

The Landscape of Hades

Reconciling the "Three Natures" of the Acheron through Mythological, Hydraulic, and Cultivation Narratives.

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Graduation Lab: **Circular Water Stories**

Academic Year: 2025-2026

Landscape Architecture track | Department of Urbanism

TU Delft



The Landscape of Hades

Part I: Topos (Location)

Part II: Anagnosis (Deep-Read/Analysis)

Part III: Methodos (Method)

Part IV: Katavasis (Descent, Design)

Part I: "Topos"

When you hear the name "**Acheron**", what is the very first thing that comes to your mind?

Part I: "Topos"

The Mythical Acheron



The fall of the Titans. Cornelis Van Harleem (1588–1590).
Statens Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark

Part I: "Topos"

The Greek Underworld

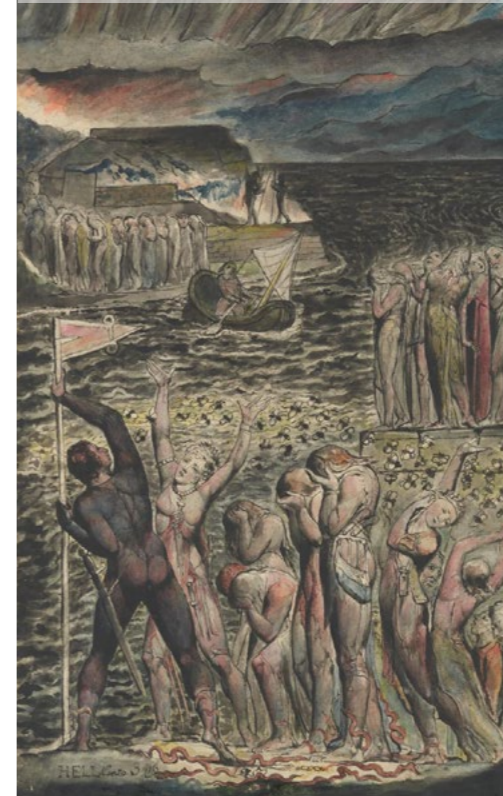
His realm is encompassed by vast rivers, whose very names inspire awe: Cocytus, Pyriphlegethon, and the like. Most formidable of all, and first to arrest the progress of the new-comer, is Acherousian lake, that lake which none may pass save by the ferryman's boat; it is too deep to be waded, too broad for the swimmer, and even defies the flight of birds deceased.

Lucian, of Mourning 3. Trans. Fowler & Fowler Lucian, of Mourning 3. Trans. Fowler & Fowler

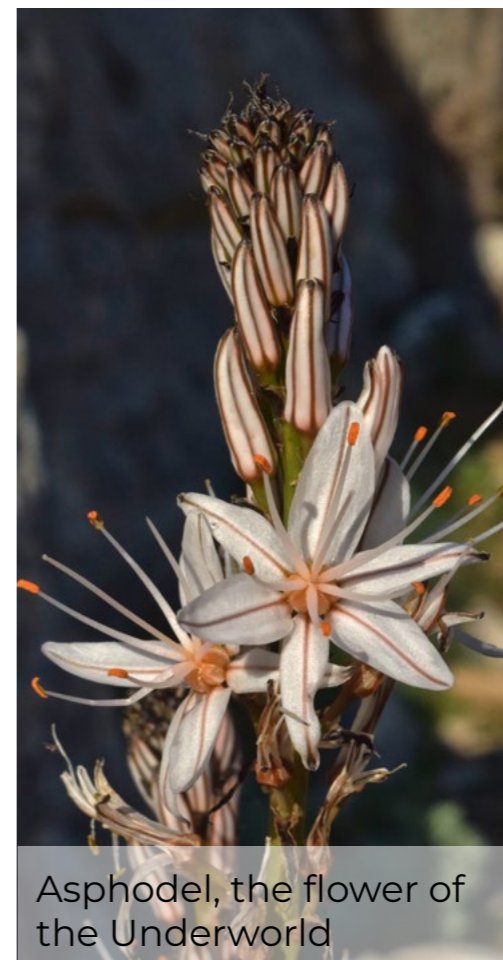
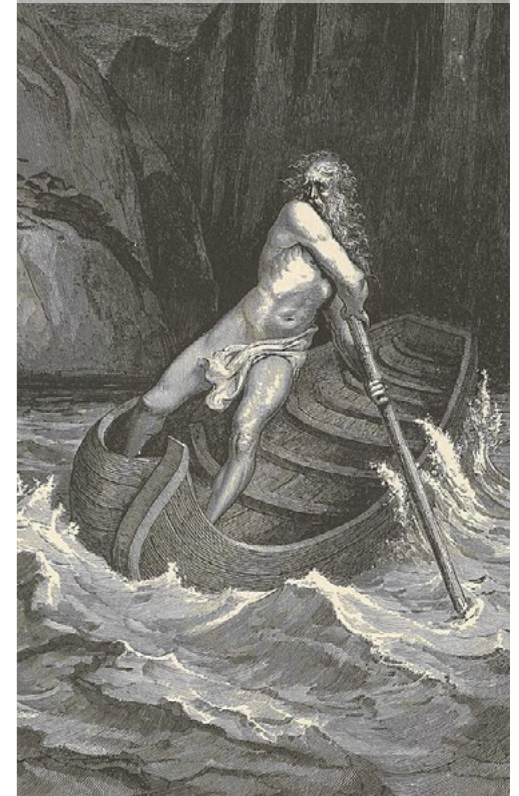


Ammoudia is "re-wilding" itself due to negligence and abandonment, February 2026

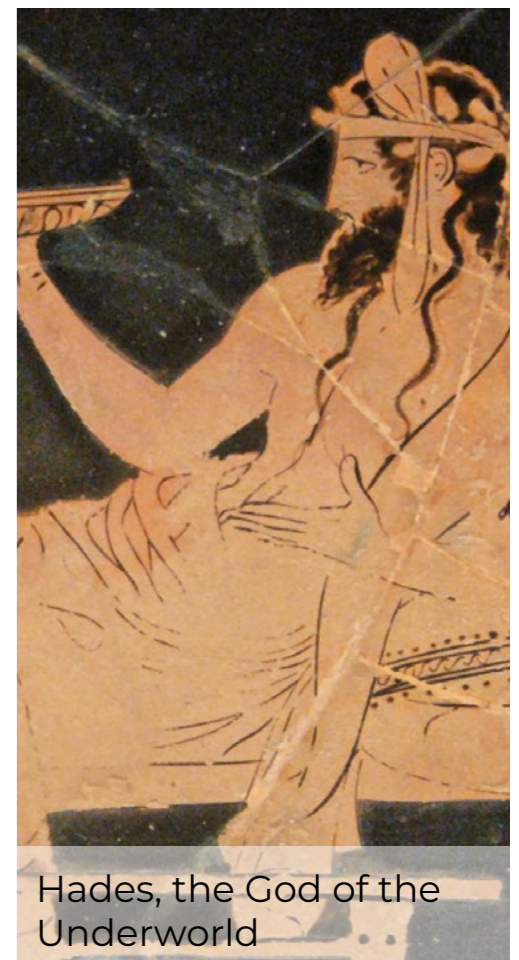
The Vestibule of Hell and the Souls Mustering to Cross the Acheron



Charon at the Gorge of Acheron, the dramatic Landscape of memory



Asphodel, the flower of the Underworld



Hades, the God of the Underworld

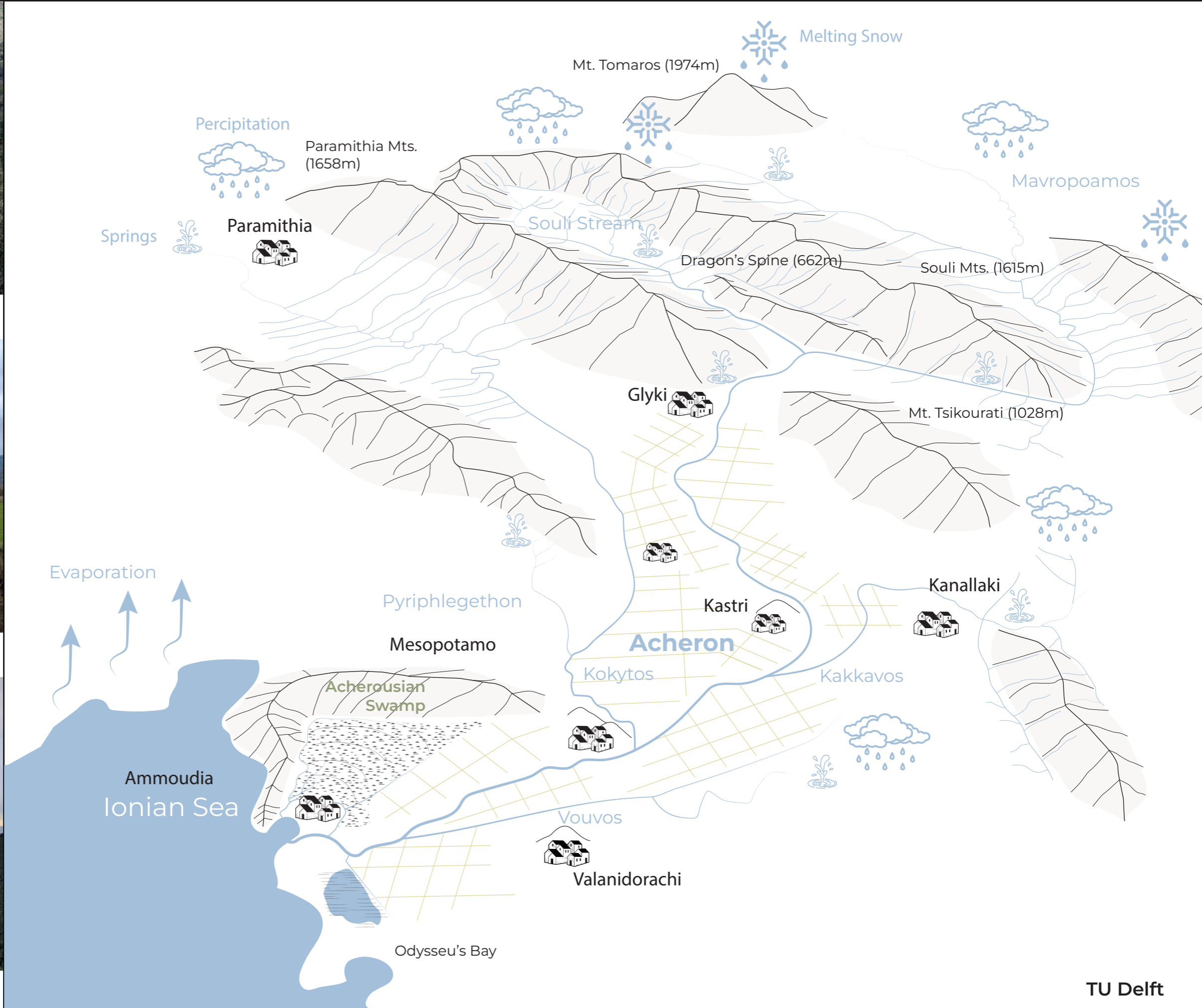
Part I: "Topos"

Reaching the Acheron



Part I: "Topos"

