rendering for the walls, he was building his house in a vernacular, traditional way. “It is taking time, but it is satisfying.”



KJELL KEYMOLEN

neighbouring house on the hill-site



KJELL KEYMOLEN

Arnaud and the neighbour

by Kjell Keymolen ir. architect, Student for Building Beyond Borders



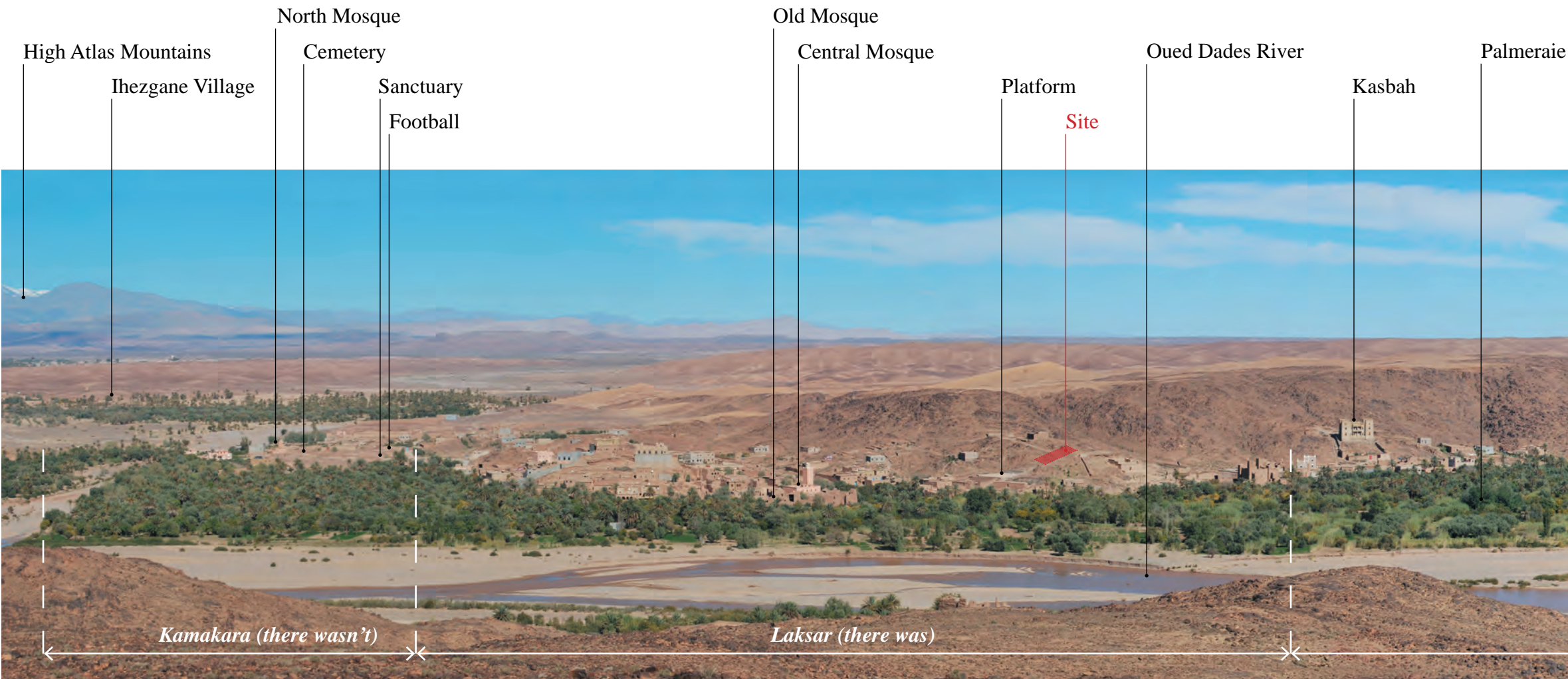
KJELL KEYMOLEN

electricity pole next to the site



Spatial Mapping

Landmarks



Panorama photo of Ouled Merzoug, looking north-east



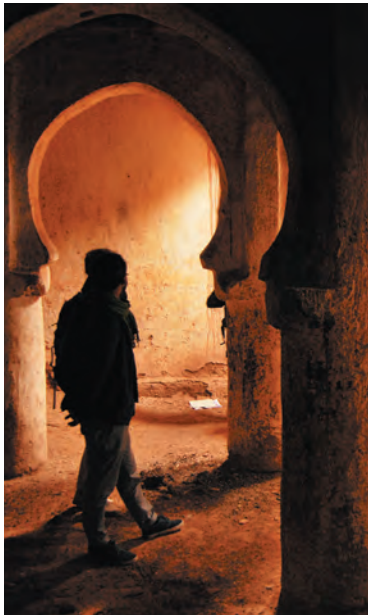
Mountains Flower



Sanctuary Ceiling Detail



Football Pitch



Old Mosque Interiors



North Mosque detail



North Mosque

How many interesting things can you find up in the mountains? Surely the environment is extreme, the sun hits hard on the rocks and not much vegetation dares growing up here. I noticed it was quite easy to climb up as the shape of the rocks was in most cases squared, and it felt like stepping on a stair. Even flowers here look like they belong to another planet.

“- What if I wanted to send you a postcard?”  
“You would have to put my name and just Ouled Merzoug as the address, since here streets have no name.  
The village will take care of it ”

Mosques. There are several mosques in Ouled Merzoug and they stand out of the rest of the village for their peculiar symbol at the top (moon slice and four spheres in a row), that allows to distinguish them from a non-religious building. Usually they are painted pink, but one is grey and built out of concrete blocks. Despite the village being very small, for a foreigner it's easy to

get lost, especially when walking through the palmeraie. Luckily from every perspective it's always possible to see a mosque and get back to the right track. Along the main road there is the ruin of the old mosque and since it was not in use any more, we could have a look inside. It really felt like discovering an unspoiled treasure for the first time.

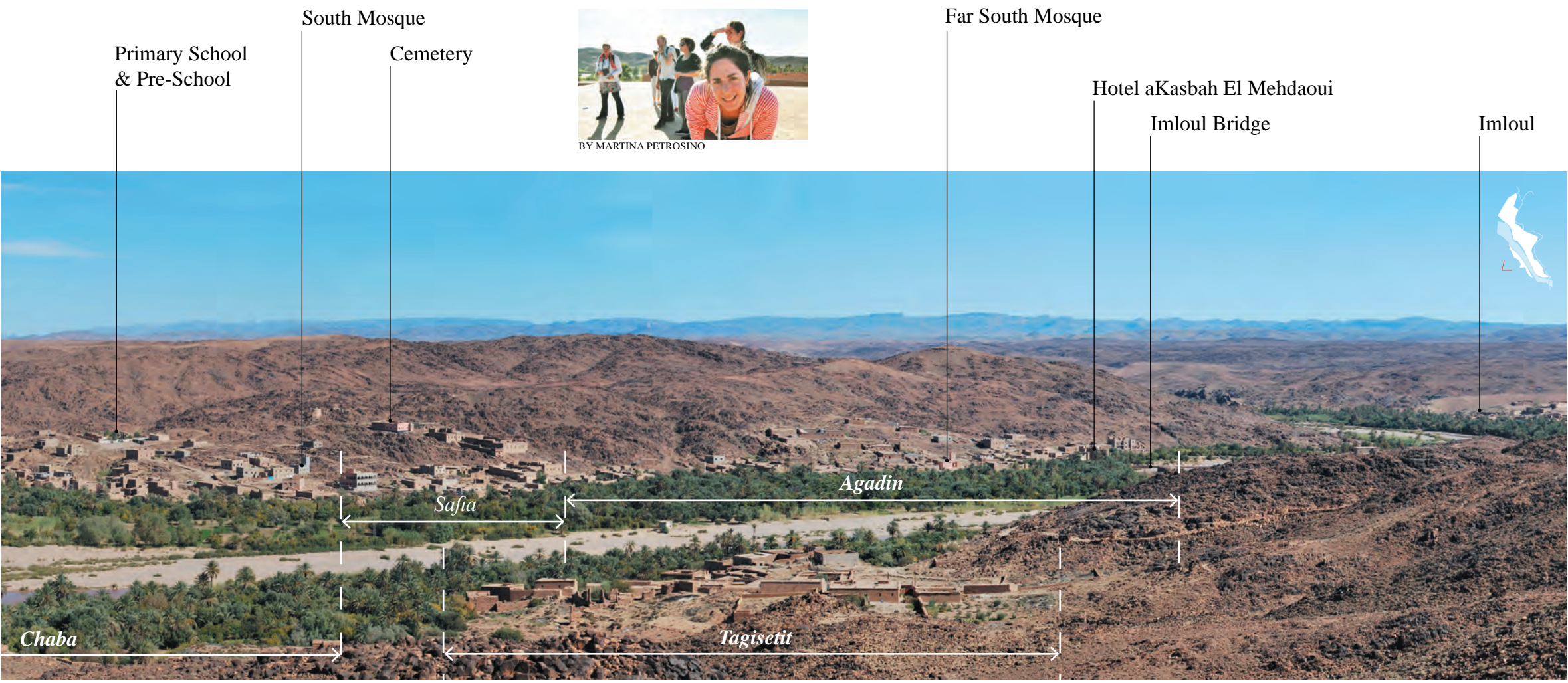


Panorama picture from the site of the women's centre



Landmarks

Spatial Mapping



MARTINA PETROSINO



Kasbah



Oued Dades River



Ahmed and the palmeraie



View of the palmeraie from the hill



South Mosque

Kasbah. “Some people want to show off, so they built a big house, some others use the Kasbah to make money.” Originally there were 6-7 big houses and people were living in large families. People from other villages would come and live in these houses to work on the fields. Later on landlords started giving some plots to the workers so that they could build their own house.

Oued Dades River. We crossed the river bare foot at the sunset. The water was freezing cold and it felt like a thousand needles piercing my feet. Locals were crossing as well. A couple of days after we crossed the river again. The water was warmer than the previous time, but we find it difficult to identify a crossing place. After a couple of failed attempts, we spotted a local

approaching the water and finding his way through. We gave each other a glance: apparently the same thought crossed our minds: LET’S FOLLOW HIM! We realised that some branches come off the surface of the water, as if they were place there to indicate a good spot for crossing. The bed of the river felt very squishy and smooth on the feet, but also full of stones.

“Life is hard here, but we live in the paradise” The palmeraie is the liveliest area of the village. Birds sing, people talk, kids laugh. Fruits and flowers are everywhere. Ahmed lives in a earth house at the edge of the palmeraie and he knows every single species that grows down there. He shown us around, describing the good properties of different plants. He taught us how to climb up a palm tree to get dates. I tried to copy him and almost killed myself.

Mapping sounds The sound of the prayer defines the hours of the day. If you hear it loud and clear, it means the mosque is not far. In the palmeraie it’s more likely to hear people chatting than the birds tweeting.

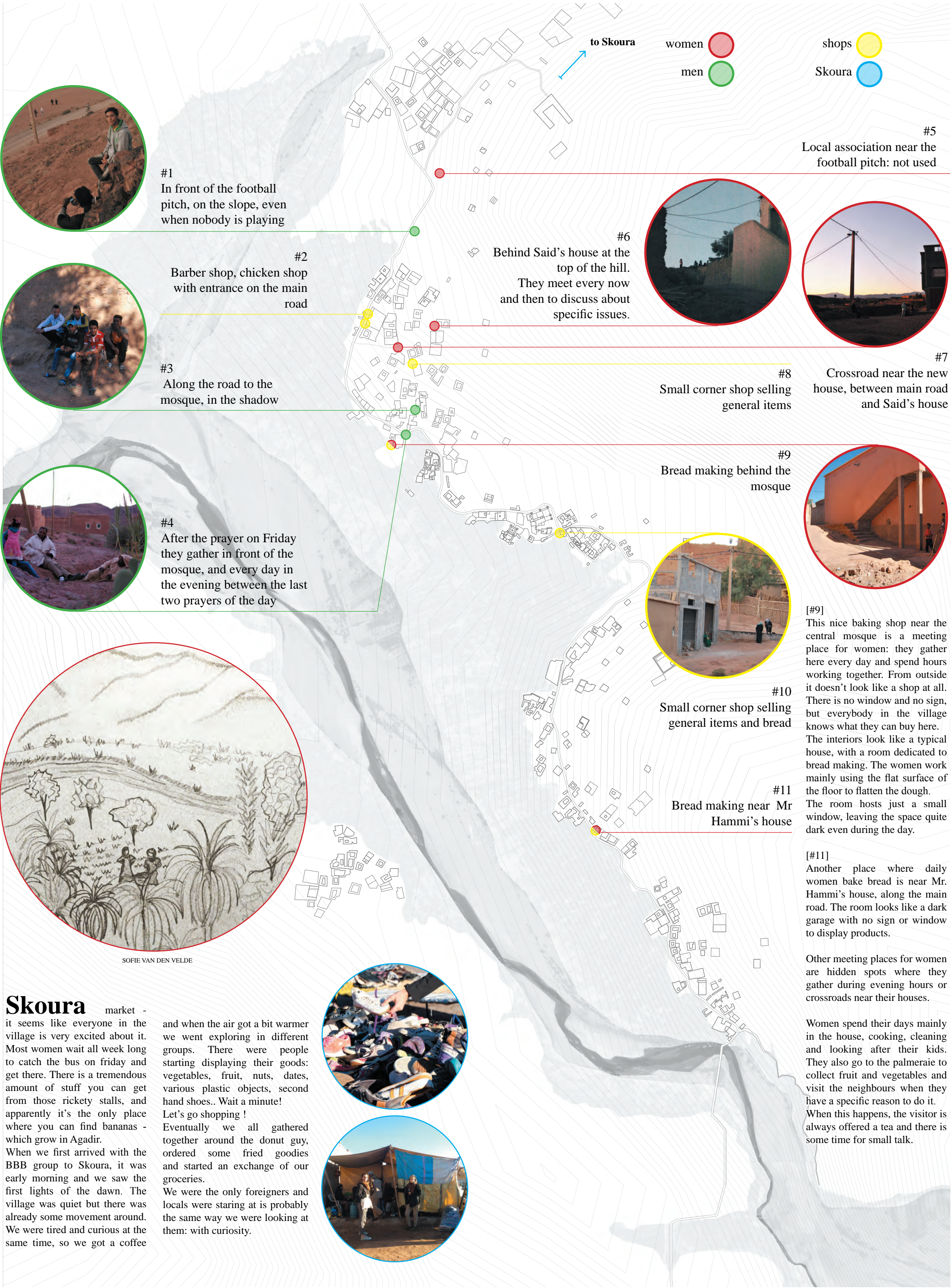


MARTINA PETROSINO



Spatial Mapping

Meeting places





## Roads and streets

# Today this is a Village Without Cars

The only central village road is a dead end for cars. It ends in a narrow foot bridge. The road has a width between 3 m and 6,5 m, but mainly measures 4,5 m. It is an unpaved, earthen road. Along most of its length, the road forms an edge line between houses and buildings along the higher side, and the Palmeraie on the lower side. In some sections the Palmeraie lies lower, at the bottom of a steep slope of 1 to 2 m. Only in few places, the road has buildings on either side. On these locations, the road is only 3 m wide.

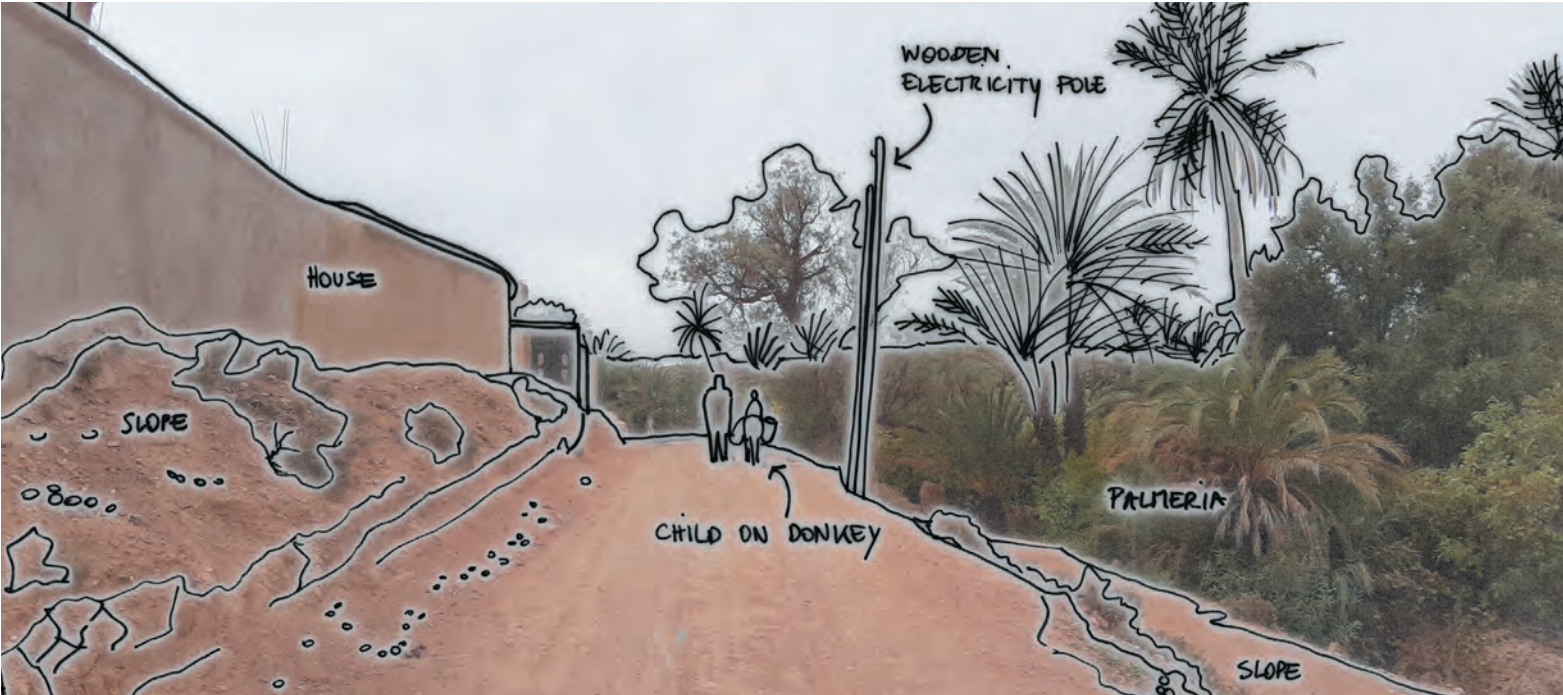
Today the villagers of Ouled Merzoug don’t have a car. It is a village of walking people. Their pace is fast which makes them difficult to follow. Some young kids have a bike and some men have a motorcycle. We only saw one truck during the week of our visit. The truck was collecting building materials in the river. During weekends, there are some people from surrounding villages and cities who come over for a visit by car. One tourist passed us on the road in his car to reach the hotel at the far end of the village. During our stay, we met the snake catcher on his donkey. Donkeys are a common sight in Ouled Merzoug, much more familiar than the sporadic awkward car.



TINNE  
Village truck on the road



MARGOT  
The snake catcher on a donkey

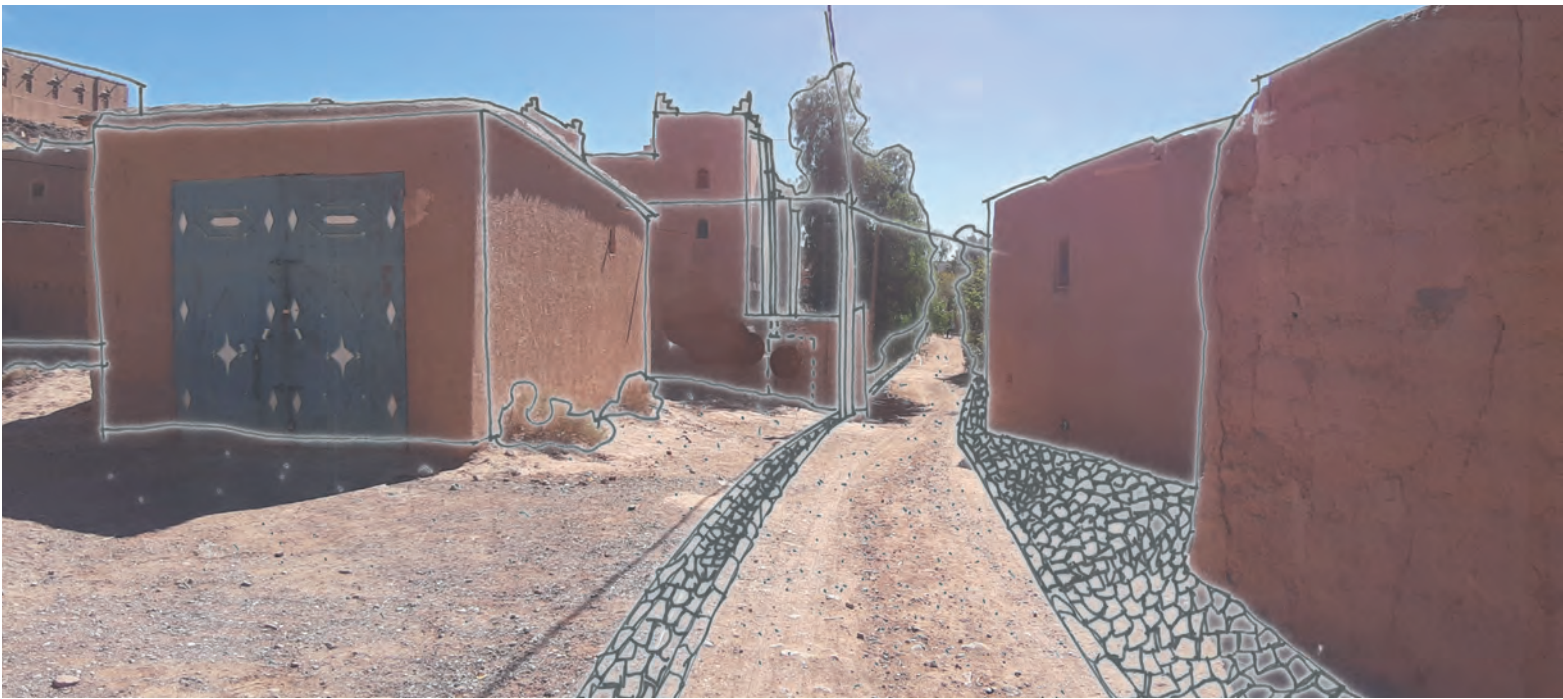


TINNE  
The situation of the road today

# The Road will Become Macadam



TINNE  
Water canal after heavy rains



TINNE  
New proposol for the road of Ouled Merzoug with two border stone lines to enclose the earthen pavement of the street

# Design of a New, Semi-Paved Street with Respect for the Village Identity

If Ouled Merzoug wants to distinguish itself from other villages and towns in Morocco, an important premise with an important decision to make is not to macadamize their main street. Since the idea of constructing one is approved, we would like to suggest an alternative.

The new proposal keeps the main road as it is but places two border stone lines to enclose earthen pavement of the street. The single lane is 3 m wide. The paved edgings on both sides consist of local rocks of 0,5 m wide, placed as slabs. Where houses or walls are close to the street, the space between road edge slabs and walls is filled with pavement of the same kind as the edgings. The

result is the standard road image of a clearly materialized car lane.

Although the public bus must be able to pass, the passage of heavy trucks should be avoided as this is very exhausting for the road structure. It also tends to enlarge the road at narrow points. This means that (building) materials should be unloaded at the entrance of the village and distributed for further transport on donkey backs or smaller rickshaws.

An alternative approach could be to only intervene at the spots or road sections where rainwater concentrates and erodes the road after heavy storms or long precipitation. In the extension of a rainwater gully that gives out on

the road, a culvert or sufficiently wide pipe under the street is necessary. In these spots and on other lower locations where water may concentrate, pavement may be necessary. Especially for the occasion of a flush flood, the water mass should be able to flow over the road, without major damage. A survey in a wet period and especially during a rain storm, will reveal how the water runs over, besides and underneath the road surface. For example, rainwater from roofs is now typically discharged on the road. It will be better to collect it in cisterns to be able to use it. The cistern may be an extra room next to the house. This way, it is covered from dust and heath, but it can still be tapped using gravity.

# Experience in Belgium says: Not a Good Idea

What will be the consequences of an asphalt road that will not be designed meticulously within the detailed context? Does it really enhance accessibility? Based on our experience in Belgium, we know that wider roads attract more cars and define the usual pecking order in traffic; pedestrians, cyclists and donkeys will be marginalized. Also, silence disappears, dust becomes a problem, vibrations can damage

walls and entire buildings, which will result in decay and degradation of the image of the village. The dependence on cars will increase through a (false) feeling of increased reachability of services, shops, leisure, family and work. This reinforces itself since the natural self-sufficiency of a rural population diminishes and the dependence on urban areas increases, which can only be satisfied by increased car use.

# Paving the Road isn’t a Good Idea

Although the plan to macadamize the road is clearly communicated among villagers, there seems no good reasoning for this. Is it one of the items on the list of a governmental program? Is it necessary as a durable solution for the degeneration of the road at specific spots, caused by heavy rainfall? Are maintenance costs currently too high? Did people complain about dust and mud?

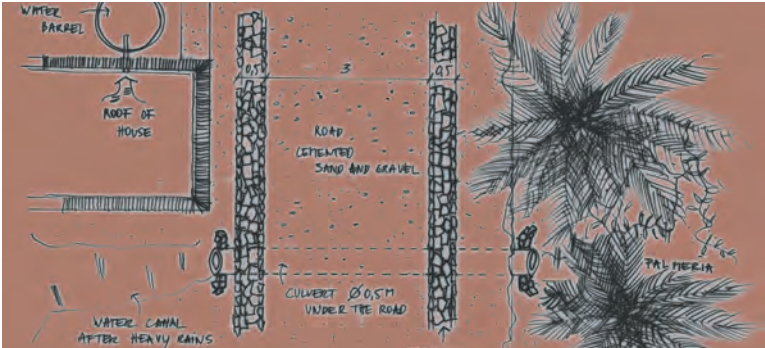
During our stay in Ouled Merzoug, topographical surveyors were measuring the street. They started at one end of the village and proceeded to the other end, spraying paint at any reference spot they encountered. This could be an electricity pole, a house, a fence... maybe even a goat, accidentally standing next to the street. Laurens talked to them and asked how they would tackle the water-drain system and the width of the asphalt road, since the front doors open onto the street. He pointed out that the foundations of adobe houses, built next to the road, might not hold the weight of the asphalt road and the construction trucks. Their answer was: “We know”. They were just doing their job and executed what they have been ordered to do.

Anyway, these are just the first steps for building a road. Once the topography is mapped, engineers can start designing the road surface and its foundation. Therefore, it might be too soon to draw any conclusion, but the lack of understanding the consequences is worrying us. Isn’t it strange that they are investing in something that the village is not immediately asking for? Could the money not be spent in a more durable project, such as recycling and waste management in the village, or an expansion of the school? After an interview with Monsieur Hammi - who is not happy with this plan to build an asphalt road with public money - , we understood that the government has already signed the approval.

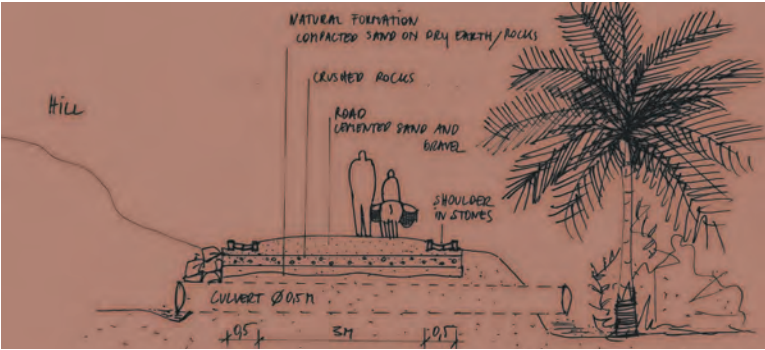
# “Give tourists a unique experience”

# Tourists to the Hotel on a Donkey Back

We believe it could add to the experience of tourists if they are or their luggage is being brought to the hotel at the far end of the village on a donkey back. This provides an extra local business and gives tourists the opportunity to have a unique experience. A true feeling of the village, far more satisfying than a short car drive to the accommodation. The walk will take around 40 minutes. In addition, empty garages at the entrance of the village can be used as a safe parking spaces for the tourists’ cars.



TINNE  
New proposal for the road of Ouled Merzoug: floor plan



TINNE  
New proposal for the road of Ouled Merzoug: section



# Spatial Mapping

## Map of domestic and irrigation systems

### Domestic water

Like many small villages within rural Morocco, Ouled-Merzoug's domestic water supply has its own system. A number of wells, which fill with ground water are situated throughout the oasis, one being the main source for domestic water.

Before reaching the well, water passes through a natural filtration system that occurs underground (organic matter / mineral / silt / clay / sand / gravel / stone) each layer acts as a filter, blocking small particles before filling up the aquifers. No other means of filtration takes place before used for consumption

Water from the well is pumped up to the water storage tank on the hillside located approximately half way between both ends of this sprawling, small village.

### Irrigation

Ouled Merzoug has an intricate irrigation system, developed over many years to establish an oasis in an otherwise arid landscape. At the south end of the village water from the nearby river is directed into three channels (one main and two subsidiary ones), flowing the length of the Palmeria. From these, smaller channels have been made to carry water to the whole area of lower ground before the change of landscape and gradient to rocky hill. The land is divided up into small plots, owned by numerous people within the village. The system also includes water run-off from the mountainside during rainy times. Those who have the financial means are able to have their own bore hole drilled to access ground water. The system works with many sluices which determinate which plots of land get water flow at any one time. As the village will gain a new pump alongside the installment of the solar panels the old pump will be put to good use to further the irrigation system. This pump will be relocated to the near end of the village, where the newest settlement of houses are, to start a new agricultural area.

- Main channel
- Secondary channel
- Third channel
- Subsidiary channels

Until recently the pump was powered by gas and needed to be switched on and off at least once a day. It was noisy and caused a certain amount of air pollution. This is in the process of changing as the the village has been granted solar panels to power a new pump. This development has been funded by MCA (Marcher Courrir Agir) a French NGO, another positive move for the village in its quest to become a more ecologically sustainable place.

With the aid of gravity, water from the tank is distributed throughout the village by, a mostly overground network of pipes.

All villagers have access to cold running water, with every home having a meter to measure usage. Grey water form domestic tasks is often used to irrigate plants close to the house. There is no overall sewage system in the village. Each house has its own septic tank close to the building. With this system there is a chance of grey water seeping back into the ground water source making it contaminated.



# Water a Fragile Resource No One Can Live Without

## The Source of Life.

Water is essential to the survival of the human race. It is significant in varying ways to different cultures, religions and contexts.



Bridge at the intrance of the village

PHOTO: AURORA FANTI

I come from the U.K., where it is cold and wet the majority of the year, where access to clean drinking water and sewage systems are integrated within every building. It might seem that I would have a completly different relationship with water then the villagers of Ouled Merzoug. True in some respects. I don't think too much about wheather there is clean drinking water when I turn on the tap. But on the other hand there are a lot of similarities, just a different context. There is the unpradictable nature of water-from floods to draughts, happening more frequently in the U.K, the every increasing cost of domestic water, the question of whether our water is safe with all the chemiclcs added, and the love hate relationship we have with the rain.

## Bus ride

The weather couldn't have been more different apone our arrival in Ouled Merzoug from the previous 16 hours. Bright, cold, clear skys and sunny, with no hint of rain. The journey between Marrakech and Ouarzazate should have taken 4 and a half hours not 16. At the start of the journey it rained for 2 hours. I didn't think much of it. It was a rainy day. Hours later the consequences of a rainy day became apparent in this semi-arid landscape. Along the mountain pass, bridges had been destroyed and landslides made the road impassable. Streams coming down the hillside where raging, overflowing bringing bolders and earth onto the road. The river far below was running extremely fast

and full. Water seemed to have come from nowhere. This mountainous landscape has very little vegetation. There is nowhere else for the water to go, apart from down the mountian. In a very short space of time the bus ride became frightening, dangerous and extremely time consuming.. It reminded me of the Scottish mountains, the sea and floods in recent years. The weather can change in a second, becoming violent and destructive.

## Two sides to water

I wasn't prepared for extreme consequences a small amount of rain would do in this part of the world. I understand water in the context of the U.K. I have a sense

of what will happen when the weather changes, and make decisions accordingly. Although this is also chnging and becoming more unpredictable. The bus ride in Morocco was a reminder about the need to understand a place, to never take anything for granted. Water has an unfathornable force that has to be respected and worked with not against. It can also be beautiful and have a very calming effect on our soul. To hear the sound of a bubbling river or the rythmic lull of the sea can still the mind. However we may look at water it is clear that we can not live without it. But how do we manage the resources we have when they seem to be becoming more unpredictable?

# A Source of Inspiration



BY MIKI Z

## Creativity from experiencing the environment around me.

I am an artist who looks at life from an angle that doesn't necessarily fit in with how others perceive things. As I was documenting the water systems of Ouled Merzoug I felt inspired to use this as a starting point for some creativity. I want to show that it is possible to be inspired from the most mundane everyday objects to create new designs and art works. There is always an opportunity to look at things from a different perspective. The water system is made up of many shapes, colours, compositions, textures, and patterns.

The fragile network of pipes, water tower, buildings, pump, the shape of the village and river on a map, concrete support posts, and water containers, to name but a few. Some of these were traditional water carriers made from local clay. A distinctive shape, many with broken handles. Others made from acrid coloured plastics. A complete contrast. I started by making some observational sketches of objects related to the water system. Taking some of the shapes, ideas and colours I made an abstract piece. Enlarging small areas can become new designs.

I would like to work together with the women of Ouled Merzog using similar process in creating fresh designs and patterns for carpets, weaving and pottery. I imagine the results would be a mix of tradition and modern imagery making creative, exciting contemporary designs. To have the opportunities to experiment and play can have a great impact on our health and well-being enabling empowerment.



MIKI Z



MIKI Z



MIKI Z



MIKI Z



# Spatial Mapping

Panorama



Ouled Merzoug



Panorama

Spatial Mapping



Skoura



People

Qui sont les femmes d’Ouled Merzoug

- Sarah MASSARI \*
- Souad ELKASSIMI
- Aziza ELKASSIMI
- Asmai BOUSSALA
- Hasnai ELIBRAHIMI
- Aouatif OHKOU
- Halima ELYAHYAWI
- Hajiba ELAOUNI
- SamaA ELBASSOUR
- Hada NASSIRI
- Touda RABIAI
- Nora OSSALH
- Khatima CHOUJAI
- Hind ELBAHRI
- Malika ELHILALI
- Halima ELFINTI
- Samira TALIBI
- Sana NAWARA
- Rabiaa HASSA
- Ilham BOUSSALME
- Sfia MOBSITE
- Bouchra TALIBI
- Najia AGLAGAL
- Aïcha ETALIBI
- Aziza HASSAN
- Aziza RABIAI
- Bouchra BOUABID
- Halima BDAAH
- Ourdia GRATIN
- Zaima BEGARTIT
- Loubna
- Fatima LARZOUGI
- Nina TAOUFIK
- Kaltoum ELKHNATI
- Sihame TAOUFIK
- Zaimab MAJIDI
- Kbira BEN ZAHRA
- Faiza AGRAME
- Hafida LBYAZ
- Khadouj YOUSFI
- Naima AIT ELFILALI
- Karima MARZAK
- Marian MARZAK
- Fatima BOUJMAOUI
- Fatima ELAHZOUI
- Kbira ELJALMOUZI
- Rkia ASSAFAL
- Najat SABIR
- Fatiha CHAOUKI
- Kadija JALILI
- Fouzia BABA
- Nadia ELFINTI
- Haman ELFINTI
- Asmai BOUSSALA
- Hasnai ELBRAHIMI
- Âouatif OHKOU
- Aziza MOUBSITE
- Fatima BAHMAD
- Amina NASSIRIA

\* Parent originaire  
d'Ouled Merzoug pour tous les  
nom souligné



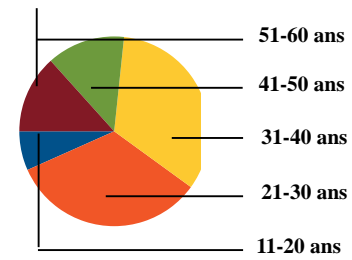
AURORA FANTI

Rassemblement des femmes sur le site de la future maison des femmes

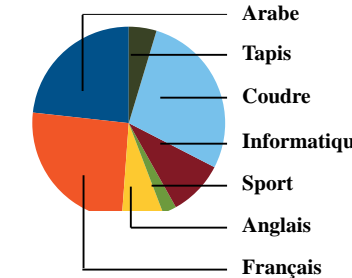
La plus belle chose à Ouled Merzoug c'est la nature

Nous avons demandé à une centaine de femmes de bien vouloir répondre à 10 questions les concernant.

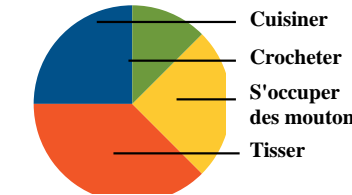
"Quel est votre âge?"



"Qu'aimeriez-vous apprendre?"



"Quelle est votre activité préférée durant votre journée?"



Voici la réponse unanime lorsqu'on leur demande qu'elle est la plus belle chose à leurs yeux dans leur village.

