A RURAL JOURNEY

designing rural tourism for communities facing depopulation

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Forword

In this thesis, I am two different characters hoping to become one in the end: I am a tourist, fleeing mass tourism and its immense infrastructures, and an architecture student wondering how to change this current tourism trend. I haven't always been divided in that way. In fact, I was a victim of the tourist bubble myself, avoiding any form of retrospection, exploring new places only to collect souvenirs through pictures. I was driven by what economic forces and advertisements told me to see, disconnected from the places I was visiting. I was becoming a spectator of a scene without understanding it, experiencing it, more importantly, interrupting it. As an architecture student, I began to wonder why today's touristic buildings weren't pathways to the local population's life. My visit to Australia in 2012 changed my views on tourism. I went there for the first time at the age of 18 to visit my distant cousins Karolina, Martin, and their parents Emilia and

Richard. I was lucky enough to have them as my own local tourist guides, as they played a critical role in my mutation from a typical tourist to the one I am today. In 2019, before enrolling for my master's degree at ETH, I returned to Australia to work for six months, and today my cousins jokingly say that I know their country better than they do. At the time, I decided to return to Switzerland without taking the plane. The trip lasted two months, and if I close my eyes, I can now imagine all the territory that separates Australia from my native Switzerland. It is during this great journey, as I watched the landscapes pass by the windows of trains, buses, and even a container ship, that I began to question tourism.

How to get to the other side of the glass, how to contribute and exchange through tourism? What is the role of the architect in this large topic?

Acknowledgments

2. Lasansky, D. Medina, and Brian McLaren, eds. 2004
Architecture and Tourism: Perception, Performance, and Place. English ed. Oxford ; New York: Berg.

1.1 Tourism

Tourism is a way of escaping routine, to discover new cultures and places. It is also the world's largest economy. [1] This industry's importance is emphasized this year, during the pandemic, with a loss of 80% of tourist arrivals, compromising millions of jobs. Nevertheless, tourism has substantial negative effects, such as its heavy infrastructure, the ecological and economic impact, as well as consequences on local communities, to name a few. Since 'The tourist' by Dean MacCannel (1976), one of the first books to theorize tourism, many people from various disciplines have tried to understand this phenomenon and research how it could positively change. Architecture is fundamental in tourism as it is often the object of a visit or found around touristic areas in the forms of hotels, visitor centers, restaurants. Unfortunately, as Medina Lasansky [2] states:
« Only recently have architectural historians begun to assess the role played by tourism in the history of the built environment. »

1.2 Rural villages

In the 1960s, 66 % of the world population lived in rural areas, whereas today, this number has dropped to 44%. This urbanization is a result of the rural areas' lack of work opportunities. The rural villages are progressively abandoned, left with empty houses with few people to maintain them. Tourism can help combat this migration by offering new employment opportunities and bringing visitors. In Switzerland, the valleys in the Alps are the areas suffering the most from depopulation.

1.3 Tourism and rural communities

The global scale tourism and local scale communities often appear to be in opposing dynamics. Only when the local community's history and needs are considered will the appropriate tourism form be introduced without ruining the local culture. This study aims to research how a design project that focuses on tourism can help preserve a rural community. It searches to answer the questions: what can we learn from existing tourism forms, and how to connect the tourism, the local community and an architectural intervention ?

1.4 Method

Firstly, a portrait of today's tourism will be presented by analyzing the history of tourism, collecting case studies, and categorizing them. Then, taking Switzerland's case, the research will target communities within the Alpine valleys most in need of tourism. Finally, a valley will be taken as the site for a design project to experience a new form of tourism.

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02
TOURISM key elements about tourism

Antiquity

Type of Tourist: Explorer
Purpose: Discovery
Type of Tourism: 7 Ancien World Wonders

Fig.2.1.1

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Imperial Rome

Type of Tourist: Explorer
Purpose: Discovery
Type of Tourism: Within borders

Fig.2.1.2

14th Century

Type of Tourist: Religious man
Purpose: Pilgrimge
Type of Tourism: Pilgrimage along trade routes

Fig.2.1.3

1. '*A message that can be dated back to 1244 BC reads: 'Hadnakhte, scribe of the treasury... came to make an excursion and amuse himself on the west of Memphis, together with his brother, Panakhd, scribe of the Vizier.'*
O'Gorman, Kevin D., and John Cousins 2010
The Origins of Hospitality and Tourism. Oxford: Goodfellow Publ.

2. MacCannell, Dean 1999
The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class. Berkeley: University of California Press.

2.1 Brief history of tourism: from elite to mass tourism

Forms of tourism can be traced back in history to 1244 BC, as evidenced by graffiti on one of the pyramids in Egypt[1]. Even at that ancient time, the tourist felt the need to mark his presence; we can relate to this first example of tourist behavior today, but what motivated the tourist to travel? Have the motivations evolved since then?

The seven wonders of the ancient world (*Fig.2.1.1)* could be considered as the first 'guidebook' for tourist landmarks. This list of 'must-see' architectural achievements was only accessible to the elite. The exclusivity of what we can call the first forms of tourism lasted for a long time. Later, in the Roman Empire, traveling was also only accessible to a few people, but their movements were limited to the borders of the Empire (*Fig.2.1.2)*. Both during Antiquity and the Roman Empire eras, seeking new places and sensations was amongst the main motives to tourism, thus marking the beginnings of traveling for pleasure and discovery. Religion and conquests were also major incentives. These motivations manifested themselves extensively between the 14th and 16th centuries. For example, in Europe, the pilgrimage route, punctuated by famous worshiping sites, took the traveler to a final sacred place far away from his home (*Fig.2.1.3)*. During European colonialism, the travel impulse came from the desire to expand the country through colonies and to spread Christianity (*Fig.2.1.4)*. Today, pilgrimage routes are still popular, whether for religious purposes or just for traveling.

However, in the 18th century, the Grand tour shaped the tourism model by introducing touring (Fig.2.1.5). It led to organized tours and later to mass tourism. These tourists were sons of aristocrats and later sons of professional middle-class traveling in Europe to Italy, France, and Spain. At first, the Grand Tour's purpose was educational, a way for the young generation to learn, observe, and record cultural artifacts. It then evolved towards searching for beauty and the sublime. In the 1800s, tours with various destinations were popularized by Thomas Cook, making travel accessible to a broader public (Fig.2.1.6). The organized tours started with 500 people in England and later expanded all around the world. The rationalization of working hours and paid holidays contributed to their development. Tourists traveled exclusively for leisure, to take a break from their everyday lives.[2]

Throughout the mentioned periods, the 'typical tourist' changed from being part of a small elite - usually upper-class men- to everyone. The reason for the journey might have fluctuated, but in the end, the tourist always seeks something different from what he knows.

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15th - 16th Century
Type of Tourist: Explorer
Purpose: Discovery/Colonies
Type of Tourism: Colonialism

Fig.2.1.4

16th - 18th Century
Type of Tourist: Young Aristocrates,
 later middle class
Purpose: Cultural Education
Type of Tourism: Grand Tour

Fig.2.1.5

1841
Type of Tourist: Middle Class
Purpose: Organized Leisure
Type of Tourism: Organized Tours

Fig.2.1.6

1. *Tourism carrying capacity is defined by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) as "the maximum number of people that may visit a tourist destination at the same time, without causing destruction of the physical, economic and sociocultural environment and an unacceptable decrease in the quality of visitors' satisfaction."*
World Economic Forum

Mass tourism, or Overtourism[1], appeared with organized tours, and the development of airlines in the 20th century increased this phenomenon (*Fig.2.1.7*). The tourism business flourished, and with high competitiveness, tourism became accessible everywhere. The mass organization expanding around tourism started to dictate the tourist's behavior with 'popular' or 'must-see' destinations. The new seven world wonders, for example, were chosen from a list of 200 monuments and then submitted to popular votes through the internet. It is somehow an 'update' from the ancient world wonders using modern tools. Those monuments, popularized by the seven new world wonders association, are now main touristic destinations. Against all expectations, in March 2020, the world of tourism stopped abruptly because of the COVID-19 pandemic. After the lockdown, tourists started traveling again, but this time, limited in their movement to their own country (*Fig.2.1.8*). A lot more tourists traveled in rural areas during the summer of 2020, escaping the city. This historical event might radically change tourism and the tourist's behavior, maybe for the best.

20th Century

Type of Tourist: All
Purpose: Leisure
Type of Tourism: Mass Tourism
Development of Airlines

Fig.2.1.7

2020: Covid-19

Type of Tourist: Local People
Purpose: Leisure
Type of Tourism: Within borders

Fig.2.1.8

WORLDWIDE　　　　　**SWITZERLAND**

2020: Covid-19
Within Borders

17 March 2020
Borders close around
Switzerland

2019
Record year for Switzerland
with 39.6 million overnight stay

21th Century
7 New world wonders

20th Century
Development of Airlines
Mass Tourism

1841
Popularization of
Organised tours by
Thomas Cook

1863
First tour by Thomas Cook in
Switzerland

1800s
Mountaineers conquer peaks

18th Century
Grand tour

18th Century
Grand Tour in Switzerland

18th Century
Romantic movement 'the Alps'
poem from Albrecht von Haller

Colonialism
Discovery roads

14th Century
Possible Pilgrimage
along trade routes

9th Century
Pilgrimmage Jacobsweg

Imperial
Borders with hostile
territory

Antiquity
7 Ancient world
wonders

Fig.2.3.1 History of tourism and its patterns

Route　　　Point of
Interest　　　Border　　　Diffuse

2.2 Brief history of tourism in Switzerland

The medieval pilgrimage of Saint-James was crossing Switzerland from Bodensee to Geneva. We could consider the first form of tourism being the pilgrims on their spiritual journey. But it's in the 18th century that Switzerland became more popular as a tourist destination. Firstly, the Romantic movement and the Grand tour promoted Switzerland's picturesque landscape. Later in the 1800s, the Swiss Alps attracted mountaineers who wanted to climb the highest tops, such as the Jungfrau and the Matterhorn. The first organized tour took place in 1863 when Thomas Cook traveled from England to Paris and continued to Switzerland. After, Switzerland grew in popularity, and the 19th century marked the arrival of hotels and new railway lines. Switzerland is now a famous touristic destination. With its highly developed railway system, tourism took place everywhere and attracted international visitors before the country closed its borders due to the pandemic in 2020.

2.3 Patterns in the traveler's movement

Traveling is associated with movements in the territory. Throughout the timeline of the history of tourism,

patterns started to emerge (*Fig.2.3.1*). The traveler's main interest could be centered on one specific point, called in this research 'point of interest' or on the path itself, called 'route.' The seven world wonders, for example, are specific points of interest because the traveler is interested in seeing a particular place or building while the pilgrimages are, on the other hand, about the journey itself. A third form is observed, during which the journey is punctuated with points of interest, both being of the same importance to the traveler. It is the case for the organized tour of Thomas Cook, where the journey and the stops contribute to the travel experience. Another critical factor in the traveler's movement is the limitation in space. On the diagram of the 'history of tourism and its patterns,' we can see two periods where borders defined the traveler's journey: the Imperial time and the COVID-19 pandemic period. Although it was for different reasons, the result is the limitation of movement and maybe a reconsideration of the importance of the journey itself. Indeed, in both, the trip begins in the hometown. Before the pandemic, the journey often started when the traveler reached his first destination, the first part of the travel being usually alienated by the plane. Those patterns, defined by the history of tourism, will help determine the types of tourism.

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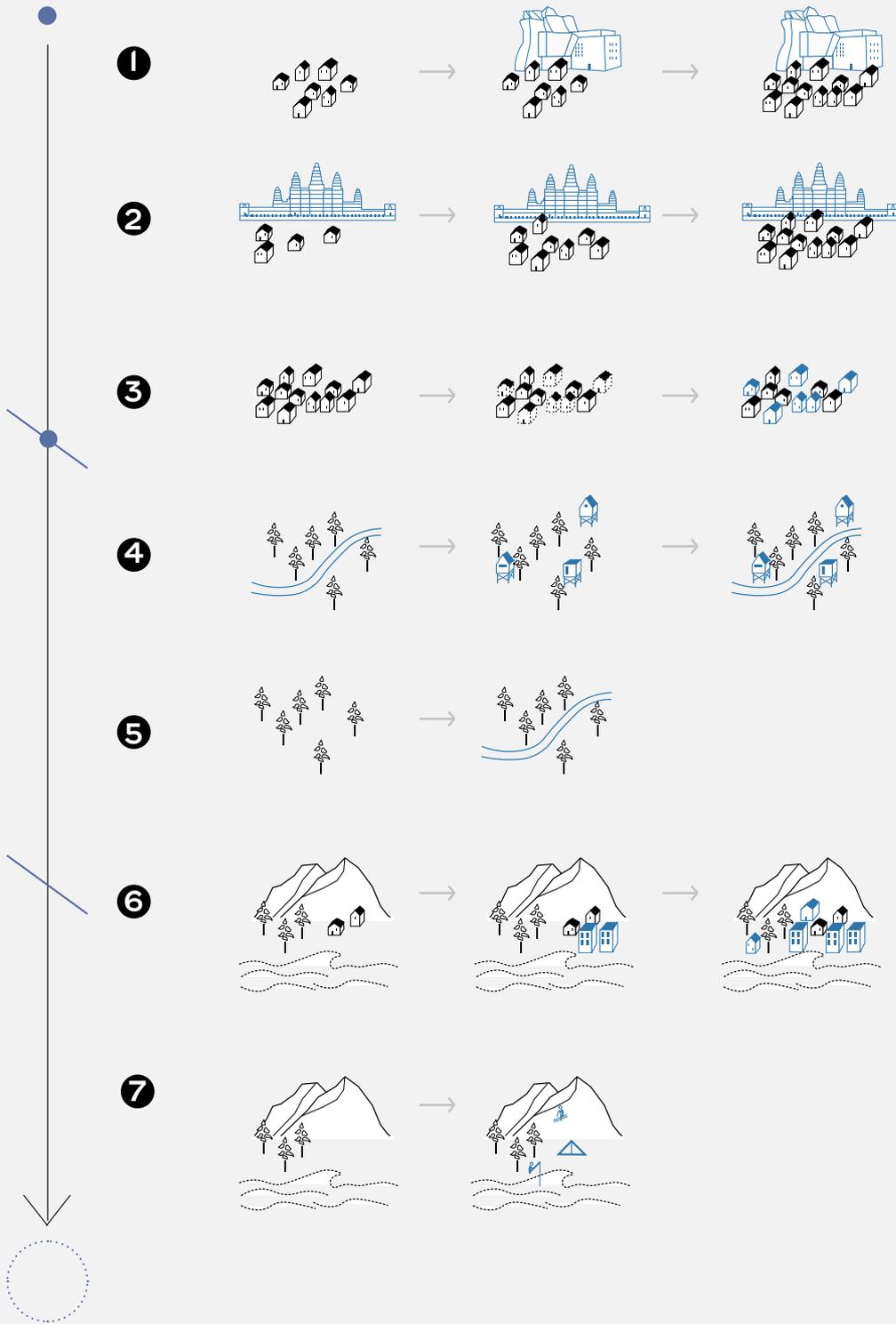
Fig.2.4.1 Types of tourism

❶ Bilbao Tourism

❷ Iconic Heritage Tourism

❸ Diffuse Tourism

❹ Roadside Tourism

❺ Trail Tourism

❻ Nature-Call Tourism

❼ Activity-Based Tourism

2.4 Classification of tourism types: from punctual to diffuse

Different types of tourism are defined following the patterns specified in the history of tourism. They are classified according to their diffusion degree, from punctual to dispersed. (*Fig.2.4.1*)

Bilbao tourism
This type of tourism designates tourist attractions focusing on a recognizable building, explicitly constructed to bring visitors. The name of this type refers to the design of Frank Gehry's museum in Bilbao. With its construction, the museum contributed to buffer the economic decline of the city.

Iconic Heritage Tourism
This second type also has a specific building as the main touristic attraction. However, in this case, the buildings are historical monuments that weren't designed and thought for tourism. They are iconic ancient landmarks that were later popularized. It can be illustrated by the Forbidden City in Beijing, for example.[1]

Diffuse tourism
'Diffuse tourism' is used, in this research, to describe tourism within the existing built environment. This type was inspired by the concept of 'Albergo diffuso,' developed by Giancarlo Dall'Ara, a tourism marketing professor. In this approach to tourism, accommodations and other touristic programs are implemented in existing buildings.

Roadside tourism
In this form of tourism, architecture becomes a tool to bring visitors into nature. It can manifest itself as multiple interventions along a path. However, architecture isn't the main focus anymore, but it shares the tourist's interest with the natural landscape.

Trail tourism
The path is the central element of this type of tourism. Historical trails, like the pilgrimage routes, are usually the most popular.

Nature-call tourism
In Nature-call tourism, tourists intend to stay close to a natural element such as the sea. Seaside resorts are good illustrations of this type. They developed in the 1800s, providing an escape from the cities, but today, they have become cities themselves with the popularization of the seaside.

Activity-based tourism
In this last type, the tourist's attraction is focused on activities more than just a stay in nature. If there is one, accommodation choice is secondary because nature is the only necessary element in Activity-based tourism.

The degree of diffusion is related to the balance between architecture and landscape. Indeed, the 'point of interest' corresponds to one specific building, such as the Bilbao and Iconic heritage Tourism. The disappearance of interest focusing on architecture creates a high diffusion degree of tourism; for example, walking can occur in various landscapes.

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1. '*Monuments like the Forbidden City or Summer Palace - or for that matter, the pyramids of Mexico, the churches of medieval Europe, and the Buddhist temples of Japan- had been built with no thought for mass tourism. They had all been exclusive, with visits limited to selected castes of people at selective hours. They have now found a new purpose: the entertainment and edification of the masses. Because of modern transportation and improved public access, the masterpieces of world architecture have come within the grasp of hundreds of millions of people.*'
Ockman, Joan, and Salomon Frausto, eds. 2005
Architourism: Authentic, Escapist, Exotic, Spectacular. Munich ; New York: Prestel.

Fig.2.4.2

TRAIL TOURISM
Kumano Kodo,
Japan
Ancient pilgrimage
roads.

Fig.2.4.7

ROADSIDE TOURISM
Echigo-tsumari,
Japan
Art festival in Niigata
prefecture.

Fig.2.4.3

TRAIL TOURISM
Shimanami kaido,
Japan
Cycle road connecting
islands.

Fig.2.4.8

NATURE-CALL
TOURISM
Great ocean road,
Australia
Popular coastline road
in South Australia.

Fig.2.4.4

TRAIL TOURISM
Art Setouchi,
Japan
International art festi-
val on Seto sea Islands.

Fig.2.4.9

NATURE-CALL
TOURISM
Maria Island,
Australia
Island classified as
national park; the
ancien convict station
was converted into
accomodation.

Fig.2.4.5

BILBAO TOURISM
Naoshima,
Japan
Island with scatterd art
museums and artistic
interventions.

Fig.2.4.10

TRAIL TOURISM
Kings canyon,
Australia
walking trail in a natio-
nal park; in the center
of Australia.

Fig.2.4.6

TRAIL TOURISM
Miyajima,
Japan
Sanctuary island with
ancient path.

Fig.2.4.11

ROADSIDE TOURISM
Krakani Lumi,
Australia
Accomodations and
communal space on a
cultural walk.

Fig.2.4.12

ICONIC HERITAGE TOURISM
Uluru,
Australia
Sacred rock in the center of Australia.

Fig.2.4.17

ICONIC HERITAGE TOUSIM
Chichen itza,
Mexico
Famous Maya ruins in the Yucatan peninsula.

Fig.2.4.13

BILBAO TOURISM
Mona museum,
Australia
The mona is located outside of Hobat in Tasmania. It was created to revitalize the city.

Fig.2.4.18

BILBAO TOURISM
Vals thermal bath,
Switzerland
Constructed by well-known architect Peter Zumthor to revitalize Vals.

Fig.2.4.14

ROADSIDE TOURISM
Festival des cabanes,
France
Annual architecture cabin festival to bring people in rural areas.

Fig.2.4.19

DIFFUSE TOURISM
Indemini,
Switzerland
Rural village with second residency homes.

Fig.2.4.15

ROADSIDE TOURISM
Ruta del peregrino,
Mexico
Architecture interventions along a pilgrimage road.

Fig.2.4.20

DIFFUSE TOURISM
Corippo,
Switzerland
Rural village with only 9 inhabitants. Currently under transfomation to become an 'Albergo diffusi' - hotel in the existing building.

Fig.2.4.16

TRAIL TOURISM
Plitvice,
Croatia
National park with wooden paths.

Fig.2.4.21

ACTIVITY-BASED TOURISM
Verzasca valley,
Switzerland
Valley in Ticino popular for its walks and river.

Diffuse

Fishing, Snorkling, Hiking,
Wild Camping

Ski stations
Switzerland

Verzasca valley
Switzerland

Brighton
England

Maria Island
Tasmania

Great Ocean Road
Australia

Kings Canyon
Australia

Shimanami
Kaido
Japan

National
Parks

Miyajima
Japan

Stockalperweg
Switzerland

Plitvice
Croatia

Kumano Kodo
Japan

Jakobsweg
Europe

Ruta del Peregrino
Mexico

Krakani Lumi
Tasmania

'Festival
des cabanes'
France

Art setouchi
Japan

echigo-tsumari
Japan

Indemini village
Switzerland

Second residency

Corippo village
Switzerland

Airbnb

Zurich
Switzerland

Bangkok
22 Mil. Vis. 2019

Naoshima
Japan

Matterhorn
Switzerland

Chichen Itza
Mexico

Uluru
Australia

Gizeh
Pyramid
Egypt

Bilbao
museum
Spain

Vals Therms
Switzerland

Mona Museum
Tasmania

Pisa Tower
Italy

Angkor Wat
Cambodia

Estimated
appearance
of tourists in
time

Point of Interest

Fig.2.5.1 Classification of case study collection

Visitors
50'000
500'000
5'000'000

The Swiss
Case

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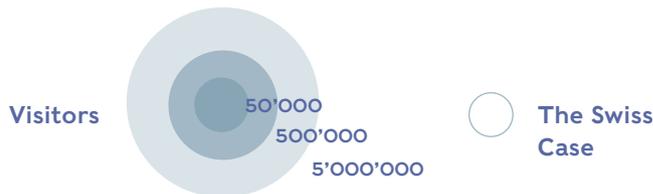
2.5 Case study collection: punctual attracts the mass

1. *'Nowhere else in Europe is more synonymous with magnificent and mighty hiking beneath eagle-dotted skies than Switzerland, and its high-altitude national park'*
'Look beyond the chocolate, cuckoo clock and yodeling - contemporary Switzerland, land of four languages, is all about once-in-a-lifetime journeys, heart-racing Alpine pursuits and urban culture'.
Clark, Gregor 2018 Lonely Planet: Switzerland.

This diagram helps visualize the different tourism forms that can be found and the number of tourists they attract (*Fig.2.5.1*). Collected case studies, illustrating the types, are arranged according to their 'diffusivity' and the estimated time of the tourism appearance. Despite the modest extension of its territory, the Swiss context possesses all types of tourism, and popular destinations in Switzerland are either touristic towns or 'Activity-Based' and 'Nature-based' tourism. In the well-known guidebook 'Lonely planet' on Switzerland, the first pages are dedicated to the ' Top 15,' and it is constituted by hiking places, lakes, rural regions, and cities such as Bern and Zurich[1]. The most famous 'Iconic Heritage tourism' is the Matterhorn, with nearly 2 million visitors per year.

This collection and arrangement reveal that mass tourism appears when the type of tourism is more punctual. Contrarily, there are fewer visitors for new forms of tourism with a higher 'diffusivity' and where the relation to the landscape is more substantial. This diagram introduces the 'number of tourists' parameter. It is essential to grasp the amplitude of the tourism industry and to understand the mass tourism effect. In designing a project related to tourism, it is necessary to consider how it will attract tourists.

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Scheme of mass tourism

Diffuse

Popular nature destinations, Popular tracks

Monuments, Icons, Cities

Estimated appearance of tourists in time

Point
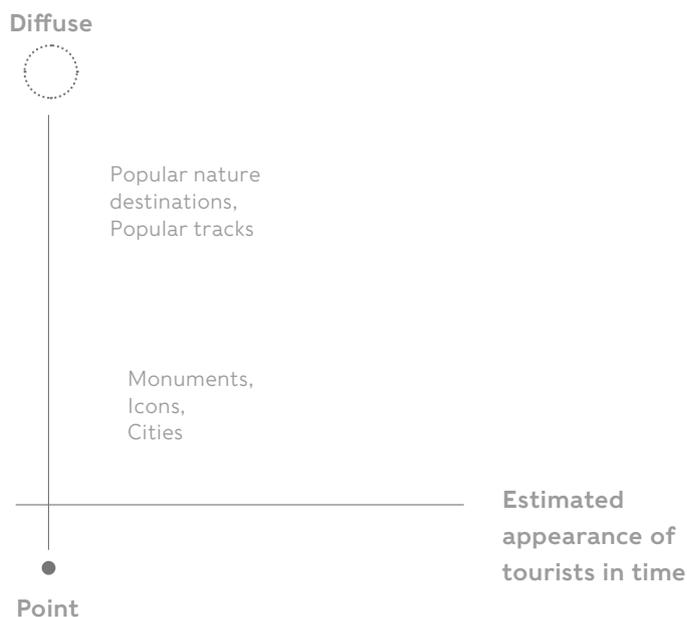
Fig.2.6.1 Photograph by Martin Parr

2.6 Revisiting tourism: Alternative to mass tourism

1. Heynen, Hilde, and David Vanderburgh, eds. 2007 Tourism Revisited: International Colloquium on Architecture and Cities #2. NeTHCA Colloquia Series, 2. Brussels: Lettre volée.

The immense tourism industry has devastating consequences. In 'Tourism revisited,' we find a very negative view of today's tourism:

 « *The tourist is an unenviable figure: ugly, inauthentic, desperately out of synch. Despite innumerable jokes and nearly universal disdain, armies of such figures nonetheless «consume» cities and sites at a seemingly accelerating pace. The infrastructure of tourism - tour operators, airlines, credit cards, and chains of hotels and restaurants - leaves its mark everywhere. Few landscapes, urban or rural, escape re-vamping in order to accommodate the 'industry' of tourism and its moneyed millions* » [1]

Mass tourism is impacting and has impacted the built environment, the economy, and the landscape of many places. One striking example is Venice, where cruise ships discharge thousands of tourists who stay only for a few hours (*Fig.2.6.1*). Often visible between the historical facades of Venice, these giant cruise ships are now part of the streetscape. Airbnb properties for visitors are now ubiquitous on the small island, pushing the locals away. Sadly, Venice is often compared to Disneyland or an open-air museum as the tourists' presence eclipses the local life. The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the effects of mass tourism, or rather lack thereof. Venice became a symbol of the consequences of tourism on our environment with its clean canals due to the absence of boats. Before the pandemic, people were traveling worldwide. The pandemic seems to have offered the planet a small break from mass tourism. Nobody knows for sure how tourism will evolve after the pandemic, but it is definitively the perfect time to take a step back and think of ways to improve this industry. 'Being a tourist' seems to have a negative connotation, to the point where even *«tourists dislike tourists»* to quote MacCannell [2]. Tourists are no longer brave explorers discovering places for the first time; they are lost in a mass that goes to the same places, does the same activities, and see the same things. However, almost since the development of package-holidays, some tourists try to escape the 'tourist trap.' In 'The independent guide to real holidays,' published in 1989, the author states that real holidays should be away from mass tourism. This behavior of trying to escape other tourists persists today, and we can see its effect on popular sites when visitors take pictures while making sure other tourists are absent from the shot. Holidays pictures might indeed look better without the crowd, but it does not make mass tourism disappear. It seems that tourists sometimes want to travel without being tourists; they want to blend into the new world they visit. According to Dean MacCannel, they search for 'authenticity,' meaning they want to see 'real life' and avoid the fake front explicitly displayed for them. This fake front is the modifications in the landscape and built environment for exactly these tourists trying to get around it. This paradoxical tendency in tourists' behavior to avoid other tourists and the negative impact of mass tourism clearly support the idea of a change in the industry.

Authors:
on new form of tourism

1. Owen, Dr C. and Hes, Dr D. 2007 Ecotourism in the architectural imagination, in Proceedings, Gazing, Glancing, Glimpsing: Tourists and tourism in a visual world, Eastbourne, UK.

2. George, E. Wanda, Heather Mair, and Donald G. Reid 2009 Rural Tourism Development: Localism and Cultural Change. Tourism and Cultural Change. Bristol, UK ; Buffalo, NY: Channel View

3. George, Babu, 2007/10/20, The Business of Community Based Tourism: A Multi-Stakeholder Approach

4. Smith, Maria, May 2020, The ecotourism hoax, The Architectural Review, p.73-74

5. Emmett, Robert S., and David E. Nye 2017 The Environmental Humanities: A Critical Introduction. Cambridge, MA:

6. Timothy, Dallen J. 2011 Cultural Heritage and Tourism: An Introduction. Aspects of Tourism Texts. Bristol ; Buffalo: Channel View Publications.

« ***Ecotourism*** *in particular has become a burgeoning sector of the tourism industry, offering a relatively guilt-free environment in which to satisfy the desire for travel and adventure. (…). The ecotourism area has also attracted much interest from researchers, most notably within the areas of cultural studies and geography. However, there has been very little work undertaken in relation to the built infrastructure that supports the tourist experience, particularly from within the discourse of architecture.»* [1]

« ***Community-based development*** *is a strategy used by tourism planners to mobilize communities into action to participate in broadening the scope of offerings in the industry. The goal is socio-economic empowerment and a value-added experience for local and foreign visitors. This process opens new niches for destinations, most notably for the nature, culture, and adventure travelers.»* [3]

« *Often visitors damage sites, for exemple by riding bicycles, motorcycles, dune buggies, or snowmobiles over fragile ecosystem. Yet for several decades ecological sensibilities have been reshaping tourists' interests, and the industry has changed accordingly. Ecotourism has been developed to minimize tourists' effects on local environments, and this is an important aspect of its appeal. But in addition, an* ***ecotourist*** *wants to understand a new place from the inside, as its inhabitants do.»* [5]

« *With increasing shifts in tourism demands from conventional tourism destinations - resorts, beaches and large cultural centers - to rural areas, it became necessary to examine the concept more closely and its potential to benefit rural regions.* ***Rural tourism*** *is not new, but like tourism generally, was mainly the privilege of the rich and affluent until the mid-20th century, as a way to escape the mundane and stresses of the industrialized domain.* » [2]

« ***Ecotourism*** *was defined in 1990 by the then newly founded International Ecotourism Society (TIES) as ʹ responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people'. Sounds good. Grab your wellies, we're walking into the woods to protect the the wrens from Tibbles the cat. Or, grab your bikini, we're flying to Barbados to sip cocktails through bamboo straws. Like everything else nurtured in the agar jelly of capitalism, noble intentions soon become corrupted and the 'eco' prefix amounts to little more than a greenwashing rebrand.»* [4]

« *(…)* ***heritage tourism*** *refers to travelers seeing or experiencing built heritage, living culture or contemporary arts. Its ressources are tangible and intangible and are found in both rural and urban settings. Visits are motivated by a desire to enhance one's own cultural self, to learn something new, to spend time with friends and family, to satisfy one's curiosity or simply to use up excess time.»* [6]

Fig.2.6.2 Photograph by AA Nanotourism Visiting
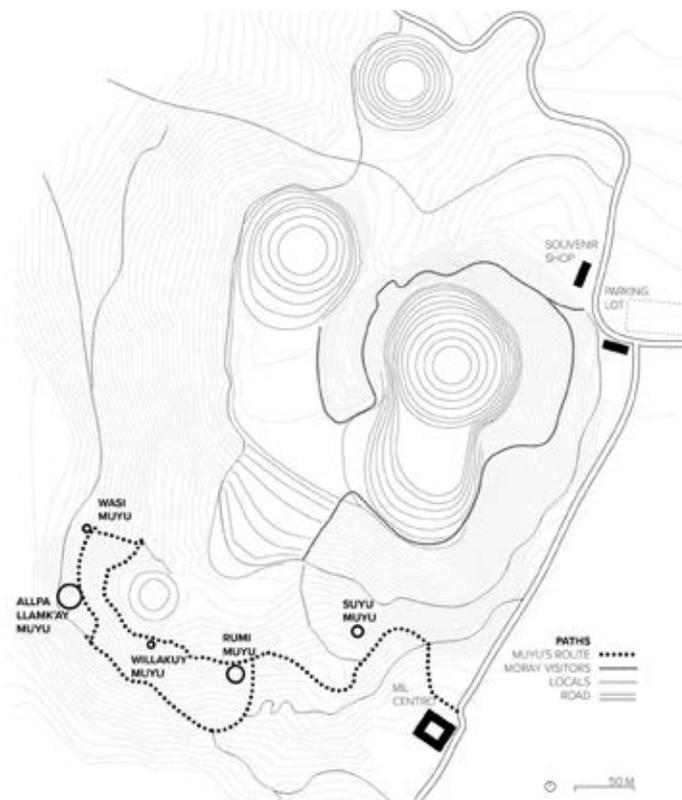
Fig.2.6.3 Drawing by AA Nanotourism Visiting School

1. Fennell, David A. 2015 Ecotourism. Fourth edition. London ; New York: Routledge.

2. https://nanotourism.org/ characteristics

Of late, new tendencies are arising in the tourism industry, putting the environment and the local communities forward. This shift comes from the realization of the negative impact of mass tourism, that some tourists also wish to avoid. These new forms of tourism - ecotourism, rural tourism, community-oriented, heritage tourism, cultural tourism, and others - suggest a model defined as an alternative to mass tourism to be respectful of the environment, the local community, and the existing built environment. The rise of these emerging forms is provoking the branding of 'sustainable tourism.' In the book 'Ecotourism,' David A.Fennel [1] categories 'ecotourism' into two types: deep and shallow. Deep ecotourism is more focused on profound impact and involving the local communities; shallow ecotourism tends to target a financial revenue, brand ecotourism, and neglects or minimizes its positive impact on the local life. It allows tourists to enjoy their 'guilt-free' holidays while, in reality, it does not have a genuinely beneficial effect. However, the initial intention of creating sustainable tourism can be constructive. It can be exemplified with the case of 'nanotourism.' Created in 2014 by two architects, nanotourism is one of the new directions tourism can take. These architects created a platform to investigate new tourism with workshops, talks, theoretical research, and exhibitions. It defines nine characteristics to describe this new form of tourism:

« *critical :confronting current realities and presumptions of tourism*
participatory: fostering co-creation and exchange between users and providers
bottom-up : processing local information to form higher level systems
site-specific : extremely responsive to contexts, therefore perpetually unique
local : produced with local support and supporting local
social : collaborative, community oriented and relating to people
responsible : non-intrusively related to the community and environment
inventive : progressive, adding new values and creating fresh potentials
educative : volunteering knowledge exchange and creating development » [2]

A good illustration of nanotourism is the case study in Cusco, Peru, by the nanotourism AA Visiting School in 2019 (*Fig 2.6.2*). The site, Moray, is one of the most popular tourist areas in Peru for its terraced ground. The government had recently retraced these historical terraces, and a restaurant with a world-renowned chef was built next to it. However, proper archeological and historical research of the site had never been done. By collecting the community's history, the student proposed an alternative path for visiting Moray (*Fig.2.6.3*). A simple landscape intervention -circles drawn on the ground- indicated where specific collected stories happened. The visitor is also encouraged to participate in activities at these locations. These simple interventions, which result from in-depth research on the community, allow an exchange between tourists and locals, and enable visitors to have a deeper understanding of the site.

31
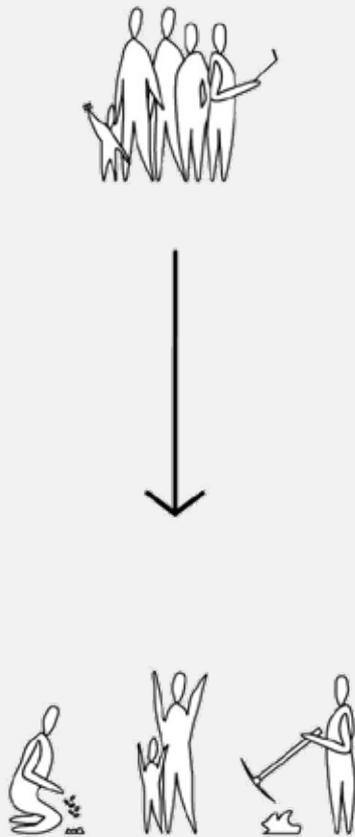
Fig.2.7.1 Drawing by AA Nanotourism Visiting School

2.7 Retrospective: Method for designing tourism

The thesis uses the new guideline of nanotourism because it considers the local inhabitants' needs, defines a new way of being a tourist, and is respectful towards the context of the site. Inspired by the definition of nanotourism and Moray's case study, the interpretive diagram gives a procedure to follow when designing for tourism (*Fig.2.7.2*). After analyzing the current tourism forms in a specific area, in-depth research about the tourists, the locals, and the sites will overview the issues and potential. The design intervention will act as a mediator allowing the exchange between tourists and locals and a better understanding of the territory.

INTERPRETATION DIAGRAM: how to tackle tourism on a site considering Nanotourism

STEP 1.

Investigate current tourism

33

STEP 2.
Identifying and Analyzing the actors

Local community

Tourists

Site

STEP 3.
Creating exchange

knowledge exchange/ Participation

Tourists

Learning about the local site

Local community

Site

Connecting/ reconnecting to environment and building tradition

Fig.2.7.2

34

Interface through path

CASE STUDY:
Kings canyon,
Australia

Tourists

Site
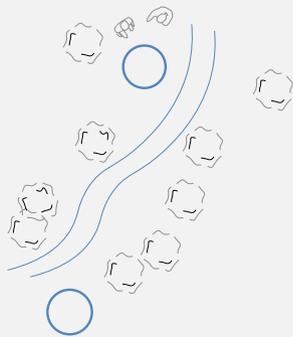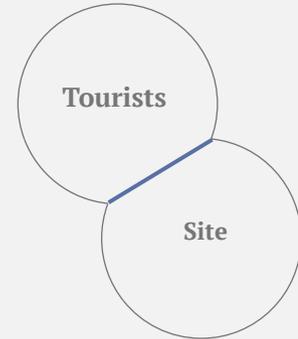
Interface through landscape intervention

CASE STUDY:
AA Nanotourism Visiting
School in Moray, Peru

Tourists

Local
community
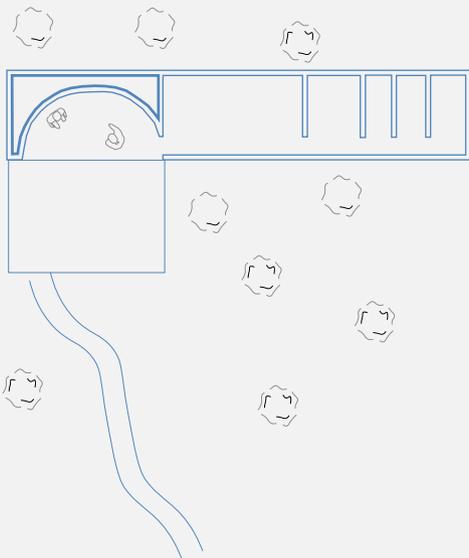
Site

Interface through architectural intervention

CASE STUDY:
Krakani Lumi,
Australia

Tourists

Local
community

Site

Fig.2.8.1

2.8 The Interface

The 'Interface' is the architectural medium that allows the encounter between the site, the locals, and the tourists. In the left scheme (*Fig.2.8.1*), we can see three case studies with different interfaces. 'Kings canyon' is a walking trail in a national park in the center of Australia. The path guides the visitors in nature. The second case study, Moray, in Peru, demonstrates the potential of small interventions. The visitors experience the site differently with the new path and the drawn circles marking local stories. It allows tourists to approach the site through the local inhabitants.

Lastly, 'Krakani Lumi', in Tasmania, is an accommodation and a communal space on a cultural walk. The walk is owned and organized by Indigenous Australians. The main area - the half-circle in the plan- is an outdoor meeting space with a fireplace that opens on the vast surrounding landscape. More than an encounter place, 'Krakani Lumi' intends to be an homage to the Indigenous Australian's culture.

The design of the interface for tourism should empower the local's culture, tradition, and the site.
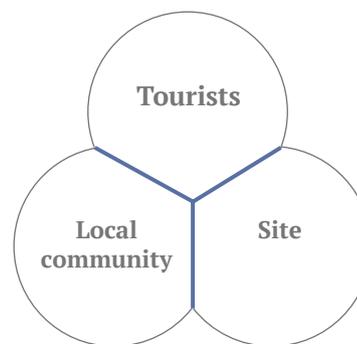
The Interface

03
TOURISM & DEPOPULATION
The valleys in Switzerland

On rural tourism

The rural exodus is a subject as vast and modern as tourism, and by associating the two, we confront the localities with global entities. When we try to think about how tourism can change positively, it is necessary to frame it in a context that really impacts the population. Nowadays, there is a movement of people from rural areas to the cities, but we also see the city dwellers moving to the countryside and the mountains as tourists. It was mostly in Zürich that I realized how much the city's inhabitants were making day trips to rural areas. Go to the central train station in Zürich on weekend mornings. You will see families, elderly people, younger people, all equipped with backpacks and walking shoes ready to discover or rediscover their surroundings. In Switzerland, these surroundings are vast as the train network is so well developed that you can easily spend a day on the other side of the county. Thus, imitating the Sunday morning travelers, I became a rural tourist in my country.

●	>15%	●	5- 7.4%	●	-2,5 - 0.1%
●	10-14.9%	●	2.5- 4.9%	●	-5- 2.6 %
●	7.5-9.9%	●	O- 2.4%	●	< - 5 %
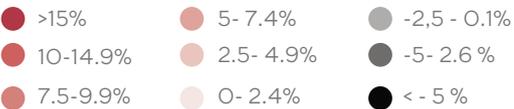
3.1 The alpes and tourism: visitors remplacing locals

1. Diener, Roger, ETH Studio Basel--Institut Stadt der Gegenwart, and Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich, eds. 2006 Switzerland: An Urban Portrait. Basel: Birkhäuser.