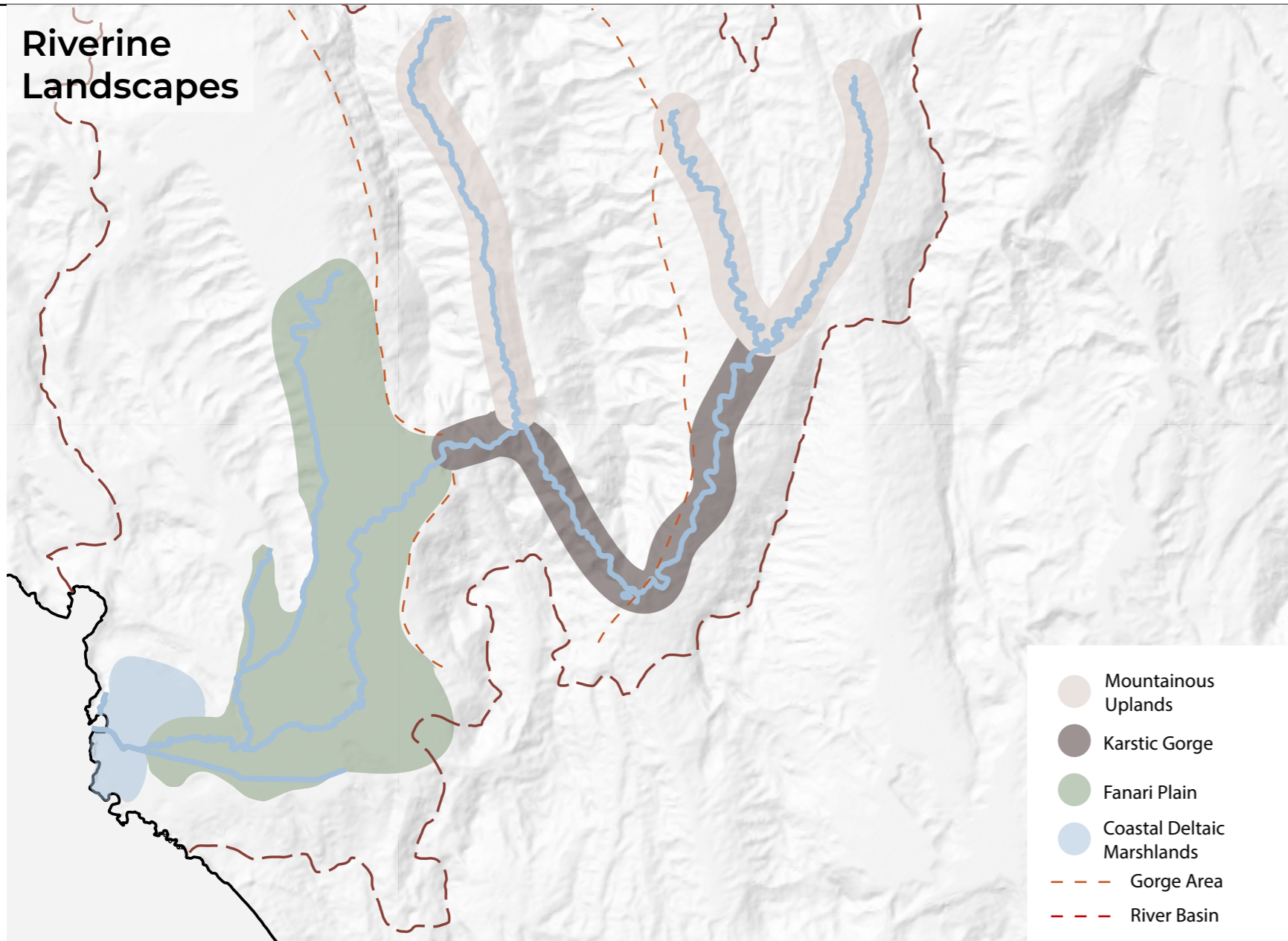
Acheron's Basin



Part I: "Topos"

Acheron's Landscape

Riverine Landscapes



The turbulent flow of Acheron through the limestone gorge



Water emerging from the Underworld (Karstic Springs)



Agriculture in the Fanari Plain



Acheron in the lowland landscape of the Fanari Plain



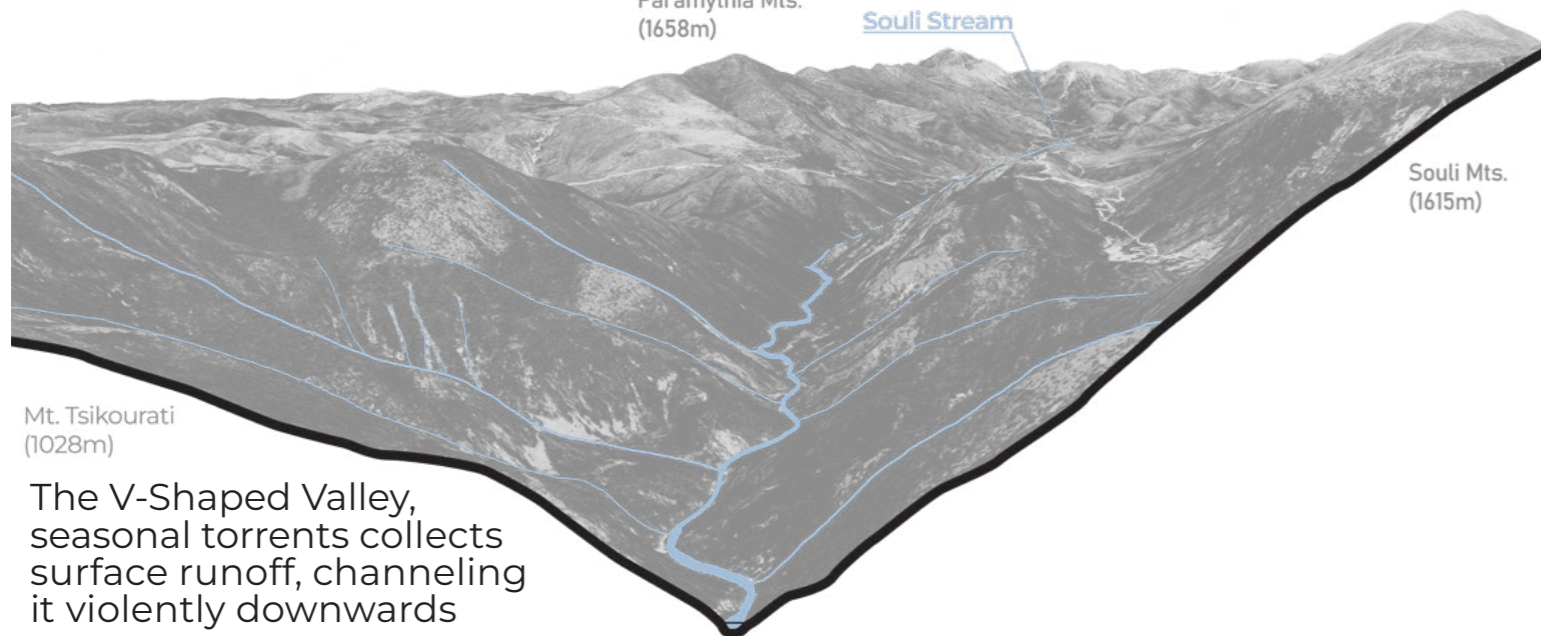
Paramythia Mts. (1658m)

Souli Stream

Souli Mts. (1615m)

Mt. Tsikourati (1028m)

The V-Shaped Valley, seasonal torrents collect surface runoff, channeling it violently downwards



Arched marshy formations, Ammoudia. Natura 2000 area

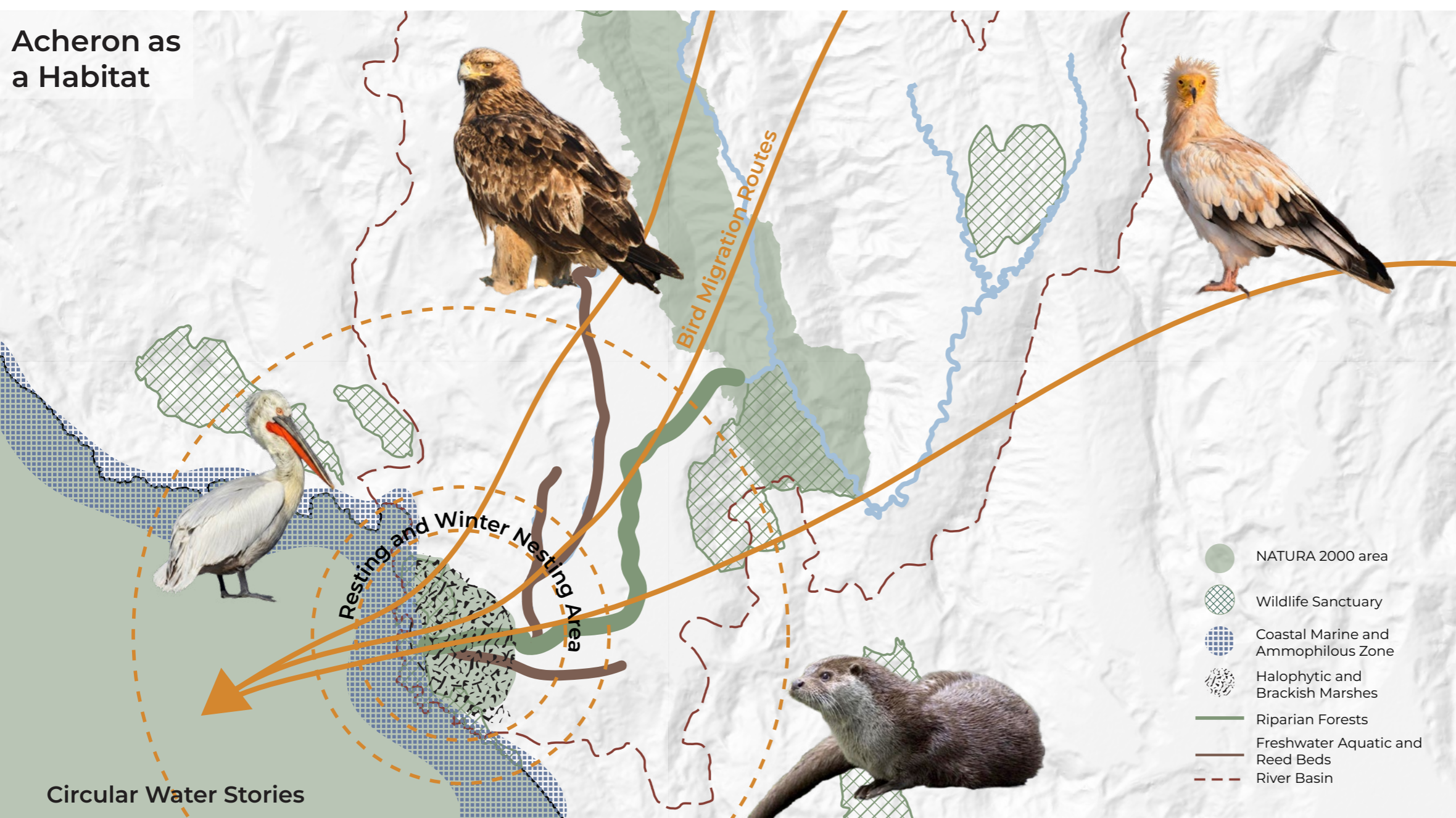


Lake formed in former agricultural land, Ammoudia



Part I: "Topos"

