Heritagisation as decolonisation. Giving back to the inhabitants of Comelico valley their minority language toponyms

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Heritagisation as decolonisation. Giving back to the inhabitants of Comelico valley their minority language toponyms
    Abstract: This paper presents and discusses an empirical experience of cadastre-based Historical GIS applied to minority language place names in the Alpine valley of Comelico. The Comelico digital toponymy atlas (T-Atlas) is a tool to record and map local place names for scientific purposes; it promotes the linguistic minority

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as a resource for cultural tourism; it intends to revitalise the use of Ladin toponyms among local population and visitors; it aims to unravel the process of translation of local place names into dominant language in official cartography (namely in cadastral maps of 19th century), so strengthening the awareness about the value of minority language in the valley.

Keywords: Toponymy, minority language, heritagisation, cadastre, historical GIS.

La patrimonialisation comme décolonisation. Redonner aux habitants de la vallée du Comelico leurs toponymes en langue minoritaire

Résumé : Cet article présente et discute une expérience empirique de SIG historique basé sur le cadastre appliqué aux noms de lieux en langue minoritaire dans la vallée alpine du Comelico. L'atlas toponymique numérique du Comelico (Comelico T-Atlas) est un outil pour enregistrer et cartographier les noms de lieux locaux à des fins scientifiques; il fait la promotion de la minorité linguistique comme ressource pour le tourisme culturel; il entend redynamiser l'usage des toponymes ladins auprès de la population locale et des visiteurs; il vise à démêler le processus de traduction des noms de lieux locaux dans la langue dominante dans la cartographie officielle (notamment dans les plans cadastraux du XIXe siècle), renforçant ainsi la prise de conscience de la valeur de la langue minoritaire dans la vallée.

Mots-clés : Toponymie, langue minoritaire, patrimonialisation, cadastre, SIG historique.

Kulturelles Erbe als Entkolonialisierung. Den Bewohnern des Comelico-Tals ihre Toponyme in der Minderheitensprache zurückgeben

Zusammenfassung: Dieser Beitrag präsentiert und diskutiert empirische Erfahrungen aus einem katasterbasierten historischen GIS, die auf geographische Namen in der Minderheitensprache im alpinen Comelico angewandt wurden. Der digitale Toponymie-Atlas Comelico (Comelico T-Atlas) ist ein Werkzeug zur Erfassung und Kartierung lokaler geographischer Namen für wissenschaftliche Zwecke; er fördert die Sprachminderheit als Ressource des Kulturtourismus; er will die Verwendung ladinischer Toponyme durch die lokale Bevölkerung und durch Besucher wiederbeleben. Ziel ist es, den Prozess der Übersetzung lokaler geographischer Namen in die dominante Sprache der amtlichen Kartographie (insbesondere in Katasterkarten des 19. Jahrhunderts) zu klären und so das Bewusstsein für den Wert der Minderheitensprache im Tal zu stärken.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Toponymie, Minderheitensprache, kulturelles Erbe, Kataster, historisches GIS.

1. Recovering minority place names: Heritagisation as decolonisation?

This paper presents and discusses an experience of a cadastre-based Historical GIS applied to minority language place names, interpreted as immaterial cultural heritage in danger (Cassi & Marcaccini 1998; Jordan et al. 2009; Kerfoot 2016), expressed in a form of a digital toponymy atlas.[1] The Comelico digital toponymy atlas (Comelico T-Atlas) has been developed in the frame of the European cooperation project PRIMIS, financed by Interreg V A Italy-Slovenia 2014–2020.[2] The main purpose of the PRIMIS project is to enhance minority languages as a resource for cultural tourism (see Figure 1). The basic idea is that the minority language is a heritage for local communities who often are not fully aware of it, and also visitors can acknowledge it as such resulting in increased attractiveness of the territories involved.
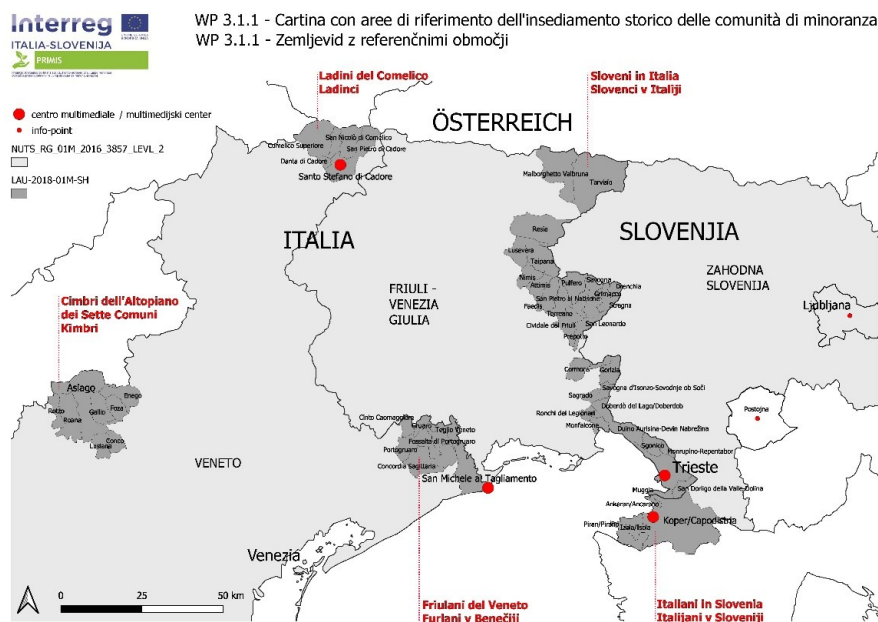