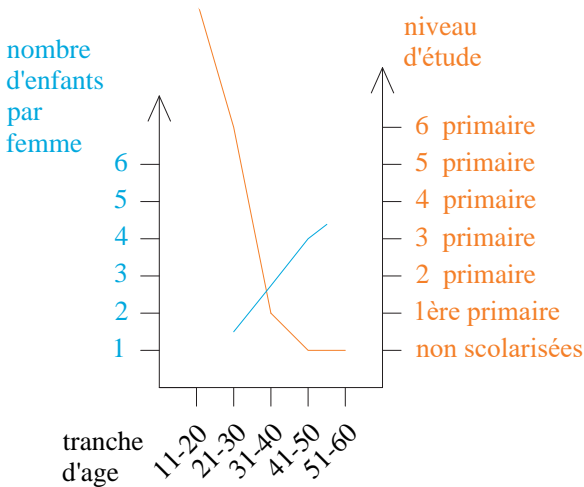
Force est de constater que la tranche d'âge la plus importante sont des femmes trentaines, pour la plupart qui n'ont jamais été à l'école.

De manière générale, les femmes semblent très enthousiastes à l'idée d'apprendre de nouvelles choses. La priorité pour celles qui n'ont pas eu la chance d'aller à l'école est d'apprendre à écrire l'arabe. Ensuite, ce qu'elles aimeraient, c'est apprendre le français ainsi qu'apprendre à coudre. Les données montrent notamment qu'une grande majorité des

femmes de plus de 31 ans n'ont jamais été à l'école (73%), que le taux de scolarité reste très faible puisque seulement 23% des femmes de moins de 30 ans ont mis les pieds au collège. A l'inverse, on remarque que les femmes des nouvelles générations ont moins d'enfants que les anciennes (en moyenne 1,5 enfants par femme entre 21 et 30 ans contre 4 enfants par femme pour les femmes de plus de 41 ans).

Alice Chang

"Combien d'enfants avez-vous?"  
"À quel âge avez-vous arrêté l'école?"



Être une femme libérée n'est pas si facile

Lors d'un entretien avec M. Hami, le directeur de l'école primaire d'Ouled Merzoug et le principal instigateur de ce mouvement de renouveau au village, il explique la vision de la femme au Maroc et plus précisément celle qu'il perçoit autour de lui.

M. Hami illustre en une phrase la place de la femme "dans l'esprit des hommes marocains", il dira que pour eux "les femmes, c'est juste pour faire à manger et faire des bébés". Si bien il déplore cette vision, il souligne qu'elle est tellement ancrée dans l'esprit collectif que le changement se fait bien trop lentement.

"Les femmes, c'est juste pour faire à manger et faire des bébés"

"Aujourd'hui", précise-t-il, "une femme peut aller seule au Souk pour faire les courses nécessaires pour la maison." Ce qui, dans son esprit, est déjà une petite victoire en soi. Cela étant dit, il balaie d'un revers tout espoir d'émancipation lorsqu'il ajoute que à côté de cela, les hommes peuvent pratiquer la polygamie et qu'elle est tout à fait accepté dans les moeurs locaux.



AURORA FANTI

Nettoyage de la maison

M. Hami ne tarit pas d'éloge sa femme, la décrivant comme un pilier essentiel, une aide chère et unique qui lui a permis d'arriver là où il est aujourd'hui.

Il s'interroge sur ce que sont réellement les droits des femmes. Et il est sans aucun doute pour son émancipation mais il reste très critique quant à la vision occidentale d'une femme libérée. Ce qui ne remet absolument pas en doute le fait qu'il considère qu'elles devraient avoir plus de pouvoir au foyer et dans le village. Et il est persuadé que l'association permettra cet essor tant attendu.

Propos recueillis par Alice Chang



ALICE CHANG

Récolte de luzerne dans la Palmeraie



ALICE CHANG

Préparation du pain au feu de bois



French   English   Dutch   Italian

People

What words can you find?

Salaam hallo hello salut ciao eh ja yes oui si leh nee no non marghabah welkom welcome  
accueillir benvenuti fteh appel apple pomme



Symbols and Symbolism

There exists all around us imagery, text, customs, objects and actions that can be read in different ways. They might mean a specific thing or we might be able to ascertain something from them. Entering a culture you are not familiar with can be daunting, especially when you don’t understand the local language, or reasons why some things are as they are. Symbols are a part of our everyday communication. Sometimes they mean nothing and other times, if misinterpreted they can have serious consequences. Yet if we open our eyes and observe everything around us we can tell an awful lot about where we are and how we should act. What do these symbols represent?



Communication

is an essential component for any project to be successful. It is vitally important that good communication skills are established for clear understanding and for everyone to feel fully engaged. Our research trip to Ouled Merzoug proved a complex task in terms of effective communication for all involved in the process. Poor communication can have a negative effect in so many different ways, from disengagement, frustration, miss understanding, poor translation, contextually miss interpretation and exclusion, to ultimately a project not being realised with the positive outcomes that were hoped for. Although I felt very frustrated at times with the many communication barriers, the majority of the group were very engaged in learning Arabic words and phrases to communicate with

the people of the village. An extensive list of Arabic words is being compiled into a resource for further language learning for our return trip in 2019.

However communication is much more than just being able to understand a spoken language. When we don’t have a common language, we observe, we use gesture and movement reverting to childlike interactions. In these instances if you are prepared to really listen to the situation with all your senses you will more than likely be able to understand. Working as part of a group as peers, as well as working with communities in a developmental context takes time and patience. These two things are extremely undervalued as tools for successfully facilitating people to come to have deep understanding of each other.



PHOTOS: JOLIE BOSMAN, AURORA FANTI, KJELL KEYMOLEN, GUILIA VENTRE

PAROLE, PAROLE, PAROLE... Chansons d’Ouled Merzoug

PAR AURANNE LERAY  
MERCİ À MONSIEUR  
HAMMI, AU FEMMES  
D’OULED MERZOUĞ A  
ABDEL JEBARI ET  
MUSTAPHA JEBARI DE KSAR  
EL KEBIR

Lors des mariages, les femmes d’Ouled Merzoug chantent ces chansons en arabe Darija. Rythmées par le changement de tenue des mariés, elles sont chantées avant la nuit de noce, au moment de l’habillage de chacun des époux.



Chansons pour la mariée

كئيلع لئلا ىلص  
وناش يل اي يبنل اي  
ميضع

Ô Prophète de grandiose  
importance que Dieu vous  
bénisse

وبرق لئلا لوسر يديس  
ديعب يناج يبراي

Ô messenger de Dieu vous  
qui m’êtes loin que Dieu  
vous rapproche de moi

Chanson pour le marié

ريخل سيرع اي يديس

Sir, nouveau marié de bonté

وم اي افقاو يديس

Sir, sa mère debout

اهيناحت كيدا دم يديس

Sir tend ta main pour que  
ta mère y mette le henné

سوس قنح يديس  
اهيتاوت

Sir, le henné de Souss’ lui  
convient

كئامامك اعم كيدا دم

Tend ta main avec vos  
manches

كئم اي افقاو يديس

Sir votre mère vous attends/  
est debout

انيز يل اي قميطاف الل  
اهتوخف

Noble Fatima, la plus belle  
de ses sœurs

ينار ينيدرو قمطاف الل

Noble Fatima désaltère ma  
soif

كئيف اقوش عم

Vous êtes mon adorée

قصورلا ىلع تيلط  
اباباي اهيف تيقل  
لوقنم

J’ai entrevu le jardin du  
Prophète ô père

قرقنلا نم طويح  
قصفلا نم يراوسلاو  
بهدل او

Mure d’argent et pillier  
d’or



People

Identitu

Where are the Men?

I was welcomed in Ouled Merzoug by a family. Mother and two sons were at home. Father works in Casablanca, far away. The oldest son works in Dubai, even further away. Soon it became clear to me that many men and boys went away. They left Ouled Merzoug in search of a job and a decent earning. Most of the year this is a village of women and children. But at the time of the Islamic Feast of Sacrifice it is a different place, apparently. “*You should come and see,*” they told me, “*then you will know the people of Ouled Merzoug*”.

The locals are mainly involved in agriculture. However, due to the limited number of jobs available, most men move to bigger cities like Agadir, Meknes, Rabat or Casablanca to find work.

“Most of the year this is a village of women and children”

I Don’t Want to Go

I did talk to some men, though. Ahmad, for instance. It surprised me that he speaks French and English and that he reads books of Voltaire and Kafka. “*I don’t want to go*”, says Ahmad. “*I cannot live in a big and noisy city. I am over 50 years old and I have never had a real job. I live with my mother, my brother and his wife in a part of a ruined house in the centre of the village. My brother was always unable to make up his mind about simple choices. But we have no decent physiologic healthcare, so he was given the wrong medication. Now he’s behaving like he is permanently anesthetised. I have a few sheep and a small garden*”. So I ask Ahmad if working on the land and taking care of the animals isn’t working: “*You are a farmer, aren’t you?*” “*Yes*”, he answers, “*but that doesn’t bring me any money*”. I am confused.



Seeds of beans

Stories from Young Men About the Future

Mouaad, Mohamed and Salah are three young guys studying or working in a Moroccan metropole. They are on holiday, back in their home village. “*What do you want to know about the village?*” they ask, willing to inform and help, to share their ideas.

How come they are not just celebrating their holidays, I wonder. Why are they so concerned with the future of this remote place? I’m impressed with their knowledge and commitment. They know Ouled Merzoug very well. I’m grateful that they are willing to share their insights.

Mouaad, 27 years old, will live and work in Paris

Cityboy Mouaad worked in a Moroccan city as a computer engineer. “*Next week I am going to work in Paris*” he says. “*Nobody knows, except my mother and sister. If the story goes around, women in the village will start asking questions*”. Mouaad knows the city as well as the village life. He is convinced that Ouled Merzoug has to move on, but in specific way: “*We have to think carefully about the qualities of our village and how we can enhance them. Education is a main issue for the future. Children know how to play on their mobile phone, but they aren’t able to read or write very well*”.

Mohamed, 28 years old, teacher in Toundoute

Handsome Mohamed tells me everything about olives, the harvest and the way to prepare green and black olives for consumption. A few times a year he goes to Kelaat M’gouna by taxi. The ‘city of roses’ is a city 50 km further down the road. He goes there to buy almond flour or almond oil, olive oil, beauty products made from roses, ... His dream is to buy these products locally in Ouled Merzoug: “*We have everything in our village to start a cooperative and to produce local products, genuine local products that are not Made in China*”.

Salah, 26 years old, live and study in Ouarzazate

Respectful Salah looks like a very responsible man to me. He is a man who demands respect from the women of the village. When they don’t pay enough attention to his parole, he urges them to be quiet. But Salah is also a kind person. He wants to be friends with women. Salah is walking through the village with a girl. His family and the village people ask him: “*What are you doing with this girl?*” Before engaging in a (serious) relationship, he wants to get to know the girl very well. Who is she, what does she prefer, what does she like? ...To me, a Belgian, this seems to be a good basis for a good relationship between man and woman.



Ahmed (aka le petit oiseau) et sa fille

MARTINA

Stories of people in Ouled Merzoug

Single Mothers, Such Strong Women!

In Ouled Merzoug, I was confronted with fundamental questions about my own life. Would I be able to raise my three girls of 15, 11 and 3 years old, all on my own? Would I be able to live without my husband? Or could I bare to share my husband?

I saw forceful women, exhausted women, women cooperating, women early out of bed, women bearing heavy baskets or bunches of wood, women running fast, ... I saw them. But I didn’t manage to ask them the questions that keep me busy since.

How would life be for these women with their husbands nearby? Wouldn’t it be good if men could work closer to home? If there was more time for love?



Strong hands with henna on palms (married woman)

MIKI

“Would I be able to live without my husband?”

Where Are the Young Women? What Are Their Stories?

They weren’t much visible, the young girls and women. Boys were playing football every night at the open field in the neighbourhood. The daughters of my guest family got married at 16 and 18. They live with their husbands’ families in Casablanca. Mouaad’s sister returned home after a divorce. I did meet two sisters, Hennen en Ilhem, who spend their time working at home.

They like sitting at the riverside. They are looking forward to learning foreign languages in the women’s centre.

Looking back, I regret that I didn’t try harder to find young women to listen to their stories, their dreams. I know very well that the goal of our project serves them first. As UN Women states:

“*Investing in women’s economic empowerment sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth*”.



Young girls

MIKI



# Economic Future of Villagers in Remote Rural Areas

I was wondering, if the women could raise an income by themselves, maybe the husbands would be less pressed to go after jobs in faraway cities or even abroad. Then maybe a job with a more modest income nearby could suffice.

Morocco knows associations of women with the goal of developing remote rural region and create opportunities for the women to make a living. For instance, women work at the Association Tithrite, specializing in different products such as herbs, olive oil, and couscous in addition to the weaving that has always been the main activity for many local women. One day, they hope to create enough jobs and opportunities within their village Ait Hamza so that its youth will no longer be forced to go working far from home.

## Increasing the Earning Capacity of Women and the Culture of Women

Subject of the training program of the students of University Hasselt (Belgium) is improving living conditions of others, and supporting the framework of women’s lives in specific, in a non-European context, unusual to the students.

The objective of our Building Beyond Borders project is a women’s centre in Ouled Merzoug. We build on the insight that investing in women’s economic empowerment sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth. UNWOMEN.org gives several examples of how steps towards such evolution can be accomplished, most certainly in rural areas. An important insight may be that the highest possible education is not necessarily the ultimate goal and best possible option for young women. Relatively well paid craftsmanship in her own village is sometimes preferable to years of studying, hoping to get one of the few decent jobs in a city.

Nonetheless, it is up to the collective of women and/or those responsible in the group to point out what they need most and what in their opinion empowers them most. A clear wish that already has been uttered is language education: Arabic, English and French.



Pomegranate

JOLIEN



Diversity of plants in the Palmeraie

AURORA

## Rural Potential of Ouled Merzoug

### Agro forestry crops

A sound element in the rural identity of Ouled Merzoug is the palm grove, Palmeraie. In contemporary conceptualisation, this is a strong example of an agro forestry system with importance for nutrition, fuel, crafts, building materials, climate and landscape/leisure environment.

This environment is probably chemical free (air, soil, the entire ecosystem), which is a great advantage for organic certification (what consumers in the industrialized world find increasingly important).

Some thoughts on the possibilities

- An example is the life of the date palm in Ouled Merzoug. The date palm in Ouled Merzoug is entirely exploited in a sustainable way. Every part of the tree is considered for use. Rugs and baskets (from palm tree leaves) may be the cash crop for this community. Ouled Merzoug is the first village in the ‘Dades valley’ and could carry the name of a ‘date palm village’ in a credible way.
- Another promising perspective is to produce organic authentic olive oil from Ouled Merzoug. There is a specific quality of the river olives, distinctive of the olives elsewhere in the region. A small press in or near the women’s centre and a bottling installation may be an option. In the article about olives further in the news paper you can read more information about that.

- Pomegranate. Large amounts of fruit ripen in the same period. The less good quality of fruit that is not properly harvested or remains unsold, is thrown away. An important fruit in the palmeraie of Ouled Merzoug is pomegranate which has a short “in-season” window from October through January. If you squeeze the fruit, the juice can be drunk all year round. In Belgium you can find pomegranate year-round in grocery stores as a fruit, juice, as an addition in yoghurt, in cosmetics. It cannot grow in northern Europe and the price in Belgium shops is considerably high. It is promoted as a healthy fruit because:
  - you don’t need to add sugar
  - its high percentage of antioxidants
  - its ability to help control the blood pressure
  - ...
- In or near the women’s centre, e.g. in the same building of the olive press, a small fruitpress and a bottling installation may be an option.
- The women can make juice for export or they can start with selling pomegranate juice to hotels, restaurants for tourists in Skoura en Ourzazate.
- Making their own flour made from wheat, corn, ... that can be sold and can be used in the communal bakery. There is an idea of placing a communal oven and shared space for baking in the women’s centre. Today there already exist two communal bakeries in Ouled Merzoug, supported by members of the women association. This place is not owned by the women. It would be good to have a space of their own.
- Others are almonds and walnut crops. For selling or to put in the pastries of the communal bakery of the women.

- And there are more ideas! There is also the idea of the women to start a goat cheese diary. Every house in Ouled Merzoug has a goat that can be milked. Dairy products are rare in Ouled Merzoug. It could also be a success if a market not too far away (Oarzazate) can be developed.
- Sugar cane is a nutrition for humans and Moroccans use loads of it, but the leaves can also serve as fodder for cattle.



GUILLIA

### Dates



TINNE

### Cookies with dates made by Rachida El Finti



TINNE

### Sandwiches from the communal bakery

## The Need for Cooperative Principles

Besides formal language acquisition, there is a need for financial self-reliance. It is clear that cooperative principles are most promising to achieve economic growth. The global prices of almonds and walnuts have doubled over the past ten years, but the earnings of farmers have basically remained at the same level. In order to optimize the gains of the local community and to compete at a reasonable scale, a cooperative model is needed, facilitating the collaboration of neighbours, relatives and governments. The advantage of Ouled Merzoug is that you can already point out facilitators like Monsieur Hammy or the women’s association. Moreover, Morocco has successful examples of cooperatives of olive producers and textile artisans. The women’s centre may be a catalyst for these initiatives. We can see two potential activities to empower the women of Ouled Merzoug financially: growing agro forestry crops and artisan crafts.

### Artisan crafts

The two main crafts of women in Ouled Merzoug are making carpets and making baskets with palm leaves and plastic. This generates a small extra income from selling these products at the market in Skoura.

Older women are eager to pass their knowledge and skills on to the younger generation. The youth is quite well interested in this cultural element. Textile traditions can be kept alive by the next generation.

Interestingly, there is an operational economic model, named Anou. It is an online store that enables direct sale of produce of a woman or the women’s cooperative in Ouled Merzoug to clients in the large cities (not via intermediary). Anou adds a 20% fee on each product sold. It provides free training to the artisans with price setting, making good pictures of the product, etc.

Another idea is to ask the Ministry of Culture to start a Federation for artisans to preserve Morocco’s unique artisan heritage. It promotes the artisan in Morocco and shows the differences of the artisan from the regions. It is a long term project, fair trade, and the women of Ouled Merzoug could be fabricating their local handicraft. An example is the ‘Fundación Artesanías de Chile’, who is working to establish Fair Trade practices and preserve Chile’s unique artisan heritage. As a consumer, you can buy these products in shops in the large cities of Chile, or online. Every single product carries a label with some information about the artisan, the origin (village or region) and the materials used.



SOFIE

### Basket for bread made of palm leafs and plastic



TINNE

### Basis for a palm leave basket



TINNE

### Carpet made with textile



TINNE

### Carpet with label (Bolivia)



# Village identity of Ouled Merzoug

## What is Ouled Merzoug’s Identity?

Personally, I’m interested in the beauty of traditional architecture, and I enjoy the beauty of artisan objects and house goods for daily use as well. My appreciation is even bigger when these things are rooted in tradition, while actually being used and still serving today’s needs. Interaction and fusion with contemporary consumption goods from the global market can even be an enrichment.



Adobe wall of a house HANNAH



Stone wall on the hill HANNAH



The hill with trails HANNAH



Landscape context: river, palm grove, village, dry hills JOLIEN



Image of a small side street in the village HANNAH

## The Identity of Ouled Merzoug

I made a list of elements that, in my subjective observation, constitute the identity of Ouled Merzoug:

- Landscape context of the village: river, palm grove, road with dwellings, dry hills
- Architecture: ruins, adobe kasbahs, adobe flat roofed houses, high walls – yet, Skoura and other villages probably have more (intact) traditional architecture
- Crafts: weaving, baskets, embroidery, fences and decoration of reed, ...– yet, other villages maybe have more and higher quality artisans work
- Cuisine-gastronomy: bread, dades, olive oil, tajine, ...– delicious, but maybe not exceptional as compared to other villages
- Agriculture: crops, cattle, ...
- Transport: relatively rare use of cars inside the village, the traditional use of donkeys and walking as common ways of transport – but the tourist with a car or coming
- Infrastructure: roads, paths, aisles, trails, no asphalt yet, no way going through so macadamizing is not a necessity, wooden electricity pole

## Exploration of the Idea of Ouled Merzoug as an Eco-Ethno-Village

Based on the identity analysis, I explored the idea to develop Ouled Merzoug as an eco-ethno-village. In my dreams, public spaces would be improved, as well as the appearance of buildings, walls, fences and roads and paths, with references to the identity. The objective of that is a generally high standard of image quality that will raise Ouled Merzoug above the standard ‘Dades valley’

## Survey of Contemporary Dynamics

I also made a list of the contemporary dynamics, both positive and negative, that can enhance (or destroy) the identity of Ouled Merzoug:

- Settlement roads and parcel layout, today’s trend towards more houses for less permanent inhabitants, sprawl to the hill with houses and public buildings (schools)
- New buildings with distinct (modern) building material use (concrete, metal doors and windows)
- Vernacular architecture: common family houses, and new big Kasbahs
- Plans to macadamize the village road with concrete electricity poles
- Carpets made with synthetic dyes
- The use of plastic material, crafts made from plastic, ...



Donkey for transport SOFIE



Cornice in adobe SOFIE

## The Women Centre as a Vernacular Building

Our goal must be to incorporate this identity in the contemporary architecture of the woman’s centre building. The building of the women centre brings the vernacular building techniques in Morocco back to life. We will be using only local building materials: stone, adobe, reed, .... and we could think about the application of local crafts in the decoration of building, garden and public space:

- floor and drainpipes / downspouts in ceramics, made in de local kiln
- carpets, rugs from wool and palm leaves
- garden fencing and/or wall decoration from cane or reed
- pavement, curb stones (rain water retention)
- ...

“Yes, indeed, I can see the identity of Ouled Merzoug, and I have a dream...”



New adobe kasbahs, old adobe kasbahs (ruins), adobe flat roofed houses, high walls TINNE





Old castle of Ouled Merzoug



People

Education



KJELL KEYMOLLEN

L’école primaire

La nouvelle école primaire d’Ouled Merzoug a été inaugurée en 2014 à l’initiative des fondations *Good planet* et *AKUO*.

L’ancien bâtiment en tôle d’acier, trop chaud en été, trop froid en hiver, offrait de très mauvaises conditions d’apprentissage. Good Planet fait alors appel à l’architecte Virginie Pauchet pour concevoir la nouvelle école en terre crue, bois et roseaux. L’installation de l’eau courante permet également l’utilisation de bacs de plantations pour des potagers pédagogiques.

Désormais l’équipe enseignante composée de 6 professeurs peut accueillir les enfants dans 4 salles de classes.

Durant l’année scolaire, les cours se donnent le matin de 8h à 13h ou l’après-midi de 13h à 18h. Les élèves apprennent l’arabe, le français, les mathématiques, les sciences, l’éducation islamique, l’histoire/géographie et l’informatique. Le bâtiment de l’ancienne école et le préau attenant s’utilisent désormais pour les représentations ou les activités parascolaires : théâtre, sport, dessin, lecture, jeu d’échec...

Pendant les vacances scolaires, des associations de lycéens sont invitées à occuper l’espace pour organiser des animations avec les enfants. Ils peignent des fresques sur les murs de l’école, font des jeux ou des décorations en

matériaux recyclés et s’occupent du potager et des plantations.

**L’équipe enseignante :**  
- Mr Omar: 1ères années  
- Mr Jamal : 2èmes années  
- Mme Khadija (arabe) et Mme Nadia (français) : 3ème et 4èmes années  
- Mr Hammi (arabe) et Mr Hamid (français) : 5èmes et 6èmes années

Parmi eux, seul Monsieur Hammi habite Ouled Merzoug. Les autres instituteurs font la navette chaque jour depuis Ouarzazate (environ 40 min de trajet). Très impliqué dans sa communauté, Mr Hammi est aussi l’initiateur du projet de l’école maternelle, du centre des femmes et du projet d’inscrire Ouled Merzoug comme éco village.



Ouvriers construisant le toit du préscolaire

BC ARCHITECTS

Bio construction

L’école primaire et le préscolaire ont été construits selon des principes bio climatiques (ventilation naturelle, orientation du bâtiment...) en utilisant des matériaux naturels, tous disponibles dans un rayon géographique proche du village: terre crue pour les murs (techniques du pisé et adobe) bois et roseaux pour les toitures.

Favoriser les savoir faire locaux permet de créer de la main d’œuvre, mais aussi de valoriser ces techniques traditionnelles qui tendent à disparaître (souvent

au profit du béton, matériaux pourtant inadapté au climat local). La consommation d’énergie est ainsi largement réduite durant la construction mais aussi maintenant que les bâtiments sont en usage.

Dans la cour, des potagers hors-sol ont été installés pour éduquer les enfants aux enjeux de l’agriculture durable. Prenant possession de leur nouvelle école, les élèves encadrés par une équipe d’enseignants très impliqués ont peu à peu fait fleurir ces jardins. Les fruits et légumes cultivés

sont redistribués aux élèves. L’association Marcher Connaître Agir se rend à Ouled Merzoug plusieurs fois par an pour les accompagner dans ce processus.

Durant l’année scolaire 2014/2015 l’école participe au programme Eco Ecole de la fondation Mohamed VI. Au cours de cette année ils mettent en place un système de tri et de recyclage des déchets, réduisent leur consommation d’énergie en optant pour des ampoules à faible consommation, installent un système d’irrigation des jardins par goutte à goutte et favorisent la biodiversité dans leur plantations.

A l’issue de cette année ils ont reçu le prestigieux Pavillon vert qui récompense les écoles avec les meilleures performances écologiques du Maroc.

L’ambition de monsieur Hammi est maintenant de pouvoir sensibiliser le reste du village aux enjeux écologiques et inscrire Ouled Merzoug sur la liste des éco villages du gouvernement marocain.

Le préscolaire

Au Maroc, l’école n’est obligatoire qu’à partir de 6 ans. De plus, en zone rurale les bâtiments réservés à cet effet sont souvent peu salubres car ils ne sont pas subventionnés par l’état. Ces conditions peu propices à l’apprentissage ont pour incidence une très faible fréquentation des préscolaires (équivalent marocain de l’école maternelle).

C’était le cas du préscolaire d’Ouled Merzoug. Il se situait en plein courant d’air, sans sanitaire ni espace de jeu. En 2016, la fondation Good planet, soutient de nouveau un projet éducatif pour Ouled Merzoug. C’est l’agence

d’architecture belge BC architects qui conçoit le bâtiment selon des principes bioclimatiques. La nouvelle école pouvant accueillir jusqu’à 30 élèves, dispose d’une salle de classe confortable, tant au niveau spatial que thermique. Elle est encadrée par 2 patios qui donnent accès aux commodités et aux divers espaces de loisirs (cour ombragée pour jouer, lire des histoires, organiser des ateliers de plantations grâce à l’apport d’un point d’arrivée d’eau).

Halima qui enseigne aux plus petits, témoigne que le passage par le préscolaire est une étape

importante au développement de l’enfant : « les élèves qui sont passés par le préscolaire apprennent mieux. Ils savent déjà écrire lors de leur arrivée à l’école. Ils s’intègrent mieux » Le nouveau préscolaire offre désormais de bonnes conditions aux 3/6ans pour apprendre et s’éveiller.

Conscientiser les familles de l’importance de mettre leur enfant plus tôt à l’école est un processus lent. Pour autant, Halima a bon espoir de voir la fréquentation du préscolaire augmenter au fil des années grâce au nouveau bâtiment.



BC ARCHITECTS & STUDIES



BC ARCHITECTS

Mr Hammi Raconte

L’enseignement au Maroc comme dans le monde entier est une nécessité et un facteur de développement. Ici à Ouled Merzoug, avant que j’arrive en 1983 il n’y avait pas beaucoup d’élèves dans l’école, entre 9 à 11 par classe en moyenne. Parmi eux seuls les garçons poursuivaient leurs études.

A partir de 1999 les premières filles ont pu aller au collège grâce

“le taux de filles à l’école franchi maintenant 56%”

à beaucoup d’initiatives pour convaincre les parents de les laisser poursuivre leurs études.

La mère est la première école de l’enfant. Nous donnions des exemples de ces femmes qui si elles même sont peu instruites n’arrivent pas à éduquer leur petits enfants. Le fait que la nouvelle école ait des sanitaires a aussi été un bon argument.

De là, le nombre d’élèves a augmenté. Maintenant et après la rénovation de l’école le nombre d’enfants varie entre 125 et 130. En plus, ils ont la possibilité d’aller plus loin. Certains d’entre eux vont jusqu’au Master et beaucoup de filles et de garçons deviennent fonctionnaires de l’état. Je peux même dire que le taux de filles à l’école franchit maintenant 56% !

L’école coranique

Jusqu’à il y a peu, les écoles coraniques appelées Mside se chargeaient de l’éducation non formelle, telle que le coran, les mathématiques et la langue arabe.

Au Maroc, religion et état sont étroitement liés. Le roi actuel Mohammed VI est considéré comme le descendant de Mahomet. Son rôle en tant que «commandant des fidèles» est de veiller au respect de l’islam. Lorsque la religion musulmane fait face à une vague de radicalisation, lieux de culte et lieux d’apprentissage sont alors différenciés.

Dans les petits villages tels qu’Ouled Merzoug, les mosquées sont fermées avant et après chaque prière. Des associations d’apprentissages jouent le rôle d’enseignement avec des professeurs agréés par l’état. Dans la région, seule la grande mosquée centrale de Ouarzazate a encore un imam qui enseigne au Mside.



MARGOT LAMBRECHTS

Recyclage

Alors que beaucoup de familles brûlent encore leurs déchets, à l’école les enfants apprennent à les trier.

Le plastique récolté sert à l’artisanat (*cf page 30*). Le verre est vendu à des marchands qui le rachètent pour le recycler. Le papier s’il n’est pas brûlé est pressé ou sert à faire des

“Une fois rentrés à la maison, les enfants proposent à leurs parents de trier leurs déchets.”

décorations pour l’école. Pendant l’année du concours pour le Pavillon vert, des poubelles ont été installées dans le village pour inviter les habitants à suivre la dynamique de leurs enfants.

A l’époque la tentative n’a pas rencontré un franc succès hors des murs de l’école. Malgré tout, ces initiatives portent leurs fruits auprès de la jeune génération. Une fois rentrés à la maison, les enfants déjà sensibilisés aux enjeux environnementaux, proposent souvent à leurs parents de trier leurs déchets.

Sanitaires

*Cela peut sembler anecdotique... Pourtant l’accès à des santaires corrects à l’école a une influence sur la fréquentation des filles!*

Il est facile pour un garçon d’aller faire la petite commission dans un recoin autour de l’école. Mais si les sanitaires ne sont pas entretenus, les filles elles, n’y vont tout simplement pas. Un pipi nature serait mal vu. Pourtant les journées sont longues et chaudes

sur les bancs de l’école. Avant la construction du nouveau bâtiment, les filles n’avaient que peu d’options: rentrer chez elles pour faire la commission ou se retenir (entraînant de nombreux cas d’infection urinaire). La nouvelle école a pu réparer ce déséquilibre et offre aux filles les mêmes chances de concentrer pleinement leur attention sur leurs études.



Education

A chaque génération ses enjeux d’apprentissage

Selon monsieur Hammi, les femmes adultes qui veulent apprendre se regroupent sous 3 catégories différentes :

Les plus vieilles veulent apprendre un métier. Leur but est avant tout de faire vivre leur famille.

Les femmes d’âge moyen veulent parler d’autres langues. Ce sont celles qui n’arrivent pas à poursuivre leurs études au-delà du collège car souvent rattrapées par les obligations familiales. Elles cherchent une ouverture. Pouvoir

communiquer dans une autre langue peut ouvrir la possibilité de commercialiser leurs produits plus facilement.

Les plus jeunes veulent connaître l’informatique. Elles ont eu accès aux infrastructures mises en place dans le village. Elles ont assisté à des classes bilingues et on déjà un bon niveau d’étude. L’informatique représente pour elles un nouveau challenge et une ouverture professionnelle vers des métiers académiques.



AURANNE LERAY

Activité des empreintes colorées avec les femmes d’Ouled Merzoug

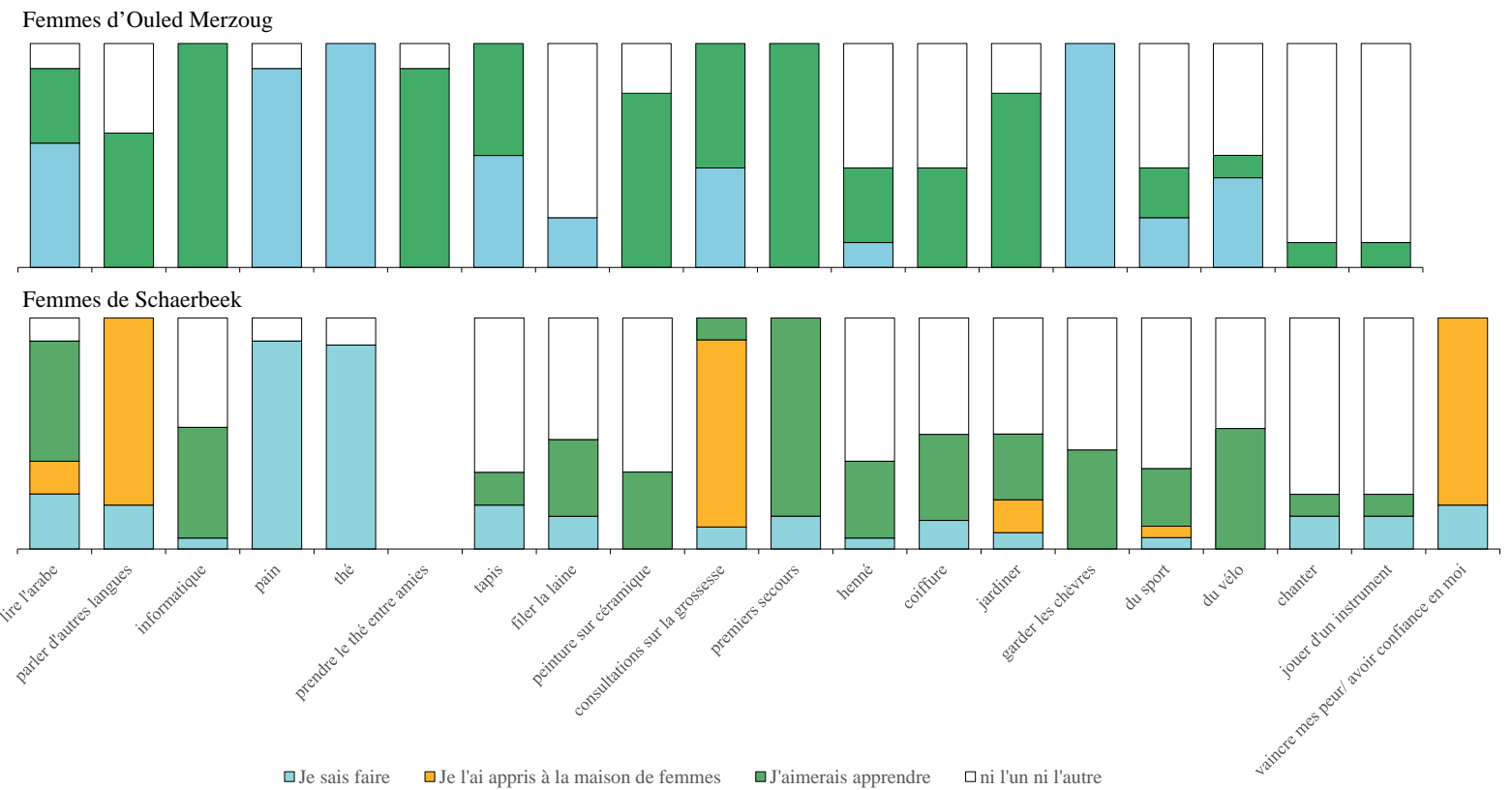
Empreintes colorées

Pour comprendre quelles activités les femmes souhaitent développer au centre des femmes, nous avons imaginé un exercice permettant de communiquer sans avoir à parler la même langue.

Des images représentent différentes activités. Devant chaque image, les femmes sont invitées à apposer leur empreinte après avoir trempé leur doigts dans de la peinture.

-Peinture bleue : ce qu’elles savent déjà faire

-Peinture verte : ce qu’elles veulent apprendre



AURANNE LERAY  
merci à mr hammi, mohamed imzline, naïma jakrir, amina amadel et toutes les femmes du cours de français de la maison des femmes de schaerbeek



MIKI ZEA

Badra Ouled Merzoug

Par un beau jour de Novembre, Badra nous invite pour un couscous. Cet après-midi là, après manger, elle nous montre ses ruches, comment elle file elle-même la laine et la teinte naturellement. Elle nous parle de l’importance d’une maison des femmes pour développer l’artisanat et transmettre ces connaissances qui petit à petit tendent à disparaître.

**A: Badra, tu sais filer la laine et faire des teintures naturelles avec la peau des grenades. Tu cultives aussi du miel à l’aide de petites ruches dans les murs de ta maison. Ces activités, peu de femmes à Ouled Merzoug savent encore le faire. Quand et comment as-tu appris cela?**

Le miel, c’est d’abord mon père qui m’a appris. Puis je me suis occupée des ruches des voisins et je me suis perfectionnée. Au début j’étais la seule femme du Doar à savoir comment s’occuper des abeilles. Depuis j’ai pu apprendre à Fatna et Halima et entre nous on s’entraide. Cela

demande certains équipements et il faut dépasser un peu ses peurs. Personne parmi la jeune génération ne sait faire pour le moment.

Les tapis et la soie c’est avec ma mère et les voisines que j’ai appris, lorsque j’étais jeune fille. C’est ce qu’on appelle le rite du «Tana» : une sorte d’atelier collectif. On se rassemble autour du métier à tisser chez une des femmes. Là on

“le rite du Tana: une sorte d’atelier collectif. De cette manière on apprend beaucoup, et vite!”

peut suivre ensemble le processus de A à Z. On tisse à tour de rôle et pour chacune des femmes présente. De cette manière on apprend beaucoup, et vite !

**A: Il y a-t-il d’autres savoirs-faire qui se pratiquaient autrefois, qui soit aujourd’hui oubliés et lesquels?**

Oui, le miel par exemple a disparu après une invasion de criquets. L’état a alors déversé des pesticides très agressifs sur les champs alentours. La formule utilisée ne permettait pas à l’écosystème de subsister. Après cela beaucoup d’abeilles ont disparu.

