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VERVE Rural Conversation Starters

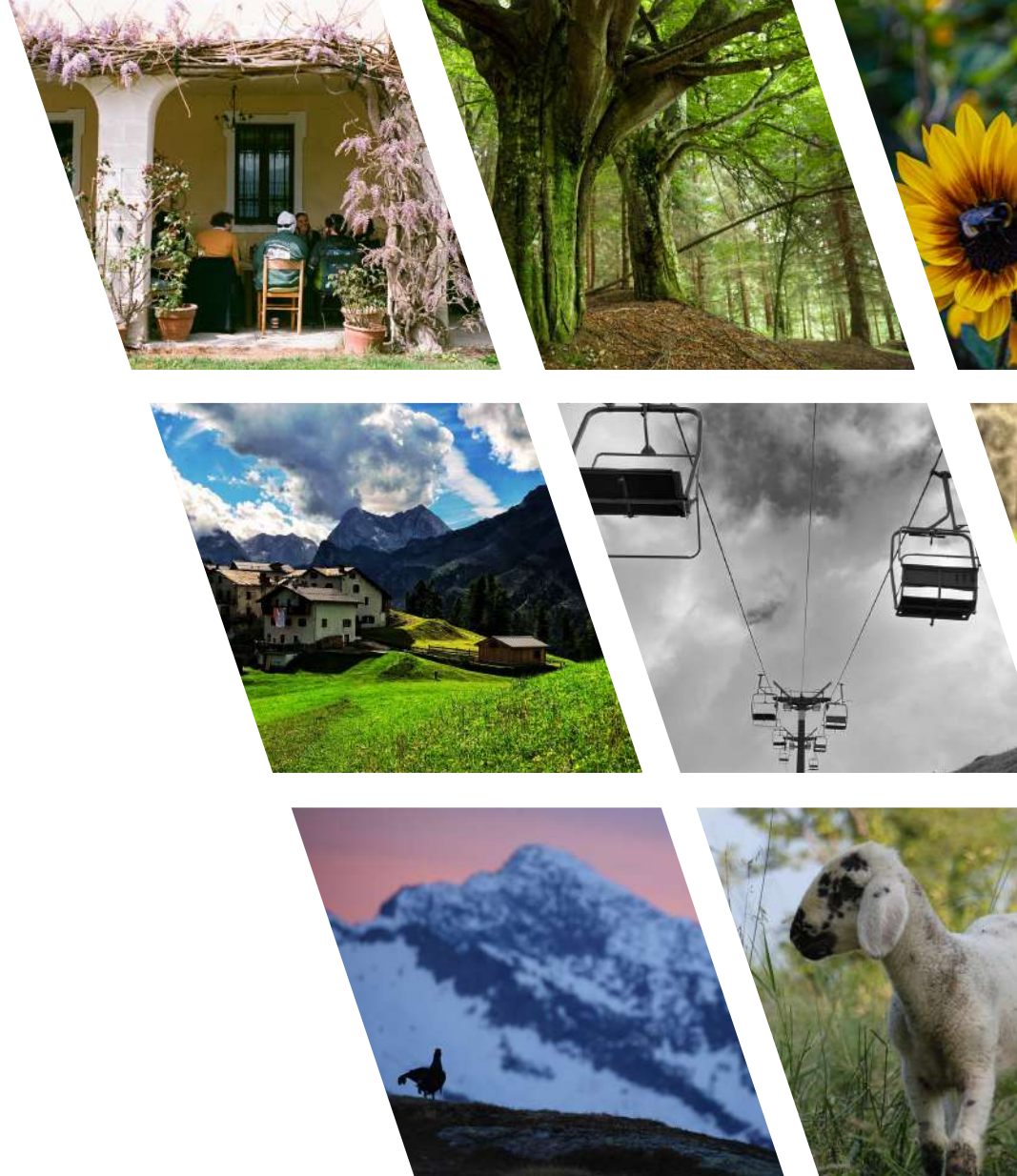
Supplementary Materials n.1
of the VERVE Toolkit “Imagining Vibrant
Rural-Mountain Futures” (2025)

by Angela Moriggi, Matilda Todesco, Deborah Vedovetto,
Giulia Corradini, Laura Secco



