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DEPARTMENT OF
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NFS
Nuoro forestry school
Centro studi del Dipartimento di Agraria

Commons, coppices and cork oak cultivation vs sustainability

Scotti - 7 mag 2025 - Hotel Taloro - Gavoi

PRO SILVA
ANNUAL MEETING
Sardinia 2025

Headlines

1. Introduction
2. Sustainability and the paradigm shift
3. Commons and forest commons (‘estovers’)
4. Coppicing, silviculture, land stewardship and the community
5. Cork oak, ecology, silviculture and cork extraction management

Introduction

- Twenty years of forest commons management in Senghe (central-western Sardinia)
- University project initiated in 2004 by young forest professionals
- Dr. Cristian Ibba - "the living heart of the system" maintaining community relationships
- Documented efforts aim to project work into coming decades
- Experience relevant to many contexts in Sardinia and beyond
- Presentation outlines social and ecological frameworks for sustainable forest management

Sustainability and the paradigm shift

- Current consumption patterns increasingly unsustainable
- Technological developments improved living conditions but created environmental costs
- Corrections within reductionist frameworks often create new problems elsewhere
- Example: Vineyard cultivation on hillsides
- Reductionist approach: World as mechanism understood by isolating parts
- Systems thinking: World as complex nested composition of relations
- Profound implications for science, governance, and responsibility
- "Things are no longer isolated pieces of matter, rather a complex nested composition of relations and interactions"
- Systems approach essential prerequisite for sustainability discourse

Commons and forest commons (‘estovers’)

- Traditionally: Resources managed collectively by defined communities, Members hold specific rights rather than ownership. Historical rights included: Grazing livestock, Collecting wood (common of **estovers**), etc.

Historical Dismantling of Commons

- Western economies viewed commons as "imperfect property"
- "The tragedy of the Commons" (Hardin, 1968) - influential but flawed narrative
- Enclosures movement (Britain, c.1800)
- Sardinian "Editto delle chiudende"
- "Su connottu" uprising in Nuoro (April 26, 1868)

Elinor Ostrom: Changing the Paradigm

- Documented value of properly governed common-pool resources (CPR)
- Applied systems approach to commons management
- Nobel Prize in Economics (2009), Helped reverse global attitudes toward commons
- Demonstrated sustainability of collective governance models, Fundamental contribution to worldwide perception shift

‘Usi civici’, Italian commons

'Usi Civici' in Italian Law

- Specific Italian form of CPR involving collective use rights
- Characterized by: Inalienability, Inusucapibility, Imprescriptibility
- Law No. 1766 of 1927 regulated rights but aimed at liquidation
- Prohibition of private commercial use reflects historical origins

Evolution of Commons in Italian Law

- Italian Constitution (1948): recognized only public and private ownership
- Cultural Heritage Code (2004): recognized environmental and cultural value
- Law no. 168 of 2017:
    - Profoundly modified evaluation of commons
    - Encouraged "commoners" to establish legal entities
    - Created framework for autonomous governance
    - Established "direct responsibility for land stewardship"

Coppice silviculture

Understanding Coppicing

- Forest management system relying on vegetative regrowth
- Long history, especially in Mediterranean region but not only, wood remains most used renewable energy source worldwide
- Italian 'ceduo' from Latin 'caeduus' ("that can be cut")
- Industrial revolution intensified practice for mining, railroads, charcoal