La fécondation des dattes également. Peu de gens s’en occupent encore car c’est un

métier peu valorisé. La production n’est pas rentabilisée. Pourtant les dattiers de la palmeraie continuent de donner des fruits, mais personne ne les cueille car beaucoup ne sont plus bonnes à manger. Au lieu de cela les habitants achètent au souk, des dattes importées de l’étranger.

La préparation de la soupe laâsida (soupe à base de grains et lait écrémé “leben” ou d’huile d’olive) dans le temps, elle se faisait tout au long de l’année. Maintenant c’est surtout pour les occasions particulières (mariage ou ramadan).

**A: Pourquoi ne sont-elles presque plus pratiquées selon toi ? Penses-tu que cela aurait de l’intérêt pour les nouvelles générations de les réapprendre?**

La poterie est physique et contraignante à cause de la fumée. Et puis les hommes des villages à côté le font déjà. De même pour la cuisine traditionnelle, les femmes n’en veulent plus.

Pour lbndeg, aujourd’hui des machines le font, alors c’est mieux.

Concernant l’activité liée au textile, avant on s’habillait fièrement avec ce qu’on avait cousu ou brodé. Mais maintenant on suit plutôt les modes alors on achète les vêtements plutôt que de les concevoir.

Pourtant, ce serait très bénéfique pour la nouvelle génération de réapprendre ces artisanats perdus. Chaque connaissance a un intérêt, surtout économique!

**A: Penses-tu que certaines de ces activités pourraient être enseignées dans le futur centre de femmes et comment?**

Oui bien sûr. La vieille génération

a envie de transmettre à la nouvelle. Nous sommes là pour les aider. Khadouj par exemple le ferait très généreusement. Comme la culture du Tana, je vois le futur centre des femmes comme une sorte d’atelier collectif où les femmes travaillent, et se partagent leurs idées, mais aussi discutent de leurs problèmes.

Je pense que les femmes ont inventé le Tana pour pouvoir se rassembler, se distraire et échapper à la solitude du foyer. Ici les femmes ne peuvent pas sortir ou se voir sans une raison valable. Elles doivent avoir l’accord de leurs maris. Avoir un endroit pour créer ensemble leur offre cette possibilité. C’est un lieu exclusivement pour les femmes. Les maris sont ainsi assurés qu’aucun autre homme ne les approche.

“L’étiquette «Maison des femmes» c’est rassurant pour elles comme pour leurs maris”

C’est aussi pour cela que les femmes sont si enthousiastes à l’idée d’un centre rien que pour elles. Parce que l’étiquette «Maison des femmes» c’est comme «Bain des femmes». C’est rassurant pour elles comme pour leurs maris.

La maison des femmes de Schaerbeek

Avant de partir en voyage d’étude à Ouled Merzoug, les étudiants du BBB sont allés à la rencontre d’un groupe à la maison des femmes de Schaerbeek (Bruxelles). Ces femmes sont marocaines pour la plupart et suivent un cours de français. Avec enthousiasme et une grande générosité elles ont répondu à nos questions sur le Maroc et leur vision d’une maison des femmes.

Elles nous ont aidés à préparer notre rencontre avec les femmes d’Ouled Merzoug. Dans le contexte d’une ville nord européenne, la maison de femmes de Schaerbeek joue un rôle

important dans l’intégration et le bien être de ces primo arrivantes. Elles y apprennent les langues étrangères, y pratiquent diverses activités (couture, gym, conférences, cinéma). Elles ont accès à des permanences juridiques, psychologiques et médicales.

Cette maison de quartier, c’est aussi l’endroit où elles se rencontrent entre voisines de tout âges et tous horizons. Lieu d’échange, et d’entraide, pour beaucoup d’entre elles cette maison est une bouffée d’air frais dans un quotidien pas toujours rose.

A notre retour d’Ouled Merzoug, nous avons répété l’exercice avec les femmes de Schaerbeek afin de comparer les résultats. A la différence près que nous avons ajouté une couleur :

-Peinture Jaune : je l’ai appris au centre des femmes

Instinctivement, à la fin de l’exercice les femmes de Schaerbeek ont souligné un oubli: « L’estime et la confiance en soi ! Vous avez oublié de le mettre dans vos images! Pourtant c’est une des choses les plus importantes que nous ayons apprises ici au centre des femmes !» Une fois ce manquement réparé c’est à l’unanimité qu’elles ont apposées une belle empreinte jaune devant la nouvelle case.



AURANNE LERAY

Les élèves de la Maison des femmes Schaerbeek

**A: A vous entendre c’est clair, la Maison des femmes, vous a permis avant tout d’apprendre à vaincre vos peurs, avoir confiance en vos capacités. Comment?**

**Ouria:** Quand je suis arrivée ici j’étais perdue. Je sortais dehors et je ne savais pas retrouver ma propre rue. Au Maroc on sortait un peu, mais on restait surtout dans notre quartier. Et puis c’était notre pays, notre culture, notre langue. Ici j’avais peur, alors je demandais tout le temps à quelqu’un de m’accompagner. Partout. Je me sentais seule, isolée, dépendante.

**Naïma (la professeure):** Beaucoup arrivent en Belgique en ayant déjà un certain âge. C’est pas facile pour elles. On a fait un gros travail sur les déplacements. Savoir prendre le tram et traverser toute la ville. Demander son chemin en français aussi.

**Yamina:** Oui! Au moins maintenant quand je me perds, je sais comment rentrer!

**Ouria:** Moi je fais tout toute seule. Je vais à 2h de route si il faut.

**Rhana:** On n’est parti de rien. On n’est même pas allées à l’école. Mais maintenant je m’en fous, j’y vais. Si je rencontre une belge dans la rue, et ben je lui parle!

**Rhimo:** Oser ! C’est ça qu’on a appris. On avait cette énergie à l’intérieur, mais ça sortait pas. On avait honte. Maintenant si quelqu’un se moque de moi je lui réponds «Ben quoi? J’apprends!»

**Fatima:** Moi j’aurais jamais cru être capable de prendre la parole en public comme ça. J’étais tellement timide! On nous a donné un espace où c’était possible de se développer. Grace à la Maison des femmes on a pris confiance et on se donne les moyens de se dépasser.

Ici c’est une bulle. La règle c’est: «On oublie tous les problèmes dehors. On se concentre sur notre apprentissage.»

“On avait cette énergie à l’intérieur, mais ça sortait pas ”

**Wafae:** D’ailleurs le Prophète a dit «Il faut apprendre jusqu’à la mort.»

**Ouria:** Seule, c’est difficile d’apprendre. Mais en groupe ça va tout seul.

**Fatima:** Les femmes d’Ouled Merzoug, c’est pas comme nous. Elles n’ont pas tout à reconstruire de zéro, dans une autre langue, une autre culture. Ce centre des femmes ça va leur ouvrir des portes, et elles vont aller loin. Elles vont nous dépasser c’est sûr!



People

The Guest Families of the Village

The map shows the layout of Ouled Merzoug village, with a river or path running through it. Red squares on the map indicate the locations of the guest families. Circular callouts provide photos and quotes from the families.

**Tinne:** “We stayed very close to the family which caused a great commitment on both sides. I got an Arabic name, Fatima, and I was dressed as a local woman. This was a funny experience but at the same time somewhat uncomfortable. They took good care of us and they were even worried when we had to find our way home late at night. The language barrier made it difficult to explain why we did certain things. Yet, it was clear if Halima did not agree with something. They know very well what they want in life.”

**Margot:** “In our guest family they made us feel like we were at home, part of the family. When Karima took me to her friends, she hooked her arm into mine on the way. She smiled and told me that she did the same with her other best friends.”

**Emily:** “One night we were having couscous for dinner with a bunch of female friends and family. The women showed us how to roll small balls of couscous in your hand in order to eat it. But we were very bad at it, so they kept giving us balls of couscous to eat.”

**Aurora:** “Staying in Ouardia’s house felt like being included within a new family. All the family members treated me with love and regard. They did their best to make me feel at home.”

**Martina:** “Yessefi came with a plastic jar of milk and started rubbing it on the carpet. Kjell and I tried as well. She kept on doing it for a good hour, adding a bit of hot water every now and then. It is a very demanding job. We did it the wrong way and Yessefi mocked us laughing. She has sense of humor!”

**Sofie:** “Fadeyla was our perfect host mom. Warm and very welcoming, yet calm and willing to give us the space we needed. We stayed up late every night, talking to her about many different topics with the few words we had learned so far. We enjoyed each other’s company, sharing meals and stories, surrounded by her very sweet children.”

**Miki:** “The family Auranne and I stayed with in Ouled Merzoug consisted of a mother and father and their 4 children between 16 and 4 years old, with a 5th one on the way. Although the family was quite shy and reserved, all the children were very enthusiastic and keen to learn. They were very hospitable and made a lot of effort to make us feel welcome in their home. The house was situated on the hill a little outside the village, made from traditional building techniques. A one level building with a courtyard, 3 indoor rooms and 2 outside areas for animals. Outside the main walls of the building there was a separate toilet room and a small garden with some kitchen vegetables.”

**Arnaud:** “Playing football with the kids in the living room was one of the highlights for me!”

**Hannah:** “It took a while before we ate together with the whole family, so our first meal together was very special. On the women’s day I got a fluorescent yellow hat from my mum to work on the field, and she was almost lying on the floor of laughter, along with two other women, when they saw me harvesting grass this way.”



Authentic experiences at my family

# “You are like a sister to me”

## Authentic experiences at my guest family, my second home

BY MARGOT LAMBRECHTS



Flip flops

In house, the villagers don't wear shoes on a carpet. So, soon I found myself running around on my socks. But the family was very happy to help me and give me a pair of their collection of colorful flip flops. Although I brought my own, I liked using them because they made me feel closer to the family and their culture.

“Barrakka!” (enough)

When I arrived at my guest family's house, one of the first things I did was drinking mint tea (with a lot of sugar) with the family. They drink tea with every meal. And let me tell you, there are a lot of meals a day! Lunch and dinner are usually hot meals. Before, you get a snack, and after, fruit or sweets. So be prepared to eat, eat or 'Kul kul' as they say.



A womens day

All female students had to observe their hostess for a day. The woman of our house, Karima, was very happy that someone was interested in what is very common for her... She tried to explain to the best of her abilities how they do things. When another women passed by and saw me crawling on the field to harvest the food for the animals, she almost couldn't stop laughing.

The master room

We slept in the guestroom of the house. This was the biggest room. The family made sure we had our own place in the house with enough privacy. They asked exactly where we wanted them to make our beds in the room. Did we prefer to sleep on the carpet or on the sofa? They gave us a pile of blankets, to make sure we would not be cold at night.



“The little nomad in me”

For as long as I can remember, my parents have been loving travelling. They believe travelling enriches lives and makes us look at our life from another perspective. So that is what I experienced while travelling as a young kid. We loved to stay as local as possible, to really get to know the culture and its daily life aspects. Did you ever get someone visiting you, who notices these little things that you don't see anymore? Well, I believe tourism can do the same thing, and make people see the quality of what they already have. Of course there are also a lot of risks to tourism, for example exhausting natural resources, globalization, losing the local culture and economy ... That is why we should organize tourism very carefully, so that people know what harms and what enriches people, cultures and nature. After my visit to Ouled Merzoug, I had some first



MARGOT AND MOTHER IN 2005

thoughts. Any form of tourism should be small in numbers, as not to overwhelm the village. But if done right it could offer something extra, which hopefully makes local people stay. Because now, they tend to move to bigger villages close by.

BY MARGOT LAMBRECHTS



Dress-up party !!

We stayed with two students with a guest family during two weeks. At the end of the week when we got to know each other a little better, they wanted us to be part of the family. We had to dress up in traditional clothing. It started with a 'kaftan' (traditional dress), but soon we were standing there with a veil, shoes and jewelry and all! We had a good laugh together.



Henna

While staying with the local family, sometimes, there were family or friends staying over as well. The women made drawings on each other's hands with henna as decoration and pastime. An older woman colored her whole palm as decoration, but also to disinfect her hands. "If you like this, they will be more than happy to decorate your hands during this women's moment", one woman said.



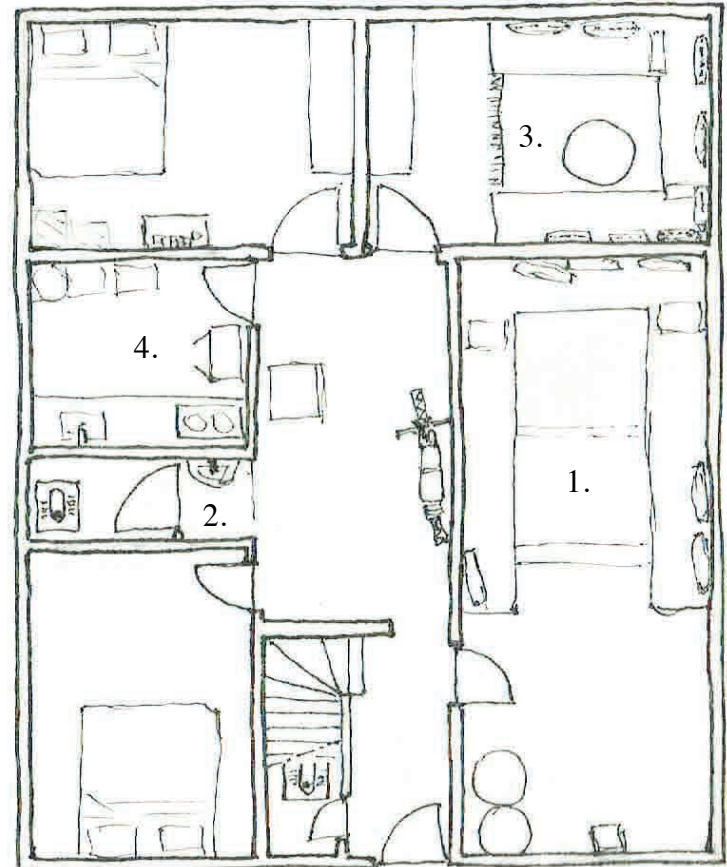
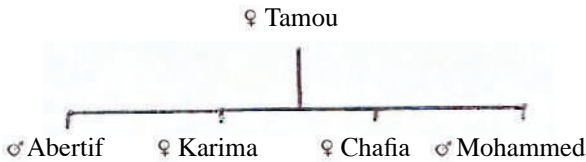
Our group of BBB , the first eco-tourists? PICTURE BY MARGOT LAMBRECHTS

## My guest house

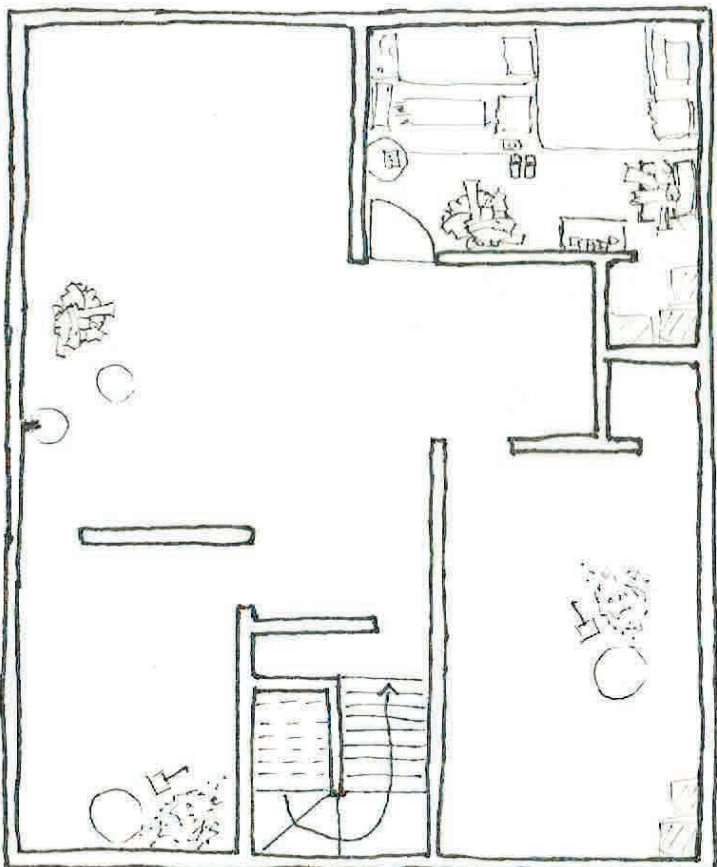


MARGOT LEFT , KARIMA , JOHN AND CHAFIA

- Qualities of Karima :
- Crochet
  - Baking
- Interesses of Karima :
- Learning french
  - Learning to work with computer
- Spoken language :
- Arabic
  - Little French



Plan 0



Plan +1

SKETCHES BY MARGOT LAMBRECHTS



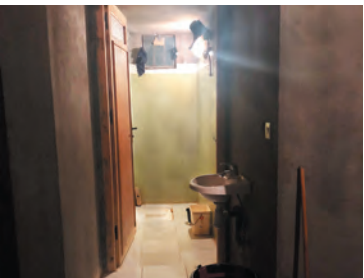
The exterior



The herbal garden



1. The guest room



2. The bathroom



3. The living room



4. The kitchen



The stables



The view from the roof

PICTURES BY MARGOT LAMBRECHTS



La Cuisine Marocaine: un Régál des Sens



Au Maroc, un repas c’est bien plus que le simple fait de manger. Comme dans le sud de l’Italie, c’est plutôt un rituel. On s’assoit pour goûter tous les plats, pour parler avec les autres et apprécier le moment présent. Cela se fait dans le calme pour mieux apprécier chaque détail. C’est une chose que j’aime beaucoup. Et voilà qu’à Ouled-Merzoug j’ai ressenti la même sensation de plaisir, dans cette atmosphère extrêmement agréable. Dès que je suis arrivée au Maroc, tous mes sens ont été stimulés: les rues fourmillantes de gens et les voix qui se lèvent de toute part m’ont immédiatement fascinées. Je me suis sentie comme chez moi en Italie. Mais ce qui a par-dessus tout capté mon attention, ce sont les couleurs si vivantes et les odeurs puissantes. Elles y sont plus prononcées que dans tous les autres endroits où j’ai voyagé. L’odeur du pain qu’on vient de sortir du four caractérise le petit déjeuner. Il est composé d’un thé, d’une crêpe sucrée accompagnée de miel, de confiture, d’huile, puis de dattes et d’olives, des amandes mais également de gâteaux, de pain ou de riz.



MARGOT LAMBRECHTS

Les viandes les plus utilisées sont le bœuf, l’agneau ou le poulet. De nombreux légumes sont également utilisés, aussi bien pour le couscous que le tajine.



GIULIA VENTRE

À la fin du repas, on vous offre une assiette de fruits frais colorés et savoureux, qui varient en fonction des saisons.



GIULIA VENTRE

Thé à la Menthe, Symbole de l’Hospitalité Marocaine



MIKI Z

Le thé à la menthe Marocain est servi dans une théière en argent avec un long bec, et il est versé à partir d’une certaine hauteur.



GIULIA VENTRE



MARGOT LAMBRECHTS

Qu’il soit l’heure du petit-déjeuner, du déjeuner, du dîner ou du goûter, si des invités arrivent dans leur maison, le premier réflexe de toute famille à Ouled Merzoug sera de mettre de l’eau à chauffer pour le thé. Et pas n’importe lequel, car au Maroc cette boisson a beaucoup d’importance. Appelé ‘Atay’, ‘latay’ ou ‘tay’: derrière ces différents noms se cache le thé à la menthe, symbole du Maroc et de l’hospitalité locale : une boisson chaude consommée pendant toute la journée. Je suis restée à Ouled Merzoug

seulement trois jours, mais je ne peux plus compter les verres de thé qu’on m’a offert. J’aime cette tradition, emblème de la bienvenue d’un peuple chaleureux. Pour préparer le thé à la menthe, il faut faire infuser du thé vert et des feuilles de menthe dans de l’eau bouillante avec en prime, une bonne dose de sucre.

Il existe plusieurs expressions et croyances populaires qui sont justement liées au thé et au sucre. Par exemple, on croit que si le thé n’est pas pris pendant la journée, alors on a mal à la tête.

“Boire du thé au Maroc nous apprend à ralentir, à nous regarder avec les autre”

Une expression très répandue est : « thé, thé, thé, s’il n’y a pas du thé, mes yeux ne s’ouvrent pas » (atay atay atay ila makan atay iniya maylhalo). Pour ce qui est du sucre, il est si important dans la tradition marocaine qu’en arabe on dit: « on naît avec le sucre et on meurt avec le sucre » (kantwaldo bssakar okanmoto bssakar). De plus, la couleur du sucre représente la paix, la clarté, tandis que son goût c’est plutôt la douceur et la bonté.

Le Rituel de la Cérémonie du Thé Marocain

La préparation du thé est composée d’un rituel fascinant et riche d’histoire. Les étapes fondamentales consistent à verser le thé trois fois dans des petits verres, d’une hauteur d’environ 40 centimètres. En effet, tout l’art du thé consiste à le faire mousser, car seul le thé servi très mousseux honore dignement l’invité. Ce geste a aussi une utilité pratique: lorsqu’on fait bouillir l’eau pour préparer le thé, il perd son oxygène. En faisant couler le liquide de très haut, on réoxygène l’eau pour une meilleure digestion. Les Marocains font ce geste de manière si harmonieuse que je reste émerveillée à chaque fois. Enfin, il ne faut pas sous-estimer le bruit agréable que fait le thé quand il tombe dans le petit verre, autre aspect sensoriel lié à la cérémonie du thé. C’est la boisson de l’hospitalité et elle ne se refuse pas.

La Diffusion du Thé au Maroc

Au cours du règne du Sultan Mulay Isma II, pendant les premières décennies du XVIIIe siècle, le thé a fait son entrée au Maroc en tant que présent de la reine Anne d’Angleterre à la Cour pour remercier le sultan d’avoir libéré des prisonniers britanniques. C’était alors une boisson rare réservée au Sultan et aux notables. Il faut attendre la deuxième moitié du XIXe siècle pour que cette boisson commence à devenir populaire dans tout le pays, de nouveau grâce aux Britanniques. En fait, lors de la guerre de Crimée en 1854, le blocus de la Baltique, interdisant aux marchands anglais les pays slaves, incita la Compagnie des Indes à vendre l’excès de thé chinois dans les ports marocains de Tanger et Essaouira. Dans le thé marocain, on utilise le thé vert de Chine Gunpowder, connu pour ses propriétés diurétique, anti-inflammatoire et anti-âge. La menthe est celle dite marocaine ou Mentha spicata Nanah, très similaire à la menthe verte ordinaire mais au feuillage plus gaufré et à la saveur plus



GIULIA VENTRE

prononcée. Elle est utilisée pour rafraîchir, désinfecter et contre le mal de tête. Pour toutes ces raisons, le thé présente donc de grands bénéfices pour la santé. Aujourd’hui, le Maroc est le premier importateur de thé vert au monde, mais depuis quelques années, on le cultive aussi localement. La plaine du Loukkos produit aujourd’hui 10% de la consommation nationale.

Giulia Ventre, étudiante BBB

<http://www.gamberorosso.it>  
<https://www.viaggiodasolaperche.com>  
<http://www.viaggiare-low-cost.it>  
<http://laroute.duthe.free.fr>  
<http://www.conferieduthe.org>

Politesse et Bon Usage à la Table: Traditions et Coutumes

“La fin du repas appelle, elle aussi, sa formule consacrée : el-hamdulillah. Ainsi rend-on grâce à Dieu de ses bienfaits, au premier rang desquels se situe la nourriture que l’on vient de prendre. Car ces coutumes ont leurs lettres de noblesse. C’est à l’imam Hassan, petit-fils du Prophète, que l’on doit, nous dit-on, les douze règles de politesse qui définissent le bien manger. Les quatre premières sont définies comme obligatoires: avoir présent à l’esprit que Dieu est celui qui donne et se satisfait de ce qu’il a donné. Prononcer les formules rituelles du bismillah et du hamdulillah. Les quatre règles suivantes sont dites coutumières, bonnes à observer mais non obligatoires: se rincer les doigts avant le repas, s’asseoir sur son côté gauche, manger avec trois doigts, se lécher

les doigts pour terminer. Les quatre dernières constituent une marque de civilité: il s’agit de ne toucher qu’à la partie du plat que l’on a devant soi, de ne prendre que de menus morceaux, de bien mâcher, de ne point fixer les autres convives...”

Magali Morsy  
Le monde des couscous

Si vous êtes invité pour un repas à la maison de quelqu’un, préparez-vous à une expérience incroyable et très intense. Cependant, comme décrit dans l’extrait du livre ci-dessus, il y a également quelques règles éthiques à suivre.

1. Dès que vous entrez dans la maison, vous devez retirer vos



MARGOT LAMBRECHTS

chaussures et les laisser près de la porte.  
2. Une fois que le repas est prêt, asseyez-vous autour de la petite table ronde, sur laquelle il y a juste une grande assiette en commun au centre.  
3. Manger avec les mains est une



MIKI Z

tradition, et pour cette raison c’est très important de les laver avant de commencer le repas. Pour ce faire, on vous propose de vous rincer les mains dans un bassin en métal.  
4. Mangez avec votre main droite uniquement: la main gauche peut être utilisée pour ramasser

du pain ou passer la nourriture à d’autres personnes. Ne pas se lécher les doigts avant la fin du repas.  
5. Si vous mangez dans un plat commun, prenez juste le triangle situé devant vous.  
6. Attendez-vous à recevoir plus de nourriture une fois que vous avez terminé votre portion. Il est poli de refuser, mais si vous avez trop mangé et que vous êtes rassasié, caressez simplement votre ventre et secouez la tête en disant “La, shukrran” (“Non, merci”). Ne soyez pas surpris si votre hôte continue à vous pousser à manger.

Giulia Ventre, étudiante BBB



Les outils de la cuisine

Daily life



**Ragoût de viande ou de poisson avec des légumes est typique de la cuisine marocaine.**

Le tajine est préparé avec un plat de cuisson large et peu profond, surmonté d’un couvercle conique, en terre cuite. Cet instrument ancien est capable de maximiser l’arôme des aliments et de donner au plat un goût nettement plus intense. Les caractéristiques particulières du pot condensent les vapeurs sur

le couvercle conique d’où elles tombent sur les aliments à cuire, en les gardant moelleuses et en englobant tous les arômes qui seraient autrement perdus. Son utilisation garantit une cuisine saine et légère.

Giulia Ventre, étudiante BBB

La Recette du Tajine de Poulet de Ouardia

Ingrédients pour 5 personnes

- 2 cuisses de poulet
- 1 oignon
- 2 courgettes
- 2 carottes
- 2 tomates
- 1 poivron
- 1 petit bouquet de persil
- 1 pincée de piment rouge en poudre
- 50 cl d’eau
- 3 cuillères à soupe d’huile d’olive
- Sel

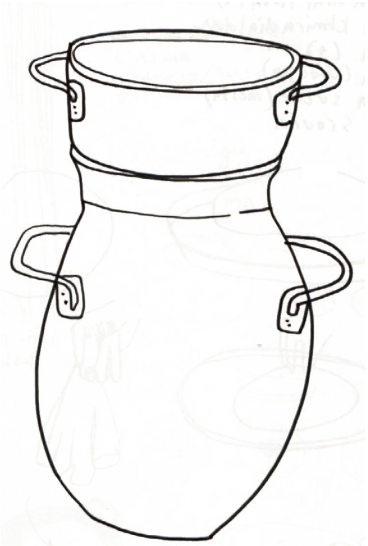
1. Faites chauffer l’huile d’olive et lorsqu’elle est bien chaude, mettez le poulet et le piment dans le plat, puis faites-les revenir pendant 10 min.
2. Lavez vos mains, puis épluchez et coupez les légumes. Pelez et taillez les tomates et enlevez la partie centrale des carottes.
3. Mélangez le poulet et ajoutez les légumes. Ensuite, ajoutez un peu d’eau et laissez mijoter pendant 30 minutes.
4. À la fin de la cuisson, rectifiez l’assaisonnement en sel et ajoutez le poivron et le persil. Servir en utilisant le tajine comme plat et avec du pain frais.



MIKI Z

Voilà le Couscous!

Le plat national le plus célèbre au Maroc est le couscous. Il est créé à base d’une farine de semoule de blé de couleur crème qui ressemble au sable du désert. Préparée à l’huile d’olive, et cuite à la vapeur dans un bouillon aromatique elle est ensuite assaisonnée de légumes cuits avec la viande ou le poisson (rissolé auparavant et/ou plongés dans un bouillon). Si vous êtes invités à manger le couscous, vous le mangerez avec une cuillère mais sachez que traditionnellement il se mange avec la main: les marocains forment de petites boulettes avec la semoule, la viande et des légumes écrasés, tout un art!

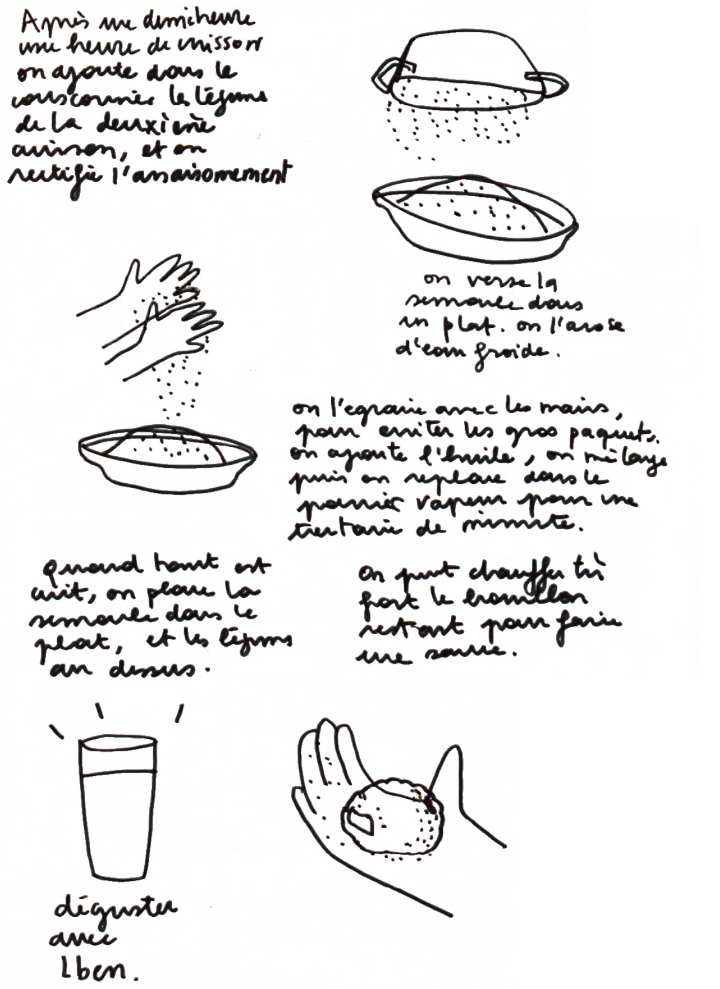
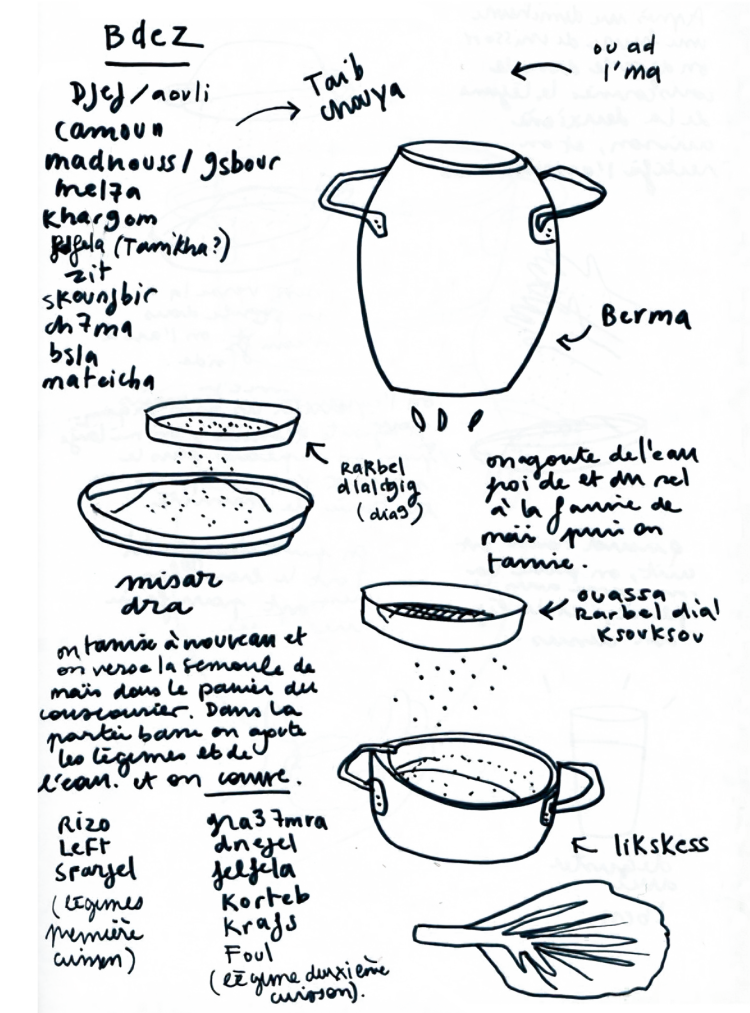


Giulia Ventre, étudiante BBB

HARMONIE BEGON



AURORA FANTI



HARMONIE BEGON

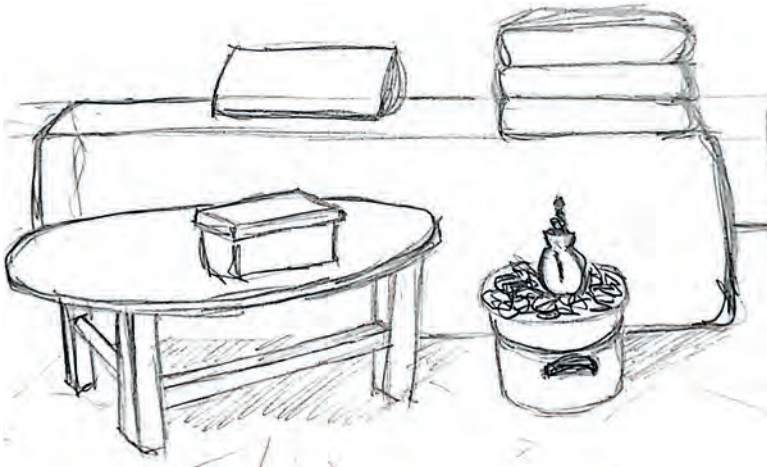
Les Espaces Dédiés à la Nourriture Dans Une Maison d’Ouled Merzoug

À Ouled Merzoug, les repas sont pris en famille. Par conséquent, les maisons sont équipées pour accueillir ce moment de convivialité et de partage. Généralement, la cuisine est séparée de l’espace pour manger. En fait, la cuisine n’est pas considérée comme une pièce noble et, de ce fait, elle présente souvent de petites dimensions. Elle est aussi régulièrement utilisée comme stockage. Sommairement aménagée, on trouve généralement un simple plan de travail, bas mais surtout transportable pour permettre aux femmes de se déplacer facilement dans la maison. Pour ce qui est du séjour, il est souvent associé à la grande pièce, réservée aux invités. Il est également très peu aménagé : des canapés tout autour de la pièce pour accueillir les convives avec au centre des tables rondes où on sert les repas ou le thé. Les couleurs vives des tapis et des coussins caractérisent cette espace.

Giulia Ventre, étudiante BBB



AURORA FANTI



GIULIA VENTRE



AURORA FANTI



GIULIA VENTRE



# Daily life

## Bread recipes

### Normal Bread and Variations



Normal bread

EMILY HAEST



Making oven bread

EMILY HAEST

#### Ingredients:

- 3 cans of flour (you can use only one type of flour such as corn flour or you can use 3 different types. In case of 3 types use 1 can of corn flour, 1.75 cans of wheat flour and 0.25 can of barley flour)
- 3 teaspoons of yeast
- pinch of salt and sugar
- semi hot water

#### Extra ingredients for Medfouna:

- 2 onions
- bunch of parsley
- fat of meat

#### Extra ingredients for gobs di chehma:

- 2 onions
- 1 carrot
- 1 zucchini
- 1 chili pepper
- fat of meat
- pinch of salt and pepper
- 1 teaspoon of curcuma
- 1 teaspoon of ginger
- 1.5 teaspoons of cumin

#### Preparation for the dough:

- Put the flour, yeast, salt and sugar in an earthen pot.
- Add water, little by little, while starting mixing with your hands.
- Every 15 minutes, turn the dough.
- Keep adding water until the dough is a nice ball not too soft or hard.
- Brush the dough with some oil.
- Let rise for 30 minutes.
- Make balls a little bigger than your palm.

#### Making oven bread:

- Take a dough ball and make a round pancake form (20 cm diameter).
- Pinch it a couple of times with a fork.
- Place it with an oven spatula in the oven far enough apart so that the dough can expand.
- Check regularly and remove the bread from the oven when golden brown.



Preparation of the dough

JOLIEN BOSMANS

#### Making stuffed pancakes:

- Chop the vegetables finely, as well as the fresh herbs. Mix everything with the spices and the fat of the meat.
- Take a dough ball and make a round pancake from 1 to 2 cm with your fingertips.
- Put the filling in the center and take the edge of the dough and pull inwards until it is a closed ball.
- Make again a round pancake from the filled ball from 1 to 2 cm with your fingertips.
- Bake in a pan on 2 sides with some oil.

#### Variations of the plain bread:

##### Batbout:

The dough is made in the same way but the bread is baked in a pan instead of an oven.

