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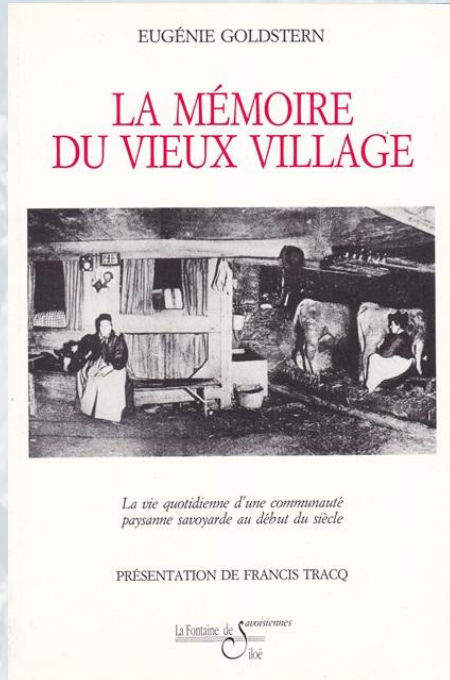
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Up there and out of time? Alps and challenged modernities in the history of European anthropology

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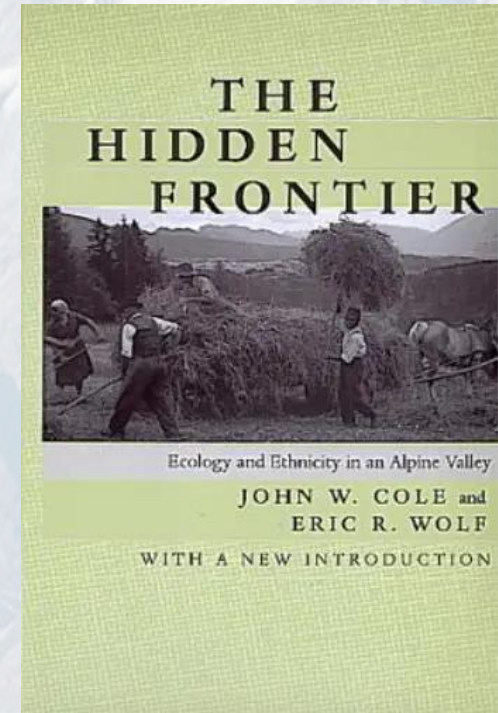
The Alps, an European mountainous range...
... or « *the rest of the West* » ?



• (1922 [1972])



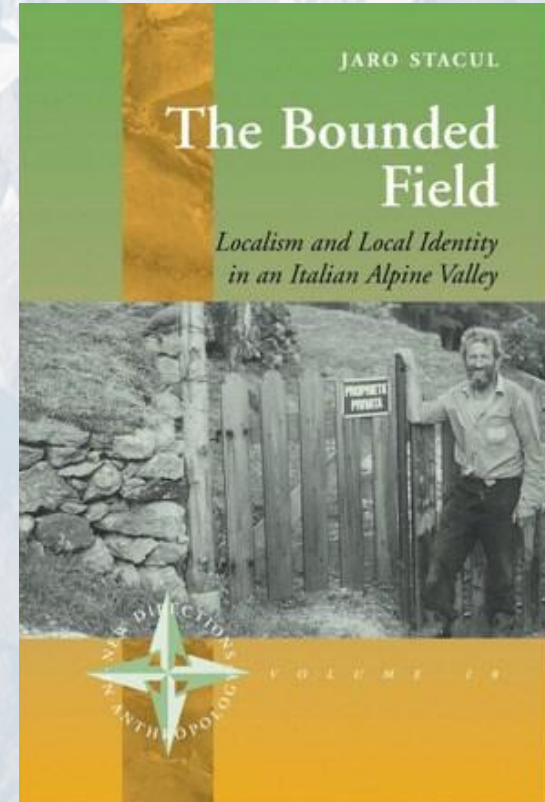
• (1961)



• (1974)

Anthropologists in the Alps and the study of modernity

- conjugating community studies (fieldwork research) with world history, looking for large scale connections, cultural variations, and political and economic explanations
- identifying the post-WWII period as a turning point (from mountain farming to tourism)
- an anti-modern, critical stance underpinning the anthropology of the Alps and studies in folklore at the end of 20th century



• (2003)