Figure 1: Minority languages areas involved in the PRIMIS project. (Source: Deliverable WP 3.3.1 of the Interreg Italy-Slovenia PRIMIS project, 2020.)

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[1] See also the proceedings of the 3rd International scientific symposium of UNGEGN's Romano-Hellenic Division in Naples [Napoli], Italy, 2021 (Ferrario 2022).

[2] The project PRIMIS – Multicultural journey between Italy and Slovenia through the prism of minorities – involves 10 partners across the North-Eastern Italian border with Austria and Slovenia, an area characterised by the presence of several linguistic minorities: Slovenians in Italy, Italians in Slovenia, Friulians in the Veneto region, Cimbri (a German-speaking enclave), and Ladins in the Comelico valley. The PRIMIS project started in 2019 and ended in 2023.

Among the PRIMIS project's actions, the following are noteworthy for their relevant connection with minority language toponymy: (1) the development of a "toponymy-based web-app" common to all partners, and (2) the creation of four multimedia centres connected with tourist information offices. The Comelico T-Atlas will be exhibited in one of the PRIMIS multimedia centres and published online.[3]

Like other initiatives in the Alps and elsewhere in the world,[4] the Comelico T-Atlas has many objectives: it is a tool to record and map local place names for scientific purposes; it is a way to enhance local minorities' awareness; it promotes the linguistic minority as a resource for cultural tourism; it intends to revitalise the use of Ladin toponyms among local population and visitors.

In the frame of the PRIMIS project the concept of minority language as heritage is not assumed without any problematisation. While aware of the risks connected with linguistic and toponymy heritagisation, we consider that in the Comelico T-Atlas it prevails the idea to provide Comelico Ladin speaking inhabitants with a sort of payback for linguistic expropriation they suffered in the past. As we will see, the use of HGIS plays an important role in securing this objective (Ferrario 2018).

As Harvey (2001: 328) has demonstrated, it is important to understand "heritage as a process […], related to human action and agency". Heritage-making is "a process of engagement, an act of communion, and an act of making meaning in and for the present" (Smith 2006: 1). Heritage making is strictly linked to political issues and can be interpreted as "an instrument of cultural power" (Harvey 2001: 328). Authorised Heritage Discourse can promote an unchallenging consensual view of both the past and the present (Smith 2006) and risks to produce a museumification effect on the heritage itself, detaching it from its living context.

Toponymy shows the inscription of power onto the landscape (Chloupek 2017). Several examples in human history show that the introduction of new toponyms has been used as a colonising practice, erasing indigenous place names to make local identity vanish for political purposes. A recovery of indigenous toponymy can be therefore interpreted as a decolonising practice (Palmer & Korson 2020). Recognizing place names as cultural heritage in

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[3]   The Comelico multimedia centre opened in July 2022. The T-Atlas will be published online in 2023. It will be possible to consult it in the centre as well, thanks to an interactive screen. The authors are involved in the local cultural life as professionals and/or member of local associations and have been collecting Ladin toponyms in Comelico for more than 20 years. The T-Atlas described in these pages has been realised in 2021–2022 by the Fondazione Comelico Dolomiti (www.fondazionecomelico.it) in collaboration with the Iuav University of Venice (www.iuav.it).

[4]   Just a few examples among many others: Lorenzi (2012), www.toponomasticafriulana.it (accessed 2022-04-11), Griebel & Keith (2021), atlas.kitikmeotheritage.ca (accessed 2022-04-11).

areas of minority languages in decline is a way to preserve cultural diversity (Jordan 2016) but can also be interpreted as a decolonising practice, vis à vis a dominant majority language.

According to the Faro Convention, digital technology can have a major role in enhancing access to cultural heritage, as well as maintaining diversity of languages and cultures in our information society (art. 14). Historical GIS applied to toponymy addresses the relationships between official place names and indigenous place names and allows to reflect on how the colonising process was conducted.