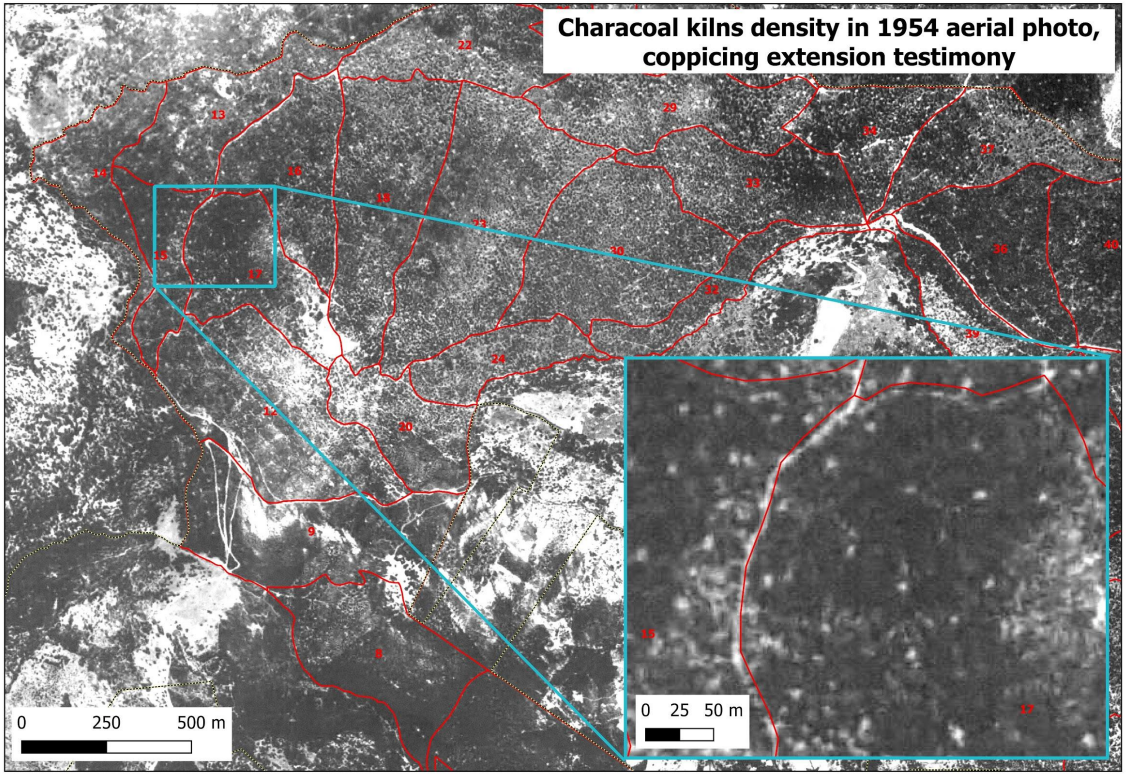
The Rise and Fall of Coppicing

- Widespread practice during industrialization
- Declined with introduction of gas and petroleum for heating
- State Forestry corps pressed for conversion to high forests
- Current debate continues:
  - Critics: view as primeval, environmentally harmful
  - Supporters: see as practical and environmentally sound when properly managed[1]

Historical Evidence: Seneghe Forest

1954 aerial photo reveals:

- High density of charcoal kilns,
- Extensive coppicing and exploitation,
- Landscape shaped by traditional practices



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Coppicing and Sustainability

- Limitations as "regeneration" practice:
  - Favors existing gene pool over new combinations
  - Reduces forest's adaptive capacity ("autopoiesis")
- Environmental costs:
  - Soil compaction and erosion risks
  - Mechanical damage
- Sustainability dependent on management techniques and landscape planning

Community Dimensions of Forest Management

- Exploitation patches create structural landscape diversification
- Social gatherings during harvesting build community bonds
- Expression of community's commitment to land stewardship
- Contributes to community identity and temporal projection
- Requires considering territorial system as a whole (forest and community)

Conclusions

Sustainability Through Systems Thinking

- Assessment must consider:
  - Environmental impacts and mitigations
  - Social and community benefits
  - Cultural heritage values
  - Economic sustainability
- "By taking into account the territorial system as a whole, the question of sustainability can be addressed in a proper way"

The Path Forward

- Sustainability requires systems thinking, not reductionist approaches
- Commons represent valuable model for collective environmental responsibility
- Coppicing can be sustainable within proper community and ecological context
- Legal frameworks evolving to recognize value of commons
- Future requires balancing traditional practices with modern sustainability needs
- Personal and collective responsibility for land stewardship is essential