##### Mahrash:

The dough is made in the same way but before going into the oven, you put some grains of couscous on top of the bread.

Margot Lambrechts & Emily Haest

### Pain Collé

#### Ingredients:

- 3 cans of flour
- 2 liter hot water
- 1 liter semi hot water
- 4,5 teaspoons of yeast
- pinch of salt

#### Preparing the oven:

- Make a fire with palm leaves and wood in a traditional round oven.
- When the fire is burning well, cover it at the top and let it burn well so that the earthen pot is discolored from white to black.
- When most branches have been burnt, remove the largest coal from the oven.
- Clean the inside of the oven with a wet rag until the black is removed.
- Cover the remaining coals with an iron scoop.

#### Preparation of the dough:

- Pour 2 liters of hot water into a mixing pot.
- Sift the flour and pour it into the water.
- Add yeast and salt to the mixture.
- Mix the whole by kneading and then stamping with a clenched fist in the dough.
- When the dough forms a whole, add 1 liter of semi warm water, little by little.
- (Here you can pull part of the edge of the dough inwards occasionally and continue to work with fists. When you add a little water you can turn the dough whole and mix it further.)
- When everything is mixed well, cover the whole with plastic and towel on top.
- Let rise for 30 minutes.

#### Baking the bread:

- Take a portion of the dough and place the dough on one hand.
- Wet your arms and stick the dough on the inside oven wall. Make sure your arms do not touch the oven!
- Continue spreading the dough open against the oven wall, into a 1 to 2 cm thick oval.
- Use extra water when the dough is released from the oven wall.
- Do the same for a second dough ball in this oven. Two loaves can be baked per oven and per heated fire.
- Let the dough bake for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Loosen the bread by sliding an iron spatula between the oven wall and the bread.

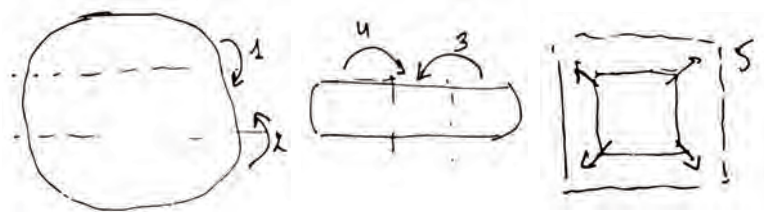
Margot Lambrechts



Making of pain collé



SOFIE VAN DEN VELDE



How to fold the msemen

EMILY HAEST



Msemen

EMILY HAEST

### Msemen

#### Ingredients:

- 400 grams of flour
- 100 grams of semolina flour
- 1,5 teaspoon of yeast
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 300 ml of semi hot water
- oil and butter

#### Preparation of the dough:

- Mix the plain flour with the semolina flour.
- Add yeast and salt to the mixture.
- Add water, little by little, while mixing the dough with your hands.
- Let it rest for 10 minutes.
- Cut the dough into smaller balls of about 5 cm.
- Cover a big round pan with oil and cover your hands in oil as well.
- Take 1 ball and flatten it as thin as possible, putting some more oil on the dough. Make sure the dough stays greasy.
- Now you are going to fold the pancake into a rectangular shape.

- Take one third of the upper part and fold it down, do the same for the lower part and fold it upwards.
- Take one third of the left side and fold it to the right, do the same for the right part and turn it to the left.
- Flatten your small rectangular pancake to a bigger rectangle.

#### Baking the pancake:

- Melt some butter in a cooking pan.
- Put your pancake in the pan.
- With your hands, let the pancake rotate in the pan.
- Flip the pancake with your hands.
- Keep on rotating the pancake with your hands.
- Remove from the pan when it has a nice golden colour.
- Serve with some jam.

Emily Haest

### Gobs Gorisatzj (bread rolls)

#### Ingredients:

- 1 cup of flour
- 1 glas of sugar
- 1 glas of oil
- 1 teaspoon of yeast
- 1 bag of baking powder
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon of Nescafé
- sesame seeds



Gobs Gorisatzj

EMILY HAEST

#### Preparation of the dough:

- Mix all the dry ingredients.
- Add the oil, little by little, while mixing the dough with your hands.
- Let it rest for 60 to 90 minutes.
- Cut the mixture into smaller balls, about the size of your fist.
- Let it rest for another 30 minutes.
- Mix the egg with the Nescafé.
- With a brush, put some of the egg mixture on top of the dough balls.
- Put some sesame seeds on top of the dough balls

#### Baking the bread rolls:

- Take a dough ball and place it with an oven spatula in the oven.
- Repeat until your oven is filled with the dough balls but leave some space between the balls so that the dough can expand.
- Check regularly and remove the bread rolls from the oven when golden brown.

Emily Haest



Types of bread and ovens

Ovens

In Ouled Merzoug we have seen that the women use 3 different kinds of ovens. There are 2 traditional ovens and 1 gas oven. The gas oven has a rectangular shape and is made out of metal. It can be placed on the ground or on a worktop. Usually it is placed somewhere inside the house.

The traditional ovens are made out of earth. Here they use clay from the hillside. The traditional ovens are placed in an outdoor space which can be covered. They are normally placed in the same space, next to each other. The first traditional earthen oven looks like a round pot. It is rather small (its diameter is about 40-50cm) and it is used for making ‘pain collé’. In this case you can make 2 breads per oven and per heated fire. The second traditional oven is much bigger than the first one. It is somewhat ball-shaped. The oven is about 1m wide, deep and high.



EMILY HAEST

Traditional round oven

The oven consists of 2 openings,. The first opening is placed on the right side. It starts from the ground and it is used for making the fire. The second opening is positioned on the left side and it is lifted from the ground. The opening is filled with a layer of rocks and it is used to bake the bread. The second oven is used for baking the ‘bread of water’ or ‘gobs lemàh’ in Arabic. The bread got this name because more water is used compared to other bread types.

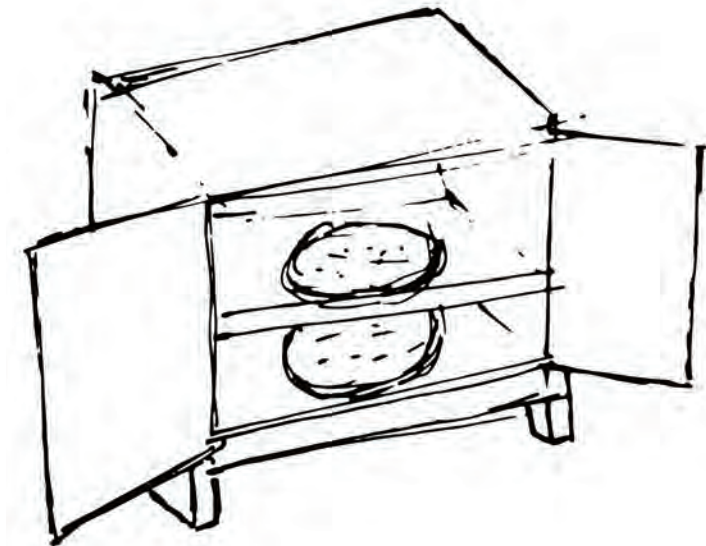
Emily Haest



Different types of bread served in Ouled Merzoug

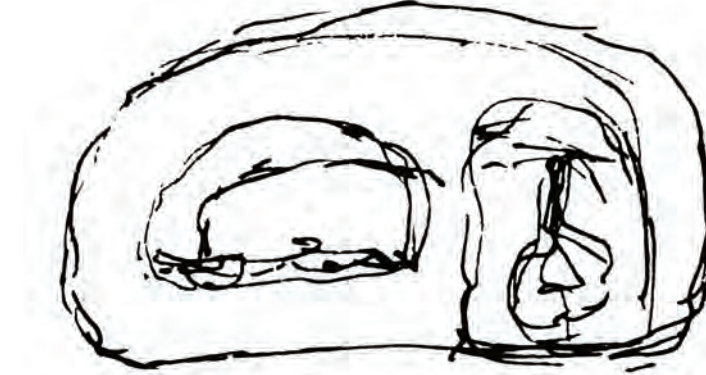


TINNE BEIRINCKX, EMILY HAEST, MIKI Z & AURORA FANTI



EMILY HAEST

Gas oven



EMILY HAEST

Traditional stone oven

Besbusa (Orange Cake)

Ingredients:

- 3 eggs
- 4 oranges
- 1 glass of oil
- 1 glass of sugar
- 1,5 glass of smieda (semolina flour)
- 1 glass of regular flour (sifted)
- 2 bags of baking powder



MARGOT LAMBRECHTS

Preparation of orange cake

Preparation:

- Press 3 oranges into 1 large glass of juice.
- Add this juice in the blender together with 3 eggs, the oil and sugar and mix the whole.
- Pour the mixture into a bowl and add the smieda and bags of baking powder.
- Sift 1 glass of flour into the mixture.
- Beat with a beater to a homogeneous mass.
- Pour the mixture into a low, large baking tin so that the dough sits 3 to 4cm high.
- Bake the cake over a low heat for 30 minutes.
- Put a pan with a glass of water on the fire. Add half an orange in parts and 1 glass of icing sugar. Stir and cook through.
- Remove the cake from the oven and pour the juice over the cake with a spoon, spread well and leave to cool.

Margot Lambrechts

Bread

In Morocco there are a lot of different types of bread, depending on the type of flour that is used, depending on which kind of oven or cooking pan is used and also depending on which ingredients are used for the finishing. Each bread gets its own name.

If you look at the types of oven there are 2 traditional ovens which are used for making 2 traditional bread types.

The round oven is used for making ‘pain collé’ (the recipe for this bread you can find on this page), the bigger oven on stone is used for making the ‘bread of water’.

The gas oven and the cooking pan are used for the other types of bread. The most important type is the standard bread of flour (also called the plain bread, the

recipe you can find on this page), this bread is the basis for other variations and filled alternatives. This standard type is baked in the gas oven. ‘Bathout’ requires the same preparation as the normal bread but it is baked in a cooking pan instead of a gas oven.

“making your own bread is very demanding work but most of all satisfying ”

Experience of Making the Bread

On our fourth day in Ouled Merzoug we were asked to follow a woman of our guest family. This day was very important to us because we were able to experience how the daily life of the women of Ouled Merzoug looked like. This way we could imagine better what kind of activities they do, which activities are the most time consuming, which are the most important to them etcetera. On the other hand it was a time where we, as visitors, were confronted with are limitations by growing up in another culture. What the women thought as a very normal activity, something that every woman should be able to do, for us almost all of those activities were very difficult to do and to us, all the women are real artisans. For example, each day the women make freshly baked bread and so on Thursday we got the chance to observe and to assist in making these delicious Moroccan breads. In our guest family we made two types of breads that day. The first

pile of breads we made, was the plain bread, the type of bread we would eat every day. In our home they came together with several women (neighbors, friends and family) to work together. In the house there was a separate room which would only be used for making bread. First of all we had to prepare the dough for the bread. We started by putting together all the dry ingredients in an earthen pot. Then we started to add water, not all the water at the same time but little by little, until we reached the perfect ratio at which the dough would not be too soft and not too hard. While we were adding the water, the woman who was mixing the dough, used the perfect technique. She would smash the dough with her fists, taking the outer parts of the dough and pulling them to the middle of the plate and she would repeat these steps for a while. When the dough was let to rest for about 30 minutes, another woman would come and help in order to

‘Mahrash’ is made in the same way as the normal bread but it is finished off with some grains of couscous on top.

The ‘medfouna’ is the basic stuffed pancake, or ‘pain farci’ in French. It uses the same dough mixture as the normal bread and then it is stuffed with onions, herbs and spices. The stuffed pancakes are baked in a cooking pan. ‘Gobs di chehma’ is another stuffed pancake. The preparation is similar to the ‘medfouna’ (you can find the recipe of the ‘medfouna’ and the ‘gobs di chehma’ in the recipe of the plain bread).

Instead of the regular wheat flour you can use the ‘semolina’ flour. ‘Semolina’ is the coarse, purified wheat ‘middlings’ (product of the wheat milling process that is not

flour) or ‘durum’ wheat. The bread that is made with this kind of flour is called ‘khobz di smieda’. They also have a bread made of barley flour which is called ‘khobz di zraa’.

Next to bread, the women can also make bread rolls, ‘gobs gorisatszj’ (you can finid the recipe on this page).

There are also a lot of sweet variations. ‘Beghrir’ for example, is one kind of pancake. Another kind of pancake is ‘msemen’, which is known very well in the community (you can find the recipe on this page).

The women also make cakes sometimes. ‘Besbusa’ is a light cake with oranges (you can find the recipe on this page).

make small balls of the dough and afterwards they would flatten them into little pancake forms. After another 30 minutes, it was time to bake the bread in the gas oven and in the evening we could enjoy are homemade bread!



EMILY HAEST

Making of msemen

Between the preparation of the dough and the baking of our plain bread we also made msemen, traditional Moroccan pancakes. The mixing of the dough of the msemen was very similar to the plain bread but the preparation afterwards was very particular

for the msemen. First of all it was very important to use lots of all oil and butter, our hands, the plate and the dough had to be covered in grease. Then we took a small ball of the dough and made a rectangular shaped pancake. How did we do this? Well, we started by flattening the ball on our plate and then we folded the edges inwards. At this time we had this small rectangular shaped pancake which we extended outwards to make it a bit bigger. Now it was time for the fun part, baking the pancakes with our bare hands! We put our pancake into a greasy cooking pan and started rotating the pancake so it would not burn. When it was golden brown at the bottom, we flipped the pancake to the other side, again with our bare hands, which was pretty hot. When we had cooked all the pancakes my fingertips felt a bit sore but when I got home to Belgium I was already accustomed to rotating my pancakes that I now do it at home as well!

Emily Haest



# Green and Black Gold?

Young women are climbing in the olive trees, shaking the branches or pulling olives from the twigs. “*Plup, plup, plup, watch out!*” A woman hits the branches with a stick to make the fruits come off. Olives are falling on a plastic canvas. From November till January this is daily labour for the women of Ouled Merzoug. They harvest cooperatively and manually.

“The women harvest olives cooperatively and manually”

This heavy work and the tree care represent around 80% of production costs. Three women work three trees a day. They take turns and pay each other in a share of the olives, of the olive oil or in currency, about 60 to 70 Dirham a day. An olive is a vulnerable fruit. It can be wounded easily during harvest and transport. The use of harvesting machines is rare. At home, the bags are put down wide open to prevent the proliferation of yeasts or molds. Providing space for drying olives is one of the multiple functions of the large inner space in a traditional house.

A Strong Tree as a Symbol of Peace

An olive tree is one of the most drought-resistant trees in the world. Mature olive trees only need occasional watering during prolonged periods of little rain or drought. Young trees may require up to 2,5 gallons weekly until they are established, depending on levels of rainfall. They cannot survive in wet soil.

The olive is an extremely ardent tree, a model of vitality. It was considered sacred by ancient people. Its Berber name is ‘azemmur’, diverted from the term ‘tazmat’ (strength). Until this day, to “extend an olive branch” means to make an attempt to solve a conflict. The flag of the United Nations depicts the world with two olive branches on either side, symbolizing its goal of world peace. An olive tree is a popular gift at birth, marriage and as a souvenir at the decease of loved ones.

“The Berber name of a olive tree is ‘azemmur’, diverted from the term ‘tazmat’ (strength)”



Flag of the United Nations



Women at work picking olives



Black olives in a bag

AURANNE LERAY

## Black Olives in a Bag

How do black olives become so dry and salty? You prepare them by putting the olives in a perforated bag (for example a couscous bag) and add salt. The bag is positioned between two big stones and rests there for two to three months. In the open courtyard of our house I saw a plastic bag of black olives on the ground. Is this another way



Fresh green olives



Olive tree

## Most Families Have Olive Trees

In Ouled Merzoug people grow big and small, black and green olives: green olives mostly for eating, black olives mostly for olive oil, some for eating. Some families have no trees, others, like Mohamed’s family,owns 25 trees. They yield between 200 and 600 kg annually (depending on weather conditions). This only covers their personal use. Their olives are not sold. Some families have even more trees, and a yield of around a ton per annum.

## Inedible Fresh Green Olives!

Fresh, untreated olives are inedible due to the extreme bitter taste caused by a glycoside. After harvesting this taste is neutralized by treatment with a diluted salt solution. But how does the salt enter the olive fruit? My Moroccan mummy Halima taught me to slit 3 to 4 cuts in an olive or to smash it with a stone. After smashing the olives, they are put in a bowl of salted water, lemon and pigment. The bowl is placed in a dark space and after 3 to 4 weeks, the water is refreshed. The green olive is then ready to eat.

“Fresh, untreated olives are inedible”

Le bonheur est dans l’amertume\*

*Il y a des choses qu’on n’apprend pas à l’école... et ces petites leçons de vie vous laissent parfois un gout amer... littéralement.*

Ce jeudi matin, c’est pleine d’enthousiasme que je me mets en route pour la palmeraie avec Fuzia et Miki. On ne tarde pas à retrouver Fadila, Eline et Sophie ainsi que toute la ribambelle d’enfants de nos mamans d’accueil respectives. On parcourt les plantations, coupe la luzerne et on s’émerveille (moi tout du moins) devant la richesse de toute cette végétation. Devant les Oliviers surtout.

Devant ces arbres là, ce sont tant de souvenirs d’enfance qui refont surface. J’ai 10 ans et pour la première fois je parcours un champ d’Olivier dans le sud de la France. Le bois sec et tortueux. Les feuilles graphiques et pastelées... Oh et les olives! Leur gout acidulé, leur chair tendre. Ces réminiscences m’ouvrent l’appétit.

Alors, prise d’un élan bucolique, me croyant en pleine communion avec la nature, je cueille délicatement un fruit, le mets en bouche et le mord à pleine dent.

*Note à moi-même et à tout autre ignorant de mon espèce: On peut apprendre à tout âge, pour autant, certaines leçons sont moins cuisantes si elles ne se font pas en présence d’un public nombreux et rieur. De fait, les olives crues, d’une extrême amertume sont immangeable avant le processus de saumurage.*

\*citation de Jules Renard



of preparing black olives?

## Olive Worldwide Consumed

Olive fruits are widely used. Olive oil is used for cooking, as medicine, ointment, body care,... It's a basic ingredient of soap. Every Moroccan consumes an average of 2,5 liters of olive oil per year. Belgians only consume 0,5 liters of olive oil per year.

“Every Moroccan consumes 2,5 liters of olive oil per year”

## Olive Oil Made in Skoura

For centuries, the production of olive oil was small-scale family business. Today only the harvest is a job done by hand by women village workers. The end product of the process is an industrial made olive oil for food consumption.

Today the pressing and bottling of the olives of the region of Ouled Merzoug is being done in Skoura. There are several truck drivers in the village who bring the olives to a big press in Skoura. People are being payed per kg olives: the price amounts up to 0,5 Dirham per kg. The big press works with batches of 1 ton of olives. 100 kg of olives yields between 16 to 24 liters of oil, depending on quality/ quantity water, soil,...

The pressing costs 60 Eurocents per kg of olives. The scooter that picks up the olives costs 80 Dirham round trip Ouled Merzoug – Skoura. If each of the 150 families picks on average 300 kg of olives, the total cost of pressing their olives amounts 39.000 Dirham per annum.

## “Disadvantages of pressing olives in Skoura”

The disadvantages of pressing in Skoura are:

- No authentic taste, several origins are being mixed.
- Large batches needed (at least 1 ton). Individual producers send their production to the press. Excess amounts are stored and kept for the next transport, which doesn’t promote quality.
- Due to the transport, the oil is not so fresh.
- The producers receive moderate to low prices.
- The uncertain factor in the payment process is the yield of oil in litre per kg of olives.
- The producers are not united in a cooperation or other association. This makes them very weak in the price setting.



Many kilos of freshly picked olives



Traditional wooden olive press with palm leaf baskets

## New Story: Olive Oil Locally Made in Ouled Merzoug

The key to add local value to olive oil, is pressing the oil in Ouled Merzoug. This could result in a genuine, regional product of specific quality and controllable origin. In this case, the label ‘bio’ would be easy to reach. Smaller batch sizes would enable fresh production and immediate processing parallel to the harvest rate. The olive oil would be sold by litres, and not by the ton of olives. As an effect, the oil prices will be in proportion to quality and the producers will be able to negotiate better prices. More added value can be created by processing the oil in other derived products like soap and beauty products. Small batches enable to separate qualities (e.g. green and black) and pick only the ripe olives in several consecutive harvests.

## “A small press in Ouled Merzoug to make high quality olive oil”

The women of Ouled Merzoug can put a small press in the women’s centre for making their own oil, based on the four simple principles that guaranty high quality olive oil: 1) harvest them by hand, 2) pick them ½ black and ½ green, 3) bring them straight away to the facility for pressing, and 4) cold press them without heating.

The women’s centre could hold a portion of the (bottled) oil as a payment for the pressing. This oil can be used as a payment method to people in the village that deliver other services to the centre or as an alternative, the centre can sell olive oil by itself.

I propose two possibilities for making the olive oil:

- 1) The old way, using the traditional wooden press for dried olives in a palm leaf basket with stones, like you can see in the Kasbah Amridil-Skoura. In the same way but with the power of electricity: two big mill stones driven by a motor for mixing the pulp. Positioned in series behind that mill, there would be a modern press with palm leaf baskets.
- 2) Three small industrial devices in series. This would be a machine that removes leaves and twigs and washes the fruits to start. Secondly, a machine that mixes the fruits (malaxer). Next, the resulting pulp is then transferred in a hydraulic press. The measurements for the space needed (machines plus operation space) will be around 4 by 8 meters. Depending on the productivity of the orchards of Ouled Merzoug, they can decide on the size of the press. The table on this page shows technical specifications of a typical small to medium size professional olive oil press.

## Olive Oil as a Growing Market in Morocco

Morocco is in the top 5 of the largest olive oil producers. In recent years there has been a strong increase thanks to the ‘Morocco Green Plan for the Development of Agriculture’. Morocco aims to have 1,22 million hectares of olive groves by 2020, compared to only 773.000 hectares in 2009. The production of olives will then reach 2,5 million tons. Olive oil has become a mass consumable, processed through machines in a factory.

“Morocco is in the top 5 of the largest olive oil producers”



TINNE



TINNE

Olives in a bowl of salted water

## A Village House for an Oil Press

So, it is a good idea to install a small oil press in Ouled Merzoug. The best location for it seems somewhere near the women’s centre but at the same time near the road. This leads to the idea of selecting an empty house near the stairs and the path that leads to the women’s centre. Another possibility might be the actual bakery behind the mosque, once this will be in the women’s centre. Combining this with a cheese factory is an option, since both need a clean, tiled chamber.



TINNE

Professional small press

Feature	S size	M size
Malaxation capacity	2 x 40 kg	2 x 100 kg
Power supply	3.5 kw	9 kw
Hourly throughput	50 – 80 kg	100-150 kg
Weight of crusher/ malaxer/ decanter	350 kg	325 kg / 500 kg

TINNE BEIRINCKX



TINNE

Modern press with palm leaf baskets



# Daily life

## La palmeraie



Vue de l'ensemble de la palmeraie

MARTINA PETROSSINO

### Ecosystème

La palmeraie d'Ouled Merzoug est constituée de terres agricoles associant des arbres et des cultures. On peut la considérer comme un système agroforestier. L'écosystème de la palmeraie est constitué de trois couches. La première est constituée de palmiers dattiers, la deuxième d'arbres fruitiers et la troisième de cultures potagères. La plupart des parcelles sont délimitées par les chemins ou le système d'irrigation. Depuis des générations, l'homme a su tirer profits des palmiers dattiers, non seulement pour ses fruits, mais aussi pour son bois de chauffage et ses différentes parties utilisées de multiples manières dans l'artisanat local. Les arbres fruitiers constituent ensuite le deuxième étage de végétation sous le palmier

dattier. On trouve le grenadier, l'olivier, le figuier, l'abricotier, le cognassier, la vigne, l'amandier, mais aussi quelques poiriers et pommiers qui peinent à survivre aux fortes canicules de la région. Cette deuxième couche permet d'ombrager les parcelles et de garder l'humidité de la terre pendant les périodes les plus chaudes. Il semblerait que les fruits soient essentiellement réservés à la consommation familiale. Enfin, en cultures sous-jacentes, on rencontre l'hiver, de la luzerne, du blé, de l'orge, des fèves, des carottes, des navets, des oignons, de la coriandre et de la menthe. L'été, quand les disponibilités en eau sont suffisantes il est notamment possible de faire pousser du maïs, des courges, des pastèques, des tomates et des piments. En dehors des animaux domestiques, le cheptel familial



HANNAH VAN BREEN

La palmeraie d'Ouled Merzoug

est essentiellement constitué de volaille, ainsi que de quelques têtes de caprins et d'ovins. Les ânes sont indispensables pour les transports divers et variés.

Alice Chang

### Une palmeraie pour tous?

Il y a quelques dizaines d'années, les habitants qui ne possédaient pas de terrain à cultiver pouvaient cultiver sur le terrain d'un tiers sous réserve d'offrir à ce dernier 4/5 de la production annuelle. Aujourd'hui, ce principe demeure mais la redevance est nettement moins élevée pour ainsi permettre aux plus démunis de vivre dignement. Lorsque l'eau du canal n'est plus suffisante pour irriguer l'entièreté de la palmeraie (aux alentours du mois de mai), un système de partage nommé "système de tour"

est organisé et annoncé par micro. Il permet à chaque propriétaire de bénéficier de l'eau du puits du village. Les canaux sont déviés de manière à ce qu'un certain nombre de "tour" soit donc attribué à chaque propriétaire en fonction de la surface des terres qui lui appartiennent (1 tour = 24h d'accès à l'eau). Les habitants qui ont les moyens de construire leur propre puit le font. Les voisins et autres habitants pourront utiliser ce puits également, moyennant le prix du gaz nécessaire à faire tourner ce

dernier. Avec les sécheresses annoncées pour les années à venir, il est raisonnable de penser que la quantité d'eau sera probablement insuffisante pour exploiter la totalité des parcelles de la Palmeraie. Ne faudrait-il pas songer à l'instauration d'une politique d'exploitation raisonnée et rationaliser de l'eau? Par exemple mettre en place, une technique de micro-irrigation éprouvée, tel que le goutte à goutte.

Alice Chang

### Les trésors d'Ouled Merzoug

La plupart des femmes du village connaissent bien les techniques culturales, elles savent manier les techniques d'irrigation, utiliser le fumier, et entretenir leurs parcelles. Au cours des derniers siècles, les variétés les plus adaptées au climat local ont été sélectionnées. Force est de constater que l'utilisation d'engrais et de pesticides chimiques est insignifiante voir inexistante. Il semblerait donc qu'Ouled Merzoug a pour l'instant échappé à l'emprise de l'agro-industrie

qui sévit de par le monde. Cette industrie est parvenue à privatiser les semences et à empêcher la reproduction artisanale des semences afin de monopoliser un système de production alimentaire dans lequel pesticide et achat de semence génétiquement modifiée vont de paire et deviennent la norme. Et ce, avec les conséquences que l'on commence à connaître autant pour les sols, les plantes et la santé. ( des sols morts, dépendance à

l'achat de plantes génétiquement modifiées et des problèmes de santé liés aux perturbateurs endocriniens) Il est important de remarquer que les habitants d'Ouled Merzoug ont un réel trésor entre leurs mains. Ce trésor est d'une part matériel puisqu'ils sont maîtres de leurs semences, mais il est aussi immatériel puisqu'ils ont un savoir-faire.

Alice Chang

### Un exemple parlant

Le cas de Saytlia, une microentreprise, est particulièrement évocateur de ce qui pourrait être fait à Ouled Merzoug. Tout commence par un couple qui hérite de terres familiales non loin de Rabat et décide de s'y installer. Ils commencent par planter des arbres (oliviers et autres arbres fruitiers) pour protéger leur terrain de l'érosion. Ensuite, ils mettent

en place un potager, dont la terre ne sera enrichie qu'à base de fumier naturel. Le potager nourrit leur famille, mais il s'avère que très rapidement un surplus se dégage pour les amis et les voisins. Suite à la crise financière de 2010, le couple décide de lancer leur commerce. Ainsi, plusieurs fois par semaine, ils distribuent des paniers de fruits,

de légumes et des préparations faites maison. Le tout commandé par internet. Cette activité permet, aujourd'hui, au couple d'employer trois personnes et ainsi faire vivre trois familles dans de bonnes conditions. Cet exemple est particulièrement encourageant pour ceux et celles qui imaginent un avenir tout en restant à la campagne.

Alice Chang



MARGOT LAMBRECHTS

La récolte de la luzerne



ALICE CHANG

Palmier dattier



TINNE BEIRINCKX

La récolte des olives

La luzerne cultivée ( Medicago sativa) est une plante herbacée vivace originaire des régions tempérées du Proche-Orient. Elle est largement cultivée comme plante fourragère, compte tenu de sa grande résistance à la sécheresse et sa richesse en protéines. D'où le nom qu'on lui connaît couramment, à savoir la "reine des plantes fourragères". La culture de la luzerne occupe une place dominante dans la Palmeraie d'Ouled Merzoug. Elle est une des ressources principales pour le cheptel familial. Il n'y a pas de zone de pâturage autour des oasis ce qui oblige les femmes à nourrir quotidiennement le troupeau à partir des ressources de la Palmeraie. Tout comme pour la récolte des olives, les femmes s'entraident pour cette tâche, ce moment est un terrain fertile et propice aux rencontres et au partage de savoir entre elles.

Selon la tradition musulmane, la datte est le fruit du paradis, ce fruit est considéré miraculeux par ses nombreuses vertus nutritionnelles. Ces bienfaits, sont d'ailleurs particulièrement appréciés lors de la grossesse et de l'accouchement. Pour produire de beaux fruits, le palmier dattier ( Phoenix dactylifera , L. ) à besoin d'être pollinisé artificiellement, à la main, et ce, chaque année au printemps. Pour ce faire, il faut extraire le pollen des palmiers mâles ( les dhkhar ) pour le poser sur les palmiers femelles et ainsi assurer une bonne pollinisation. Traditionnellement, les musulmans rompent le jeûne du Ramadan avec des dattes. Le manque de main-d'oeuvre pour la pollinisation et la récolte oblige les femmes d'Ouled Merzoug à acheter des dattes en ville.

La récolte des olives s'effectue dans l'arbre ou au sol, à la main. Pour récolter les olives d'un arbre, une dizaine de femmes se mettent ensemble. L'une d'entre elles monte à l'arbre et, à l'aide d'un bâton, fait tomber les olives sur une bâche préalablement posée sur le sol. Toutes les autres femmes ramassent les olives au sol et les mettent dans un grand sac. Ce moment de récolte est un moment joyeux et d'échange entre femmes. L'entièreté de la récolte est pour la femme à qui appartient la parcelle. En échange, elle aidera les autres femmes pour la récolte de leur parcelle respective. Dans le cas où l'une d'entre elles n'a pas de parcelle propre, elle échangera son aide contre un repas, des olives ou de l'argent.

Alice Chang

### Où se fournir en vivres



CHACUNSONMAROC.BLOG4EVER.COM/

Marché de Skoura

Les habitants d'Ouled Merzoug font leurs courses une fois par semaine à Skoura, village situé à 10 km dans lequel prend place un marché hebdomadaire. Il est important de remarquer que les dépenses familiales concernent essentiellement l'alimentation. En grande partie, ces dépenses sont allouées aux produits manufacturés tel que le sucre,

la semoule et la farine. Mais les familles achètent aussi la plupart de leurs légumes et fruits. Il existe des échoppes de proximité dans le village qui permettent d'acheter des produits non périssable mais cela reste l'exception.

Alice Chang

### Projet de potager collectif bio

Par le passé, les habitants de Ouled Merzoug ont essayé de vendre leur production à Skoura. Malheureusement, ils se sont heurtés à la concurrence de produits non biologiques moins chère. Aujourd'hui, les femmes d'Ouled Merzoug veulent mettre en place un potager collectif à l'entrée du village. Elles comptent réutiliser l'ancienne pompe du village pour

l'irrigation de ce terrain. Pour éviter la concurrence, l'idée serait de créer un souk aux abords du village afin de vendre les fruits, les légumes et les herbes aromatiques directement et sans intermédiaire aux restaurateurs et aux hôtels d'Ouarzazate, qui ont une clientèle plus exigeante quant la traçabilité et la qualité des produits, mais aussi avec un pouvoir d'achat nettement plus

important. De cette manière, le village deviendrait un pôle de développement d'agriculture écologique ce qui accessoirement pourrait faire découvrir leur artisanat, également produit d'un savoir ancestral et respectueux de l'environnement.

Alice Chang



Se qui pousse dans la Palmeraie

Daily life





Daily life

Personal hygiene

Personal hygiene inside Ouled Merzoug Houses

BY AURORA FANTI

A personal reflection on personal hygiene in Ouled Merzoug.

It’s hard to start a conversation about personal hygiene. It becomes an even more difficult task when it comes to speaking about it with people you have never met before. And when, in addition, the people who you are supposed to ask some intimate as well as delicate questions, do not speak your language. And last but not least, when they live in a continent that is totally different from your little, magic, luxurious, European world.

So, yes, when it came to introducing this topic at my host family home, I didn’t feel comfortable with it, at all.

Going to Ouled Merzoug, a tiny village in South Morocco close to the Atlas Mountains, means that you have to take into account that when you arrive there, you do not know what’s going to happen to you when it comes to personal hygiene. You need to be aware of that. First of all: forget bath tubs and showers, bathrooms with sinks, cupboards where you would expect to store beauty products, and for me, as an Italian, of course, forget about a bidet.

By now, you may be thinking: “No way, during my last trip in Marrakech, in my fabulous riad, the bathrooms had all this comfort”. But this can be seen as a result of Morocco’s westernization. They create an environment which resembles European stereotypes, more suitable for international tourists. Is that fair? Maybe it is. Anyway, after two nights in a luxurious riad in Marrakech, I was shocked when I was told that in Ouled Merzoug, there were not going to be any showers.

Fortunately, I had the chance to discover how common people deal with personal hygiene by experiencing their everyday routine. This way, I had the possibility to make up my mind about different habits that were not natural to me in the first place. What I brought home from this village is not something tangible, but the experience itself. So, in the next paragraphs you will find a survival guide with all you need to know about hygiene in Ouled-Merzoug, from a western, European perspective.

**The toilet.** There are various interpretations of the Moroccan toilet. Some of them are basic: when you enter the toilet space, you can



AURORA FANTI

A. The bath according to Ouled Merzoug ritual.

see a porcelain ‘French toilet’ (squat toilet) and next to it, a tiny bucket and a tap (pic B on this page). Some toilets have porcelain tiles on the floor and on the walls as decorative elements, whilst other toilets have simple walls and flooring out of bare rammed earth. In most cases you will notice a recess in the wall which corresponds to the European cupboard. It’s the place where the family keeps their soap, a sponge and a towel. The tiny basket close to the toilet is used to flush it after using it, with water from the tap. Furthermore, in Morocco they clean themselves with water and soap instead of using toilet paper. This is part of a Muslim tradition called ‘ablution’. This ritual consists in washing specific parts of the body, as described in The Koran, before prayers. Also, it is common practice

that there is no sewage system in the houses of Ouled Merzoug. Using toilet paper would pollute the green areas or the water channels next to the houses where the dirty water flows. **Bath.** Sooner or later, everybody would need to have a shower. In Ouled Merzoug, they use an ancient method which still works. First, they warm up a pot with water on the fire. Then they pour the hot water into a big bucket. They add some cold water to adjust the temperature (pic A on this page). After that, the washing ritual can start: naked or with underwear, they sit on a small stool and pour water on different parts of the body using a cup. They sponge and rinse and continue adding water according to their needs. In the end, they rinse by throwing the rest of the warm water on themselves.



AURORA FANTI

B. A typical toilet with a niche used as a shelf and a small bucket for cleaning after having used the toilet.

**Laundry.** Even though there are some families who own a real washing machine, most women in Ouled Merzoug still wash clothes by hand. How do I know? They offered to wash my clothes during my stay at my host family! There are different habits regarding this activity. There are women who do the laundry in their courtyards,

using a bucket filled with water (pic I next page). After that, they take the clean, wet clothes out and let them dry, sometimes by hanging them on the rocks (pic F-G-H next page). Other women still prefer to wash clothes in the river (pic J next page) or in water channels nearby their homes. For carpets, there is a specific day of the year in spring



AURORA FANTI

C. Women still use dried palm leaves to clean and sweep the flooring of domestic spaces.

Oral hygiene

BY AURORA FANTI

Oral hygiene deserves a chapter on its own since it’s a controversial topic. During the stay at my host family I wondered where I could brush my teeth as I never saw them doing it and since there is no sink in the toilet. Moreover, I felt ashamed of asking for information because I didn’t want to seem rude to them. They answered to my request politely that I could use the sink in the courtyard. This made me understand that somehow they knew about toothbrush and toothpaste. Anyway, in Morocco teeth brushing is not a common habit yet and you can notice it by looking at adults’ teeth. Their tooth decay is obvious. In Morocco sugar is one of the most important and used ingredients in

the kitchen. High levels of sugar are usually found in Moroccan tea, a drink that is consumed more often than water all over the country. Tea is filled with sugar, which makes it really tasty. After all that sugar it would be wise to brush the teeth regularly. Brushing teeth at least twice a day is generally advised to prevent tooth decay. Still, in the village they are not used to doing it. During a talk with Mouad, a

“During the stay at my host family I wondered where I could brush my teeth”



HANNA VAN BREEN

D. Tooth paste and tooth brush.



AURORA FANTI

25-year-old man from Ouled Merzoug, I learned that children chew Siwak plant sticks. Siwak is a natural teeth cleaner known for its antibacterial activity. It helps controlling the formation of plaque. Mouad also explained that nowadays in the village, tooth care is an issue. People are starting to be aware of and consequently, they begin to take care of it. School is the first place where personal hygiene education is spread so that kids can then report it at home to their families. They are taught that brushing teeth with a proper toothbrush is important to avoid having them damaged at adult age. When they explain at home the reasons why it is important to use it, their parents might buy the toothbrush. In conclusion, a deep awareness about the matter is still far to be



PICS BY INTERNET

E. Siwak plant and siwak tooth sticks.

obtained in the village, but the fact that we could see a toothbrush in a few households means that things are changing slowly. Certainly, a radical change in people’s routine takes time.