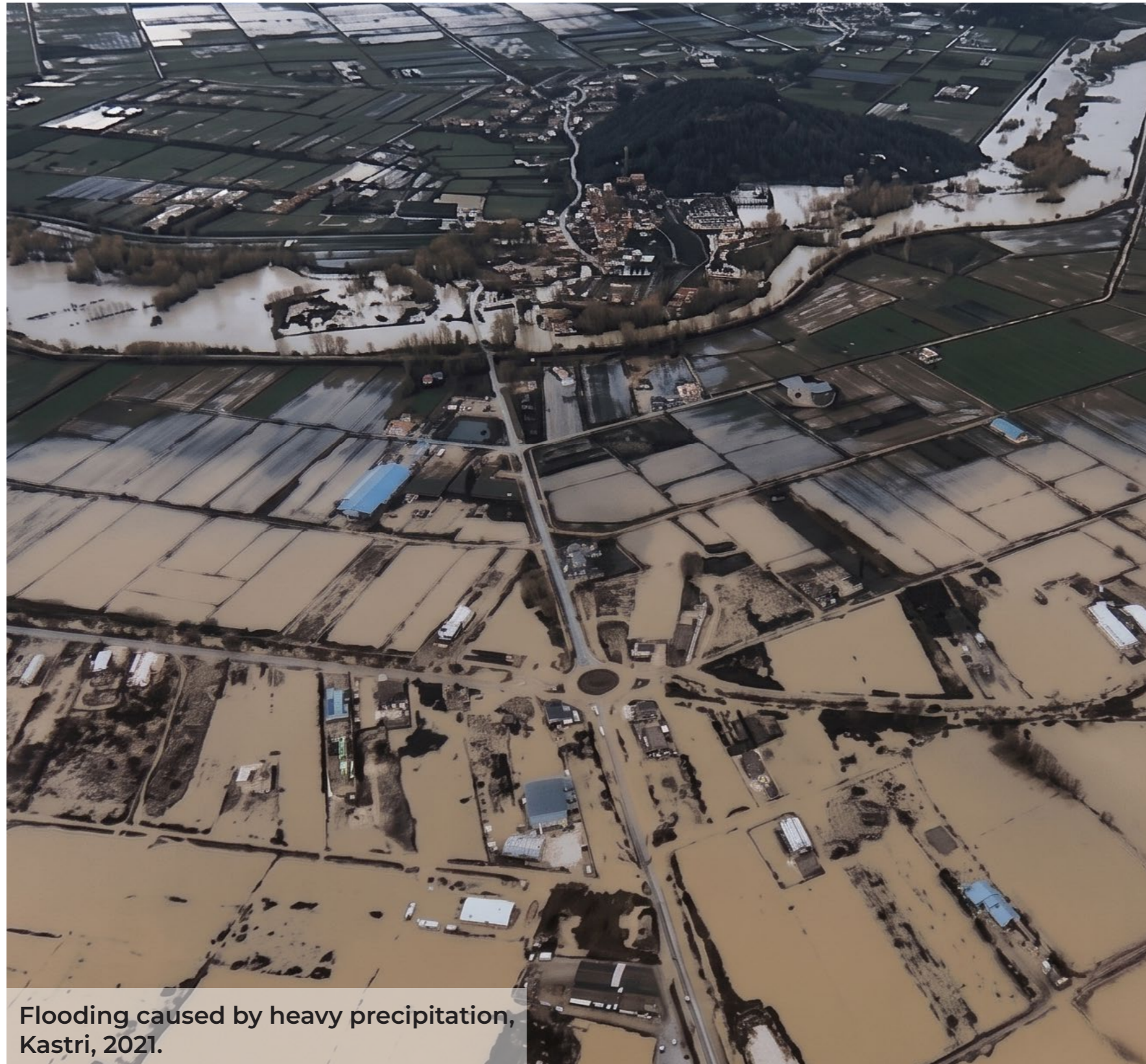
A Fragile Ecosystem



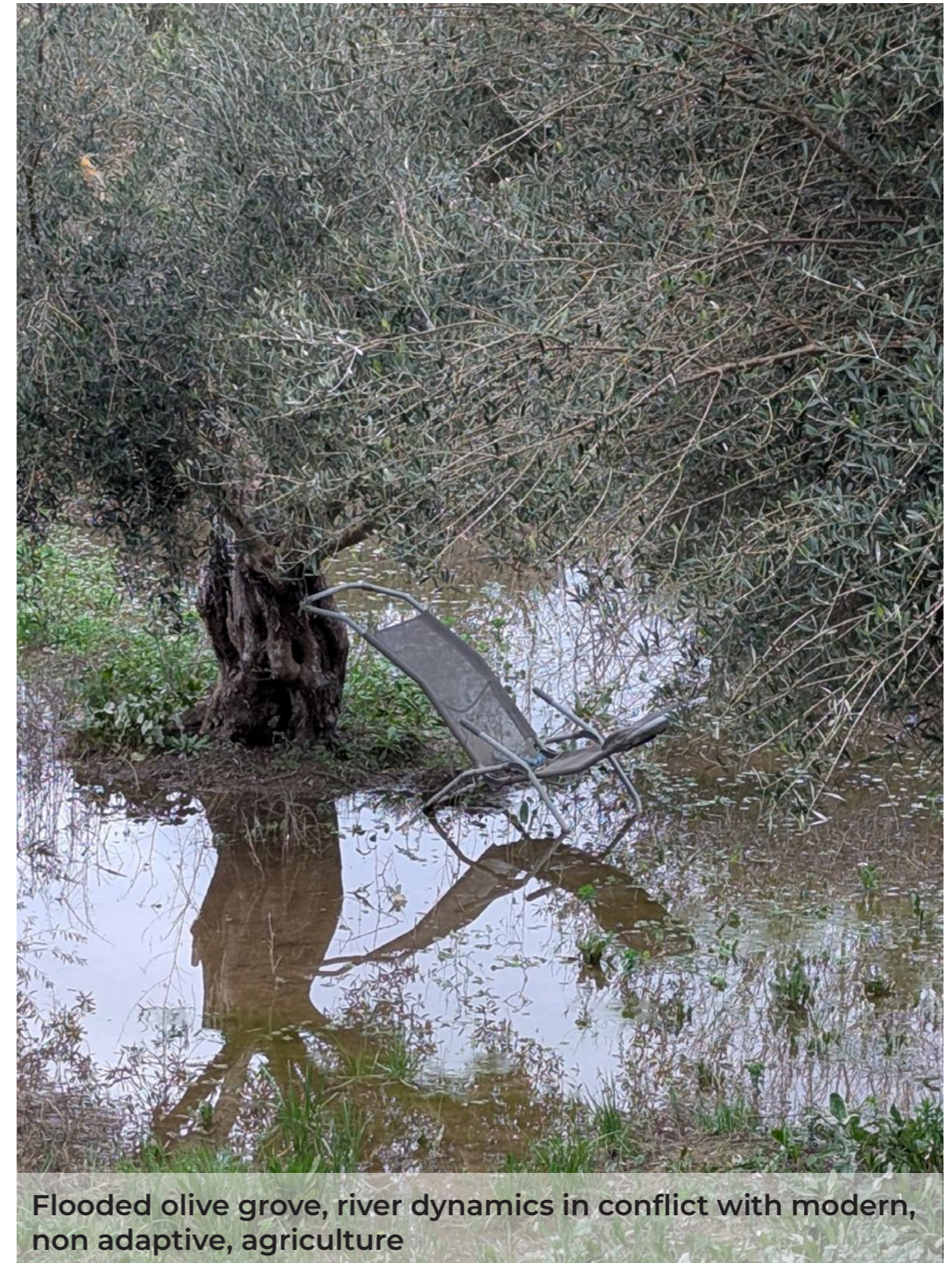
When you think about **rural, agricultural landscapes** today, anywhere in the world, what would you say are the most urgent crises **threatening** their survival?

Part II: "Anagnosis"

Climatic Vulnerability



Flooding caused by heavy precipitation, Kastri, 2021.



Flooded olive grove, river dynamics in conflict with modern, non adaptive, agriculture

Part II: "Anagnosis"

Agricultural Pressures

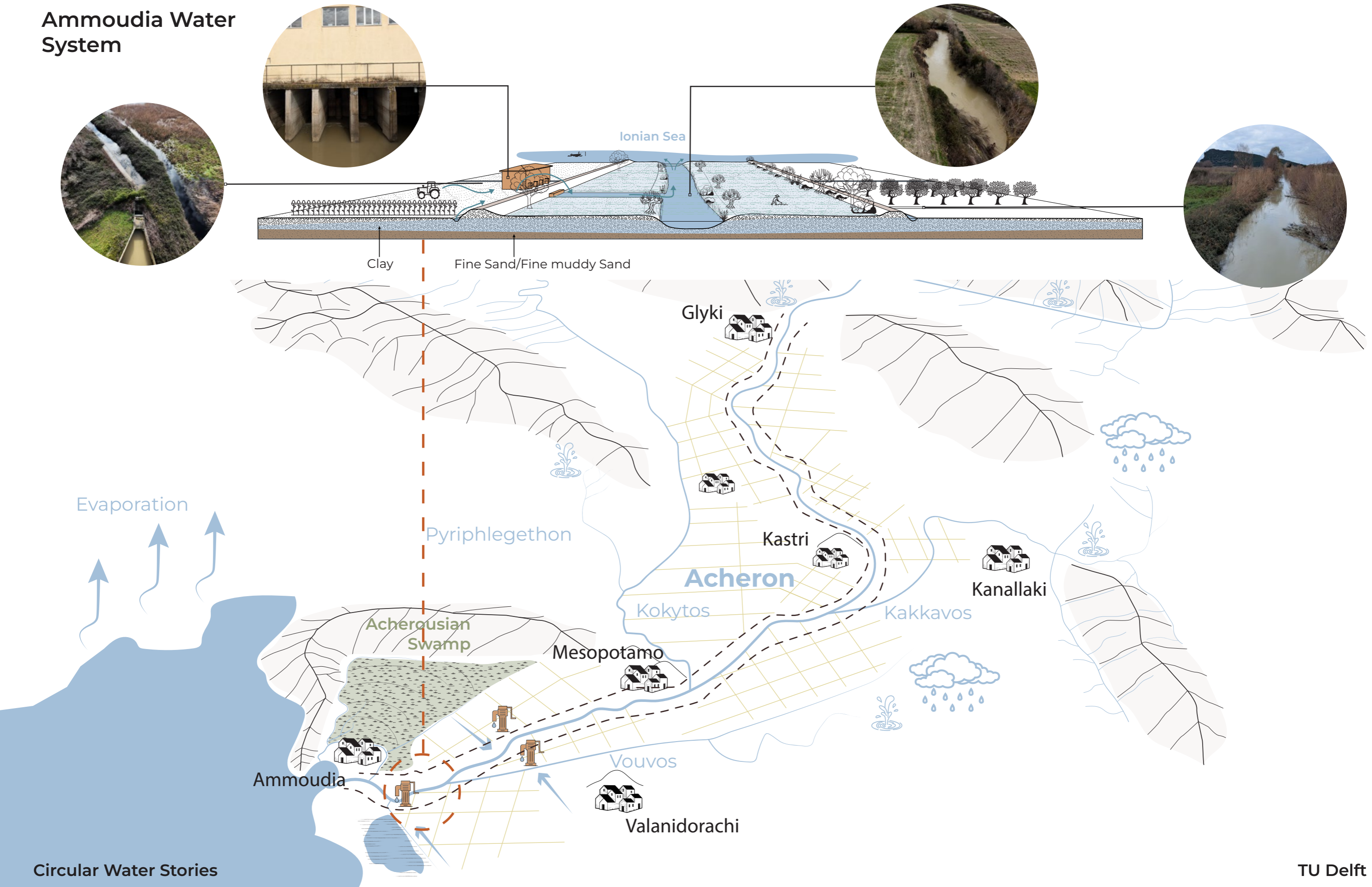


The Acheron River (left) and the fields, a dormant current of memory, acting as a backdrop of technical and hydrological solutions

Part II: "Anagnosis"

Agricultural Pressures

Ammoudia Water System



Part II: "Anagnosis"

Ecological Degradation/Unmanaged Access

Anthropogenic pressures on the Natura 2000 area.



Negligence, trash litters the NATURA 2000 marsh ecosystem



Part II: "Anagnosis"

Rural Abandonment



Abandoned houses in Kastri



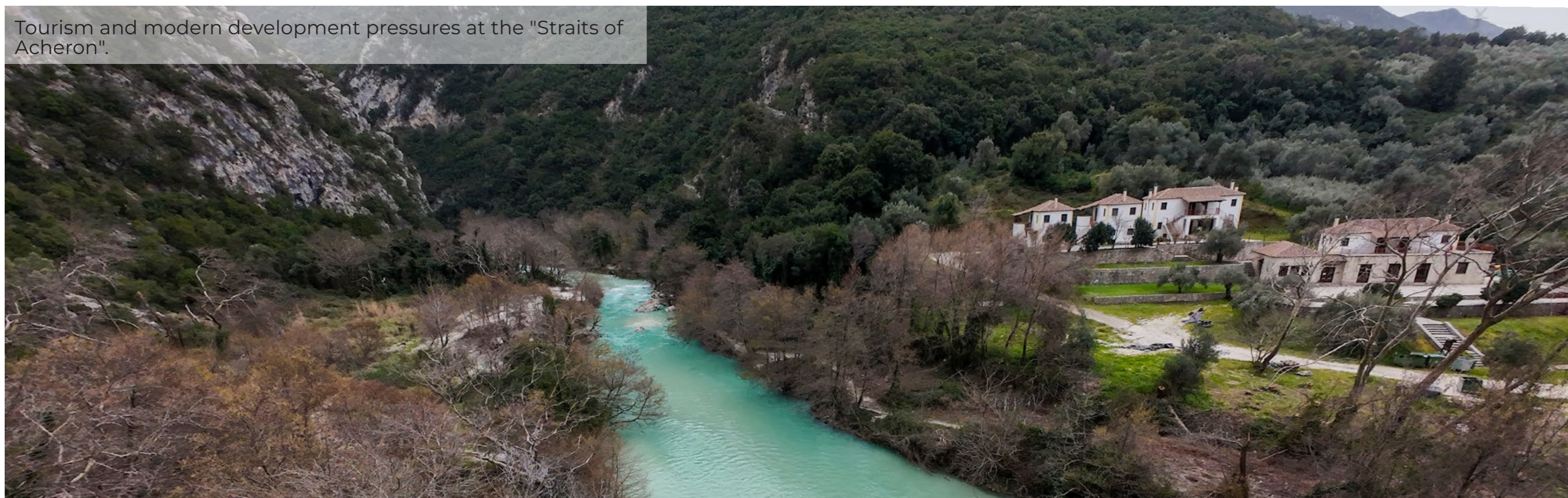
Part II: "Anagnosis"

Tourism Exploitation

The entrance to Acheron's Straits. The riverbank has been cleared to be used as a parking lot. Seasonal exploitation of the river



Tourism and modern development pressures at the "Straits of Acheron".