Today, Switzerland's rural population represents 26.15% of the inhabitants, and this number is decreasing each year. The rural exodus is a phenomenon that appeared with the industrialization revolution, which required additional labor in urban developments. In Switzerland, the Alpine region was the most affected area by depopulation, and the diagram of migration of permanent resident shows it is still the case nowadays. (*Fig.3.1.1*) Two reactions followed this migration in the Alpine region: decreased agriculture and growth of alpine tourism. In 'Switzerland: An Urban Portrait', the author talks about the contribution of tourism:

« Although industry contributed more to the alpine economy, tourism was probably more important as a counterforce to omnipresent depopulation and, not least, as a stimulus for promoting a kind of substitute mythology for the Alps. » [1]
The alpine landscape started to change in the 1800s with the proliferation of tourism due to the development of roads and the railway system. The 1950s were a turning point, with the popularization of winter tourism with skiing. They led to drastic changes in alpine villages with the propagation of second residencies.

39

- > 120 inhabitants per hect.
- 41- 120 inhabitants per hect.
- 16- 40 inhabitants per hect.
- 7- 15 inhabitants per hect.
- 4-6 inhabitants per hect.
- 1-3 inhabitants per hect.
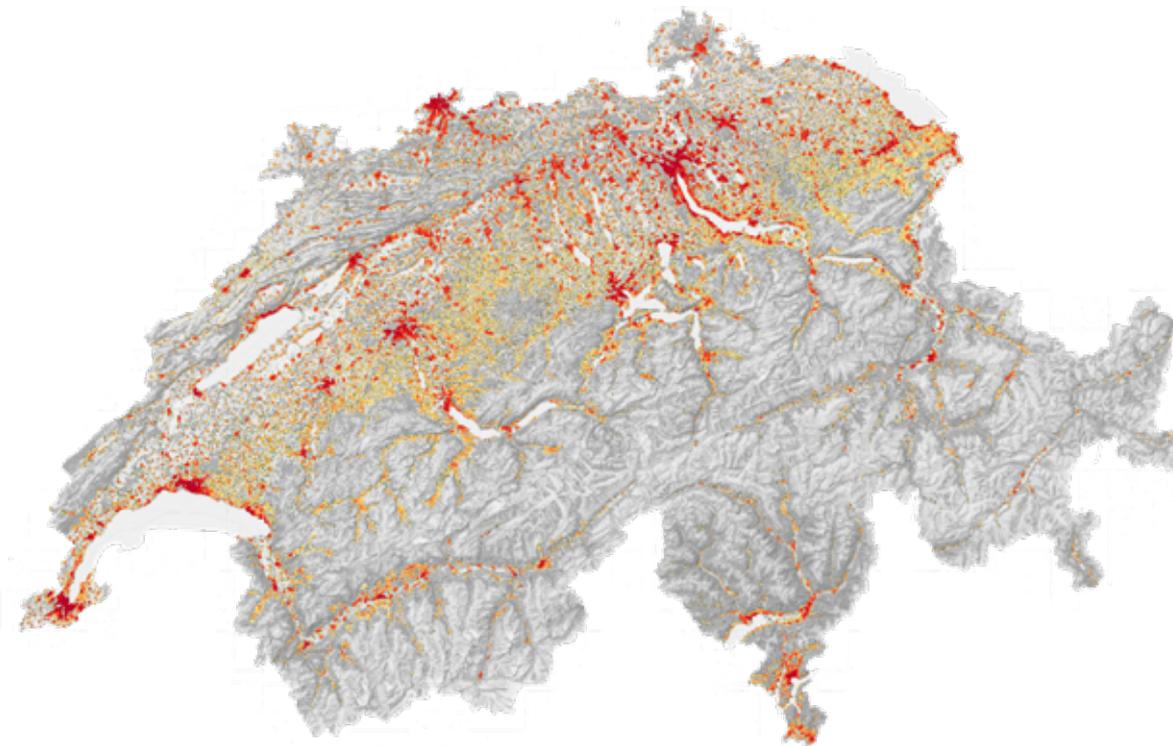
Fig.3.1.2 Number of inhabitants per hect. 2019
map.geo.admin.ch
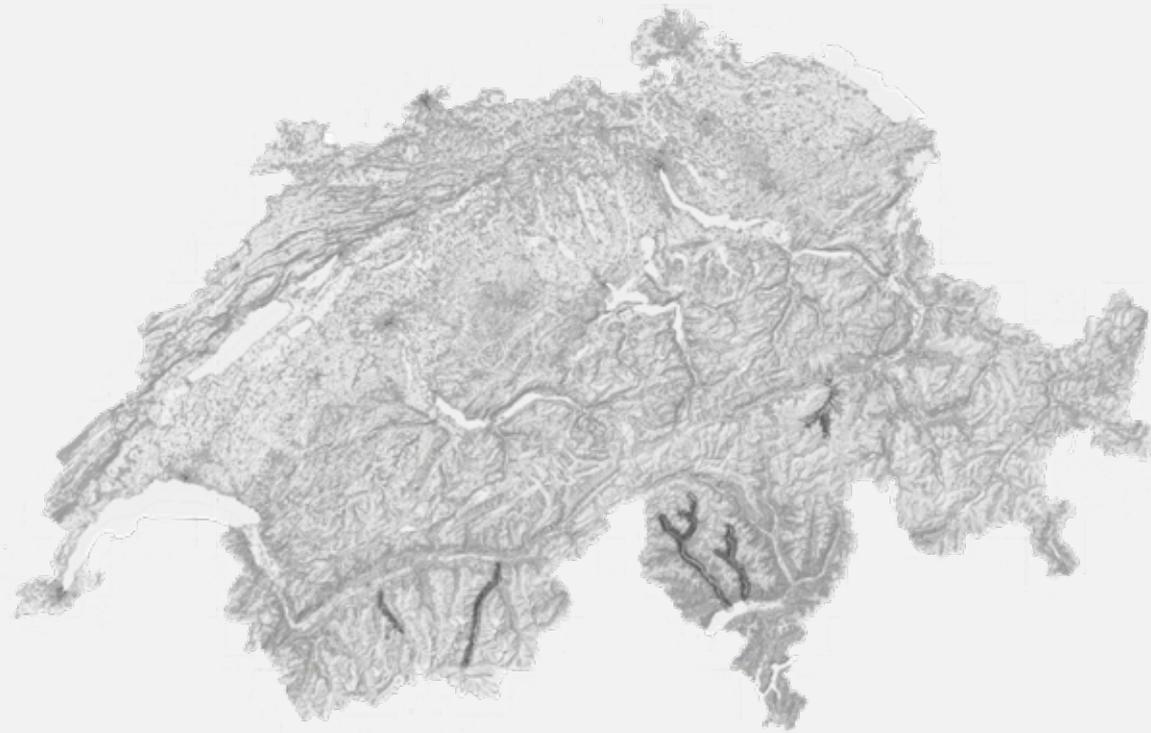
Fig.3.2.1 The five valleys

❶ Hérens valley   **❸** Vals valley   **❺** Verzasca valley

❷ Saint-Nicolas valley   **❹** Maggia valley

Fig.3.2.2 Lavertezzo, Verzasca valley

3.2 The five valleys

Five valleys (*Fig.3.2.1*) were chosen as case studies to correlate their tourism forms to the permanent population's migration. These valleys were the most contrasted in terms of loss and growth of the population. They share a common history of agriculture traditions, but they also present different tourism forms. Although most of the valleys are famous for skiing activities, some attract tourists for other reasons. The purpose of comparing these valleys is to see if there is a link between tourism and depopulation in the current condition or if one of the valleys proposes a different model.

Fig.3.2.3 Zermatt, Saint-Nicolas valley

Fig.3.2.4 Bosco, Maggia valley

41

Fig.3.2.5 Vals, Vals valley

Fig.3.2.6 Saint-Martin, Hérens valley
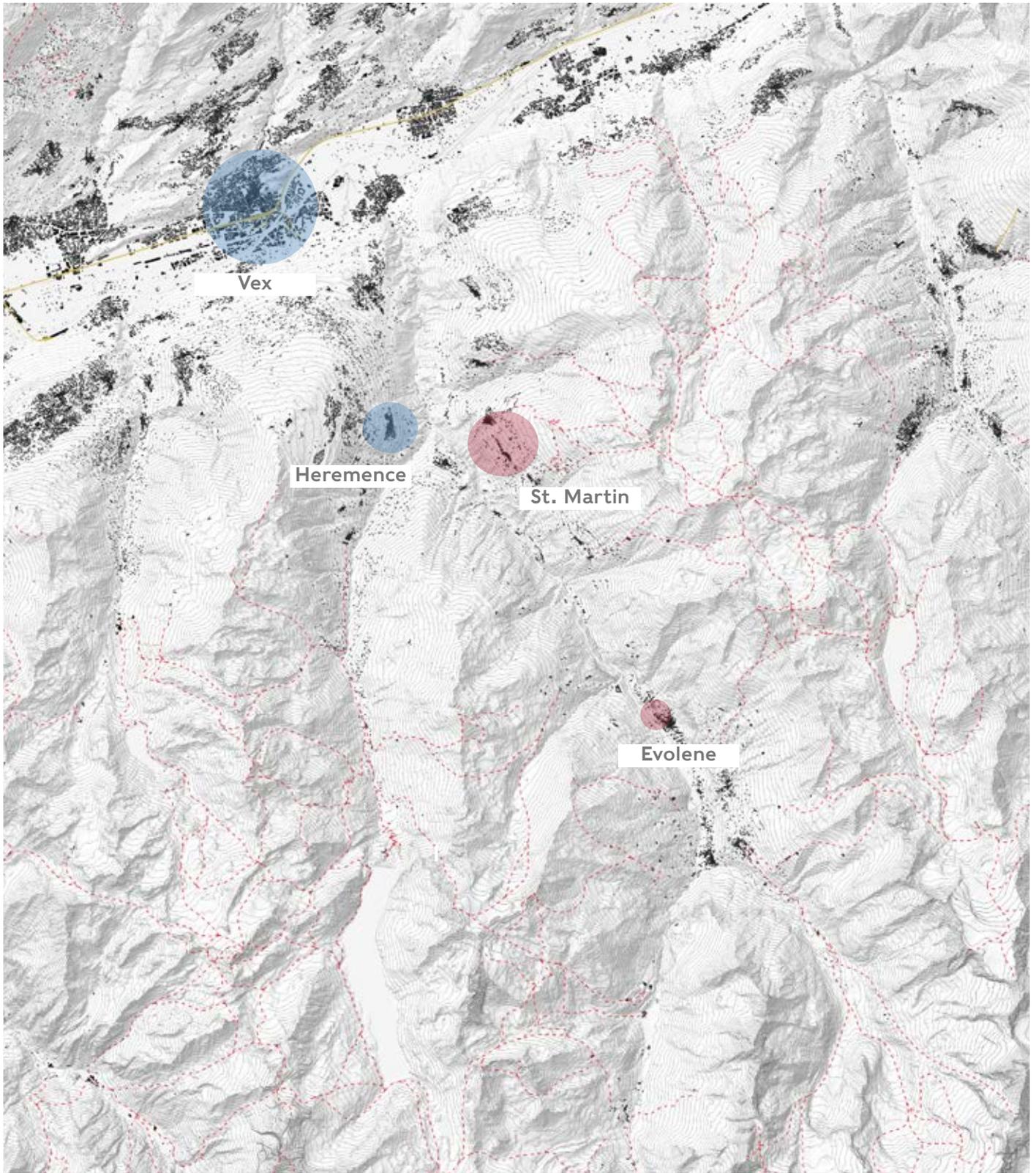
42

Vex

Heremence

St. Martin

Evolene

● degrowth permanent residents
between 2010-2019

● growth permanent residents
between 2010-2019

5%   10%

- - - - Ski routes

───── Railways

O km   5

**Activity-based
tourism**
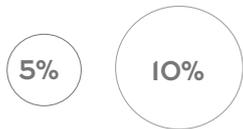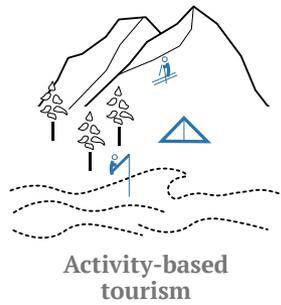
Ski stations:
Herens valley

The Hérens Valley is formed by the communes of Les Agettes, Nax, Vernamiège, Mase, Vex, Héremance, Saint-Martin, and Evolène. The primary resources of the valley came from agriculture, and the communities were also exporting wool textiles. Later, it became a popular point of departure for mountain activities. In 1860, hotels opened in Evolène and Arolla, marking the beginning of tourism in the valley. The convention, uniting the communes toward tourism promotion, was canceled in 2018 due to a lack of common direction. Today during the winter, the valley is especially popular for its skiing areas that reach 3'000 m. There are also other winter sports activities such as ice-skating, winter hiking, and ice climbing. In summer, visitors come for the extensive hiking paths and mountain bike trails. The valley has also conserved many traditional buildings, which create an immersion in traditional Alpin villages. The Hérens Valley is mainly a case of 'Activity-based tourism.' Both Evolène and St-Martin's evolution of the permanent population has been decreasing for the last nine years. However, by comparing the population migration in both villages since 1950 (*Fig.3.2.7*), we notice Evolène's permanent residents' number increased from the 1960s until the end of 2000. This period corresponds to the popularization of skiing, and unlike to Saint-Martin, Evolène possesses a ski station. This 'Activity-based tourism' might have contributed to slowing the depopulation in Evolène. Vex's population has been continuously growing since the 1960s. It is probably due to its geographical location - in the plains - where the popularization tendency has been on the rise across all Switzerland.

43

**Evolution of permanent
residency from 1950 to 2019**

bfs.admin.ch

Fig.3.2.7
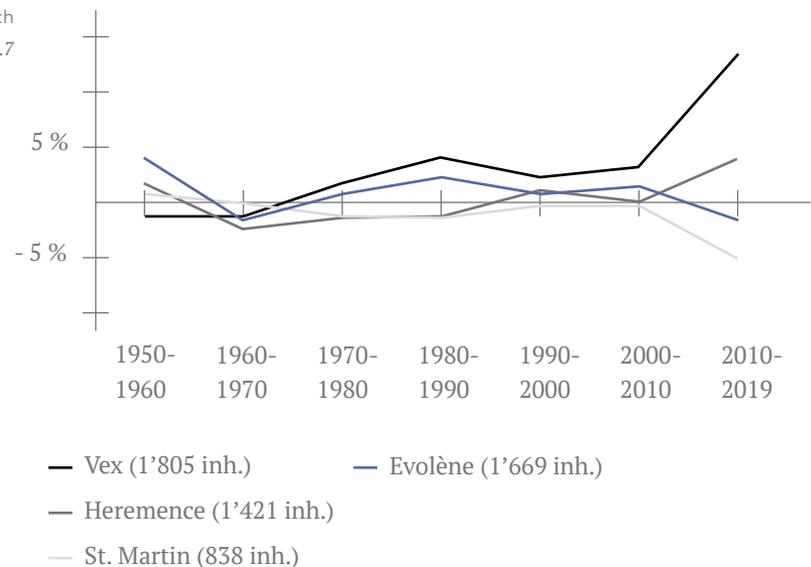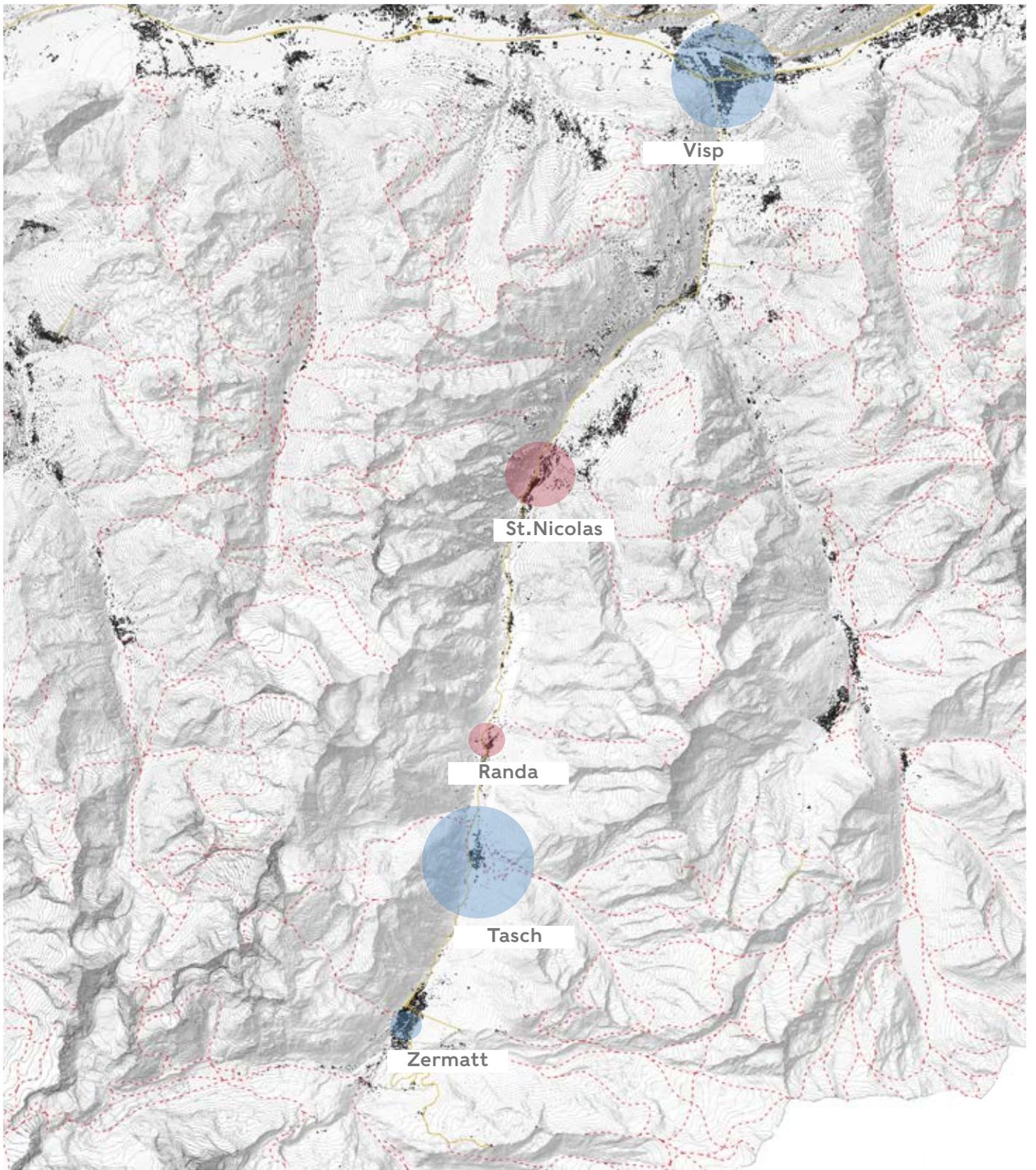
| | 1950-1960 | 1960-1970 | 1970-1980 | 1980-1990 | 1990-2000 | 2000-2010 | 2010-2019 |

— Vex (1'805 inh.)   — Evolène (1'669 inh.)

— Heremence (1'421 inh.)

— St. Martin (838 inh.)

Visp

St.Nicolas

Randa

Tasch

Zermatt

degrowth permanent residents
between 2010-2019

growth permanent residents
between 2010-2019

5%   10%
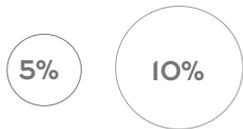
- - - - -   Ski routes

————   Railways

O km   5
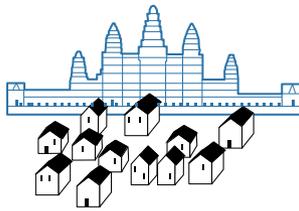
Iconic heritage tourism

Iconic tourism destination: Saint-Nicolas valley

The Saint-Nicolas Valley, composed of the communes of Zermatt, Täsch, Randa, and Saint-Nicolas, is a portion of the Viège Valley. Until the 19th Century, the population lived from agriculture and farming and secured a small revenue by selling livestock to Italy through mountain passes. The Matterhorn, the 12th highest Mountain of the Alps (4 478m), lies at the very end of the valley. The interest in the Alps and its inhabitants attracted scholars, followed by tourists and mountain climbers in the 1850s. Due to the number of visitors, numerous hotels were constructed. The influx of tourism grew even more with the establishment of the railway in 1888. Today, Saint-Nicolas Valley's whole economy is centered around tourism, and Zermatt is one of the most notorious tourist destinations in Switzerland.

Zermatt is the only village in the valley which didn't experience permanent residency degrowth since the 1950s (*Fig.3.2.8*). Surely, it is due to the Matterhorn's presence, a form of 'Iconic heritage tourism.' It strongly contrasts Saint-Nicolas' population degrowth, a village situated between the famous town of Zermatt and the plains. Täsch, the closest village to Zermatt, has experienced high population growth since the 1980s. It is linked to the growing housing price of Zermatt. Moreover, as Zermatt is an exclusively pedestrian village, Täsch is used as a point of departure to Zermatt, and a considerable portion of Täsch's inhabitants works in the tourism industry. So, in the Saint-Nicolas Valley, tourism surrounding the iconic Matterhorn maintains the population in the higher part of the valley.

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Evolution of permanent residency from 1950 to 2019

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Fig.3.2.8
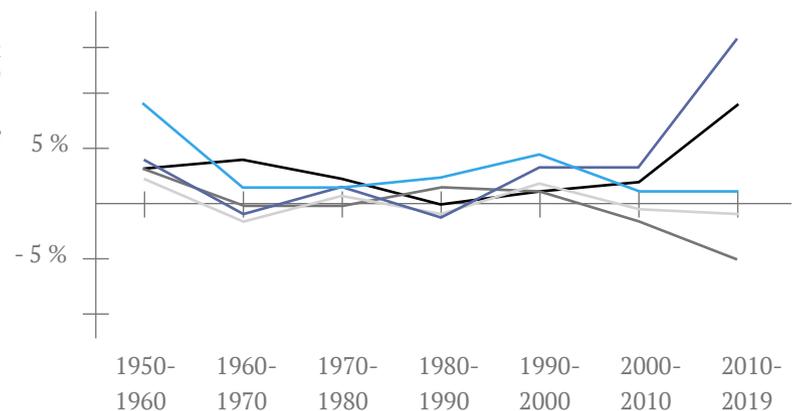
Visp (7'978 inh.)

Tasch (1'314 inh.)

St. Nicolas (2'235 inh.)

Zermatt (1'669 inh.)

Randa (435 inh.)
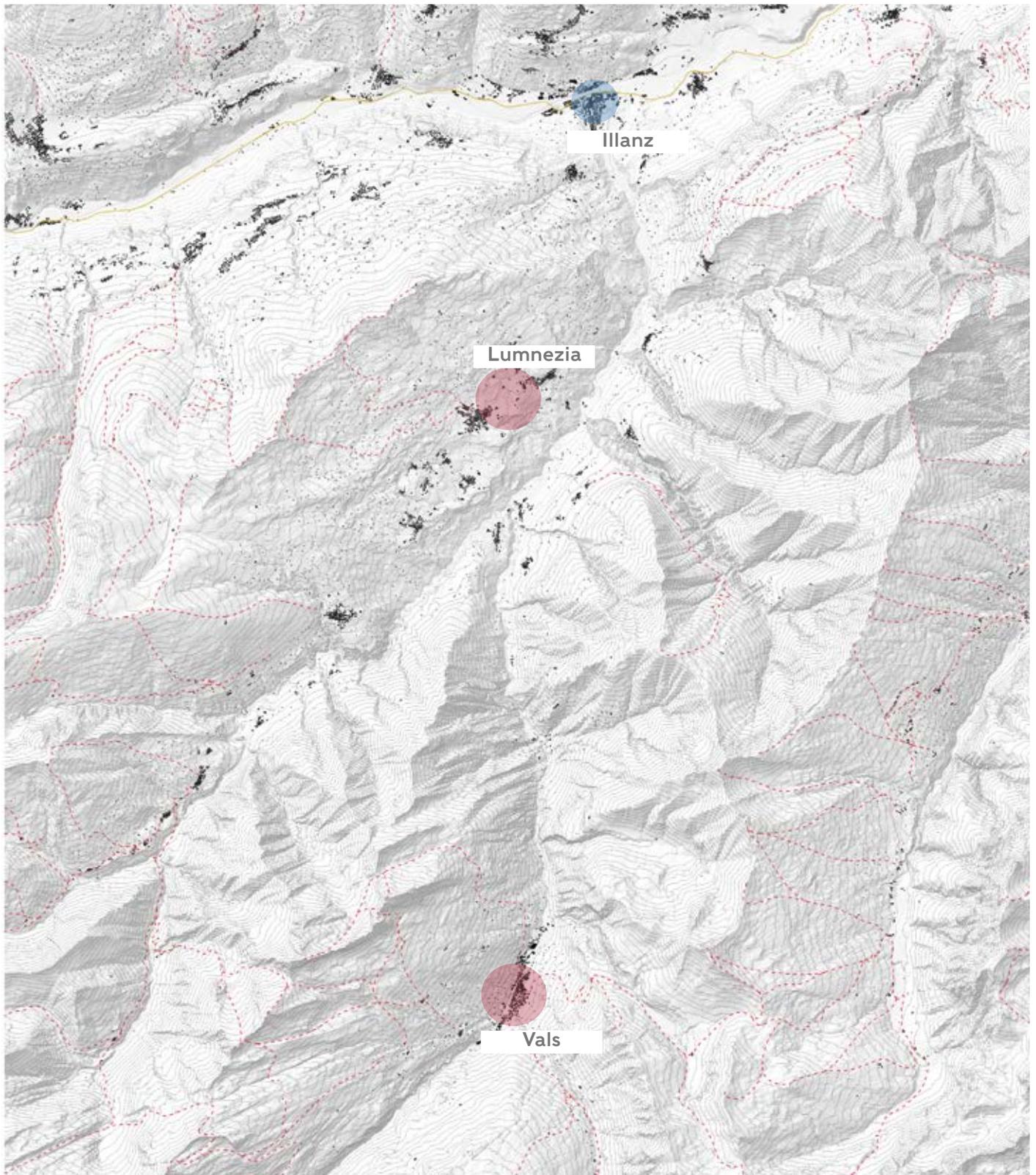
46

Illanz

Lumnezia

Vals

*degrowth permanent residents
between 2010-2019*

*growth permanent residents
between 2010-2019*

5%   10%

- - - - - *Ski routes*

_____ *Railways*

0 km   2
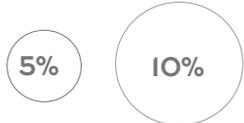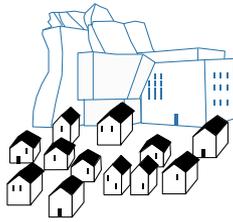
**Bilbao
tourism**

Bilbao tourism in Vals valley

The Vals valley was exploited from the 11th century for breeding and alpine pasture. The valley's only contact with the exterior was the modest exportation of livestock to the south until the construction of a road through Illanz in 1879. Later, in the 1960s, the valley considerably changed by exploiting its local resources and creating the mineral water 'Walser' brand. It brought new work opportunities to the region. Ski lifts were introduced a few years later, in 1973, opening the region to tourism. In 1993, the construction of the Vals thermal baths by Peter Zumthor transformed the economy of Vals. It was built on a hotel site erected in the 60s that went into bankruptcy. The popularity of the valley is now mainly due to this 'Bilbao tourism,' and Vals' economy is based on tourism. Although there are many small villages in the valley, they now only form 3 Communes: Vals, Lumnezia, and Illanz.

The evolution of the permanent residency since 1950 displays similar variations between Illanz and Lumnezia (*Fig.3.2.9*). On the other hand, Vals' fluctuation of the population is different. In the 1960s, the depopulation slowed, and from 1980 it grew for 20 years before decreasing again. These dates correspond respectively to the development of the Walser brand in Vals and Zumthor's thermal baths construction. The thermal baths seemed to have temporarily stopped the decrease of permanent inhabitants in the village. The Vals thermal baths, although very popular, weren't enough to stop the degrowth of the population, probably because it is addressed to a restrictive category of tourists. The price of the thermal baths being high, tourists often come only for the day or short stays, and the luxurious hotel is only affordable to a few people. It is a very punctual attraction that isn't creating a strong connection with the village. Moreover, the ski station in the valley is not very popular. Tourist arrivals have been decreasing, and new propositions emerged, such as the highest and thinnest hotel tower, to save the valley.

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**Evolution of permanent
residency from 1950 to 2019**

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Fig.3.2.9
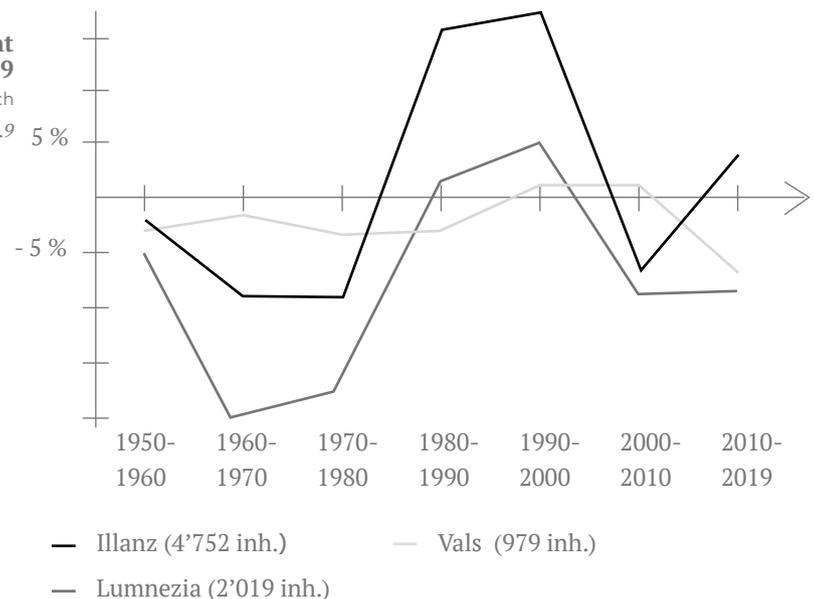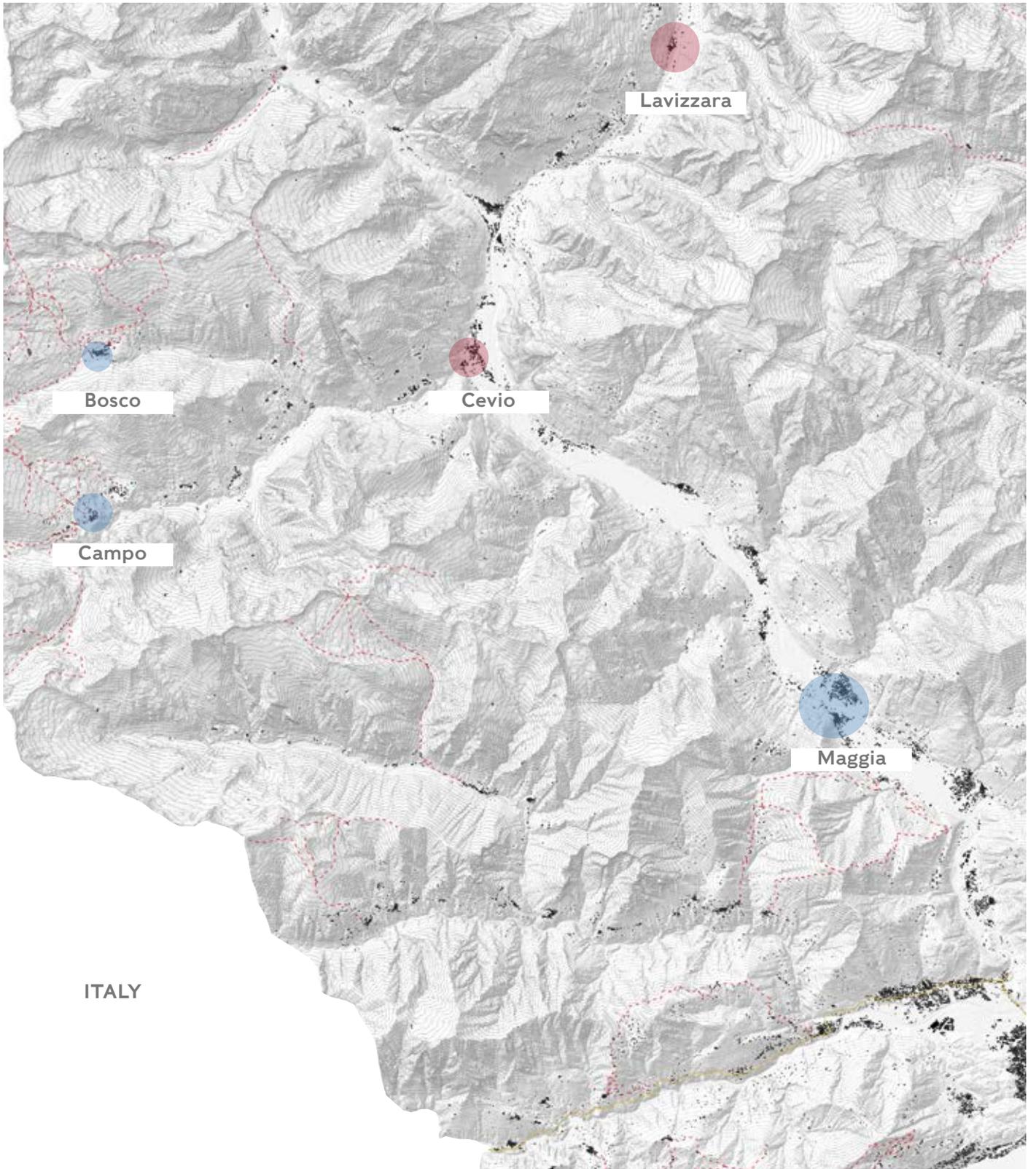
| 1950-1960 | 1960-1970 | 1970-1980 | 1980-1990 | 1990-2000 | 2000-2010 | 2010-2019 |

— Illanz (4'752 inh.)   — Vals (979 inh.)

— Lumnezia (2'019 inh.)

Lavizzara

Cevio

Bosco

Campo

Maggia

ITALY

48

degrowth permanent residents between 2010-2019

growth permanent residents between 2010-2019

5% 10%

- - - *Ski routes*

—— *Railways*

0 km   5

Activity-based tourism
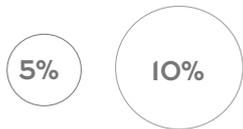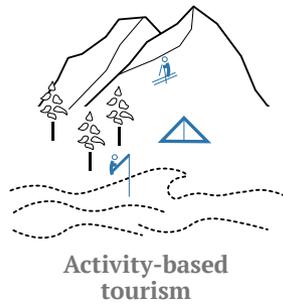
Exploring nature: Maggia valley

The population in Maggia valley used to live from agriculture and, to a lesser extend, career exploitation. The valley was connected to Locarno by a railway in 1907, but it closed 60 years later. The development of hydropower stations in the valley in the 1950s slowed the rural exode, and although it brought economic prosperity, it cost in terms of environmental impact. Indeed, the lower part of the valley has dried out. Like Verzasca, the neighboring valley, tourism developed in the 1970s, and it became a large industry followed by dairy and career exploitation. During the summer, a lot of inhabitants from Locarno come to swim in the river. According to the permanent residency evolution below (*Fig.3.2.10*), Maggia's

population peaks drastically between the 1960s and 1980s, corresponding to the construction of the hydropower stations. Moreover, Locarno's demographics growth caused the city to expand in the rural lower area of the Maggia valley. The villages of Bosco and Campo have recently increased their population, and they didn't experience a drastic loss of population since the 1950s. These villages both have popular ski stations and are very close to the Italian border, which might explain the slowed depopulation. At the end of the valley, Cevio and Lavizzara have been suffering from population loss these last ten years, which could be due to their isolation and lack of tourism activities.

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Evolution of permanent residency from 1950 to 2019

bfs.admin.ch

Fig.3.2.10
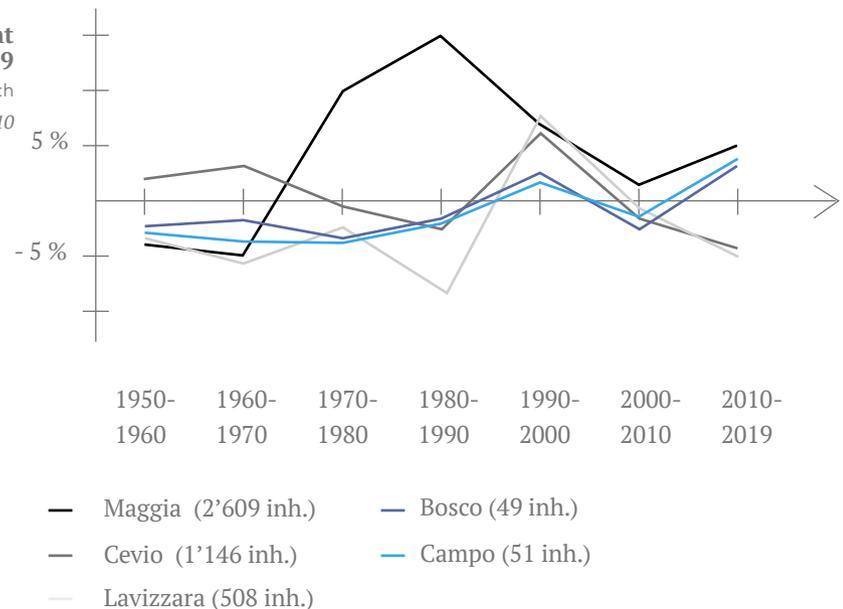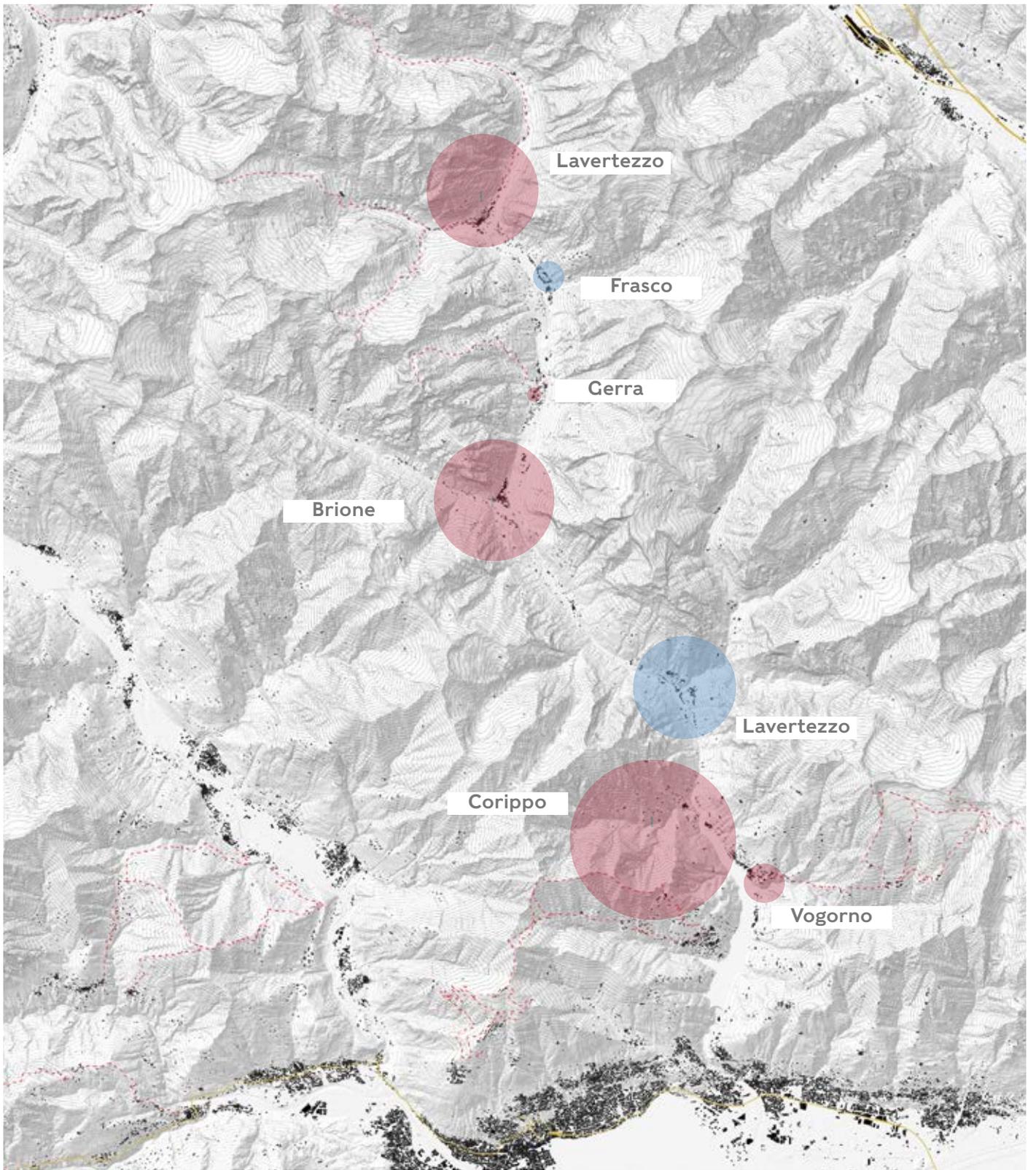
	Maggia (2'609 inh.)	Bosco (49 inh.)
	Cevio (1'146 inh.)	Campo (51 inh.)
	Lavizzara (508 inh.)	

