



International Laboratory
of Architecture
& Urban Design



MY AFRICAN COMPETITION

FIGUIG CLIMATE STUDIO
*Scenarios of Sustainability and Resiliency for the
Historic Landscape of an oasis town.*

Figuiq (Morocco), 30 May – 4 June 2022



A project coordinated by ILAUD, the International Laboratory of Architecture and Urban Design, in cooperation with MAC, My African Competition, and the Municipality of Figuiq, under the auspices of Union for the Mediterranean (TBC). In partnership with ENA, Ecole Nationale D'Architecture - National School of Architecture of Oudja, International University of Rabat, University of Wageningen in the Netherlands, and University of Westminster in the UK.

Background

Figuig, in the Oriental Region of Morocco near the border with Algeria, is an oasis town alimented by a sophisticated water system, and comprised of rich natural, agricultural and cultural resources. Traditional customary and indigenous knowledge systems linked to the local Berber culture persist, alongside an active life of citizens' associations. The unique cultural heritage of seven Ksars forms a unified ensemble with water infrastructures, such as cisterns and waterways, and the historic landscape of date palms.

While the town has suffered in recent years territorial isolation, lack of job opportunities and depopulation, aggravated by the impact of the pandemic, which has hardly hit the tourism industry in Morocco, Figuig is determined to embark in a process of sustainable urban transformation, more resilient and inclusive, aiming to diversify its local development. This is witnessed by the launching of an international design competition for a new multi-functional cultural center in the administrative town center, which will help set up a permanent laboratory of urban and rural resiliency.

In the process of reimagining its future, however, Figuig is confronted with acute problems of climate change, which have repercussions at all levels. Prolonged draught, overheating and unprecedented water evaporation are posing serious threats for the survival of palm trees and dates cultivation, with visible reduction of the water level of underground cisterns and pools. They are also worsening the livability of common open spaces, reducing the comfort of residential housing and, in general, of the built environment. At the same time, such challenges represent an objective limit to fully utilize the potentials of local agricultural productions, but also to regenerate the local economy. As a matter of fact water scarcity and extreme weather conditions could undermine an urban heritage conservation model based on tourism, if not properly planned, and impact negatively on the local livelihood.

Aim of the workshop

The aim of the workshop is to define scenarios of sustainability and resiliency for the future of Figuig and its region, during a one week participatory urban and landscape design studio. Bringing together a group of national and international scholars and students, the work will focus on some key areas of the town to define 'tentative' strategies, responding meanwhile to the following questions:

- What are the climate implications of an increasing rising temperature on the life and functioning of the oasis town? And on the areas selected?
- What policies, measures, actions, can be applied to reduce the impact of climate change on the built and natural environment, following the principles of climate urbanism?
- What are the trade off between potential climate adaptation/mitigation measures to be implemented, and the conservation of the historic fabric and landscape of the oasis?

- How could the civil society develop knowledge and competences to enhance their livelihood while fighting climate change? How could Figuiç as a whole could capitalize on this process of knowledge production to gain visibility as an international good practice of sustainability and resiliency?

The workshop has the ambition to experiment policy innovation locally, meanwhile contributing to inform global practices of sustainable, inclusive, climate resilient urban-rural transformations. In particular, ideas on how to pilot locally sustainable measures and actions will inform the recently launched ***Union for the Mediterranean Strategic Urban Development Action Plan 2040***. The workshop will contribute to a number of **comprehensive actions** and **priority thematic axes of interventions** of the document, as follows.

ACTIONS

- Action 2: To Educate & Strengthen Capacity. The workshop will contribute to train young professionals and local officials around climate urbanism and sustainable heritage conservation.
- Action 3: To Envision & Govern Together. The workshop includes co-design practices, public discussions and presentations and it is highly participative in its process.
- Action 5: To Implement & Manage. The workshop promotes the design of integrative strategic projects for rural revitalization and urban-rural linkages with the potential to be replicated in similar contexts across the Euro-Mediterranean Region, especially around certain priority thematic axes of interventions as follows:

PRIORITY THEMATIC AXES OF INTERVENTIONS

- (iii) Blue and green infrastructure;
- (iv) Heritage conservation-based strategies for sustainable urban development;
- (viii) Public and shared spaces regeneration;

With the potential to touch upon: (v) Informal settlements and deprived neighbourhoods and (ix) New Towns, urban extensions, and new neighbourhoods.

In addition, the Figuiç Climate Studio aligns to a number of international policy agendas of global relevance, namely: the UNESCO 2011 Historic Urban Landscape Recommendations; the UNESCO Culture 2030 Agenda for Rural Revitalization; the Planners for Climate Actions of UN-HABITAT; the Rural Landscape Programme at FAO; the UN 'New Urban Agenda' and SDGs.

Strategic Areas in Figuig

Three strategic areas in Figuig have been identified as sites of exploration.

A. The old Minaret area in Ksar Loudaghir



This is one of the oldest Ksars of Figuig with a palm tree public area near the Mosque, with the famous octagonal Minaret. The area is subject to regeneration and the challenge is to keep a balance between the open space, the existing cultivation of palms, and the conservation of the historic structures for tourism purposes.