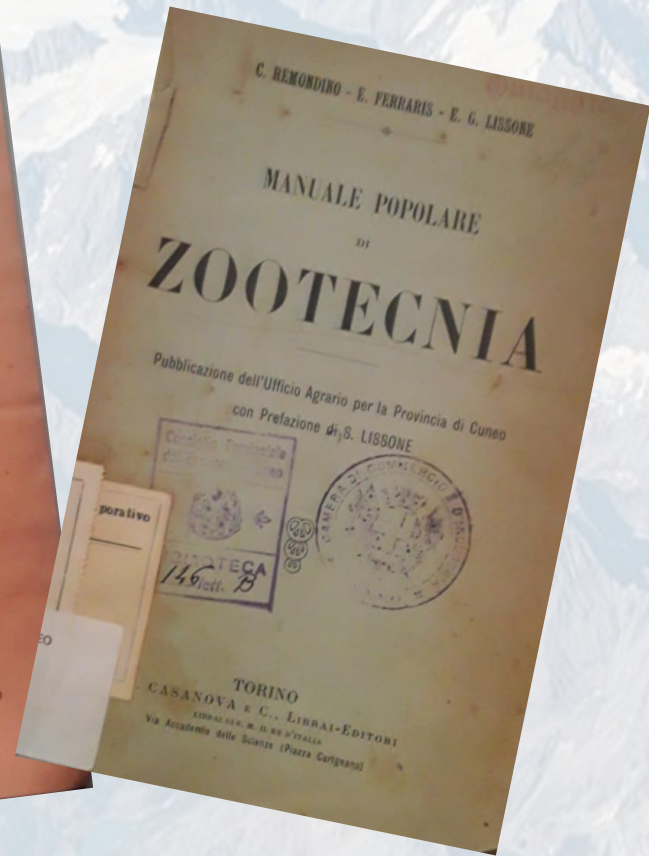
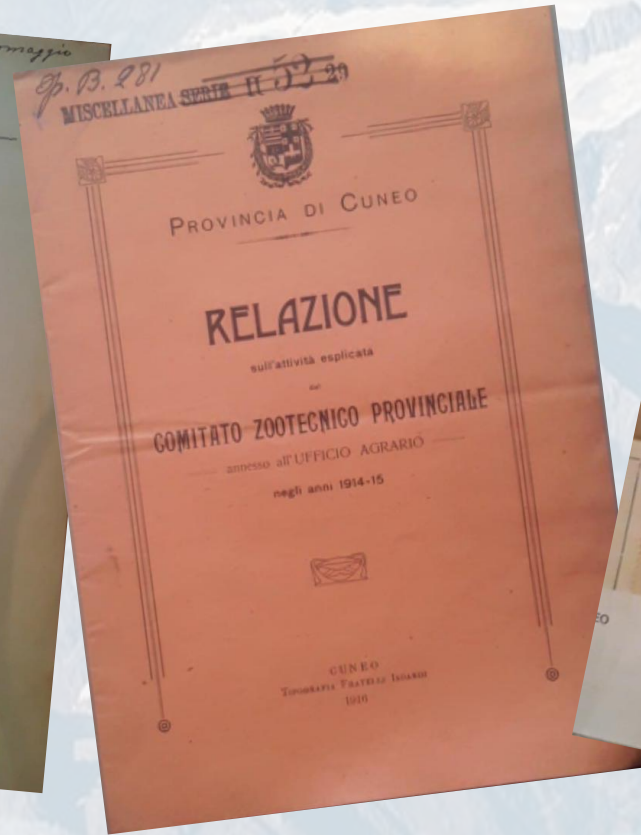
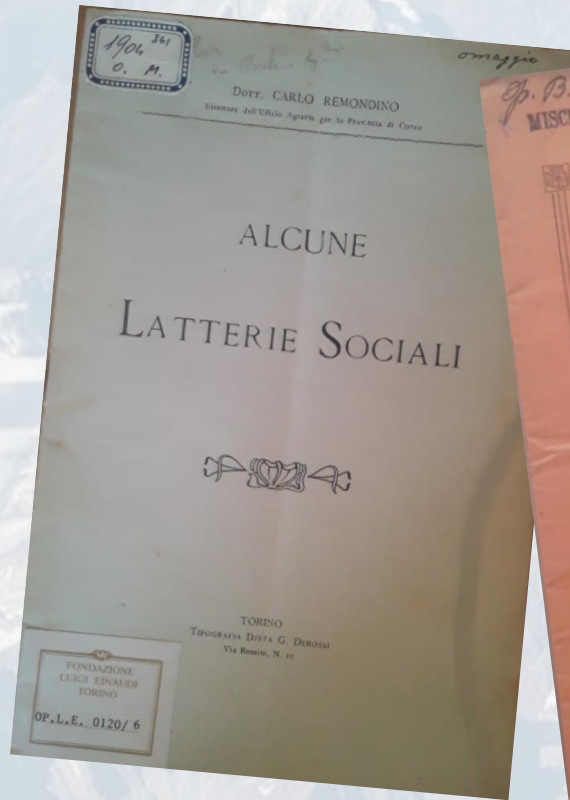
On peasants and experts in the Western Alps (1897-1930)