Lavertezzo

Frasco

Gerra

Brione

Corippo

Lavertezzo

Vogorno

degrowth permanent residents
between 2010-2019

growth permanent residents
between 2010-2019

5%   10%

- - - *Ski routes*

——— *Railways*

0 km   5

**Activity-based
tourism**
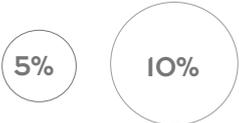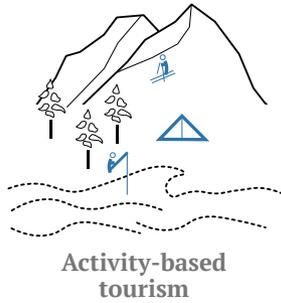
1. *'Between 2004 and 2014, the population of the valley decreased by 5%, while that of the municipalities on the plain increased by 13 %. More than a third of the population is over 60 years of age, a share that rises to a quarter for the Canton of Ticino as a whole. Agriculture and forestry account for more than a quarter of the 225 jobs in the valley, while the share of the service sector, mainly catering, which benefits from the high level of daily tourism, amounts to 50% (2013 data).'*
Extract from Masterplan Valle Verzasca 2030

Verzasca valley

The Verzasca Valley is composed of Brione (Verzasca), Corippo, Cugnasco-Gerra, Frasco, Lavertezzo, Sonogno, and Vogorno. The 18th of October 2020, the seven communes united to become the commune of Verzasca. Alpine pasturage constituted the leading economy of the valley. The communities were therefore moving during winters in the Magadino Plain, near Locarno. For a long time, the valley sustained itself in food, construction materials, and clothing. The construction of the road in 1865 connected the villages to the plain and brought the possibility to exploit other resources. Quarries opened in the mountains, and a dam was built at the beginning of the 20 century, creating the artificial lake of Vogorno. Tourism developed in the valley in the 1970s and Sonogno built a museum in 1979. Today, the most popular place is Lavertezzo, famous for its swimming in the transparent water of the river during the summer.

The villages in Verzasca are currently experiencing massive population decrease, except for Lavertezzo. However, this commune and Gerra are administratively attached to land in the plains, explaining why the statistic of their inhabitants grew since 1950. The diagram of the population's evolution shows that the fluctuation was less extreme between the 1970s and 2000 (*Fig.3.2.11*). It corresponds to the opening of the valley to tourism, but it seemed it was not enough. This valley doesn't have sky stations or particular touristic attractions other than its nature, accelerating the rural exode. The valley is trying to propose solutions to cope with the depopulation of Verzasca. In Corippo, where only nine inhabitants remain, an 'Albergo diffuso' will be implemented. It means some abandoned houses will be transformed into guest rooms, and the 'osteria' will become a reception. Moreover, a « Masterplan Valle Verzasca 2030 » [1] was initiated to 'improve the quality of life' and 'increase tourists' length of stay.

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**Evolution of permanent
resident from 1950 to 2019**
bfs.admin.ch
Fig.3.2.11

| | 1950-1960 | 1960-1970 | 1970-1980 | 1980-1990 | 1990-2000 | 2000-2010 | 2010-2019 |
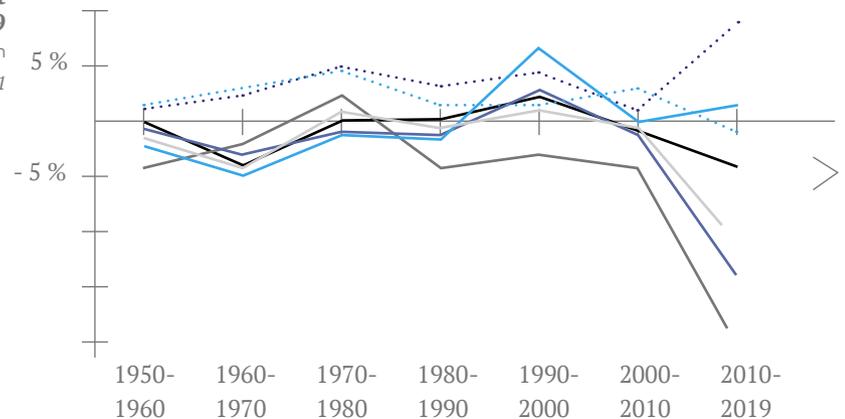
— Vogorno (1270 inh.)   — Brione (172 inh.)   — Sonogno (82 inh.)
— Corippo (9 inh.)   .... Gerra (2'845 inh.)
.... Lavertezzo (1'299 inh.)   — Frasco (107 inh.)
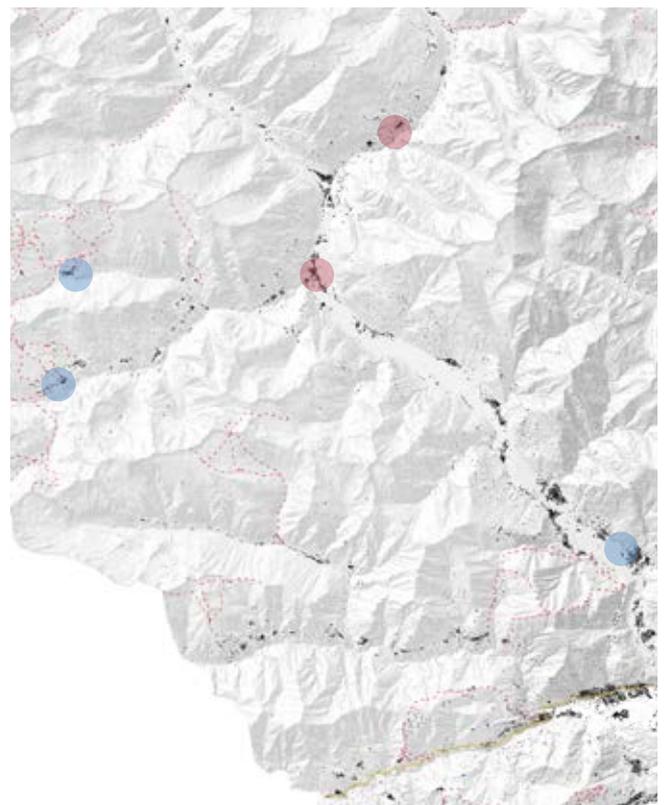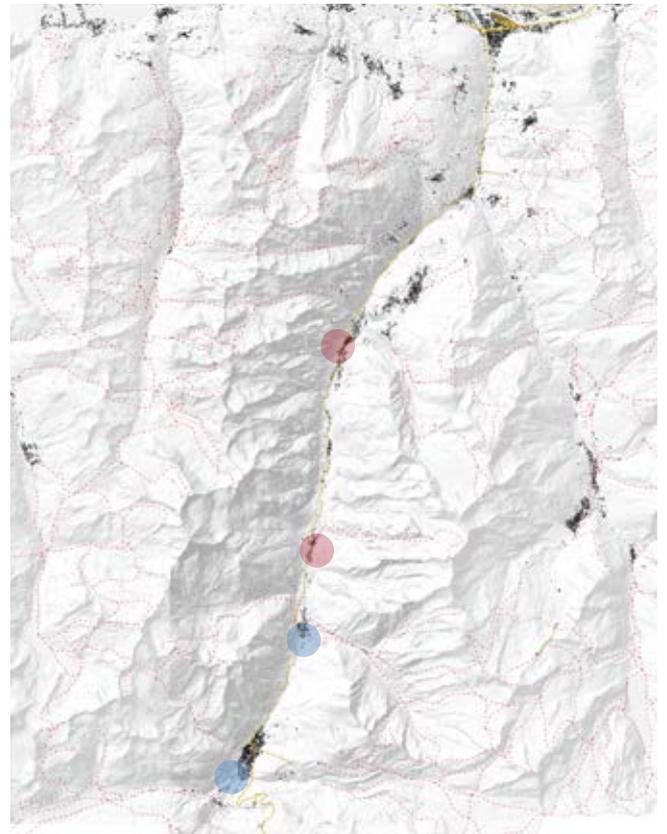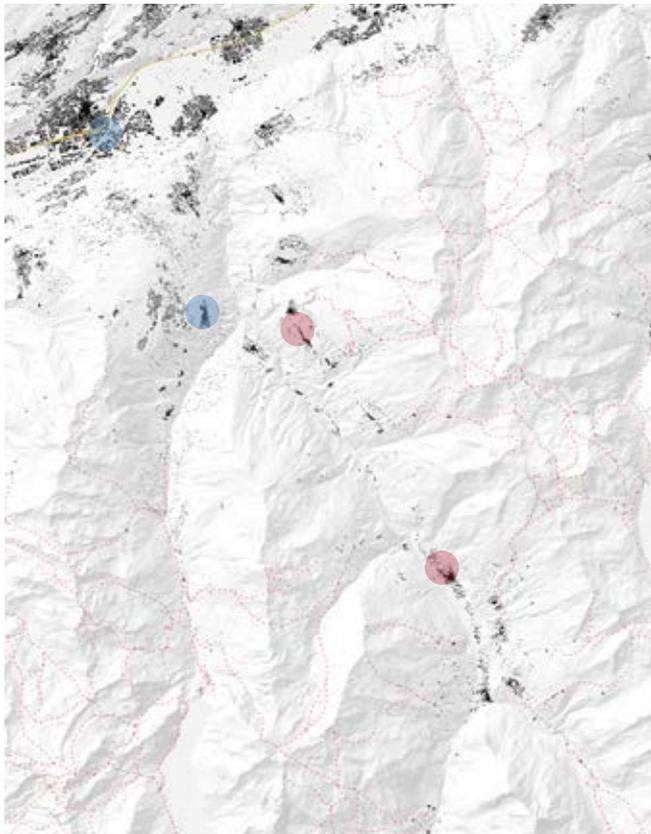
Hérens Valley

Saint-Nicolas Valley

Vals Valley

Maggia Valley

3.3 Observations on tourism in the valleys: When current tourism is not enough

1. Diener, Roger, ETH Studio Basel--Institut Stadt der Gegenwart, and Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich, eds. 2006 Switzerland: An Urban Portrait. Basel: Birkhäuser.

2. Bätzing, Werner, 2015,. Zwischen Wildnis Und Freizeitpark: Eine Streitschrift Zur Zukunft Der Alpen. 1. Auflage. Zürich: Rotpunktverlag.
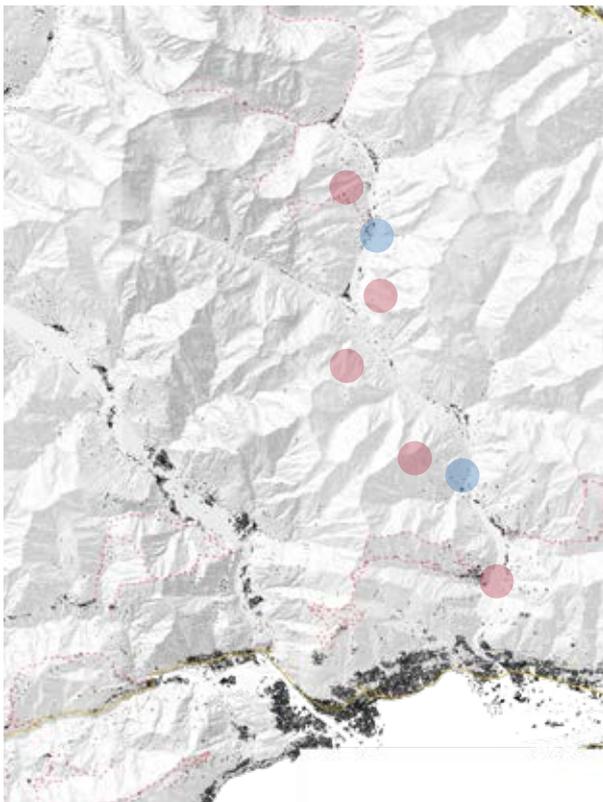
Verzasca Valley

The economy of the Alps of the 21 century is closely related to tourism and its infrastructures. It creates a disparity in the distribution of economic resources in the valleys. For example, in Saint-Nicolas valley, some villages, like Randa and Saint-Nicolas, seem to be in-betweens zones visitors pass through to get to the 'interesting' tourist place. Moreover, alpine tourism lost its exclusivity and is facing economic stagnation [1], even decline due to the neighboring region's attractiveness. This shift could explain why in Vals and Hérens valley, the ski station doesn't influence the depopulation anymore.

In his book 'Zwischen Wildniss und Freizeitpark', Werner Bätzing talks about the concentration of tourism activities in the Alps in punctual areas:

« *In the last 10 years this* {the concentration} *has been increased by the fact that spectacular viewing platforms, suspension bridges, high ropes courses and amusement parks have been built in numerous places in the tourist centers, because the panorama and landscape alone are no longer enough, and that the ski areas with snow parks, WiFi, apps and other means are technically upgraded. As a result, tourism is withdrawing more and more from natural and cultural landscape of the Alps and concentrating more and more in small, technically well-equipped tourism ghettos.*» [2]

There is conscequently no originality from one mountain station to another. In almost all cases, tourism seems to have helped slow down the depopulation of these rural areas only temporarily but was not enough to last. The only form of tourism in the five valleys, which seems to bring a long term demographic growth, is the 'Iconic Heritage' tourism, which takes place in Zermatt with the Matterhorn. The problem with this form of tourism is that the visitors are 'day tourists' coming in mass, and they don't involve a lively exchange with the locals. With climate change, the solutions should be found in alternatives to ski stations, more respectful of the environment.

Overall, the current tourism form doesn't seem enough to stop the depopulation in these valleys today. It might be because it focuses on tourism experiences that aren't concerned with sustainable connexions with local inhabitants; it is too 'tourist-oriented.' The 'Verzasca masterplan 2030' demonstrates the inhabitants belief that changing tourism can be a way to improve local life.

53

54

B

A

A

B

Fig.3.4.1 Corippo, Buzzi, Giovanni, 1999,
Locarnese, Bellinzonese 1,

3.4 New strategy for tourism in the valleys: Verzasca

In the report for the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) on 'sustainable mountain tourism,' Professor Dr. Peter F. Keller wrote:
« *Mountain tourism needed to be reinvented. New strategies include the repositioning of the competitive advantages of mountain tourism as a whole and of its individual destinations. As an example, potential visitors must be told that mountain tourism is no longer a mass market with many similar products in all mountain countries, but that it has in fact developed into a multi-niche form of tourism offering both traditionally attractive and innovative new products*.» [1]
The current tourism model in the five valleys needs to change to become competitive and sustainable. Tourism was developed in the valleys more than 80 years ago and hasn't changed much since, but the tourists' appeal and the environment has. Creating an experience adjusted around locality could generate new interest among tourists and become more beneficial for local inhabitants.
Verzasca valley is a compelling case study to develop as it has the highest population loss, a future masterplan which involves changing tourism, and there is already a project following the direction of 'nanotourism.' The 'Albergo diffuso' project in Corippo consists in renovating an existing restaurant, and repurposing it into a cafeteria and reception. The project also intends to restore five traditional houses, which would be used as accommodations. A couple would move back to the village to take care of the new hotel full-time. This project allows the restoration of the village while keeping its traditional features and giving inhabitants a reason for moving back. The hotel is integrated into the village and in the community. The interface,in this case, is the existing houses,and it tries to attract the locals back. In this project, there is a desire to connect visitors and locals. Yet, Corippo has only nine permanent residents left, and this project can be seen as the next step in countering depopulation; when there is no one left. Other parts of Verzasca valley still have inhabitants, and a project taking place there could try stopping the rest of the villages from being in the same state as Corippo.

1. *Sustainable Mountain Tourism - Opportunities for Local Communities, Executive Summary. 2018. https:// www.e-unwto.org/action/showBook?doi =10.18111%2F9789284420285, accessed November 14, 2020.*

55

Tourists

Local community
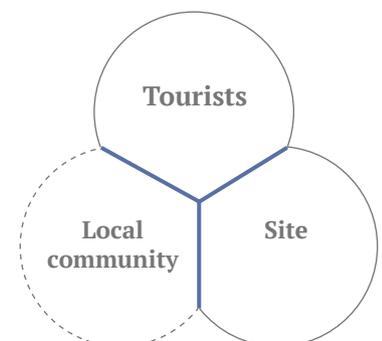
Site

04
PORTRAIT A case study in the Verzasca valley

On Verzasca valley

I visited the Verzasca valley for the first time this summer during a camping trip in Ticino. I found this place on the official tourism website of Ticino. After several twists and turns of the road going up the valley, I stopped in Lavertezzo, the most touristic place of the valley. Many people were enjoying the sun under the Ponte dei salti and bathed in the refreshing waters of Verzasca. Italian, German, French, and English languages could be heard. I had the impression of discovering a little paradise in the Italian part of Switzerland. Since then, I have returned to Verzasca, this time intending to explore the valley as part of my thesis. I went to the end of the valley, realizing what I had missed during the summer, naively stopping where everyone else stops. Since I was looking for answers, I had a different attitude and started talking to people in the valley as I was walking along. I discovered extremely kind people who were very patient with my approximative Italian, and I was lucky as many of them even spoke French, my native language. One encounter that remains on my mind is with a lady of a certain age in the village of Frasco. She explained who lived in the village; her son, who works in the plains, a Swiss-German family who is sometimes there during the summer, and her neighbor, a friend who is not often in the village. She said that she is often alone and that winter is an even more solitary period. After she showed me the community oven, I left her at the village entrance, and she stayed there at the edge of the pedestrian path, watching the passing of the tourists.

1.

RESEARCH

Defining the current form of tourism

**Activity-based
tourism**

2.

INTERVIEWS AND SURVEY

Identifying the actors

Locals

Tourists

Site

• history
• demography
• tradition

• types
• territory
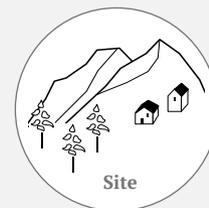
• built
environment
• ressources

3.

PROJECT

Intervention helping the community with local problematics

knowledge
exchange/
Participation

Tourists

Learning about
the local site

**Local
community**

Site

Connecting/
reconnecting
to environment and
building tradition
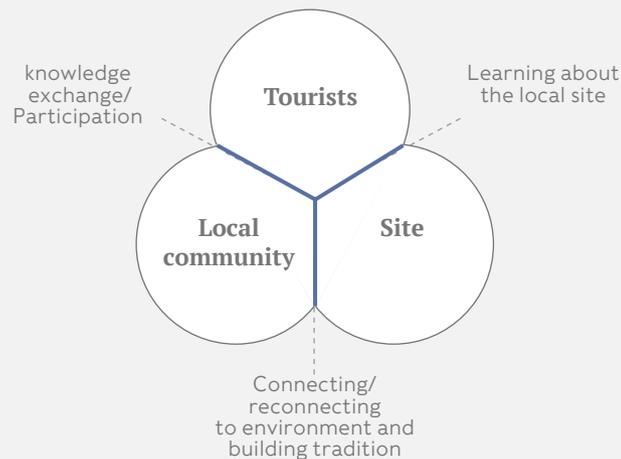
*Fig.4.1.1 Analytical method of the case study:
how to deploy nanotourism*

4.1 Analytical method of the case study

An intervention that helps fighting depopulation should give inhabitants economic and social reasons to stay or move back in the region. The previous general analysis of tourism in the five valleys gives a prospect on the current conditions and what could be changed. The case study of Verzasca valley will try to demonstrate how this transformation can take place. The diagram on the left clarifies the procedure inspired by the 'nanotourism'[1] already explained earlier (*Fig.4.1.1*). This procedure involves the analysis of existing tourism, the local community, and the territory. Therefore, the Verzasca valley will be investigated under its history, the different types of tourists, and its built environment. The end of this analysis will highlight the main issues found in each factor.
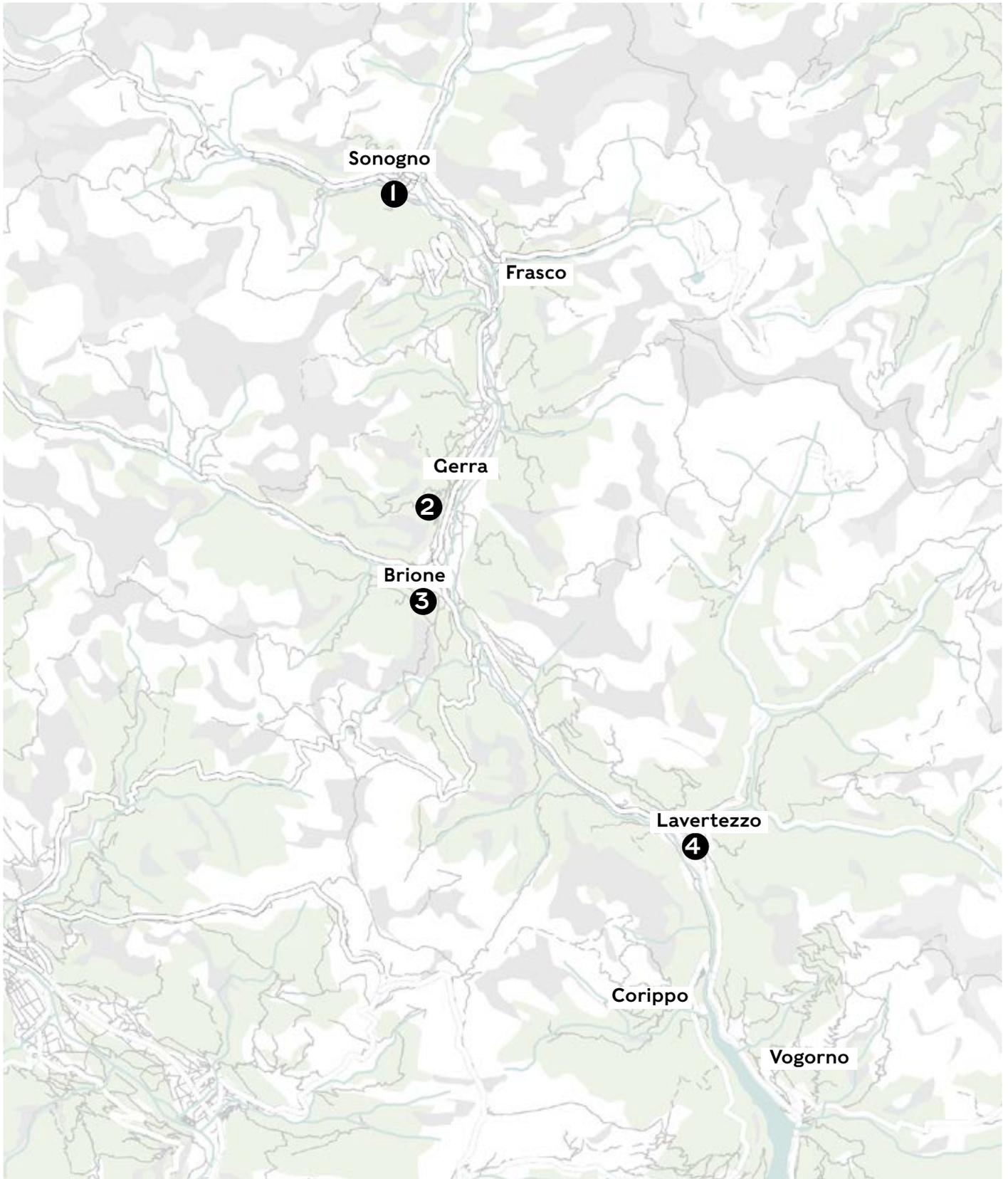
Sonogno
❶

Frasco

Gerra
❷

Brione
❸

Lavertezzo
❹

Corippo

Vogorno

❶ Museum Verzasca

❷ Bobosco

❸ Castle

❹ Ponte dei salti

Pedestrian trails

4.2 The tourist and its territory

In the valley, tourism represents a significant economic activity. Indeed, the third sector, which includes tourism, currently represents between 50 and 67% of the economy of the villages. Approximately 300'000 day tourists visit the valley each year, with a peak during the summer of 5'000 visitors per day. Moreover, the second residencies represent about 80% of the built environment in the villages. Tourists usually come during the summer as the main activities are hiking and swimming. Lavertezzo is the most famous location in the valley with its 'ponte dei salti.' Its popularity drastically increased with a video posted online in 2017 by Italian tourists, promoting the spot under the bridge in Lavertezzo for its cristal clear water. As the best asset of the valley is its nature, the villages try to encourage tourism development with playful trails. For example, 'Bobosco', between Brione and Lavertezzo, is a circuit that allows you to follow a wooden ball, which makes hiking more fun for kids. The touristic infrastructures in Verzasca are in majority constituted by the 'Grotto'[1] ,restaurants, and the guesthouses, usually in traditional stone buildings (Fig.4.2.1). There aren't many new buildings destined for tourism. For example, the museum of Verzasca, located in Sonogno, is a renovation of an old house, and its extension is the rehabilitation of a bus deposit. Overall, Verzasca's tourism concentrates on its nature, and it manifests itself discreetly in the existing built environment. However, except for some agritourism, tourism in the valley does not actively include local inhabitants and create over-tourism during the summer while nothing happens during the winter. The current tourism conditions in the valley do not seem to be optimal given the depopulation of the valley against growing tourist popularity, hence the need for the masterplan 2030 mentioned before.

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Number of overnight stays in 2019
Organizzazione turistica Lago Maggiore e Valli
Fig.4.2.1

Vogorno (1270 inh.)	94'232
Corippo (9 inh.)	11'070
Lavertezzo (1'299 inh.)	84'813
Brione (172 inh.)	58'475
Frasco (107 inh.)	51'568
Sonogno (82 inh.)	43'392

Lavertezzo   *Fig.4.2.2*

Rustici - holiday homes   *Fig.4.2.3*

Pedestrian trail
                                              Fig.4.2.4

The community: on tourism

«We are looking to change tourism to keep them here longer than a day. Currently, it is an invasion with many people during the day, and they leave the evening. This year particularly.»

« It is still a project, but I hope it will make people come during the winter. It would be good if people came overnight also, not only camping. » { about the masterplan 2030 }

« We don't have time during the tourism period because we are on the pasturage, producing cheese. It would be a dream if tourists would help. (…) Some people come to live with us and support, and they were all fantastic. We don't have enough money to pay for some help. »

« I think having a masterplan is good, but there should be more involvement of the local inhabitants; otherwise, it stays on paper. The 'bobosco game', installed not long ago, is a good idea because it gives jobs in the valley.»

« About thirty years ago, I was part of this group of people who believed that the valley was bustling, that it could well increase and that we should be prepared to welcome people in another way. For example, leave the cars in Tenero and organize shuttles to clear the valley. We could also inform tourists more, and that would create a different type of tourism. A few years ago, some young people from Milan made a video that caught the attention of many Italians. Suddenly, it showed the limits of the unchecked influx of people into the valley»

«Tourists in the Valley (the one who stays overnight) are very respectful and know our realities. On the contrary, mass tourism/day tourists bring me a little sadness as they remind me of the Rambla in Barcelona. They are running for you do not know what, quarrels about parking, but if we had to ask what trees they saw on the path or details in general about our Valley… I think …. unfortunately they wouldn't be able to answer. But I want to reiterate that not everyone is the same, but too many invasions do not bring nice energy to our little «wild» beloved valley.»

64

Sonogno ✝ 🎓 ⛽ 🛝 ⛸ 🍴

Frasco ✝ 🍴

Gerra ✝ ✂ 🍴

Brione ✝ 🎓 🛝 🍴 💲 ✉ 🛒 ✝

Lavertezzo ✝ 🍴

Corippo ✝

Vogorno ✝ 🎓 🍴

| ✝ Church | 🛝 Playground | 💲 Bank | ✝ Quarry | ✂ Hair dresser | 🍴 Restaurant(s) | ▭ Flat areas |
| 🎓 School | ⛸ Ice rink | ✉ Post office | 🛒 Supermarket | ⛽ Gas station | | |
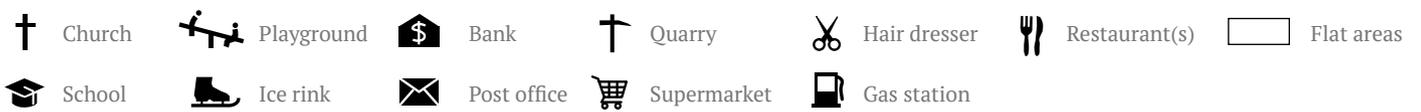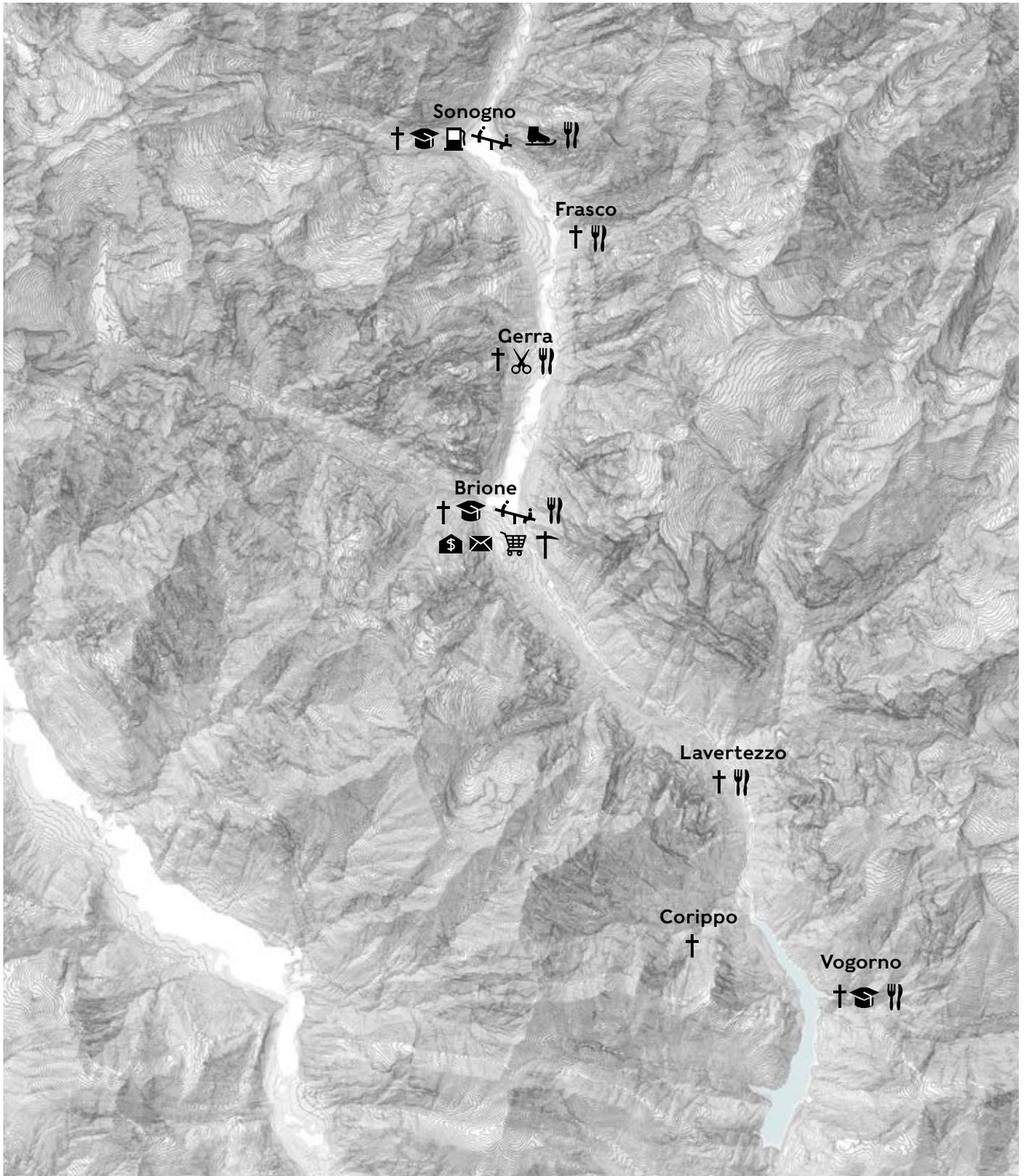
4.3 The community and its territory

Sonogno, Frasco, Guerra, and Brione are situated on the alluvial terraces of the valley, close to the river Verzasca, while, Corippo and Vogorno are perched on the mountain slope. The Verzasca valley is between 400 and 2000 m above sea level. It has always been difficult to access, both from the plain or the two adjacent valleys, because of the steepness of its landscape. The slopes on the valley are more than 30°, and the only flat land is present between Brione and Sonogno, but it didn't stop the inhabitants from exploiting it. The first information about the population of Verzasca valley was in 1591 during the visit of the Bishop of Como Feliciano Niguarda. At that time, the valley counted 2'100 people. In the second half of the 19th century, the population of Verzasca and the other valleys in the Locarnese region decreased due to trans-oceanic migration. Between 1848 and 1873, 649 inhabitants of Verzasca left overseas in Australia and America, and only 1/5 returned eventually. It affected the number of

men between 20 and 50 years old, creating a disequilibrium between men and women. However, today, this disequilibrium isn't present as much. The population density of Verzasca is only 20 inhabitants per m2, the lowest density in the area. In all the villages, except for Lavertezzo, the percentage of the population older than 65 years old is higher than the portion of the younger villagers (0-19 years old) (*Fig.4.3.1*). The schools in the valley are situated in Vogorno, Brione, and Sonogno. The children from the upper part of the valley go to Sonogno or Brione, depending on their age. In the valley, Brione has most of the public infrastructure, probably due to its location, in the middle. In terms of occupation, the inhabitants of the valley are either retired, work in the tourism industry, commute daily to the plains, or work in agriculture.

Pourcentage of population by age in 2019
bfs.admin.ch
Fig.4.3.1

AGE	0- 19	20-64	+ 65
Vogorno (1270 inh.)	12 %	57 %	31 %
Corippo (9 inh.)	0 %	11 %	89 %
Lavertezzo (1'299 inh.)	23 %	59 %	17 %
Brione (172 inh.)	11 %	50 %	39 %
Frasco (107 inh.)	13 %	57 %	31 %
Sonogno (82 inh.)	19 %	50 %	30 %

Vald Pastures, Verzasca valley
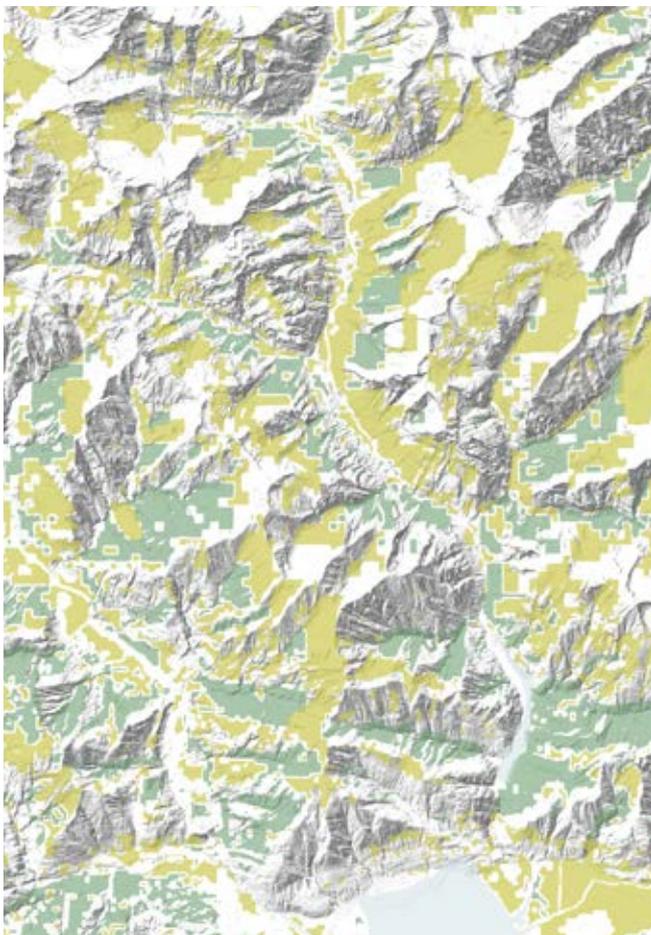
1972
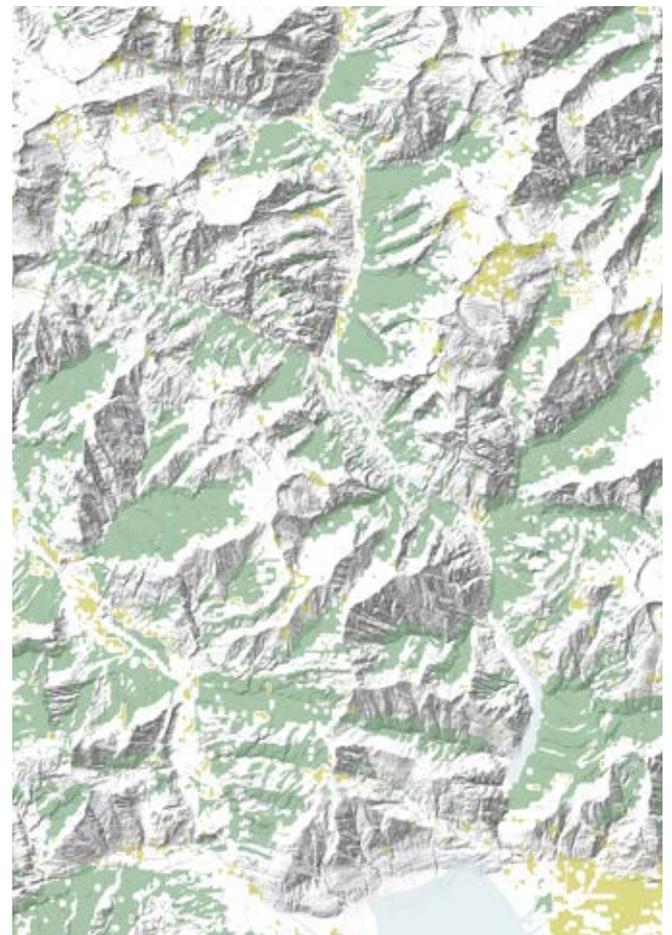
Fig.4.3.2

2009

Fig.4.3.3

● *Forest*   ● *Agriculture*

In Giovanni Buzzi's book , we can find a description of Schwinz's view - Swiss doctor and author in the 1700s - on Verzasca: « *After having defined Verzasca as a "horribly narrow and wild" valley, this author - known for the validity and calmness of his judgments - wonders about "how civilized people could ever have thought of building houses in regions thus made uninhabitable by nature itself "only to conclude that" what nature has not given to the place, men give it to it with tireless diligence"* » [1]
 Various authors in the 1700s gave their opinion on Verzasca valley and the reason for the settlement of its inhabitants. This region was considered to be wild, so were its villagers. Still, despite its harsh territory, the valley developed its economic resources on cattle breeding and pasturage. At the beginning of the 19th century, 94% of the inhabitants worked in the primary sector. Farming activities took over agriculture, and the valley became famous for the quality of its meat. After the Second World War, the population gradually abandoned the valley to settle in the plain or migrate to other countries. This drastic change in the lifestyle caused the modification of the territory as the forest conquered the area previously maintained through agriculture (*Fig,4.3.2 and Fig.4.3.3*). In our days, the primary sector is still present in the economy; it is the most important after tourism. However, working in the agriculture sector is difficult because of the lack of workforce and the low output. Farmers usually don't have money to pay extra help, but some visitors offer their support in exchange for food and a place to stay.