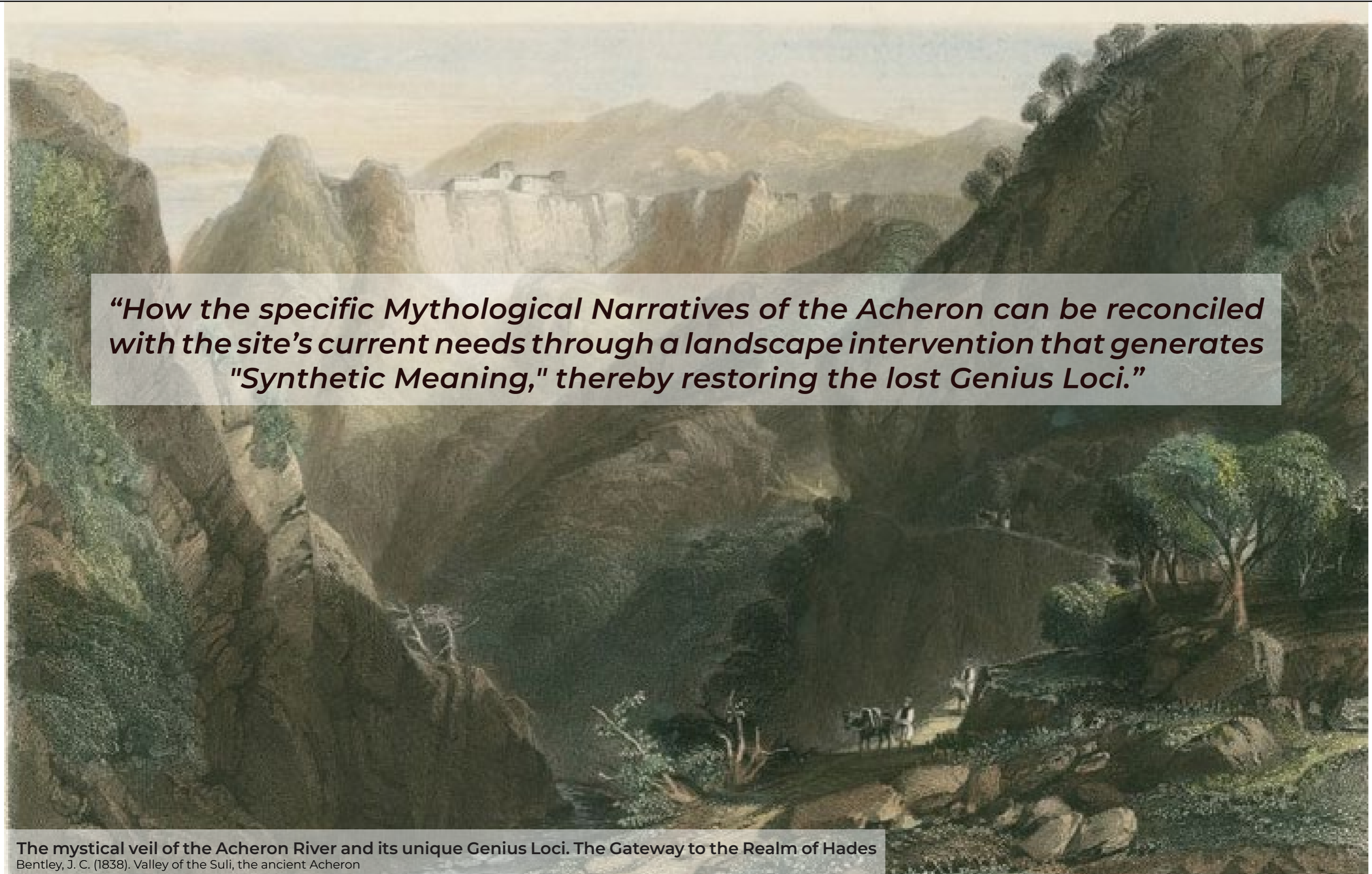


Near Cichyrus is a lake called Acherusia, and a river called Acheron. There is also Cocytus, a most unlovely stream. I believe it was because Homer had seen these places that he made bold to describe in his poems the regions of Hades, and gave to the rivers there the names of those in Thesprotia.

Pausanias 1.17.5, Trans. W. H. S. Jones



The Acheron River carving its path through the Fanari Plain.
As seen from the road to Souli.

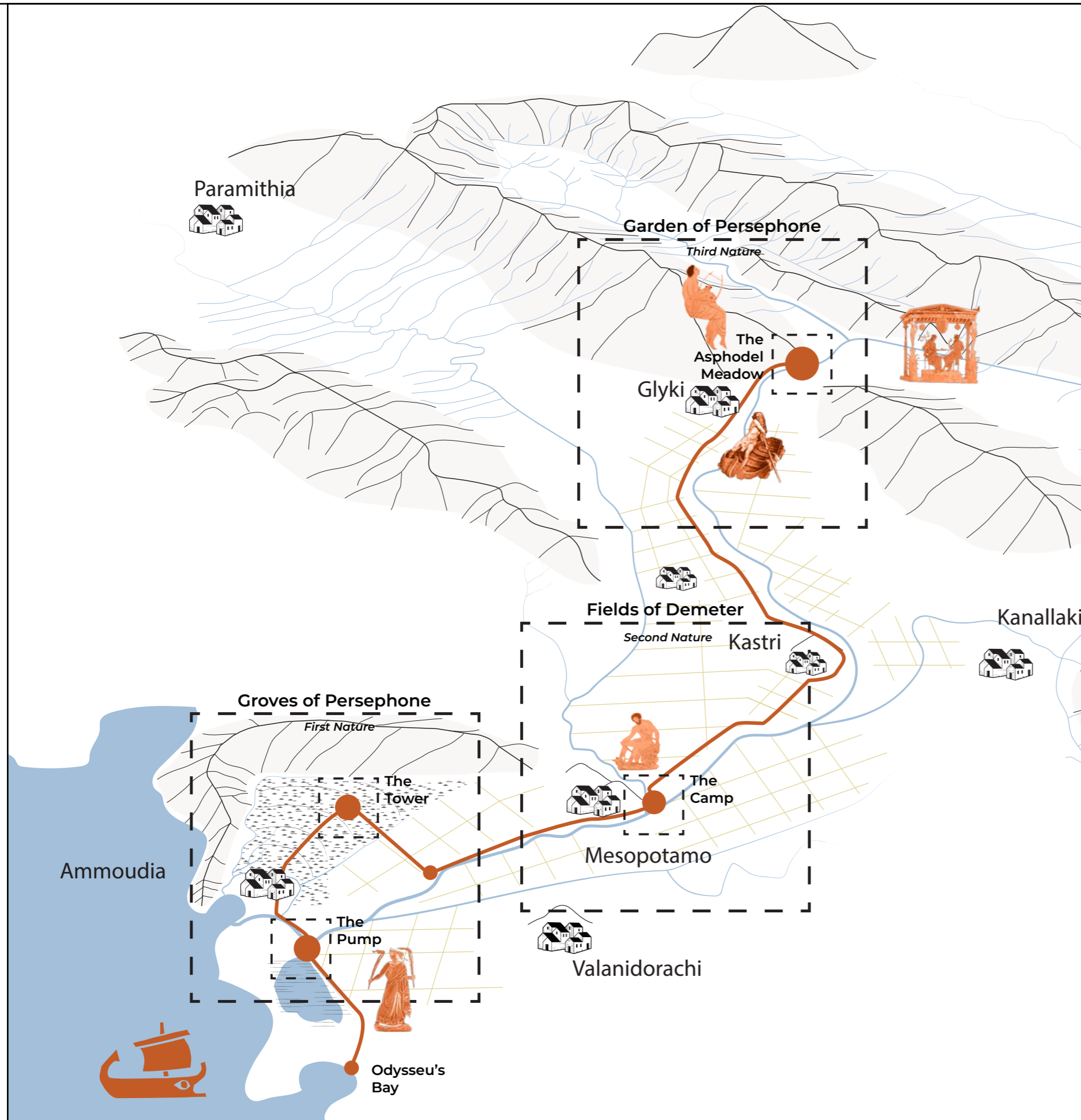


"How the specific Mythological Narratives of the Acheron can be reconciled with the site's current needs through a landscape intervention that generates "Synthetic Meaning," thereby restoring the lost Genius Loci."

The mystical veil of the Acheron River and its unique Genius Loci. The Gateway to the Realm of Hades
Bentley, J. C. (1838). Valley of the Suli, the ancient Acheron

Part III: "Methodos"

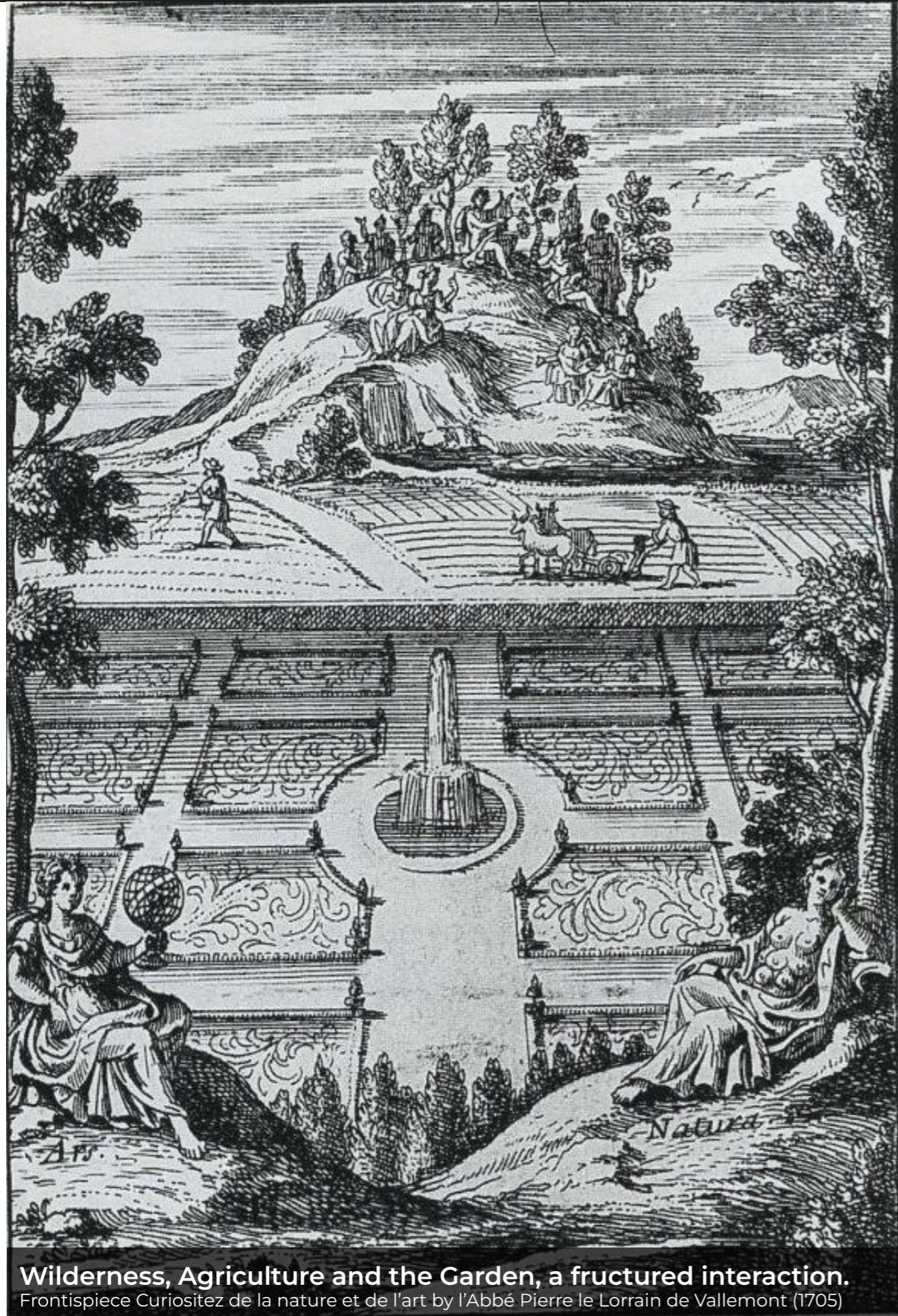
Design Assignment and Objectives



- Multi-Day Narrative Route:**
 Establish spatial continuity along the Acheron to reconcile the river's ancient Genius Loci with contemporary challenges.
- Scales of Intervention:**
 Territorial hydrological framework, meso-scale terrain pathway, and human-scale detailing.
- The "Three Natures" of Acheron:**
 Rebalance and reconnect Acheron's "Three Natures", from wetlands, to cultivation, to the Garden
- Synthetic Meaning:**
 Use Olin's theory to transform pragmatic necessities into expressive design "figures" driven by mythological intent.
- Socio-Economic Symbiosis:**
 Year-round, nature-based tourism to combat rural abandonment. Foster a mutually beneficial relationship between hikers and the local community.

