Landscapes, memories and glimpses of the future of sheep farming in Northern Tuscany

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The areas field of our research: Lunigiana and Garfagnana

Garfagnana and **Lunigiana** are mountain regions: the first one corresponding to the Serchio river valley, between Apuan Alps and Apennines ranges; the second one corresponding to the Magra river valley. Both Garfagnana and Lunigiana are historical **“streets’ area”** due to its important **mountain passes.**

Apuan Alps and Apennines: Two different mountains and two different examples of exploitation now

The two mountain ranges, Apuan Alps and Apennines, have extremely different geological, morphological and climactic features. **Apuan Alps**, despite its recognition of **Regional Park**, have **marble quarries** destroying its original landscape; **Apennines** otherwise are well enhanced by **National Park (Reserve of Biosphere**, MAB Unesco program), imprinted on **a sustainable development** mainly based on slow and responsible tourism.

Apuan Alps and Apennines: similar models of exploitation given by pastoral activity in the past

In summer time these mountains offered their **pasture lands** (called **‘Alpi’, ‘Alpeggi’**) to many flocks; in autumn, shepherds and flocks descended from the Apuan Alps and Apennines mountains to gain the flat areas around Lucca and Pisa and in southern Tuscany (Maremma).

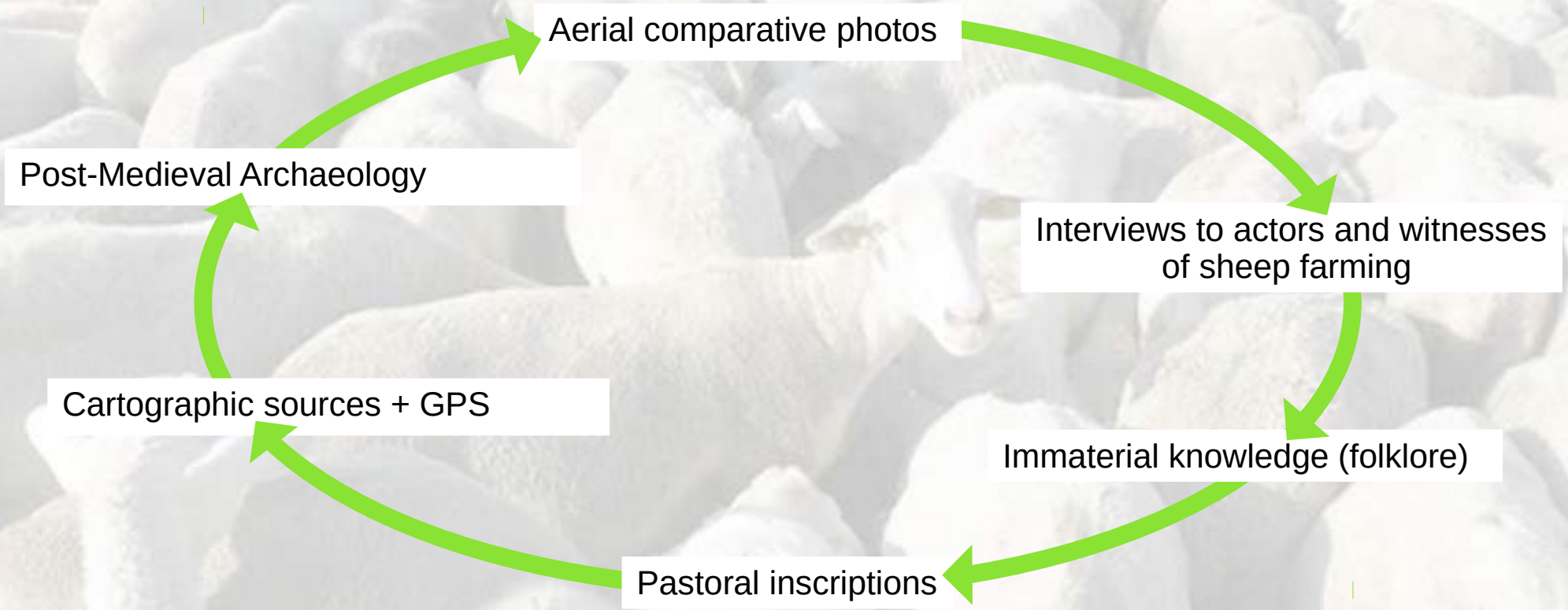
Just an idea of zoo-technical heritage in movement

At the **beginning of 17 cent.**, the territory of **Sillano in Garfagnana** had **16.000 sheep** and 150 cows. (it means 258 sheep per kmq!)