1. *Buzzi, Giovanni 1999 Locarnese, Bellinzonese, Riviera. Locarno: Dadò.*

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Pourcentage of enterprises working in the primary sector in 2020
bfs.admin.ch
Fig.4.3.4

Vogorno (1270 inh.)	20 %
Corippo (9 inh.)	50 %
Lavertezzo (1'299 inh.)	11 %
Brione (172 inh.)	14 %
Frasco (107 inh.)	40 %
Sonogno (82 inh.)	35 %
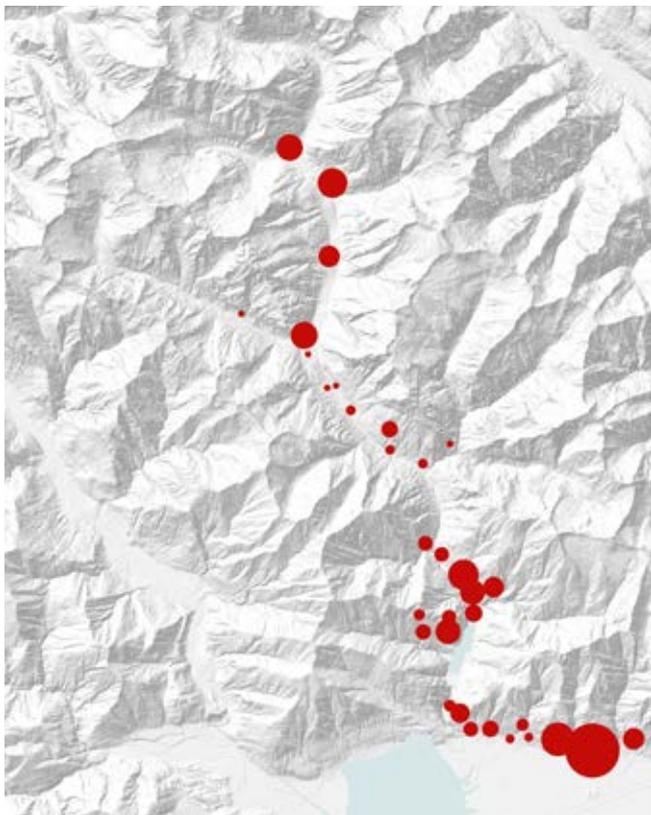
January - March

Fig.4.3.5
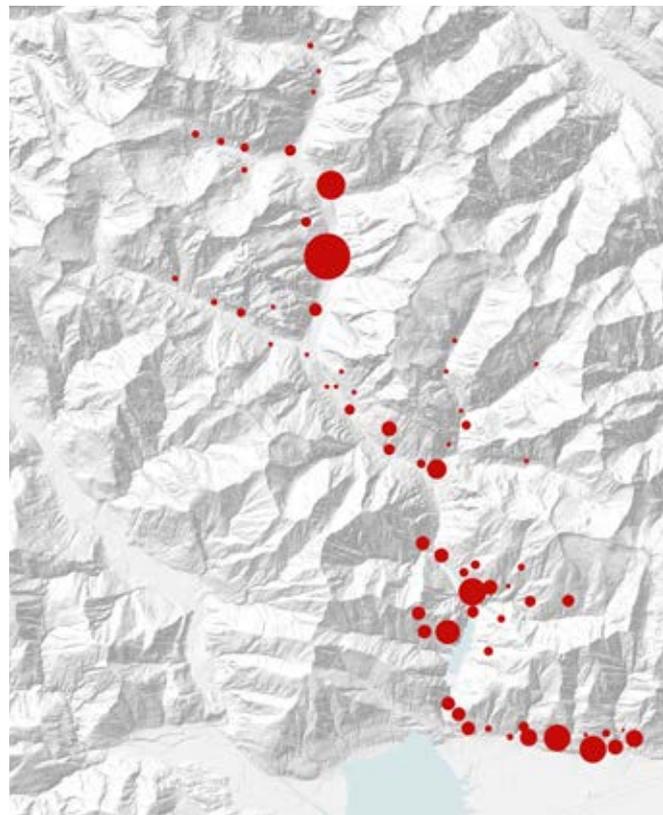
April - May

Fig.4.3.6
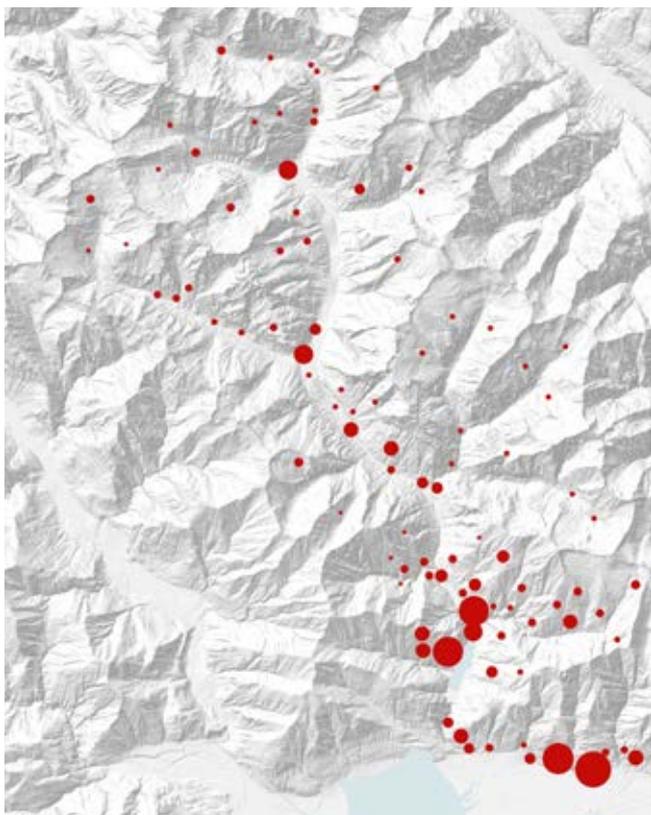
July - August

Fig.4.3.8
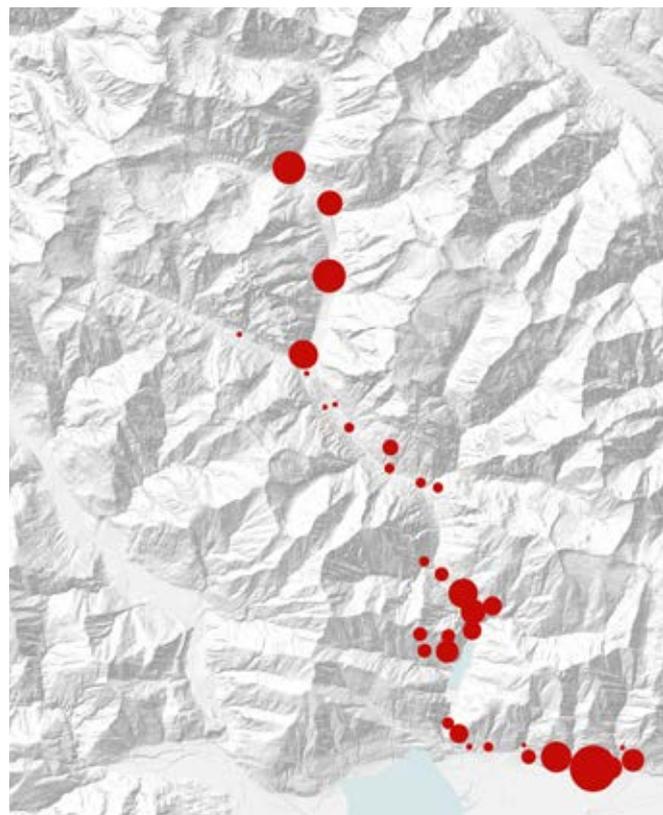
September - December

Fig.4.3.9

June   *Fig.4.3.7*

November - December   *Fig.4.3.10*
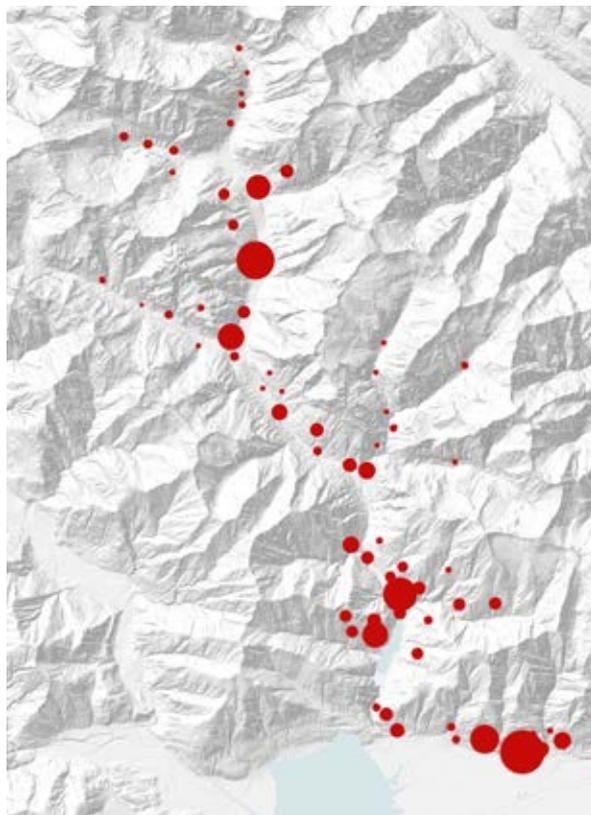
🔴 Inhabitants

Transhumance then and now

The community from Verzasca took advantage of the plains and the Alpine area, the two different landscapes of the region, through transhumance. In winter, the inhabitants possessing cows stayed in the plains and the farmers with goats and sheep on the 'floor' of the valley. It is too dangerous to stay higher in the valley because of the snow. On the migration scheme during a year, we notice that the most concentrated area during the winter was around the Magadino plains, Lavertezzo, and the flat land between Brione and Sonogno (*Fig.4.3.5 and Fig.4.5.10*). The inhabitants still had a lot of agricultural work during this slower period, such as taking care of the animals in the stables and preparing the fields. Women had extra work because a lot of the male population emigrated to find jobs elsewhere. In Spring, a new cycle was beginning as the farming activity moved from the plains to the valleys, which involved several days of preparation and many walking hours (*Fig.4.5.6*). The villagers used to transport tools, sheets, food, and children. This period marked the get-together between the inhabitants who spent the winter with the goats in the valley and the inhabitants who went down to the plains. During the summer, the villagers dispersed throughout the area, higher in the mountain (*Fig.4.3.7 and Fig.4.3.8*). Women usually climbed the mountains while men traveled back and forth between the valley and the plains for small jobs. Children were also involved in the work from an early age because every community member was essential for this short period of good days. The main activities were cheese production with goat milk and hay harvesting to ensure the winter supply. The hay was moved from the alpine pasturage to the valley floor by rolling it down the mountain, carried, and later with a trolley system on ropes. In autumn, the inhabitants and the animals went back to the plains and the villages in the valley (*Fig.4.3.9*). In preparation for the winter, rye, millet, and potatoes, essential nutritious food, were collected. Celebrations happened during this period around the pick up of the chestnut. The villagers also went into the forest to pick up firewood.

69

70
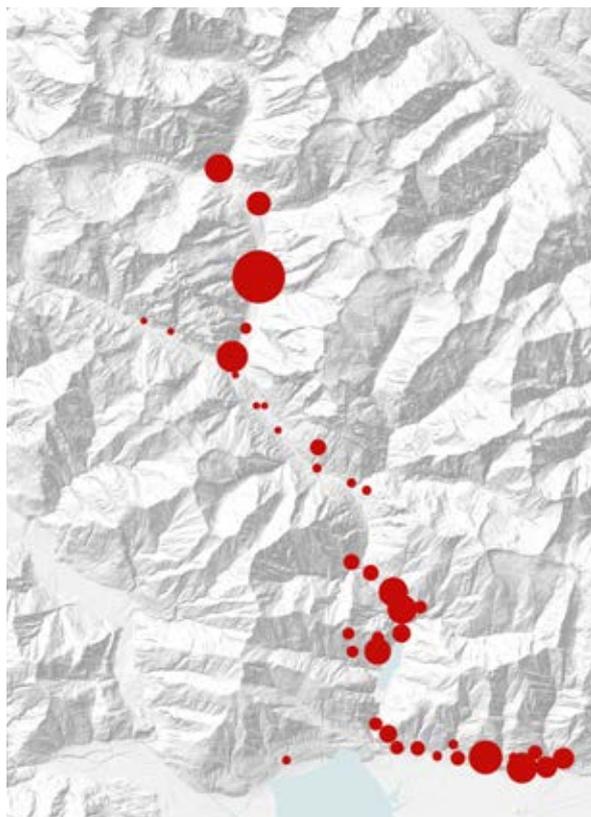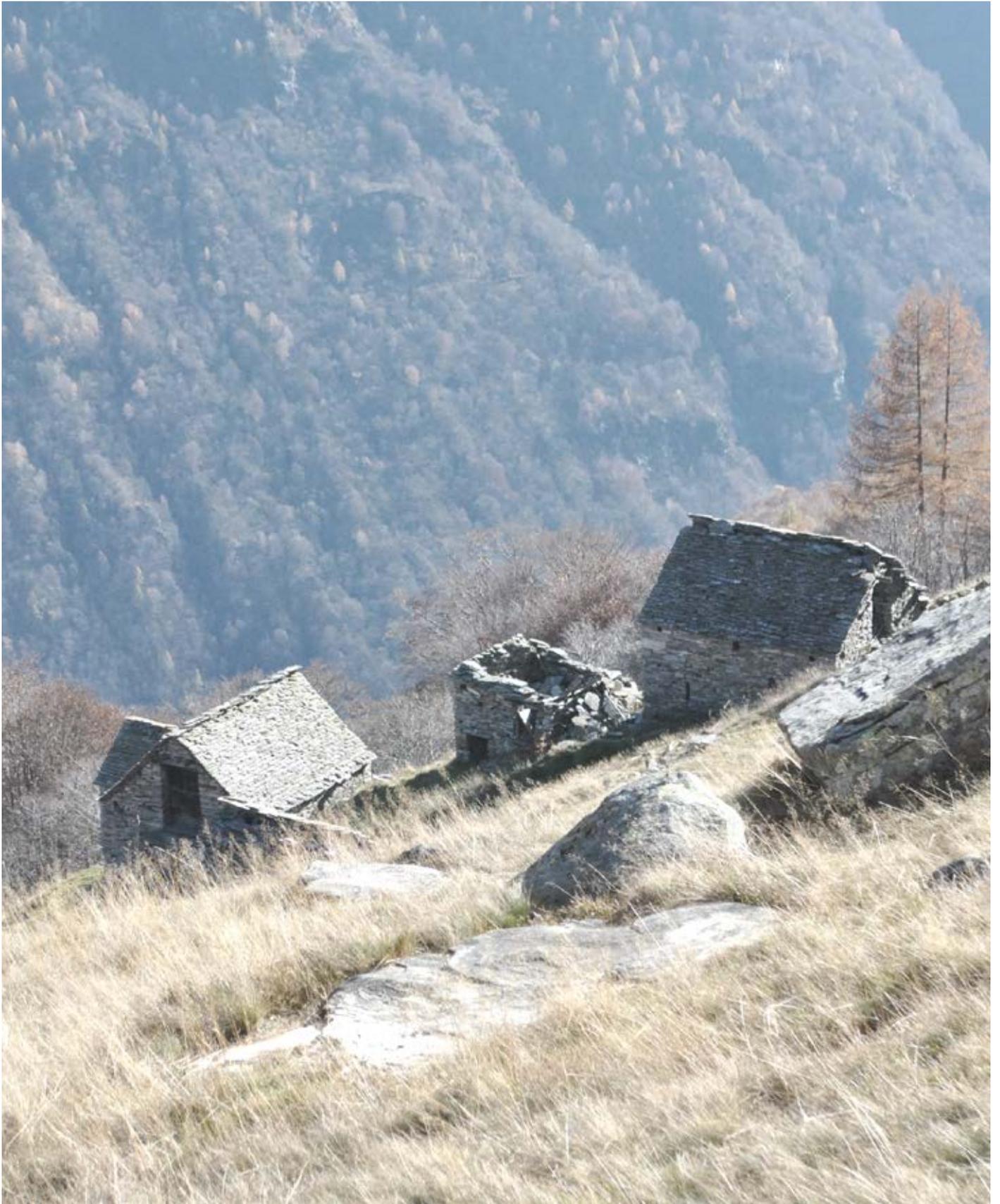
Pasturage in Verzasca valley, Photo by the author

Today things have changed in the agricultural sector. With the depopulation of the valley, many houses from the transhumance heritage were abandoned on the floor of the valley and the pasturage. These 'monuments' stand as a reminder of what was once the valley. There are fewer farmers in the valley, but some people are also coming to the valley to start new agricultural businesses. Now, the main production of the valley is cheese, sold in the small shops in the valley, the 'grotto,' and the market in Locarno. A few years ago, the government tried promoting agritourism in the valley, which involves visitors' participation. Unfortunately, it is challenging to combine teaching people who don't know agriculture with everyday work. The harvest of fodder to feed the animals evolved. It was usually collected locally, but now, some farmers import it, probably due to workforce scarcity. On a more positive note, the arrival of the cable-car in the valley considerably helped the farmers. These small installations allow the transport of cheese, fodder, and sometimes goats who got lost. It changes people's daily lives in the pastures who no longer have to go back and forth between the pasture and the valley.

Fig.4.3.11

Fig.4.3.12

Life at the pasturage -
Pascal and Danielle Favre, RTS documentary

Fig.4.3.13

The community:
On life in the valley

«There is a 'Castello' in Brione, and sometimes we organize small parties there. We, ladies from the valley, also have a knitting club, and we meet every Monday.
We are changing places, on time at Brione, on at Sonogno. We move so that the older ladies can also join because they don't have cars. It is important to stay social during the winter because it is long and empty. »

«In summer, we work to make cheese, take care of the animals, and milking. During the winter, the animals stay in the stable, and we take care of the milking and the manure. The quietest month is October. »

«With my wife, we divided up the tasks, one of us doing the work on the pastures, the cheese-making, and the other downstairs. My wife makes these cheeses upstairs and sends them to me by cable car. Me downstairs, I take the cheeses to sell them, and I take care of the hay. From the bottom of the cable car, I send her fresh food, like vegetables and fruits.»
{ during summer}

«For me, it was a great childhood in Sonogno. We were outside all year long until nightfall, winter or summer. It was quite a nice village life. During the summer the number of people in the village doubled because of all the people that had holiday homes and tourists. But during that time I was working with my parents for hay or to go to the pasturage. Children of farmers were usually helping during summer. My father had cows and goats, but he was doing a bit of everything. He was also working as a communal secretary and also a postman. Our family was always involved with the post; my brother was the last postman of Sonogno»

Fig.4.4.1 Village Sonogno 1977,
Buzzi, Giovanni, 1999 Locarnese, Bellinzonese 1

Sonogno 1890
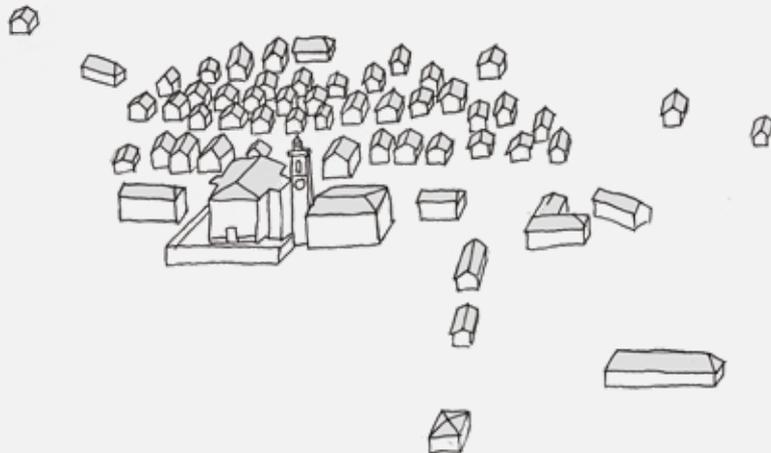
Sonogno 2020

■ *Building for religious purpose*

▨ *Dwelling*

▤ *Stables/Barns*

▨ *Dwelling with balcony*

4.4 The built environment

1. *Colombo, Alessandro, Paola Garbuglio, and Giampiero Gianazza 2003 Villaggi delle Alpi. Sant'Arcangelo di Romagna: Idea Libri.*

All the houses in Verzasca are in stone with a few wood elements. They usually have a tilted roof creating a homogenous built landscape with the exceptions of churches, municipality buildings, and the castle in Brione. The use of stone and wood is common in the alpine landscape as it is the on-site material. However, in Ticino, the stone construction can be found more extensively due to the Roman influence. This material choice by region is well described in the book ' Villagi delle Alpi':

 « ... *we can identify building types linked to well-defined geographical areas in the territory, in which, for historical-cultural reasons, the use of stone was preferred to wood or vice versa. Roughly speaking, if we exclude the stone settlements of Oberbayern and Garmisch to the north and the wooden buildings of the Walser to the south, we can indicate the architecture of the Alpine northern flank of Allemanna formation as wood architecture, while that of the south slope of Roman formations as architecture the stone.* »[1]

 In the villages, the houses are usually positioned with the ridge of their roofs perpendicular to the level curves. Some of the wooden balconies would face south, thus used during summer to dry hay and cereals.. The houses aren't connected but are close to each other and follow the configuration of the territory.If the village is on a slope, the houses are arranged in a way to follow the natural land creating an unregulated arrangement. Every house has its own access creating irregular road networks. Utilities building such as mills, community ovens, and buildings for drying chestnuts could be found at the edge of the village. Other smaller buildings could be found scattered on the mountain, and their functions were linked with agriculture or animals. In the tiny Alpine villages occupied during summer, the barns and the dwellings were usually separated.

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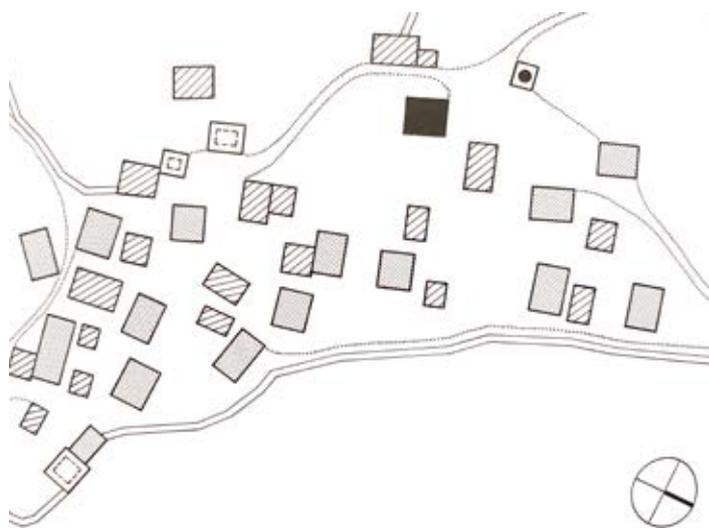
Fig.4.4.2 Pasturage of Monte di Püscen 1977 Negro, Buzzi, Giovanni, 1999 Locarnese, Bellinzonese 1
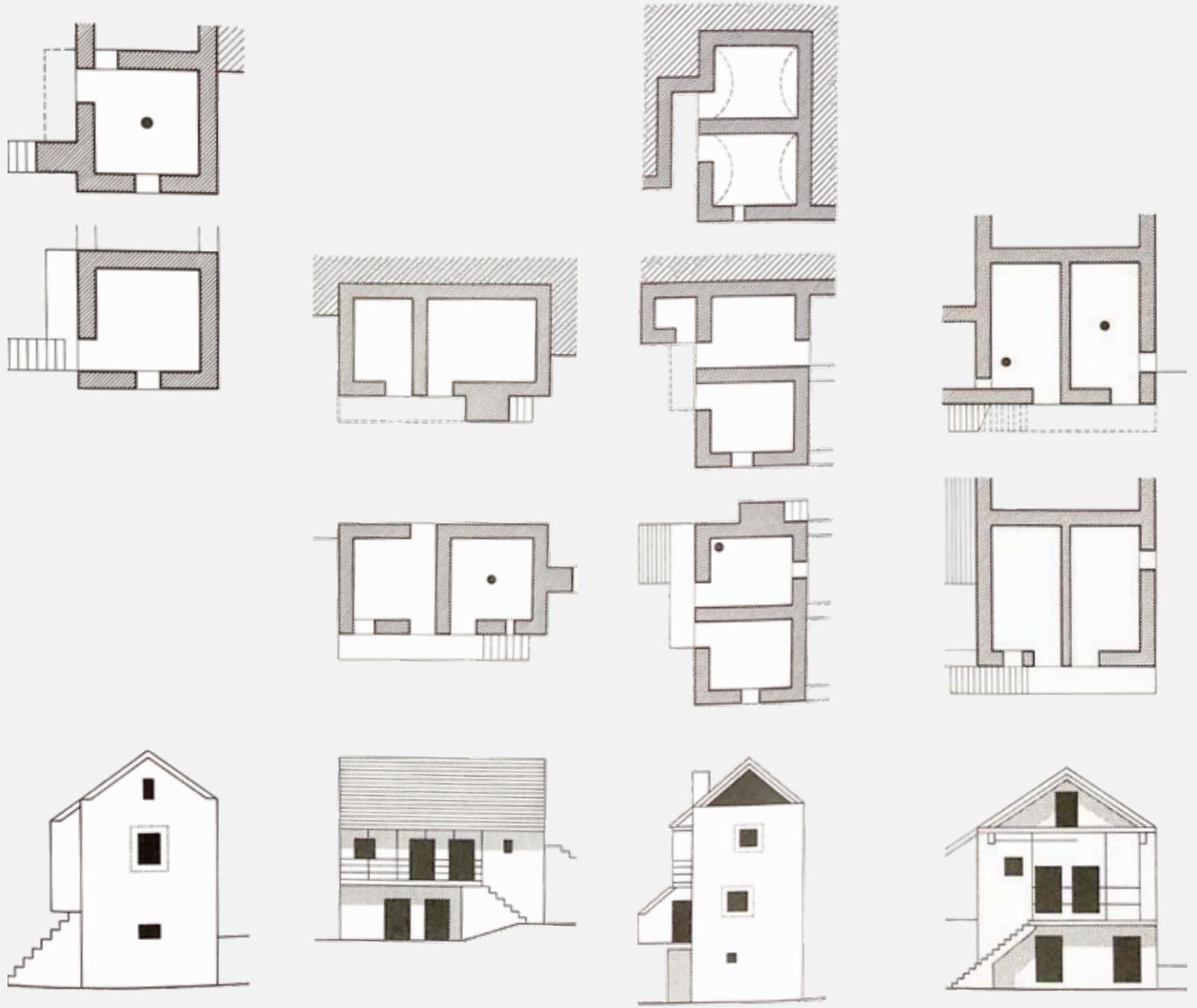
Casa a torre

Casa doppia poste di faccia

Casa doppia poste di punta

Casa doppia di punta

Fig.4.4.3 Typologies
Buzzi, Giovanni, 1999 Locarnese, Bellinzonese 1

The most common and simple form of construction in Ticino is the 'casa.' It's a building with a square plan and a unique room that serves as a kitchen. It was usually found in the pasture areas. Today, these modest houses are mostly abandoned. The inhabitants at the pastures were eating in front of the 'casa' and slept in the stable or a dormitory.

The stone walls of the constructions are usually 50 to 60 cm thick, and the roof is constituted by overlapped stones covering the wooden structure of the roof. The houses in Verzasca valley were composed of a kitchen on the ground floor. Under the kitchen, cellars were used to conserve dairy products. The attic was initially used as a storage room or as a dormitory for big families. The stairs were almost always external, leaning on the wall, or inserted in the masonry. The stairs could be avoided thanks to the natural slope of the terrain.

In the valley, there are four distinctive typologies of houses (*Fig.4.4.3*):

- '*casa a torre*': the most simple form, composed of four stone walls usually forming a square.
- ' *casa doppia poste di faccia*': The plan looks like two 'casa a torre' put together. The ridge of the roof is parallel to the slope.
- ' *casa doppia poste di punta*': It's the same configuration as the previous type, except the ridge is perpendicular to the slop.
- '*casa doppia di punta*': In this last type, the rooms are grouped together, and the ridge is perpendicular to the slope.

The buildings for agriculture work, such as stables, are usually simple buildings composed of one room with very small openings.

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Brione - exemple of a house
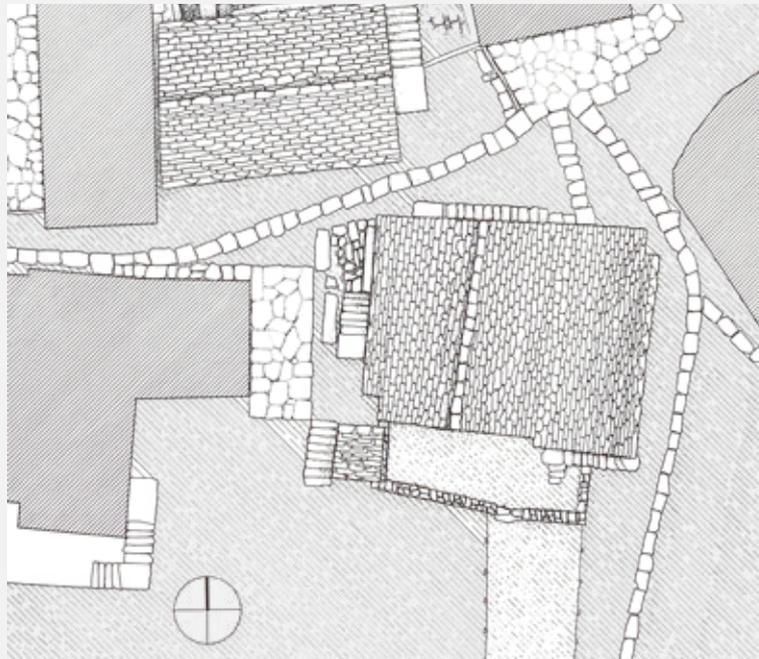
Situation plan
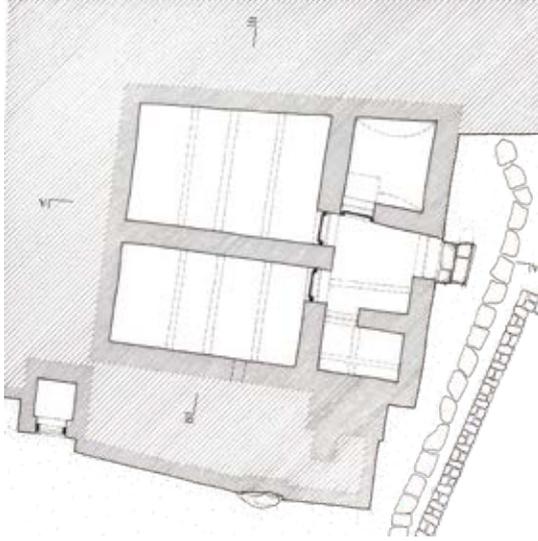
Basement- two caves, two services rooms
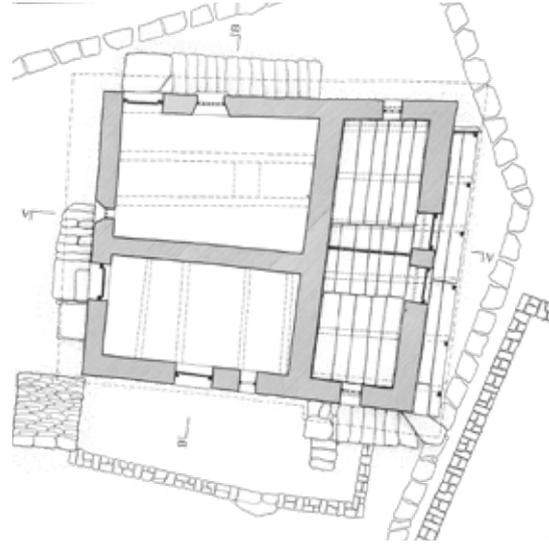
First floor - four rooms, access from outside

79
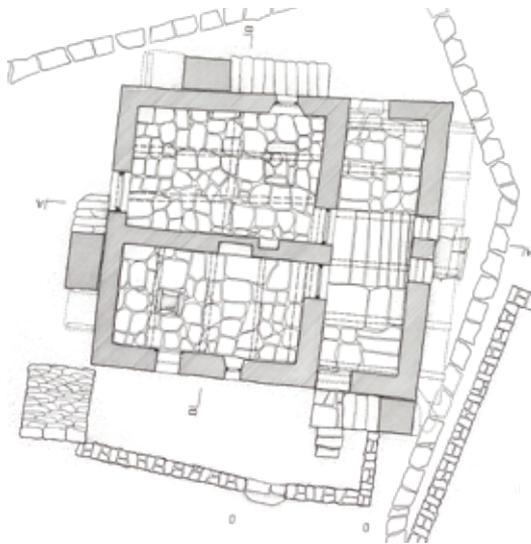
Ground floor- two kitchens, one closed atrium
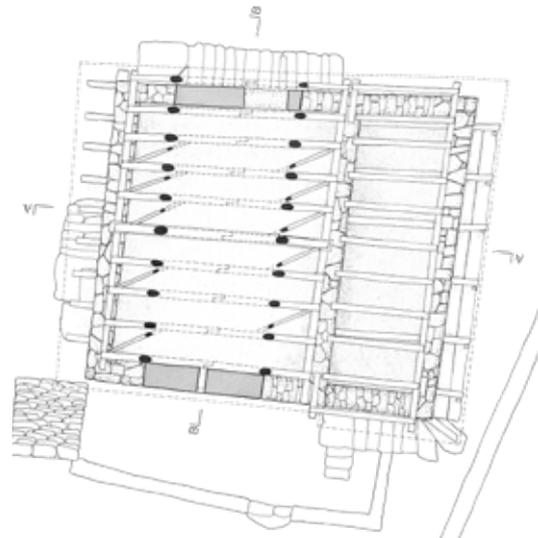
Under the roof- access with ladder

0m   5m

Fig.4.4.5
Buzzi, Giovanni, 1999 Locarnese, Bellinzonese 1

Cross section A-A

80
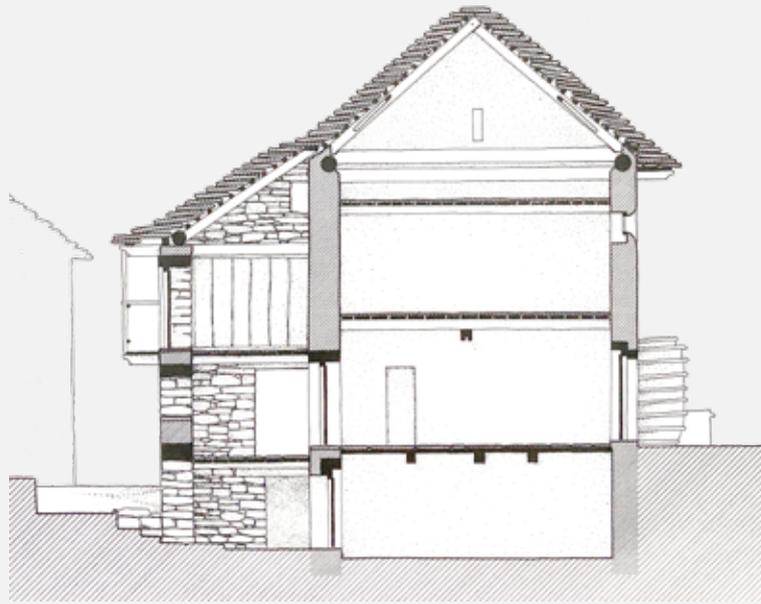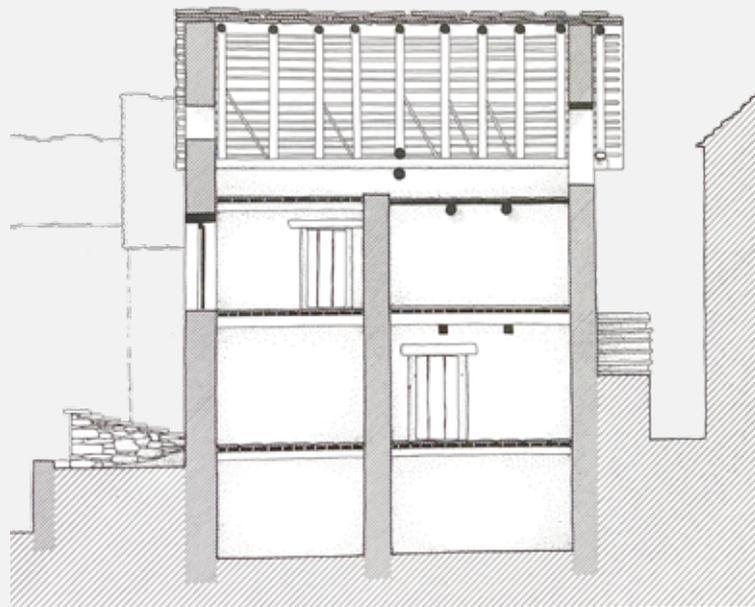
Longitudinal section B-B
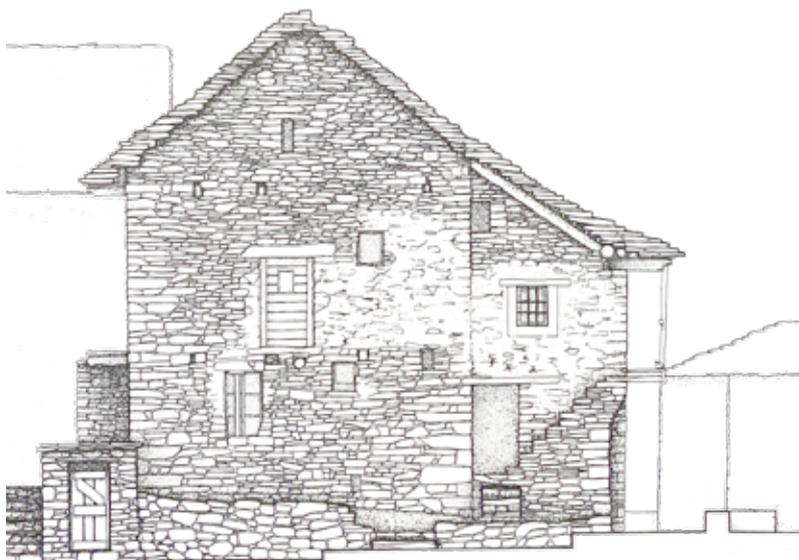
South elevation

East elevation

0m   4m

Fig.4.4.7
Buzzi, Giovanni, 1999 Locarnese, Bellinzonese 1
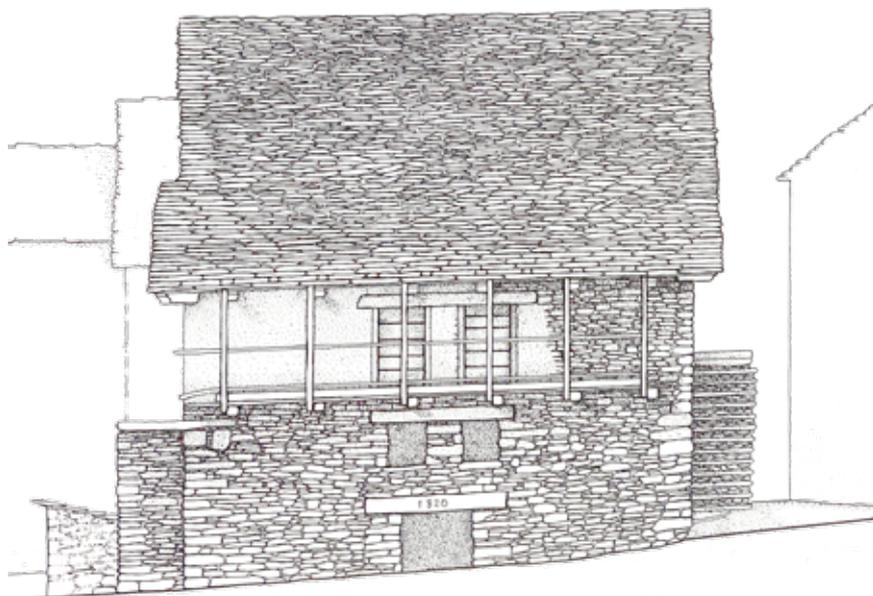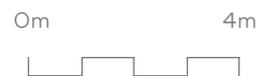
Fig.4.4.8

Fig.4.4.13

Fig.4.4.9

Fig.4.4.14

Fig.4.4.10

Fig.4.4.15

Fig.4.4.11

Fig.4.4.16

Fig.4.4.12

Fig.4.4.17

In the valley, granite is the most used construction material, and the skill of stone construction was passed from generation to generation. The stones are simply laid on top of each other, and the wall is not hermetically closed. Inside the living space, a fine layer of lime plaster is used to cover the wall to avoid air passage. Those dry stone walls are very resistant, and if destroyed buildings can be seen in the valley, it is not due to the collapse of the structure but rather due to avalanches and rockfalls.

There are many ruins in the valley today, and it's hard to renovate them due to inheritance problems and costs. There are few skilled people in the art of traditional stone construction, and the only quarry left in the valley, in Brione.

Transporting the Hay

Elements:

Fig.4.4.8.
Windows with masonry inserts
Fig.4.4.9.
Wall masonry detail
Fig.4.4.10.
Self-standing exterior stair
Fig.4.4.11.
Exterior stair, inserted in the wall
Fig.4.4.12.
Detail of the communal oven
Fig.4.4.13.
Inscription on the wall masonry

Fig.4.4.14.
Roof detail, wood structure and stone superposition
Fig.4.4.15.
Typical detail of Verzasca, plaster around the window
Fig.4.4.16.
Overlayed stones for the roof
Fig.4.4.17.
Wooden balcony

83
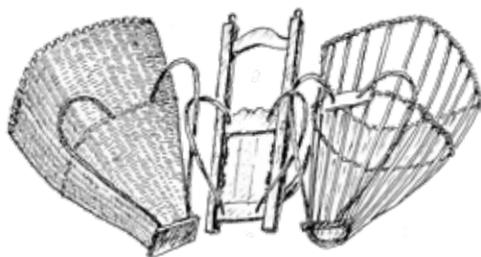
Resources

Stone
Used for construction.
Wood
Material of construction for the roof.
Important resource during the winter for fire
Hay
Essential nutrition for the animals during the winter
Sheep
sheep's wool was woven for clothing, and this tradition continues today.

Hemd
Woven hemp for sheets and linen.
Chestnut
An essential food at the time because it is rich in nutrients
Cow/Goat
Production of Milk and cheese
Corn
Use to cook 'polenta', one of the most traditional dishes in the valley.

The peasant's gear

Fig.4.4.17
Bianconi, Giovanni, 1980, Valle Verzasca
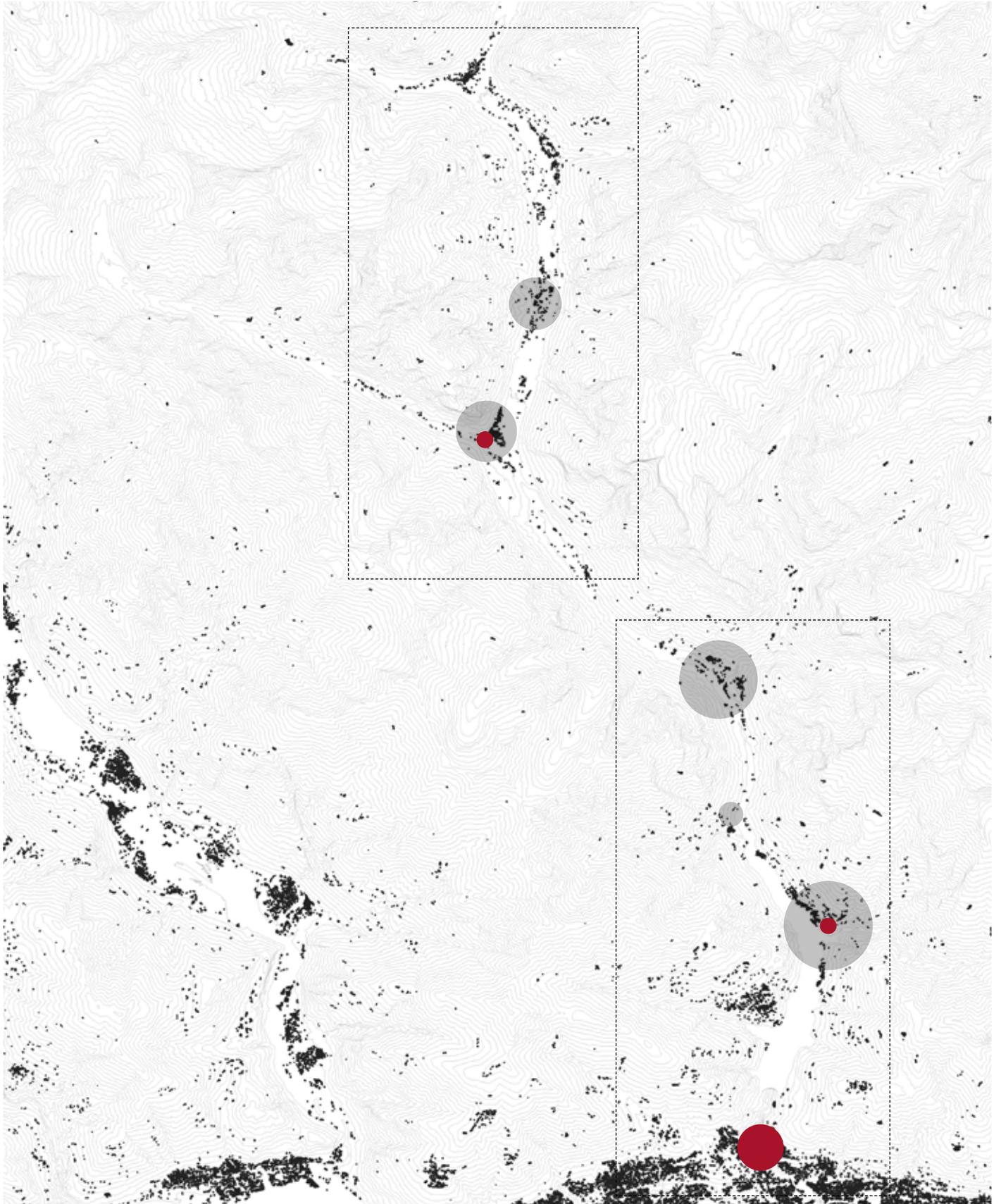
● *public infrastructure*

4.5 Diagnosis of Verzasca Valley

We can distinguish two parts in the valley; the upper part composed by Brione, Gerra, Frasco, and Sonogno; and a lower part constituted by Lavertezzo, Corippo, and Vogorno. The lower part attracts more tourists and second residencies and benefits from Locarno's public infrastructure. The upper part, further away from the city, is more isolated. There are fewer public infrastructures, and this part suffers from further depopulation. For these reasons, it would be more interesting to develop an intervention in the upper part of the valley. The built landscape in the valley is punctuated by ruins, more widespread in the upper part of the valley, and the pasturage.