WOMEN of the village: stories of untold resilience and courage



BY AURORA FANTI

A personal reflection on the study trip to Ouled Merzoug.

For me, becoming familiar with Ouled Merzoug female community was the deepest experience during the fieldtrip in Morocco. The first thing that I had to overcome, was my western perspective. I found myself to be sometimes narrow-minded in this kind of situation. I realized that I had to look at things with new eyes, but... How? I’ve managed to open my eyes on how resilient women of Ouled

Merzoug are by spending time with them day by day, and tea after tea. Tea that was prepared for every one of us by all of them with the same savoir faire.

I had the chance to observe different family situations. For instance, I noticed how the women are left alone with house management. Often, the husband works far from home and the wife has to work in the fields, cook, look after the babies and breed the animals. “A woman of Ouled Merzoug can not be lazy” reported Salah, a 25 year old man from Ouled Merzoug. “They all have to be strong to survive”. This seems to be a hard life to me. During a

“I had to look at things with new eyes, but... How?”



AURORA FANTI

conversation with village women regarding health issues and well-being, it became clear that they experience difficulties in everyday life due to a lack of basic services



AURORA FANTI

The women of Ouled-Merzoug during a round table session dealing with health and well being.

such as a nearby doctor or hospital. After the survey, I understood that most of them still deliver their babies at home. Going to the closest hospital simply is too complicated because of the lack of proper means of transport. And I noticed that women are open to discuss topics that are commonly considered to be more intimate or



AURORA FANTI

A woman climbing a fruit tree.

delicate. They are well aware of their role as women. Most adult women would like to learn how to read and write. Still many of them are illiterate. I was inspired by these women, who climb trees to catch grapefruits for lunch, who wake up at 3.00 am to bake bread for breakfast, who farm and then go back to their babies and still find a way to take some time for themselves. Maybe they understand that this is the only way to achieve a better future for next generations of women?



AURORA FANTI

A woman farming.



AURORA FANTI

A woman collecting dates for guests.



AURORA FANTI

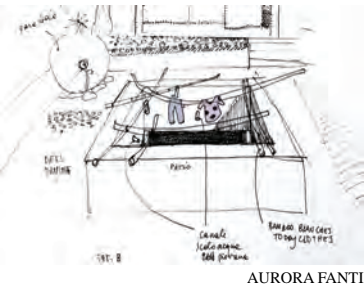
Women walking through the main street.



Household


Daily life

Areas and tools dedicated to hygiene and household in the domestic space




F

AURORA FANTI




G

MIKI ZEA




H

AURORA FANTI



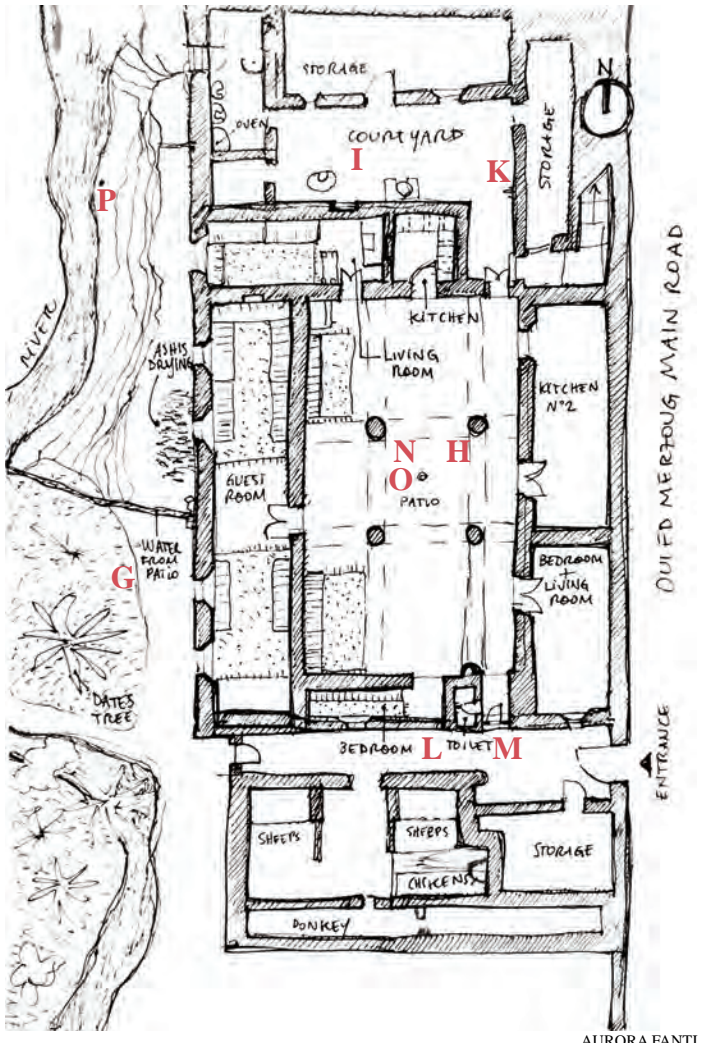
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AURORA FANTI



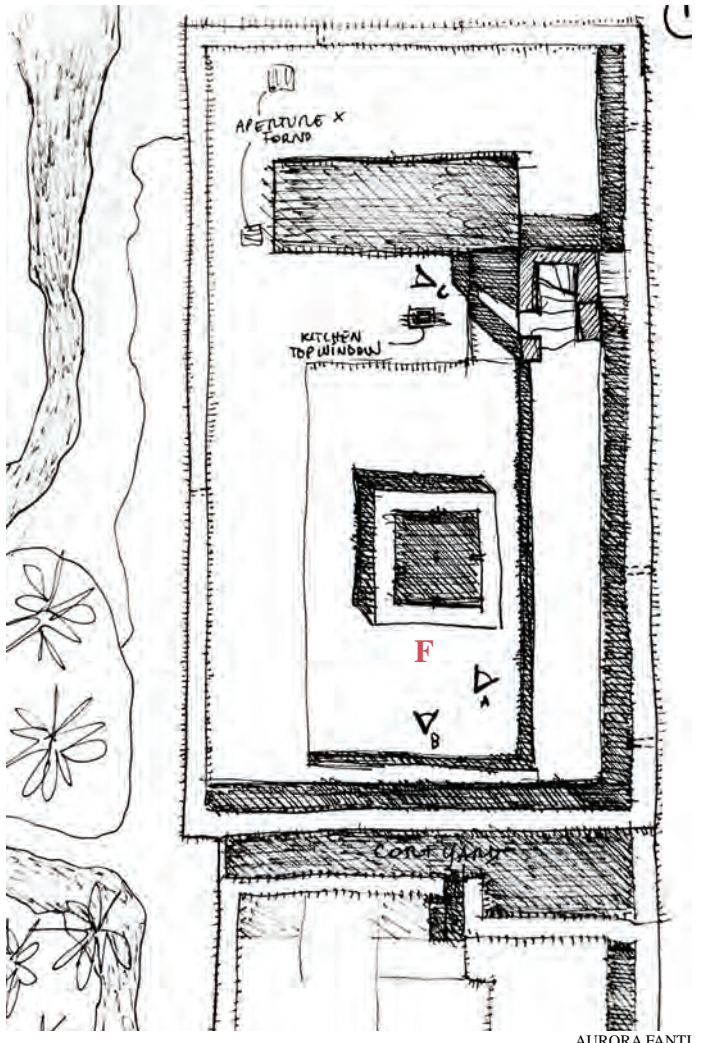
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AURORA FANTI




Above and on the right: ground floor Plan and roof Plan of a typical home in the village.

AURORA FANTI




F

AURORA FANTI




N

AURORA FANTI



O

AURORA FANTI



P

AURORA FANTI

**Legend:**

**F-H.** House rooftop and patio details: where washed clothes are hung to be dried.

**G.** Washed clothes lying on outdoor rocks to get dried.

**I.** Washing clothes in the home's courtyard.

**J.** The river by the village where women go to do the laundry.

**K.** An external tap with current water.

**L-M.** Buckets, to flush water in the toilet and a typical toilet in the village.

**N-O.** How dishes are washed in the courtyard of a house without current water in the kitchen.

**P.** Dishes being washed in the water channels nearby the home.

Henna

BY JOLIEN BOSMANS

A personal reflection on the study trip to Ouled Merzoug.

I noticed ‘my mother’s’ nails, still covered with a light shade of what once was the dark reddish brown of henna. The nails of Imen, the wife of her son, were the same and

even on the one year old Marwa, I could still see some traces of henna. I knew if I would show them that I liked it, they would probably arrange everything for me to have a treatment too. The only way I could express my admiration was to point to her nails, say ‘henna’, look if I am right and then say ‘mezjeeen’ (good). And indeed, the next evening

when we arrived after a long day of mapping, the bowl with henna paste was arranged for me and my roomie Emily. Before leaving for the field study trip, I already wondered if the people in Ouled Merzoug use henna as a ‘beauty product’.

The concept of a tattoo for two weeks (maybe three) intrigued me already in Belgium. Since the age of 17 or 18 years old, I

discovered a wonderful product, named henna. All the following summers, my sister and me tried out different designs on different people, on different parts of their body. Not only the aesthetics itself, also the creation of it, interests me. It is always applied in a really relaxing and sunny environment. Most of the time, the recipient is talking in a small group of friends, or reading a magazine, while the

person who applies the henna is fully concentrated to get the tattoo as symmetrical and detailed as possible. I got a henna tattoo in the house of my guest family, a place really close to origin of this tradition and the source of the plant. I was so satisfied. And although the designs are different, the culture and place are different, the composition of the henna itself is different, the meaning behind it is different and so on, the act of putting the henna on our hands oozes the same warm togetherness in this simple ritual: one woman is concentrating and the others are all really close to each other, talking in a small

circle, looking at the henna now and then and giving their opinion.



Herbal beauty

BY AURORA FANTI

Until the use of commercial medicine and beauty products spread over Ouled-Merzoug, people from the village cured themselves and took care of their beauty with herbs and natural handmade mixtures. Nowadays, this habit is disappearing. In the past there were some women experts in herbs who were named ‘ACHABA’, which means ‘herbs

specialist’. I had the chance to meet two of them, both named Khaddouj, 52 and 53 years old. One of them had learned the herbal art from her mother, the other had gained the knowledge on her own by looking at neighbours who were farming these plants or collecting them in the mountains. Luckily, she is now passing on all her knowledge



**Kaddouj, age 53, The Achaba.**

to her daughter, Rachida. They explained to us that ‘She’ is the herb which was used for disinfecting and scar healing. For instance, intimate parts are washed with this herb after delivering a baby or a circumcision ritual. It prevents flu as well, by boiling it in water and having a shower with that water.

‘Mkhinza’ mixed together with smashed onion and rose powder is a remedy for headache. It is spread on the forehead.

‘Tamaris’ was used for dyeing hair as well as for tooth ache. Its oil works as a nice face mask.

Natural shampoo used to be obtained from **cactus pulp**.

**Henna** is used for several purposes. They used to make a strengthening hair mask, mixing smashed henna and acronfel powder to be kept on the hair for 2 hours up to 1 day. They mixed **henna with sage** to obtain a black hair dye. Furthermore, women in Moroccan culture use henna also for hand and feet tattoos for special occasions, as well as for permanent nail dye. Finally, they apply ‘Khol’ to their eyes, a powder cosmetic made from ground stone, using a simple wooden stick.

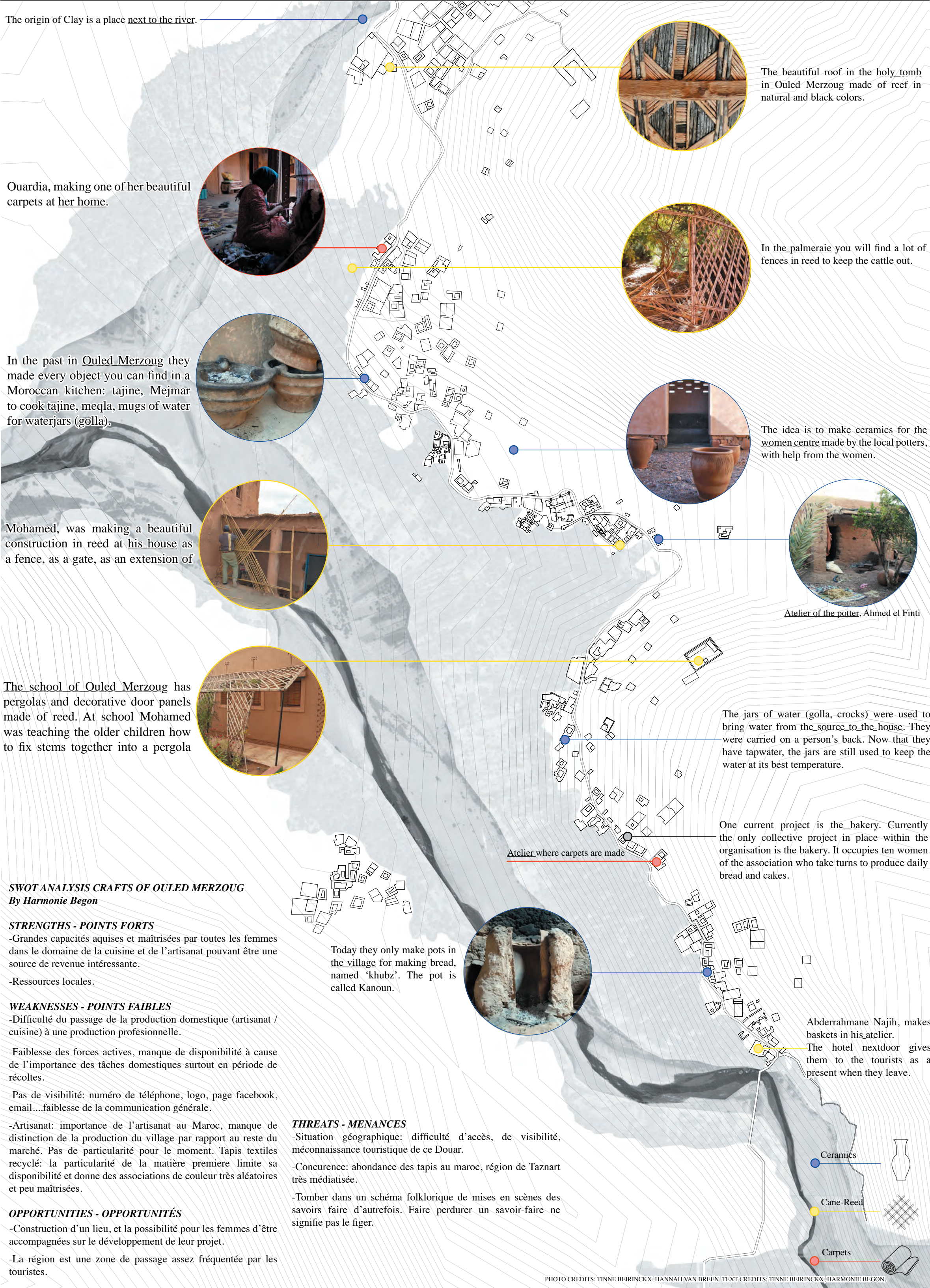
“Natural shampoo used to be obtained from cactus pulp.”





Crafts

Overview of all the crafts





Palm Leaf objects, both Practical and Aesthetical

The Dades river and the most important street of Ouled Merzoug are separated from each other by a green oasis with different plants and trees. The majority of these trees are date palms, which explains the origin of the name of this green space: the ‘Palmeraie’. The presence of this ‘Palmeraie’ in the village is very visible in the houses and their interiors. In every household at least a few different uses of palm trees can be found. The wood of the tree is used for roof structures and furniture, the branches and leafs are used as roofing materials, for fences, wind makers for fire, toys...

Apart from these examples, the fibers of the branches and the leafs are also used as a base material for weaving of a variety of objects such as carpets, bags, dishes for bread and different kinds of baskets. This collection of palm leaf objects is presented here.

“The presence of the ‘Palmeraie’ in the village of Ouled Merzoug, is very visible in the houses and their interiors.”

Hannah Van Breen

OPEN DISH FOR BREAD

**PALM**  
Traditionally, woven palm leaf objects were completely made from palm tree elements: palm tree branches for the core structure, and palm tree leaves for the finishing. Since it takes longer to make them and less people are willing to pay a higher price, only few women still use this traditional method.

**PALM + PLASTIC WASTE**  
Some women finish their baskets with plastic waste material. They reuse fibers from their household’s waste, such as plastic 10kg flour bags, or cookies and chips packages. These materials have similar benefits as imported plastic fibers. It takes more time to gather, but it creates an interesting economic benefit. Moreover, recycling reduces waste production.

**PALM + IMPORTED PLASTIC**  
A lot of women finish their palm leaf product with plastic fibers because they like vibrant colors. It is more durable, washable and less labor intensive then using palm leaves since plastic fibers are easier to handle and they can be directly used when bought. Plastic fibers are bought at the souk in Skoura for the price of 30-40 Dirham (+- 3 euro) for 4 t’bag (bread dishes).

Hannah Van Breen

CLOSED BASKET

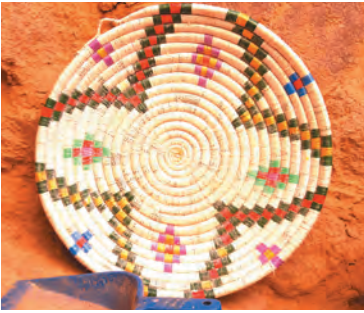
“Some women are already recycling plastic waste in the making of their crafts.”

Hannah Van Breen

(PALM) CARPET



OPEN BASKET



Palm leaf objects made by different women of Ouled Merzoug.

Waste Recycling in Weaving Crafts

When walking through the streets of Ouled Merzoug, the presence of plastic waste in the public space immediately caught my eye. There is no communal waste management system in Ouled Merzoug to date. Organic waste is used for feeding animals. All the rest – if collected – is being burnt in backyards or on the streets. I feel that this burning of plastic and the lack of an efficient waste management system contrasts with the idea of Mr. Hammi (the head of the village) to develop

Ouled Merzoug as an ‘ecological village’. While mapping the crafts and talking to different women, I noticed that some women are already recycling plastic waste in their palm tree objects, be it to obtain a mere economic benefit. So there is hope.

A centralized collection of waste, usable for crafts, could make this benefit even bigger and keep the village cleaner at the same time. This is an idea to explore further...



TINNE BEIRINCKX AND HANNAH VAN BREEN

Palm Baskets  
Who Makes Them?  
What Drives Them?

Making palm leaf baskets is a craft only for women. But how do women combine this job with their other domestic tasks? Who are their clients? Where do they sell their products? An interview with Hesna and Khadija.

“It would be wonderful to have a place in the village to show and sell our work!”

Hesna used to be a member of the Women’s Association of Ouled Merzoug. When she sold her baskets as a member, 20% of the profit went back to the Association, 80% she could keep for herself. Now she prefers to be independent, and she’s not part of the Women’s Association anymore. Hesna makes her baskets at home. This makes it possible to work for a few hours in between other domestic tasks. She makes her baskets on demand, for the people in the village or for people in Skoura, who buy her work at her stall in the souk. She would love to sell her work in the new women’s center.



Salah & Hesna.

TINNE BEIRINCKX

Khadija is a member of the Women’s Association. Like Hesna, she has a small stall on the souk in Skoura where her husband sells her baskets. If he does not have the time, she goes there. Khadija has a special room for weaving baskets in her house. The room has one window with a view on the mountains. Different kinds of carpets and flour bags cover the floor. There is one little table with different baskets on top, and a television. She would be delighted to have a place in the village to show and sell her work.

Hannah Van Breen



Khadija.

TINNE BEIRINCKX

The Beauty of Breaking the Language Barrier



BY HANNAH VAN BREEN

Before going to Ouled Merzoug, I had the feeling that the language barrier between the group of students and the people of the village was going to be one of the biggest challenges. When we arrived in Marrakech we started practicing some basic Arabic words using the small travel

booklet from Margot, while waiting for our ‘thé à la menthe’ or our ‘tajine végétarien’ at a local restaurant. Obviously, most of those first words were related to food. Practicing continued at our host family in Ouled Merzoug, where Arnaud and I spent the week. In the beginning, the communication with our ‘new parents’ was difficult. They insisted to give us privacy and we did not spend a lot of time with them. The children of the house were more curious though... With the few French words that they spoke, the few Arabic words that we spoke, by using our hands (and arms, legs and feet) and facial expressions, by drawing with the children and playing football in the covered inner courtyard of the house, we managed to find an alternative way to communicate. After breaking the ice with the

children Fatima, Zaira, Roshdi, Muhammed and little Ritesj, mom Hadisha and dad Abdul showed us their favorite youtube videos and started talking to us in Arabic, as if it was our second language. Since then, we spent our evenings enjoying the company of our new ‘famille marocaine’. At the end of our stay dad Abdul decided that the only thing we still had to do,

“La Belgique, ça y est! La Belgique, c’est fini!”

was moving to Ouled Merzoug “parce que la Belgique, ça y est – la Belgique, c’est fini!”.

Ouled Merzoug. Because of our limited knowledge of Arabic, most of the conversations did not go further than ‘salam aleikum’. Three moments were the most valuable to me: the workshop with the women on Wednesday, the mapping day on Friday, and the last meeting with my Moroccan mom Hadisha. During those moments, I was accompanied by translator Salah. His presence was crucial in making these interactions so memorable. On Wednesday, we organized a collage workshop where each woman could make her own image of the ‘women’s house of her dreams’. As soon as the women understood the opportunity to communicate with us through Salah, they started to take the lead in the conversation... all at the same time! Salah had a hard time translating everything they wanted

to say to us. The combination of this workshop method and the presence of Salah as our translator finally gave these women a voice. It was the first time that we really managed to break the language barrier.

“The assistance of the translators allowed to give a voice to the women.”

On Friday, we wanted to gather more information about the crafts of the women in Ouled Merzoug. Salah took us for a walk through the village. This way, we had the chance to visit the houses of Khadija, Hesna and Salah’s mom, to ask them our questions and to see them weaving carpets and making palm leaf baskets.

These encounters, together with the guided visit by Mr. Hammi, helped my research. They were the most important sources of information for this page. On the last day of our stay, mom Hadisha accompanied Arnaud and me to our meeting point at ‘the office’ (the house of Saïd) before taking a taxi to Skoura. This was the most beautiful ‘language barrier breaking moment’. As soon as Hadisha saw translator Salah, she dragged us to him and asked him to translate her last words to us. With tears in her eyes she said:

“I am so grateful that you stayed with us. I am going to miss you. You are always welcome in our house.”

A perfect ending of an unforgettable experience.

Hannah Van Breen



# Weaving: Bringing the Women Together

Weaving carpets is a Moroccan tradition that has been passed on from generation to generation, from mother to daughter. The younger generation of women in Ouled Merzoug make less carpets than their mothers; they go to school and do other activities in their free time such as sports, watching television etc. Yet, the weaving of carpets is still a know-how mastered by almost all the women in the village. Women make carpets for their own households and family. In some cases, they get orders from other women or from outside the village (hotels, restaurants...). Most

women weave in their own houses, in a central space with a lot of natural light. They work on their carpet for only a few hours a day, in between other domestic tasks. When the Women’s Association gets a big order, they organize themselves in small groups of 2 women who weave together for 3 to 4 hours a day. Carpet weaving is done on large weaving looms. The village counts more or less 40 of these looms, one of them owned by the Women’s Association. The looms are always property of one specific household, but they are shared with all the women of the

village. Every woman knows who owns a loom, who is weaving a carpet at the moment and which loom is free to use. Because of the sharing of the looms, the central position of the looms in the houses and the collective weaving sessions, the weaving of carpets brings the women of Ouled Merzoug together.

Hannah Van Breen

“Every woman knows who owns a weaving loom, who is weaving a carpet at the moment and which loom is free to use.”



Rkia teaching Harmonie how to weave a carpet.

HANNAH VAN BREEN



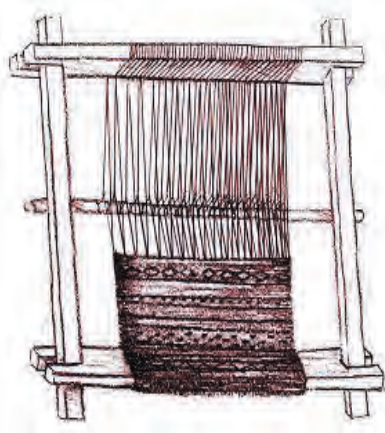
Outils pour filer la laine: la laine, les deux brosses carrées, la quenouille (‘mezghel’).

HANNAH VAN BREEN

# De la Tonte des Moutons au Tissage

Tonte, nettoyage, échapiallage, le cardage et enfin le filage de la laine, teintures, tissage. Lorsque que la laine provient de la tonte des moutons domestiques, toutes ces étapes sont réalisées par les femmes à la maison. L’échapiallage permet d’avoir une couleur homogène d’une part et mélanger et adoucir la laine, dont le but de rendre la laine plus souple et plus facile à travailler. Le cardage consiste à passer la laine entre deux brosses carrées en vue d’obtenir une mèche parfaitement lisse. Le filage consiste à l’étirement et la rotation des petits rouleaux de laine déjà préparé. L’outil utilisé est une quenouille dit ‘mezghel’. C’est un long travail, que beaucoup des femmes ne prennent plus le temps de faire. Beaucoup de femmes ont parlé de la télévision comme instrument responsable: les femmes préfèrent regarder leur série que travailler la laine ou un tapis chaque jour.

Harmonie Begon



Combing and spinning the wool.

HANNAH VAN BREEN

To form long fibers, the wool is combed. Two combs with metal teeth (‘mezghel’) separate the wool in thin threads.

“C’est un long travail, que beaucoup des femmes ne prennent plus le temps de faire.”

The spinner quickly rotates with one hand a tapered wooden spindle. With the other hand, a wick is obtained thanks to a stopper that they roll between thumb and index finger. The combed wool is pulled in small pieces to form the outline of a thread. The stopper is motionless while the spindle turns the mass of wool into a solid thread.

Hannah Van Breen

# Plus de Moutons?

La laine de la maison est une ressource pour le moment limitée. Cependant, il semblerait également que la laine locale ne soit pas de très bonne qualité. Les moutons porteurs d’une laine de qualité vivent dans les montagnes. Se pose ainsi la question de l’élevage des moutons, comme la ressource locale de la laine n’est pas suffisante à une production collective de tapis. Il conviendrait d’analyser plus précisément la capacité de production locale de laine dans le village, si est organisée une tonte régulière des moutons, et de quantifier la quantité de laine disponible chaque année. Parallèlement, il faudrait

identifier un partenaire, un ou plusieurs bergers, pouvant fournir annuellement la laine à l’association des femmes. Et quantifier également la quantité de laine qu’il est possible d’obtenir par année par ce biais.

“La laine de la maison est une ressource pour le moment limitée.”

Harmonie Begon



Mohamed, Radouj et Harmonie, tonte d’un mouton.

HARMONIE BEGON



Carpets

# Une Variété de Techniques de Tissage

Il existe différents types de tissage selon trois critères: la matière première, la technique de tissage, la nature et la finesse de la laine. Les tapis Bidron et Bouchraouite, sont ainsi des tapis réalisés à partir de textiles usagés. Le premier est un tissage simple, le second est un tissage fait de noeuds, donnant

cet aspect «froufrou» au tapis. Les autres tissages sont réalisés à partir de laine: le Mendil est un petit tissage, la maille est large, la laine est filée très finement. Le Mendil est un tissage utilisé pour ranger le pain, il est réalisé avec de la laine dial dar, de la maison, et teint ensuite, généralement en

rouge avec des réserves effectuées avec des élastiques, ce qui donne des cercles oranges après teinture. La3bena est le tapis spécifique à ce village. Traditionnellement il est réalisé avec la laine de la maison, laine naturelle noire, blanche, ou marron, en créant un simple motif de successions de bandes de

ces différentes couleurs. Parfois les femmes ajoutent des laines teintées artificiellement en rouge, vert, ou encore de la laine blanche artificielle. Lorsque la laine utilisée est filée extrêmement finement, cette version de La3bena s'appelle Lksa. Lksa est un tissage plus fluide et souple, La3bena est

plus une couverture qu'un tapis. Zerbya est un tapis en laine, très coloré, qui est généralement composé de nombreux motifs. La laine est souvent une laine naturelle mais la teinture est artificielle. Ce tapis est réalisé en utilisant la technique des noeuds, comme pour le Bouchraouite,

donnant un tapis très épais, et aussi très lourd.

Harmonie Begon



‘Bidron’ (Gdush).

HARMONIE BEGON



‘Mendil’(Gdush).

HANNAH VAN BREEN



‘La3bana’ (Aziza Kasimi).

HARMONIE BEGON



‘La3bana’ (Aïcha El Finti).

HARMONIE BEGON



‘Lksa’ (Aïcha Taheri).

HARMONIE BEGON



‘Zarbya’ (Josse Zora).

HARMONIE BEGON

## From Artificial to Natural Dyes

To date, hardly any woman colors her own wool in Ouled Merzoug. Most wool is imported by a man from Skoura, who buys it in the souks in Marrakech. Dyed wool costs 50 Dirham/kg, plain wool 20 Dirham/kg. When wool is colored, artificial dyes are used. Although the Palmeraie contains a treasure of organic pigments (mint green, pomegranate yellow, vine leaf yellow, pomegranate green, walnut bark brown or beige, henna orange...), no woman in the village masters the old natural dyeing recipes and techniques. Possible reasons for this trend can be the high price of imported natural dyes (e.g. Henna has a price of 35 Dirham/kg) and the

increased workload of growing, harvesting and drying fruits and plants for natural pigments.

“By combining local plants, a broad range of natural dyes with different tones could be produced.”

After following a conference on ‘Les couleurs et les teintures naturelles’, organized by La Fondation Jardin Majorelle in Marrakech, Harmonie Begon carried out some experiments on site. By combining local plants, a broad range of dyes with different tones could be produced. Several women of the village expressed an interest in continuing this dyeing technique. It remains to be seen whether this technique will eventually be applied on the scale of the entire village.

Hannah Van Breen and Harmonie Begon



Experiments with natural coloring by Harmonie Begon.



HARMONIE BEGON



Crafts

Reed

Reed: Is it a Craft ?

The first thing I encountered walking through the village Ouled Merzoug, was this fence. I loved it. It's a bit ambiguous: a fence, a gate? Who is the artisan that constructs it? I am not familiar with Morocco, nor with the rest of Northern Africa, so I wonder if it is something typical of Ouled Merzoug? It became clear that it's not that peculiar and not confined to this village.

“It is a craft not unique to Ouled Merzoug”



Decorative window panel

Shared Local Crafts-manship

Mohamed is the expert of the village. As far as I know, he is the only professional craftsman. The fences around the gardens and the small fields provide privacy. They keep goats and sheep out. Mohamed gets orders to produce them. The people of the village cut the stems themselves or ask other people to do it. Or they buy them at the Skoura market. The price for 5 cane stems is 1,5 dirham (0,14 euro).

I saw Mohamed making a pergola in the school of Ouled Merzoug. Older children were helping him. On a row, outside the school, they were cutting the small branches off the stems (or stalks) of the cane plant. One boy had a specific tool for doing that instead of an ordinary knife. It looked professional. Inside the courtyard of the school, different sizes of stalks were separated. Mohamed was learning the older children how to fix the stalks together into a pergola using iron wire. Plants on the pergola will give shade to the entrance of the school building during hot summer.

“Mohamed is the expert of the village and learns the older children of the school how to make a pergola”



Entrance in reed



Fence with reed as a panel



Bunch of reed stems



The roof of the holy tomb



Reed as part of a cornice



Decorative roof in reed



Transparent fence in reed

Fast Growing Local Plant

Most students in my group identified the material of the fence as bamboo. But it's not, it is reed or cane 'reed: *Phragmites altissimus* synonym of *Phragmites australis* subsp. *altissimus* or golden cane palm: *Dypsis* sp. maybe *Dypsis lutescens*?'. The plant is growing very well throughout the Palmeraie and near the river. It doesn't need special care.

I saw fences, pergolas, decorative door panels, window panels and ceilings made of this cane. The beautiful roof of the holy tomb in Ouled Merzoug is made of this material. I wonder how they made the black color? Grinded charcoal? Burning it? In the past, artisans made carpets and baskets for dried meat, vegetables, figs, dates from this reed.

“It is not bamboo, it is reed”



Reed as a growing plant



Professional tool for cutting the small branches off the stems



Mohamed, the expert, at work



Fence in reed



Door panel in reed

Make it Something Typical of Ouled Merzoug

Like everywhere in the world, local natural materials are being replaced for the sake of development. In Ouled Merzoug a clear example are the fences in steel with plastic canvas. This phenomenon spreads in rural Morocco. At this point in time Ouled Merzoug still has the option to choose to preserve local materials for fencing as a characteristic heritage element. In the future one should be able to keep enjoying the magical combination of the orange colour of the earthen walls and the evening sun. Merging the reed fences into contemporary architecture as functional and decorative element, like they did at the school building, is a good start. The reintroduction of the craft to use reed for carpet weaving or basket making, may be a new craft for the women of Ouled Merzoug.

“Reed fences: as a characteristic heritage element of Ouled Merzoug”

TINNE BEIRINCKX



Pergola in reed



Entrance to a house with a fence in reed



Ceramics

Crafts

Pottery: Local Culture of Ouled Merzoug

Until recently, every village with any source of clay, counted several potters. In Ouled Merzoug today, there are only two specialised ovens (kilns) left.

Water and Bread

Berber tradition mainly produces earthen containers for solid food and liquids for domestic use. The models merely evolved since ancient Hellenistic times. Also, in Ouled Merzoug, every imaginable object you can find in a Moroccan kitchen was produced: tajine, Mejmar to cook tajine, meqla, mugs for water or water jars (golla). Today, they only make the earthen bread kilns, named ‘khubz’. The pot is called Kanoun (tandoor). This pot is the heart of every traditional mud-brick oven in a family home. The fuel consists of palm leaves, charcoal or fire wood. Temperature in a tandoor can rise to 480 °C (900 °F).

It’s wonderful how the ancient, unchanged objects are still in use in every house in Ouled Merzoug. The jars for water (golla, crocks) served to transport the water from common sources to the house on the back (of the women). Now that most houses have a tap, the jars keep the water at the optimal temperature through the process of evaporation from the outer surface. Let’s hope cheap plastic jars and refrigerators will not replace the golla.

Characteristic of Berber ceramics are the geometric patterns. Decoration with dots, lines and chevrons. Dotted decoration is made with the resin from the Thuya de Barbarie, a native tree species to Morocco.

“These ancient, unchanged objects are still in use in every house in Ouled Merzoug”



A jar for water (golla, crocks)



Fire pot for tajine



A shard of ceramics found in the village



Antique ceramics for honey and flower



Kanoun (tandoor)



Kiln



Ceramic Articles in the Women’s Centre

The idea is to show the craft of ceramics in the women’s centre of Ouled Merzoug. Their utensils could be as much as possible made from earth, wood, reed and palm leaves, instead of metal or plastics. With time, women could learn to produce these objects themselves in local kilns, with help from the local potters.

“The idea is to show the craft of ceramic in the women’s centre”

A first project may be to produce floor or wall tiles (with specific shapes, formats and colour glazing, designed by the women) from local clay and to punch a small watermark or symbol in them before baking them and placing them on the floors and to the kitchen walls. Typical Moroccan wall tiles (zelliges) for the kitchen, for example, with a format of 10 x 10 cm and 1,2 cm

thick and glazed, or floor zelliges of 14 x 14 cm and 1,9 or 2,5 cm thick. A simple method is to flatten the clay with a rolling pin over two planks of wood and then cut them into the desired format.

“The women will make their own wall tiles for the kitchen in the women’s centre”

We could search for women Moroccan potters from the region to give workshops to the interested women in Ouled Merzoug, or invite foreign ceramists who want to share knowledge and learn from the Moroccan traditions. We could build on the skills of Harmonie Begon (a designer with expertise in ceramics and known in the village). This will be very interesting. Women could produce objects themselves and, in that way, appreciate them.

“Making ceramics will be an exchange of knowledge”

There are more objects that they can make in baked earth, such as household goods (tajine, meqla, golla, cups for tea,...), drainpipes or gargoyles, fire pots for heating the rooms of the women’s centre, flower or plant pots,...

Important for the feasibility of the pottery project is to know the characteristics and the behaviour of the clay and the kiln. It’s the combination of clay and temperature that determines the result. Laurens Bekemans (architect from BC architects and project manager of the project of the women’s centre), will ask the local potters about these technical parameters. He will also transfer some clay samples to Belgium to be analysed by ceramists here. Perhaps, a new project is born.

The Beautiful Story of the Day of the Pottery

In Ouled Merzoug the source of the clay is a spot near the river, in front of the bridge at the entrance of the village. The upper horizon of this soil is removed to access the clay layer underneath.

After digging it out, the clay is dried in the sun for two days. Then it’s brought by the village truck to the atelier. There, the clay is smashed with a wooden plank to remove the stones and evacuate excess water. In the atelier, the potter, Ahmed el Finti, shapes it into a circular form on the turntable. A pot is dried for two more days in the sun before baking.

Early in the morning, on the day of pottery baking, the men go to the forest in the mountains to chop wood for burning the kiln. The primitive stone kiln has a circular form of about two meters diameter and an open hole in the top and a hole in the side to access the oven. On top of the earthen pots, a layer of pieces of broken pots is laid to cover the new ones. Above this shard layer, the wood fire is burned. It takes about 6 hours of baking at 900°C. Then they must wait another 6 hours for the oven to cool down to collect the pieces. The temperature remains relatively low, causing the Berber ceramics to remain brittle and crumbly.