1630 – Garfagnana and Lunigiana in turn had passed by flocks from North (Emilia region): during the plague 600 shephards and support workers from Reggio territory got stuck in Castelnuovo with **15.000 sheep, 9.000 goats, 650 horses...**

...Transhumance routes builder!

Methodology of Research

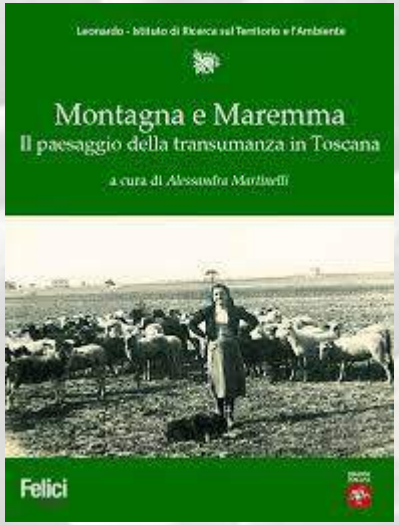


Different sources in dialogue to study pastoral organization
In Garfagnana and Lunigiana in the last 3 centuries...

Oral sources between memories and new projects

Past, Present, Future (?)

Horizontal Transhumance involves the long-range flocks moving from northern Tuscany to Maremma (southern Tuscany) (until 10 days walking).



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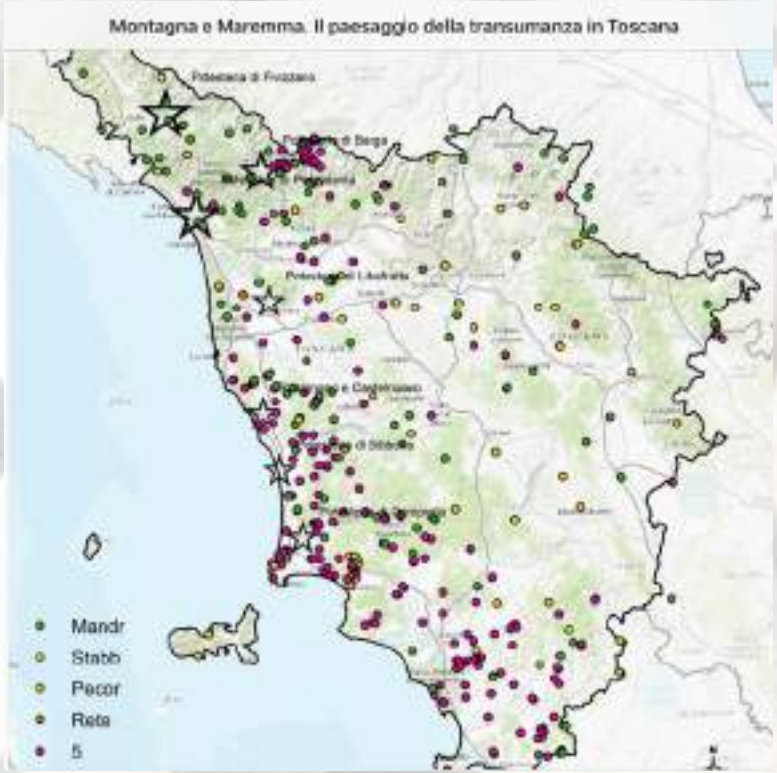
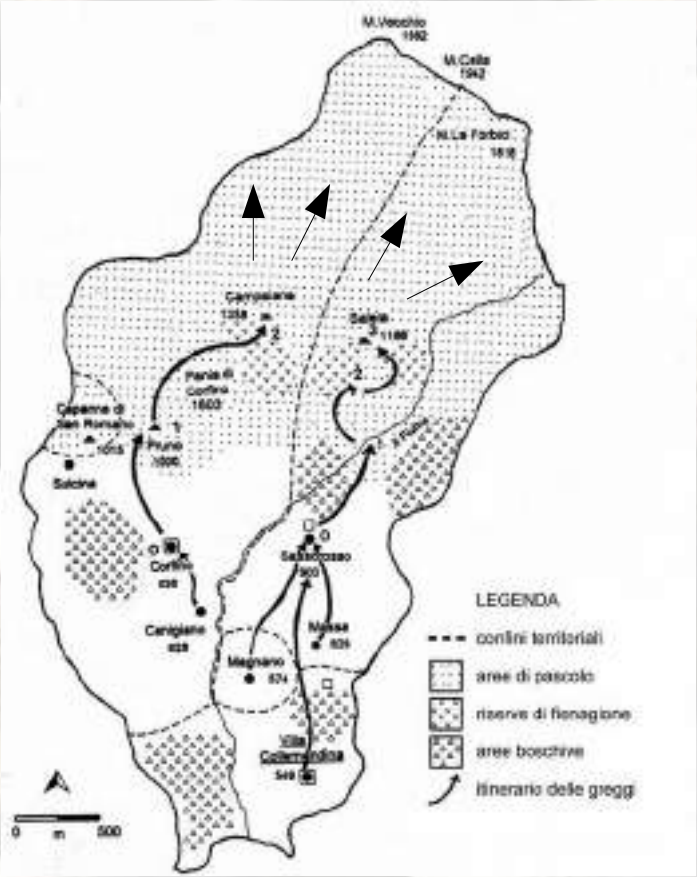