Interested in critically placing ourselves as researchers into this process of heritagisation-decolonisation, we are not only working on the recovery of Ladin toponymy, but also in monitoring the bottom-up actions on toponymy promoted by the local community, and the actions put in place by the Region and the State in the last 20 years, trying to understand the local demand for such a recovery.

2. The Comelico and its minority language: A public demand for Ladin toponymy

The Comelico, belonging to the historical region of Cadore (north-eastern Dolomites [Dolomiti/Dolomiten], Italy), is situated at the Italian border with Austria and is inhabited by a Ladin speaking population.[5] Ladin language is still spoken by a large part of the population, albeit decreasing among young people. The language is only learned at home, not at school.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, local language and culture have been colonised and Italianised, but this was a smooth and long process. Very differently from the Italianisation in the nearby South Tyrol [Alto Adige/Südtirol] after the First World War during the fascist period, here the process was not based on violence, but on public institutional disdain. Still in the 1970s local language was not admitted at school, and parents preferred to speak Italian with their children so that they would not be made fun of.

From the beginning of the 19th century, cartography had a crucial role in colonising toponymy. Many Italianised toponyms had been fixed in several official documents: cadastral maps (1815–1816, 1845–1846), military maps (from 1989 onwards), regional technical maps (from the 1980s). The same happened in hiking and tourist maps in the second half of the 20th century. Nevertheless, Ladin toponyms are currently used by Comelico inhabitants when

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[5]   The Comelico has about 7,000 permanent inhabitants in five municipalities. After an industrial boom in the second half of the 20th century, in the early 2000s it was hit by a strong crisis. In the last few years local economy is turning to tourism. Neither the industrial fortune, nor the crisis could yet erase the traditional agro-pastoral and forestry activity, still largely practiced in the valley. There is now an urgent need to drive tourism away from speculative development and to limit identity erosion.

they speak the local language, not only in private conversation, but also in public or semi-public events.[6] From our experience, we can say that local people do not feel a sentiment of injustice, but only a sense of loss, perceived as inevitable.[7] They themselves use Italianised toponyms when speaking Italian.

The Comelico, already included into the Ladin speaking area by the Italian linguist Graziadio Isaia Ascoli (1873), has been officially recognised as a minority area only in 1999 by the National Law No. 482. Therefore, in this valley, the heritagisation process of the Ladin language is still somewhat backward in comparison to other Alpine valleys. Nevertheless, before and after the official recognition of the linguistic minority there have been numerous initiatives in the valley to promote the public use of Ladin (museums, publications, songs, theatre shows, etc.). Also, minority toponymy has been involved in this process, for example with institutional initiatives like the municipality bilingual road signs, financed by the national law on minorities (see Figure 2).[8]

Figure 2: Official bilingual road sign financed by the National Law No. 482/1999 at the entrance of a village in Comelico (2009-11). (Source: Google street-view.)

Toponymy has been involved also in bottom-up semi-spontaneous actions, generally managed by local cultural associations, showing a diffuse "Ladin toponymic public demand" (see Figure 3).

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[6]   It is still used for example in the gatherings of the local Regola. The Regole are ancient familiar organisations of "antichi originari", local residents that still own and administer the commonly owned pastures and forests.

[7]   This statement does not come from specific research but from empirical long-term observation.

[8]   This was not systematic: most of the smallest villages have no bilingual sign yet.

Figure 3: Bottom-up initiatives on recording Ladin place names of some non-permanent settlements with physical signs (left) and digitally on a website (right). (Source: https://www.qualitabellunese.it/Val_Visdende/giro_dei_borghi.htm, accessed 2023-02-27; collage by the authors.)