Some of the traditional houses have been renovated to become second residency houses, but they are not well insulated, discouraging tourists from coming during the winter. The buildings are either grouped in the forms of small villages on the floor of the valley or scattered in the mountains. These buildings in the mountains are complicated to access, but cable-cars provide a connexion between the villages on the bottom of the valley and the pasturage. These cable-cars could be the key to a solution against the disappearance of these agricultural units, which are so crucial in the history of the valley.

85

INHABITANTS

Lack of Activities and public spaces

DAY TOURISTS

SECOND RESIDENCY

No involvment

Bad insulation

FARMER

Workforce scarcity

STONE

RUINES

WOOD
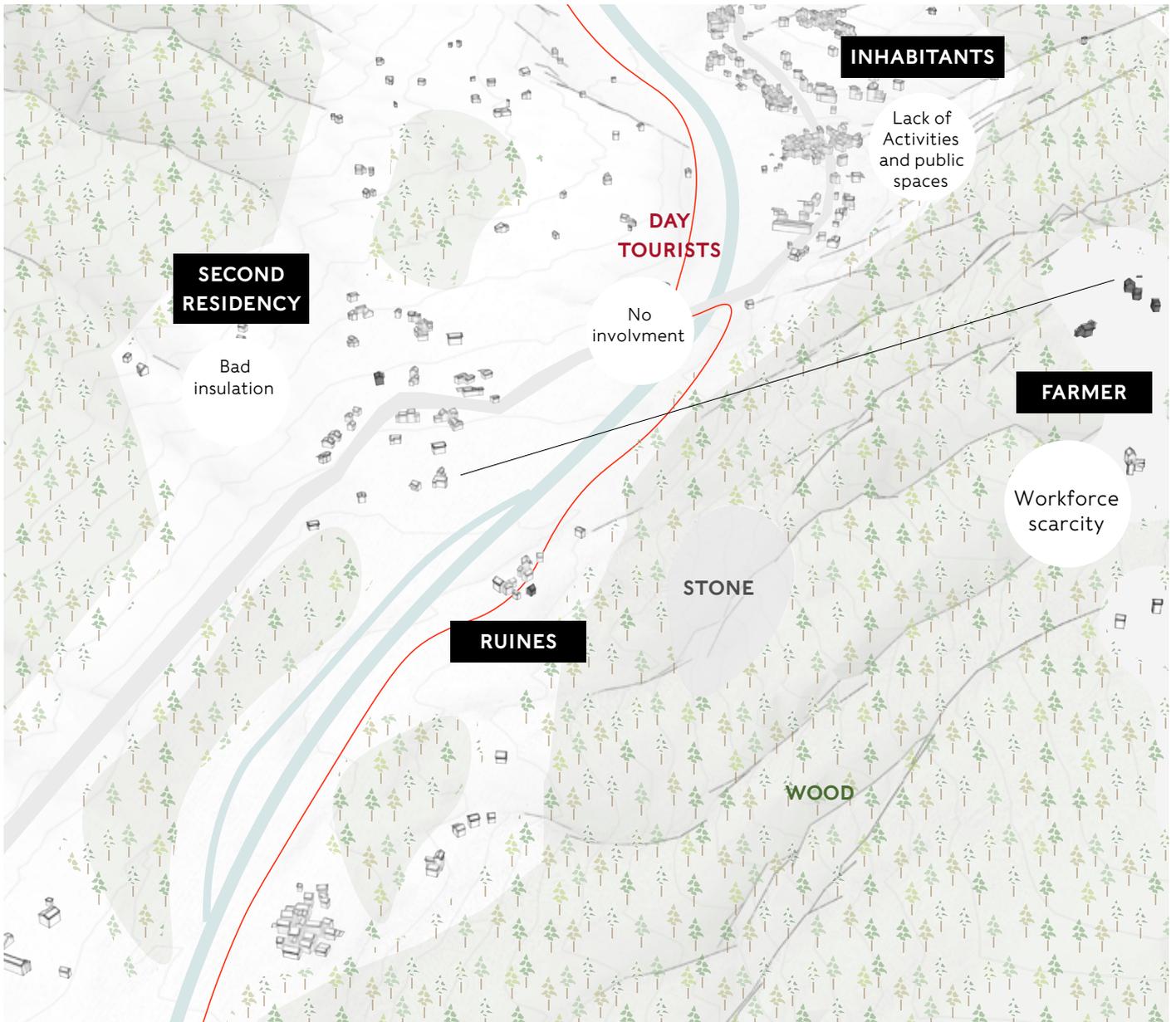
The precedent analysis of the main factors - the local community, the tourists, and the site - and the interview with local inhabitants highlighted issues and potential in the valley. In the local community, the research showed that there are mainly four types of occupations in the valley; farmers, commuters, the people working in the tourism industry and the retired inhabitants. The farming activity is a disappearing tradition in the valley due to the hard work and the lack of help. The retired inhabitants suffer from a lack of activities, and during the winter, it's also the case for other inhabitants. On the tourist side, there are mostly two categories: the day tourists and the second residencies tourists. After talking with the locals , there seems to be a difference in the attitude of those two types of tourists. The people coming into the valley in their second residencies seem more respectful toward the valley and its inhabitants. In the different interviews , the locals speak about the contrasted arrivals of tourists between winter and summer. During the summer, many feel overwhelmed by the mass tourism and point out the indifference in the behavior of day tourists towards the locals. Finally, regarding the site, the main problem is the abandonment of the traditional stone houses causing the landscape of the Verzasca valley to be sprinkled by ruins. It is difficult to renovate those houses because of construction laws, the lack of workforces, and skilled workers. Sonia Urietti Mocettini, who works in the renting enterprise 'rustici', also claims that another issue is the bad insulation in the traditional houses which discourages the second residencies tourists and owners from coming during the winter.

At this point, it is possible to understand the important aspects in the valley that could be positively changed. The intervention should target the preservation of the disappearing traditions in the valley by considering the ruins and the farming activity. Tourists could be more involved in the community activities, creating a real exchange with the locals and a richer experience for them. Verzasca offers plenty of resources that could be reactivated by a project.

87

Heidi, Illustration by Jessie Willcox Smith

Fig.4.5.1

David Herrliberger, 1773

Fig.4.5.2

4.6
Misconceptions about the Alps

1. *Pedrozzi, Martino, Günther Vogt, and Pino Brioschi 2020 Perpetuare architettura: gli interventi di Martino Pedrozzi sul patrimonio rurale in Valle di Blenio e in Val Malvaglia 1994-2017 = Perpetuating architecture : Martino Pedrozzi's interventions on the rural heritage in Valle di Blenio and in Val Malvaglia 1994-2017.*

2. Bätzing, Werner, 2015,. Zwischen Wildnis Und Freizeitpark: Eine Streitschrift Zur Zukunft Der Alpen. 1. Auflage. Zürich: Rotpunktverlag.

In the book on Martino Pedrozzi's intervention in Val Malvaglia, we can how two representations of the mountains coexist; one peaceful and the other one treacherous: « *The seeming harmony with nature in the subsistence-based economy and the considerate use of the modest resources provided by this rough environment is always associated with a romantic transfiguration of simple life.*»[1]
The mountains are indeed romanticized with a tendency to forget its force, danger, and how difficult it was to settle in this landscape. In Verzasca, the transhumance follows the animals' rhythm and runs away from the threat of the mountains during the winter. During this period, the mountain pastures are left facing avalanches. These stone houses are sunk into the slope blending into the landscape to escape what might come down from above. In addition to avalanches, rockfalls threaten certain groups of houses. The houses in the valley are made of what could destroy them. With today's techniques, it becomes possible to avoid this kind of disaster, but not everywhere. Considering the built environment also implies understanding how danger is defining the dwelling

patterns of the inhabitants. Today, when imagining a project in the valley, it is necessary to remain humble before the mountain and its overwhelming forces.

Another critical aspect in the Alps that is often overlooked is its primeval state. In reality, « *there are hardly any real wilderness areas in the Alps due to the extensive traditional uses*»[2]. What we see developing these last years is nature taking over the previously modified landscape. If tourism should be introduced in a place like abandoned pastures, maintaining them could be a possibility. It depends on what we consider as 'traditional' in the alpine landscape; the untouched nature or its appropriation by farming activities.

Looking at the charming stone houses of Verzasca, it is simple to idealize the life of the inhabitants while, in reality, it was very tough and still can be. Tourism should be seen as an opportunity to learn from this traditional life and to create an exchange. The aim is not to go back to the old life in the valley but to maintain traditions while alleviating their burden through visitors' participation.

05
THE SITE
rethinking tourism in Verzasca valley

On the site

On my third visit to the valley at the beginning of November, I set out to explore the Vald mountain pasture. On arrival, I saw a magnificent sight: two dogs guarded a herd of goats running freely on short green grass punctuated with stone buildings. The view was breathtaking, and I began to imagine how life could be at these heights. I saw a cable-car and decided to follow it to the end. After a climb so steep I could barely walk without sticks, I arrived in another mountain pasture, this time completely abandoned. During this exploration of the alpine pastures, so traditional to the Verzasca way of life, I didn't meet any tourists; they were all downstairs in the valley, walking

on the footpath that connects the different villages. I went back down to Frasco, where I wanted to revisit the potential site of my thesis. There, I was lucky enough to run into the owner of the place, Lorenza. She took the time to explain the history of the village and how she came to own it. Lorenza had already done a lot of research on the origins of the village and who had lived there. Amongst them, a couple had emigrated -like many others in Verzasca - to Australia to work on a farm near Melbourne. This is how I found, in the strangest way, a new connection between Switzerland and Australia. Lorenza also tells me that she has the ambition to renovate this village to welcome tourists.

Cortascio, photo by the author
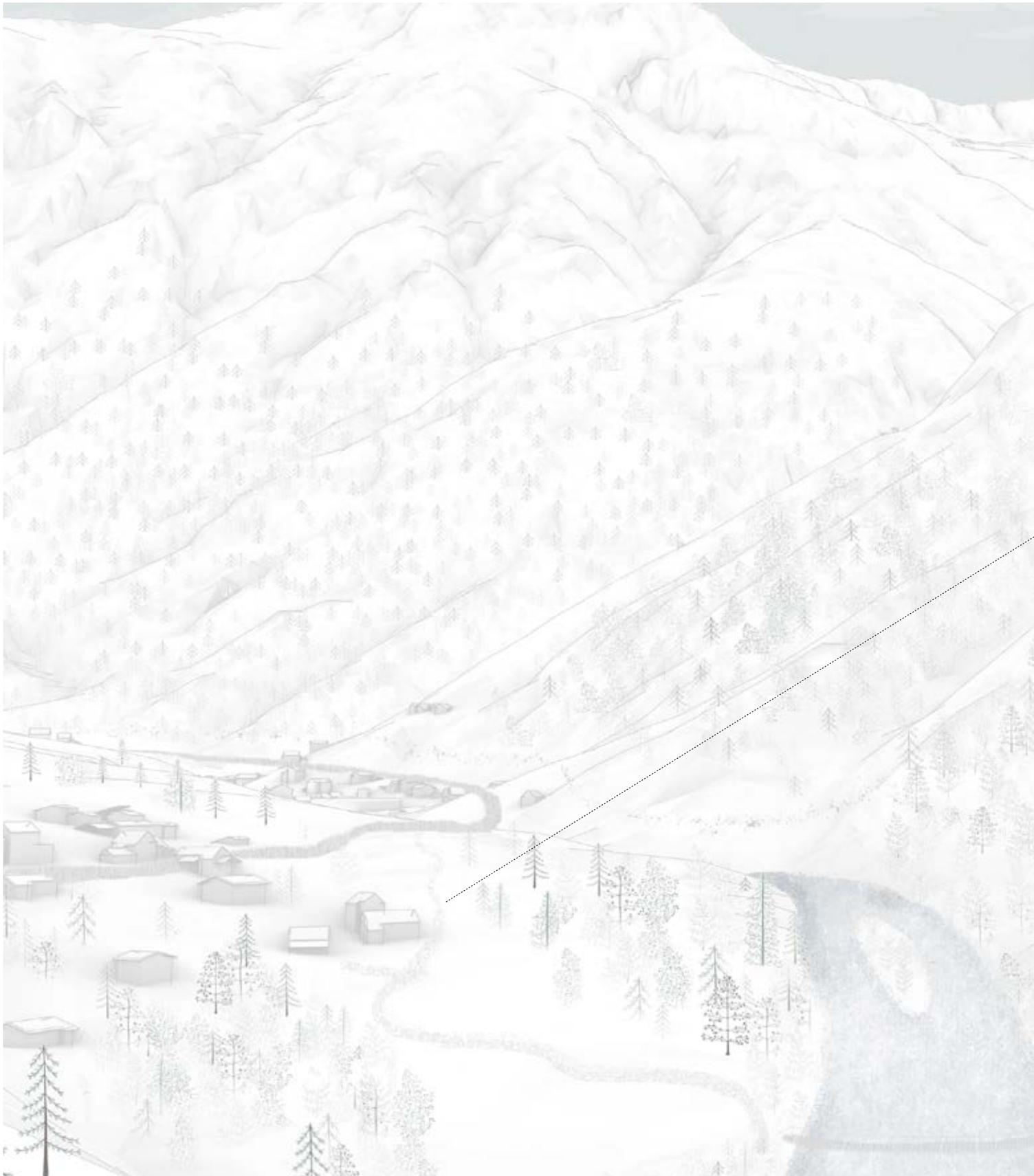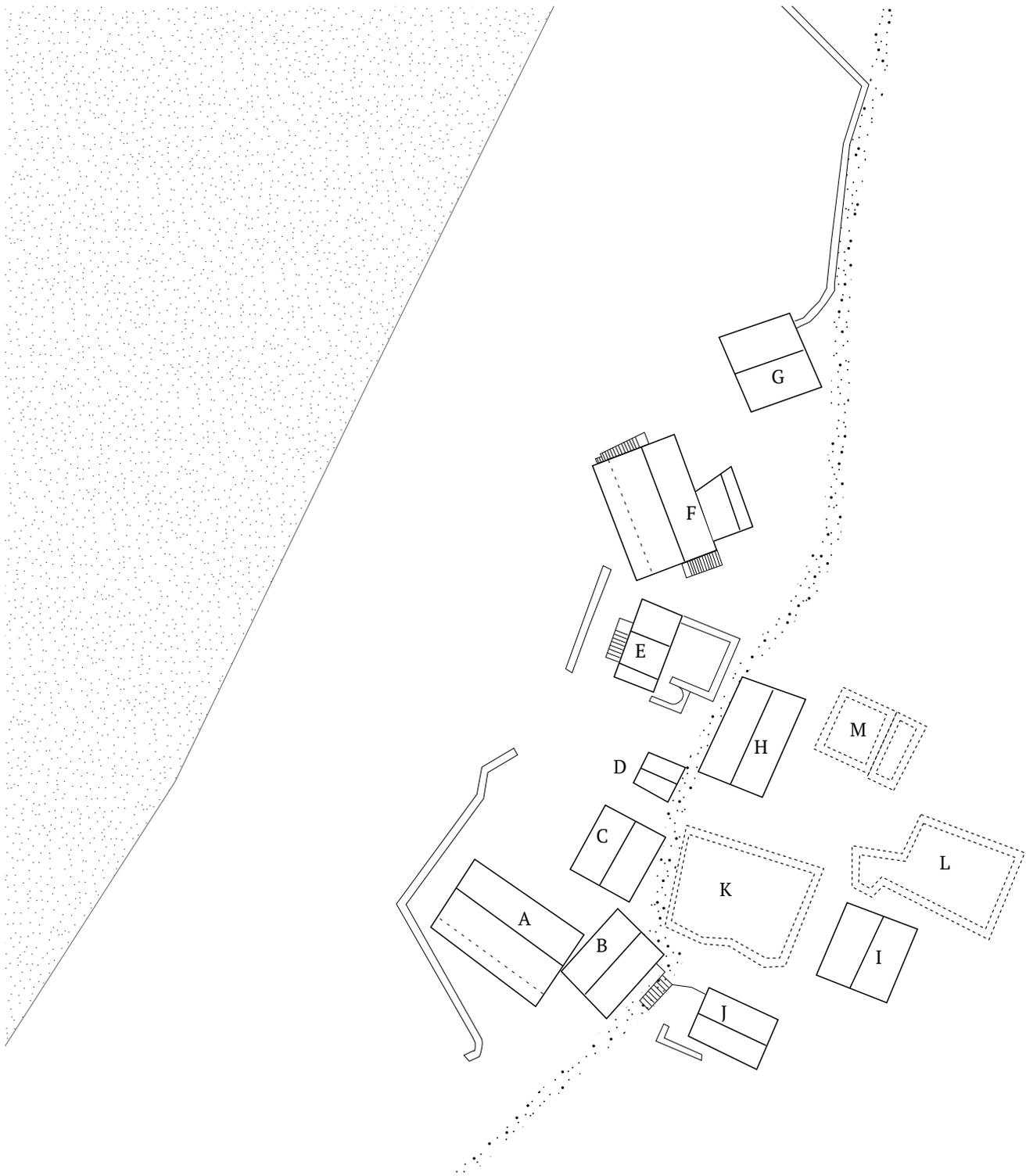
BRIONE

Locarno
↓

SONOGNO

FRASCO

SITE

GERRA

Assumed original function: *Cortascio 1:500*

A. Housing unit   D. Communal oven   G. Stable   J. Stable   M. Unknown
B. Housing unit   E. Cheese making   H. Housing unit   K. Unknown
C. Stable   F. Housing unit   I. Stable   L. Unknown

5.1 The site: Cortascio

The project, proposing an alternative tourism form, will be implemented on a site in the upper part of the valley, between Brione and Sonogno. The intervention focuses on the restoration of a group of ruins situated on the main pedestrian path of the valley. Day-tourists go through the ruins when walking on the popular trail that connects all the villages in the valley. In addition to its strategic location, the hamlet is one of the largest sets of ruins on the footpath of the upper part of the valley. This hamlet, uninhabited since 1924, was called 'Cortascio' and is now legally attached to the commune of Gerra-Verzasca. The buildings might have been constructed between 1500 and 1600. The hamlet was abandoned following a landslide that occurred on the night of the 14th of August 1924. It was originally composed of 13 buildings, and today, nine stone houses are still standing, the oven of the village is intact, and a fountain was built in 1969. A large field is located in front of the hamlet and is currently used by a peasant for his animals. In 1974 the hamlet was sold to a company that wanted to repurpose it for tourism. After going bankrupt, the company organized an auction sale, and now, the whole hamlet belongs to only one owner, which is extremely rare in the valley.

99

Status of Buildings

The buildings of Cortascio can be classified into three categories depending on their state of decay. The first category is for buildings in very good condition with the stone walls, the roof structure interior slab almost intact.

The second category also has a whole stone structure, but the slabs are broken or missing. Finally, the third category describes ruins; the buildings have fallen, and only a few stones are remaining.
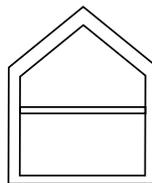
I. Slabs, exisiting wall
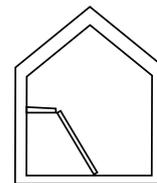
II. Exisiting wall

III. Few stones remaining

I. Slabs,
exisiting wall

West facade

North facade

East facade

South facade

Cortascio, photo provided by Lorenza Gianettoni
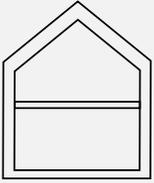
Building A
Assumed original function:
Housing unit
143 m2

Basement Floor plan 1:200

1rst Floor plan 1:200

Ground Floor plan 1:200

Attic Floor plan 1:200

I. Slabs,
exisiting wall

West facade

North facade

East facade

South facade

102

Building E
Assumed original function:
Cheese making
33 m2
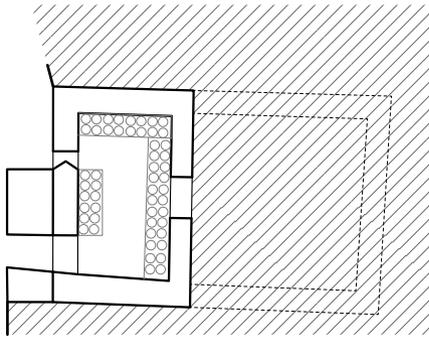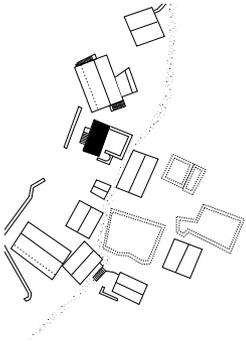
Basement Floor plan 1:200

Attic Floor plan 1:200

Ground Floor plan 1:200

I. Slabs,
exisiting wall

104

West facade

North facade

East facade

South facade

Cortascio, photo provided by Lorenza Gianettoni

Building F
Assumed original function:
Housing unit
146 m2

105

Basement Floor plan 1:200

1rst Floor plan 1:200

Ground Floor plan 1:200

Attic Floor plan 1:200

I. Slabs,
exisiting wall

West facade

North facade

East facade

South facade

Cortascio, photo provided by Lorenza Gianettoni

Building H
Assumed original function:
Housing unit
64 m2

107

Ground Floor plan 1:200

Attic Floor plan 1:200

I. Slabs,
exisiting wall

West facade

North facade

East facade

South facade

108

Cortascio, photo provided by Lorenza Gianettoni

Building J
Assumed original function:
Stable
34 m2

Ground Floor plan 1:200

Attic Floor plan 1:200

II. Exisiting
wall

110

West facade

North facade

East facade

South facade

Cortascio, photo provided by Lorenza Gianettoni

Building B
Assumed original function:
Housing unit
56 m2
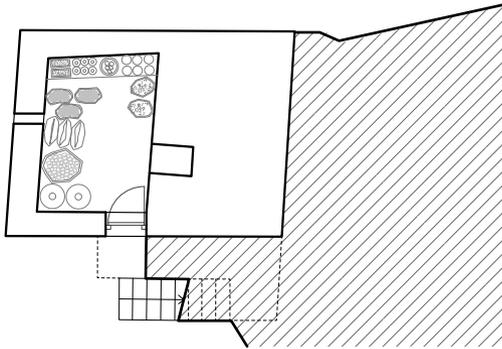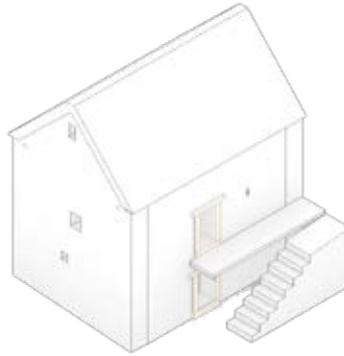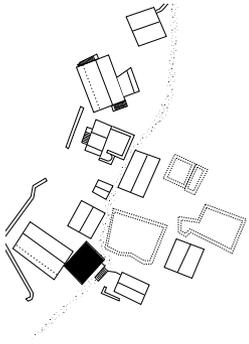
Ground Floor plan 1:200
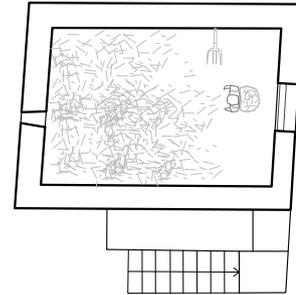
Attic Floor plan 1:200

1rst Floor plan 1:200

II. Exisiting
wall

West facade

North facade

East facade

South facade

112

Cortascio, photo provided by Lorenza Gianettoni

Building C
Assumed original function:
Stable
45 m2
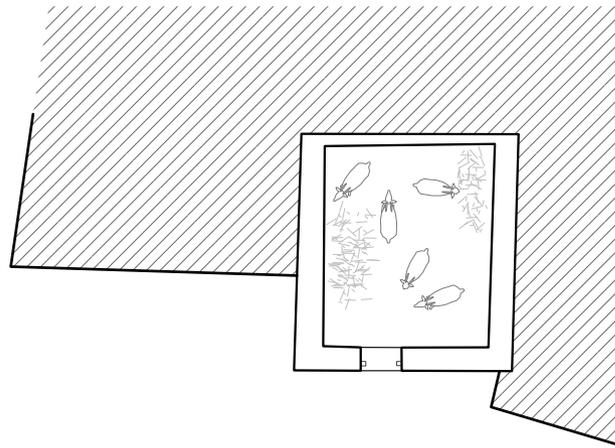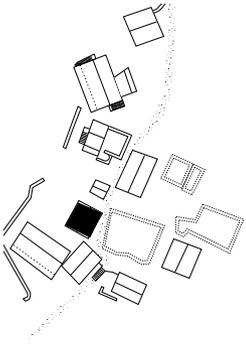
113

Ground Floor plan 1:200

Attic Floor plan 1:200

II. Exisiting
wall

114

West facade

North facade

East facade

South facade

Cortascio, photo provided by Lorenza Gianettoni

Building G
Assumed original function:
Stable
55 m2
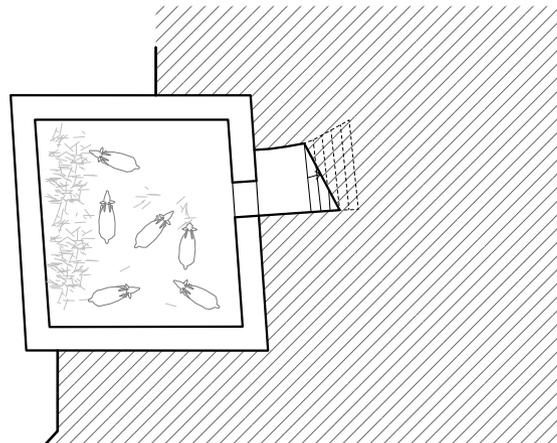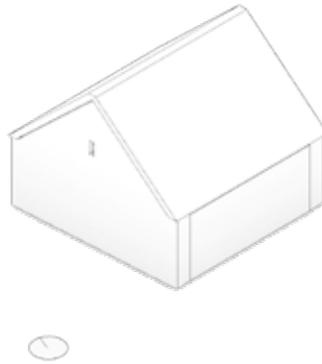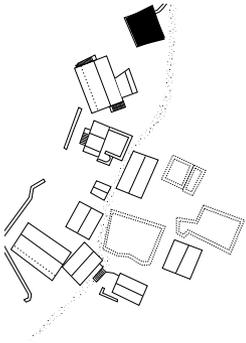
Ground Floor plan 1:200

Attic Floor plan 1:200

II. Exisiting
wall

116
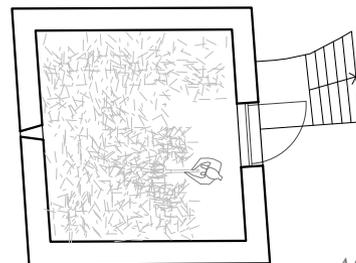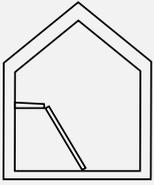
West facade

North facade

East facade

South facade

Building I
Assumed original function:
Stable
54 m2
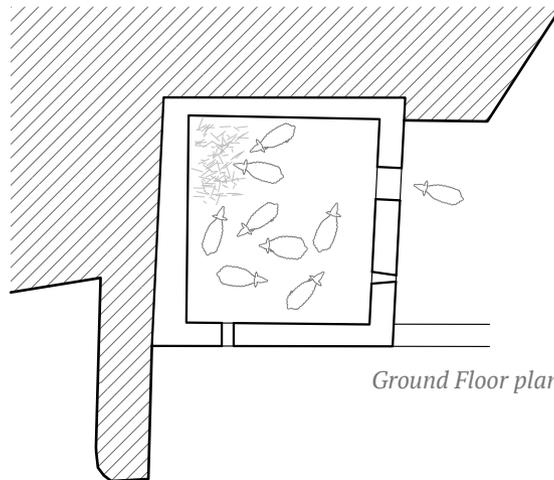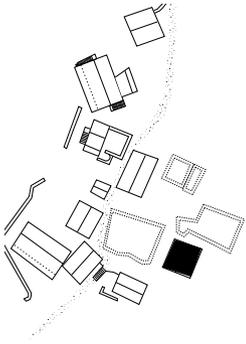
Ground Floor plan 1:200
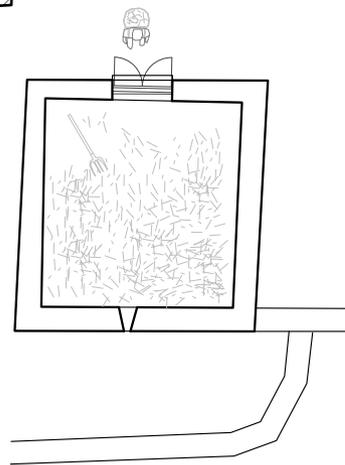
Attic Floor
plan 1:200
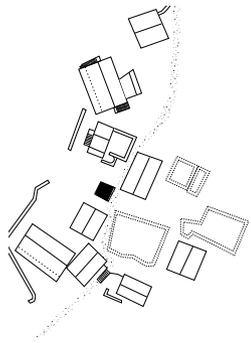
Building D
*Assumed original function:
Communal oven*
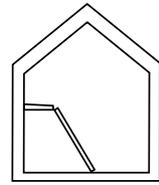
II. Exisiting
wall
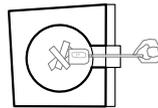
East -South facade

North facade

West facade

Cortascio, photo provided by Lorenza Gianettoni

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

I

J

K

L

M
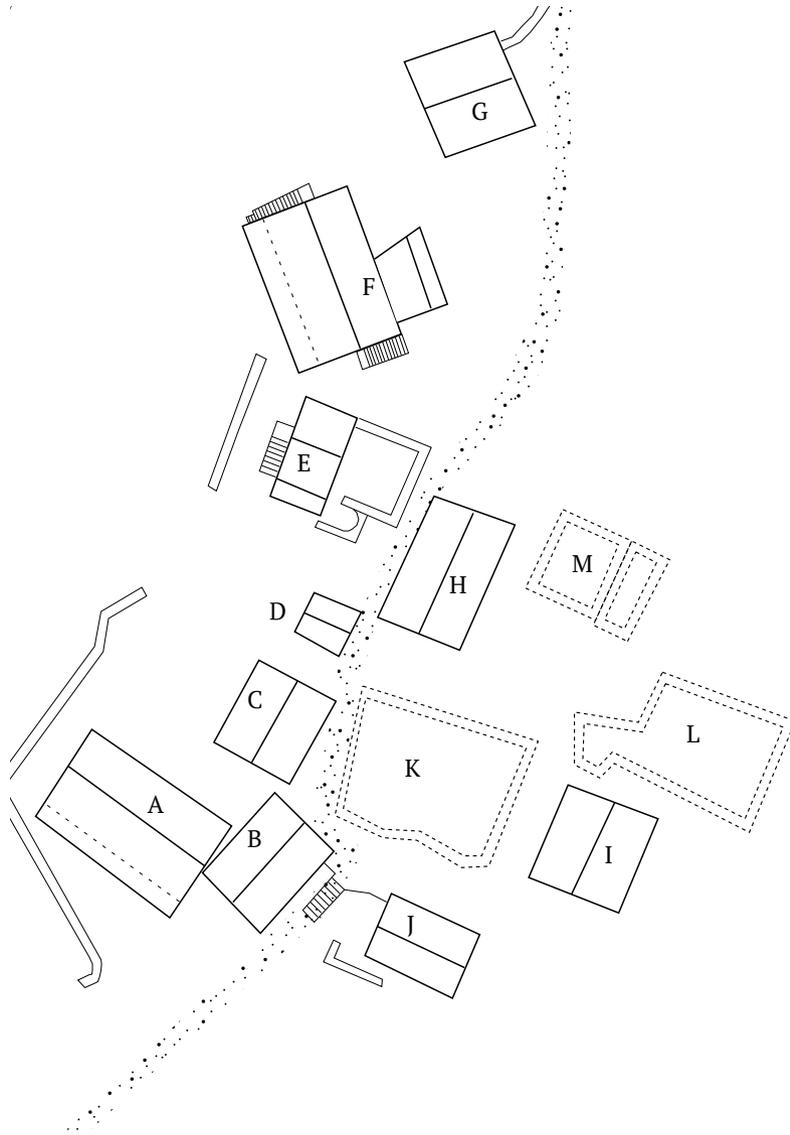
Summary of the current condition of the buildings

Building number	Pressumed original function	Wall good condition	Slab good condition	Windows	Doors	Interior mold	Interior coating	Interior debris
A	Housing unit	●	●	○	●	●	●	—
B	Housing Unit	●	○	●	○	—	●	○
C	Stable	●	—	—	—	—	—	●
D	Oven	●	—	—	●	—	—	Unknown
E	Cheese making	●	●	—	—	●	○	○
F	Housing Unit	●	●	○	●	●	○	○
G	Stable	○	—	—	—	—	—	●
H	Housing Unit	●	●	○	○	—	○	●
I	Stable	●	—	—	○	—	—	●
J	Stable	●	●	—	○	—	—	●
K	Unknown	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
L	Unknown	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
M	Unknown	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

● *Yes*

○ *Partly*

— *No*

Correct way to built a stone wall

1.

Through-stone

2.

superimposed
and opposite
header

header gripped
in pliers by two
others

Through-stone

3.

122
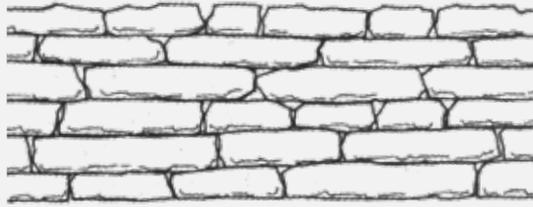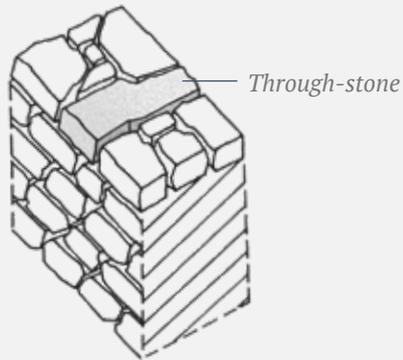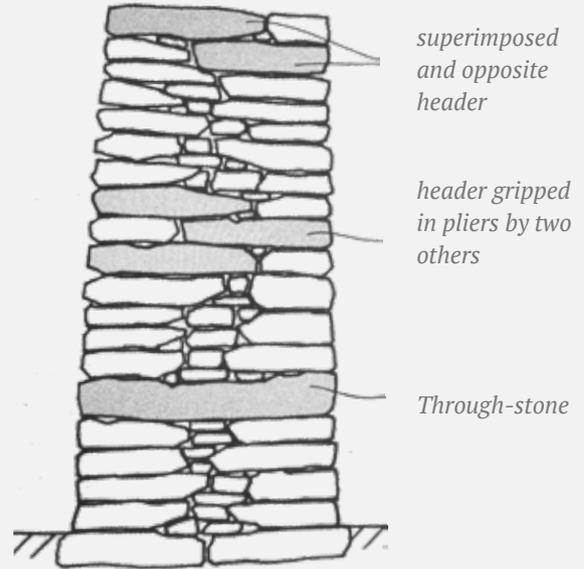
Common mistakes
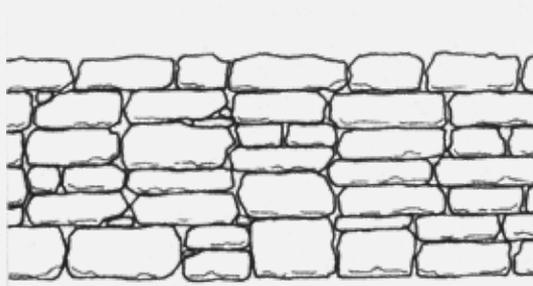
4.
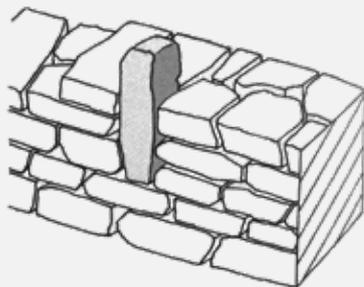
5.
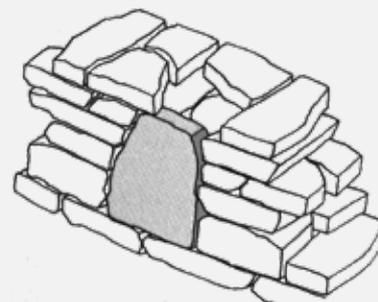
6.

5.2 The dry stone wall in details

1. *Lassure, Christian, 2008, La pierre sèche, mode d'emploi. Paris: Eyrolles.*

pickaxe

breaker tool

shovel

hammer
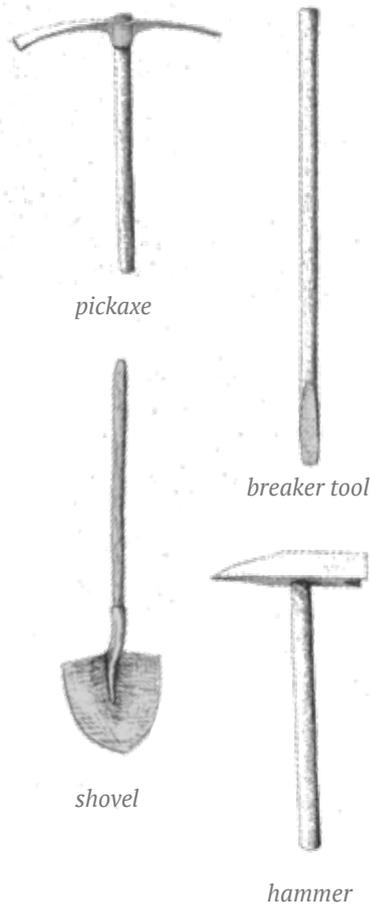
In the french manual for dry stone construction, one can read: «*Today dry stone fascinates, as much by its perenniality in the landscape as by the perspectives opened by its renewal.*»[1] Dry stone constructions use natural stone without mortar. It is as simple as stones laying on top of each other, offering the possibility of reusing the material indefinitely. In Cortascio, the stone houses require renovation, and the ruins need re-assembling. Luckily, one can take most of the needed stone onsite.

A technique behind the layering of stones allows the dry stone constructions to endure over time. In the section of a properly constructed stone wall, we can see the wall is mostly composed of two piles of stones, and the void in between is filled with small rocks (*Fig.5.2.1-3*). The stability of the stone assembly depends on closing the gaps. The two most important rules are always placing the flatter side of the stone on the bottom and having one stone supported by two (*Fig.5.2.1-1*). If one stone is just laid on another one, the wall could have a vertical joint

(*Fig.5.2.1-4*) that compromises the durability of construction over time. The stones should also be put in the horizontal position. Otherwise, they will break under the weight of the superior masonry. Stones as wide as the wall, called 'through-stone' (*Fig.5.2.1-2*), can be used for more security. Each stone be must be wedged with smaller stones to ensure that it does not move at all. The top of the wall is crucial because it secures the two piles of stones separated by the dunnage stones. Heavy flat stones should be used on top of the wall and tight against each other.

When working on a dry stone wall, it is necessary to be organized. Before starting the construction, the stones should be classified into different categories depending on thickness, length, and width. A lot of smaller stone should be put aside to serve as a wedge. The more efficient way to work on stone wall is by teams of two, one looking for the right stone while the other person searches for the perfect position to place them. The stones can be heavy, and teamwork will make such constructions possible.