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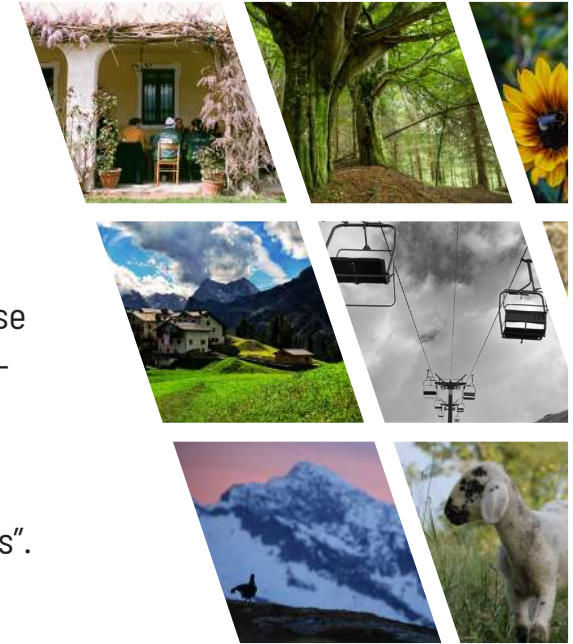
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VERVE Rural Conversation Starters

A set of postcards created during the “Photovoice Lab.” Each postcard features a personal story written by a young resident or enthusiast of a rural-mountain area. These stories challenge simplistic or abstract portrayals of rural life, adding texture and nuance to the conversation. They delve into themes such as interconnected socio-ecological relationships, sense of place, socio-economic change, resource management, and aspirations for a good life. Reflecting on these postcards can encourage groups to share ideas and develop a richer understanding of rural socio-ecological dynamics.

You can use these postcards to facilitate the “Generative Dialogue with Conversation Starters” (Method 2, Pathway 1, p. 26) shared in the [VERVE Toolkit](#) “Imagining Vibrant Rural-Mountain Futures”.



VERVE CO-CREATIVE VISIONING PROCESSES
FOR TRANSFORMATIVE
SOCIAL INNOVATION IN RURAL AREAS



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The images and narratives presented in the following pages constitute research data. For reasons of confidentiality, the authors’ names are not fully disclosed. The full dataset is available online in an open access data repository. For more information, please contact: angela.moriggi@unipd.it

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Point of no return

The fear of change, innovation, and the persistence in actions that have no future. We find ourselves at the starting point of a declining ski resort in the Venetian Prealps, which, in the last decade, has been subject to partial and total closures and loss of licenses, all due to the lack of snowfall. We cannot deny the transformation underway and, knowing that ski resorts will be increasingly at risk, it is good to understand their limit—the point of no return—and to understand when it is time to rethink the entire structure and supply chain. Will we be able to take advantage of high temperatures for summer tourism? Because on June 21st, with 30 degrees, everything is silent.

*Nevegal, Belluno
Francesco, 26 years old*



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Conviviality

Colors, mountain silhouettes, the lake, and the kiss of wind and rain greet me as I cross the Fadalto into Alpage. Familiar sights, marking my homecoming, though I'm not quite there yet. As the train rolls on, I feel my Bellunese heart beat faster. If Nonna calls, I'd answer in our dialect.

But the moment I truly long for is yet to come: a garden feast with friends, the comfort of homemade pastry, the sweet scent of wisteria. Ah, now this is home.

*Belluno
Francesco, 26 years old*



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Alive on my skin

A tiny village of sixteen little houses; little known, almost deserted. But then, I begin to hear: from the small road comes the chatter of children, from a kitchen I hear a teapot boiling, someone is splitting wood. And now, I see: I see those kids just back from Sasso Bianco, I see Gina and Ciana warming their tea with love, I see Don Antonio preparing the bonfire. And I'm there, with them. All together like 12 years ago; happy.

