

Indigenous Community Conservation in the Farma Valley, Southern Tuscany,

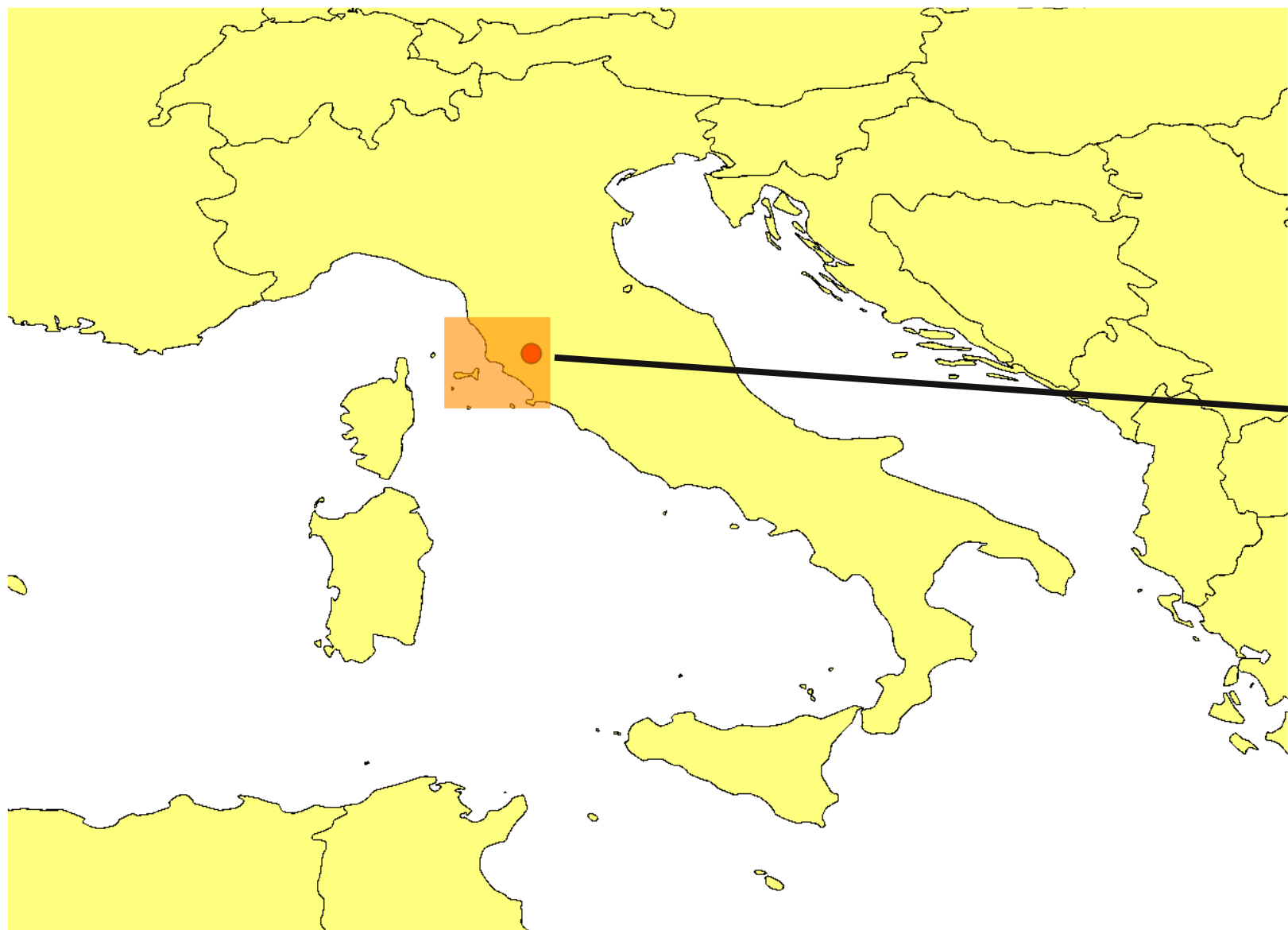
Andrea Giacomelli , Gregorio Neri, Alessio Serragli, Claudio Spinosi