IRTA -Leonardo acquisition (from oral sources and analysis of pastoral toponyms)

Not only Maremma

Northern Tuscany was subject to both horizontal and vertical transhumance.
In the last months of research **we focused on local vertical transhumance.**



It involves the short-range, local flocks moving towards plains/mountains **(1-3 hours walking).**

Thanks to rural statutes (16-18 centuries) we are able to reconstructs the period of **flocks' progressive ascent** from villages to alps and their permanence at different altitudes. **The mountain appears as an economic space whose exploitation is calibrated on forage resources.**

Pastoral exploitation of different elevations reflects in settlement pattern

Villages: stable settlement (700-900 mt altitude)

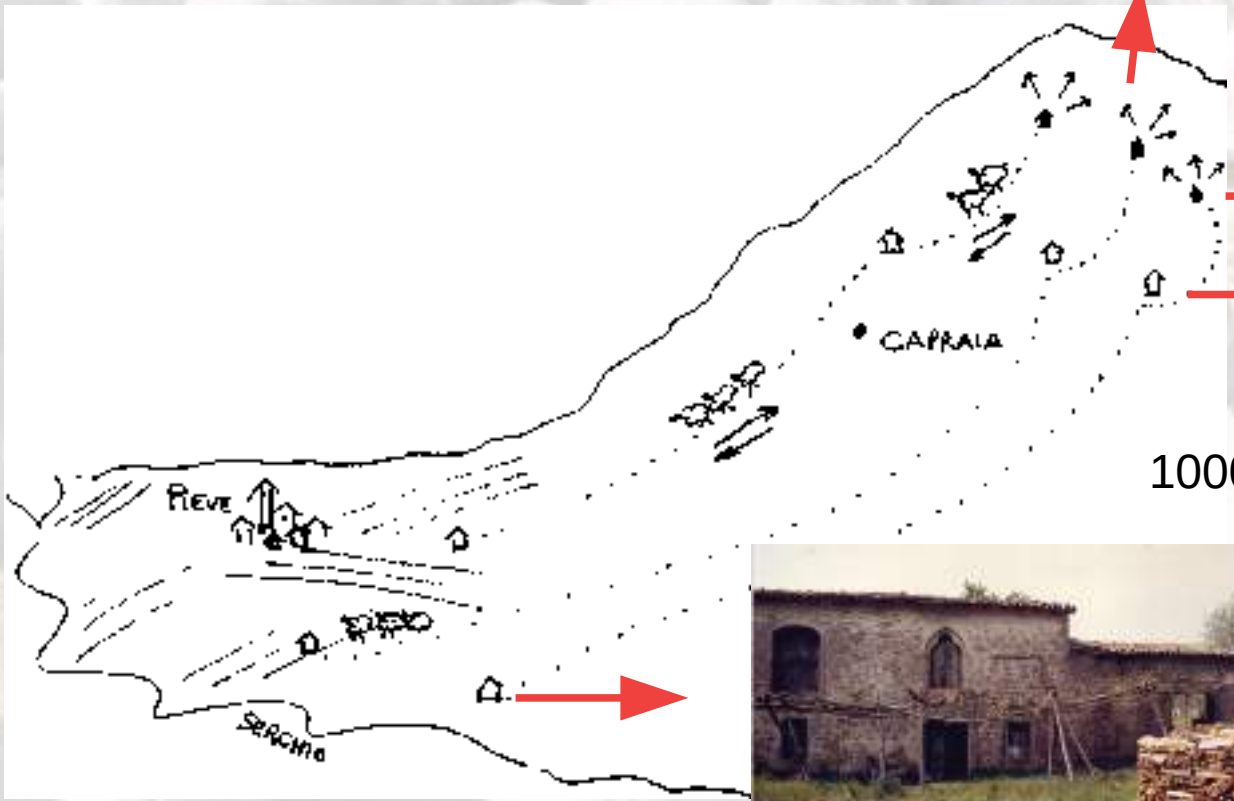
Alpeggi: pastoral villages localized in the summer pastures (1000-1300 mt altitude)