*Caracoi Cimai
Gioia, 25 years old*



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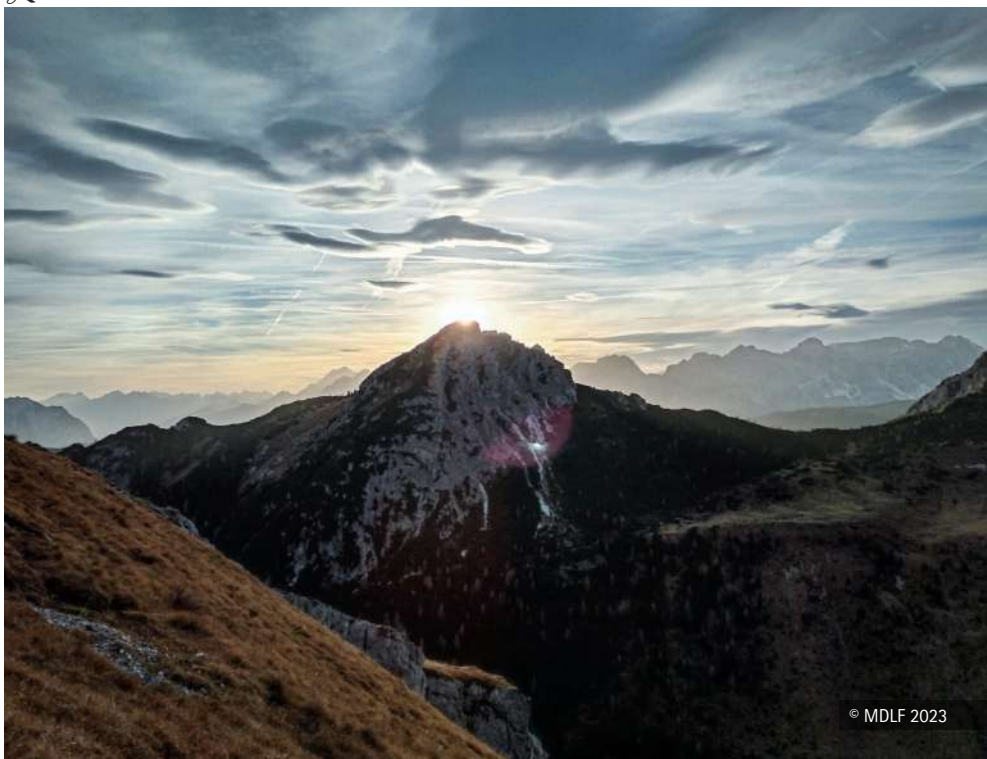
Amnesia

There are places where one suddenly finds themselves on the precipice between the present and the past, helplessly witnessing the irreversible transformation of life into memory. The encroaching forgetfulness, that collective amnesia which gradually overwhelms and condemns to oblivion the reality that was here just a moment ago: the noise of the sawmill, the murmur of the Piave River, the clapping of hooves on the path, the baskets brimming with wood. The forest devours the plain, ivy suffocates the past.

*Termine di Cadore
Elettra, 37 years old*



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Knowing not to wait

There is no disconnection without interdependence. I thought this as I looked at the rope holding up a now-removed rockfall barrier in an abandoned place. Every time we recognize a disconnection, we glimpse that interdependence which—suddenly or gradually—has broken. Perhaps the belief that there is Man and Nature is still too deeply rooted in me. These disconnections remind me that Man must find his meaning in Nature. Some say that Man is nothing more than man in nature, still others that Nature is not such if it does not include man. I don't know the answer, of course. I just want to be able to recognize the interdependencies without waiting.

*Ospitale di Cadore
Sebastiano, 30 years old*



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Peace on the peak

Whenever I have the time and the weather is on my side, I gather my things and set off. I escape, turning my back on boredom and negative thoughts, climbing to 2200m in a valley that few know and visit, where peace reigns and the only sounds are those of the wind and the screech of eagles, where the mind empties and the eyes fill with admiration for the beauty of nature in all its facets. This is my small but great happy place, the place where I feel most at home.

Michele, 23 years old



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In the woods

I don't know if it's the enveloping green, the feeling of the forest's freshness in the air, or the silence of the woods—which is everything but silent—but when I move alone in a forest, far from human disturbances, I feel good. It's like feeling comforted by the forest itself, by those trees that have been there long before you, and will be there long after your death.

*Monte Grappa
Michele, 26 years old*



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Animal Machines

The animal-machine is an ancient concept that underpins modern farming. "Animal welfare" is supposed to guarantee freedom from hunger and thirst, from environmental discomfort, from disease and injury; freedom to express species-specific behavioral characteristics, and freedom from fear and stress. Does "animal welfare" actually exist in farming or is it just a grand deception, a kind of self-absolution? Is farming, intensive or otherwise, compatible with a non-anthropocentric view of our relationship with non-human animals?