Introduction

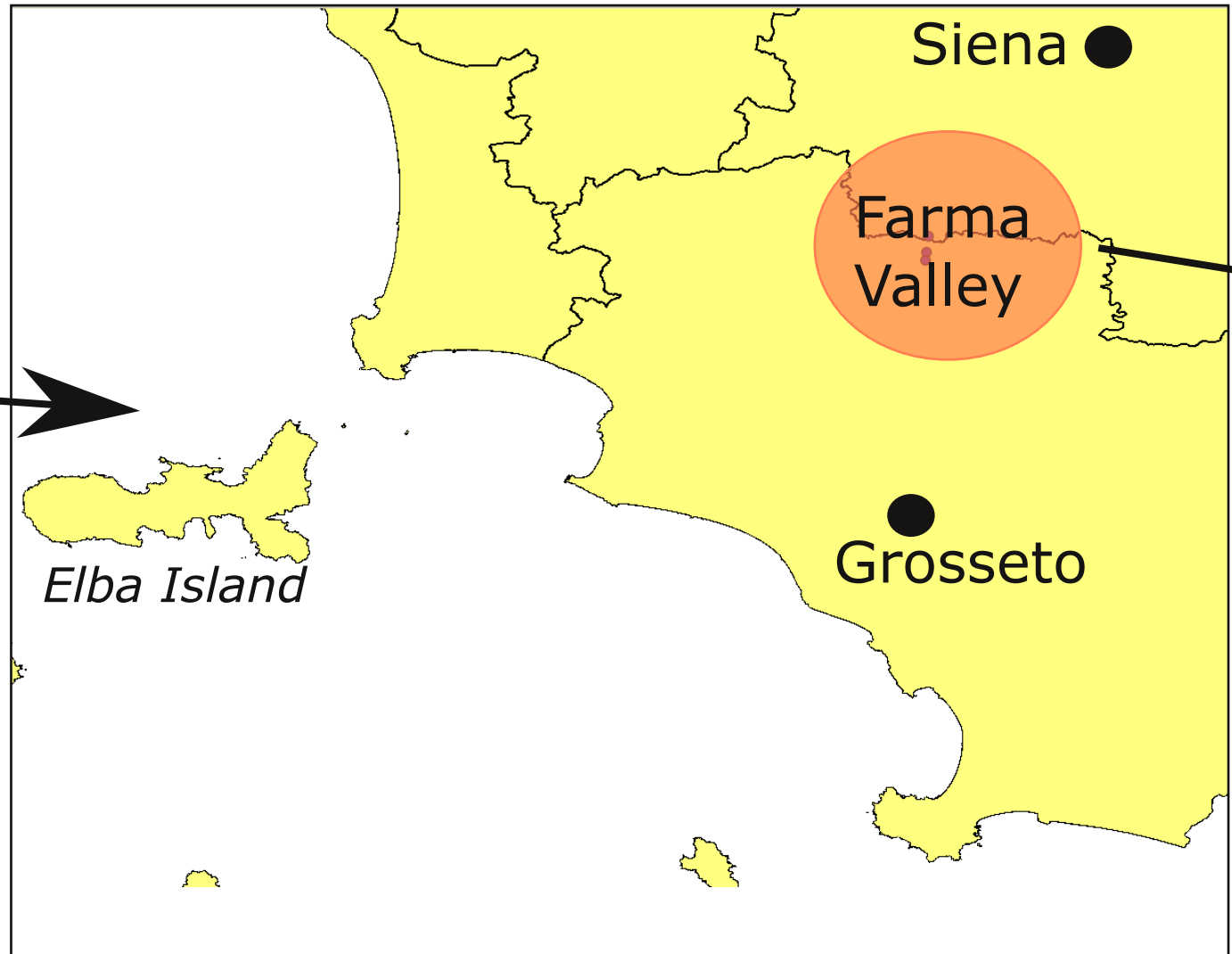
This poster presents experiences of indigenous community conservation from the Farma Valley, a location in Tuscany, Central Italy. Over the past four years, the combination of ancient practice and traditions and innovative technologies and approaches to land protection and promotion have generated very peculiar projects, some of which with international visibility. These experiences are also suggesting to local communities next steps in the conservation of their territory and, more in general, of their heritage.