123
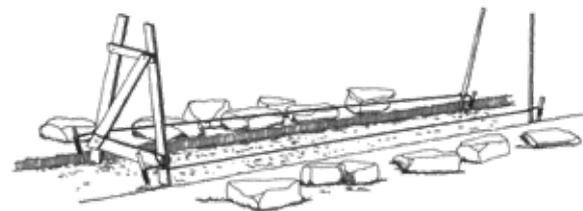
Fig.5.2.2 Illustrations in ' La pierre sèche mode d'emploi', Christian Lassure,2008
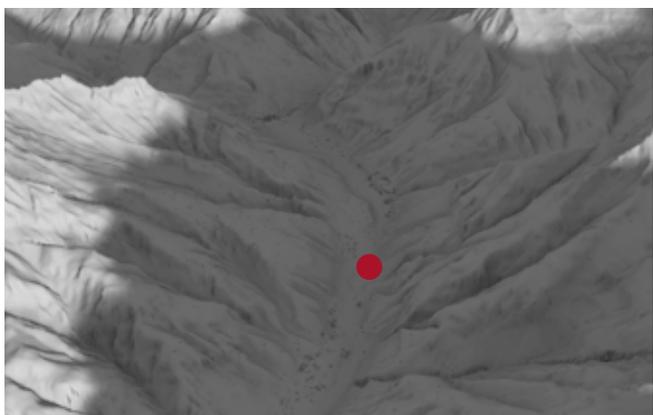
21 December 9:00
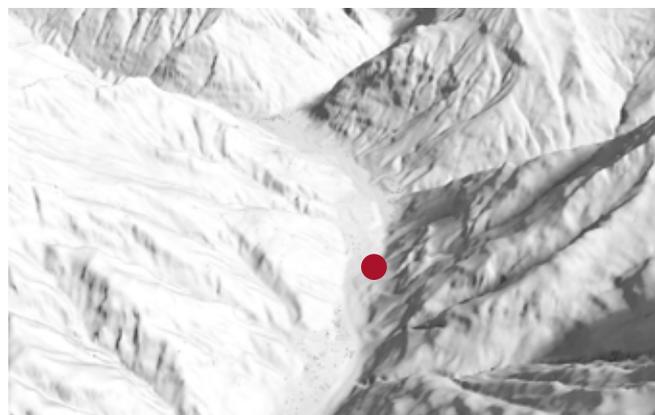
21 June 9:00
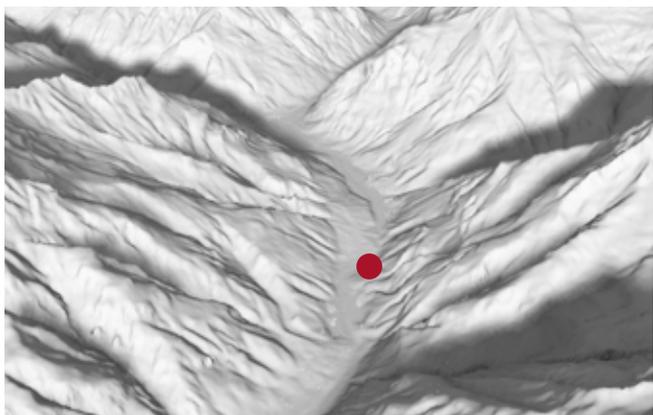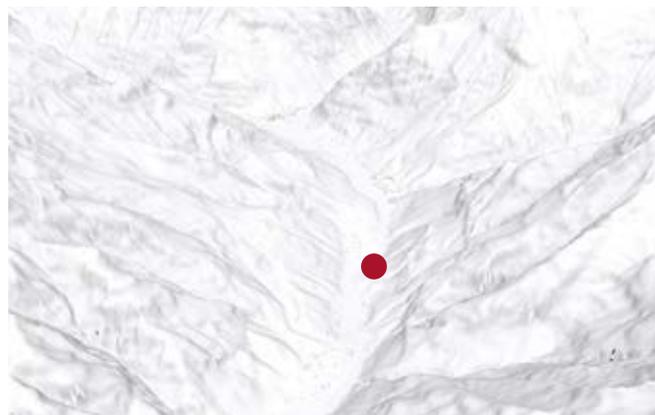
21 December 12:00

21 June 12:00
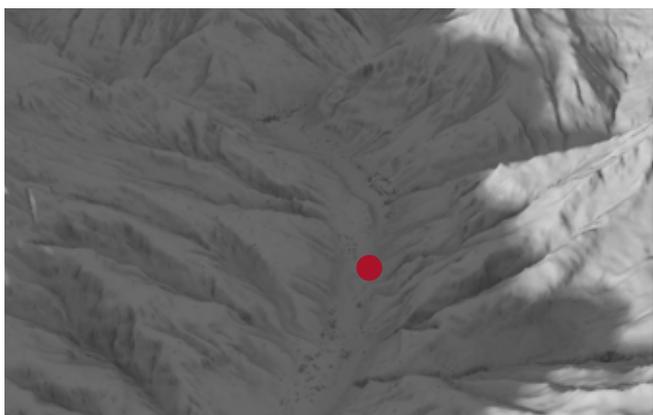
21 December 16:00

21 June 16:00

5.3 Environmental analysis

Cortascio is located on the lower part of the west side mountain. This part has more sun exposure in the afternoon. During the winter, the hamlet has the chance to benefit from direct sunlight even until 3 pm. The sun exposition is essential in the mountain when considering tourism as the visitors try to escape the bad weather in the plains and the city during the winter. Due to its North-South orientation, the valley receives a lot of sunlight, even in its lower part.

In the hamlet itself, the casted shadows are crucial to consider for the design of exterior installations. It shows outdoor equipment should preferably be settled on the west side of buildings to profit from the afternoon sunlight.
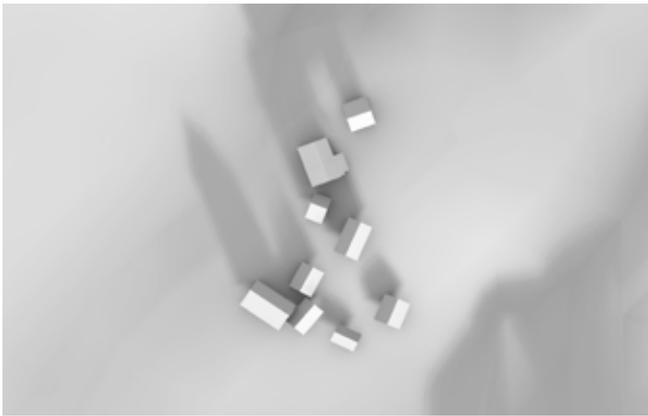
21 December 11:00

21 June 9:00

21 December 16:00

21 June 18:00
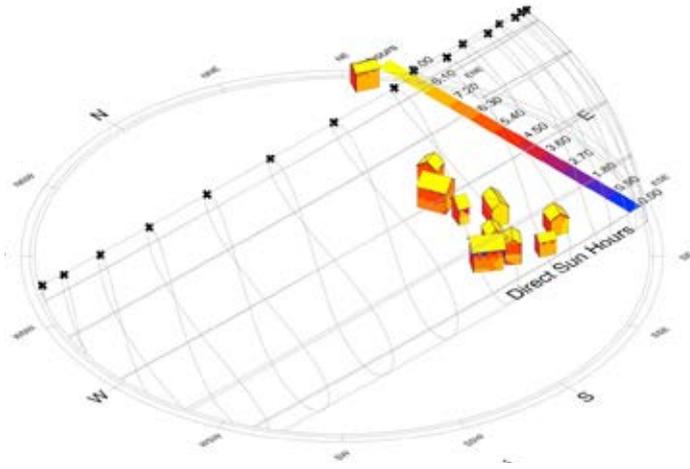
21 June
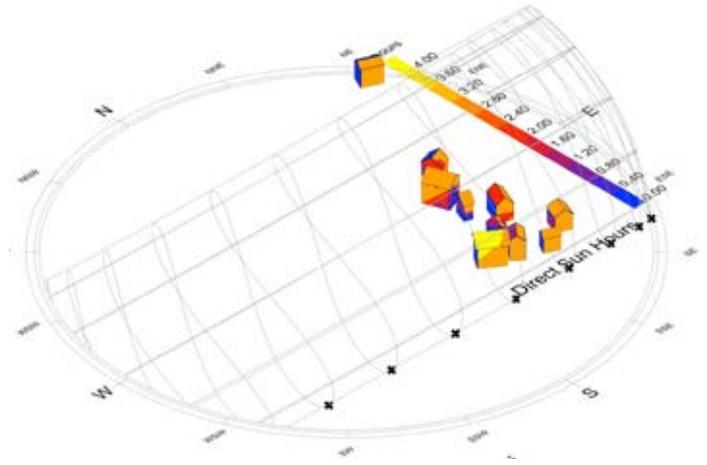
21 December

Cortascio in winter, photo by the author

The direct sun hits the south-east buildings' facade for approximately seven hours during the summer and 3.5 hours during the winter. This analysis will influence the interior design of the stone buildings.

In the higher part of the valley, where Cortascio is located, The summer is hot and humid, but the temperature is lower than in the plains near Locarno. The inhabitants of the plains come in mass during this period to enjoy cooler air and the Verzasca fresh river. There are more tourist activities from May to October, which corresponds to the milder climate.

During the winter, the weather is cold and dry. The snow falls in this part of the valley from December to February/March and can reach heights higher than a meter. This season is quieter with barely any tourists and only a few outdoor activities related to the snow, such as hiking with rackets and ski trekking. It is not rare to see deers and stags coming down to the villages at this time of the year. The cold weather in Verzasca is all the more noticeable in the stone houses in which it seeps.

Average precipitation days in Cortascio
*Fig.5.3.1*
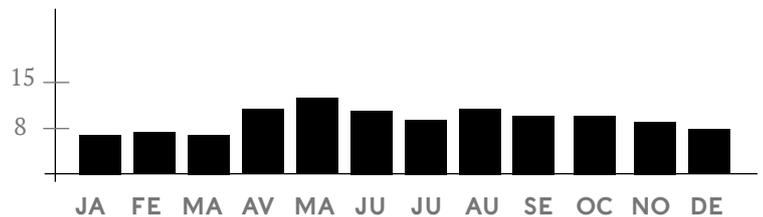
Average temperature in Cortascio
Fig.5.3.2

— Max

— Min

Avalanche High risk   Flooding risk
Avalanche Medium risk   Landslide risk
Avalanche Low risk
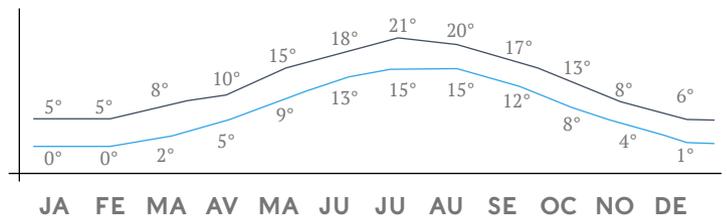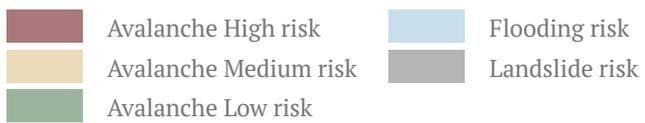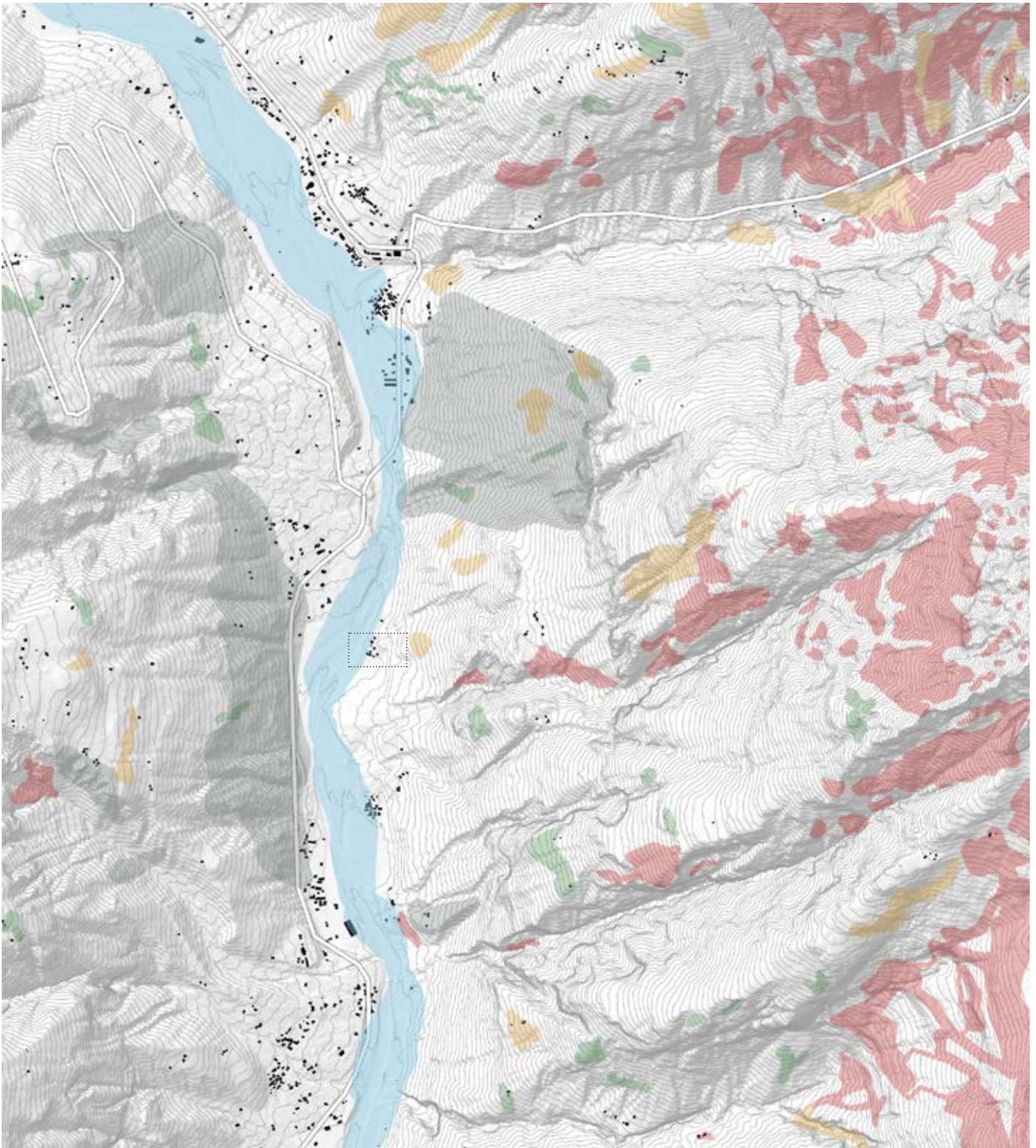
Fig.5.3.3 Natural hazards map
https://www.map.geo.admin.ch and
https://www.map.geo.ti.ch

Natural hazards

Around Cortascio, there are a few natural hazards. The avalanche danger in the hamlet is relatively low. However, above the small village, in the mountain, the risk varies from medium to high. There are different methods to protect an area from avalanches, such as building infrastructures or using the forest as a shield. When redeveloping this abandoned hamlet, the avalanche risk should be taken into account by understanding which trees should stay around as protection and which can be taken down if necessary.

The natural hazard map shows that the overflooding of the river can be an issue. The history of natural disasters since 1977 confirms that the most significant risk in this area seems to be heavy rain that usually happens during the summer. They lead to the overflow of the Verzasca river, floodings, and landslides. The damages caused are usually concerning houses and blockage of the roads. Cortascio is a few meters away from the river and at the bottom of the mountain slope and consequently might have natural risks on both east and west side. However, since the disastrous landslide that occurred in 1924, there has been no report of such events damaging the hamlet directly.

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Noticeable natural disasters since 1977
Fig.5.3.4
WSL Unwetterschadens-Datenbank der Schweiz

2017 — **28 June** - Landslide and flooding due to heavy rain. Fire department operation due to road blockage and flooded cellar and basement.

2003 — **29 August** - Landslide and flooding. The river overflowed and caused some house damages in the pastures of vald.

2002 — **3rd May** - Heavy rain. Stones and tree were washed onto the road, and several houses were evacuated.

1998 — **10 August** - Landslide. Debris swept away two uninhabited houses and nine cars; 2 of them fell into the Verzasca river.

1987 — **15 June** - Landslide. The trafic on the upper part of the valley was interrupted.

1981 — **21 September** - Landslide. The trafic on the upper part of the valley was interrupted.

1977 — **18 August** - Heavy rain caused landslide and flooding

traditional valley centers area

extensive residential area

area for equipment and buildings of public interest

area outside the building zone

indicative forest area

main connecting road

P   parking spaces

5.4 Regulations and planning

The hamlet is located in the 'traditional valley center area', inside the construction area. Inside this area, in other villages of Verzasca, it is quite common to see these old stone houses,'rustici', renovated or being under construction. Thus, it is realistic to imagine the acquisition of a construction permit to renovate Cortascio. However, the renovation of these 'rustici' is not always so simple. Most of them are usually located outside the constructible area, in the mountain, or between villages.

For this reason, renovation permits are complicated to obtain, which results in their abandonment. In 2010 the Grand Council of Ticino approved the PUC-PEIP, a new cantonal land-use plan specially destined to regulate the 'rustici'. It was supposed to make their renovation more accessible. Still, the conditions seem to be very strict as there are regularly articles and propositions to change the law regarding the rustici. This subject is a common debate in this part of Switzerland.

Cortascio
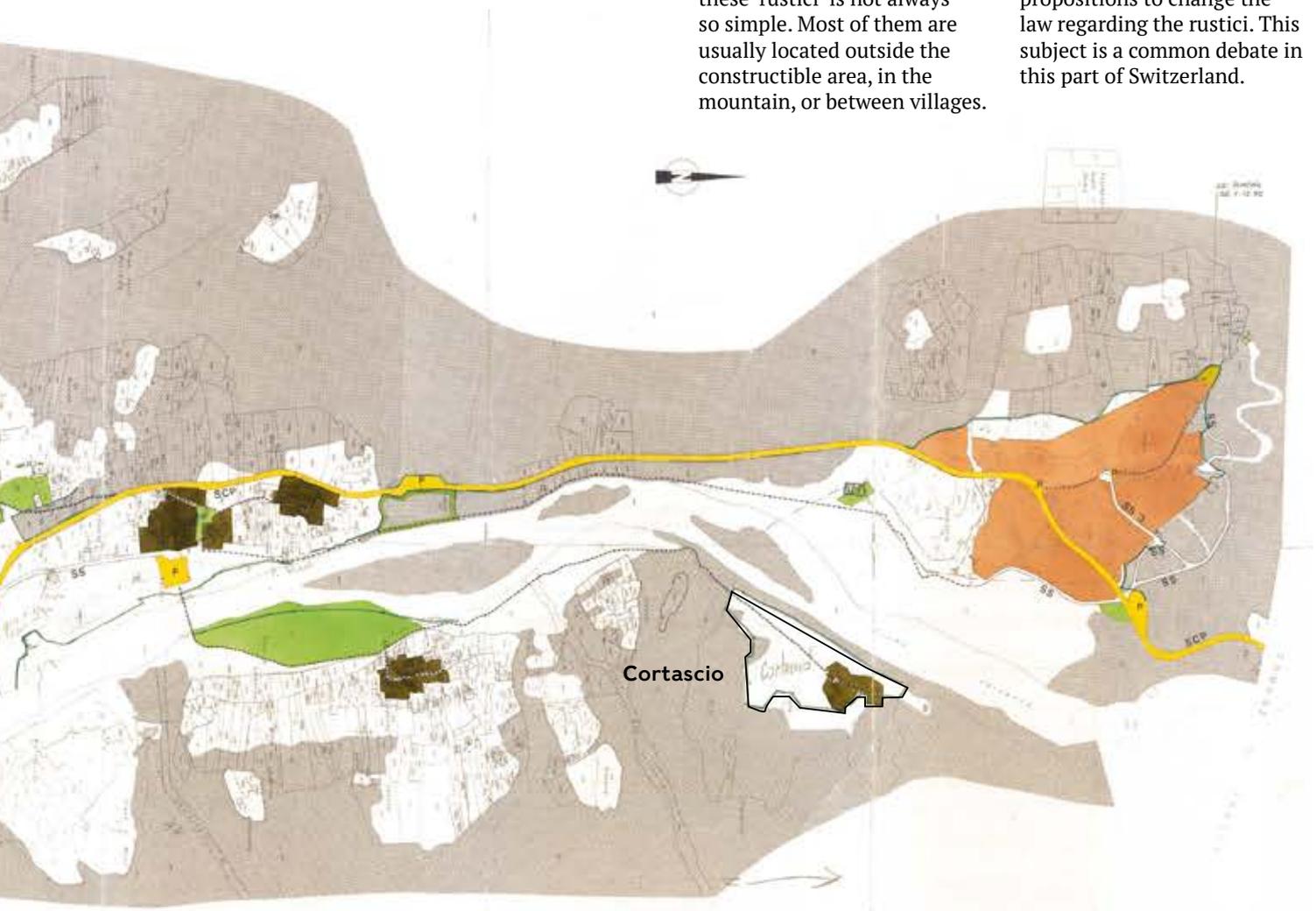
Fig.5.4.1 Land Use 'Piano Regolatore', Gerra Verzasca, 1987

1. Identifyed issues

Locals

Tourists

Site

• The farmers: need for workforce

• Retired: lack of activity

• All: lack of activity during winter
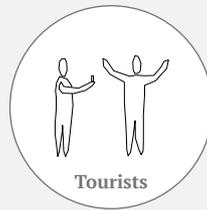
• Day tourists: lack of engagment

• Second residencies: bad insulation

• All: no tourists during winter
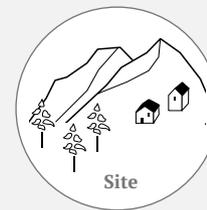
• Abandonned buildings: no one to renovate

2. Verzasca Masterplan 2030

«Living in the valley»

«Tourism»

«Territory»

• Lively valley all year long

• Maintaining public services

• Support for local enterprise

• More public spaces

• Longer stay

• Mobility

• Stay during Winter

• Care for the territory

The program: comparaison to Verzasca masterplan 2030

When considering what programs in Cortascio will help improve the tourism in Verzasca valley, it is worth confronting the previously identified issues with the 'Verzasca Masterplan 2030' put in place by the municipalities of the valley. Firstly, the masterplan is divided into three parts: 'Living in the valley', 'tourism', 'territory'. It corresponds to the method adopted in this thesis to conduct in-depth research on the local community, the site, and the tourism. In the masterplan, statistics endorse some hypotheses in the thesis. For example, it confirmed how important the territory is to the inhabitants, the lack of public places, and the desire to change the current tourism. The different points in evidence in the left diagram are topics evoked by the inhabitants during a meeting about the masterplan. They are close to what has been analyzed.

The issues found in the valley are similar between this thesis and the masterplan, but the method to solve them will differ. Indeed, the masterplan considers solving the three points separately. The projects proposed in the section 'tourism' of the document include campings, new walking paths, green areas, tourist information centers, and alpine huts development. These solutions create a separate territory for tourists with a lack of encounters with locals and real engagement in the valley.

The goal for the project in Cortascio will be to create a connexion between the territory, the local community, and the tourists. The main difference is the thesis' conviction that tourists are willing to try new activities that directly help the valley. Tourists in Verzasca are now part of its life, and instead of just accomodating them, it could be possible to make them contribute. The following survey on tourism proves that the inhabitants of Verzasca can imagine tourists providing a new type of support.

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Come si può migliorare
il turismo in Valle Verzasca attraverso l'intervento architetturale?

Sono uno studentessa di architettura al Politecnico federale di Zurigo. Nell'ambito della mia tesi di master, sono interessata a ripensare l'architettura per un turismo più sostenibile che sia più vantaggioso per gli abitanti della Valle Verzasca. Ho bisogno della vostra opinione su questo tema attraverso un piccolo formulario (10 min) per capire la vita in Valle Verzasca.

Se siete interessati a ricevere questo questionario via e-mail, contattatemi all'indirizzo:

ccopiglia@student.ethz.ch

Aiutatemi a ripensare un futuro sostenibile per questa valle, portando una visione più personale su questa meravigliosa valle!

Grazie mille in anticipo,
Saluti,
Clara Copiglia

23 Inhabitant in Verzasca: On a tourism intervention

What is your opinion on the tourism in the Verzasca Valley ?

There is too much mass tourism — *14 answers*

There is a lack of accomodations and overnight stays — *3 answers*

It represents an important source of revenu — *5 answers*

It is good the way it is now — *1 answer*
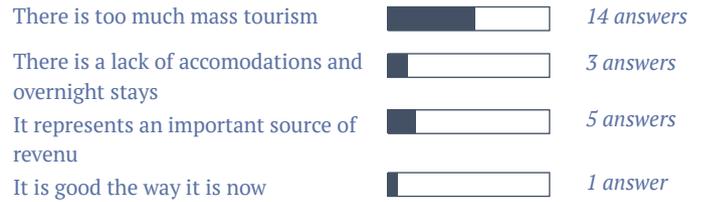
Does tourism brings something positif in Verzasca?
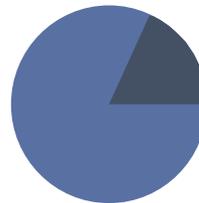
- Yes, 82%
- No, 18%

« Definitely cleaning up and combating invasive plants that are increasing year after year taking away space from native plants! And a course to vacation homeowners on what not to plant in gardens!»

« the respect of the place with the awareness of coming to the valley as discreet visitors, interested in learning something and not to demand their needs»

In which activities tourists engagement could be more usefull ?

Tourists wouldn't do such activities — *1 answer*

Leave the valley clean — *2 answers*

Alpine help (pastures, haymaking) — *10 answers*

Maintaining the trails — *5 answers*

Renovating rustici — *3 answers*

Learn about the valley — *1 answers*
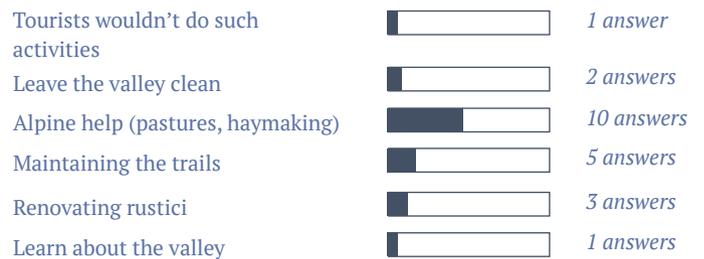
Do you have skills you would wand to share with visitors ?

- Yes, 30%
- No, 70%

Traditional cooking — *4 answers*

Knitting — *1 answer*

Knowledge on life in the mountains — *2 answers*
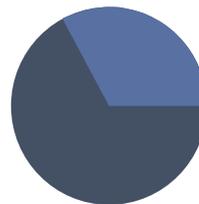
How to improve tourism in the Verzasca Valley through architectural intervention?

I am an architecture student at
ETH Zurich. As part of my master's
thesis, I am interested in rethinking
architecture for a more sustainable
tourism that is more beneficial for
the inhabitants of the Verzasca
Valley.
I need your opinion on this topic
through a small form (10 min) to
understand life in the Verzasca
Valley.
If you are interested in receiving
this questionnaire by e-mail, please
contact me at:

ccopiglia@student.ethz.ch

Help me rethink a sustainable
future for this valley,
by bringing a more personal vision
to this wonderful valley!

Thank you very much in advance,
Greetings,
Clara Copiglia

How often would you be free to do these activities?

1 or 2 days per month	*4 answers*
1 day per week	*1 answer*
A few days per year	*5 answers*

« (...), with the guidance of local craftsmen, those who want to have an «active» vacation in the valley could help with some of the renovation work.»

« I find it unfortunate that they are in ruins. It would be nice to revive them, even thinking about the labors of our ancestors.»

« They should be renewed and maintained, because they would allow to keep alive the rural history of the valley, to avoid the eradication of the land, to give work to local activities, etc..»

« As much contact as possible with nature and someone who will revive the old traditions, outdoor shows.»

« That they have the utmost respect for the valley is given so that they can pass on the beauty of the Verzasca to future generations.»

« A gentle, slow, sustainable tourism that enhances our cultural heritage, the natural park, families rediscovering nature and adventure, a retreat from the hustle and bustle. Not just an exploitation but a respectful exchange.»

What is your opinion about the stone ruins in the valley ?
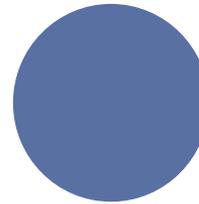
● *100% , Renovate them*

What would be the ideal tourism in Verzasca ?

It's perfect as it is	*1 answer*
That helps to renovate rustici	*1 answer*
Nature oriented	*2 answers*
More respectfull towards nature and inhabitants	*9 answers*
Less day tourists	*3 answers*
More overnight tourism	*3 answers*
Control the mobility in the valley	*2 answers*
More tourism during winter	*1 answer*

How would you change the tourism ?
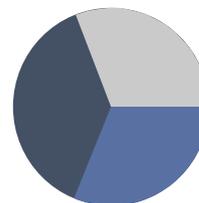
● *30% Change tourists behaviour*
● *40 % Find a way of exchanging with tourists*
● *30% Other answers:*

- Create adequate infrastructures
- No cars, only public transports
- No day-tourists, only quality tourism
- Tourits helping farmers

Martino Pedrozzi, Recomposition
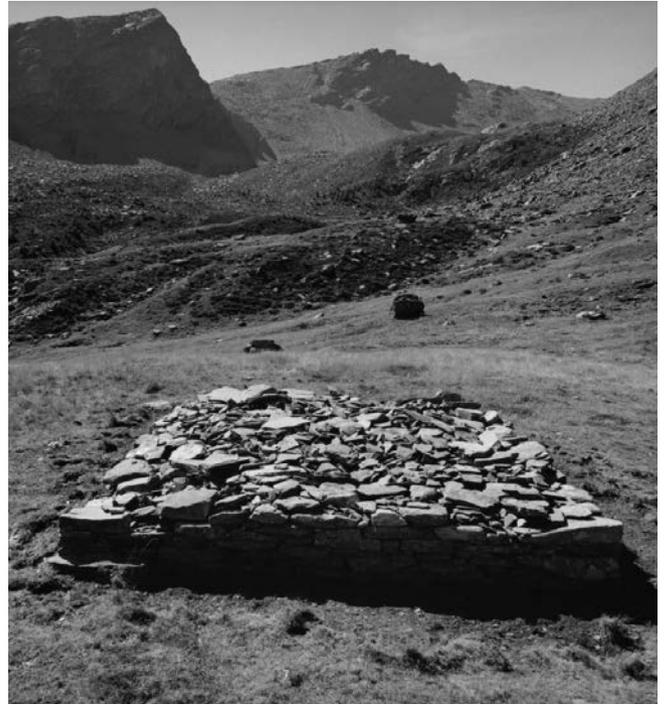
Fig.5.5.1

5.5 Designing Cortascio's Interface

A new interface between visitors and locals

The intervention will allow a new interaction between locals and visitors. Visitors would take part in the rehabilitation, so it is essential to precisely determine the balance between volunteers and professional workers' involvement.

A new interface for Cortascio

The project will rethink the connexion of the rustici in Cortascio with its exterior space and the pedestrian path. It will allow a coherent transition from inside to inside.

A new interface from Cortascio to Verzasca

The new program of Cortascio tries to reach an impact at the scale of the valley. Cortascio will become a center of diffusion for activities that help to maintain the territory, its architecture and help local inhabitants.

Reference

The 'recomposition' work of Martino Pedrozzi in Malvaglia valley demonstrates a possibility of intervention on rustici working with volunteers. He organized a workshop with his architecture students and another time with his friends and family. Together, they re-arranged the ruins to redefine the public space by filling what was once the interior of the buildings. This simple gesture maintains the landscape and brings awareness to the abandonment of the vernacular architecture in Ticino. The local inhabitants were grateful that Martino brought life back to their rustici, their ancestors' heritage, and a part of their tradition.

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LEARNING LOCAL SKILLS ➔ **RENOVATION/ REHABILITATION**

Stone work

By visitors/ second resident
By profesionals
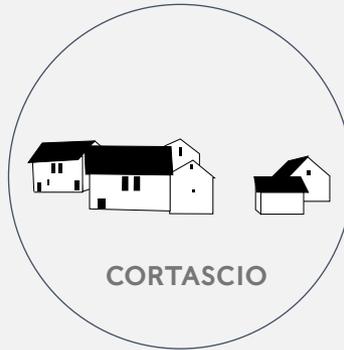
CORTASCIO

LEARNING LOCAL SKILLS

Stone, cheese making, knitting Workshops

ACCOMODATION

For visitors and familiy to take care of Cortascio

COMMUNAL SPACE

For visitors and locals
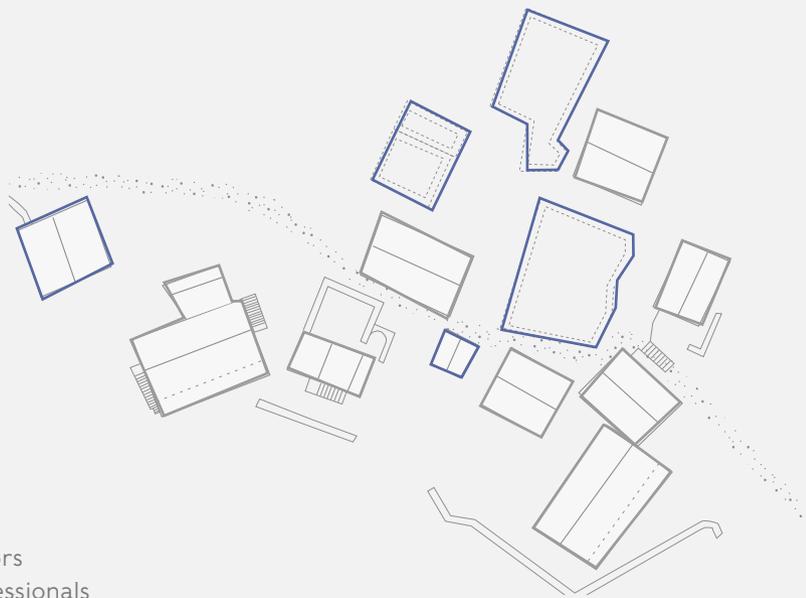
—— Work by visitors
—— Work by professionals

A new interface between visitors and locals

The project intends to bring together tourists, locals, and the territory in Cortascio. The proposed program will be centered around activities that provide traditional knowledge of the valley, such as dry stone workshops, cheese making, and knitting. It will allow elderly inhabitants to have an activity while sharing their knowledge, and visitors could acquire new skills. Moreover, visitors would also participate in the rehabilitation of Cortascio. Thus, the first challenge of the project is to have a balanced implication between the visitors and professional workers. This concept will dictate the design of the project. When working with volunteers, one can't expect the same quality in the result as professional work. It is essential to choose the tasks done by the visitors carefully. Working with volunteers also implicates a different construction schedule. The most productive time would be during the tourism influx peak from April to October. Cortascio should be renovated step by step according to volunteers' availability and starting with buildings having essential functions, such as accommodation. The hamlet should have certain flexibility regarding the buildings' program due to the significant difference in the pace of life between winter and summer. Most of the second residencies and visitors' accommodations in the valley are empty during the winter. Cortascio will make the space available for local inhabitants.

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Estimated number of day-tourists
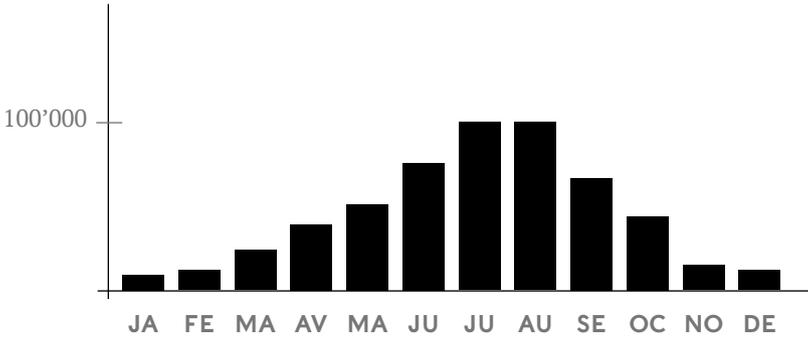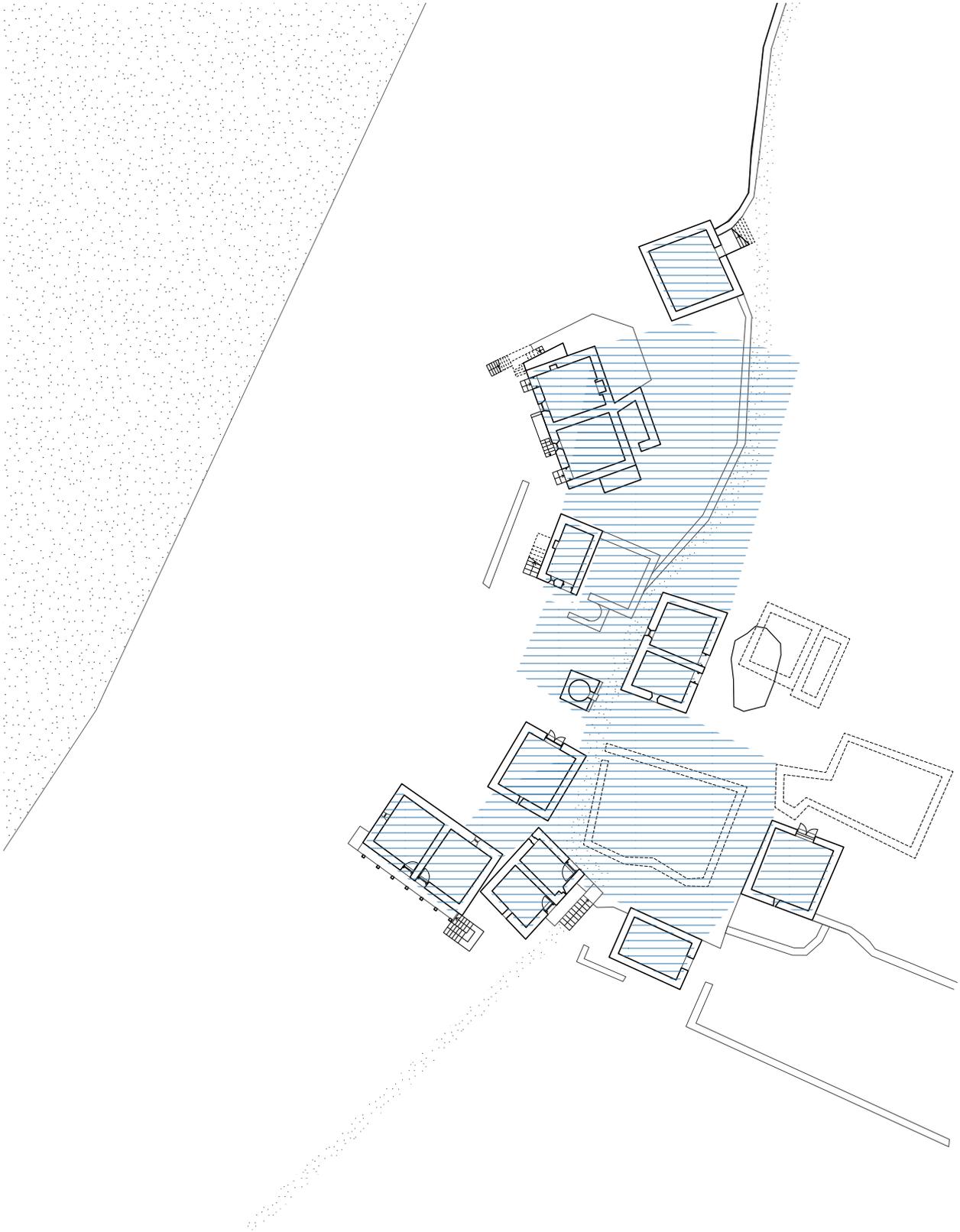
A new interface for Cortascio

In the current situation, the pedestrian path goes through the hamlet, opposing tourists' flux to the dormant rustici. The second challenge of the site is to design an intervention inviting tourists to look at the 'rustici' differently and, by extension, at the heritage of Verzasca. Day tourists usually see the 'rustici' from the outside, and longer-stay visitors see them as charming holiday homes. In Cortascio, the hamlet will be united by rethinking each building and the in-between spaces. The buildings have multiple entrances oriented in various directions, due to their position in the slopes, and intervening in the outdoor area could create a more coherent whole. The hamlet will become an interface between visitors, locals, and the environment by designing a new transition between interior and exterior and rethinking the circulation.

Volunteers and professional workers will rehabilitate the rustici. As seen in the previous detailed analysis of the site, the buildings are in different decay states. The design project will define various strategies to restore the buildings depending on their conditions and their new functions. The state of the building will also determine the extent of volunteers' involvement. For example, the transformation of rustici in advanced decay could be entirely done by volunteers as it mostly involves the re-arrangement of stones.

The design project will use local materials. Stone and wood are thus the most suitable choice. Stones can be taken directly on-site from fallen parts of buildings or ruins, and hay could be used for insulation. However, the need for insulation should be approached carefully as it changes the interior aspect of the buildings and might not always be necessary.

