

3. Alpeggio Ourty, Valle d'Aosta, Italy



Valle d'Aosta and its mountain pastures

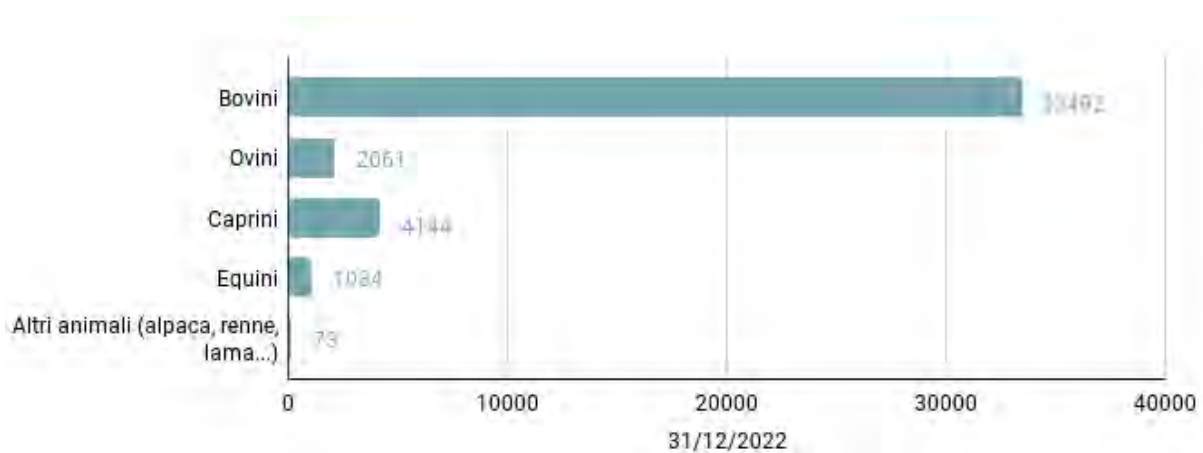
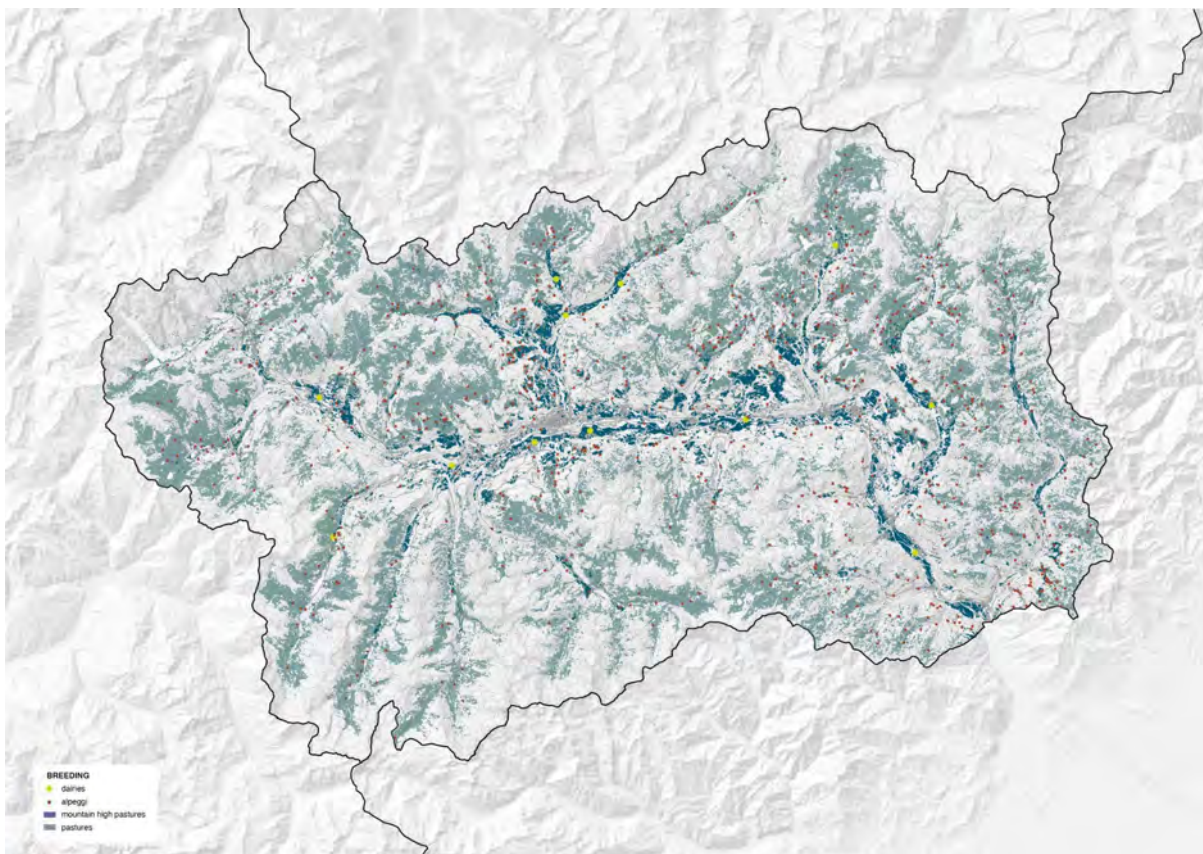
Valle d'Aosta (Vallée d'Aoste) is a unique example of European rurality, combining iconic tourist destinations in the western-southern Alps with deep-rooted cattle breeding and farming traditions.