The **stable settlement is located no higher than the quote of vegetation of chestnut tree.** Infact chestnut flour replaced wheat flour in the diet of these communities and chestnut cultivation was carried on in the vicinity of the villages (‘‘**Silvo-pastoral economy**’’).

Vertical Transhumance: Pieve Fosciana-Capraia-Apennines ridge

1680 mt

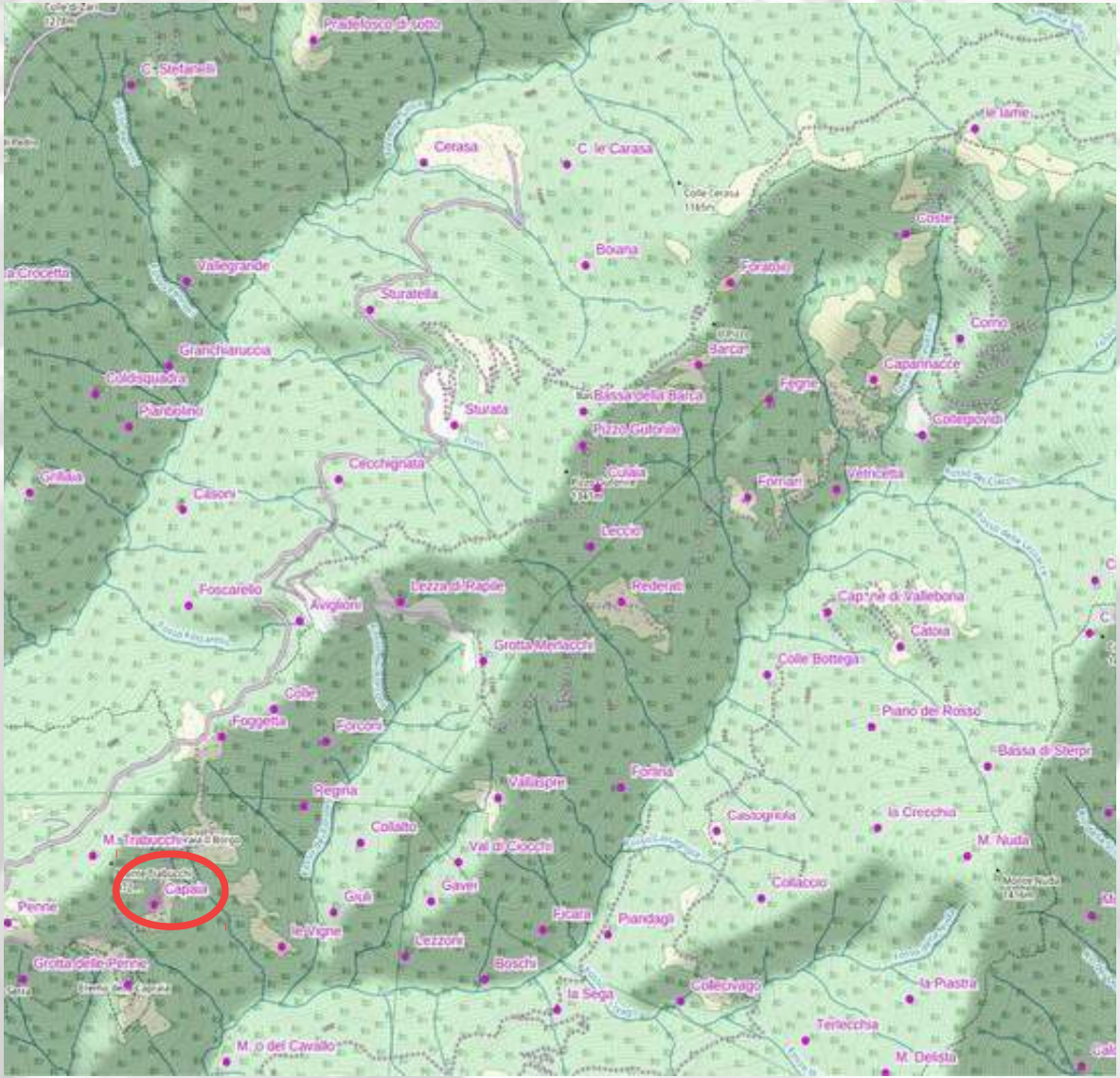
1300 mt



1000 mt

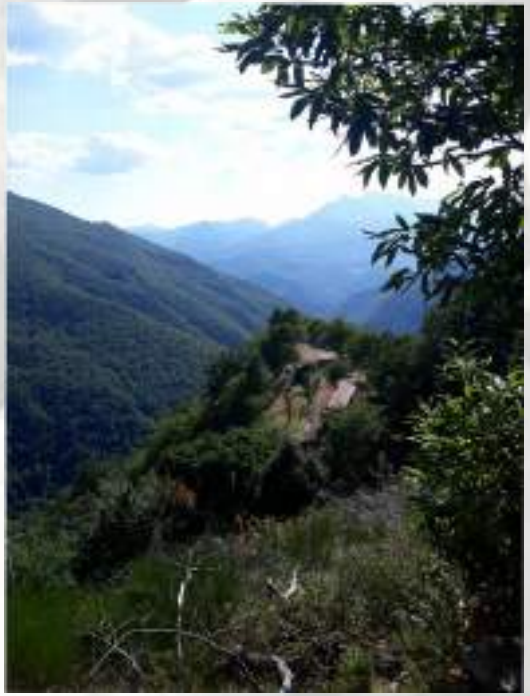
340 mt

Small flocks (50-80 sheeps) and consolidated **relationships** with local **peasants in the Fosciana plain** allowed Capraia's community **to avoid a long-distance transhumance.**



The **high density of micro-toponims** related to Capraia area and **material/oral sources** try **fixed scattered permanent farms (900-1100 mt).**