Everyone in the village knows when it’s pottery baking day. In winter, people gather at the kiln for its warmth. They take the hot cinders home with them to put them in a fire pot to heat the room.

“Bringing warmth in the village”



Floor tiles in ceramics



Wall tiles in ceramics



Turntable of the potter

Making Pots is a Men’s Business in Ouled Merzoug

In Ouled Merzoug, the potters are men. They told us that also in the near village, ceramics are made by men.

But making pots is not a man’s business in general. In Morocco, ceramics were mostly made by women. For generations the skills were passed on from mother to daughter, often being the only means for a woman to make a living. Nowadays, with girls getting a higher education and better jobs, this succession is no longer guaranteed. In addition to that, the market for household goods is flooded with cheap mass products (mostly plastic), making it even harder to sell traditionally crafted ceramics to the general public. If this trend continues, the current generation of women potters might be the last.

“Making pots is not a man’s business in general”

The main questions about ceramics in the village will be: “What is the future of pottery in the village for the men? Is there a new future for the women? Can we learn something about the surrounding villages? From other villages in Morocco, in the world? Other types of crafts with ceramics?”

In France, pottery was a fading industry in the 1950’s and 1960’s, mainly due to the general use of enamel. In the 1960’s artistic ceramists came to the remote village of La Borne. A few surviving artisans transferred the technical knowledge and skills of the large ovens, the firewood and the local clay. Today, La Borne is a world-famous art centre with around 50 artist potters, both man and women, working and residing there.



# Building culture

Vernacular architecture

Ouled Merzoug has six different neighbourhoods. The very first settlement is **‘Laksar’**, meaning ‘there was’, since it has always been there.

The next village, **‘Imloul’**, can only be reached on foot or with vehicles that are small enough to pass the narrow bridge.



Building with both rammed earth (right) and concrete blocks (left)

MARTINA PETROSINO



The mosque in Agadin, build with concrete

MARTINA PETROSINO



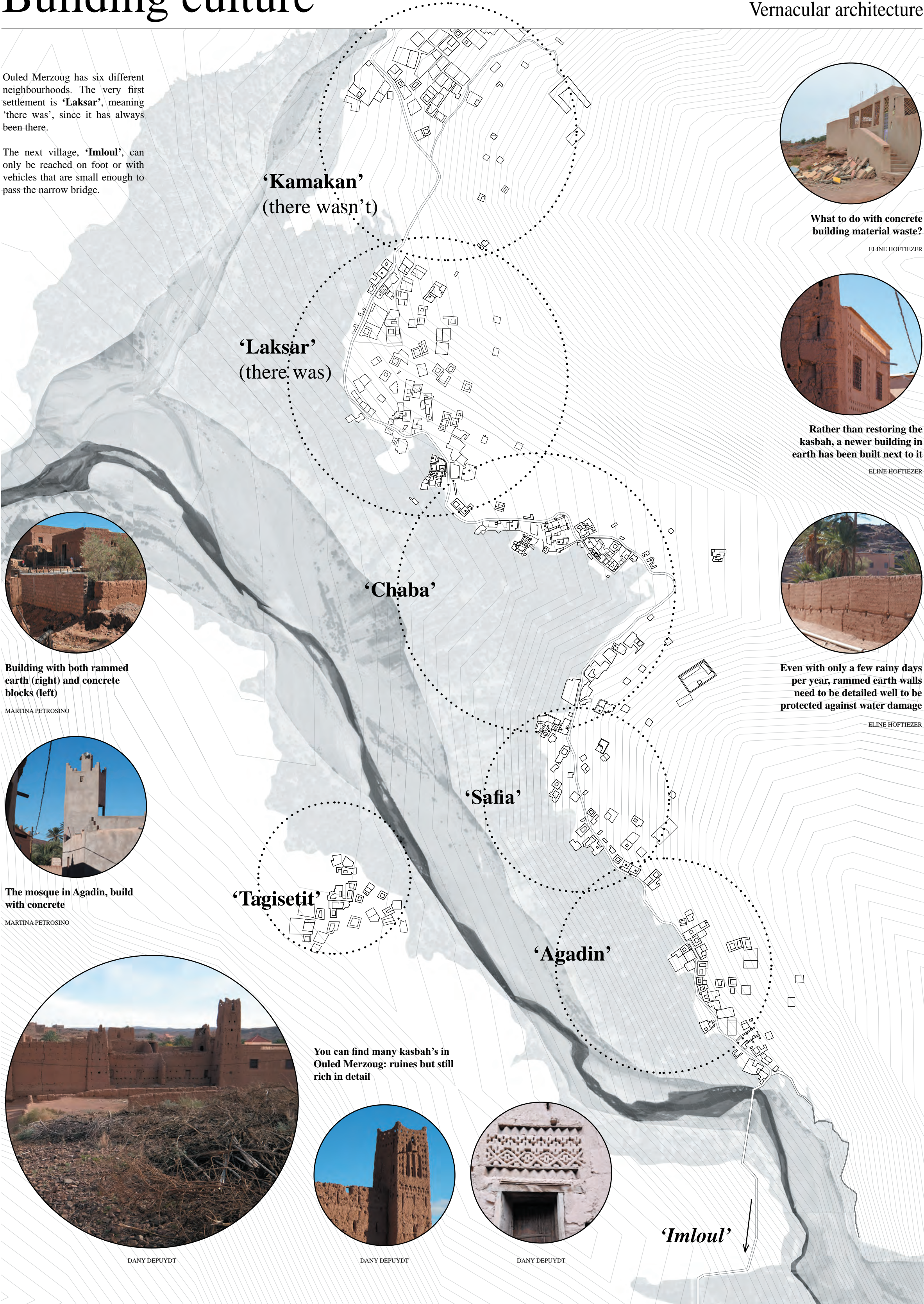
DANY DEPUYDT



DANY DEPUYDT



DANY DEPUYDT



**‘Kamakan’**  
(there wasn’t)

**‘Laksar’**  
(there was)

**‘Chaba’**

**‘Safia’**

**‘Tagisetit’**

**‘Agadin’**

**‘Imloul’**



What to do with concrete building material waste?

ELINE HOFETZER



Rather than restoring the kasbah, a newer building in earth has been built next to it

ELINE HOFETZER



Even with only a few rainy days per year, rammed earth walls need to be detailed well to be protected against water damage

ELINE HOFETZER



## Earthen Architecture: Past or Present?

### Reassessing Traditional Architecture

BY ELINE HOFTIEZER

When I ask Noredine what type of house he would like to have, he asks if I know this *kasbah* on top of the hill, the one from concrete. Of course I had seen this building, as it was hard to miss.

Nordine is 39 years old and from Casablanca. He is divorced and has a 3-year-old boy, Adam, who lives in Agadir with his mother. You can see he is from the city, he dresses smartly and wears sunglasses whenever the sun comes out. He considers himself quite open-minded and while talking to him I get the same impression.

As a child Nordine lived in Ouled Merzoug for three years. He speaks Arabic, French and English. His stammer makes me listen more attentive and I formulate my questions carefully. Currently he is looking for a new job as an electronic technician, but it hasn’t been easy for him. He considers moving abroad because he finds that people abroad are more open minded towards his stammer.

I wonder if the *kasbah* on top of the hill is admired by many people and ask Nordine what he likes about the ‘concrete kasbah’. Reinforced concrete has gradually established itself as a universal model and is often considered as a symbol of



DANY DEPUYDT

The ‘concrete *kasbah*’, proudly standing on top of the hill, overlooking the village.

progress, even where climatic and environmental conditions make it totally unsuitable.

### “I want the best of both”

Nordine ensures me it does not have to do with appearance. While we walk past his family’s house, he tells me that just a couple of years ago, he invested a lot of money and time in the renovation. Unfortunately, the repairs didn’t last long and the house already needs extensive maintenance

again, which makes him feel very discouraged. That is why he hopes to build a modern home for his family. Right next to the earthen home there’s a concrete building being built, which will be his sister’s home. The material is more expensive, but building with it goes fast and it will need less maintenance in comparison with earthen homes. However, Nordine knows that the house will not be nearly as comfortable as traditional earthen homes. He tells me he is interested in combining the best aspects of both traditional and modern building techniques.

Earth is sometimes considered to

be a poor and unworthy building material, even when it offers many advantages. It has a great adaptability for construction use. It is easy to find and available in very large quantities with consequent low costs of supply and transport. When built in a suitable typology, earthen buildings assure a good adaptation to climatic conditions, thanks to the low thermal conductivity which isolate from the external heat maintaining a thermal comfort inside the house.

Unfortunately, as already happened in Europe in the past century, also in Morocco the traditional building ‘know how’ is

at risk to disappear. The change of life style and the ‘race to progress’ is producing a gradual loss of the traditional construction culture and related technical knowledge, developed over centuries. Such difficult situation is confirmed also by the lack of master masons and new skilled workers.

Perhaps the mere restoration of the built heritage is not sufficient to preserve and enhance such a valuable building typology? It seems interesting and necessary to reassess traditional architecture, to adapt it to present needs and to promote the use of earth again as a valuable construction material.

## If ‘Kasbahs’ Could Talk



DANY DEPUYDT

An old Kasbah in Ouled Merzoug, slowly returning to earth

### The Future of Heritage

BY DANY DEPUYDT

It strikes everyone that the settlements in the pre-Saharan region, located on the southern slopes of the Atlas Mountains in South Morocco, have their very own nature. The natural barrier of the mountain range divides North and South not only geographically, but also in traditions, architecture and cultural heritage. Clearly the local Berber population, originally from the north, has been able to safeguard their individuality. The more inland you go, it seems that development (as we know it)

has not penetrated yet and some settlements leave us with the impression that time has stood still. The past is tangible in the unique shape of the buildings, the use of materials and their texture.

Also the scarcity of what the area has to offer and the resourcefulness of the local population is evident. The settlements were all built with locally available material and knowledge, resulting in architectural authenticity in terms of configuration and materials, and a harmony with the natural and social context.

Very striking elements in the landscape silhouette are unmistakably the tower-shaped structures called ‘kasbah’. The word kasbah comes mainly from

the Arab world, but it appears in different forms. In Morocco and in the Moorish Spain, the Arabic word form refers to several buildings behind a defensive wall. The Spanish word *alcazaba* is a related name. A kasbah was a residence for the local leader when the city was attacked. The meaning of the word varies from defensible dwelling, to watchtower, medina, fort, to old districts.

Kasbahs date only from the earliest mid-17th century, while similar structure and technology was used much earlier in the region. They are very closed and introvert building volumes, usually with corner towers, built up with thick walls of mashed earth or loam, and from the second floor in adobe, which allowed for more detailed or decorative elements. Within the defensive walls the floorplan often consisted of a central narrow light shaft surrounded by various spaces. The central shaft is strongly reminiscent of the central courtyard of urban housing. The ground floor was probably intended for storage and animals, while the floors above were used as living areas. Eventually building a defensible home became unnecessary and the concept of kasbah evolved more and more towards a castle. Entire families started moving to the cities. For some, building a kasbah was a sign of wealth.

Earthen buildings are very fragile. Lack of necessary regular

maintenance usually is fatal. Especially when accompanied by vacancy, expropriation or disloyalty. Moreover, it is difficult to deny that such buildings are less suitable for contemporary life standards and expectations.

If such kasbahs could talk, they could write thick history books. Because their past remains inextricably linked to the present we owe them protection.

Admittedly, every situation is different and such property often gets into very complicated situations when ownership is transferred and responsibilities are passed on. But man cannot walk away from his responsibilities to preserve his heritage and pass it on to his descendants.

### “But what should we do with our patrimony?”

This seems to be one of the biggest challenges for the next generation. The essential values of buildings are usually described in terms of differences between their remembrance and present values, artistic and functional values, and commemorative and aging values. However with the rising resistance towards our disposable society, a ‘future value’ has yet to be added to the valuation of our heritage.

## The Oldest Man of the Village

### A Conversation With Saïd’s Father, Hazj Filti

BY ELINE HOFTIEZER

We can see that things have changed in Ouled Merzoug, but how fast they have changed, we don’t exactly know. Saïd sits close to his fathers ear, translating Martina’s questions and mine about the very beginning of Ouled Merzoug.

He must be at least 120 years old, he says. First there was only the neighbourhood ‘Laksar’, which means ‘there was’. There was just a handful of ‘dâr’ (houses), build next to the road and close to the Palemeraie, where the families worked on the land.

New knowledge, such as of ceramics, came when people from other villages moved to Ouled Merzoug. At first they all lived together with 6 to 7 families in a ‘ksar’ (an Amazigh fortified village). In exchange for their knowledge and labour the new families were given a piece of land to build their own home. Everyone who did not have the money to



ELINE HOFTIEZER

Saïd and his father

hire builders would work together with their neighbours, much like most families still collaborate on the fields. Nowadays people still like to build their own home, like Saïd has done. He recently moved out of his parents home. “*And now needs to find a wife*”, Martina adds jokingly.

It is hard to imagine that Saïd’s grandfather would walk all the way to Marrakesh to exchange dates for money, beans, barley or clothes. He needed only 6 days and he would spent the nights next to the road. They also traded with the neighbouring villages, like Skoura, exchanging dates and chicken for produce like olive oil and barley.

“*Building in a existing fabric, requiring more than pragmatism and style, is in itself a design practice. Adaptive reuse of buildings, where changes is the introduction of new programs and functions, pose the fundamental question of how the post should be made present in the design for the future.*”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Extending the Lives of Buildings, Lilian Wong (2017)



Building culture

Housing typology

What Do the Insides of the ‘Dars’ Look Like?

BY SOFIE VAN DEN VELDE

In Arabic, ‘dar’ means ‘house’. It refers to a house with the presence of a courtyard, rather than a garden (“riad”). The village of Ouled Merzoug radiates a certain tranquillity through its homogeneity in colour and finishing of the houses. While the earthen exterior of most of the houses – ‘dars’- looks similar, the personal touch of the families becomes visible in the interiors. Colour is added in a special way through textiles and paint. Other materials, such as tiles, wood and metalwork are being used in a more practical way but have an aesthetic effect. Storage spaces are integrated inside the thick walls.

**Housing typology**

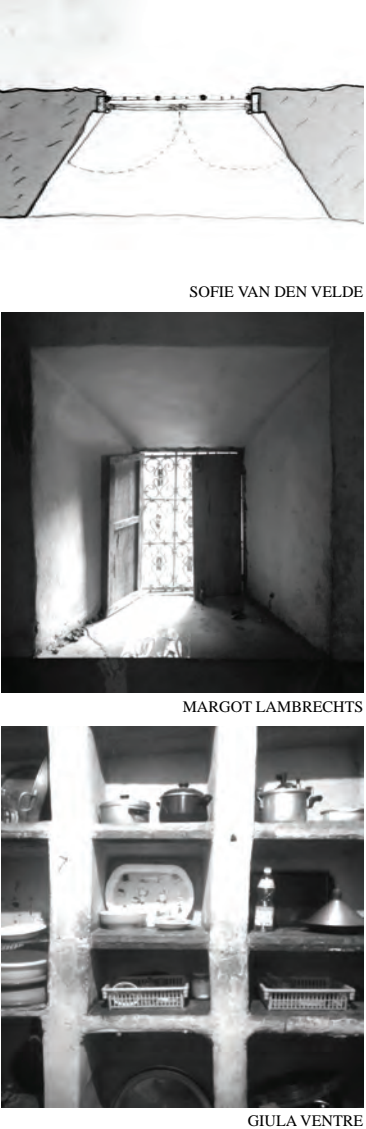
Going through the thick wall from the road to the inside of the houses means that you are entering the private, enclosed family sphere. In most cases, the entrance leads you to a courtyard (4) that serves as a circulation space to access all other rooms. All rooms have just one entrance and one or several small windows. Occasionally, the courtyard serves as an open-air cooking area, or a sleeping area during hot summer nights. The most important room of the house is the sitting room (1). It is the room where the family receives their guests and offers them tea or food. It is a long and narrow space that is always well-maintained because the sitting

room is the only space where guests usually enter, besides the courtyard. This sitting room can

*“The most important room of the house is the sitting room (1). It is the room where the family receives their guests and offers them tea or food. It is a long and narrow space that is always well-maintained,..”*

serve as the main space where the family spends time together, but there might be a second, more private sitting room as well, where no visitors will enter. It is very similar to the first one, but its appearance is more casual. It usually is the place where the family watches television, if they have one. Other key spaces in the house are the small kitchen, one or several bedrooms, and a toilet. All rooms all have a rectangular footprint with a span no wider than 3 meters because of the physical restrictions of the local wood structures. This makes for a floor plan with several long and narrow spaces. The height of the spaces is about 2,50 meters. The spatial configuration of the rooms and the presence of a courtyard is different in every house. It depends on many factors including the time in which it was built, the family composition and the used materials. Nonetheless, the main rooms and interior elements described in this article are present in all family houses of Ouled Merzoug.

Thick Walls with Bevels and Recesses

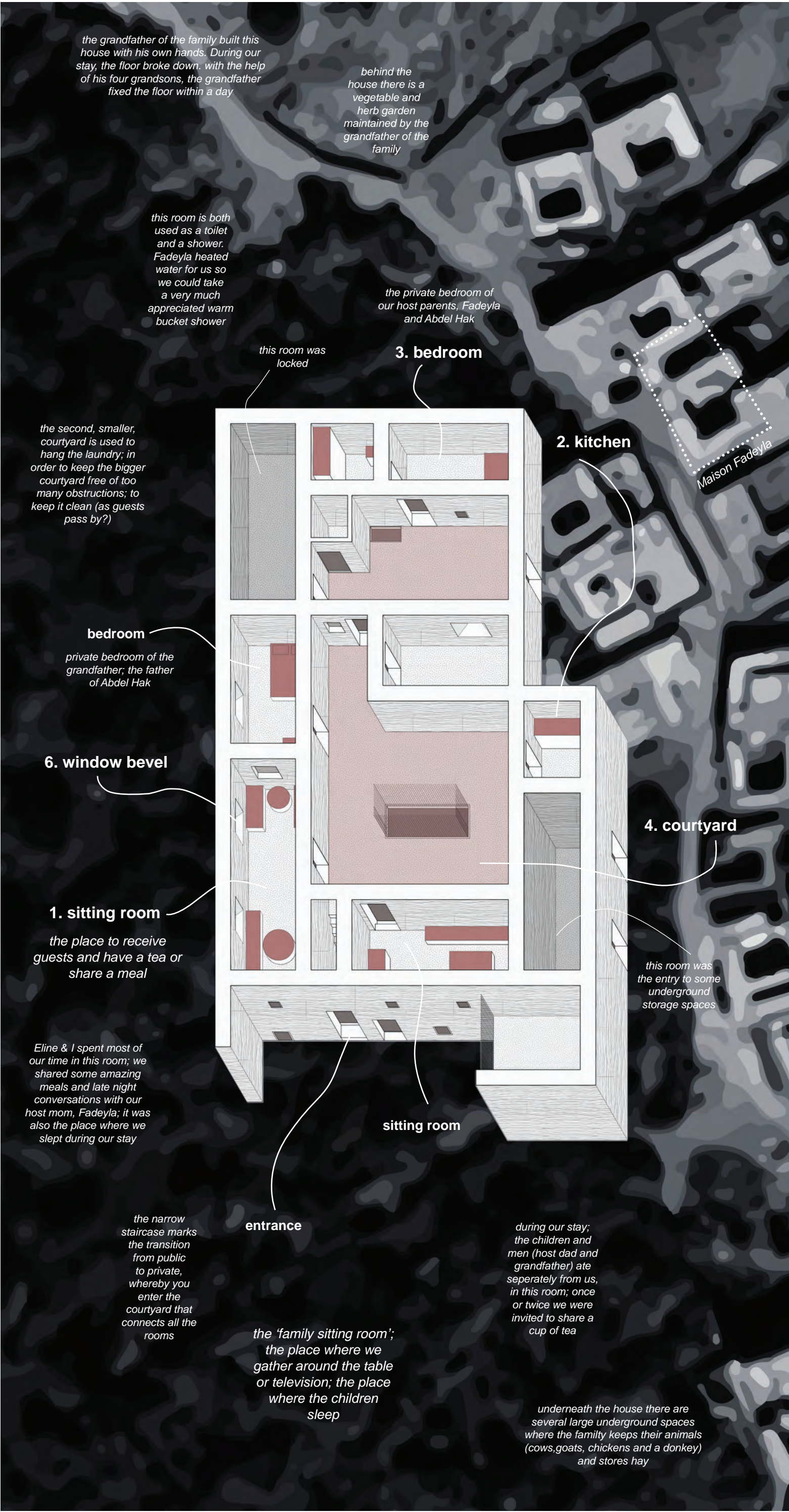


Top: Building detail of a traditional window in a family house. Middle: Picture of a window and its bevels. Bottom: Picture of an integrated shelving system.

The majority of the houses are built with rammed earth and or adobe walls, and the thickness of the walls (between 40 and 65 centimetres) facilitates some significant architectural details, such as bevels and recesses. Within the quite plain walls of each room only one door opening and one or two window openings are located. The sides and top of the window openings are trapezium shaped, bevelled towards the interior, in order to capture as much light through the small windows as possible. There is a maximum reflection of light on these window sides because of their particular shape. This way, the windows become very present in the room. And, by placing the window ledges on the outer part of the wall, window openings can be used as shelving or other purposes. At our host family, the 2,5-year-old girl even played in it as if it were her own little house.

*“This way of integrating furniture into the building itself testifies to a way of thinking that uses first what is already available, rather than the idea of filling the space with furniture.”*

Thick walls do not only provide for extra storage space at window openings. In the whole house several storage spaces can be found integrated in the walls. Both



Drawing of the house of Fadeyla, showing the interiors and configuration of the rooms.

sofie van den velde



Furniture

in the rooms and in the courtyard, recesses or small alcoves can be found. In many kitchens a complete wall might be covered with a fixed, built-in shelving system of rammed earth and wood. Wooden planks are put horizontally in between earthen pillars as shelving. This way of integrating furniture into the building testifies of a way of thinking that uses what is already available first, rather than filling the space with furniture afterwards.

Furniture and Materials

BY SOFIE VAN DEN VELDE

Almost all rooms in the ‘dars’ have a rectangular shape. Different functions are simply defined by the furniture and materials that are used in the interiors. The sitting room is the first

room to enter. Low seats made of mattresses and pillows along the walls form a U-shape. It immediately invites you to sit around the low table with tea, sweets or food. It represents a typical way of eating, sharing a meal around one big plate of food. The floors are covered with different layers of carpets. More than often, the woman of the family made one of those herself. The floor becomes a surface of soft and warm materials. Children can play and fool around comfortably on this floor. The sitting room is also used for prayers, and an extra, special carpet is spread out to do so. The kitchens are small and functional. They consist of an integrated shelving system, a counter with a sink, a gas stove and some cabinets for extra storage. Although there often is a lack of light and air, most kitchens are adjacent to an outside space or courtyard that can serve as an extension of the kitchen. The sleeping room could be either the sitting room or a private room. In the latter case, it is a quite simple space with little furniture, containing a mattress on the floor, on carpets or on palettes, and some storage space for clothes. The bathroom is very basic, mostly built in a later period than the origin of the house. It consists of a French toilet, a tap and a bucket in a space of about 1,5 square meters.



Hand-made drawing of the sitting room of Khaddoug, the mother of our translator Mouaad.

SOFIE VAN DEN VELDE

Finishing and Decoration

The use of finishing and decoration in general is very modest and mostly linked to practical aspects, except for the heart of the house, the sitting room. The walls of the sitting room are finished according to the means

of the family. They might be left bare, or plastered and painted colourfully, or covered with tiles. Sometimes, curtains or shutters cover the windows. The ceiling can be the bare roof structure, with palm trusses and branches, or it can be plastered and painted. Ornamental plaster (stucco) is common to highlight light bulbs or to mark transitions from wall to ceiling.

Contrary to the sitting room, the decoration in the kitchen is first and foremost practical. Tiles surround the counter for waterproofing, and all the other elements serve as storage or cooking utensils. The sleeping room might have some decoration like painted walls or stucco around the light-bulb. Some elements such as mirrors or a picture can be found.



Hand-made drawing of the sitting room of Fadeyla, the host mom of Sofie & Eline.

SOFIE VAN DEN VELDE

Key Elements of the ‘Dar’ of Ouled Merzoug



SOFIE VAN DEN VELDE



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SOFIE VAN DEN VELDE



TINNE BEIRINCKX

1. Sitting Room
2. Kitchen
3. Bedroom
4. Courtyard
5. Light-bulb
6. Bevels and Recesses

Getting to Know a Culture and a Language trough Non-Verbal Communication

BY SOFIE VAN DEN VELDE



Arriving in a village where most of the inhabitants do not speak any language you know, brings out the best of one’s non-verbal communication skills. For me personally, staying with a host family is one of the most intensive but most rewarding ways of getting to know a different culture. It is a true immersion in an unfamiliar world that goes beyond words.

It goes beyond the words that I already know, with which I try to define everything. It brings out my creativity too, and it teaches me again and again that there are so many things that we all have in common without the necessity of putting them into words. As such, after a while, you might be able to understand without talking. Eight years ago I left Belgium for a year to live with a host family in Panama. Nearly knowing any words in Spanish, for quite some time, I had to get by using my hands, mimicking, and using recently learned words in order to learn some more. Non-verbal communication was an important step in getting to know this culture and language. Yet, in the end I understood that there was no other option than to learn the language in order to communicate.

Last summer I volunteered in Jordan to help building a school campus for Syrian refugees and Jordanians. The biggest challenge for me was working day in day out with twenty Syrian and Jordanian men, not knowing any word of Arabic. The cultural difference was even bigger than in Panama. Side by side we produced several hundreds of compressed earth bricks a day. “Yallah, yallah” (“Come on, come on!”), they always shouted. In the beginning, it felt like a bridge impossible to cross, but in the end, we managed to understand each other. We got to know each other, we exchanged smiles, laughter, and even stories. This was the most beautiful experience: getting to know these

men and seeing the evolution in our attitudes towards each other in just fifteen days. Last November, we arrived in Ouled Merzoug after a quite long and relatively turbulent journey. In the afternoon we were divided to stay with different families. Eline and I joined Fadeyla and her little girl on her back, to her home. With no common language to speak, we tried to note down as many words as we could, in the hope that we got the explanation right by mimicking. Soon that



SOFIE VAN DEN VELDE

night, I began to draw what I saw around me: the interior of the sitting room, the mattresses and pillows, the window and the window ledge, and the four very sweet sons of Fadeyla. The boys really liked it. It made them giggle. They gathered around me and pointed out to their brothers and mother. Since we wanted to show respect and not to be too intrusive, we kept on communicating like this. Noting down and using the words we had learned, mimicking,

“You’re cured!”

and drawing. At one point I was drawing the sitting room again, when Inès, one of the boys, came to sit beside me and started pointing out furniture and naming it. ‘Sdjari’ (sofa), ‘le frasj’ (the

carpet), ‘le bola’ (the light-bulb)... It was a very memorable moment of communicating naturally, in a different way than we usually do. On one of the last nights, two fellow students and I were interviewing Khaddoug, a lady that knows a lot about herb medicine. We were talking with the help of her son Mouaad, who translated, but I felt very aware of all the knowledge and understanding that I had gained during that week. After she “treated” one of my friend’s cold, they came back into the room and she said something in Arabic. “You’re cured!”, I said, joking to my friend. “That’s what she said!”, confirmed Mouaad. What an amazing feeling that was! It was the ultimate top of my week. Feeling that I could understand what she was saying, without knowing the words.



# ONE DAY WITH ‘L’EQUIPE DU BATIMENT’

During our stay in October, I had the opportunity to follow and experience the daily routine of the father of my host family. Just like myself, Abdul Kbir works as a building contractor in and around Ouled Merzoug. Without preparation, information or any form of translation I joined him for a day with ‘*L’équipe de bâtiment*’.

## THE JOBSITE

After breakfast, Abdul Kbir and I left for work, a construction site in the center of Ouled Merzoug. Without us noticing, little Mehmed (the son of Abdul) was following us although his mom rigourously forbade him to join us. After some words with his father and

since it was a school holliday he was allowed to come and help at the construction site. Abdul and his colleagues were currently working on building a new garage and storage house. Since the building was located right next to the main road of Ouled Merzoug, they were obliged to build the front facade with adobe bricks to blend in with the neighbouring houses. It reminded me of the (in)famous ‘rule of consonance’ widly used by urban planning departments of almost every Belgian city. Sadly enough the rest of the building was made of concrete and cement bricks. On that day, I was helping with the pouring of the main ring beam. On the picture bellow you see one of Abdul’s colleagues standing on his improvised scaffolding, ready to pour the concrete mix in the formwork from recuperated wood planks they found somewhere.

## RESOURCEFULNESS

As I mentioned earlier, a lot of the work they do is based on their years of experience, a sort of building instict and a lot of inventiveness wich often results in some beautiful ad hoc solutions. The way they reuse old planks and nails for the formwork, filling up the

gaps with paper waste, or the way they just punch holes in the new brick walls in order to make scaffolding etc. Another beautiful example are the homemade tools like the *lmṛqa* or hammer made out of forged rebar. At first I was charmed by all these inventions, but I think it is important not to forget about the fact that it is a lack of recources that forced them to forge rebar into tools rahter than a romantic collection of artefacts.

## POETIC OR CHAOTIC

Because I wasn’t very keen on working with concrete all day and since I’m already familiar with this process, I tried to shift my focus on the small habits and routines on site, like sharing food, the hierarchy within the ‘équipe’ how the workers are being payed at the end of the day etc. In a way this was a perfect preparation for when our project will be build during the summer and to establish and maintain a good relationship with our ‘équipe de bâtiment’. Looking back at this experience I think it will all boil

down to **tolerance**. Not only on a architectural level (90 degree angles, a perfect level floor etc) but also on a human level. Embrasing their ad hoc solutions and sometimes introducing them to more rational approaches, using their rythm and sometimes pushing them to finsh something, distinguishing poetry from chaos.

Arnaud Goossens



Abdul Kbir holding his DIY lmṛqa

ARNAUD GOOSSENS

English	French/local	Price	Unit	remarks
<b>LABOUR COST</b>				
Foreman	Chef de chantier	150	dirham/day	
Skilled worker	Mahlem	120	dirham/day	
laborer	Ouvrier	80	dirham/day	
Earth brick production	Adobe production	1	dirham/unit	
Donkey	Âne	50	dirham/day	a donkey can carry up to 100kg
Truck	Voyage camion	150	dirham/day	
<b>MATERIALS</b>				
granite rocks	Pierre granite	67	dirham/m3	We can use for free the rocks available on building site
Sand and Gravel	Sable ou gravier	50	dirham/m3	
Sand/gravel mix	Caillasse	50	dirham/m3	is used to make concrete and cement mortar for stone masonry
Cement bag 50kg	Sac de ciment	75	dirham/bag	
Lime bag 50kg	Sac de chaux	65	dirham/bag	
gypsum bag 50kg	Sac de gypse	65	dirham/bag	to verify
earth	Terre	50	dirham/m3	
Concrete mix loadbaring	Mélange béton	625	dirham/m3	(1,2,3 c,s,g) mix = 3 wheelbarows of sand/gravel mix + 1 bag of cement
Concrete mix stabilisé (poor concrete)	Stabilisé	950	dirham/m3	(1,3,4 c,s,g) mix = 6 wheelbarows of sand/gravel mix + 1 bag of cement
straw bail	Botte de paille	50	dirham/unit	can be 20dh/uni if is the good season
Adobe brick	Brique adobe	3	dirham/unit	
Metal rod	Fil métallique	12	dirham/kg	
Nails	Cloux	18	dirham/kg	
Rope	Ficelle	20	dirham/50lm	
Steel bar dia 14mm	Tige de fer dia 14mm	70	dirham/12lm	
Steel bar dia 12mm	Tige de fer dia 12mm	50	dirham/12lm	
Wooden beam eucalyptus/tamarin 3m	Chandelle eucalyptus dia 10cm l= 300m	25	dirham/unit	Round section with diameter 100mm for secondary beams
Wooden beam eucalyptus	Poutre en bois dia 25cm l=500cm	375	dirham/unit	Maximum length 5 meters diametre = 25/35cm
Wooden board (18*400*4)cm	Madrier (18*400*4)cm	200	dirham/unit	
Wooden board (18*400*3)cm	Madrier (18*400*3)cm	150	dirham/unit	
Palm tree beam dia 10cm l=250cm	Poutre de palmier dia 10cm l=250cm	50	dirham/unit	
reed	Roseau	20	dirham/pack	with one pack of reed you can weave 1,3m2 of panels
palm leafs	Feuille de palmier			depending on the season
potters clay	Argile de potiers	50	dirham/m3	
Cork	Liège	350	dirham/m2	
<b>MATERIALS INCLUDING LABOUR</b>				
Wooden door	Porte en bois	950	dirham/unit	price for standard dimensions 210*80cm
Metal door	Porte en métal	1100	dirham/unit	price for standard dimensions 210*80cm
Earth base coat plaster	Tamelast	32	dirham/m2	
Finishing plaster with stabilisation lime	Tamelast Finition	150	dirham/m2	exterior use
Finishing plaster with gypsum	Tamelast nous-nous	130	dirham/m2	interior use
Reed for ceilings	Plafond en roseau	35	dirham/m2	
Reenforced concrete beam 15x30cm	Poutre en béton armé 15x30cm	314	dirham/lm	
Stone masonry (50cm)	Maçonnerie en pierre	503	dirham/m2	
Adobe Masonry	Maçonnerie en adobe	287	dirham/m2	
Rammed earth masonry	Maçonnerie en pisé	220	dirham/m2	To verify with a local

## Local materials



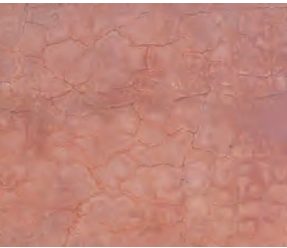
reed



granite rocks



metal rod



Tamelast nous-nous



adobe brick



palmtree beam



top of a wall made of adobe and reed



Earth plaster (Tamelast)



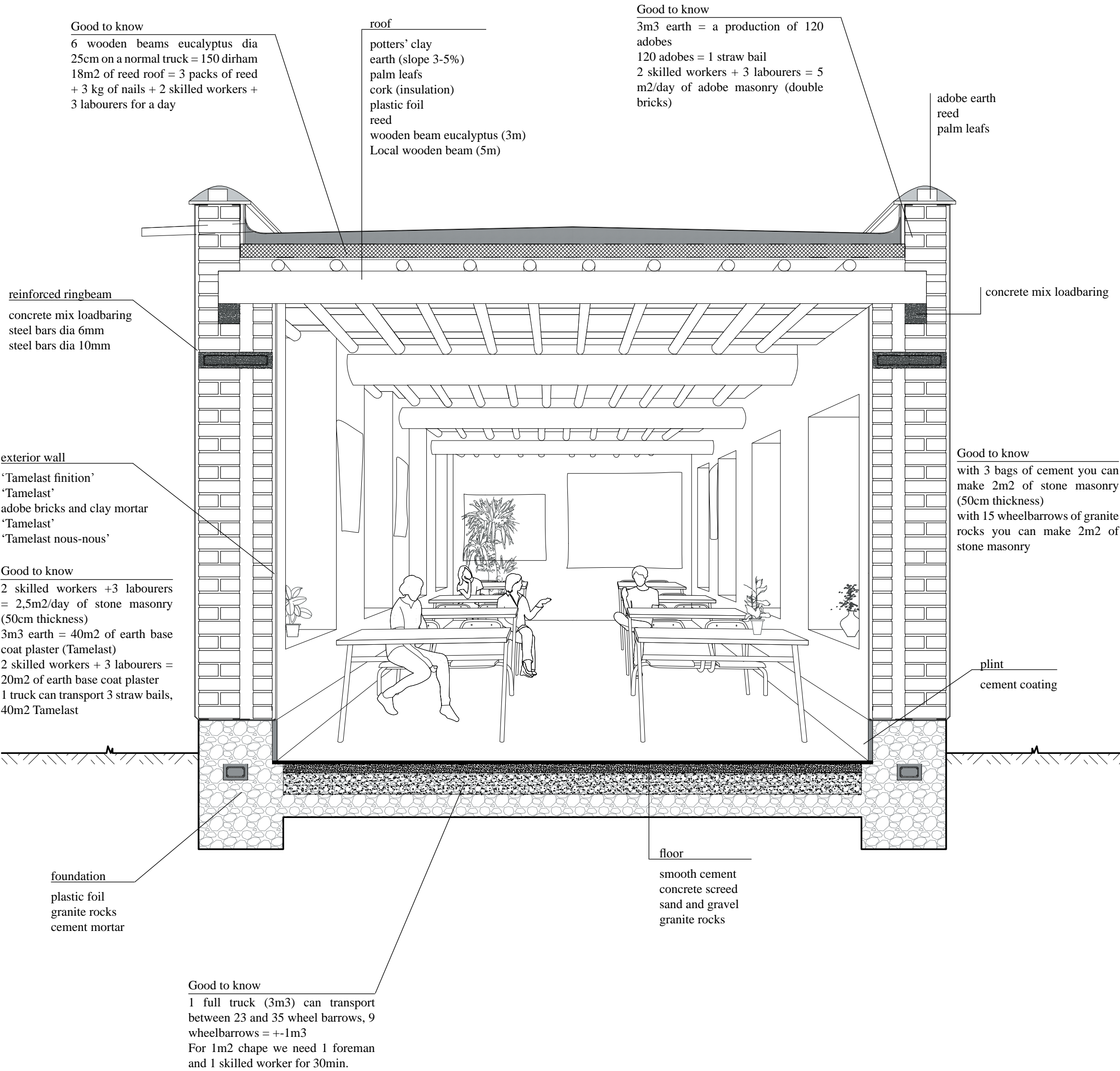
Building materials

Building culture

Building details and price list

This is a section of a fictive school in Ouled Merzoug, based on the school from Virginie Pauchet. With this drawing we want to show you a possible composition of the construction materials. Each material has it's value indicated in the price-list on the opposite page. This table is used as a 'materials list' and tool for the design and budgeting.