Part III: "Methodos"

Theory: Three Natures



Wilderness, Agriculture and the Garden, a fractured interaction.
 Frontispiece Curiositez de la nature et de l'art by l'Abbé Pierre le Lorrain de Vallemont (1705)

1st Nature



Wilderness: Ammoudia Wetlands

2nd Nature



Cultivation: Fanari Plain

3rd Nature



Garden: Stourhead
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:English_landscape_garden_at_Stourhead_England.jpg

Part III: "Methodos"

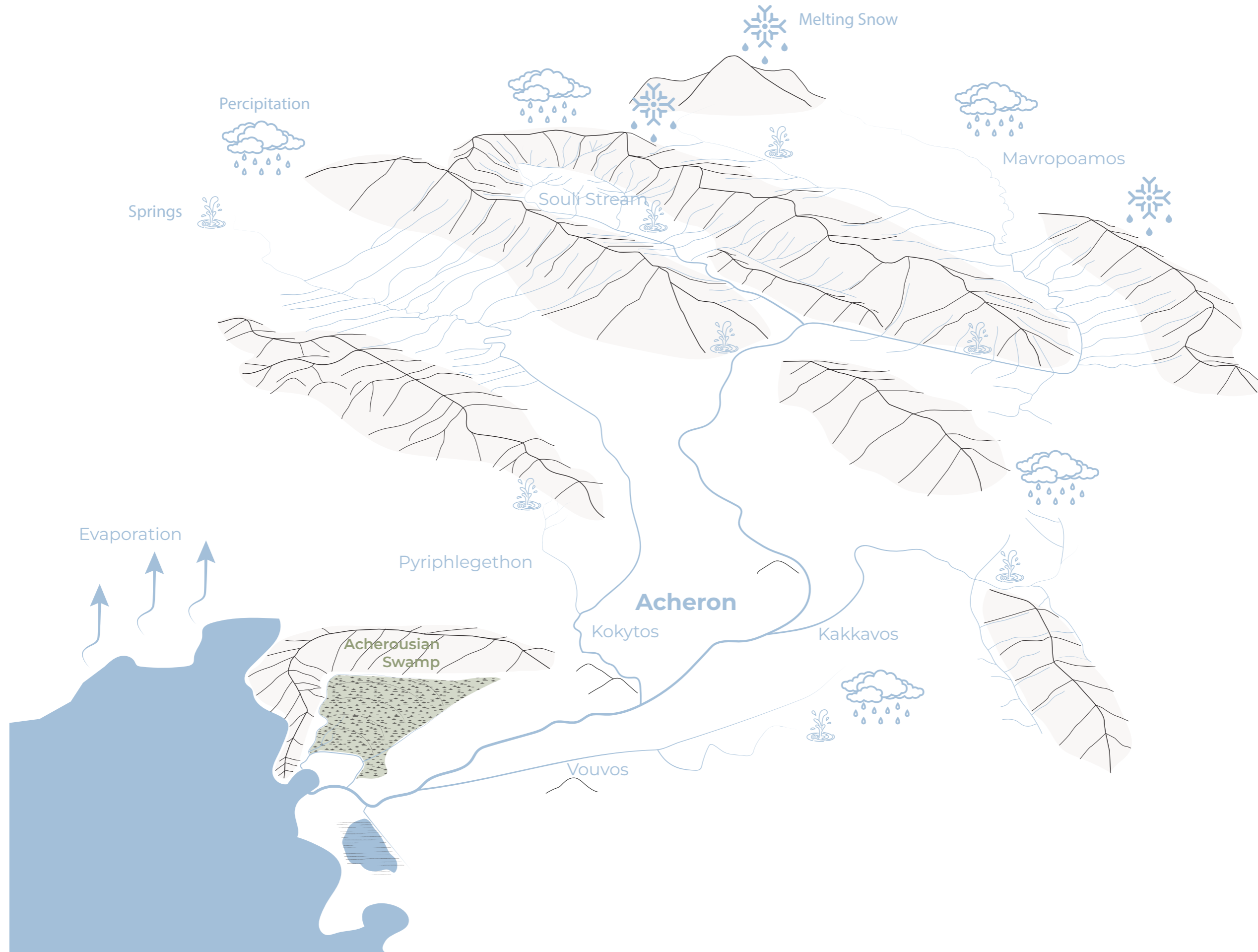
Palimpsest



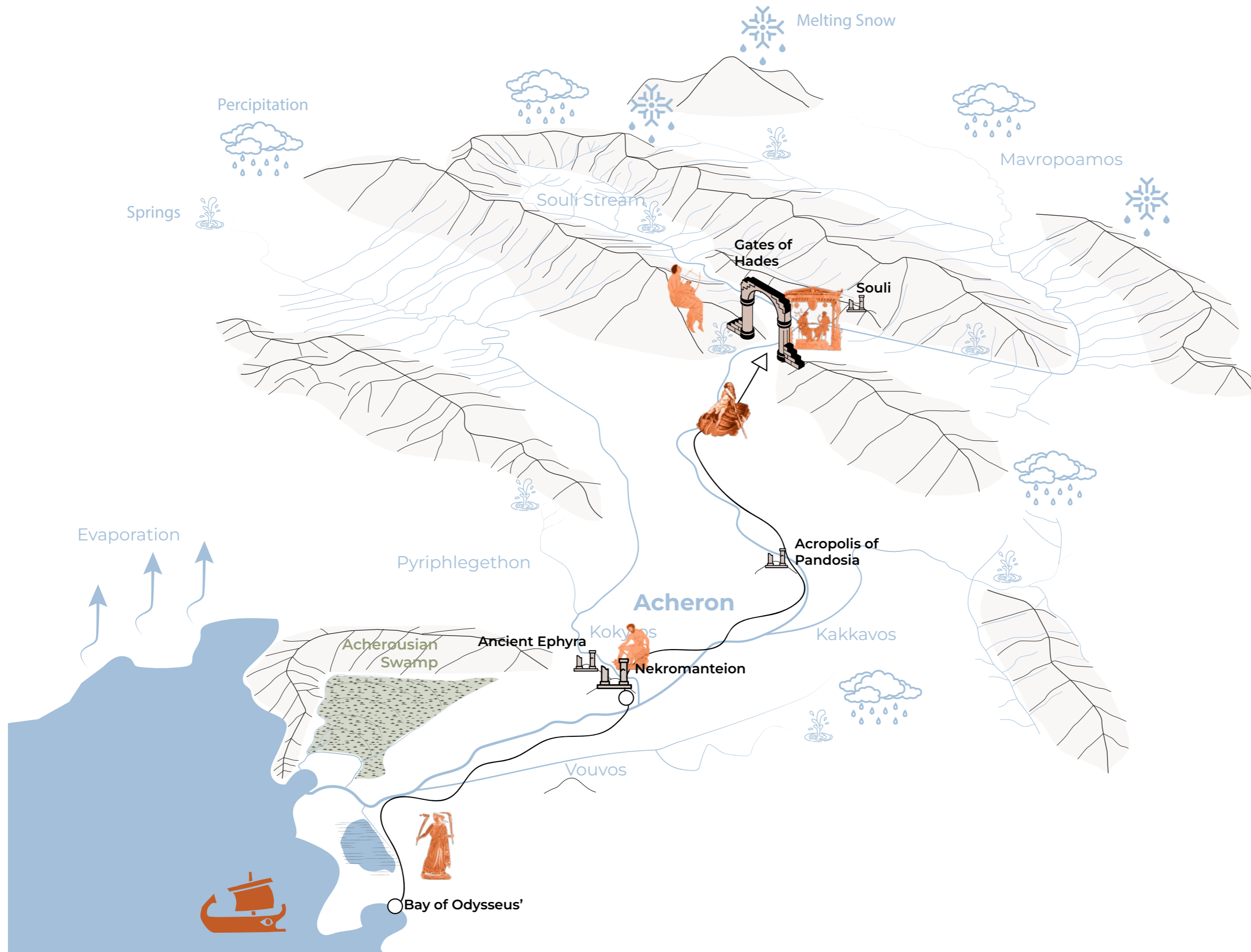
Palimpsest: "visible traces" of the past are continuously overwritten but can never fully erase
<https://www.protothema.gr/city-stories/article/768323/mia-volta-stin-othomaniki-athina/>

Part III: "Methodos"