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SECOND
RESIDENCY

LOCAL
INHABITANTS

Second
resident
renovating

Day
visitors
transporting
hay

FARMERS

RUINS

Skilled
visitors
workshop

Skilled
visitors
helping

144

going to
gathering
space

LOCAL
INHABITANTS
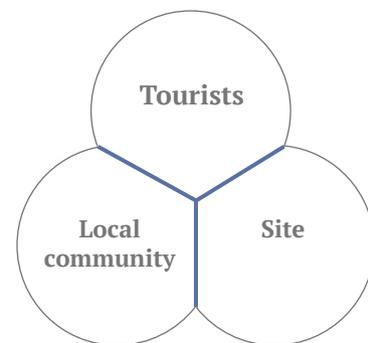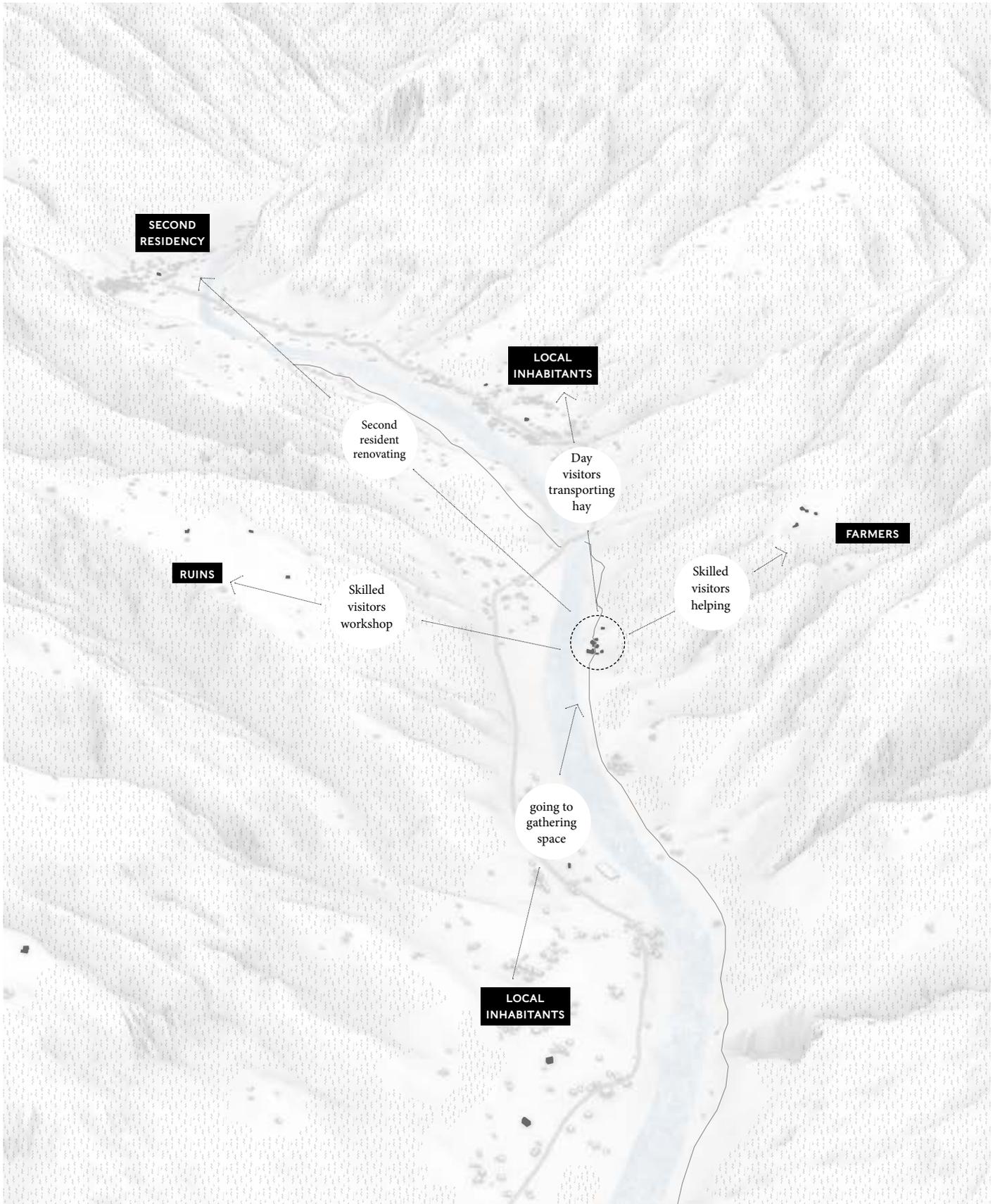
A new interface from Cortascio to Verzasca

Through its new functions and the renovation itself, Cortascio will teach visitors new skills, used to have an impact on the scale of the valley. The ruins in Verzasca could be re-arranged through workshops organized by the hamlet with professionals and volunteers. The owners of rustici used as second residencies could also benefit from their newly acquired skills by operating small maintenance work on their buildings. Cortascio will also have a workshop that allows interested visitors to learn skills regarding the pastures. When they come back to the valley, they could experience life in the pastures by helping the farmers. The hiking day-tourists passing through Cortascio will, if they wish, transport small things such as hay. Local inhabitants would benefit from Cortascio through visitors' help and new interaction by teaching

tourists some local skills. Moreover, Cortascio will offer communal spaces for the inhabitants to meet or do activities.

In Cortascio, tourists would become active visitors and enrich their experience by contributing and learning about the tradition of Verzasca. The day-tourists would be interrupted in their gaze and confronted to the reality in Verzasca: It is not just a beautiful place where time is stopped; it is a place where inhabitants live, with their traditions and care for their territory.

Cortascio aims to prove to tourists and local inhabitants that there are other tourism approaches, more beneficial and less intrusive. This evolution in tourism is not just a concern for economists and sociologists but also architects.

145
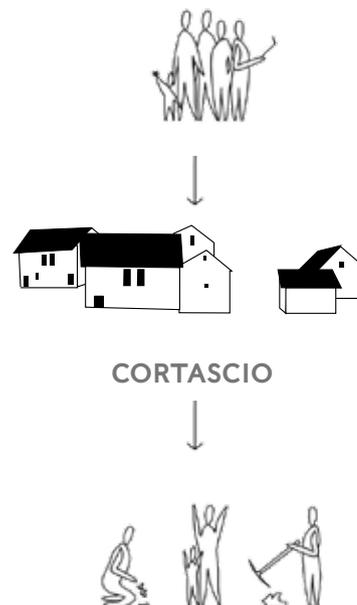
CORTASCIO

06
PROJECT
Perpetuating stone

PROJECT TIMELINE

1850s

Cortascio was a hamlet with permanent inhabitants living from agriculture. Multiple families were co-habiting together.

15 august 1924

A landslide provoked the departure of the local community and destroyed two buildings.

2021

Cortascio is now completely abandoned. The original pathway is used as the main pedestrian path for day-tourists.
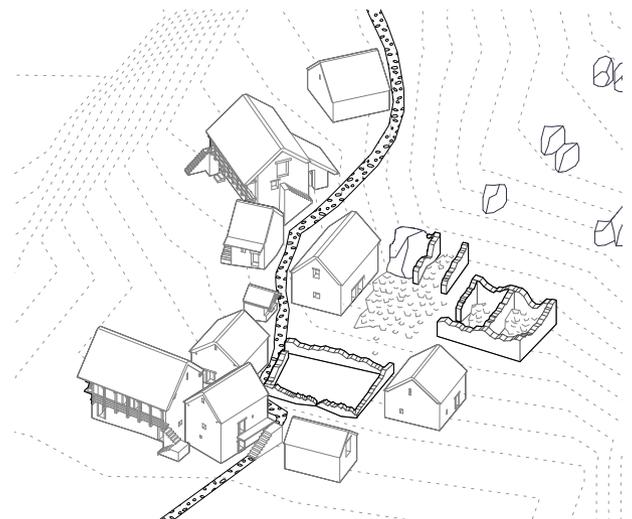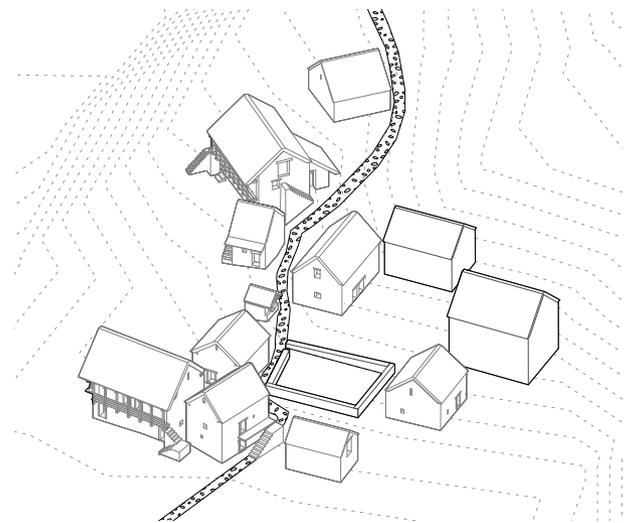
2022 - RENOVATING

The first step of the project consists of involving visitors with the renovation of the existing buildings and moving some stones to the upper part of the site.
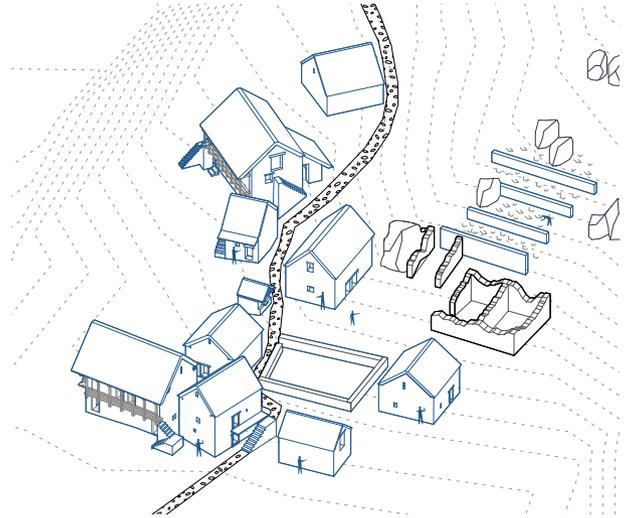
2023 - STORING

Three buildings serve as wood storage to dry it. The trees are cut in the valley, maintaining the territory.
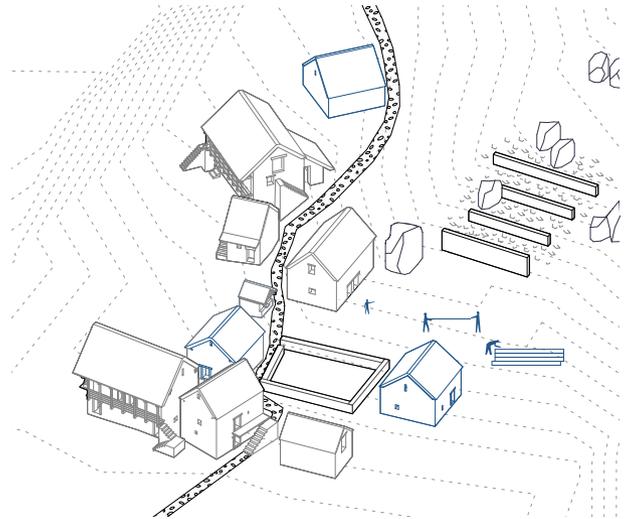
2024 - ADDING

Visitors explore the dry stone construction technique with the addition of two new buildings.
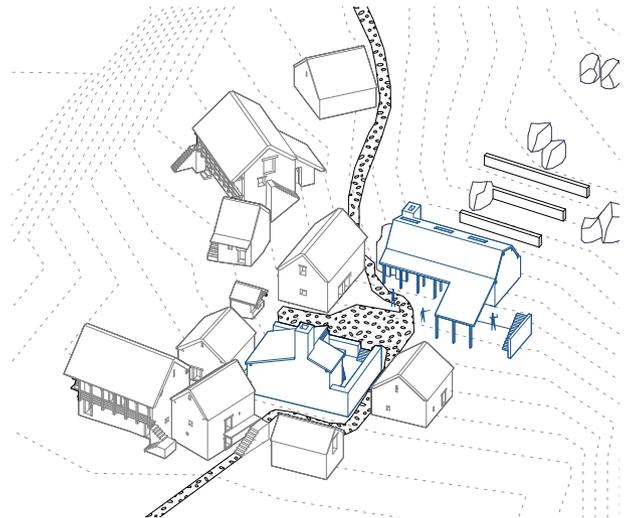
THE NEW CORTASCIO:
In between locals and tourists

Cortascio becomes a place where tourism is oriented towards the local community and environment.

A. Self-service shop
B. Accomodation
C. Shared bathroom
D. Communal oven
E. Workshop

F. Accomodation
G. Cheese workshop
H. Animal shed
I. Wool workshop
J. Communal kitchen

K. Reception/Library
L. Exhibition/Co-working
M. Communal garden

A. *The day tourists stop to buy local goods supplied by the inhabitants of the valley.*

G. *Tourists learn cheese making. It gives the tourists the possibility to help the farmers of the valley, after completing this workshop.*

I. *The elders of the valley teach the tradition of wool knitting to visitors.*

J. *Once a year, the communal kitchen becomes the heart of the chestnut festival. People gather to put the chestnuts on a fire that will burn for three weeks.*

K. *The reception helps to operate Cortascio. It registers the member and coordinates the renovations and volunteer work in the valley.*
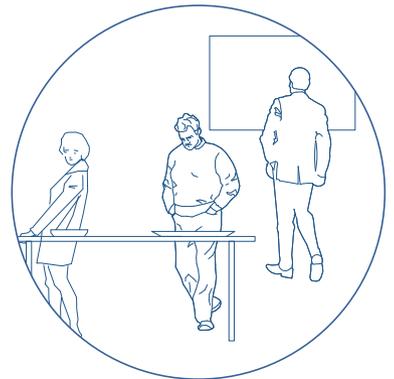
I. *The exhibition displays the work of local artists during the tourist season and transforms into a co-working space during the winter.*
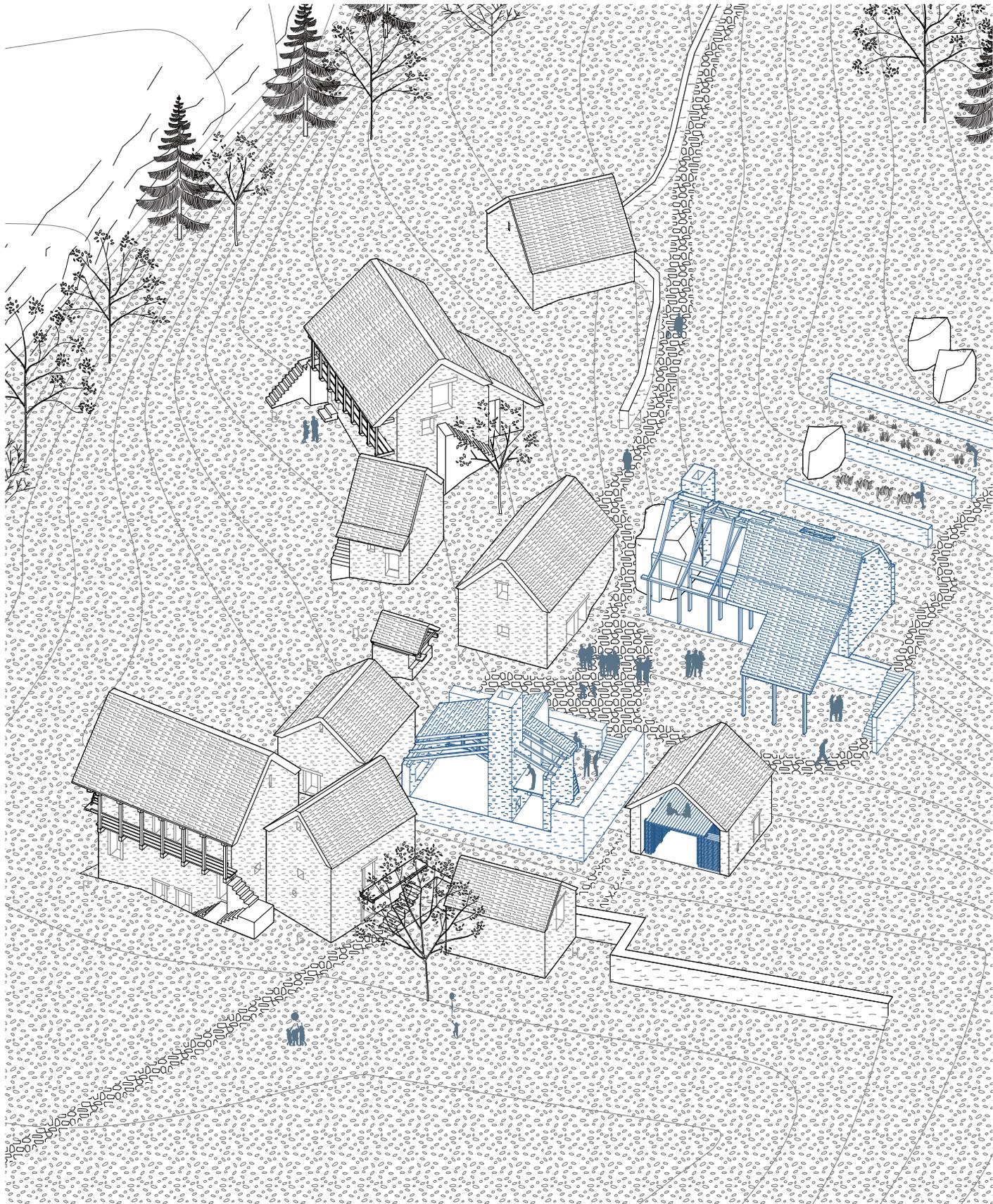
PARTICIPATORY CONSTRUCTION:

1. RENOVATING

Volunteers, assisted by local craftsmen, renovate the existing buildings. It consists of clearing them from clutter, replacing missing stones from the facades, and insulating some of them.
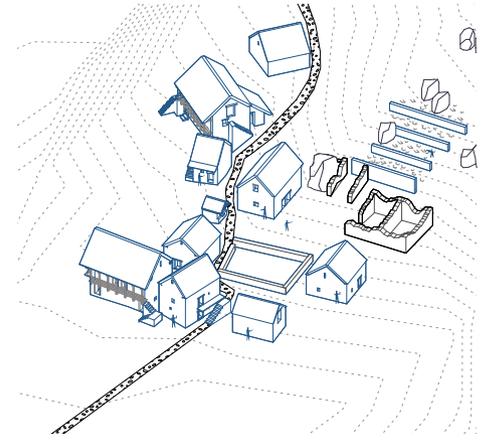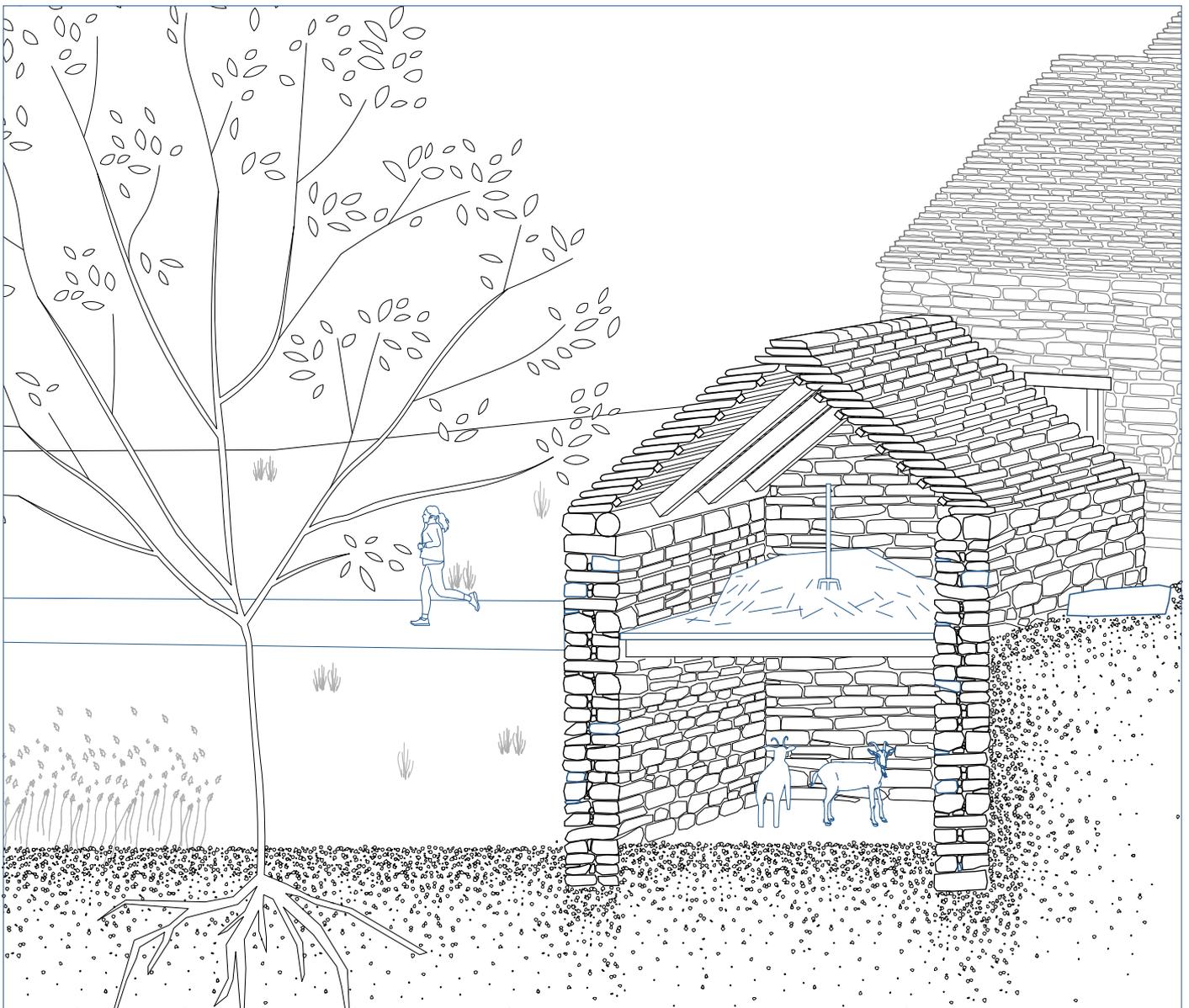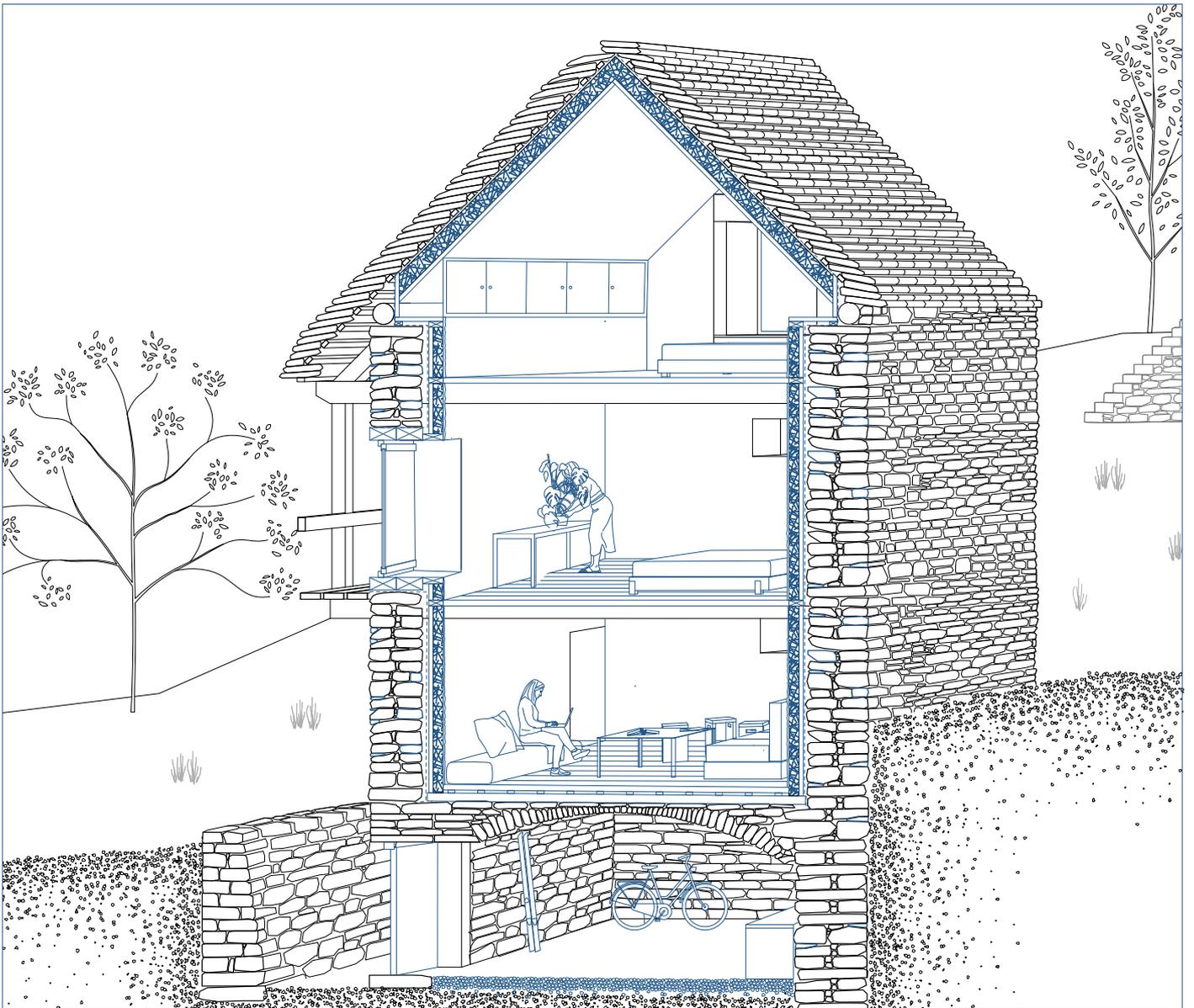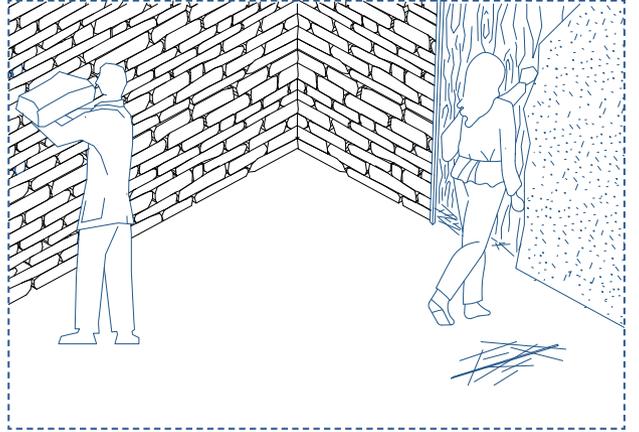
PARTICIPATORY CONSTRUCTION:

2. STORING

Some non-insulated buildings are used for workshops during the summer. An interior stacking of wood offers a new space and serves as storage. During the winter, the wood is used for further construction in Cortascio, or sold.
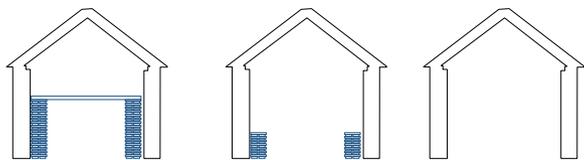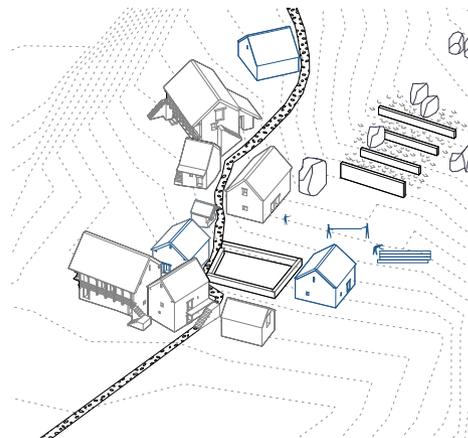
Tourism season

Winter
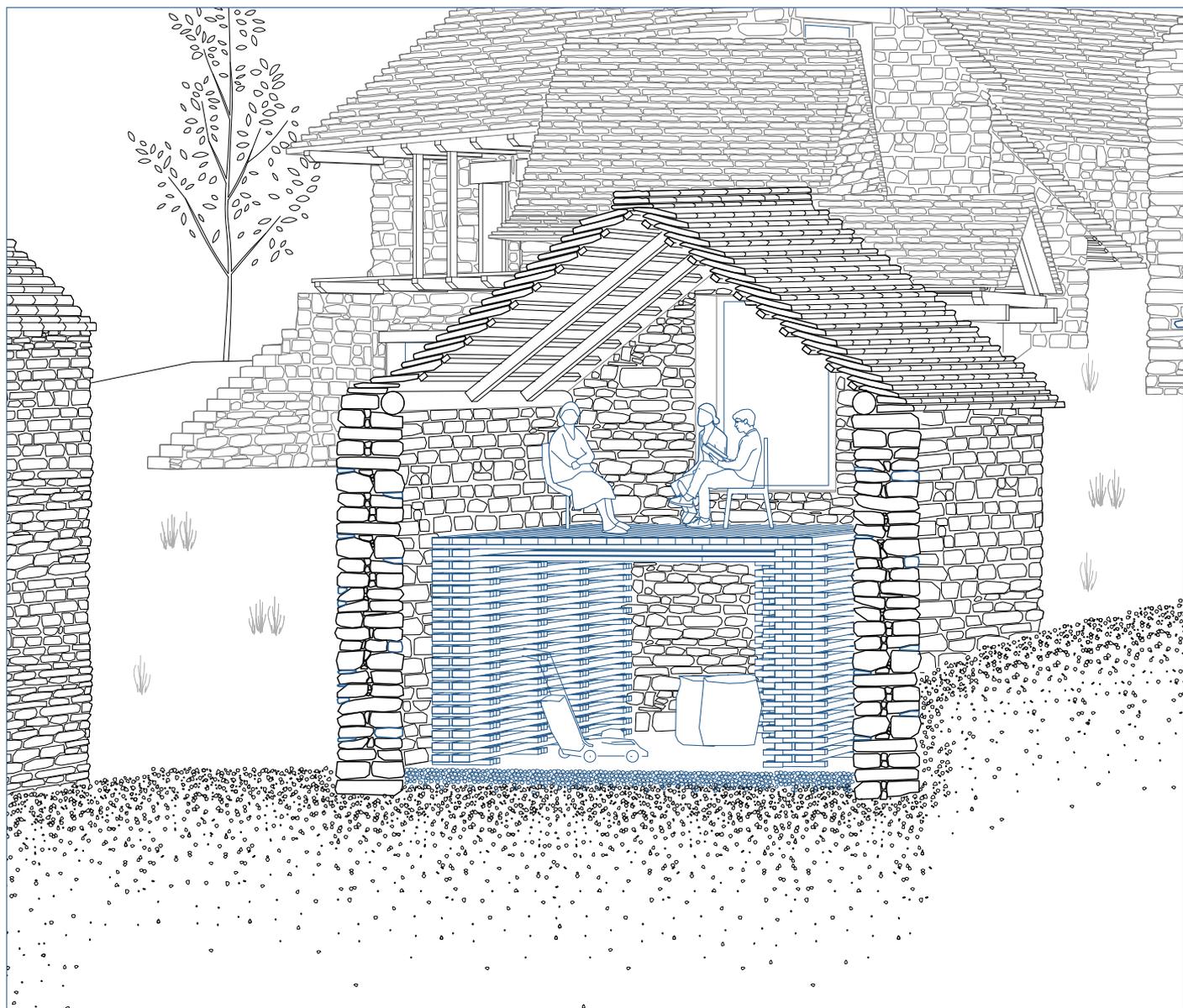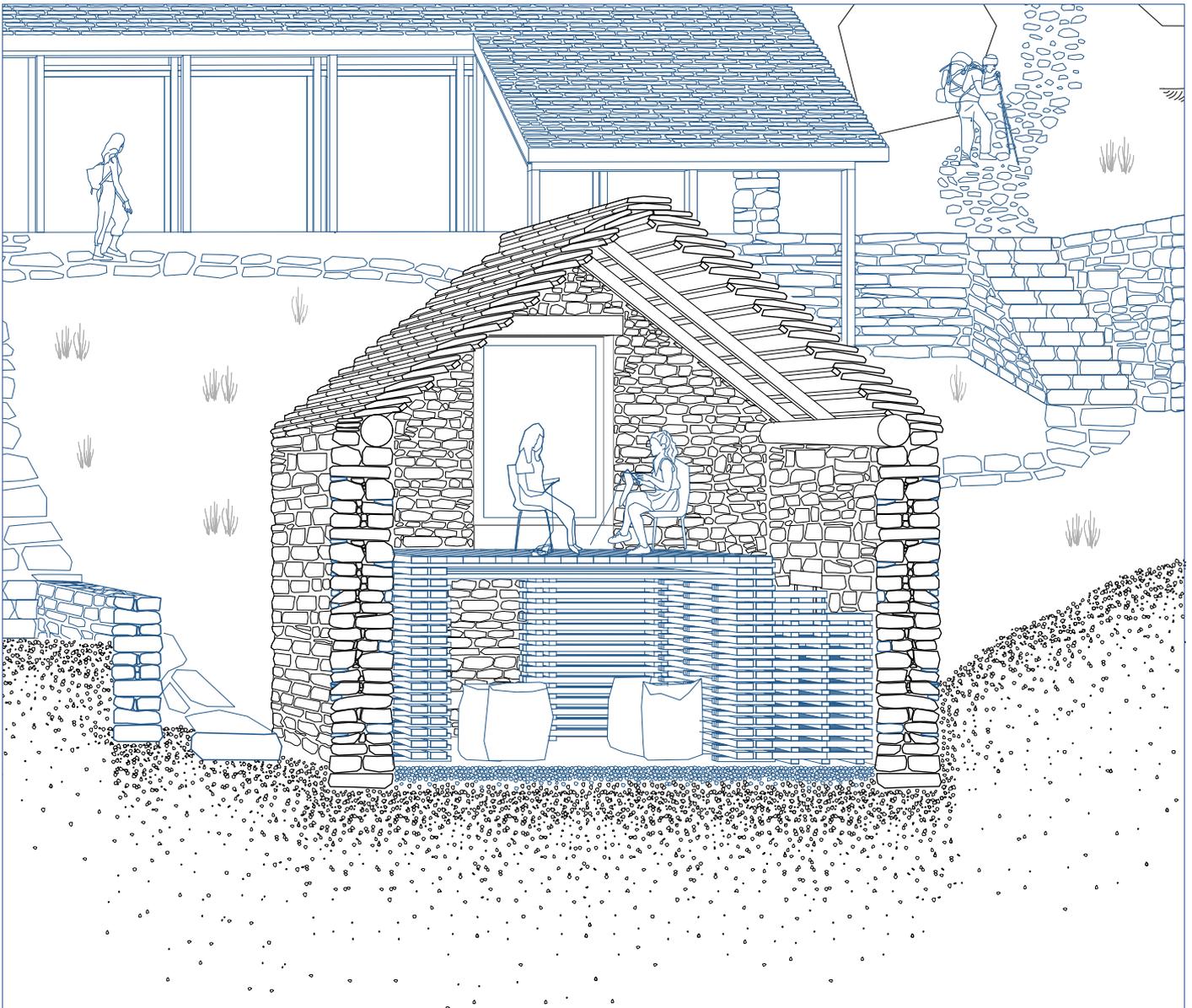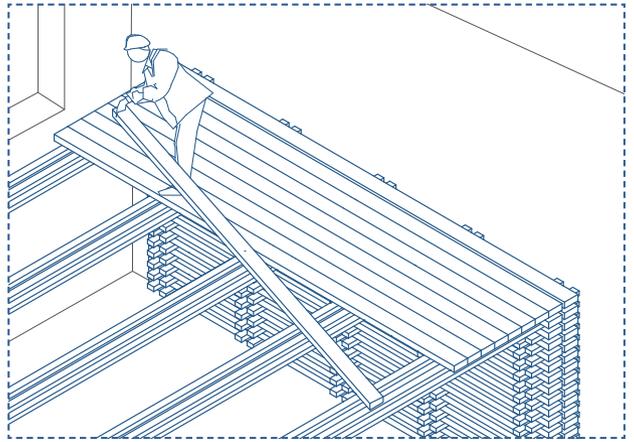
PARTICIPATORY CONSTRUCTION:

3. ADDING

Two new buildings are added to the village. They are taking advantage of the leveling done by the first inhabitants of Cortascio. The walls are in dry stones with a small part, near the chimneys, with lime mortar. The buildings are inspired by the vernacular architecture from the valley and demonstrate the possibility of using a traditional construction technic nowadays.
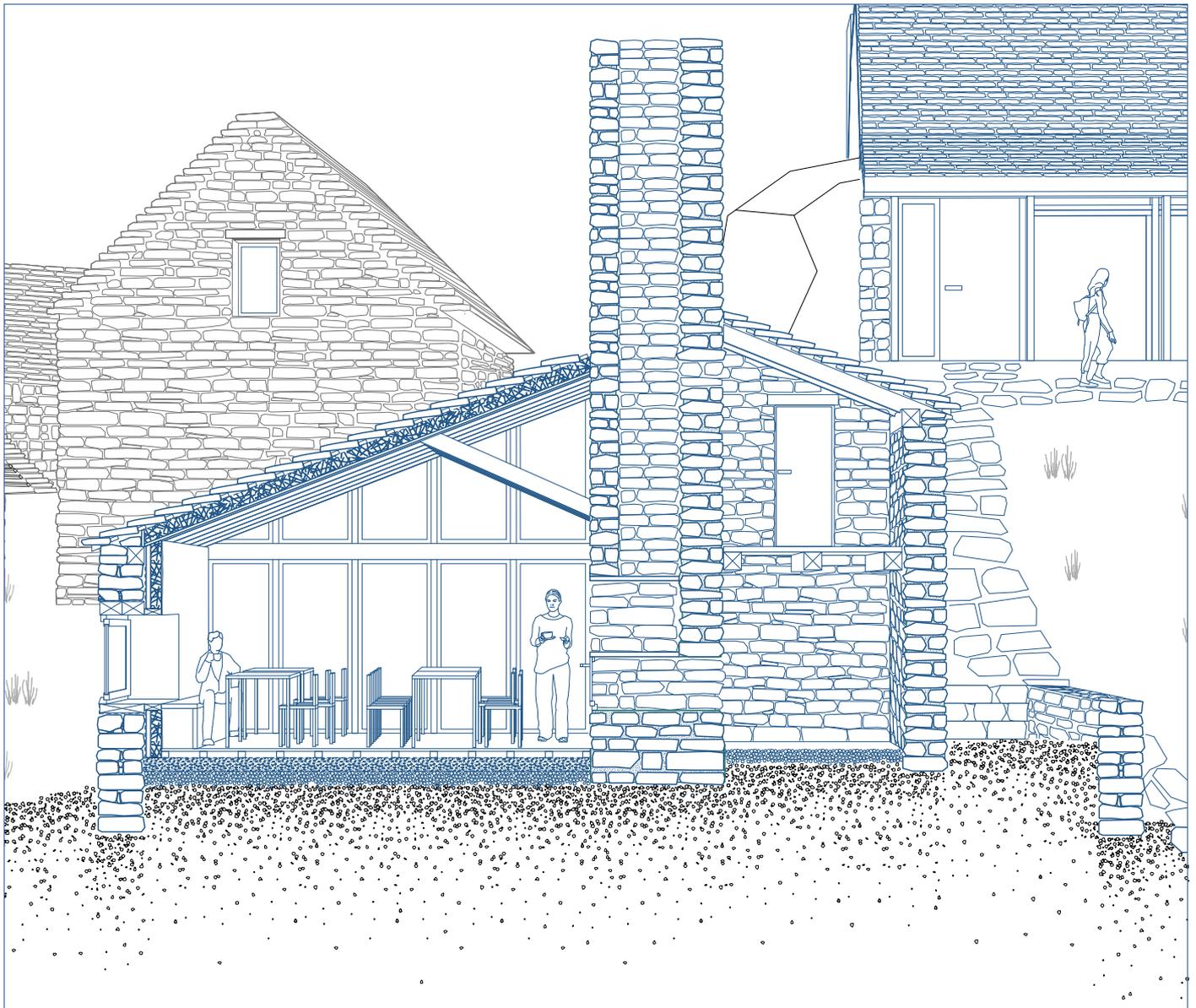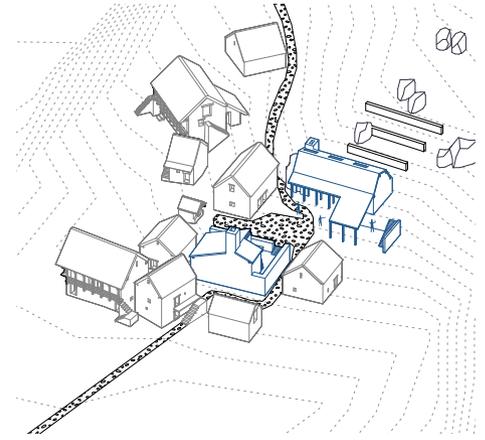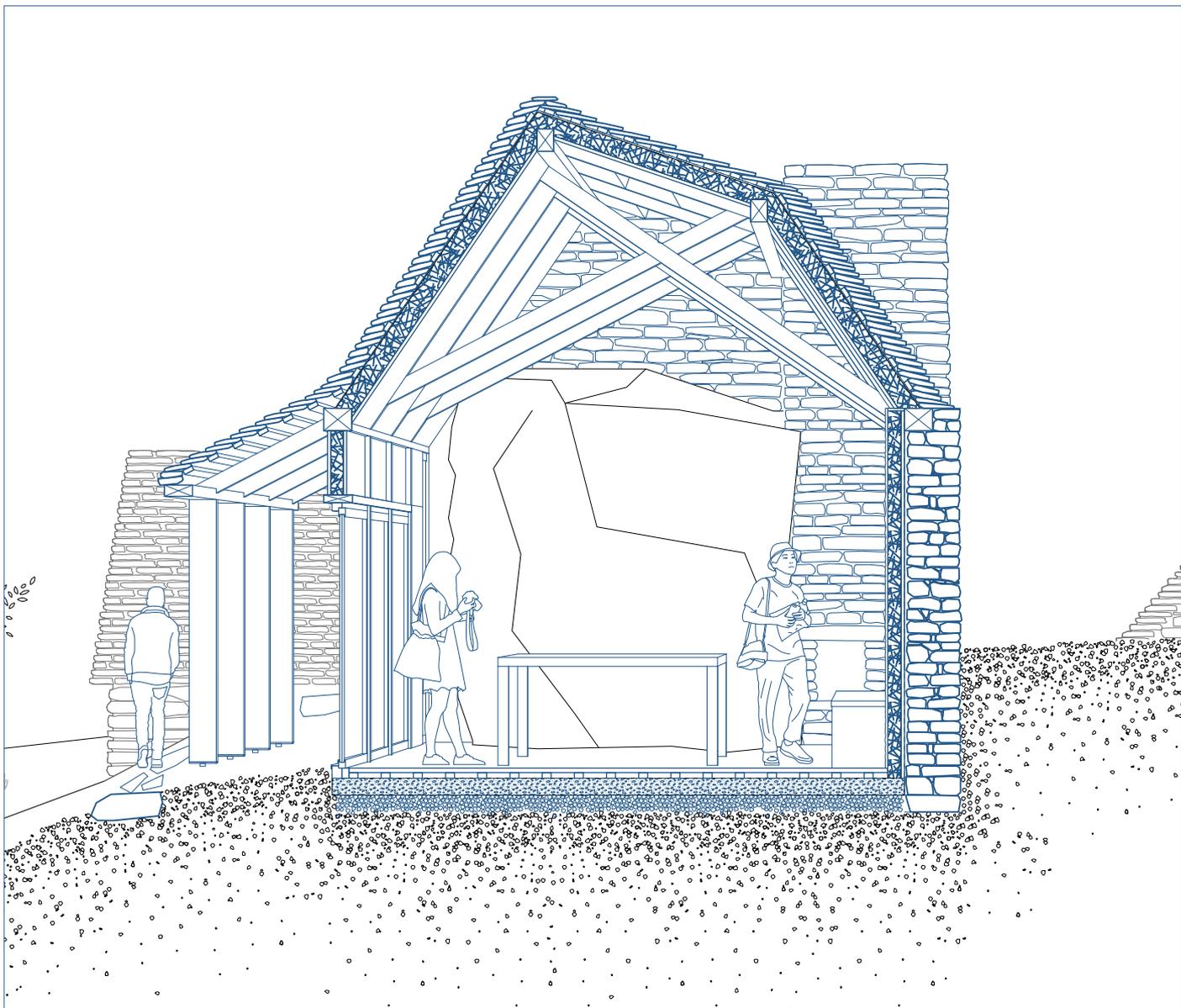
The communal kitchen
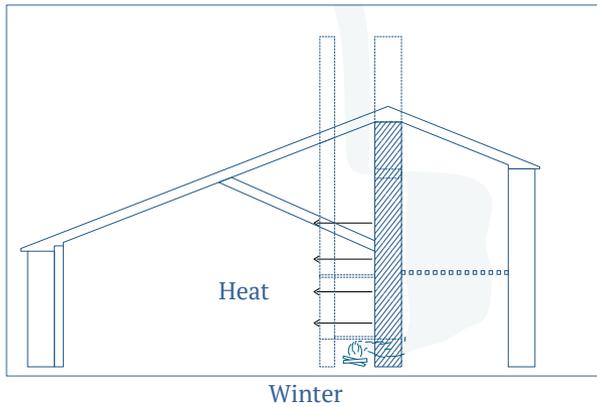
The communal kitchen becomes the heart of the village, a place for locals and visitors. It is used all year long. The building is designed as an homage to the traditional *'Grà,'* a building used to dry chestnuts.