Kjell Keymeulen





# Building culture

Bioclimatic design

## Bioclimatic architecture, what and why?

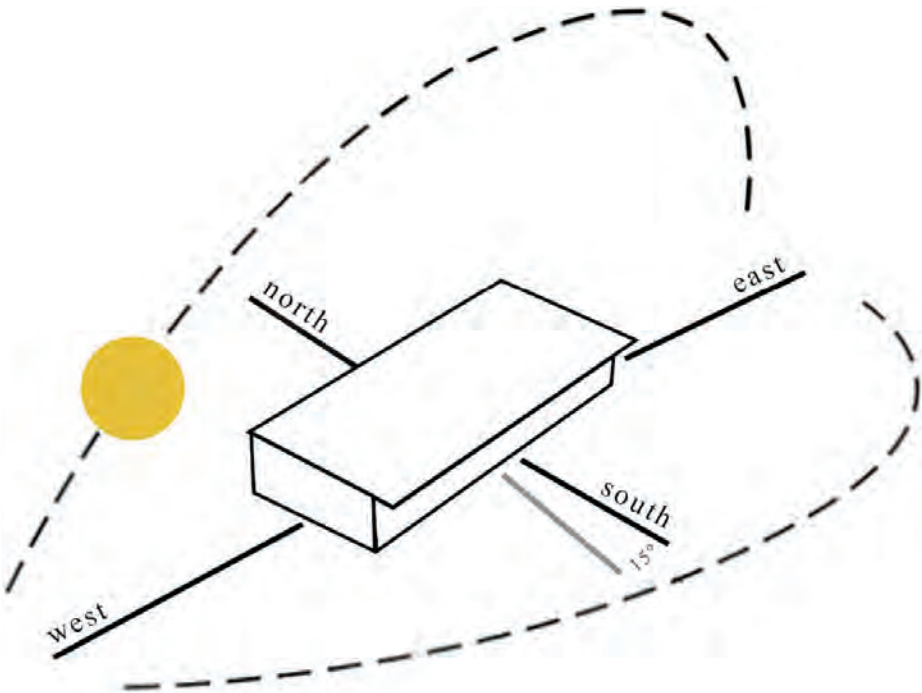


Griet Verbeeck

Prof. Griet Verbeeck is one of the lecturers of the postgraduate Building Beyond Borders. Together with a team, she teaches theory and practice about sustainability and design methodology. On the 7th of November she gave a lecture about bioclimatic architecture. She explained what it is and why it is important.

According to CRES (Center for Renewable Energy Sources and Savings) bioclimatic architecture refers to the design of buildings and spaces (indoor – exterior – outdoor) adapted to the local climate, providing (thermal and visual) comfort, making use of solar energy and other environmental sources. In his book: “Architecture and Climate” of 1959, the author D. Grondin says that bioclimatic architecture refers to a group of design decisions that offer appropriate living conditions within a building with minimal use of technical units that require energy consumption of non-renewable resources. The industrial revolution was the beginning of a rapid development in which we took too little account of our environment. Due to centuries of climate pollution, we have initiated irreversible ecological consequences. We have to take on our responsibility and work towards a better future, by immersing ourselves in sustainable development. By making use of and taking into account the local conditions and context, you can provide optimal comfort while minimizing the negative environmental impact of buildings. This is what we will have to do in Ouled Merzoug.

## Smart orientation: simple and very effective



path of sun

The correct orientation and location of buildings is important. It concerns the protection against solar heat in summer, passive solar gains in winter, and controlled wind channeling, resulting in good ventilation. The orientation of a building is influenced by the direct environment, the number of incoming sun on the different sides of the building, at different times, the wind direction, the

adjacent buildings, the existing roads, ... The most important thing in the case of Ouled Merzoug is the sun protection in summertime, because of the hot and dry climate. The longest sides of the building would be best placed north and south (possibly, at an angle of 15°). The north side gets the least sun and can be the biggest as a result. The south side gets the most sun,

but even a small overhang can provide a lot of shade on the entire facade because the sun stands very high. East (morning) and west (evening) get a large amount of unwanted sun in the summer. This can be limited by the placement of trees or awnings. The slight angle of 15° that a building makes in relation to the north-south axis ensures that the west side absorbs less solar heat in the summer. The

east side is only exposed to the sun in the morning. So it could be an option that the sleeping rooms are located here, because in the late evening and night the room can be cooled down again. The optimal orientation of a building must be specifically examined in order to have the best solution. Flexibility is also very important so that also in winter a good situation can be created. For

example, flexible awnings or cross-ventilation can be provided in summer, but closed off in winter. A last element that should be taken in account is the possibility that radiation will reflect on adjacent buildings, which can cause incident heat radiation. The buildings are best oriented towards the inside.



aerial photo Ouled Merzoug

GOOGLE EARTH



Belgian students claiming the shadow

LAURENS BEKEMANS



Khadoug, 53 years

AURORA FANTI

*“This winter we had snow. I had so cold and called you Mouaad, remember?”*  
*“Yes, you told me that you felt that you were living in a fridge”*

## How water can cool a building

Water can be used as a cooling system by using both evaporative cooling and by minimizing heat gain. It turns out that the drier the air is, the greater the cooling effect. Water as a cooling effect is therefore very suitable for a warm and dry climate. In addition, if one takes into account the wind patterns and the vegetation, these effects can be used to bring cold air into the building. For example, one can ensure that the air first goes through a water feature and then circulates in the building. A spray pond has more effect than a silent pond. External cooling can also be used. This involves keeping the walls and roofs of a building moist, which can reduce the surface temperatures by 30°C. Another intensive cooling application is a roof pond that ensures that the heat accumulation is minimized.

From an experimental study of on passive roof cooling in a warm and dry climate, it was discovered that 50% of the total heat absorption in a building is done via the roof. That is why they have looked for improvements by using the advantages of cooling techniques for ponds. The heat is actually reduced during the day and stores coolness during the night. But of course, for all these measure, we need water. Typically for Ouled Merzoug is that it almost never rains. The two or three days it does rain, it rains in very large amounts. Moreover, the climate is changing. Ouled Merzoug will experience more and more droughts than ever before and the rains are predicted to be less frequent, but heavier. Consequently, the biggest challenge is to capture and store the water. This is not only the case for the cooling system, but also

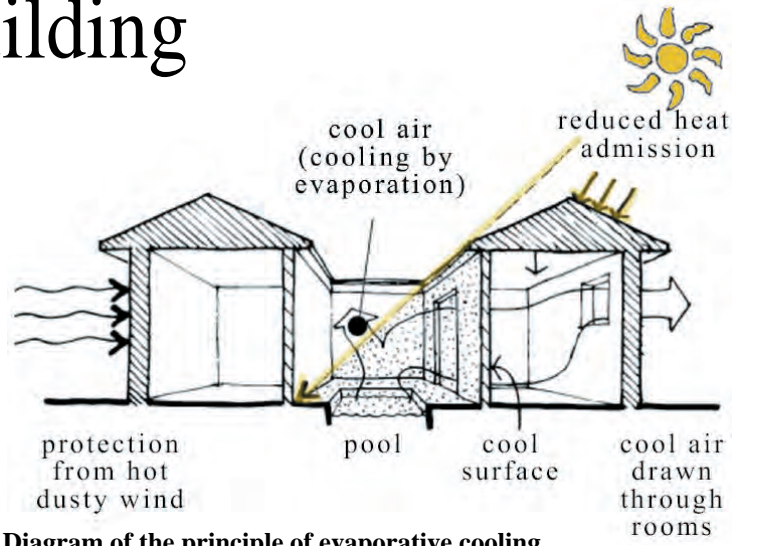


Diagram of the principle of evaporative cooling

for every other use (for example agriculture). Some students of the University of Leuven did more research about this topic, which can be found in their report “Future rural villages”. In order to establish a project that lives up to the fullest potential of preserving life and water in climates like Ouled Merzoug, they

combine two uses. By integrating the water reservoir in the design and the program of activities, the construction is no longer only a practical and efficient place to hold, store and use water, but also a place where people are able to find pleasure and joy with or without each other at the water-side.

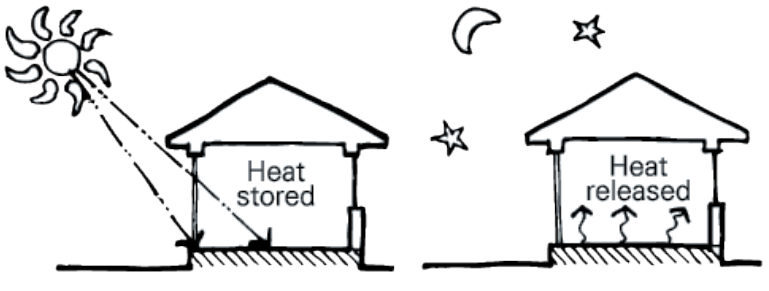


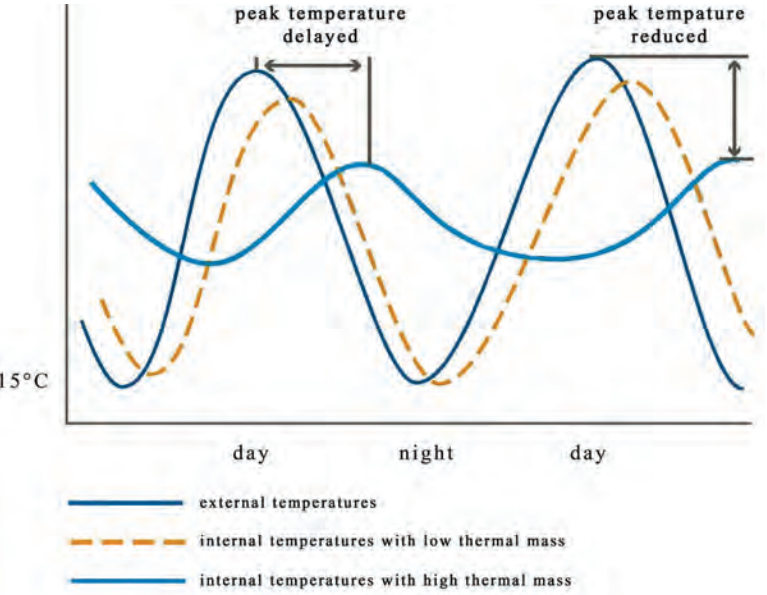
Diagram of the principle of thermal mass



Thick earthen wall

JOLIEN BOSMANS

## Thermal mass: good in summer and winter?



By alternately storing and releasing heat, high thermal mass softens the extremes in daytime temperatures.

Thermal mass, in the most general sense, describes the ability of any material to store heat. For a material to provide a useful level of thermal mass, a combination of three basic properties is required. Firstly, a high specific heat capacity is required, so the heat squeezed into every kg is maximized. Secondly, a high density: the heavier the material, the more heat it can store. And lastly, moderate thermal conductivity, so that the rate heat flowing in and out of the material is roughly in line with the daily heating and cooling cycle of the building. Heavyweight construction materials such as brick, stone, earth and concrete all have these properties. This means that heat moves between the material surface and its interior at a rate that matches the daily heating

and cooling cycle of buildings. During warm weather, like in summer, much of the heat gain in heavyweight buildings is absorbed by the thermal mass in the floors and walls, helping preventing an excessive temperature rise and reducing the risk of overheating. Another benefit of thermal mass is the ability to help reduce fuel consumption during the heating season when used in passive solar design. This approach to design seeks to maximize the benefit of solar gain in winter, using the thermal mass to absorb gains from south facing windows, along with heat produced by cooking, lighting, people and appliances. This is slowly released overnight as the temperature drops, helping to keep the building warm and reducing the need for supplementary heating.

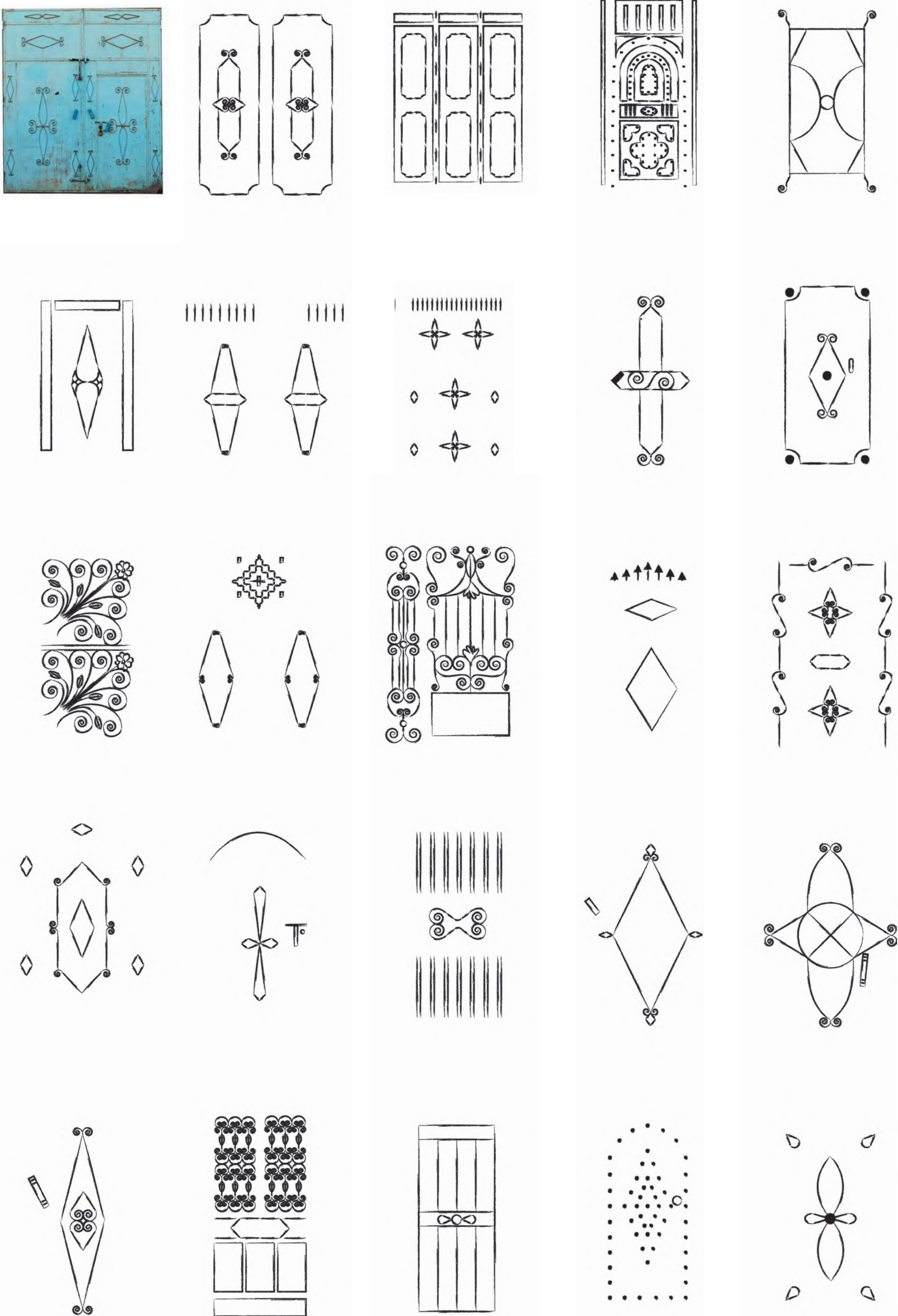


ابحث عن بابك

The Colourful Doors of Ouled Merzoug

While exploring the village for the first time, we noticed all the colourful and decorative front doors of the houses. We asked Mr. Hammi if these symbols had a specific meaning to it, but it turned out to be the creative freedom of the black smith. Nevertheless, it makes for a cheerful collection of personalised signs and a way to recognize eachother's houses.

Can you recognize your door?  
Est-ce que vous pouvez reconnaître votre porte?





# Building culture

The site



View from the future site of the women’s house

PHOTO CREDITS: JOLIEN BOSMANS.



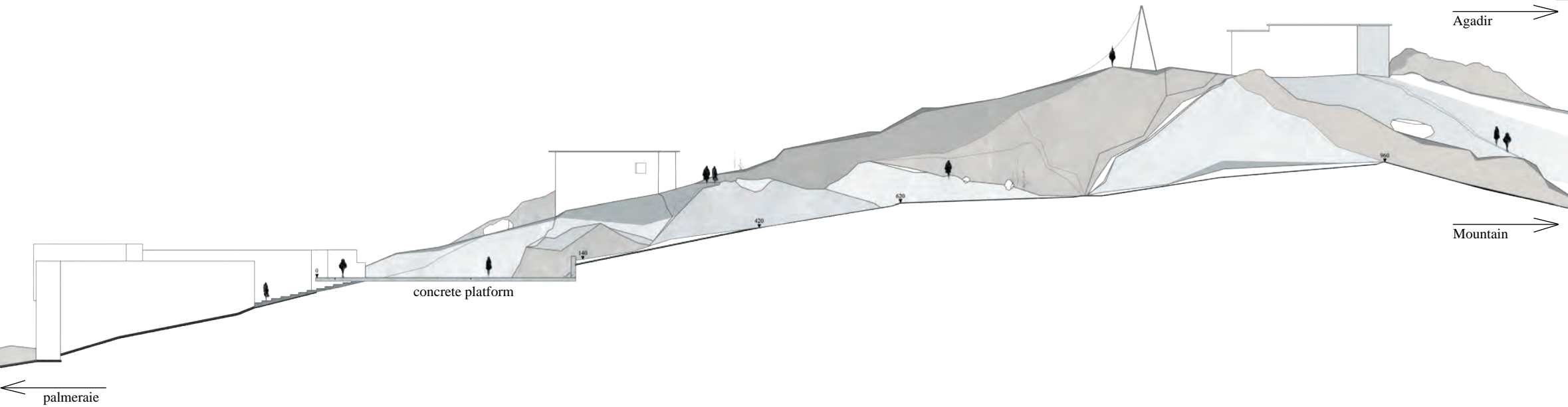
A Specific Site and Program

High up the hills of Ouled-Merzoug a specific piece of land which is reserved for the centre offers a 360° view over the village. The site was a donation of the community of Ouled Merzoug to the women's association. Due to its location, the centre will have a constant visibility and presence in the landscape when looked at from the lower town parts.

The inhabitants of the village have initiated the idea of setting up a women's house. This house is committed to strengthening community development through education and empowerment of women by providing services, support and training opportunities. It would give the women an opportunity to spend all their free hours more usefully; in the centre they will gain knowledge, exchange experiences and create products.

Our presence triggers discussions about the activity, it creates dreams, groups... Things become possible. It is the building that embodies the activity. The architectural project here is so ambiguous, it does become a starting point, an open door, the opportunity to create something. The project of the association is a project in the long term. The women will take charge of their project and the goal of the project is to accompany its implementation in a dynamic of empowerment and support.

Cross Section

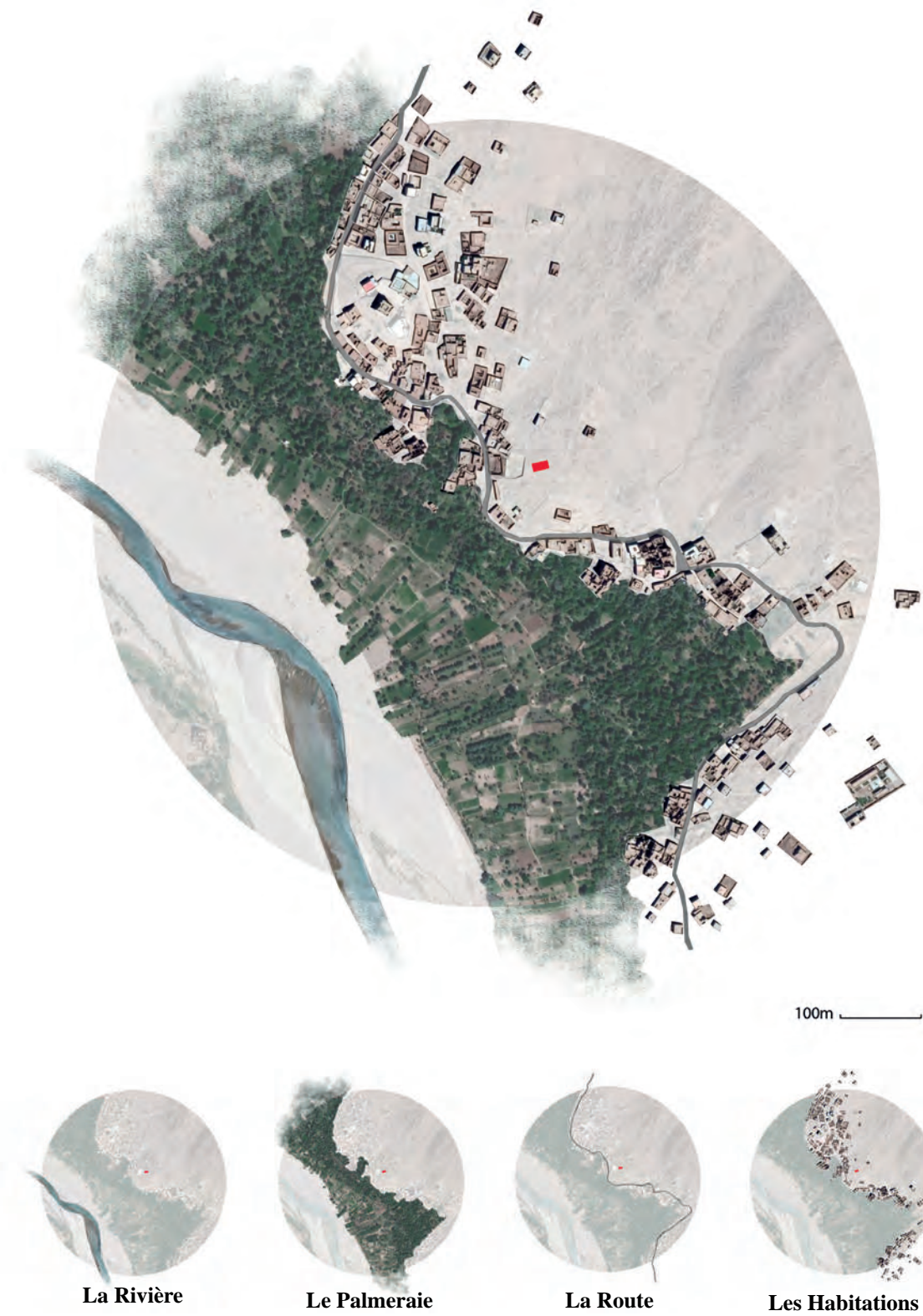


Longitudinal Section



# 6 Projects

## 1- Introvert



Plan d’implantation du projet

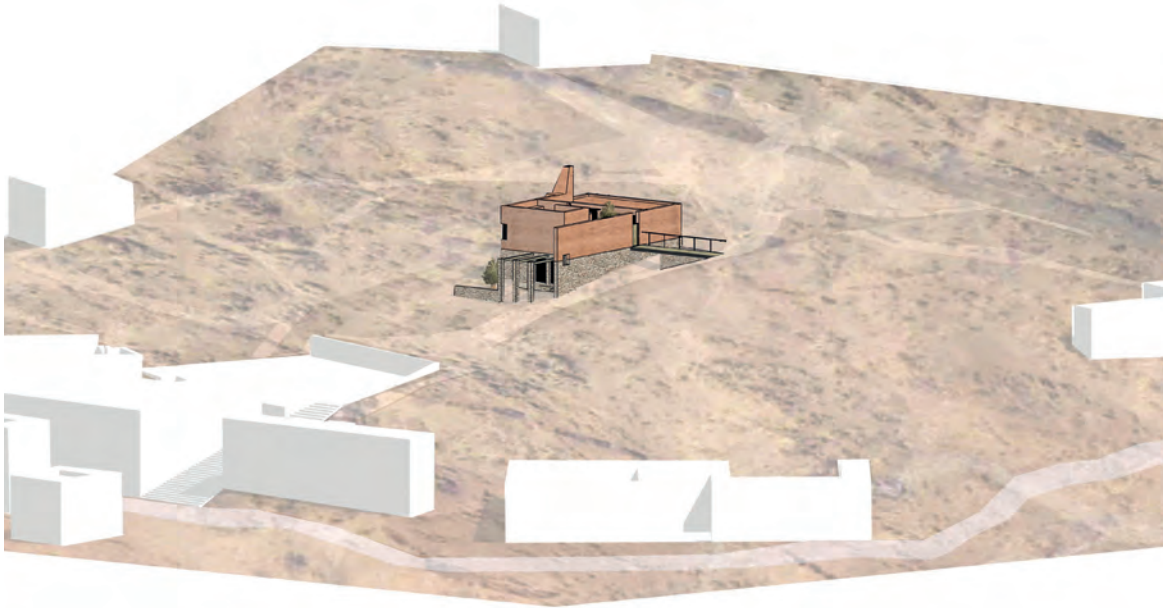
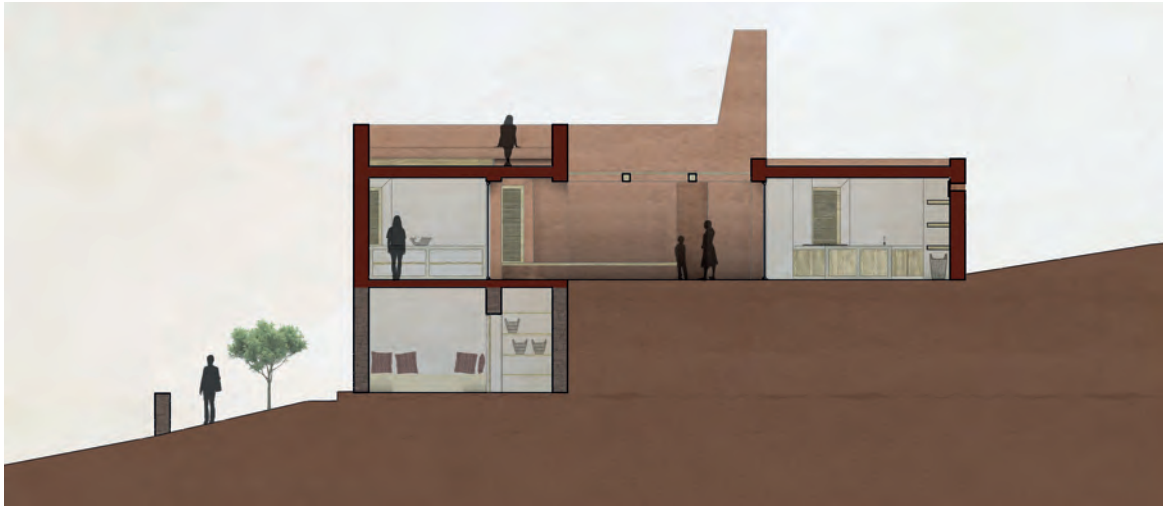


Image 3d du projet



Coupe dans le “Patio”

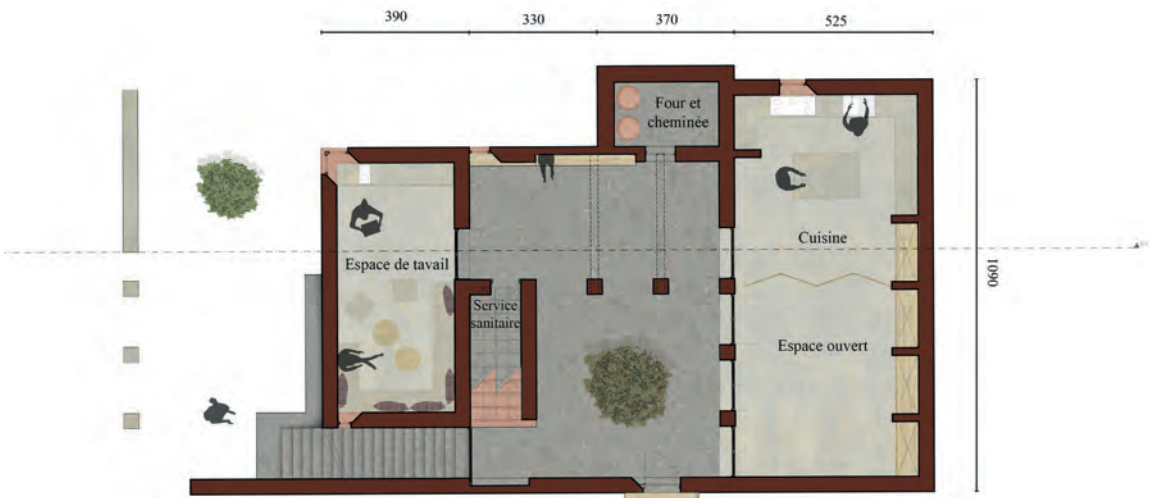
# Introvert ...

BY DANY DEPUYDT, MARGOT LAMBRECHTS, GIULIA VENTRE

Les gens s’installent toujours dans des endroits qui leur offrent une sécurité de vie adaptée. Mais les temps changent et les conditions évoluent, c’est pourquoi nous sommes généralement obligés d’adapter nos besoins de vie. L’appel construire une «maison des femmes» suscite rapidement beaucoup de questions. Pourquoi, de quoi s’agit-il, pour qui, qui sont ces femmes et dans quelles circonstances vivent-elles, d’où vient cette question, à qui appartient-elle ...? Et très souvent, ces expressions sont un «manque», quelque chose qui menace de disparaître du passé, devenant un avenir incertain. Le passé, le présent et le futur, les trois sont clairement indissociables. Une réponse possible à la question de la «communauté de femmes» semble bien à voir quelque chose avec le manque de reconnaissance, de reconnaissance et de solidarité pour créer une certitude future. Notre projet fait référer à la typologie existante d’un logement local, où la sécurité fermée, introvertie et introvertie de l’environnement immédiat est très claire. En outre, les maisons

d’origines avaient été construites comme un ensemble. Un bâtiment seul, éloigné du voisinage, semble plus tôt moins évident dans ce contexte. C’est pourquoi nous trouvons qu’il est nécessaire de créer une connexion avec à la plate-forme de prière en utilisant pleinement différents niveaux. Quand on approche le bâtiment, on passe graduellement de la voie publique et de la plate-forme aux espaces clos et plutôt privés du foyer pour femmes. Au bas de l’immeuble se trouve l’espace qui peut être utilisé pour des services semi-publics. Cet espace supplémentaire moitié enterré, donne l’avantage de pouvoir être utiliser pour différents services : un atelier pour l’artisanat, un espace visiteurs, une salle d’exposition, une salle de stockage, une chambre d’amis. Cet espace est donc séparé de la partie plus fermée / privée à un niveau supérieur en termes de niveau, de matériel et d’accès. Cette pièce, ainsi que la parvis avant, est donc toujours en relation ou en dialogue avec tous les événements publics possibles sur la plate-forme. Cela donne au “foyer des femmes” une occasion

unique de “reconnaître” le dialogue avec son environnement en tant que partenaire à part entière. De ce parvis, on y entre directement par l’escalier principal vers la « maison des femmes » supérieure. Un foyer pour femmes où l’on se sent comme chez soi, avec un espace extérieur fermé entouré d’espaces appropriés. Y compris : un espace quotidien et de travail quotidien, un espace plus grand avec une cuisine ouverte adaptée, occasionnellement séparé afin que les groupes plus petits puissent travailler, un endroit pour la boulangerie avec un cheminée et puis des installations sanitaires communes. Toutes les chambres donnent sur la cour, ainsi que toutes les fenêtres. Les ouvertures des fenêtres vers l’extérieur sont réduites au minimum dans le but de donner aux chambres supérieures une atmosphère privée / fermée et de n’encadrer qu’une seule vue. Comme valeur ajoutée, il y a une terrasse sur le bâtiment avant qui donne une vue sur le village et qui peut être utilisé pour plusieurs choses.



Plan du rez de chaussée

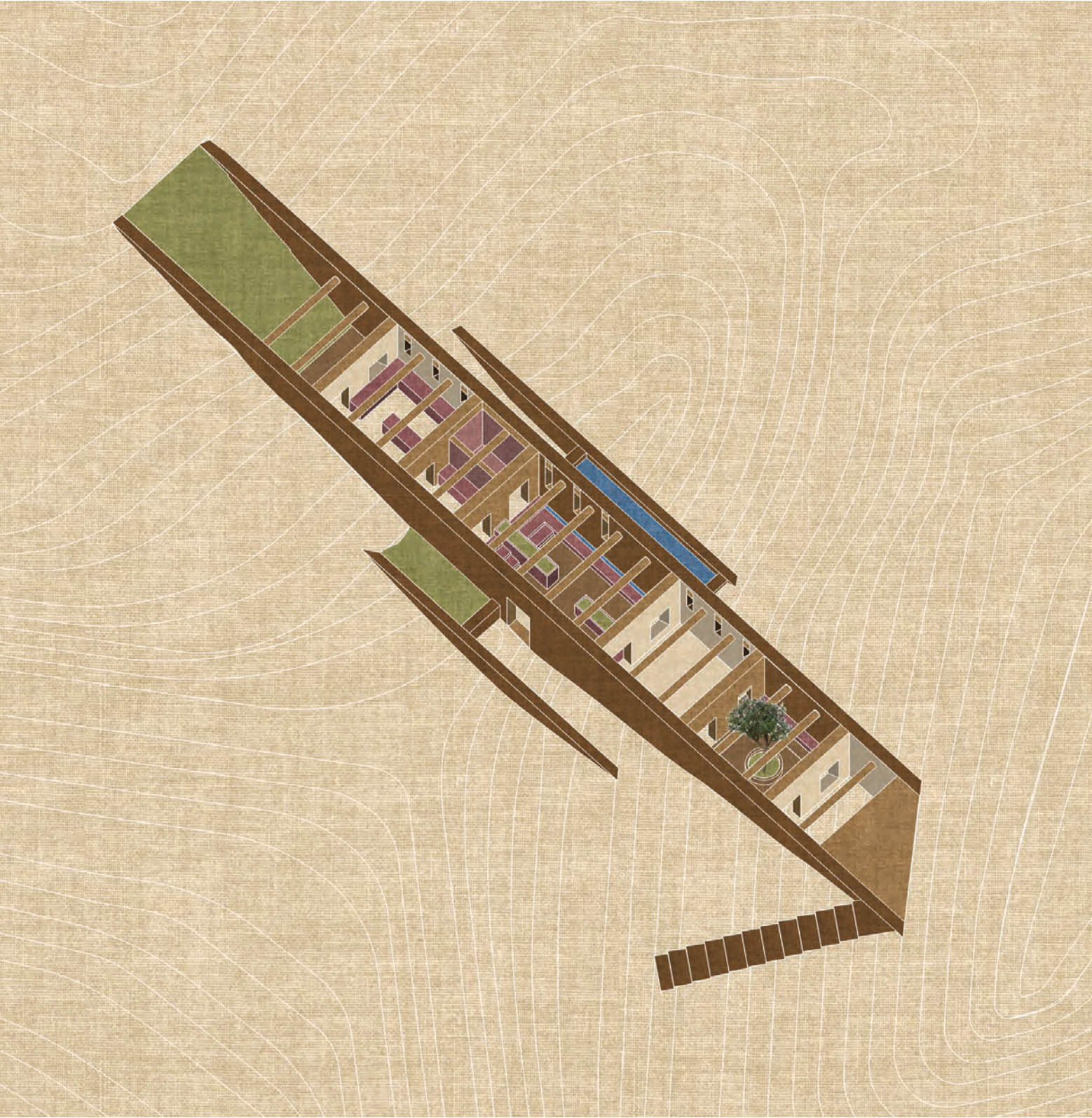


Plan du sous-sol et de l’espace atelier



2- Nichée entre les collines

6 projects



A. Axonométrie de la maison des femmes

Un avec les Systèmes de la Nature.