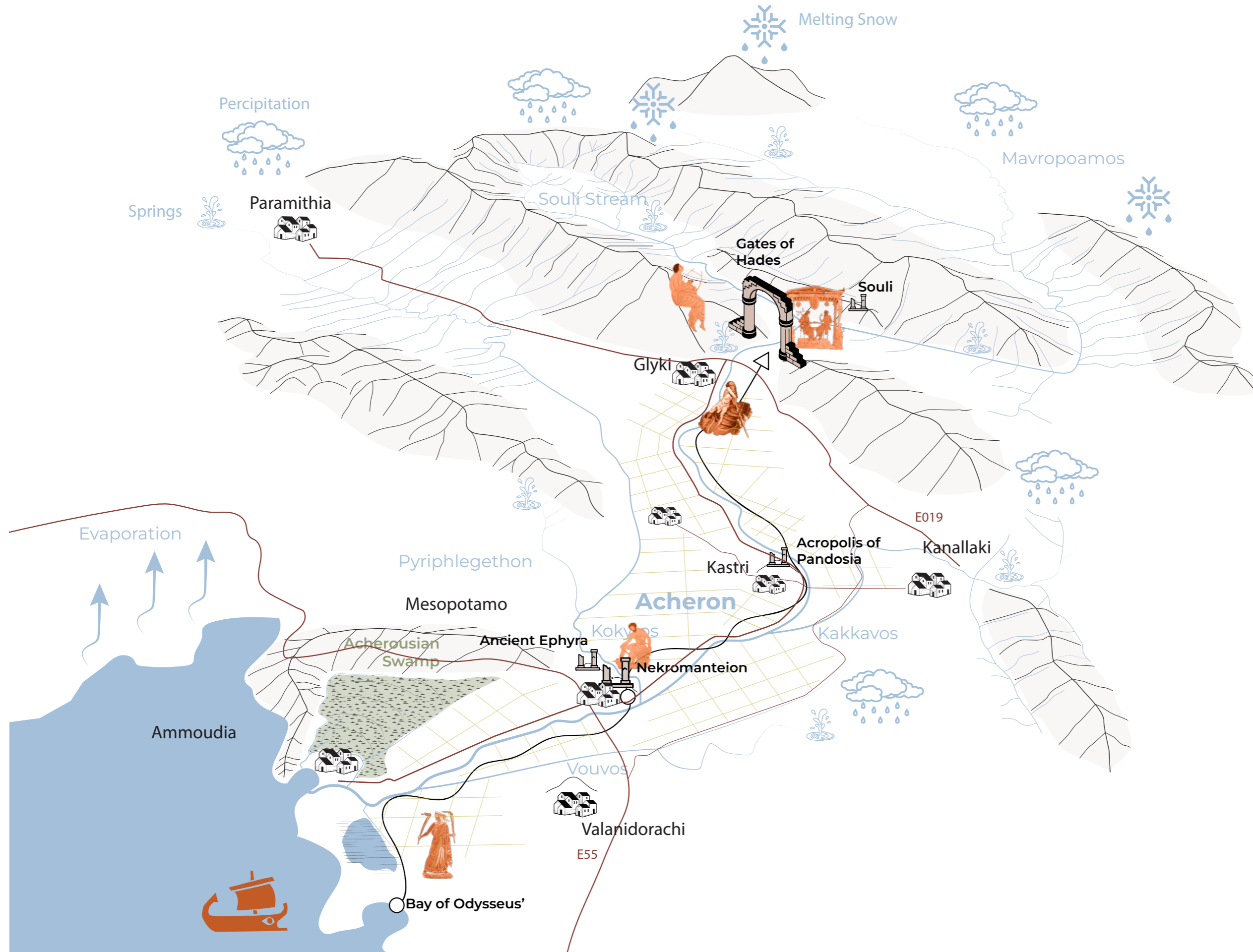
Palimpsest



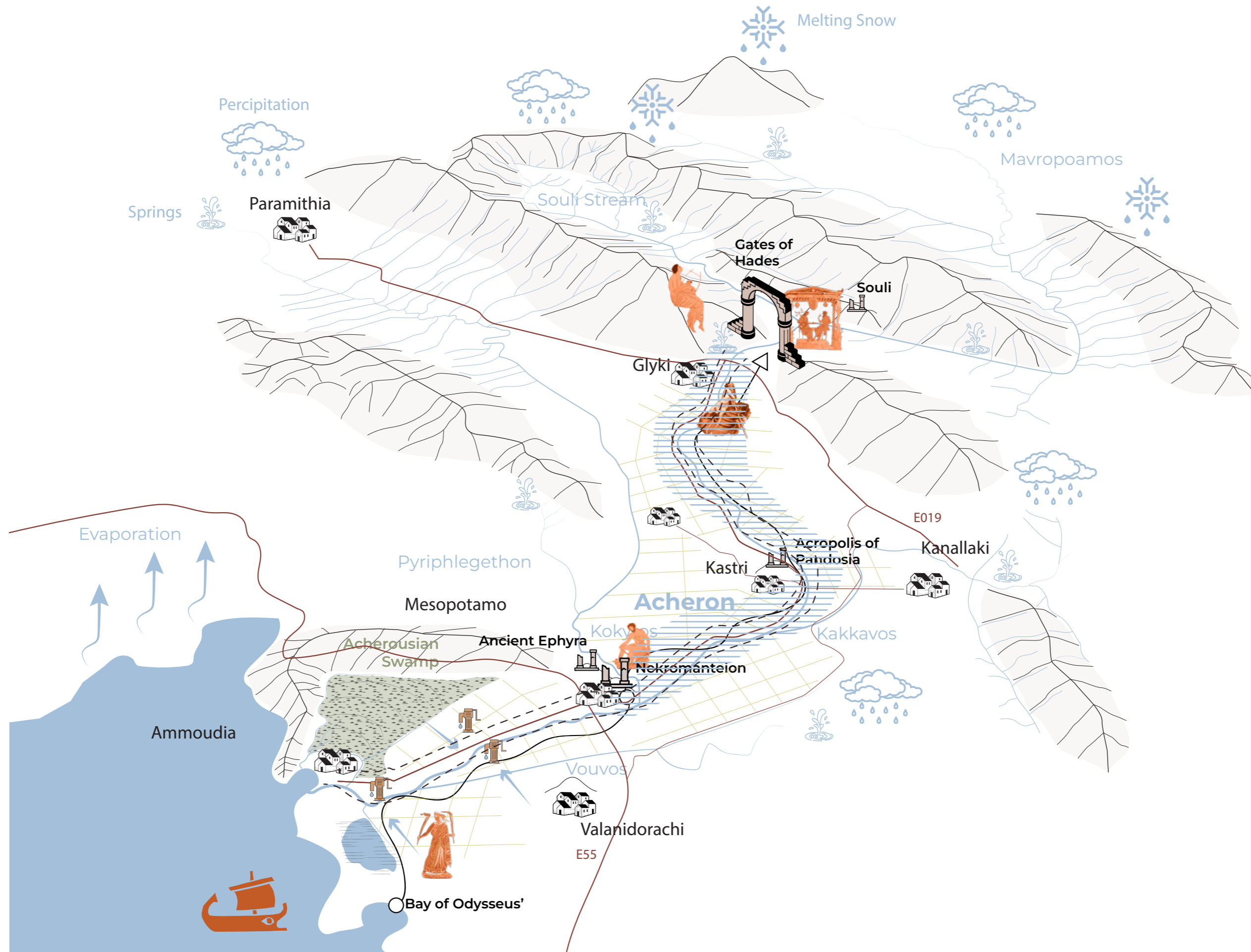
Part III: "Methodos"



Part III: "Methodos"



Part III: "Methodos"



Part III: "Methodos"

Working with the Myth



But once your vessel has cut across the Ocean River
you will raise a *desolate coast* and *Persephone's Grove*,
her *tall black poplars*, *willows* whose fruit dies young.
Beach your vessel hard by the Ocean's churning shore
and make your own way down to the moldering
House of Death.

Homer, *Odyssey*, 10.508–515, trans. Tr. Fagles

When they have crossed the lake, they are welcomed
to the interior by a *great meadow* overgrown with
asphodel, and a *spring* that is inimical to memory, in
fact, they call it "Oblivion" for that reason.

Lucian, *of Mourning* 5. Trans. Fowler & Fowler

"And there into Acheron, the Flood of Grief, *two rivers*
flow, the torrent River of Fire, the wailing River of Tears
that branches off from Styx, the Stream of Hate, and a
stark crag looms where the *two rivers thunder down and*
meet. Once there, go forward, hero. Do as I say now.
Dig a trench of about a forearm's depth and length and
around it *pour libations* out to all the dead..."

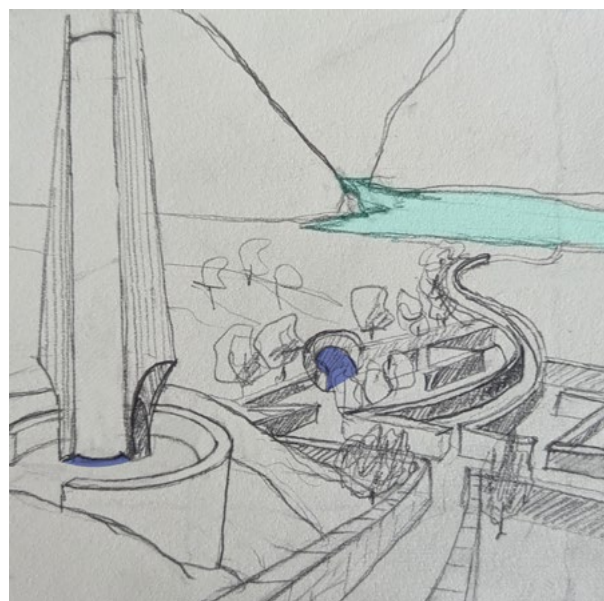
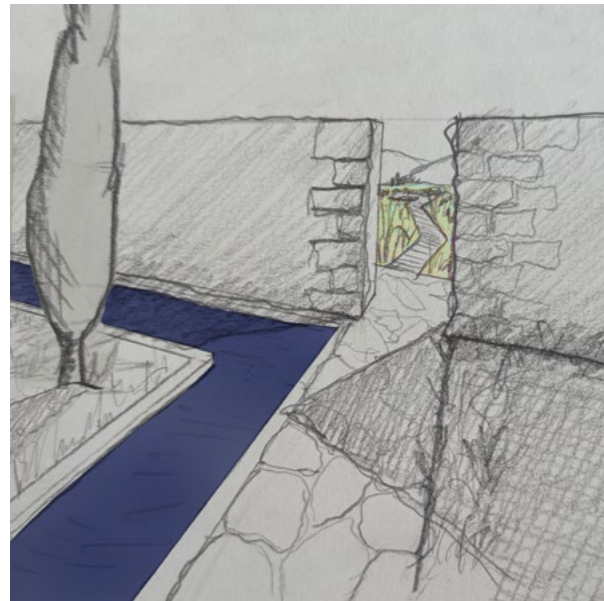
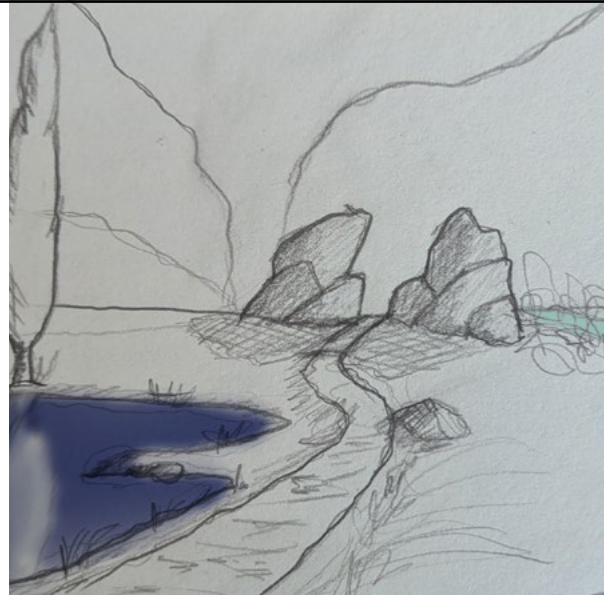
Homer, *Odyssey*, 10.508–515, trans. Tr. Fagles

"You will find to the left of the House of Hades a *spring*,
the spring of Lethe, and standing by it a *white cypress*.
Do not even approach this spring.
But further on, through a *treacherous path*,
you will find the *Lake of Memory*,
where cool water flows forth, and there are *guardians*
before it."

Orphic Gold Tablets, Edmonds, 2011

Part III: "Methodos"

Finding the Language



Circular Water Stories

Part IV: "Katavasis"

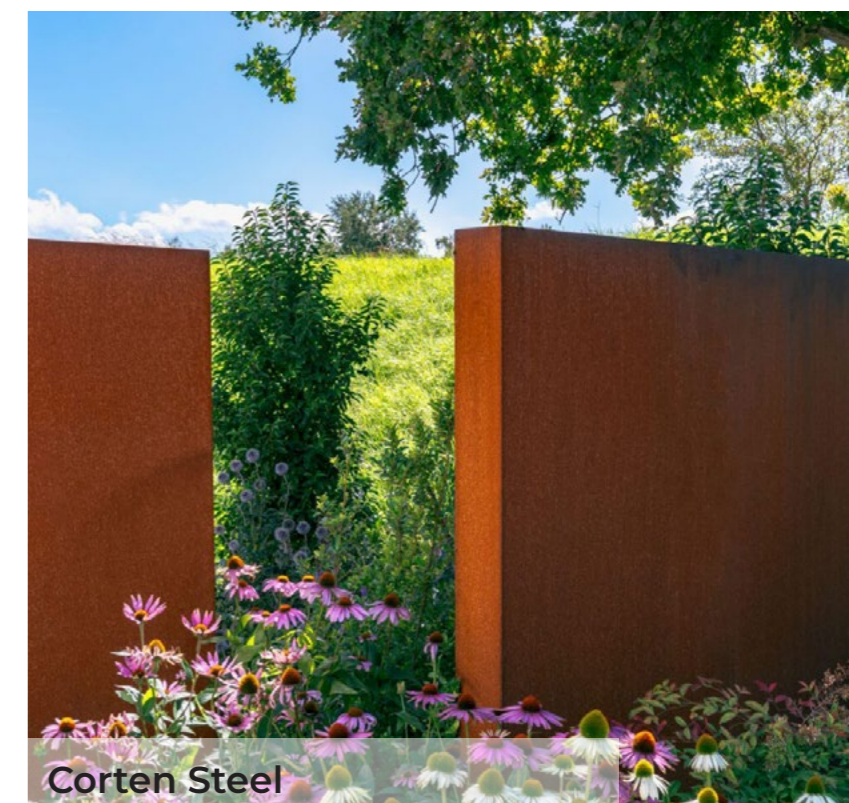
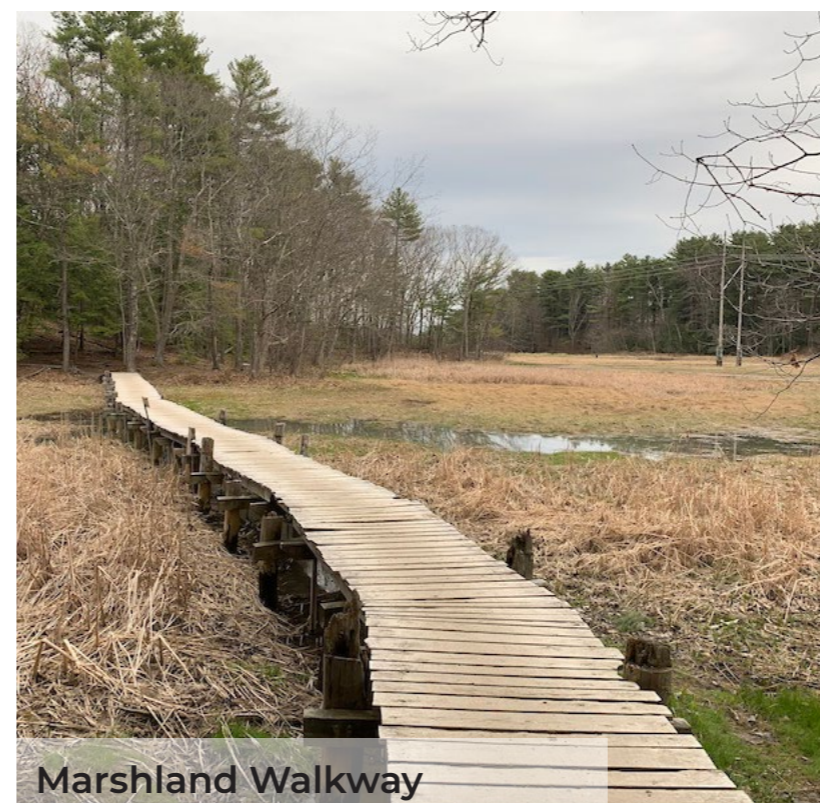
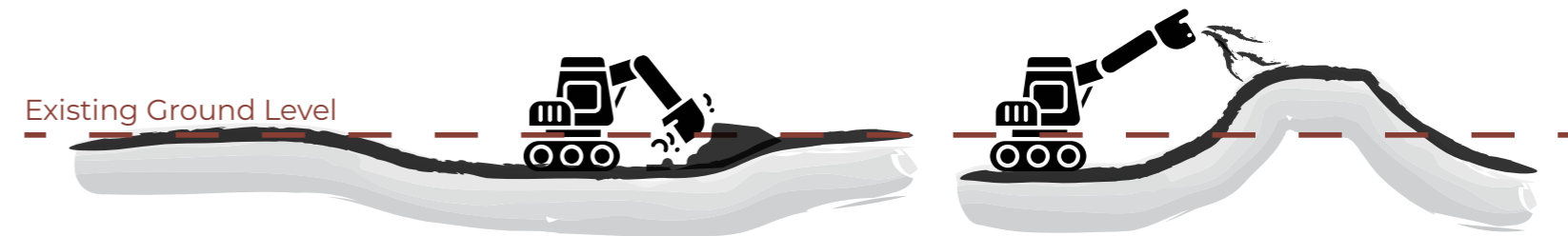
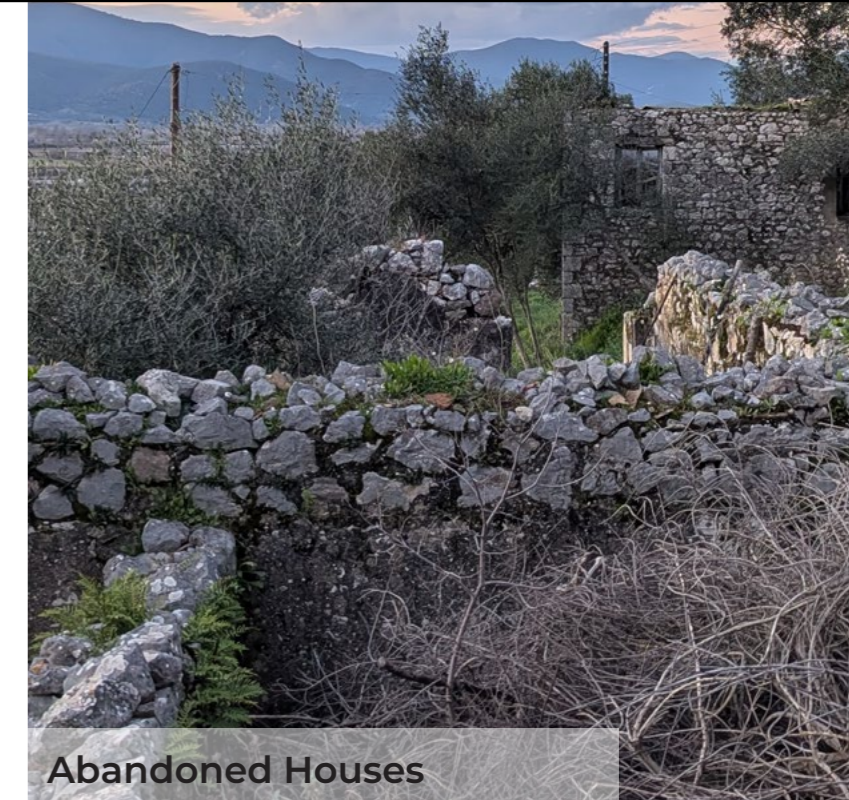
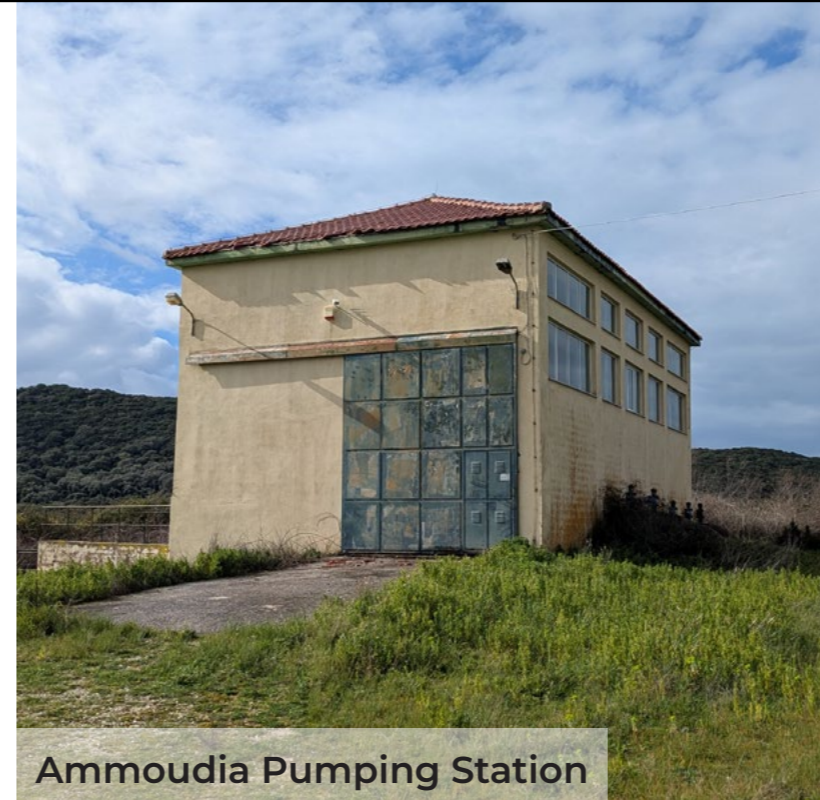
Katavasis of the Acheron