The region's dual character influences how both human and nonhuman actors use the territory seasonally. Winter brings crowds of skiers and tourists to traditional resorts like Courmayeur or other important centers, while summer marks different kinds of slow tourism and transhumance of cattle, a classic practice in Alpine mountain pastures. For centuries, the movement of cattle during summer has been a fundamental ecological component of the Alpine landscape, providing preservation to the landscape and high-quality dairy products from the milk produced at high altitudes.

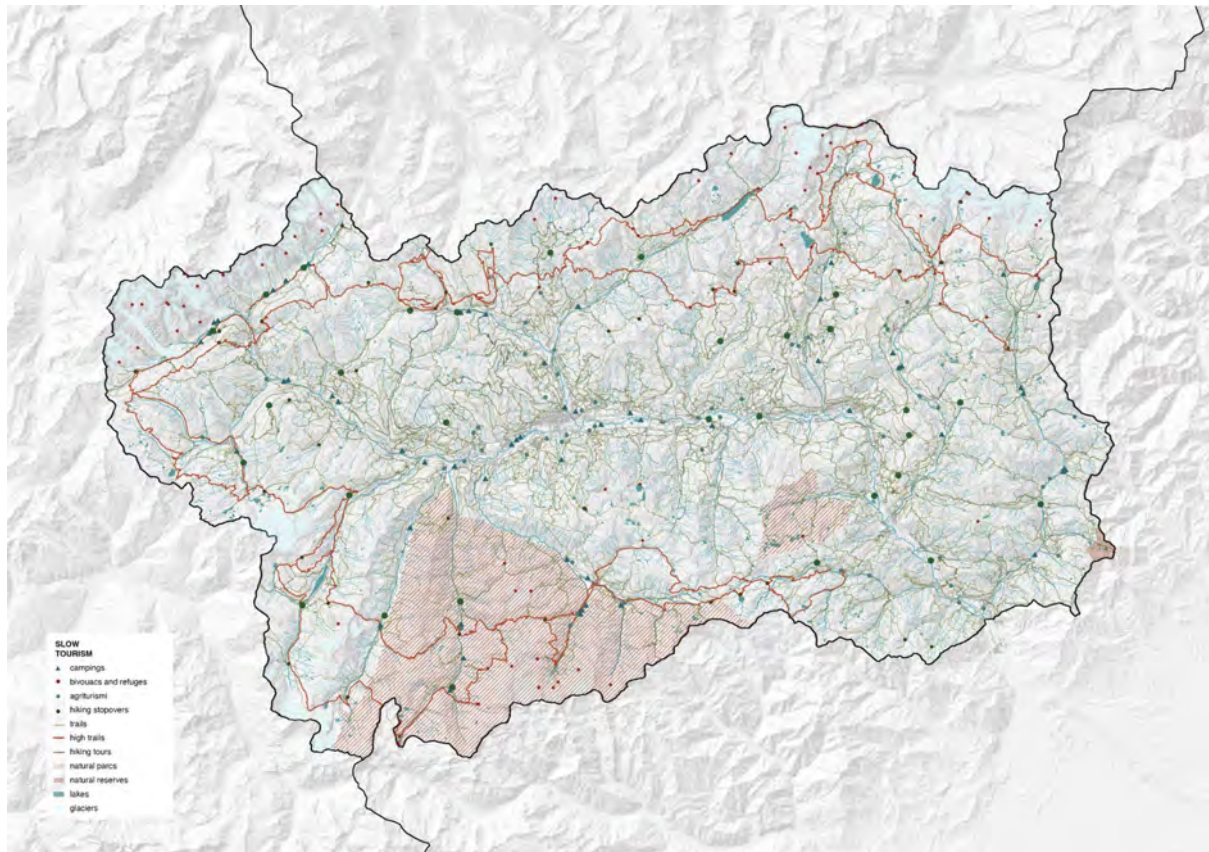
As in many other Alpine regions, the minor settlements of Valle d'Aosta risk significant depopulation, with the exception of the touristic locations that are sustained by the seasonal workers and temporary rents. In contrast, farming remained stable over the years, even increasing. In fact, the absence of large plain agricultural areas and the associated difficulty in cultivating the farmland present have led to a significant decrease in agricultural activities in the region over the last few decades in favor of other productive activities, especially large centers on the valley floor. On the other hand, the presence of numerous mountain pastures has led livestock breeding to be one of the prevailing agribusiness activities. Most farms in Valle d'Aosta are in fact recognized as zootechnical farms; according to ISTAT, 1475 out of

2503 farms are zootechnical farms. Most of them are engaged in cattle breeding, accounting for about 82% of the livestock, and to a lesser extent, goats and sheep. Moreover, between 2007 and 2019 the number of cows in mountain pastures varied between 6.547 and 6.980, with few variations.

Bovine breeding, mainly of transhumant mode, is of mixed production orientation, aimed at the mixed production of meat and milk; most farms have between 20 and 49 animals, followed by farms with 10-19 or 50-99 animals. Sheep and goat breeding, with a predominantly mixed production orientation, is characterized by the housing or intensive mode; on average, the farms have between 1 and 20 animals. On the other hand, the presence of horses, pigs, poultry, fish, and snail farms is insignificant in terms of numbers and products.