Setting

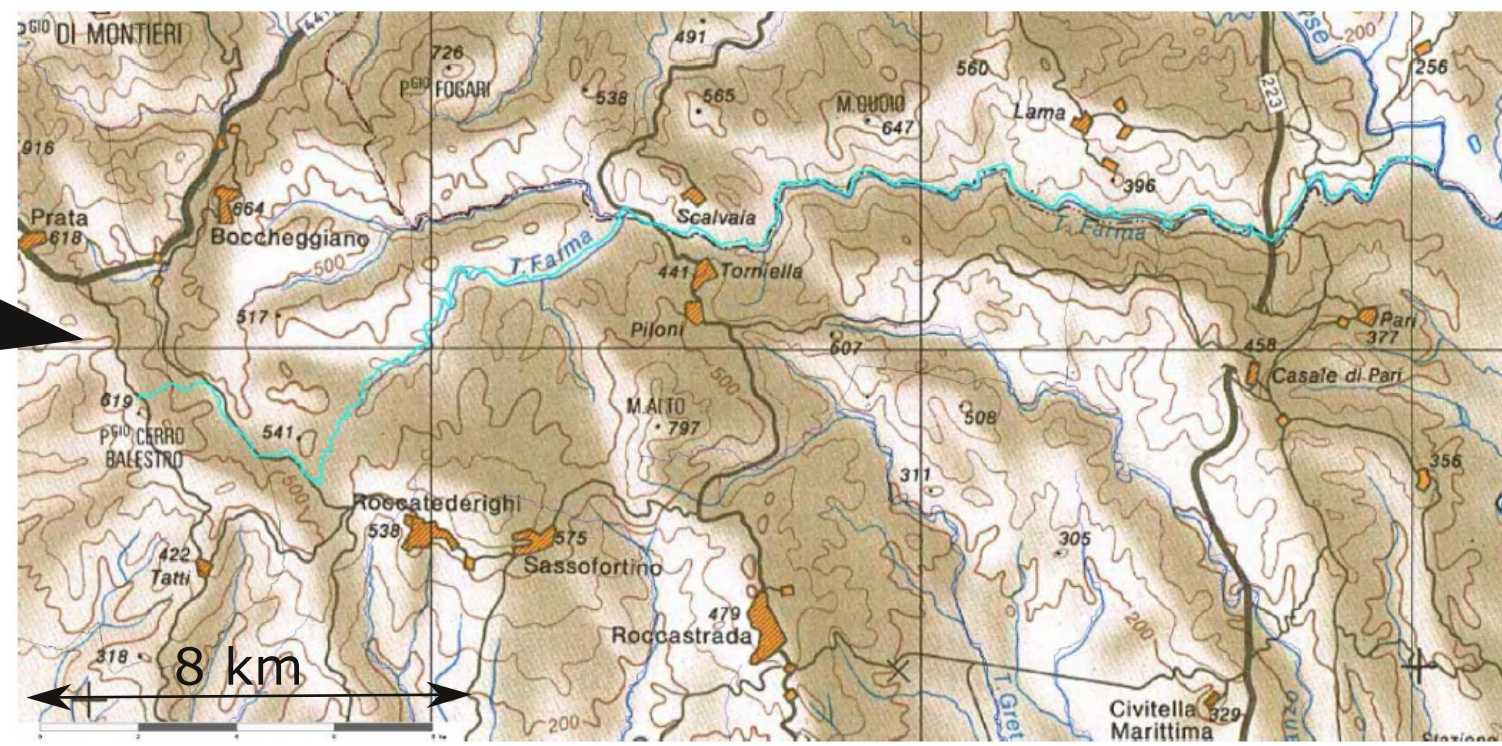
The Farma Valley is located in Southern Tuscany, Italy, half way between the medieval town of Siena and Grosseto. The valley has an extension of approximately 120 km², with elevation ranging from approximately 300 to almost 1000 m above sea level. Three natural conservation areas are hosted inside the valley, with a total extension of little over 2000 hectares: these are named Farma (156 ha), La Pietra (530 ha), and a small area dedicated to the surroundings of the Belagaio Castle (in fact, embedded in the Farma reserve). Population is very sparse, with one of the lowest densities in Italy. The valley is the home to three communities, located in Piloni and Torniella (Grosseto Province), and Scalvaia (Siena Province), with a total of less than 500 inhabitants. Tourism, which is one of the typical activities for Italy, and Tuscany in particular, is relatively scarce.