These farms guaranteed family and flocks/cows/pig subsistence
but the **integration** with
***alps* in summer** and **Fosciana's plain in winter was indispensable**.



The pastoral imprint on places and architecture

Long transhumance broke off just over mid-20th century; while the vertical one in some cases continued until the 1980s: **these practices quickly ended in silence** but **many remains on the ground** return us the magnitude of the phenomenon.

Recurring features reflecting sheep breeding in the villages

Sassorosso, 900 mt

Metello, 982 mt

Living-spaces for persons and animals are obtained in the same building.

house aged 1771

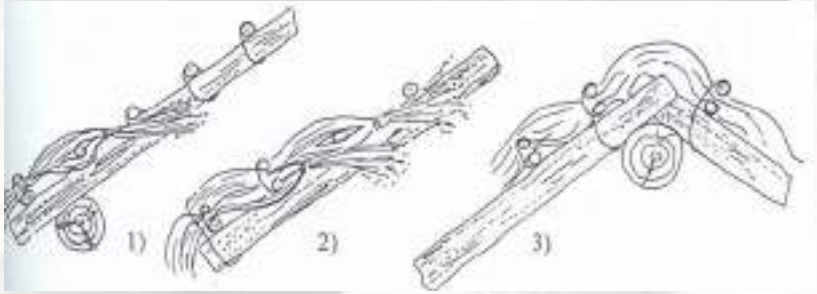
Campaiana

1358 mt altimetry

A case of **centralized pastoral settlement** in the Apennines of Villa C.