Previous experiences of recording Ladin toponyms were at disposal as secondary sources. After a first collection of geographical dialectal terms (Marinelli 1901), the toponyms collected by Tagliavini during his linguistic investigations on the Ladin dialect of Comelico should be mentioned (Tagliavini 1926, 1944). A chapter of the series of the "Oronimi Bellunesi", promoted by the Angelini Foundation of Belluno, is dedicated to a part of the Comelico (Cesco Frare 1993). In the same years, P. Cesco Frare collected a very large number of toponyms and microtoponyms relating to the highest parts of the valley, still unpublished. More recently, some new studies were published (Cesco Frare 2001; Barbierato & Vigolo 2008) and some first toponymic maps (GRCCS 2002; De Bolfo et al. 2005; Cesco Frare 2016; De Bernardin Gàina & Soravia 2019). Two published maps have been recently unified by V. Ferrario and A. Turato and exhibited in the section dedicated to the Ladin language in a local museum (www.algudnei.it). There are also several handwritten maps, coming from graduation thesis and students' exercises of the local University of the Elderly, under the guidance of P. Cesco Frare. Even though the aforementioned maps and collections were built at different times, with different criteria and methods and using different base maps, still they cover a large part of the valley (see Figure 4) and have been
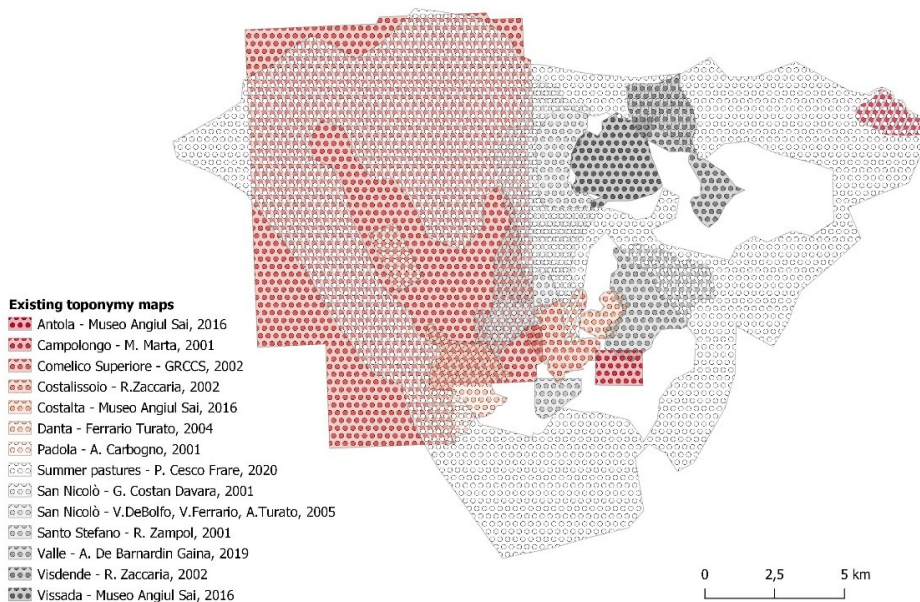
considered a valuable source for the Comelico T-Atlas.[9]

Existing toponymy maps
- Antola - Museo Angiul Sai, 2016
- Campolongo - M. Marta, 2001
- Comelico Superiore - GRCCS, 2002
- Costalissoio - R.Zaccaria, 2002
- Costalta - Museo Angiul Sai, 2016
- Danta - Ferrario Turato, 2004
- Padola - A. Carbogno, 2001
- Summer pastures - P. Cesco Frare, 2020
- San Nicolò - G. Costan Davara, 2001
- San Nicolò - V.DeBolfo, V.Ferrario, A.Turato, 2005
- Santo Stefano - R. Zampol, 2001
- Valle - A. De Barnardin Gaina, 2019
- Visdende - R. Zaccaria, 2002
- Vissada - Museo Angiul Sai, 2016

Figure 4: Areas covered by published and unpublished Ladin toponymy maps
and collections in Comelico. (Source: authors' elaboration.)

3. Ladin toponymy and the Comelico T-Atlas

Starting from the existing toponymic collection (in the following: fieldwork toponymy), the Comelico T-Atlas aims at:
- gathering all fieldwork toponymy within a single framework and covering the areas not investigated by previous collections;
- presenting Ladin toponymy to the public;
- comparing Ladin toponymy with official toponymy, unravelling the process of translation of local place names into the dominant language, so strengthening the awareness about the minority language in the valley.

For these purposes, the Comelico T-Atlas develops a methodology already adopted in 2004–2005 within a research project financed by the Italian National Institute of Mountains (IMONT) for the drafting of the toponymy map of the Municipality of San Nicolò already mentioned (De Bolfo et al.

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[9]   During the long-term research about Comelico toponymy carried on by the authors in the last twenty years, at least 50 informants were involved at different times. To fill the gaps and cover the entire valley, during the PRIMIS project four new informants have been involved, through the mediation of local cultural associations.

2005), in which the work of collecting toponyms started from the historical toponymy recorded in the 19th century land registers and specifically in the so-called "Napoleonic Cadastre" (Ferrario 2019).

Modern cadastres can be considered a kind of ante litteram GIS, in which the spatial data (the parcels drawn on the map) are uniquely linked to alphanumeric data contained in the corresponding register. Therefore, cadastres have been largely used in various disciplines (such as historical ecology, forestry, landscape history and historical geography) as a base map for a HGIS to reconstruct past land uses. On the contrary, HGIS was rarely employed in toponymy studies in Italy (Gava et al. 2020).