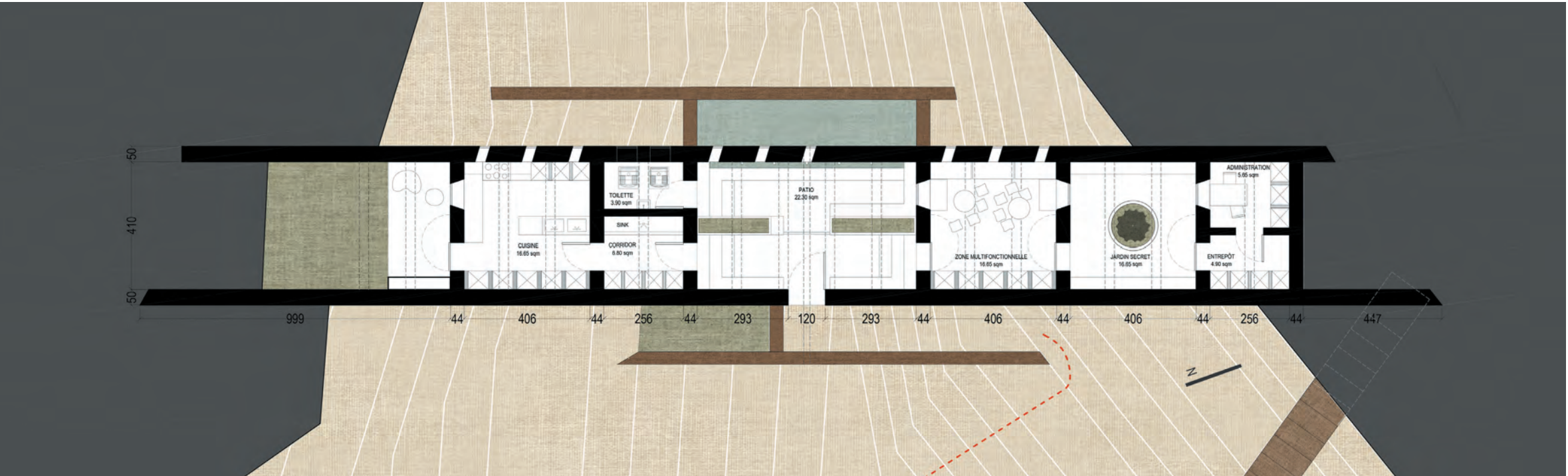
AURORA FANTI, SOFIE VAN DEN VELDE & MIKI ZEA

La permaculture est un système de conception intelligent qui valorise les besoins humains, tout en améliorant la biodiversité, en réduisant l’impact sur la planète et en créant un environnement plus équitable pour tous. Les trois grands principes - Earth Care - People Care - Fair Share - sont à l’avant-garde de la vision de ce projet. Une attention particulière a été portée à la conception d’un bâtiment qui est un système durable en soi. Même situé dans la vallée, entre trois pentes naturelles, le bâtiment émerge du cœur de cette colline rocheuse, travaillant avec le paysage naturel du site. L’utilisation de la pierre et de la terre locale comme principaux matériaux de construction complètent l’ensemble. Le terrain devient le bâtiment. Cette position permet au paysage de s’écouler dans la structure du bâtiment, créant ainsi des environnements intérieurs et extérieurs. A l’intérieur de ces limites, une attention particulière a été accordée à la création d’espaces à la fois publics et privés, avec des espaces d’activités éducatives et économiques ainsi que de bien-être. Le système d’eau (eaux grises, pluie, eaux usées) fait partie intégrante de la conception, maximisant ainsi l’utilisation de cette précieuse ressource. L’élément de recyclage des eaux grises est littéralement au cœur des zones de raccordement du bâtiment



avec ce système visuellement ouvert au centre. L’introduction d’une toilette à compostage dans la conception est un ajout précieux aux considérations environnementales de cette nouvelle structure. Non seulement ces systèmes réduisent l’impact sur l’environnement, mais ils deviennent un outil éducatif pour apprendre à connaître les systèmes durables”

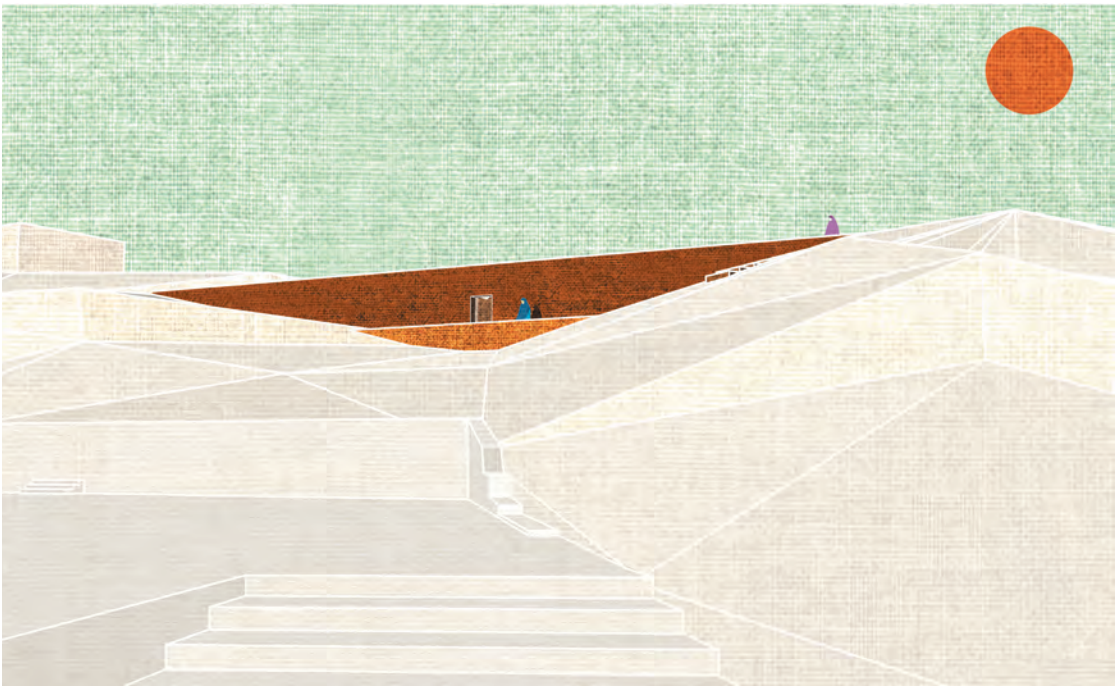
seulement ces systèmes réduisent l’impact sur l’environnement, mais ils deviennent un outil éducatif pour apprendre à connaître les systèmes durables et à les mettre en œuvre au sein de la communauté au sens large. L’ensemble de la structure du bâtiment devient une ressource éducative vivante et immersive pour les femmes de Ouled Merzoug pour le présent et des développements continus de croissance pour l’avenir.



B. Project plan



C. Image de la cour avec le système de traitement des eaux grises.



D. Image de la maison des femmes, vue de la dalle de béton.



# 6 Projects

## 3- Où les Villageois se Croisent

### Un Lieu de Rencontre pour Tout le Village

BY TINNE BEIRINCKX, ARNAUD GOOSSENS, EMILY HAEST, HANNAH VAN BREEN

Pendant notre visite à Ouled Merzoug, nous avons organisé un atelier de collage, où les femmes ont fait une image de la “maison des femmes de leurs rêves”. Elles pouvaient choisir des éléments dans une collection d’images de bâtiments avec différentes formes de toiture, différents artisanats et usagers. A la fin, chaque femme a expliqué son collage au groupe. Au cours de cet atelier, toutes les femmes ont collé des femmes, ainsi que des hommes et des enfants dans la maison des

femmes: la maison des femmes doit être un lieu de rencontre où tout le monde est le bienvenu.

Nous concevons cette maison des femmes comme un lieu non seulement pour les femmes, mais avec une valeur ajoutée pour toute la communauté du village. C’est un lieu de rencontre, qui peut être approprié par différentes personnes à différents moments de la journée ou de l’année mais auquel les créations des femmes restent central.

“La maison des femmes doit être un lieu de rencontre où tout le monde est le bienvenu. Mais auquel les créations des femmes restent central.”



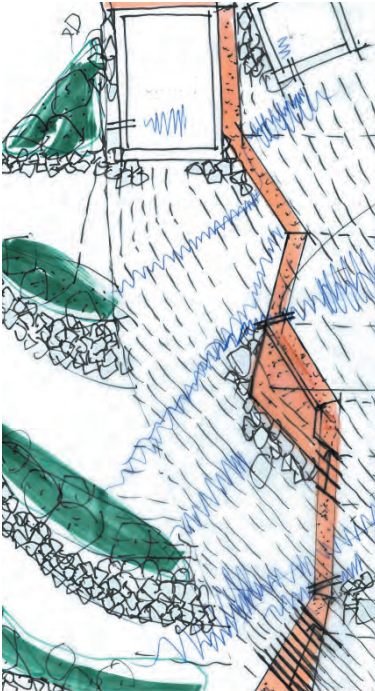
Des collages faites par les femmes lors de l’atelier de co-création.

HANNAH VAN BREEN



Technique de reboisement sur une colline.

BE NASAINA MARIE VALENCIA



Reboisement et chemin.

TINNE BEIRINCKX

### Une Colline Verte

Pendant des périodes de pluies avant et après l’hiver, une grande quantité d’eau descend des montagnes et coule dans différents ravinements. Le site de la maison des femmes se trouve dans l’un de ces ravinements. L’eau descendant de la colline provoque l’érosion du sol, la destruction des chemins et de la route du village, et l’écoulement rapide de l’eau vers la rivière. En raison du changement climatique, les périodes de sécheresse et les saisons des pluies deviendront de plus en plus extrêmes à l’avenir. En conséquence, les flancs des collines vont souffrir d’avantage. C’est aussi sur ces flancs que se réalise le développement du

village. Pour y anticiper, des actions à l’échelle du village sont nécessaires. Nous proposons une stratégie de reboisement des ravins pour éviter les problèmes liés à l’écoulement de l’eau emais aussi pour renforcer la biodiversité, la qualité du paysage et pour ombrager les flancs des collines.

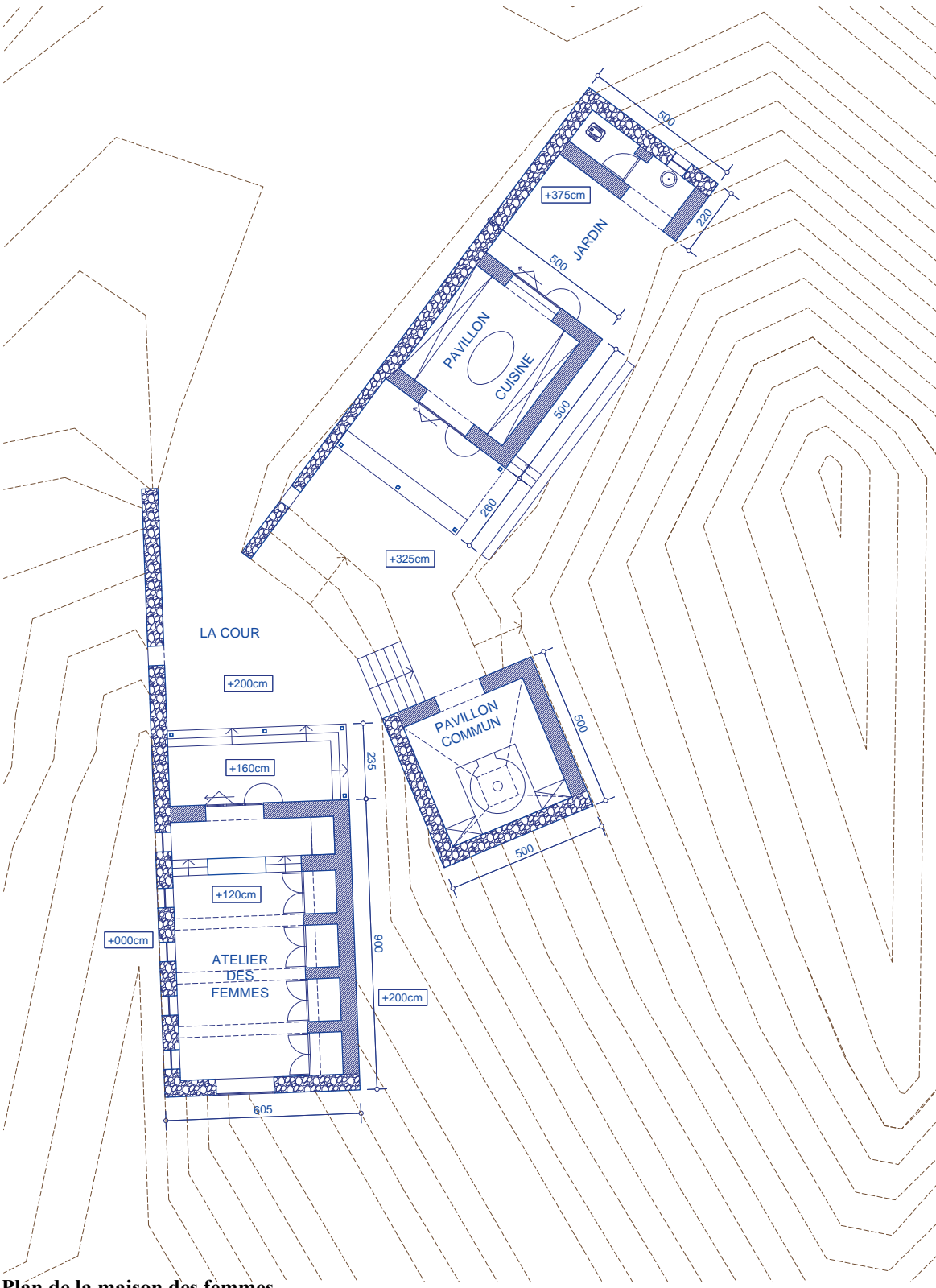
“En raison du changement climatique, les périodes de sécheresse et saisons des pluies deviendront de plus en plus extrêmes.”

### La promenade vers la Maison des Femmes

Le site est situé au croisement de deux chemins qui sont des raccourcis. Le premier chemin relie les différents bâtiments et espaces publics importants, tels que le terrain de foot et l’école maternelle. Le deuxième chemin relie la route principale et le centre du village par la plate-forme en béton (réservée aux manifestations religieuses) avec le premier chemin. En plaçant la maison des femmes sur le croisement de ces chemins, nous intégrons la maison dans le réseau des bâtiments publics du village.

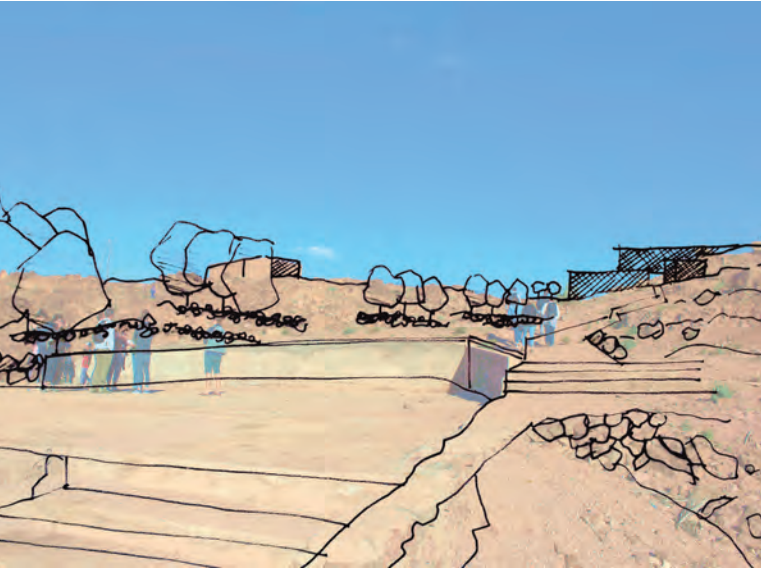
“Nous intégrons la maison dans le réseau des bâtiments publics du village.”

Nous choisissons de ne pas construire au centre du ravin, mais de construire le long de la crête de la colline; en suivant la topographie naturelle du site et en essayant de saisir les différentes vues panoramiques. Un chemin pavé est construit à partir de la plate-forme. Le long du chemin, des aires de repos sont créées, où les gens peuvent profiter de belles vues panoramiques avec le vent frais dans le dos.



Plan de la maison des femmes.

TINNE BEIRINCKX, ARNAUD GOOSSENS, EMILY HAEST, HANNAH VAN BREEN



Le chemin et la maison des femmes, vus de la plate-forme.

TINNE BEIRINCKX

### La Maison des Femmes: à la Croisée des Chemins

Le chemin mène les villageois à un lieu de rencontre central, ‘la cour’. Cette cour est le cœur de la maison et peut être appropriée par différents utilisateurs à différents moments de la journée. Ces différents usages sont stimulés par de nombreux éléments: un escalier pour boire du thé, des pierres comme éléments de jeux pour les enfants, un espace ombragé sous le figuier comme lieu de repos avec une vue sur les montagnes. Bien que la maison des femmes est situé le long d’un chemin public, il y a aussi des espaces plus réservés ou même privés.

“Bien que la maison est situé le long d’un chemin public, il y a aussi des espaces plus intimes.”

Autour de la cour, se trouvent 3 pavillons. Chaque pavillon a une “interface” semi-publique vers la cour. L’atelier des femmes est un lieu d’enseignement, d’apprentissage et de création

artisanale. Dans l’espace couvert devant la façade, les femmes peuvent s’asseoir dehors pour travailler leur artisanat et où un petit marché peut être organisé. A partir de la cour, une ruelle mène au jardin plus privé, où se trouve l’accès au “pavillon de la cuisine”. Du côté cour de ce pavillon, une cuisine extérieure avec comptoir peut prolonger l’espace cuisine, ou bien servir à plus de personnes pendant des festivités. Le pavillon le plus central, le “pavillon commun”, représente une valeur ajoutée pour l’Association des Femmes ainsi que la communauté du village. C’est un espace idéal pour une boulangerie publique, une presse à olives ou un moulin à grains partagés.

“Le pavillon commun représente une valeur ajouté pour L’Association ainsi que la communauté du village.”



4- A bras ouvert

6 projects

A bras ouverts

BY AURANNE, BINIAM AND KJELL

Une coline rocailleuse surplombe le village et ses alentours. Au Nord-Ouest, le village et la palmeraie. Au Sud-est les montagnes de l'Atlas à perte de vue.

Depuis la plateforme de béton on l'aperçoit! Perché tout en haut, profitant de la vue imprenable, le centre des femmes joue avec la topographie.

Tels des bras ouverts sur l'avenir, de hauts murs en pierre de granite connectent la vallée de part et d'autre et convergent vers le centre du bâtiment.

Chemin faisant, en longeant ces murs j'arrive à une esplanade. Espace public mais protégé par les rochers, c'est l'endroit idéal pour faire du commerce, installer des échopes temporaires ou négocier avec les femmes à travers un comptoir extérieur aménagé à même le mur de granit.

Toujours en suivant le chemin induit par ces monolithes de granit, je découvre une brèche à leur point de rencontre. Là, à l'écart de l'agitation du marché se situe l'entrée du centre des femmes.

Par cette porte cachée, j'accède au coeur bâtiment: un patio ombragé aux murs épais où boire un thé avec une amie lové dans les alcôves, à l'abris des regards et du bruit.

Centre névralgique du bâtiment, le patio dessert chaque pièce.

J'entre par la porte à ma droite dans l'espace atelier. Grand et lumineux. Il donne accès à une terrasse extérieure. Si je suis ce chemin, je retrouverai l'envers du décors: la fenêtre comptoir s'ouvrant sur la place publique. Mais plutôt, je traverse l'atelier, et découvre une pièce attenante. Plus petite, elle s'ouvre ou se ferme à la guise pour y donner des cours ou prolonger l'espace de création.

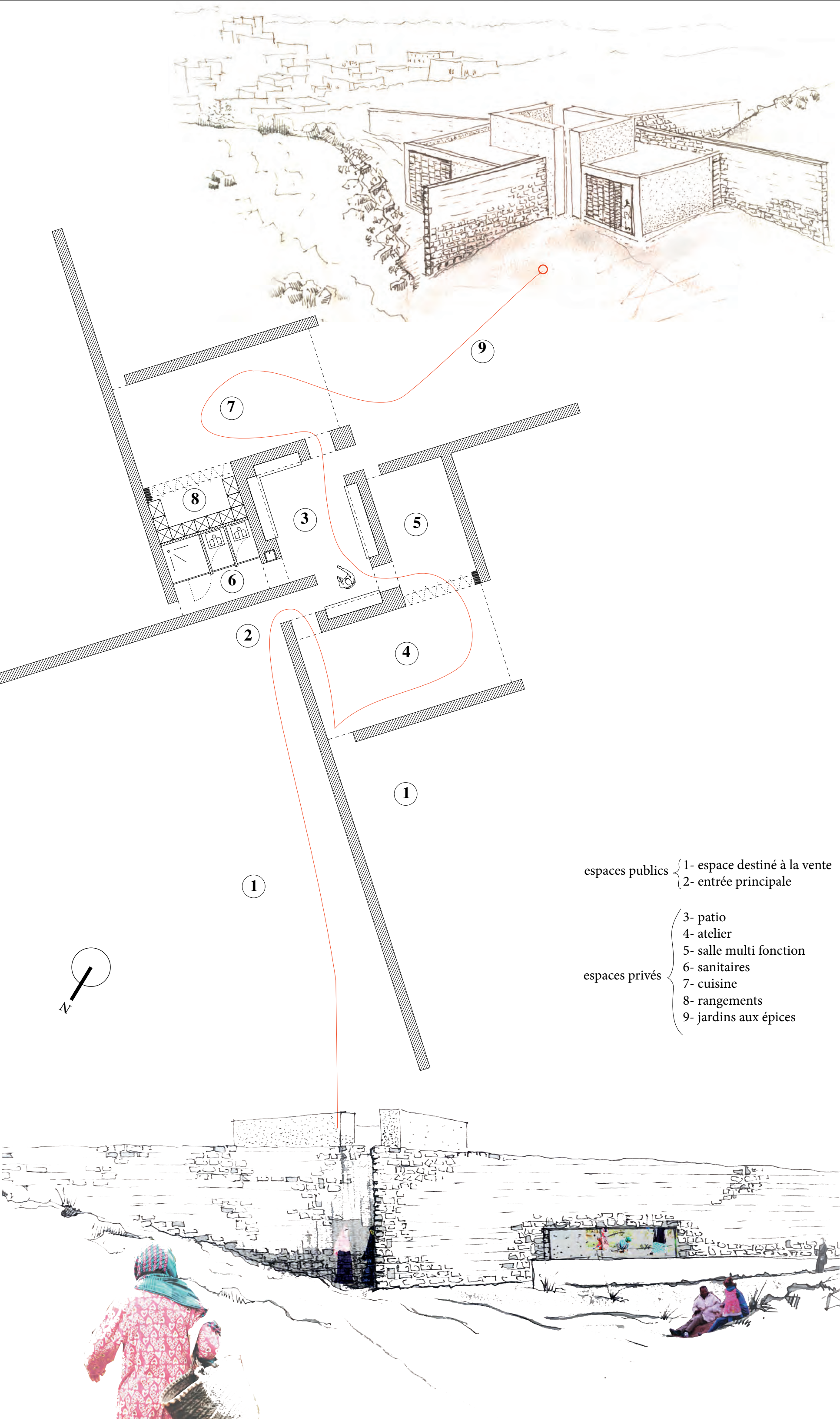
Une petite porte me ramène vers le patio. En facede moi, les sanitaires. Prenant à droite j'entre dans la cuisine. Caché derrière un mur mobile se révèle l'espace de stockage. Mais attirée par la lumière filtrée au travers des persiennes je traverse la grande porte fenêtre et découvre le jardin aux épices. Là se termine ma déambulation submergée par les parfums de rose et de romarin.

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Les hauts murs qui jouent avec la topographie sont en granit. Ils encadrent des murs en adobe recouvert d'un enduit.

L'orientation du soleil et des ouvertures permet de faire entrer la chaleur en hiver et la repousser l'été afin de garder par tout temps des températures agréables.

Le patio, par sa hauteur tire l'air chaud vers l'extérieur. Les ventilations latérales tempèrent l'été.





# 6 Projects

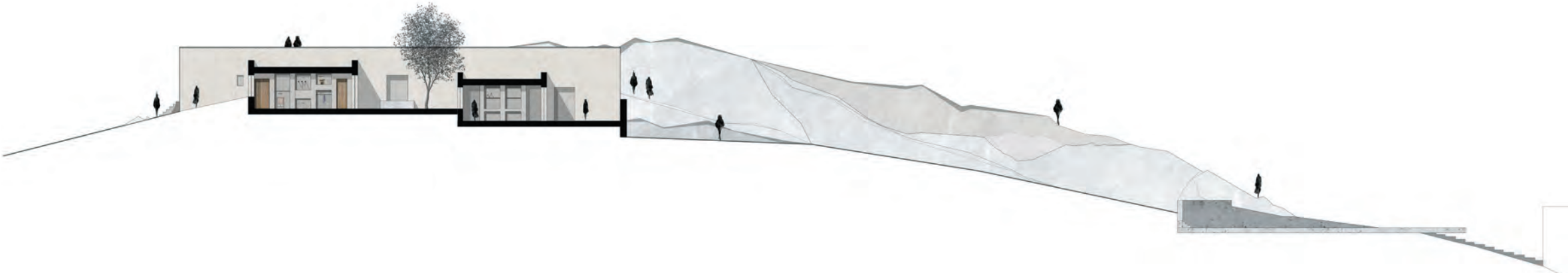
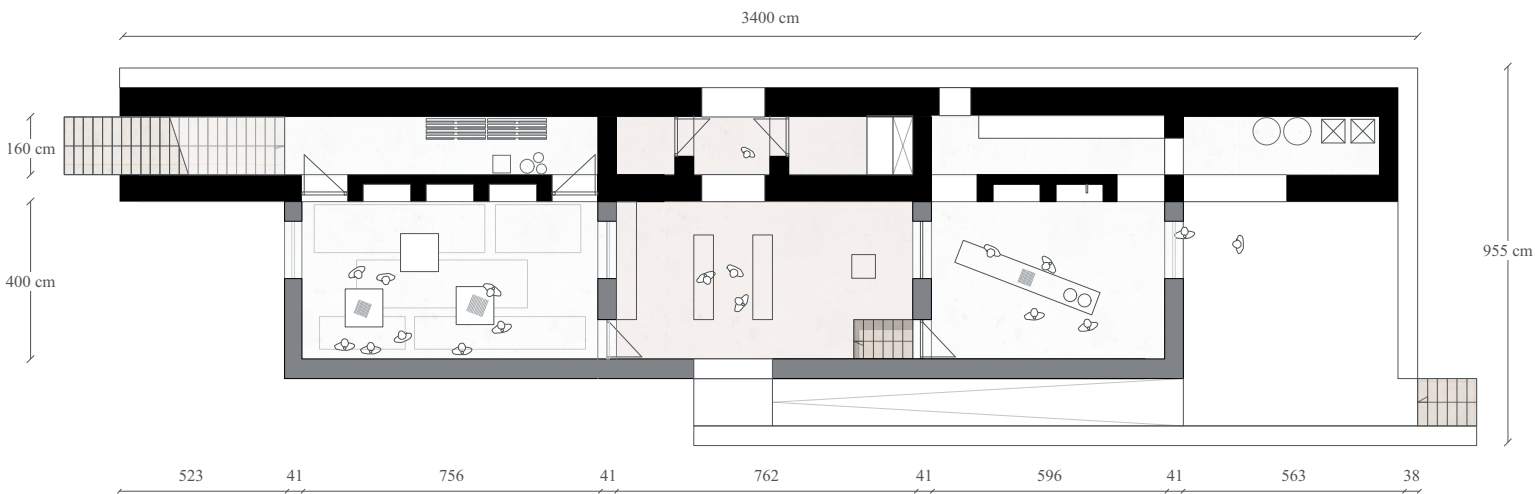
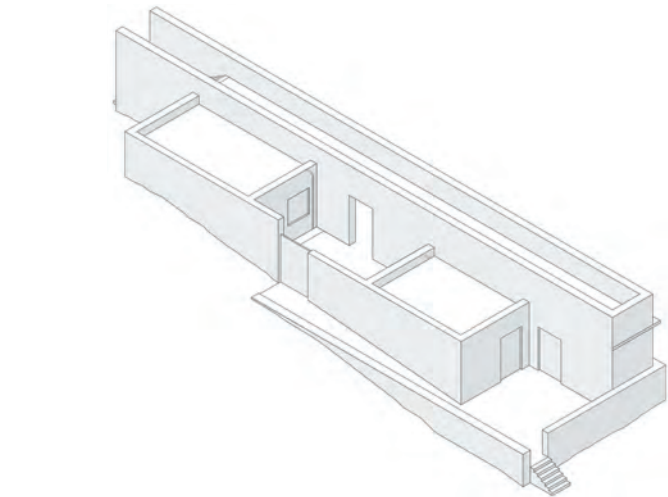
## 5- L'Articulation à polyvalence

### L'articulation à polyvalence

BY JOHN SILVERSTAND & JOLIEN BOSMANS

L'association des femmes d'Ouled Merzoug n'existe que depuis deux ans, une organisation encore très jeune. Les activités qu'elles exercent actuellement et celles qu'elles souhaitent exercer dans le futur sont très divergentes. C'est pourquoi le principe de base de ce project est la polyvalence. Ce centre n'existe que de 4 espaces : 2 espaces intérieurs, 1 espace extérieur et 1 patio. En combinaison avec une bonne organisation et programmation, les 4 espaces peuvent porter le programme multiple demandé par les femmes. La bande étroite sur le côté sud du bâtiment

longes ces 4 espaces et articule l'ensemble du projet. Cette bande est un grand placard avec tout l'équipement nécessaire pour des scénarios multiples, de sorte que l'association puisse changer facilement d'un programme à un autre. Tous les systèmes fixes sont intégrés dans cette bande (par exemple : sanitaire, cuisine, ...). Et en été, il sert comme une protection contre les rayons du soleil venant du sud de s'infiltrer dans les espaces et assure en raison de sa hauteur plus élevée pour créer de l'ombre dans le patio et sur les toits.





6- Domus

6 projects

Un espace de rencontre, de partage et d’apprentissage

BY ALICE CHANG, MARTINA PETROSINO AND ELINE HOFTIEZER

Ouled Merzoug est un petit village dans une Palmeraie situé dans la province de Ouarzazate, à plus de 1000 m d’altitude dans le haut atlas au Maroc. Le village bénéficie d’un climat désertique chaud. Il ne pleut que quelques jours par an (en automne et en hiver). Les températures entre jour et nuit varie en moyenne de 20°C. En été, les températures moyennes maximales sont autour 37 °C alors qu’en hivers, la nuit, les températures peuvent facilement descendre en dessous de zéro.

**Contexte social et culturel**  
Environ 350 femmes habitent dans ce village. Étant donné qu’une grande partie des hommes ont déserté la Palmeraie à la recherche d’un emplois stable en ville le rôle de la femme est devenu plus que capitale dans la gestion des affaires quotidiennes et sont devenu les piliers du noyau familial.

Si certain diront que l’Islam est la religion du savoir, il est certain qu’elle encourage fortement à s’instruire. “*Lis, au nom de ton Seigneur qui a créé l’homme d’une adhérence. Lis ! Ton Seigneur est le Très Noble, qui a enseigné par la plume (le calame), a enseigné à l’homme ce qu’il ne savait pas.*” (Coran 96 :1-5).

Une grande majorité des femmes du village n’ont pas eu la chance d’aller à l’école et ont une véritable soif d’apprendre. Elles veulent apprendre à lire et écrire mais aussi apprendre de nouvelles langues, à se servir d’un ordinateur et d’internet. Elles ont une grande connaissance de l’artisanat local qu’elles semblent souvent sous estimer. Elles souhaitent échanger leurs savoirs et ainsi renforcer et développer leur place comme vecteur économique, social et politique. Le but de la construction de la Maison des Femmes est donc d’appuyer des initiatives déjà existantes.

**Typologie (concept)**  
L’idée est de créer un espace dans lequel les femmes puissent se retrouver pour apprendre, partager et s’épanouir en tout intimité. Créer différents degrés de privacité tout en leur offrant une vue sur le paysage sont les lignes directrices du projet qui

prévoit principalement un espace polyvalent, un atelier, une cuisine et un espace extérieur. L’espace polyvalent serait matérialisé par un dôme, un espace semi-couvert permettant notamment d’accueillir les réunions des femmes.

“C’est un espace sans hiérarchie, où telles les briques qui le constituent, chaque femme soutient et est soutenue par les autres pour former une entité solide.”

Cette nouvelle typologie symbolise également un programme encore inédit dans le village et s’associe avec une technique constructive vernaculaire. Ainsi, derrière des murs traditionnels s’inscrivant dans le paysage, se devine un dôme qui ne s’apprécie réellement que de l’intérieur. Le dôme utilise une technique ancestrale remise au goût du jour par Hassan Fathy puis par Fabrizio Carola et se construit à l’aide d’un compas géant. Cette technique s’adapte très bien



Vue de l’intérieur du dôme

au contexte d’Ouled Merzoug puisqu’elle permet de créer un grand espace en utilisant uniquement des brique de terre crue, et ne nécessite pas de main d’œuvre très qualifié.

**Principes bioclimatiques du batiment**

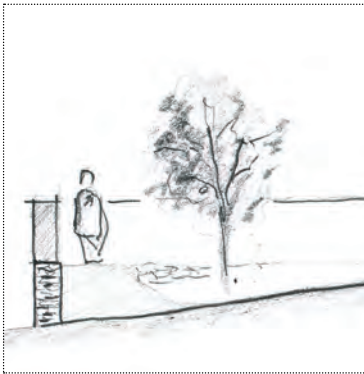
Le projet tente de tirer parti des caractéristiques du site et du climat pour créer un environnement confortable pour ses utilisateurs. C’est dans cette optique que nous proposons d’utiliser le dénivelé pour permettre aux utilisatrices de profiter pleinement de la vue en

toute intimité depuis le jardin et le dôme. En ce qui concerne l’orientation du bâtiment, la façade principale fera face au sud ce qui permettra de la protéger des rayons estival les plus fort. Par ailleurs des espaces tampons viendront protéger les façades Est et Ouest.

D’autre part, l’épaisseur des mur en terre octroiera une grande inertie thermique. Ainsi, les murs et les toitures stockeront l’énergie solaire accumulée au cours de la journée pour la rétribuer la nuit et garder un confort intérieur maximal en continu. En été, une bonne ventilation permettra au bâtiment de se refroidir au plus vite lorsque que la température extérieure descend.

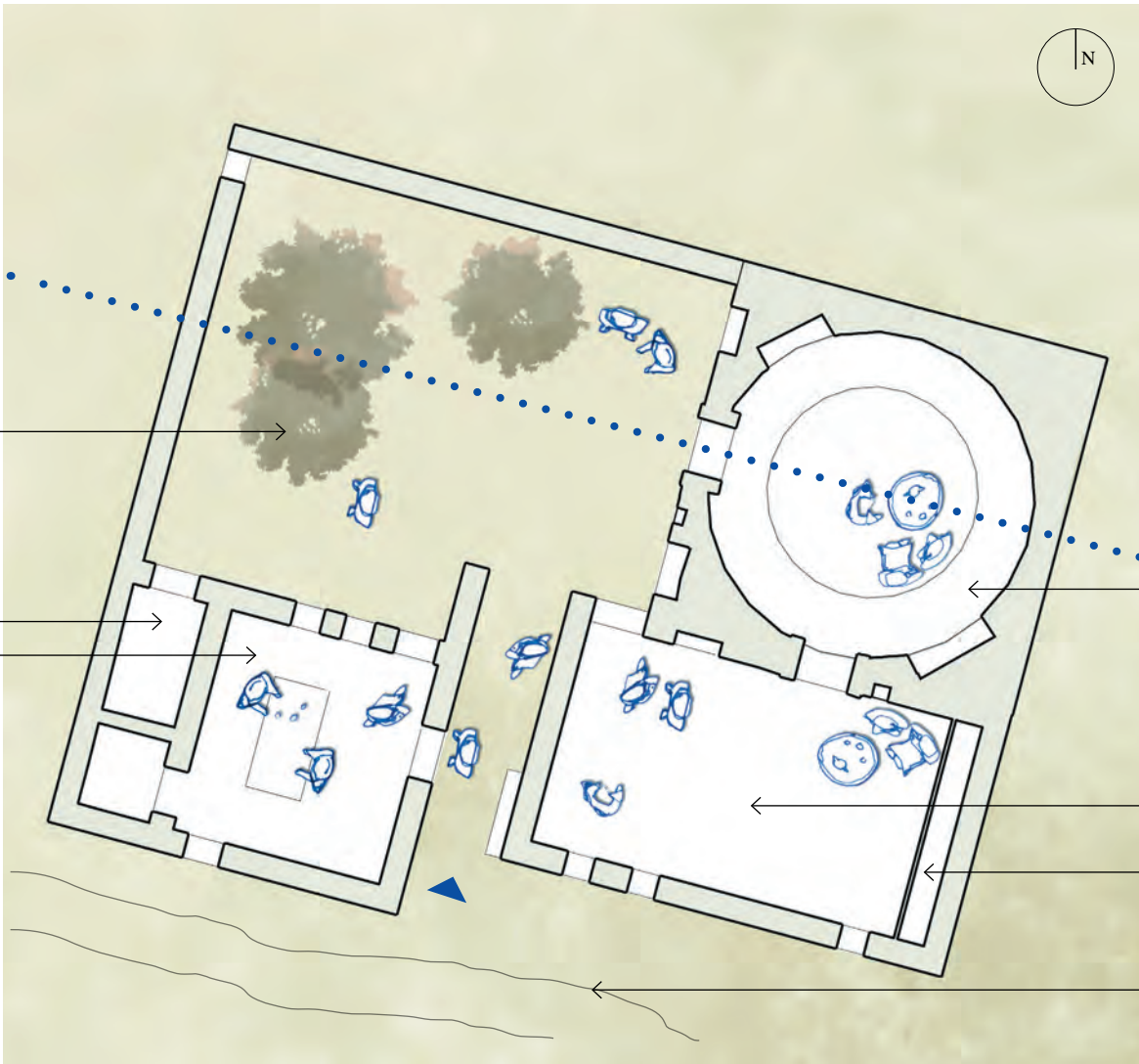
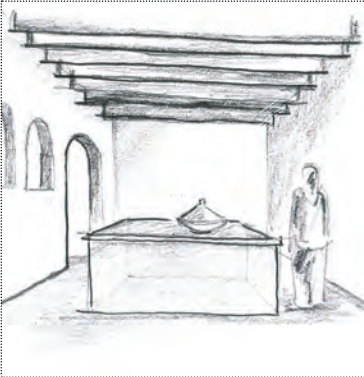
Une attention particulière sera également portée sur la récupération d’eau de pluie des toitures afin de compléter l’arrosage du jardin. Une espace sera prévu pour le stockage de cette eau en haut du jardin et un travail sur la dénivellation de ce dernier permettra de retenir un maximum l’eau qui tombe sur cet espace extérieur.

Enfin, le projet sera bien entendu construit avec des matériaux naturels, sains et à faible empreinte écologique en l’occurrence principalement en terre crue et les matériaux importés seront évités tant que possible.



Jardin clos

Toilette  
Cuisine



Dôme / Espace polyvalent

Classe/ Atelier  
Rangement

Entrée



Coupe à travers le dôme