Campaiana

Huts with rye-straw roofs and dry stone walls: a perishable architecture



Casini di Corte, 1184 mt

Huts can rarely be dated

Campaiana

The ‘‘*casere*’’ or ‘‘*caselli*’’: cheese-laboratories
(the original roofs are made of sandstone slabs)

Chimney on the wall with opening/closing valve.

Agriculture areas near the mountain pastures

The terraced fields near the pasture land were farmed for the **production of vegetables (potatoes) and robust mountain cereals (rye).**

Terracing of dry stone walls testify this agricultural past.

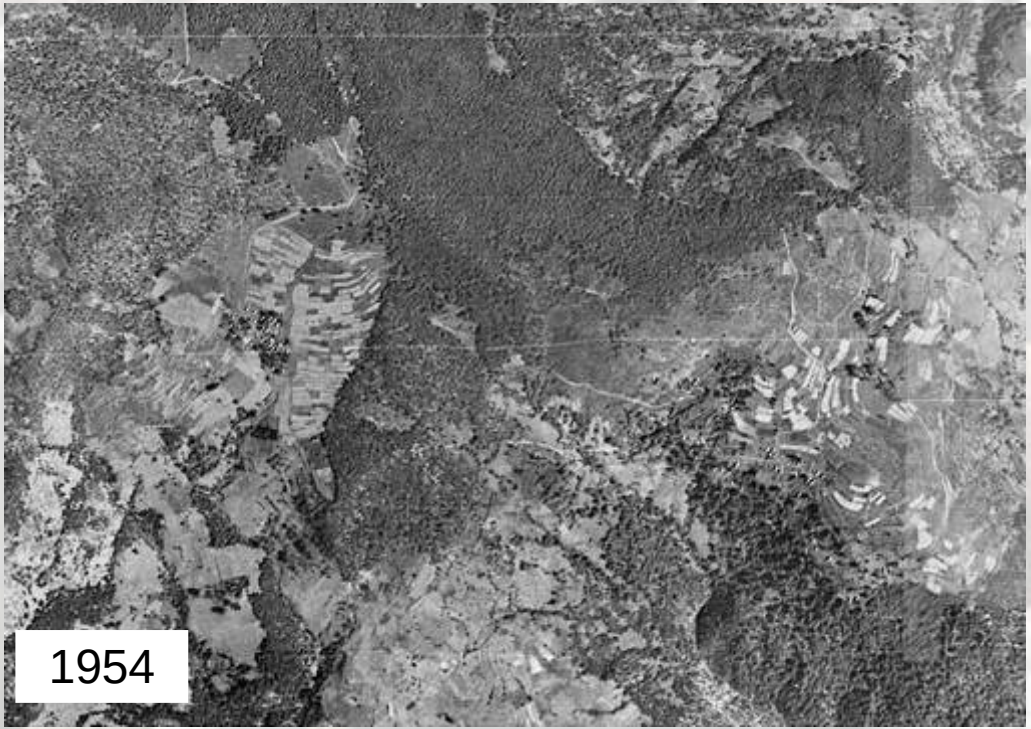
From interviews with the last first-hand witnesses we know that **this agricultural use generally ended after the Second World War.**

«*Item ordiniamo (…) che sia lecito per lo spazio di nove anni a ciascheduna famiglia del comune di seminare e di partire tutti li beni di Peligli, Poggiaccio, Campaiana, Isera, il Prado, Poggio di Chiappella e Lavacchio*»
(Rural Statute of Corfino, 1738).

Agriculture areas at 1000 mt: Arni (com. di Stazzema)

Views of *alpeggi* from compared aerial photos
(*Patatai* area, 1200 mt)