*Around Salce
Elettra, 37 years old*



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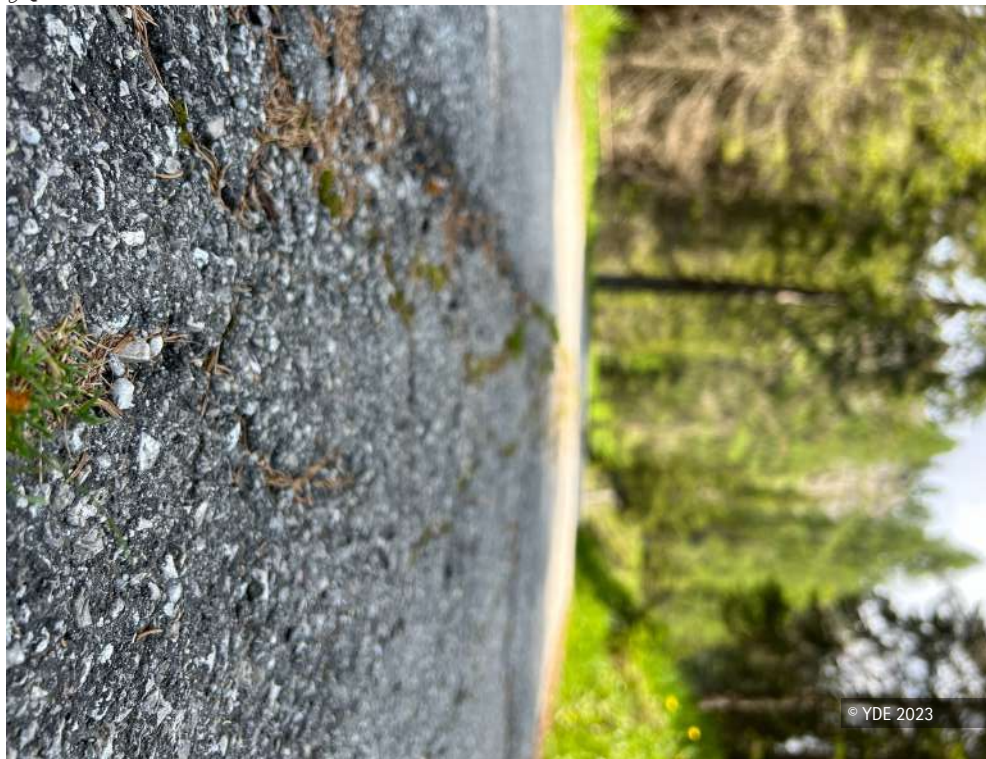
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Mountain ranges

It is not a mountain range that I can see from my home. It is a mountain range *near* my home. And they are simply the mountains. When I go towards the plains or towards the sea I feel lost—almost a bit restless—because I begin to lose my reference points on the horizon. Neither the homogeneity of the plains nor the infinity of the sea soothes me, in fact it unsettles me. But when I catch sight of the rugged horizon, the mountain peaks, then yes, I feel better, I feel enclosed, embraced, almost protected by the diversity of nature. I feel more at home.

Villiago
Nicholas, 27 years old



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Let us take our time

It's beautiful to see things from the perspective of someone who, without haste, knows that they can reach any horizon. Slowness is now a luxury, and at the same time a disdained value. Nature teaches us that great things are achieved in small steps.

Nevegal
Alberto, 29 years old



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Excessibility

Excessibility. Excessive Accessibility. Is it always right to be able to reach every place? When does a person's right to enjoy a beautiful landscape justify building infrastructure that could harm it? And with today's technology, is it fair to deny anyone the chance to experience such beauty?

This road, built with great effort during the Great War, was once a quiet path for hikers. Over time, it became increasingly popular, leading to its paving and the introduction of shuttle services. While this increased accessibility, it also brought more shuttles, more visitors, and less hikers. Is this more accessibility, or excessibility?