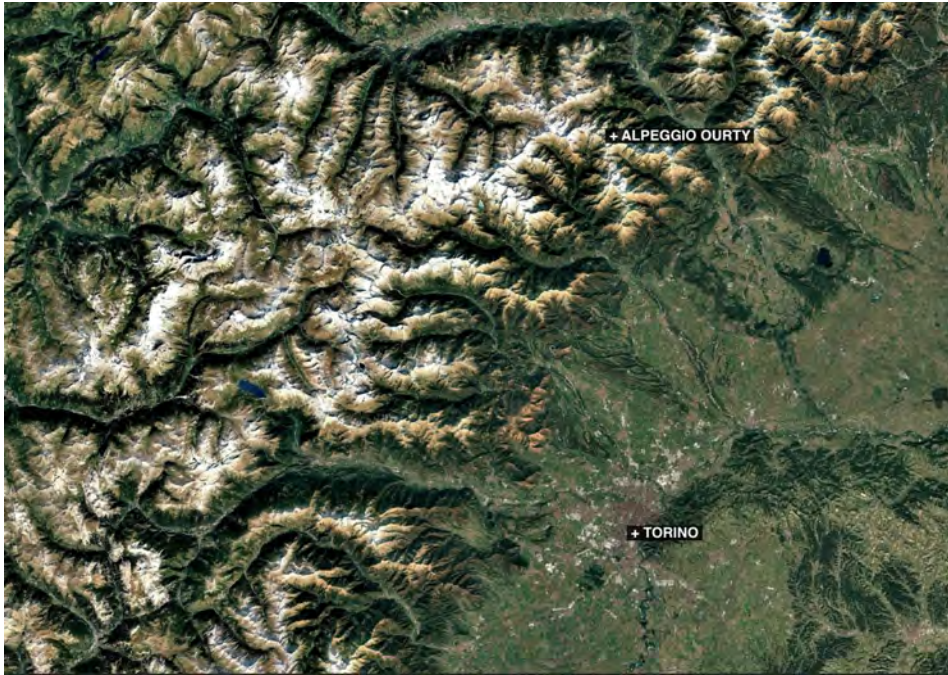
Today, agricultural activity is mainly defined by cattle breeding and the production of dairy products, many of which represent DOP products that are identifiable for the region, and cross the concept of *slow food* movement. In particular, Fontina DOP is one of the main regional products linked to milk production. This contributes significantly to the region's increased value for tourism.



An important practice—both from the cultural heritage point of view and for the animal welfare and the care of this territory—that risks being abandoned in the future if it doesn't find new ways to hybridize itself and return to be sustainable in its economic dimension as well.

During the summer migrations to mountain pastures, the *arpian* (shepherds) need temporary accommodations to live with the cattle and operate their summer farms. Historically, this has led to the construction of vernacular structures designed specifically for this purpose etc.

Site description



The Alpeggio Ourty is situated in the La Leigne Valley (Valley of the Wood) at an altitude of 1527 meters above the sea level. It is reachable from the valley village of Champorcher along the course of the Ayasse river. From the Karlantze, just crossed the bridge from Champorcher, a trail (path no. 4H) ascends to the Alpe Porte in the La Leigne Valley. From there, the route continues along trail no. 4, originating from Outre-Lêve, and ultimately reaches Località Ourty, the site of the mountain pasture. It takes around 2 hours by foot. The *Alpeggio* is the set of buildings and grassland that is used between June and the end of September—traditionally between the festivities of San Bernardo and San Michele. By law, only 8% of the green area of the *alpeggio* can be cut, leaving the rest of the grassland at its natural state as a resource for the cattle. During the 100 days of stay of the cows in altitude, the supporting buildings of the alpeggio are used to store all the necessary means in

combination to the stables for the animals, it host the *arpian* and normally some of its family members to sleep, and to store and produce dairy products.

The building complex of Ourty follows these basic needs in its articulation, hosting a main stable, two storage cellars, one space for the cheese production, and a living unit of two bedrooms and a kitchen.



Program requirements

The new alpage should accommodate the diverse needs of local farmers, tourists, and transients in the area. We envision it as a hub within active tourism routes, serving as a destination that fosters close contact with farming practices while avoiding intensive land exploitation. The alpage's essential infrastructure—temporary accommodations for farmers, stables for cattle, and spaces for producing and storing dairy products—will be complemented by lodgings and facilities for sustainable camping. This intersection of traditional farming practices and temporary uses can create unexpected opportunities for coexistence and exchange, all while respecting the rhythms of seasonality.

Minimum program requirements:

- Temporary housing for summer pastures
- Lodgings for transients in the winter (also temporary)
- Dairy production space
- Storage
- Stables and outdoor spaces for animal species
- Community room
- Common kitchen