B. Ikoudass and the Palm three forest



The palm tree forest surrounds the historic built environment and it is the main source of livelihood of Figuig. The management of the water system is still regulated in the traditional way and at the core there is a public bath for leisure. A controversial project for a public square and a new road are currently under discussion and should be better integrated in the landscape.

C. Ksar Hammam Tahtani



The area of the Ksar Hamman Tahtani features old dilapidated buildings, new constructions often grown up scarcely integrated with the existing built environment and a direct access to the palm tree forest in the north-east part of Figuig. The area is also surrounded by recently built new housing projects. Overall the area needs regeneration and existing buildings need to be retrofitted.

The three areas are localized in the map below:

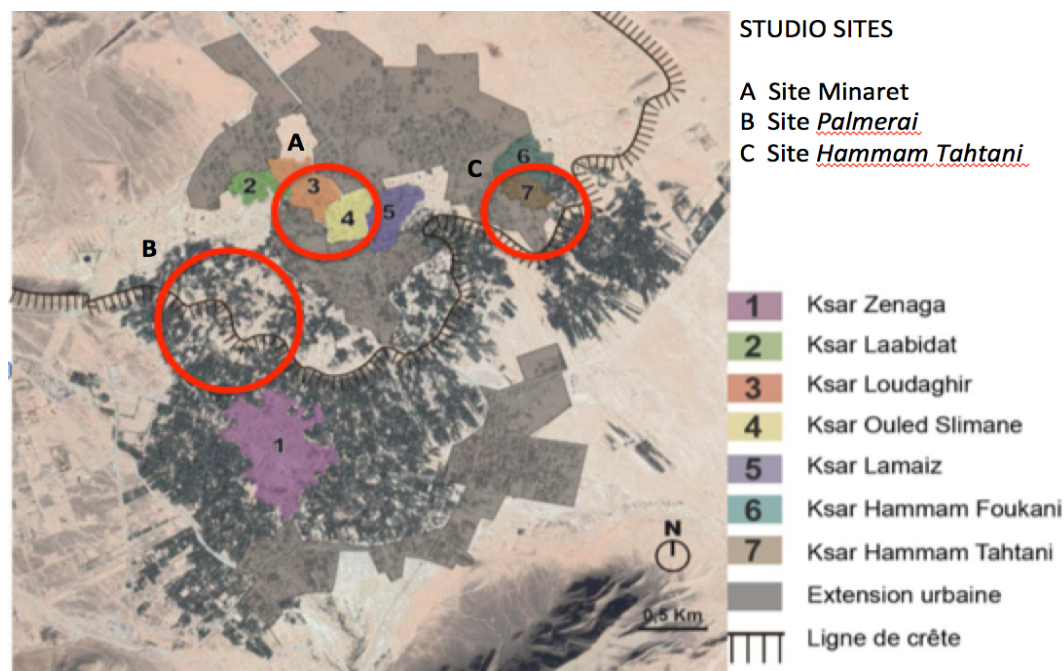


Figure 6 : Plan du contexte urbain de Figuiq, MBpaysage, janvier 2021

Format of the workshop

Four groups will be formed, each one comprised of four students. A total of 16 students will work under the supervision of 4 tutors, with the contribution of external advisors (on-site and on-line). Three groups will work on the selected sites introduced above, while one group on the overall strategy for sustainability and resiliency. An external team will work on city branding and economic strategy.

Detailed Programme

Sunday, 29 May

Arrival in Oudja and over night stay

Monday, 30 May

Transfer to Figuiq (9 am to 15 pm)

17 pm, Opening of the workshop and presentations of local authorities.

Tuesday, 31 May

Visit of the site in the morning, and charrette in the afternoon.

Wednesday, 1 June

Interim presentation of ideas in the morning, and charrette in the afternoon.

Thursday, 2 June

Intensive day of charette with external tutorials.

Friday, 3 June

Intensive day of charette with external tutorials.

Saturday, 4 June

Presentation to the Municipality in the morning.

Departing for Oudja (15 pm – 21 pm) and over night stay

Sunday, 5 June

Departing from Oudja

People

Giulio Verdini, ILAUD & University of Westminster, Workshop Coordinator and Tutor
Youssef El Ganadi, MAC & International University of Rabat, Workshop Coordinator and Tutor

Mhand El Moutaouakil, MAC, Workshop project manager and liaise with Municipality, Coordinator of the city branding strategy

A tutor from International University of Rabat TBC

Christian Nolf, Wageningen University, Tutor

Florence Vannoorbeek, SSS Studio Belgium/China, Tutor

Advisors / Crits

Paolo Ceccarelli, ILAUD & University of Ferrara, Scientific Coordinator & crit member (TBC)

Maria Pilar Guerrieri, ILAUD, crit member (on-line)

Daniele Pini, University of Bologna, External crit member (TBC)

Mohammed Rachid, ENA Oujda, External crit member (on-site)

Other external crits members can be invited on-line

Institutional Partners