Part IV: "Katavasis"

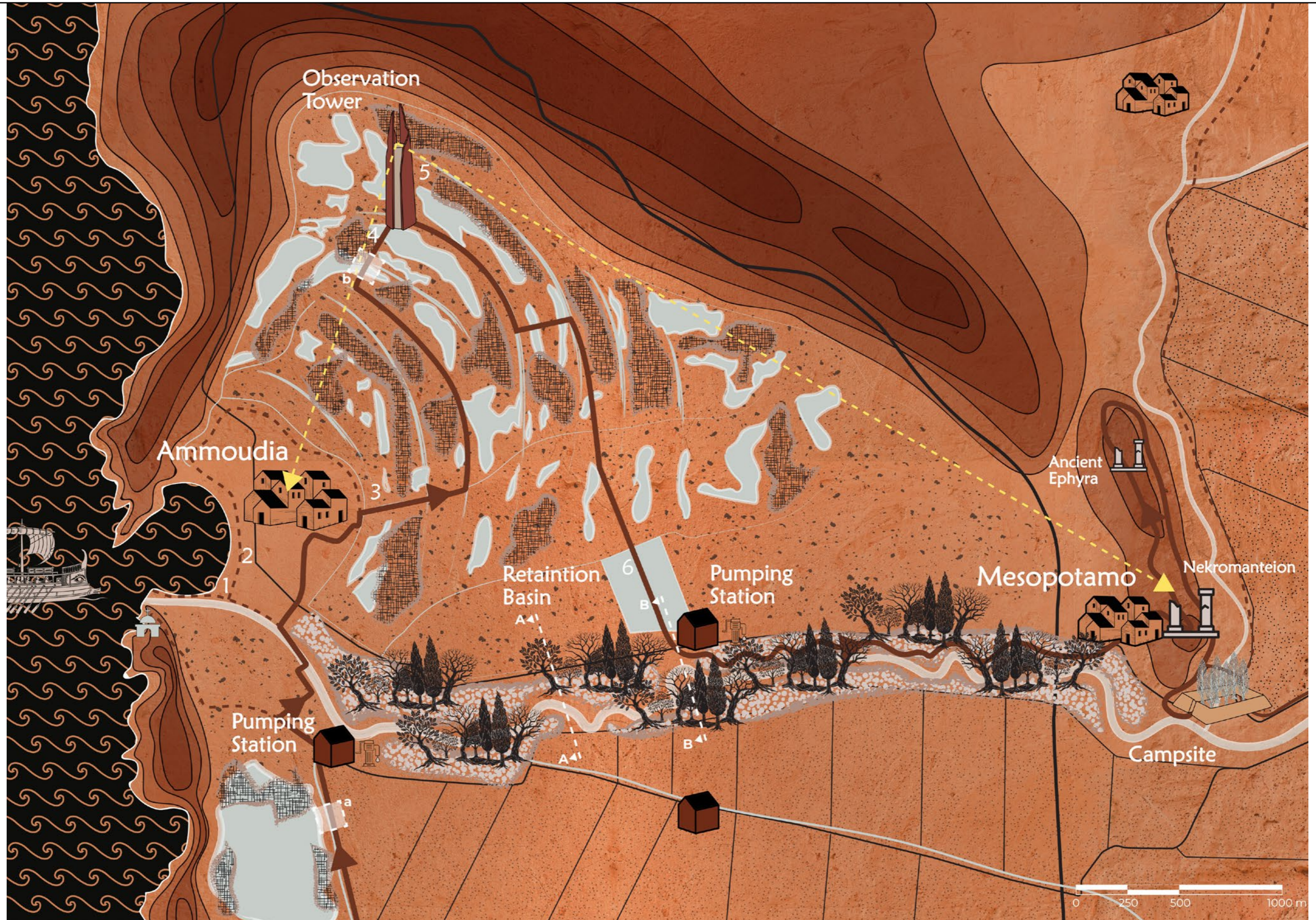
Building the Route

- **Reprogramming Infrastructure:** Hydraulic and agricultural remnants are re-purposed into the cultural route.
- **Cut and Fill Topography:** Excavated soil is used in-situ.
- **Integration of Nature & Memory:** Pathways weave through existing rock and vegetation, embodying an animistic respect for the site.
- **Walls of Mneme:** Repurpose stones salvaged from the abandoned, ruined houses to build the walls of the Garden
- **Pathways, A Stratigraphy of Movement:** Materiality of the route shifts in direct response to the landscape typologies
- **Corten Steel, The Narrative Thresholds:** frame specific viewpoints, act as a navigational instrument, anchor ancient mythological texts into the site. Creates contrast with the natural elements



Part IV: "Katavasis"

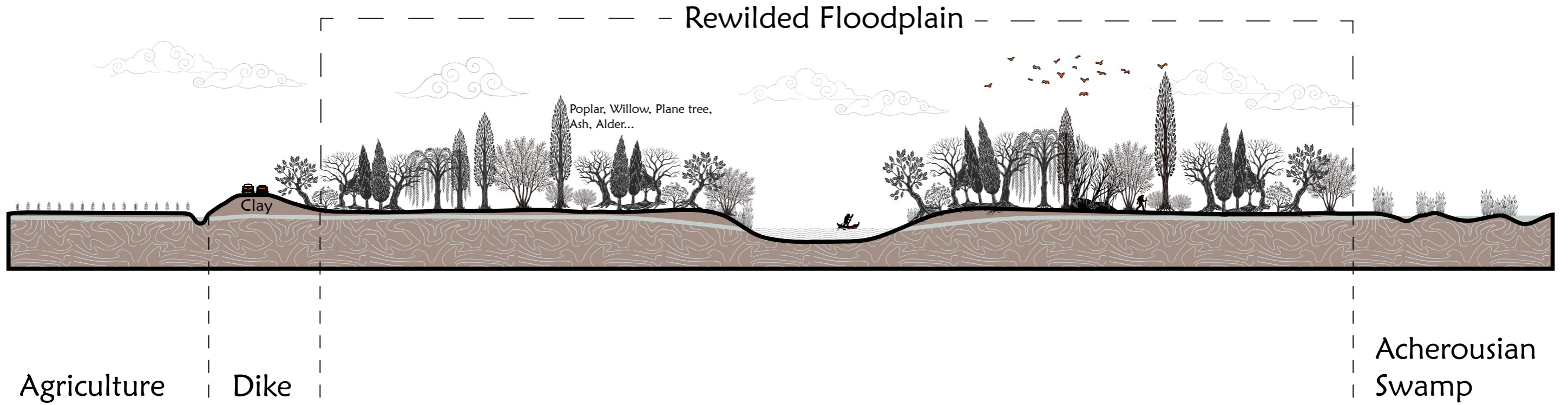
First Nature | Land of the Cimmerians



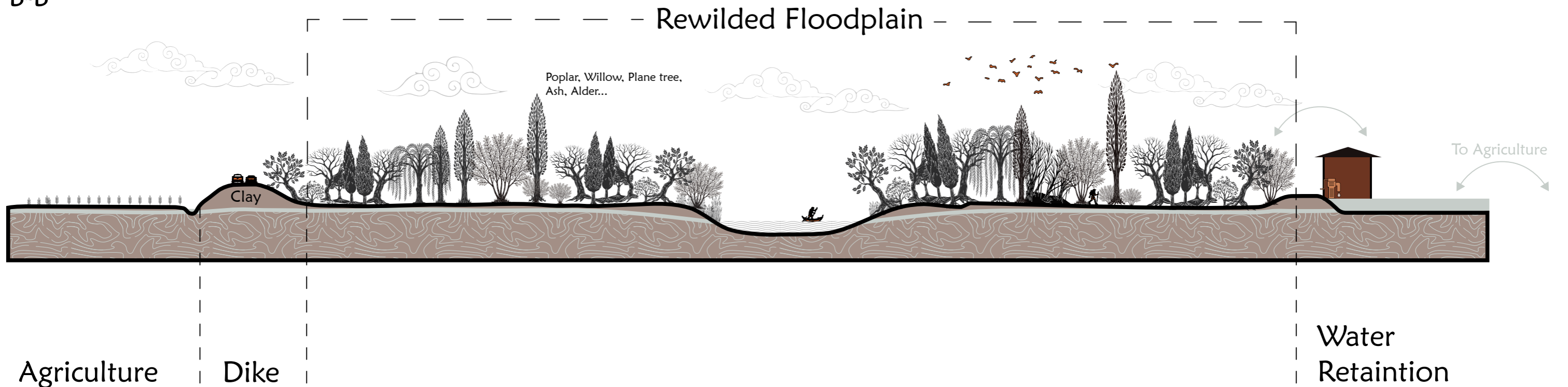
Part IV: "Katavasis"