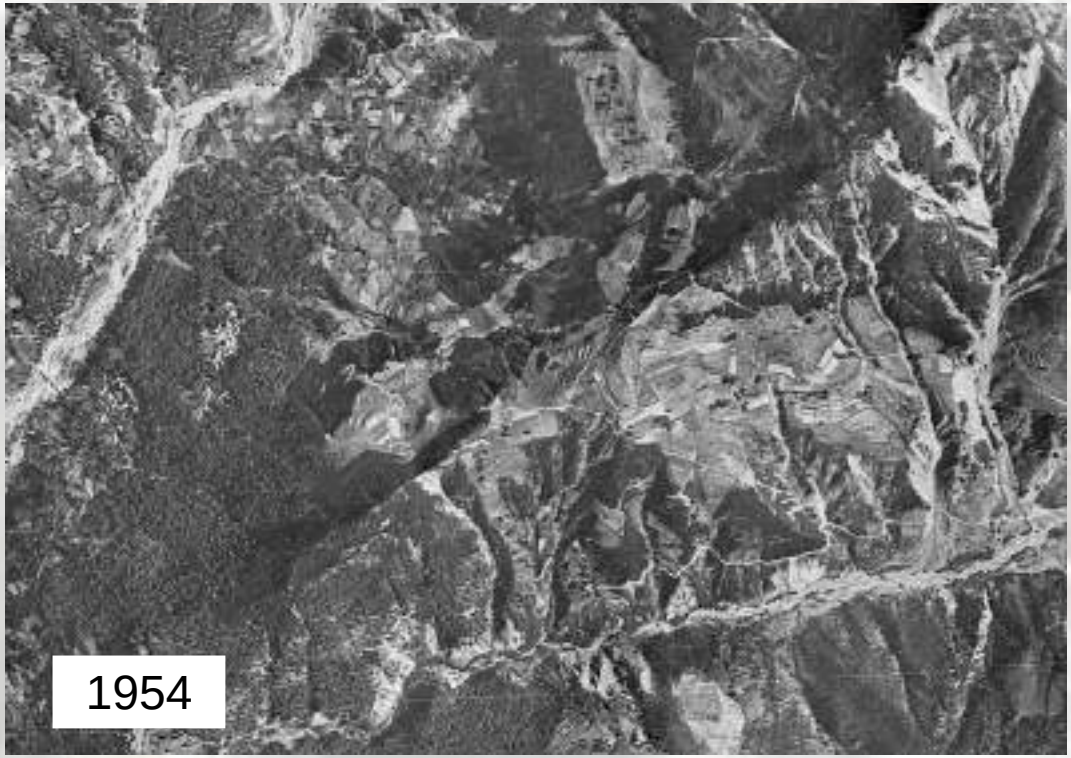
Campaiana e Salera, 1300 mt



The forest advances...we see a strong **phenomenon of re-naturalization** in the last 60 years

‘‘The climate change will push us in mountain again’’ (Luca Mercalli)