As already observed (Ferrario 2019), the Napoleonic Cadastre is in temporal terms placed favourably as an intermediary between the historical toponymy, recorded in the archival documentation of the Modern Age, and the toponymy of our ages. In fact, the 19th century cadastres record some toponyms that are no longer in use and whose oral memory has been lost, thus offering valid help in the case of toponyms present in the archival documentation, but difficult to be located geographically. Secondly, the experience collected in 2005 shows that Napoleonic toponymy can be an excellent tool to trigger the memory of informants about toponyms that are almost out of use. Last but not least, it allows to study the first phases of official replacement of Ladin place names: In cadastral maps not only the main place names of villages and the name of the valley itself are recorded in the dominant language, but even microtoponyms were Venetianised or Italianised for the first time (Ferrario 2019). To understand the relationship between Napoleonic toponymy and the one currently alive, it is necessary to compare them spatially and linguistically.

3.1. The Napoleonic Cadastre as a tool for understanding toponymic colonisation

The procedure implied for the use of cadastral maps as a HGIS base map for the Comelico T-Atlas is described in Ferrario (2022). Here we will consider only the linguistic and cultural aspects of the microtoponymy collected in the Cadastre, with the help of the Ladin toponymy still in use.

The cadastral toponymy must be observed while bearing in mind the political and cultural context in which the cadastral survey took place. With the Peace of Pressburg [Bratislava] (December 26th, 1805), the Austrian Empire renounced the Venetian Provinces which remained under French domain until April 1814. It was during this time that the cadastral survey was conceived and largely carried out.

In the Comelico, however, census surveyors arrived later. The 280 square kilometres of the Comelico have been surveyed by cadastral technicians from 1815 to 1816. The outcome consists of 23 maps and 18 registers (some registers have been later merged), all preserved in the Venice State Archive in single

copy.[10] By 1815 the Comelico was part of the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom, an Austrian domain resulting from agreements made during the Congress of Vienna [Wien]. As observed by Tonetti (1997), many of the officials employed in the political-administrative roles of the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom came from Lombardy [Lombardia] and, to a lesser extent, from the Veneto region. Judging by their surnames, we can hypothesise this same provenience for the cadastral surveyors active in the valley. This fact may have influenced the methods of collecting toponyms and their transcription. As might be expected, the municipal informants, instead, bear local family names and are sometimes well-known figures in the history of the valley.

There are no studies on the language spoken in Comelico in the 19th century. However, it can be presumed that the situation was not very different from what could be observed in the first half of the 20th century: in addition to the native Ladin dialect, the inhabitants of Comelico valley spoke a kind of Alpine-Venetian koinè, to be employed with the outsiders. It can be imagined that the municipal informants recruited in Comelico for this purpose were concerned with transmitting to the cadastral surveyor the toponyms already transposed into the dominant language. This would explain the fact that the Venetianisation and Italianisation of Ladin toponyms seem to be mostly a conscious 'translation', at least where the meaning of the toponym was (or seemed to be) transparent to the informant (see Table 1).

Table 1: Some examples of Venetianised and Italianised micro-toponyms. (Source: author's elaboration.)

Napoleonic Cadastre			Fieldwork	Transparent meaning
Italianisation	**Venetianisation**	**Transcript**		
	Drio Prese		Davòi Prèdi	'behind the clearance'
Dietro Prese				
		Sarzenà	Zarznà	'girdled'
	Cercenà			
Transacqua			Tresaga	'beyond the water'
Tabbia di mezzo			Tabié de mèdo	'barn in the middle'
Prato della casa			Pra dla céda	'meadow of the house'
Sopra Valle			Soravàl	'over the valley'
		Ponede	Ponêde	-
	Mortise		Murtidi	-
Alle Avare			Li Vari	'the lush meadows'
	Contornà		Cutarné	-

In some cases, the same toponym is recorded in different ways, once by Venetianizing it and another time by transcribing it as it sounds. This is the

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case of *Zarznà*, in some cases transcribed as *Cercenà*, in a sort of Venetian-like language, and in other cases as *Sarzenà*, more similar to the Ladin sound.

This is the case of most of toponyms that have as root *sta-/sto-*, probably resulting from the Latin term *stabulum*, that can be considered a phonetic transcription of the Ladin form still in use (see Table 2).

Table 2: Toponyms probably resulting from the Latin term *stabulum* (*derivation from *stabulum* uncertain). (Source: authors' elaboration.)

Napoleonic Cadastre	Fieldwork
Stablaman	Stablamàn
Stodnei	Studnèi
Storbin	Sturbìn
Stochiarnio	Stuciàrniä
Stojan*	Stuiàn*
Staunovo	Stunòvu
Tacostagno*	Tacustègn*
Staurotto	Sturótto
Staonatto	-
Stalbidein	Stabdögn
Stabiel	Stabiél
Stabochin	Stabochìn
Stamenego	Staménengo
Stalorenzo	Stalorénzo
Staval	Stavàl
Stazzottagno	Stazotêgn
Stabortagno	Stabortêgn
Stamassango	Stamasango
Stapanzoi	Stapanzógn
Stamezzetto	Stamsêto
Stagonoi	-
Staduan	Stadvên
Stabrenco	Stabrênc
Stavello	Stavél

As a consequence of this double process of translation/transcription, some doubtful cases can only be interpreted by knowing the local language. An exemplary case is the cadastral toponym (now no longer in use) *Casa vecchia* ('old house', in Italian), presumably translated from the Ladin *céda vecia* ('old house', in Ladin). Knowing that the phoneme *c* was at that time transcribed with the grapheme *ch*, it can be concluded that the adjacent cadastral toponym *Chieda vecchia* is in all likelihood a variant, transliterated rather than translated.