Italy



Southern Tuscany



The course of the Farma creek and the location of the three villages in the valley (from South to North: Piloni, Torniella, and Scalvaia)

Heritage The Farma valley is not huge, but contains an extremely diverse heritage

Nature

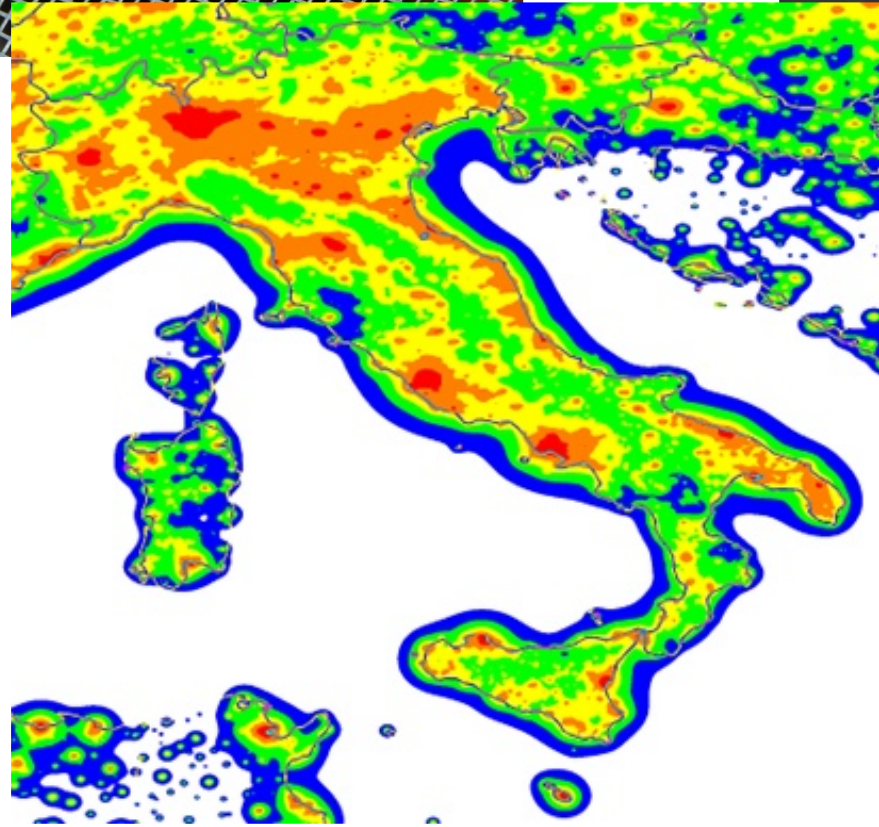
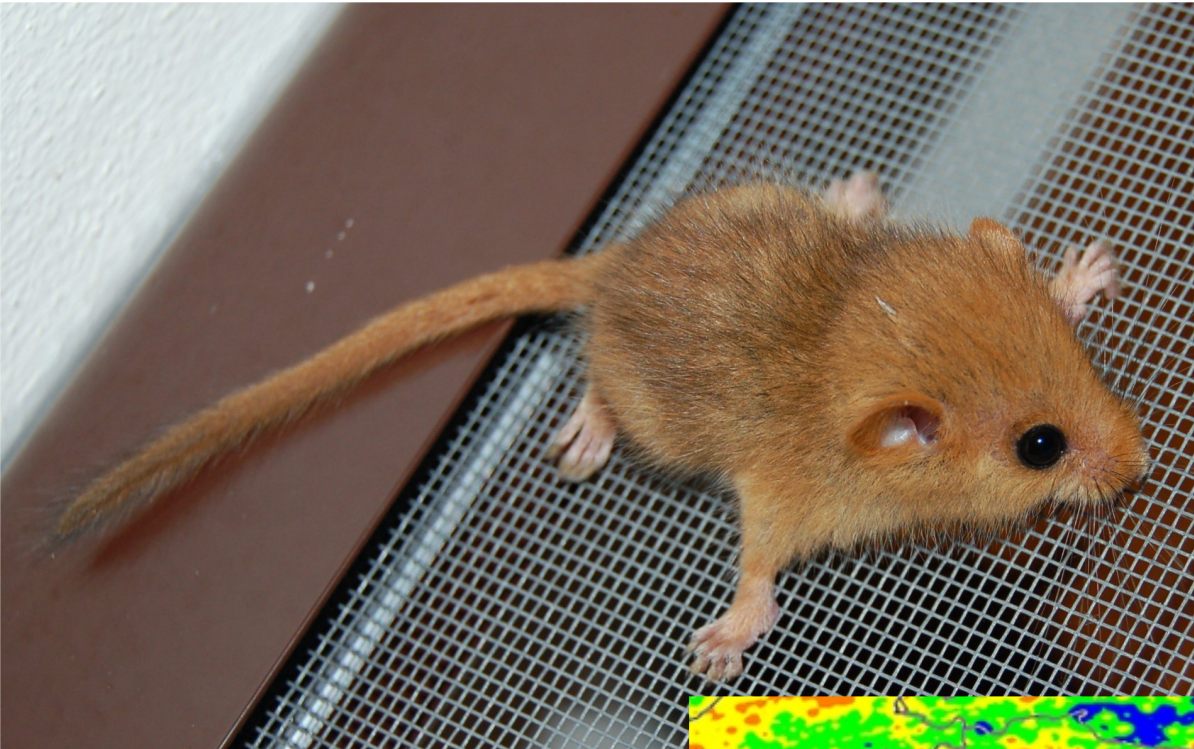
The Farma valley hosts various fauna and flora assets (see handout A). Furthermore, it is located in one of the parts of Italy with the lowest light pollution (i.e. the inland area of the Grosseto Province). This peculiarity is due mainly to the extremely low population density of this region.