Travelling Chairs for Agriculture (TCAs)

- peripatetic institutions embodying positivist thinking
- transferring knowledge to the local peasantry
- inscribing modernity in local epistemologies and practices.

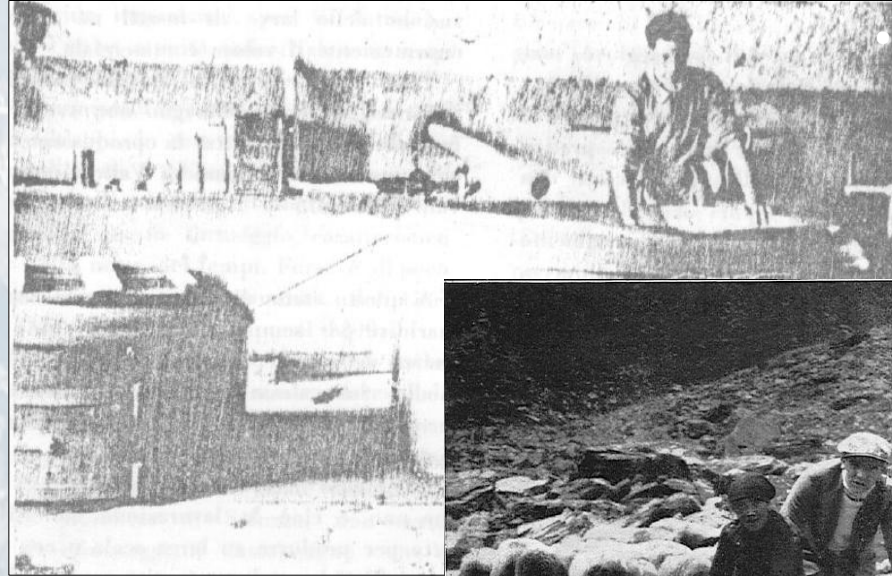
Reports produced by one TCA operating in the Italian Western Alps



Cultural brokerage, plural expertises, and desire for modernity



• (1879-1954)



(1928)



• (1929)

How to decolonise the anthropologies and ethnologies of the Alps?

- Far from being a consistent and juggernaut process, Alpine modernization was mostly the result of heterogeneous and complementary societal roots rooted into a wider, European debates on science, politics, and environment.
- epistemic movements and technical connections relating the Alps and the lowlands can help us in decolonising the histories and the anthropologies of the Alps?
- deconstructing narratives on continuity and change, on remoteness and cultural uniformity, that sustain Alpine otherness and Alpine anthropology...

« Challenging the ruptured landscape of (...) autonomous cultures raises the question of understanding social change and cultural transformation as situated within interconnected spaces. The presumption that spaces are autonomous has enabled the power of topography to conceal successfully the topography of power. The inherently fragmented space assumed in the definition of anthropology as the study of cultures (in the plural) may have been one of the reasons behind the long-standing failure to write anthropology's history as the biography of imperialism. For if one begins with the premise that spaces have always been hierarchically interconnected, instead of naturally disconnected, then cultural and social change becomes not a matter of cultural contact and articulation but one of rethinking difference through connection » (Gupta & Ferguson 1992: 8)

Rethinking Alpine modernisation

- unfolding linear perspectives in the history of agrarian change in the Alps
- transcending domination/resistance and centre/periphery perspectives, for considering disoriented histories, passed futures-to-be, translations and interconnections that sustained “large-scale” projects of modernity
- A discrete locality within a system of hierarchically – both from a political and an epistemic point of view – organised spaces, Alps can be considered as one of the places in which plural and complementary forms of modernisation were conceived and fashioned.

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An aerial photograph of a rugged mountain range with significant snow cover. The mountains are characterized by sharp peaks and deep, shadowed valleys. A semi-transparent white rectangular overlay covers the central portion of the image, serving as a background for the text.

Thanks for your attention!
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