3.2. Landscape features in Ladin toponymy

Toponyms are known to be synthetic descriptors of the historical landscape, the elements of which inspired the naming process. The Comelico T-Atlas allows to spatially locate them and to recognise possible recurrences not only in the name but also in localisation.

A significant example is that of the toponyms deriving from the Latin term *stabulum*, mentioned above. Their spatial distribution seems to follow a pattern, lining up along two or three different altitudes on the sunny slopes (see Figure 5). This distribution could be related to the origins of the human settlements in Comelico, not fully clarified in their dynamics to date. Similarly, it is interesting to observe the recurrence of the toponym *Mas* (from Latin *mansum*) which is also linked to the ownership and management of the land and therefore to human settlement.
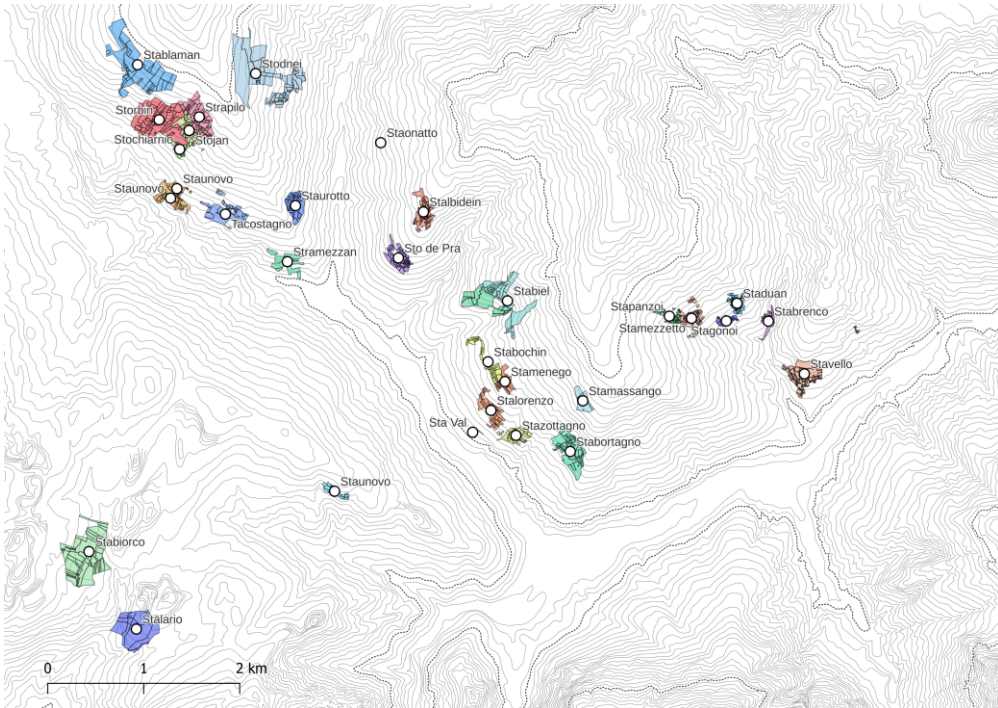
Figure 5: Napoleonic cadastral toponyms presumably deriving from the Latin *stabulum* ('stable'), perhaps to be related to the first permanent settlements in the Comelico. The contour lines of 1,000 and 1,600 m. a.s.l. are highlighted, meaning respectively the bottom of the valley and the top of the permanently inhabited area. (Source: authors' elaboration.)

Some interesting information about landscape change in the valley can be inferred also by the links between toponyms and historical documents. For example, *Zarznà* and *Ponéde* are both found in the community statutes of the villages that regulated the compulsory sheep route: "sheeps from the village of

Presenaio have to go to the place called *Colmul*, then to the stable of *Cercinato*, then to the stable named *Ponede* […]". It is worth noting that this document, full of toponyms, was written in 1575 by a local notary who, in his turn, Italianised the toponym *Zarznà* in *Cercinato*, thus clarifying the Latin origin of this toponym, which comes from the past participle *circinatum*.

As it is well known among linguists and geographers who deal with the relationships between toponymy and landscape, the *cercinatura,* 'girdling', is the circular incision of the bark of the trees to interrupt the flow of sap and make the tree die (see Figure 6). This was a very common practice for obtaining agricultural land from the forest. A practice that may seem cruel today, but which is part of the history of the Alps, of this valley, and of this specific place and tells us a lot about the way in which the human landscape was created.