Archaeology

The wide extensions of woodland made the Farma valley a primary centre for logging. In the middle ages, various iron mills were built, and used to process ore coming from various parts of the metalliferous hills district as well as from the Elba island. Other landmarks also exist, such as the castles in Torniella and in the Belagaio site, an ancient church in Piloni.

Culture and society

Hunting, especially wild boar, is a tradition in this area. Each village has a team of hunters which, during the three Winter months organize twice a week their outings. If hunting is quite common in all of Central Italy, as well as in other rural parts of the country, a much more peculiar cultural asset of this area is the ancient hand ball game of "Palla a 21" (or "Palla Eh!"). This is the Southern Tuscan variant of the medieval jeux de paum (i.e. the ancestors of tennis). Another historical celebration during the year, which is extremely important to Piloni and Torniella is tied to the First of May (labour day). Starting early in the morning, tables full of food, wine, and other local products are presented to whoever likes to join a marching band playing traditional songs, promenading from Piloni to Torniella. This event is renown throughout all of Southern Tuscany, with up to 700 people reaching the valley each year to attend it.



Past and recent past

Over the past years, public administrations (and, to a more limited extent, private operators) have been investing in the requalification of historical landmarks and natural resources. However, the fact of being a relatively remote location represents an actual issue in granting a continuity of care and resources to insure that such assets are maintained to the benefit of the local communities and of visitors, and that it is not simple to insure a return on investments in this area. On the other hand, local communities have always been active in keeping alive the spirit of their places and actually "making things happen" on their land, mostly relying on their own resources and fund raising capabilities.