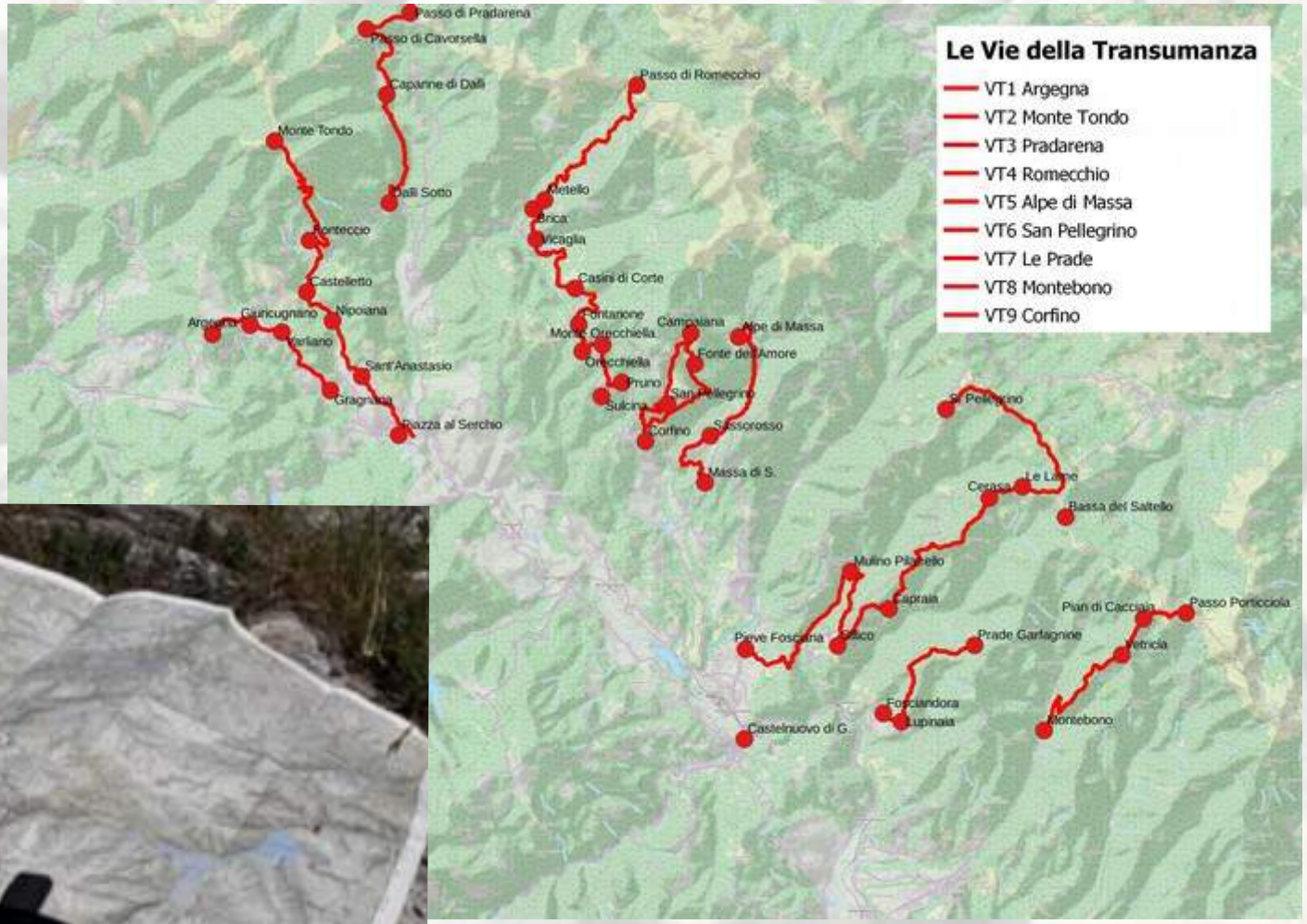
Valle di Soraggio



Ways to alps: conservative traces of millenary passages

No longer used for transhumance, but **their rediscovery and disclosure could add attractiveness** for slow tourism, environmental and territorial education.

A database in the making...



Following the flock...

(**CAMmini e BIOdiversità: Valorizzazione Itinerari e Accessibilità per la Transumanza**) progetto con l'obiettivo di migliorare l'efficacia alle azioni pubbliche nel proteggere, promuovere e sviluppare il patrimonio naturale e culturale rappresentato da aree protette, parchi e siti storici lungo l'itinerario della transumanza.

Signs of devotion along alps' ways

Small chapels act as a shelter in case of bad weather:
a neglected cultural heritage.

Pastoral epigraphs: “stone documents”

On pastoral buildings or on natural rocks outcropping in the pastures, they tell us about moods, need and desires of **distant shepherds without any traces in archival sources.**

AFFIDO.A.QUESTA.PIETRA
IL.MIO.RICORDO.SU
MONTI.CHE.FURON
A.MIA.CULLA.PEL
EGRINAI.POI.IL
MONDO.E.UN.DITTOR
NAIA.RICERCAR
CUELLA.PACE

ULTIMANO
LUCCHESI

The Zeri valley case: a glimp of future in a pastoral landscape still vital

In 2001 at Zeri, in the western corner of Lunigiana, was born the **“Consortium for the enhancement and protection of the *zerasca* sheep and lamb”**(an autonomous rustic sheep breed adapted to this climate and soil).

Solidal economy: the care of biodiversity generates a microeconomy which protects and enhances the territory and community of Zeri Valley

In 2019 the **“Community cooperative Ziri Valley”,** a whole female initiative, was inaugurated. Many women now dedicate to sheep farming. The main aim is to **regenerate the territory through the short supply chain and quality production**...

- updated techniques of **cheese** making;

- local slaughterhouse and sheep **meat** as gastronomic excellence;

- **wool** no more as wast but as raw material for crafts.

The **main effort** of these new shepherd women is to create and **“to communicate” the value** of a market recognized and supported by **the sense of belonging to this unique territory**...

THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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