Figure 6: The Ladin toponym *Zarznà* comes from the Latin *circinatum*, meaning 'girdling' and is recurrent in the Comelico valley. This practice used to be a common way to create clearances into the forest to practice agriculture. (Photo taken from https://woodyinvasives.org/management/girdling/, accessed 2023-02-27.)

It is worth noting that the comparison between cadastral toponymy and fieldwork toponymy is also very interesting for understanding landscape change. Let's take the example of *pra dla ceda*, which can be translated in English as 'meadow of the house'. If you look at the satellite photograph under the database, you will find that the fieldwork toponym *pra dla ceda* is shifted with respect to its historic area. Probably the cause of this shift (or perhaps shrinkage?) is the ongoing reforestation process clearly visible in this area.

Finally, the comparison between cadastral toponymy and fieldwork toponymy shows the extraordinary survival of historical toponymy still in use, or at least still remembered by the informants. There are very few toponyms

(some dozen in the whole valley) registered in the Napoleonic Cadastre that are not reflected in the recent toponymic maps or lists, or that have not been recognised by the informants. Overall, we do not observe a marked toponymic erosion, such as that observed in other Alpine and pre-Alpine areas.

The situation is different if we look at the toponyms recorded in recent years that are not registered in the census documentation. First, it is necessary to distinguish between permanently inhabited areas, where we can observe the strongest concentration of Napoleonic toponymy, and those of high pastures, where Napoleonic toponymy thins out. In inhabited areas the toponyms reported by the informants that are not recorded by the cadastre are relatively few and depend very much on the single informant. These are mostly names of single landscape elements known by informants who, due to their activity (hunters, breeders, shepherds) have a truly thorough knowledge of the territory. Some examples in Figure 7 (*Crepo Platél, Pieze Doi, Costa d Val da Rodal, Pala di Pezediés*) refer respectively to outcropping boulders, clearings, slopes, steep slopes. Some other examples (which, according to the informants, we defined as "ephemeral") are linked to the owner of a single land, to a fact that occurred in living memory or to the sphere of a family group and seem not destined to be used for a long time: in the same Figure *Pra di Clere* probably refers to the Eicher Clere family who owns land there.
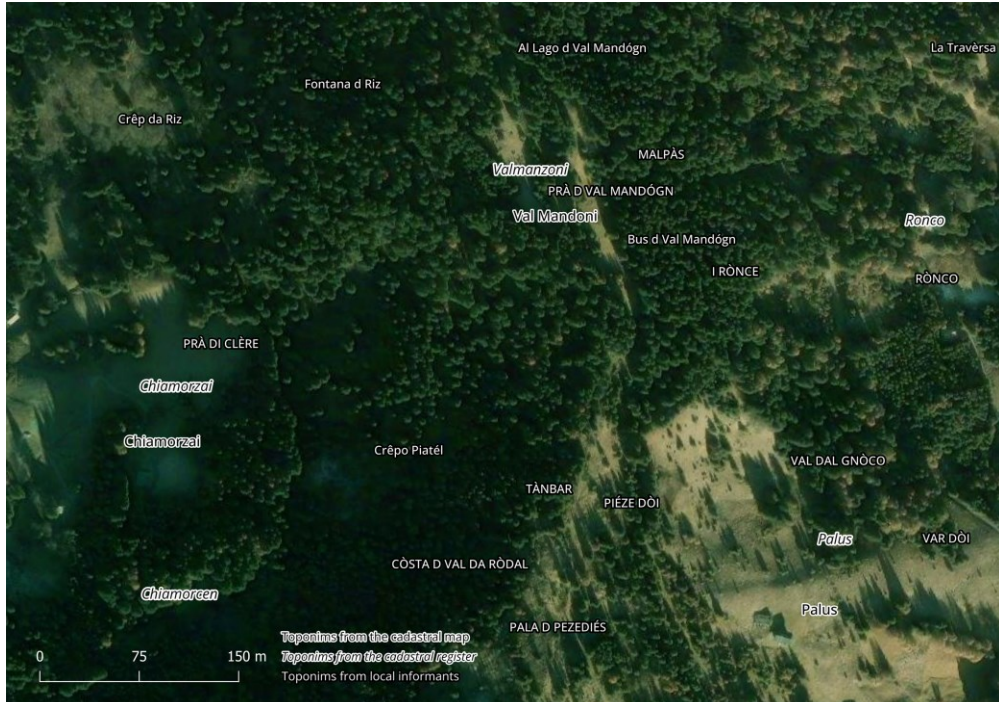

Figure 7: Comparison between Napoleonic toponymy and living toponymy mapped by a local informant in 2019 in the permanently inhabited area. (Source: authors' elaboration.)