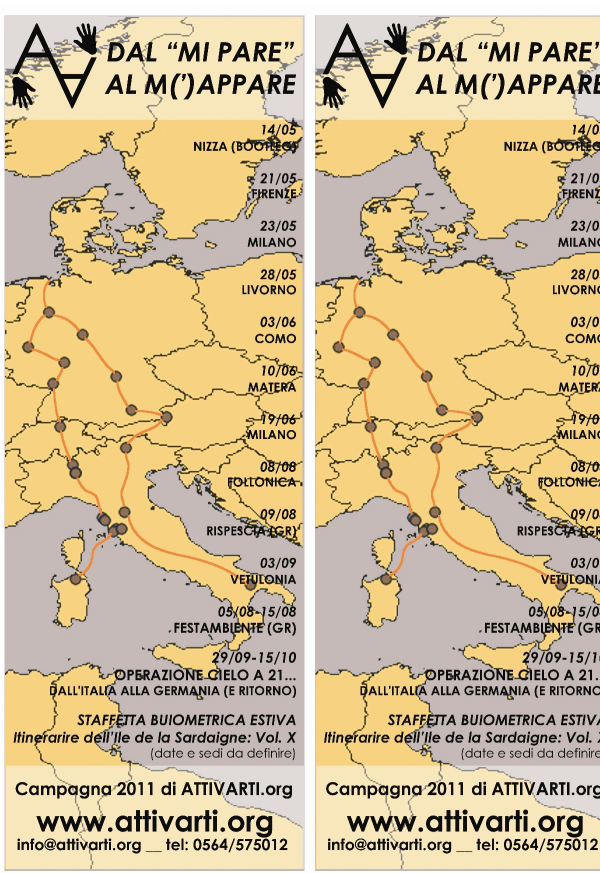


Starting from 2007, in addition to traditional events and activities (such as the first of May celebrations, the ancient hand ball tournaments during the Summer, or the wild boar hunting season during the Winter), the Farma Valley has been the origin of peculiar projects. These range from very intriguing promotional activities (e.g. holding one week of ancient hand ball games in the Summer Calendar of the City of Chicago), to innovative participatory environmental monitoring projects (on light pollution), without neglecting other initiatives such as photographic exhibitions hosted in Ribolla (Grosseto) and San Francisco (California). The "BuioMetria Partecipativa" project (participatory dark sky quality monitoring)



represents an original approach to awareness raising and collection of scientific data on light pollution.

All these actions are having the result of creating an improved awareness of the local community on the value of tangible and intangible assets of their land, of raising interest by "foreigners" with a specific know-how, and suggesting synergies to develop new actions, with the primary objective of protecting and promoting the valley. In fact, the Farma valley may be seen as a living laboratory, where traditional forms of indigenous community conservation are merging with state-of-the-art information and communication technologies, and artistic skills.



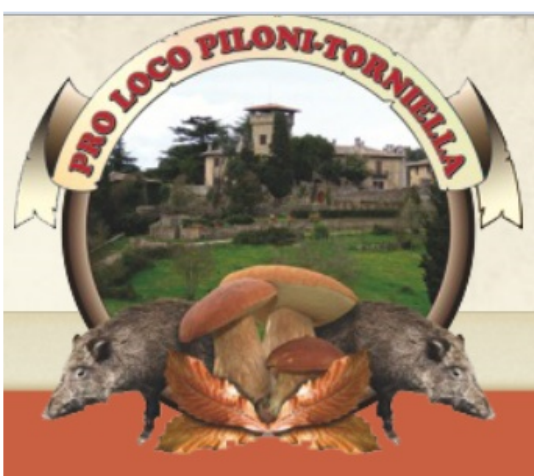
The results of many of the projects, spawned from an area which we may define as a rural melting pot, have obtained national media visibility for their peculiarity, have been recognized as having a strong "glocal" component, and are exposing a potential for near future consolidation. Last but not least, while the activities mentioned above make a substantial use of information and communication technologies, the key interactions which generated their success, and which have laid the foundation for further development have taken place in very traditional settings: the bar and the village squares of the three hamlets in the Farma

Conclusions and next steps

The events briefly summarized in this poster have provide a very strong drive in the Farma valley to consider a development in Community Conservation. At the time of writing, all of the local communities and the other associations operating in the valley are in the "live" part of their Summer program of activities. In parallel, meetings are ongoing both within the valley, and with subjects based out of the valley to evaluate ideas and options for projects related to the coming years, in order to improve our community conservation efforts. We are available to provide more information about our past accomplishments, as well as to share some of our ideas for the future. We are also interested to learn more about other cases worldwide, from which we may draw examples of best practice, or with which we may establish connections for future joint initiatives.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Pro Loco Torniella Piloni, the community of Scalvaia, the association Attivarti.org (formerly operating as "pibinko.org"), and the BuioMetria Partecipativa project.



Contact Information

Andrea Giacomelli
info@pibinko.org
ph. +39 347 15 33 857