First Nature | Riverive Zone

A-A



B-B



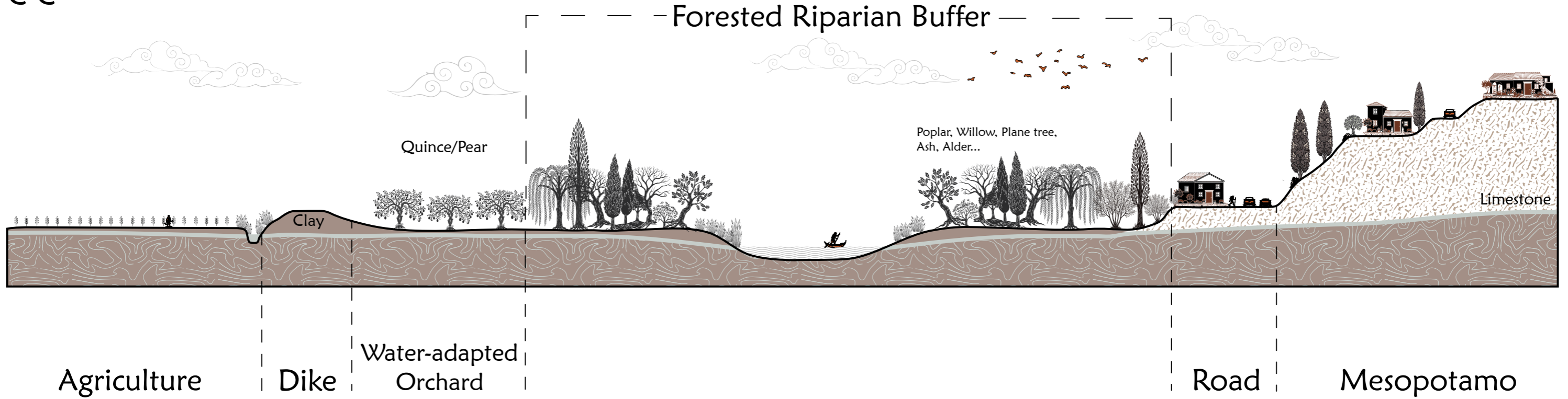
Part IV: "Katavasis"

Second Nature | Fields of Demeter

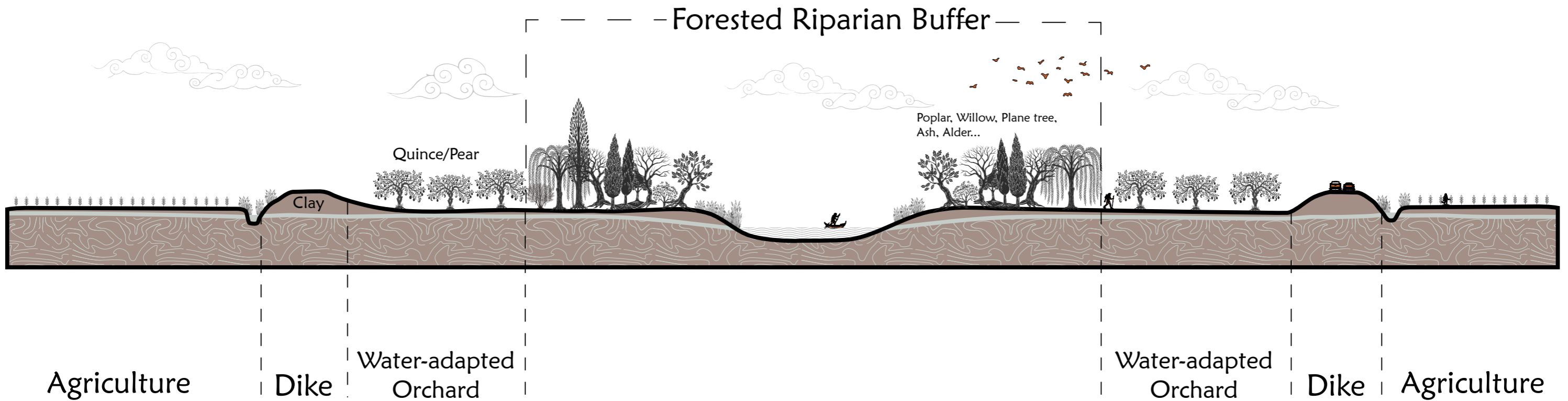


Second Nature | Riverive Zone

C-C



D-D



Part IV: "Katavasis"

Third Nature | Garden of Persephone



Asphodel Field



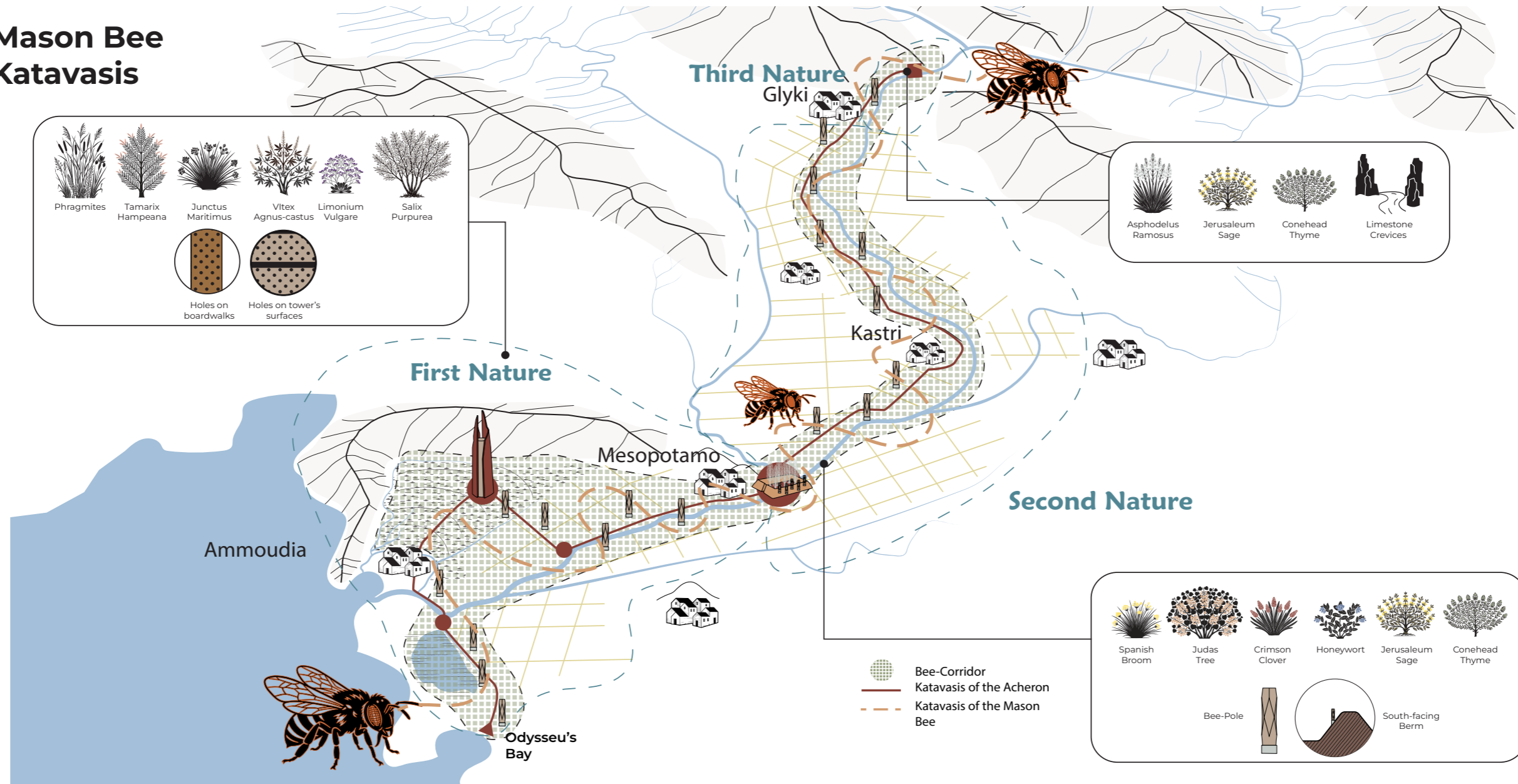
Asphodel

Part IV: "Katavasis"

The Katavasis of the Mason Bee



Mason Bee Katavasis



Part IV: "Katavasis"

A Landscape at the Crossroads

30 Years without Intervention



30 Years after Intervention, "The Landscape of Hades"



Part IV: "Katavasis"

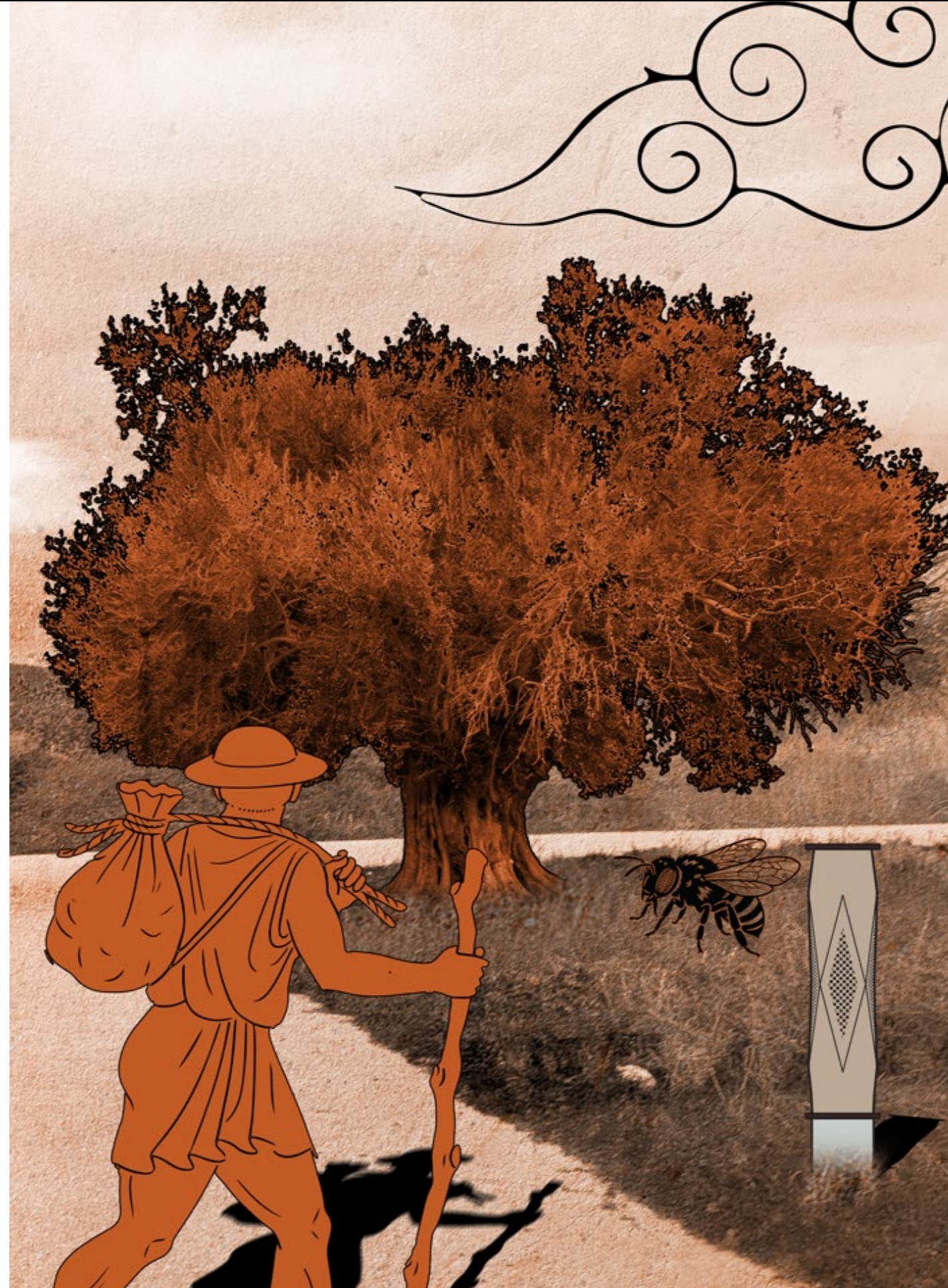
A Landscape at the Crossroads



The ancient Greek Underworld was not a mere "hell", rather a parallel world where souls lived after the body has passed away. Corot, J.-B.-C. (1861). Orpheus leading Eurydice from the underworld [Painting]. Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, United States.

Part IV: "Katavasis"

Katavasis of the Acheron



Part IV: "Anavasis"

Conclusions

A path connects two various points along a journey, walking it provides the holistic experience of exploration. As a metaphor, the path is used as the connector of the Three Nature's through which the conflicting narratives are reconciled





Thank You!