In the summer pasture areas, where P. Cesco Frare conducted a specific field survey in the 1990s, the situation is reversed. In this case the toponyms reported by the informants, all elderly shepherds with many years of extensive frequentation of the summer pastures, clearly prevail over the toponyms recorded in the Cadastre. The pastures of Dignàs and Ciampobón, depicted in Figure 8, are exemplary. The informants report a very high number of toponyms, some ephemeral, others linked to specific landscape elements, but mostly referring to small regions (*Sacùl*, *Cianbon*, *Intra i Giai*, etc.).

Figure 8: Comparison between Napoleonic toponymy and toponymy mapped by P. Cesco Frare on the basis of information by old herders in 1990s in the high pasture area. (Source: authors' elaboration.)

We focus on the case of *Cianbón* (or *Ciampobón*), the name of a high pasture now equipped with a double hut. This toponym does not appear in the Napoleonic register, even if the pasture near the hut clearly coincides with parcel 82 of the Napoleonic map. It must be said that both the hut of Dignas and that of Ciampobon were built around the middle of the 19th century, therefore they do not appear in the Cadastre. The cadastral register attributes the same toponym to all the parcels of the area, namely *Dignàs*, which today refers only to the westernmost pasture. Even the cadastral map shows only the toponym *Forcella Dignas*, located on the border with Austria.

The only reference to the current name of *Ciampobon* hut is the hydronym *Rio detto di Campo Bon*. This suggests that the toponym already

existed at the beginning of the 19th century, as well as the corresponding pasture, but it was not recorded in the register. Failure to attribute a toponym to parcel 82 may be due to imprecision of the informant, or to the inattention of the surveyor, or even to the absence of a human settlement at that time. The construction of the two huts could later have specified the areas of the two toponyms *Dignas* and *Ciampobon*, the former attributed today to the western hut, but also to the pasture up to the saddle, the latter now attributed to the easternmost hut and to the surrounding pasture.

4. Giving back to the inhabitants of the Comelico their Ladin toponymy

The comparison described in the previous pages involves an exercise of reversal of the Italianisation and Venetianisation of Ladin toponyms. In other words, it is necessary to hypothesise, with the help of previous studies (Cesco Frare 2001; Barbierato & Vigolo 2008), for each Ladin form, which form should be the corresponding Italianised one. Since Italianisation and Venetianisation follow unwritten, but well-known rules by both the informants and by some members of the research group, in the case of the current maps it was easy to verify the correspondence between the Italianised and Ladin forms shown on the map. The same procedure has been followed when the current maps were not available (white areas in Figure 4) as it was experimented in the 2005 map of San Nicolò: submitting to the current informant the Italianised toponym or a hypothetical transliteration or translation of cadastral toponyms into Ladin, this worked as a reminder for the informant, who then recognised the toponym and placed it spatially without the aid of the historical map. In essence, with the help of informants, we "Ladinised back" the Venetianised and Italianised toponyms.

The desire of the authors, shared with the participants in the drafting of the Comelico T-Atlas, was to respect the toponymic stratification reconstructed through the collections and maps. For this purpose, it was decided to include in the Comelico T-Atlas the following layers:

-   as the main layer the living Ladin toponyms collected from previous research and informants (Layer 1);
-   in the areas not covered by previous toponymic collections: living Ladin toponyms, collected by new informants with the help of the Napoleonic Cadastre (Layer 2);
-   Italianised Napoleonic toponyms (microtoponyms, hydronyms and odonyms) coming from the Napoleonic map and the Napoleonic register (Layer 3).

The points of Layers 1 and 2 are connected to sound files in which the informants pronounce the toponym in the local language to better render the specific sounds (obscured vowels, aspirated consonants, etc.) that are lost with

the transcription rules in force today (Istituto Ladin de la Dolomites 2005).[11]

Layer 3 puts in evidence the process of linguistic colonisation undergone by the Ladin toponymy.

The Comelico T-Atlas is open to succeeding contributions. For example, the digitisation of toponyms present in subsequent maps is already underway: in the so-called Austrian and Austro-Italian maps, the maps of the Military Geographical Institute, the Ceased Cadastre. Moreover, the examination of other archive sources prior to the 19th century cadastre in some sample areas will allow us to deepen the linguistic and geographical history of recurrent toponyms related to human settlement (Cesco Frare 2001). Each of these sources will constitute a new layer of the Comelico T-Atlas, able to give back Ladin toponymy to Comelico inhabitants.

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[11]   In the Comelico T-Atlas we adopted the unified transcription rules approved by the Istituto Ladin de la Dolomites, while adding some diacritic signs useful to help the non-Ladin speaking reader, who would eventually study the etymology of Ladin place names.

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