The chestnuts used to be the primary nutrition for the inhabitants of the valley during the cold winter. In mid-october, after collecting the nuts, they would meet around the *Grà*, to start a fire that was maintained for three weeks. It marked the end of the summer.

In this new building, the fire is used for cooking and, once a year, for chestnut drying. The building combines traditions with functionality by using the long path of the smoke to heat the party wall, which acts as a thermal mass.
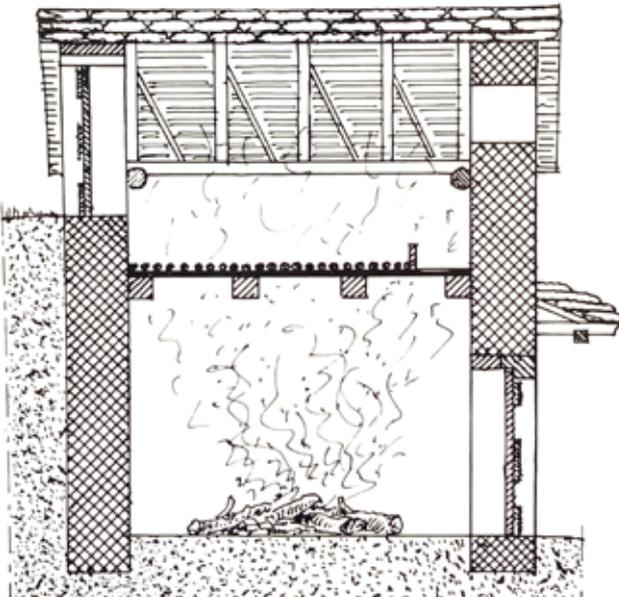
'Grà', traditional building for chestnuts drying, Valle Verzasca, Giovanni Bianconni, 1980

WALL

Stone wall with 500 mm
lime mortar

ROOF

Stones

| Joist | 40x80 mm |
Vapor barrier	
Hay insulation	200 mm
Slat	40 mm

WALL

| Dry stone wall | 400 mm |
Wood panel	30 mm
Vapor barrier	
Hay insulation	100 mm
Lime coating	15 mm

Exhibition/Co-working

Cold

Summer
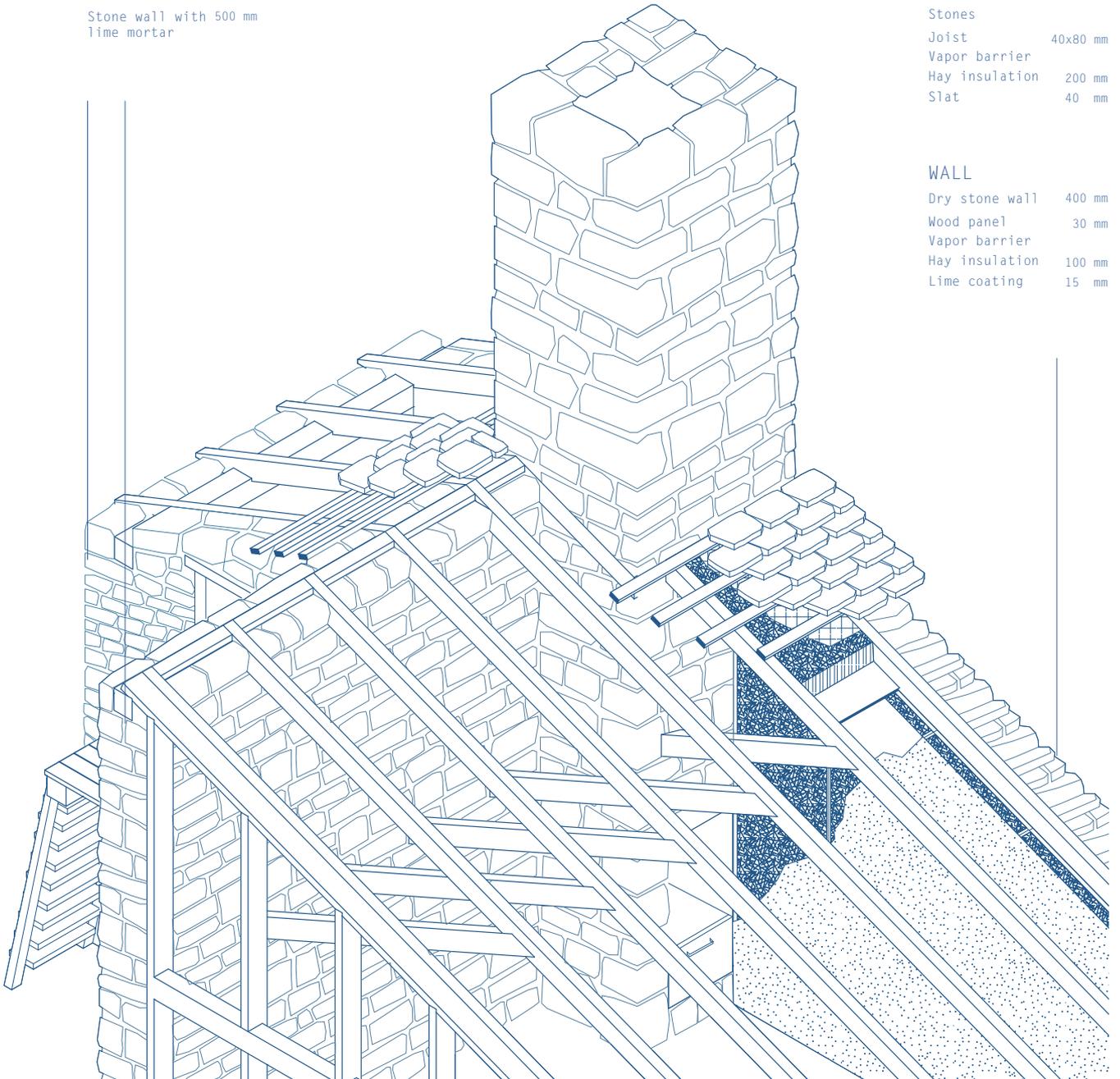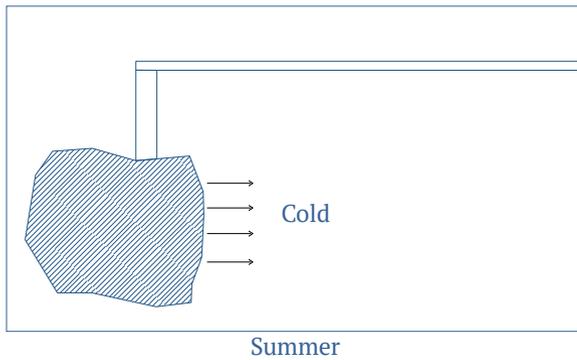
The second new building offers a generous multipurpose space. One of its walls wraps around the largest rock that fell from the mountain during the landslide in 1924. It uses the rock structurally and thermally, as it cools the space during the summer.

Many buildings in dry stone in Ticino were constructed around or under rocks. It offered cooler space and reduced the amount of stonework. The roof of the building embraces the shape of the rock, and its three slopes allow zenithal openings.
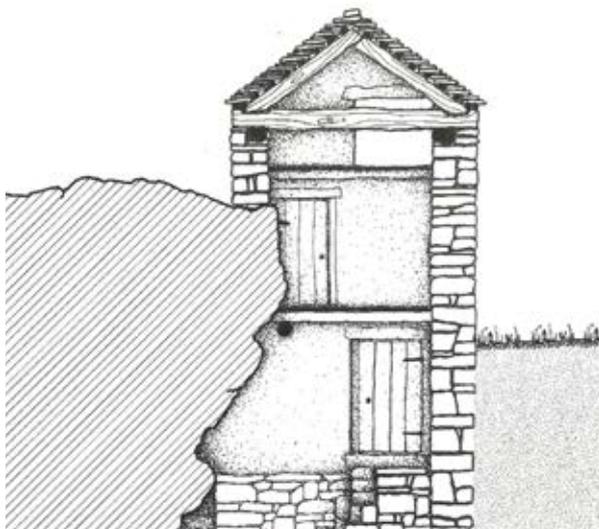
Cantina Binsacca, Moghehno,
Vivere tra le pietre, Museo di Valmaggia, 2004

WALL

Stone wall with
lime mortar

ROOF

Stones

Joist   40x80 mm
Vapor barrier
Hay insulation 200 mm
Slat   40 mm

WALL

Dry stone wall 400 mm

Wood panel   30 mm
Vapor barrier
Hay insulation 100 mm
Lime coating   15 mm

165
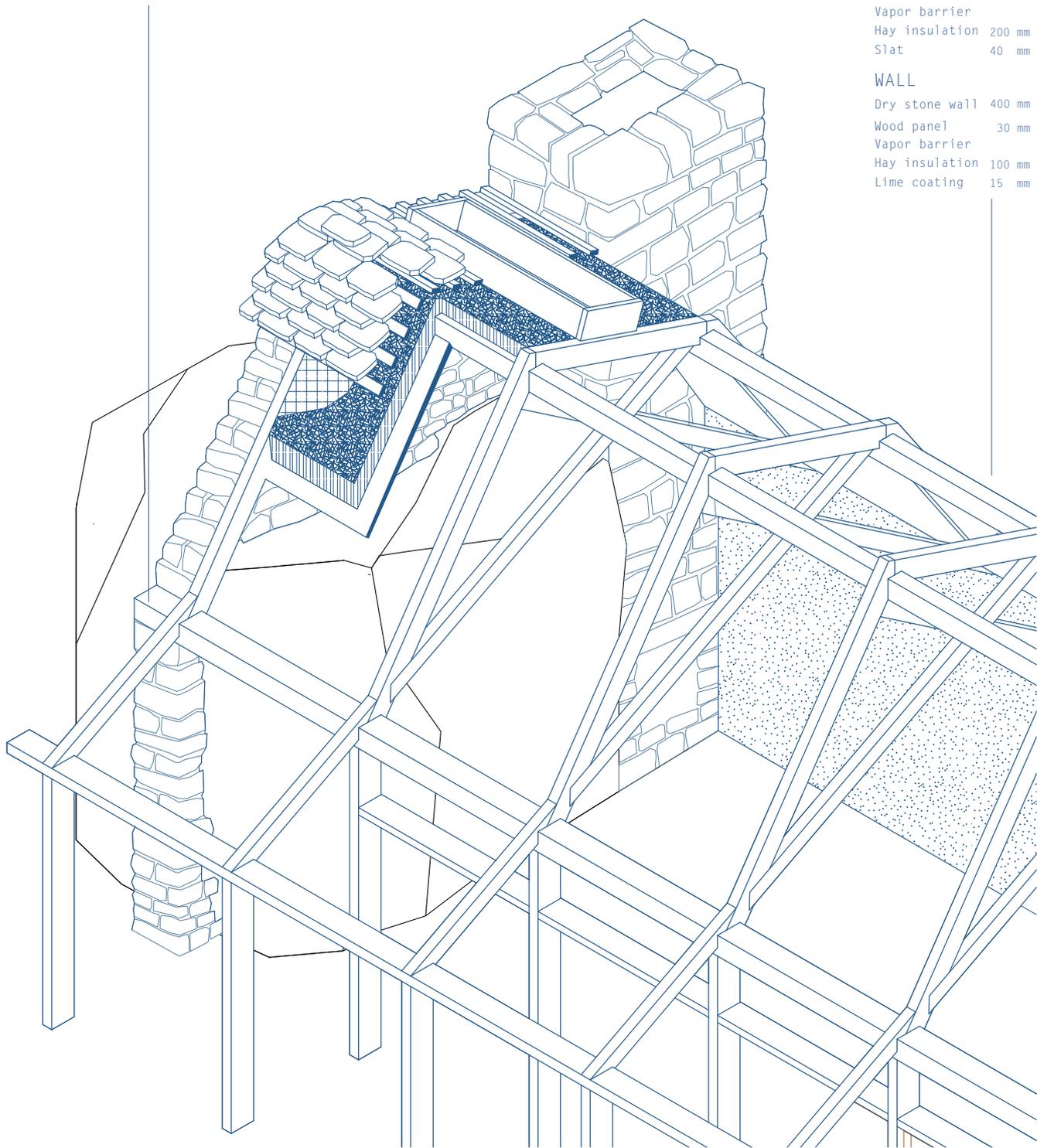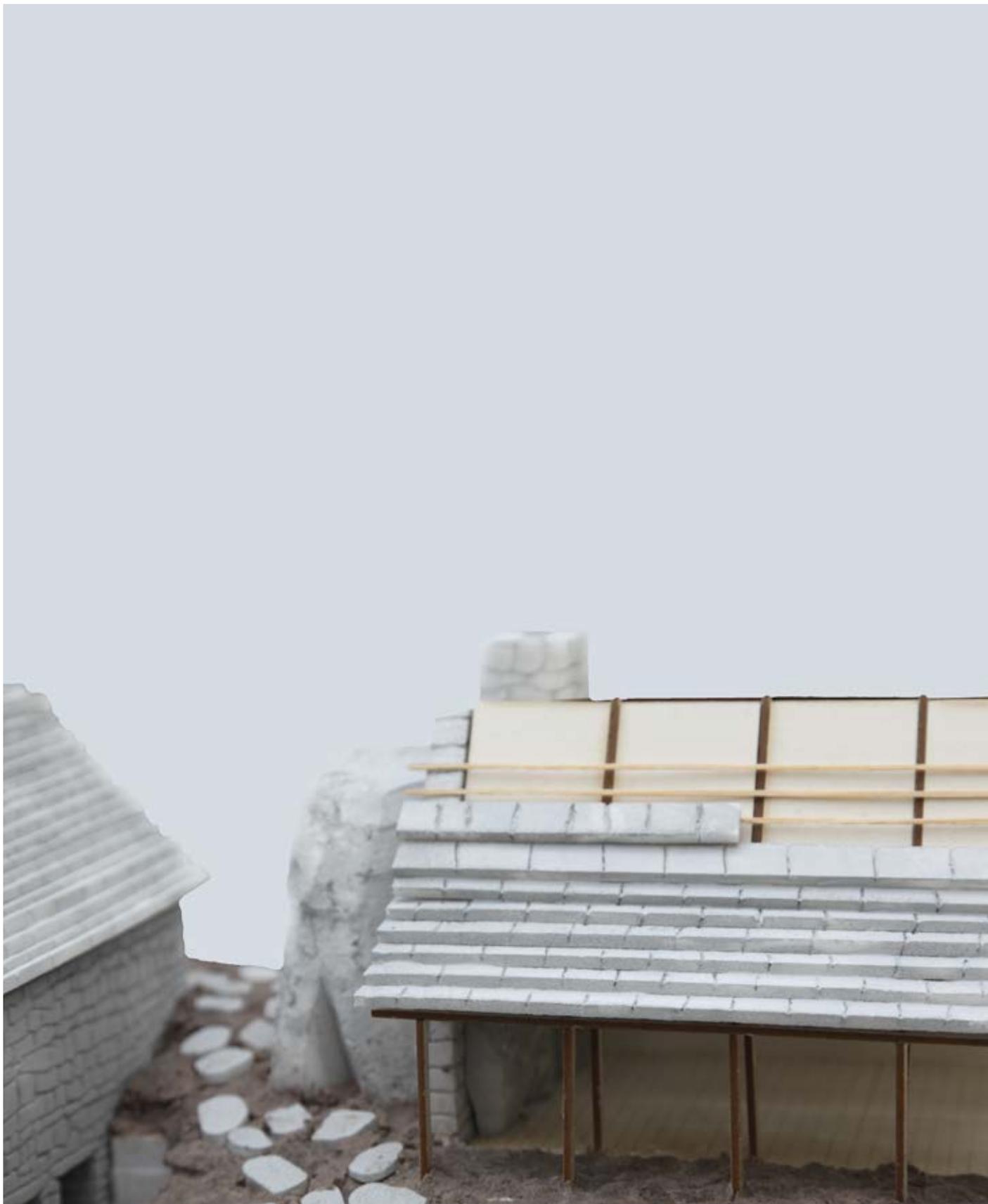
MATERIALS
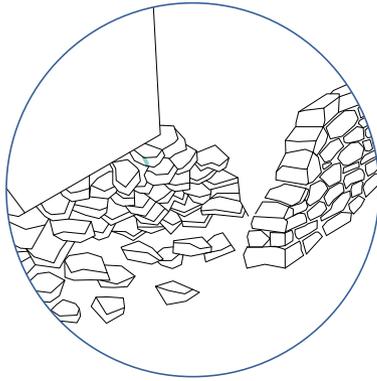
RUINS ON-SITE
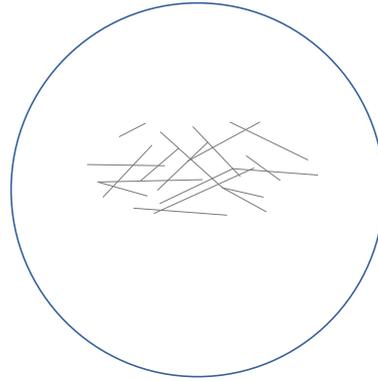


HAY ON-SITE

TREES FROM

RENOVATING

STOR

A. Only stones replacement
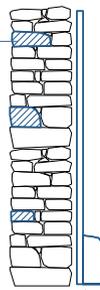
*B. Stones replacement and insulation*
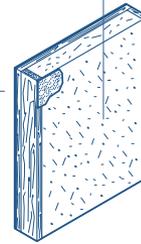

INSULATING PANEL

C. Sto replacem interior stack

*After the co renovation in C will still be s*

M PASTURES
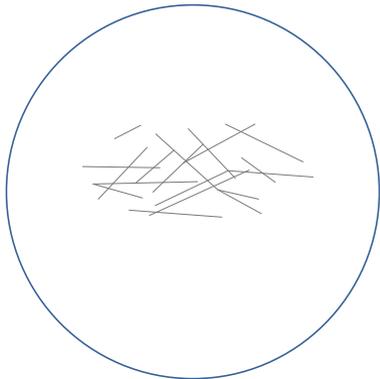
HAY ON-SITE
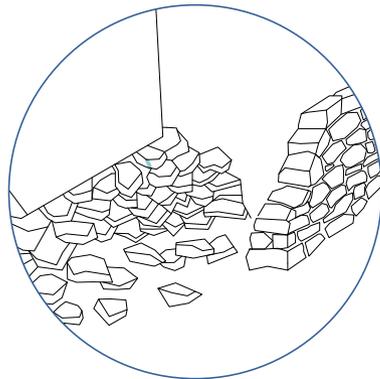
*RUINS ON-SITE*

RING

ADDING

ones
ent and
r wood
king
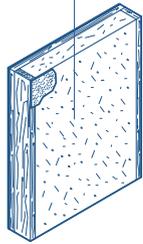
INSULATING PANEL
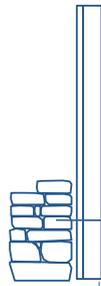
D. New dry
stone wall and
insulation panel

E. Stone wall
with lime
mortar

onstruction and
Cortascio, the wood
stored to be sold

WORKSHOP

10:00

12:00

16:30
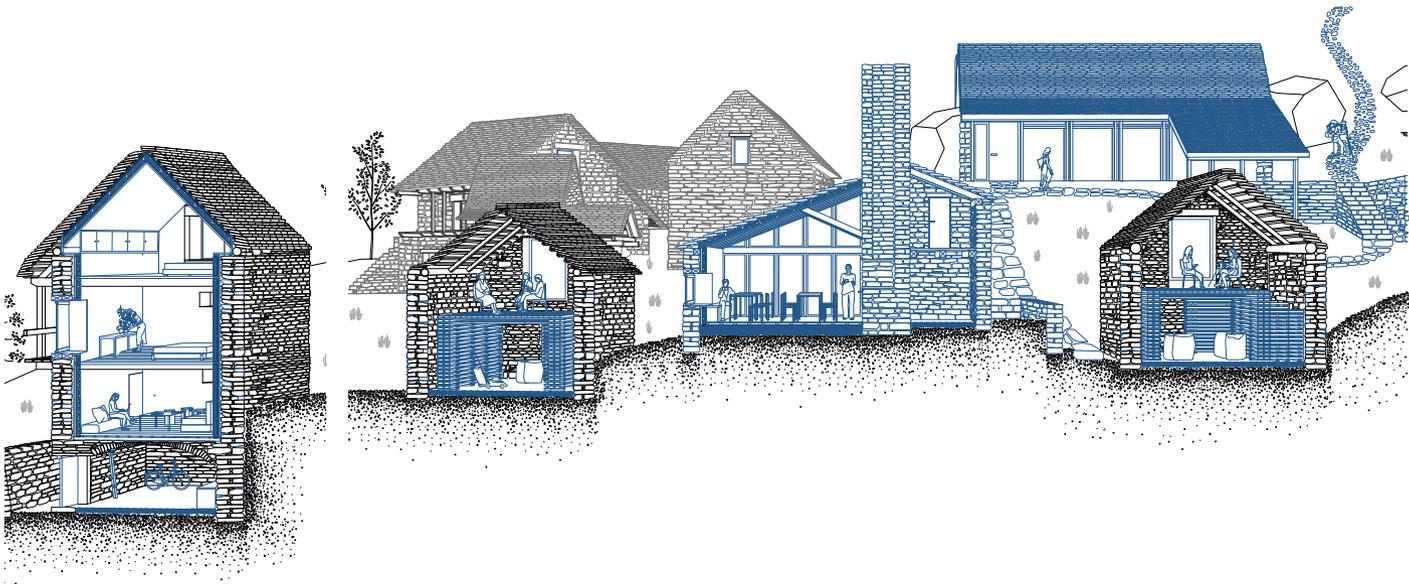
SECTION A-A'

SECTION B-B'

SECTION C-C'
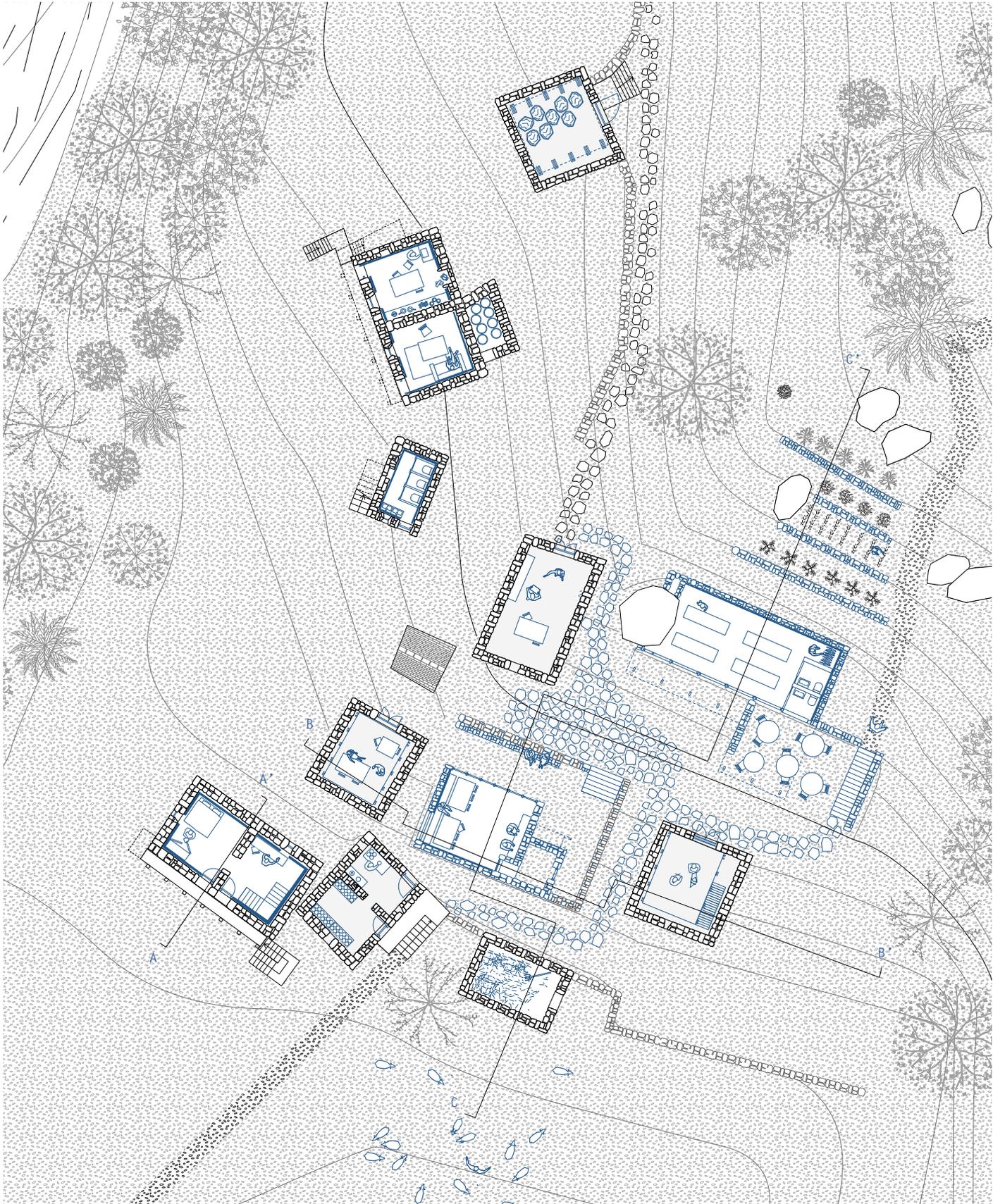
Only during
tourism season

DIFFUSION OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE VALLEY

1 . *Trees are cutted in the mountain, maintaining the territory*

2 . *New self service shop are implemented along the pedestrian path*
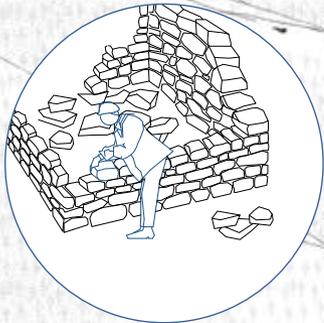
3 . *The many ruins of the valley can be renovated*
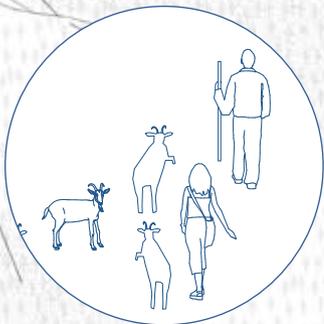
4 . *Some visitors can come to help the farmers*

SECOND
RESIDENCIES

RUINS

FARMERS

Main road
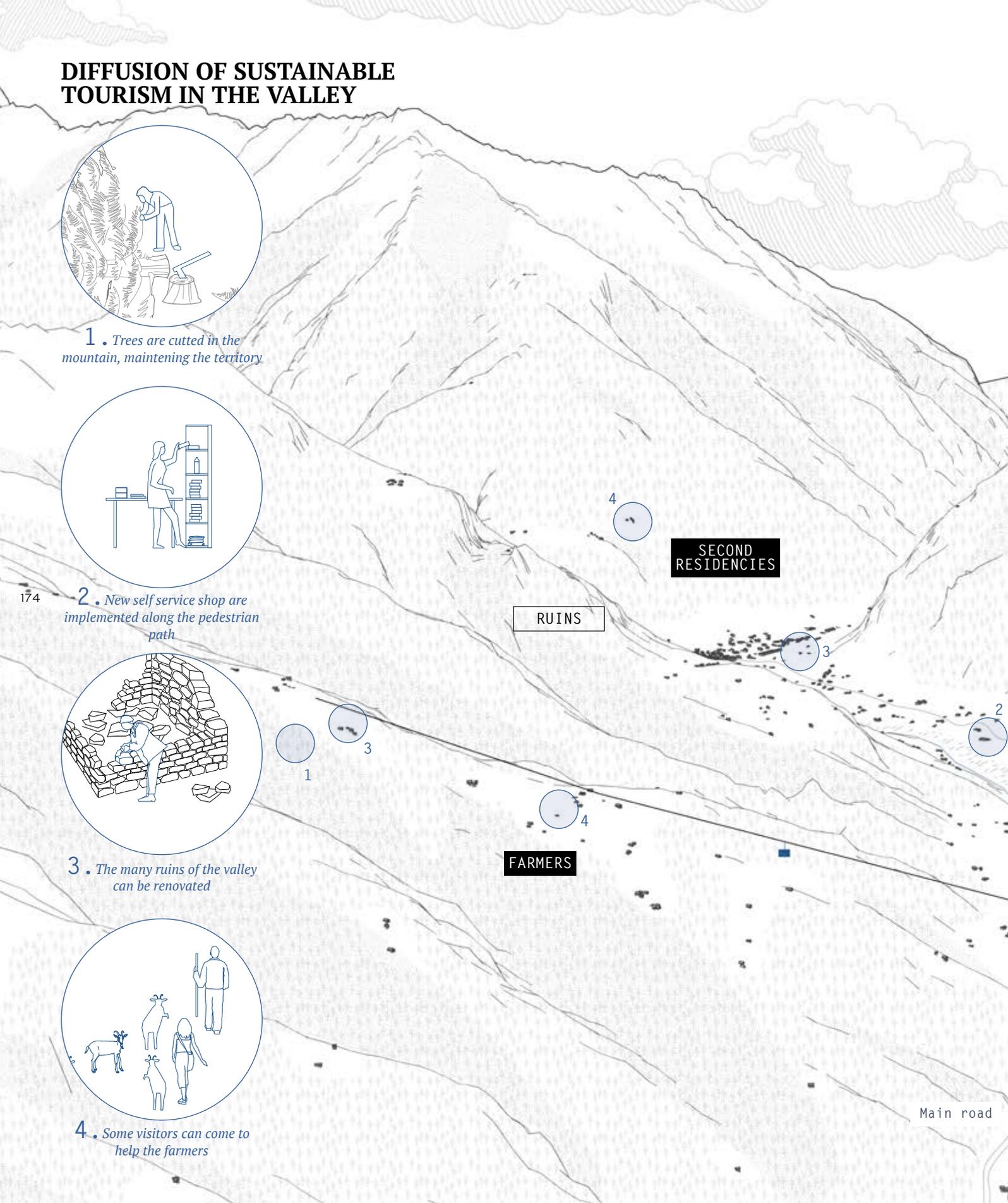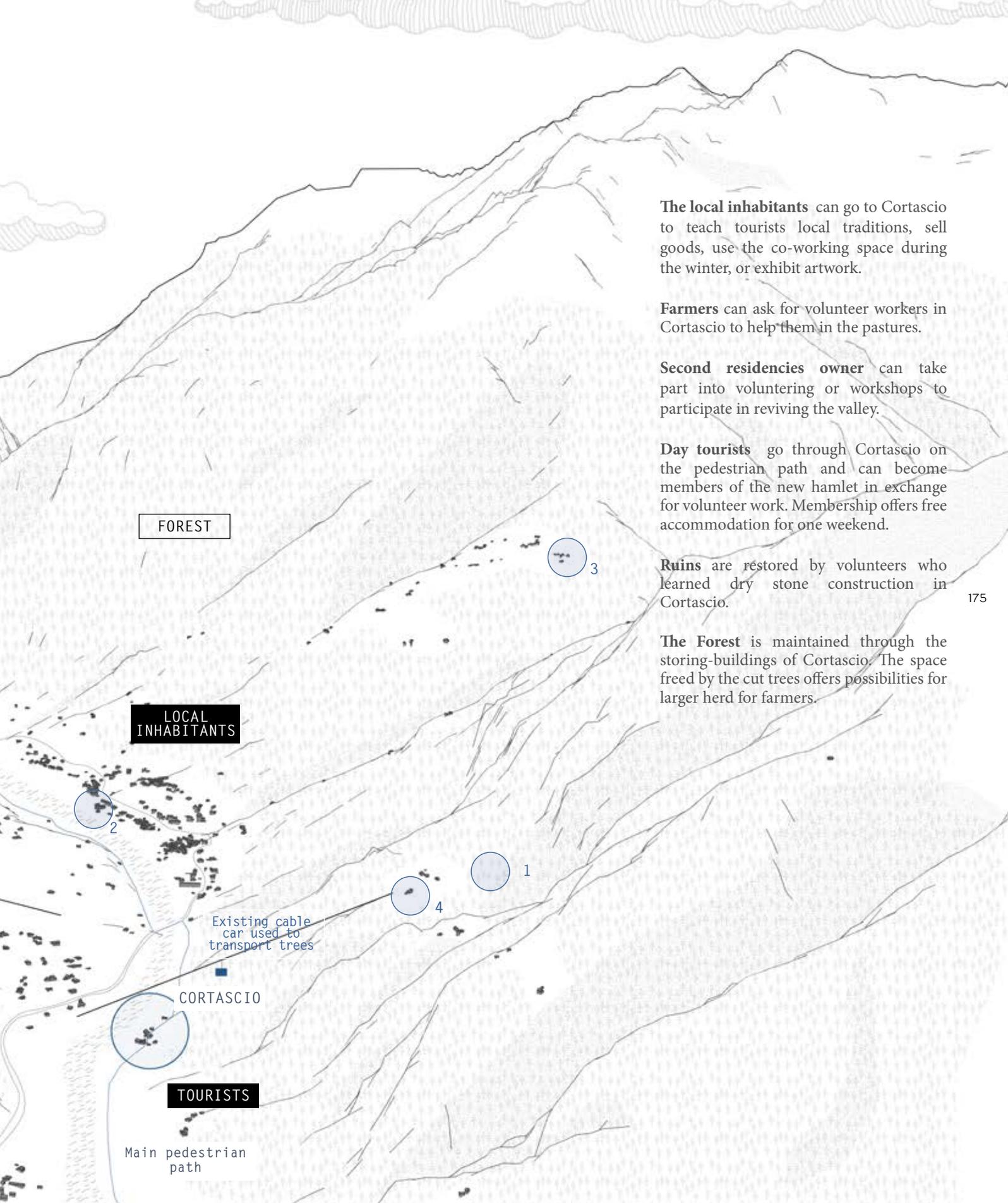
FOREST

LOCAL
INHABITANTS

2

3

1

4

Existing cable
car used to
transport trees

CORTASCIO

TOURISTS

Main pedestrian
path

The local inhabitants can go to Cortascio to teach tourists local traditions, sell goods, use the co-working space during the winter, or exhibit artwork.

Farmers can ask for volunteer workers in Cortascio to help them in the pastures.

Second residencies owner can take part into voluntering or workshops to participate in reviving the valley.

Day tourists go through Cortascio on the pedestrian path and can become members of the new hamlet in exchange for volunteer work. Membership offers free accommodation for one weekend.

Ruins are restored by volunteers who learned dry stone construction in Cortascio.

175

The Forest is maintained through the storing-buildings of Cortascio. The space freed by the cut trees offers possibilities for larger herd for farmers.

Books

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Owen, Dr C. and Hes, Dr D. 2007 Ecotourism in the architectural imagination, in Proceedings, Gazing, Glancing, Glimpsing: Tourists and tourism in a visual world, Eastbourne, UK.

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Images

02 TOURISM

Fig.2.4.2 kumano kodo
 https://thetravelhackinglife.com/kumano-kodo-pilgrim-trails-japan/

Fig.2.4.3 Shimanami kaido
https://travel.gaijinpot.com/shimanami-kaido/

Fig.2.4.4 Art setouchi.
https://www.peak-experience-japan.com/blog/137

Fig.2.4.5 Naoshima.
https://divisare.com/projects/366763-sou-fujimoto-architects-fernanda-castro-naoshima-pavilion

Fig.2.4.6 Miyajima
http://littleislandtakara.com/miyajima-itsukushima-shrine-daishoin-temple/

Fig.2.4.7 Echigo- tsumari
https://ocula.com/magazine/features/echigo-tsumari-art-triennale/

Fig.2.4.8 Great ocean road
https://www.traveller.com.au/guide-to-driving-victorias-coastthe-things-you-must-see-and-do-along-the-iconic-great-ocean-road-h1g351

Fig.2.4.9 Maria island.
https://eastcoasttasmania.com/zh/2017/12/leave-ordinary-life-behind/

Fig.2.4.10 Kings canyon
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lGWcqbYMpYI

Fig.2.4.11 krakani lumi
https://architectureau.com/articles/krakani-lumi/

Fig.2.4.12 Uluru
https://www.travelawaits.com/2553949/best-ways-to-explore-uluru-ayers-rock/

Fig.2.4.13 Mona museum
https://makeittasmania.com.au/fr/mode-de-vie/mona/

Fig.2.4.14 festival des cabanes
https://www.arts-in-the-city.com/2018/07/11/actu-le-joli-festival-des-cabanes-dannecy/

Fig.2.4.15 Ruta del peregrino
https://www plataformaarquitectura.cl/cl/02-89980/mirador-espinazo-del-diablo-hhf-architects

Fig.2.4.16 Plitvice
https://www.bouger-voyager.com/plitvice-guide-de-visite/

Fig.2.4.17 Chichen itza
https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/483/

Fig.2.4.18 Vals thermal bath
https://www.weekend4two.ch/fr/source-thermale-a-vals

Fig.2.4.19 Indemini.
https://www.myswitzerland.com/fr-ch/destinations/indemini/

Fig.2.4.20 Corippo
https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corippo

Fig.2.4.21 Valle Verzasca
http://snowtoseas.com/sonogno-switzerland-perfect-day-trip/

Fig.2.6.1 Venice by Martin Parr
https://www.italianways.com/italy-as-told-by-magnums-photographers/

Fig.2.6.2 Nanotourism
https://nanotourism.aaschool.ac.uk/#/alternative-moray/

Fig.2.6.3 Nanotourism
https://nanotourism.aaschool.ac.uk/#/alternative-moray/

Fig.2.7.1 Nanotourism scheme
http://nanotourism.aaschool.ac.uk

03 TOURISM AND DEPOPULATION

Fig.3.2.3 Zermatt
https://meetings.myswitzerland.com/es-es/inspiration/zermatt/

Fig.3.2.4 Bosco
https://www.ticino.ch/it/commons/details/Bosco-Gurin-la-terra-dei-Walser/94048.html

Fig.3.2.5 Vals
https://www.awwway.ch/vals-escapade-dans-les-grisons/

Fig.3.2.6
Saint-Martin https://saint-martimmo.ch/saint-martin/

Fig.3.4.1 Buzzi, Giovanni, 1999 Locarnese, Bellinzonese 1, Riviera. Locarno: Dadò. p.191

Images

04 PORTRAIT

Fig.4.3.11 to Fig.4.3.13 RTS documentary https://pages.rts.ch/emissions/passe-moi-les-jumelles/8013320-passe-moi-les-jumelles.html

Fig.4.4.1 Buzzi, Giovanni, 1999 Locarnese, Bellinzonese 1, Riviera. Locarno: Dadò. p.185

Fig.4.4.2 Buzzi, Giovanni, 1999 Locarnese, Bellinzonese 1, Riviera. Locarno: Dadò. p.184

Fig 4.4.3 Buzzi, Giovanni, 1999 Locarnese, Bellinzonese 1, Riviera. Locarno: Dadò. p.197-199

Fig 4.4.4 to Fig.4.4.7 Buzzi, Giovanni, 1999 Locarnese, Bellinzonese 2, Riviera. Locarno: Dadò. p.267-283

Fig.4.4.17 Bianconi, Giovanni, 1980, Valle Verzasca, Locarno, Armando Dadò Editore p.36, 43
Bianconi, Giovanni, 1971, Ticino Rurale, Locarno, Società ticinese per la conservazione delle bellezze naturali ed artistiche p.20,43,55,81

Fig.4.5.1 Heidi https://www.peuterey-editions.com/?url=107-nouvelles-heidi---les-illustrations.html

Fig.4.5.2 David Herrliberger https://www.republik.ch/2020/06/09/die-falsche-katastrophe

05 THE SITE

Fig.5.2.1 Lassure, Christian, 2008, La pierre sèche, mode d'emploi. Paris: Eyrolles.

Fig.5.2.1 Lassure, Christian, 2008, La pierre sèche, mode d'emploi. Paris: Eyrolles.

Fig.5.3.1 https://weather-and-climate.com/average-monthly-Rainfall-Temperature-Sunshine,frasco-canton-of-ticino-ch,Switzerland

Fig.5.3.2 NOAA, National center for environmental information

Fig.5.3.4 WSL Unwetterschadens-Datenbank der Schweiz

Fig.5.4.1 https://www.verzasca.swiss

Fig.5.5.1 https://pedrozzi.com/it