Monte Piana
Yuki, 29 years old



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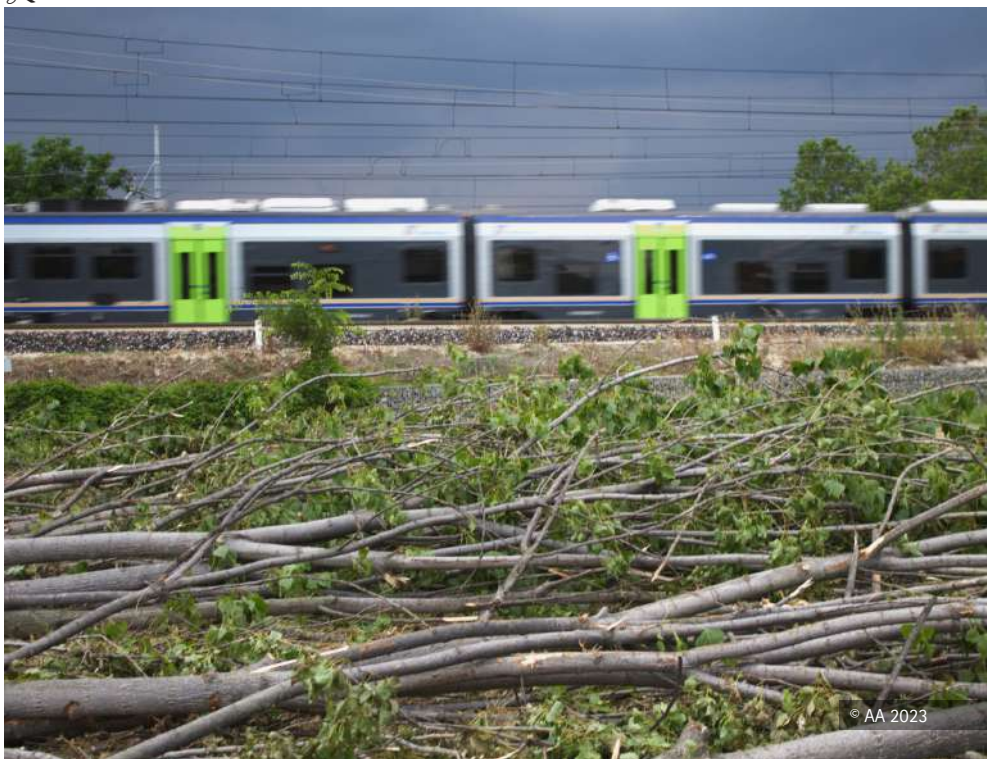
Balance

I chose to study natural sciences to understand how the world around us works and to better protect it. I would especially like to safeguard the Dolomites, where I dream of living, perhaps in a mountain hut like this one, but with a balance between "modern" needs and "real" needs, trying to reduce my environmental impact. For example, I would love to rediscover the joy of growing my own food and having the time to do so, hoping to find a primarily remote work job; all of this would also limit my car use, following the principle of "think globally, act locally". But most important, I want to stop dreaming and start making it a reality; it will be difficult, but I have to at least try.

close to rifugio Fedare
Gioia, 25 years old



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Trust

Adaptation. Proactive action, recurrent intervention. We're used to waiting until the crisis hits before realizing there was a problem that could have been addressed earlier. Cleaning riverbeds is a proactive step that can prevent flooding and give us peace of mind. By taking targeted actions, we can minimize potential damage and build trust in our ability to manage our environment.

Belluno
Francesco, 26 years old



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Horizontal forest

This small poplar grove has been a fundamental part of my life over the past year. I ended up there for the first time on one of the worst afternoons of my life, while walking aimlessly after learning of the death of a dear friend who had fallen off a peak in the Lagorai mountains. Walking among the trees, I felt better, and from that moment on, every time I saw a poplar it was like receiving a hug, but that particular grove had become a privileged point of connection with the stars. And yet yesterday, as I passed by on the train, I felt short of breath. They had cut everything down, and today it's a dead plain. [...] When I found myself there in the middle of the area and took this picture, I thought about what life is and is not, and what life gives and takes away.

Castelfranco Veneto
Anonymous Author, 28 years old



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Nothing without meadows

Has anyone ever considered what humans would be like without the green cushion that covers our valleys, if it were disconnected from our farmers? You might say we would be nothing. And you'd be right. But there's more. Bees (the source of honey), cows (providing milk), rabbits, goats, and countless other creatures. Would humans even exist? Now, that's a good question.

San Pietro di Cadore
Michele, 23 years old



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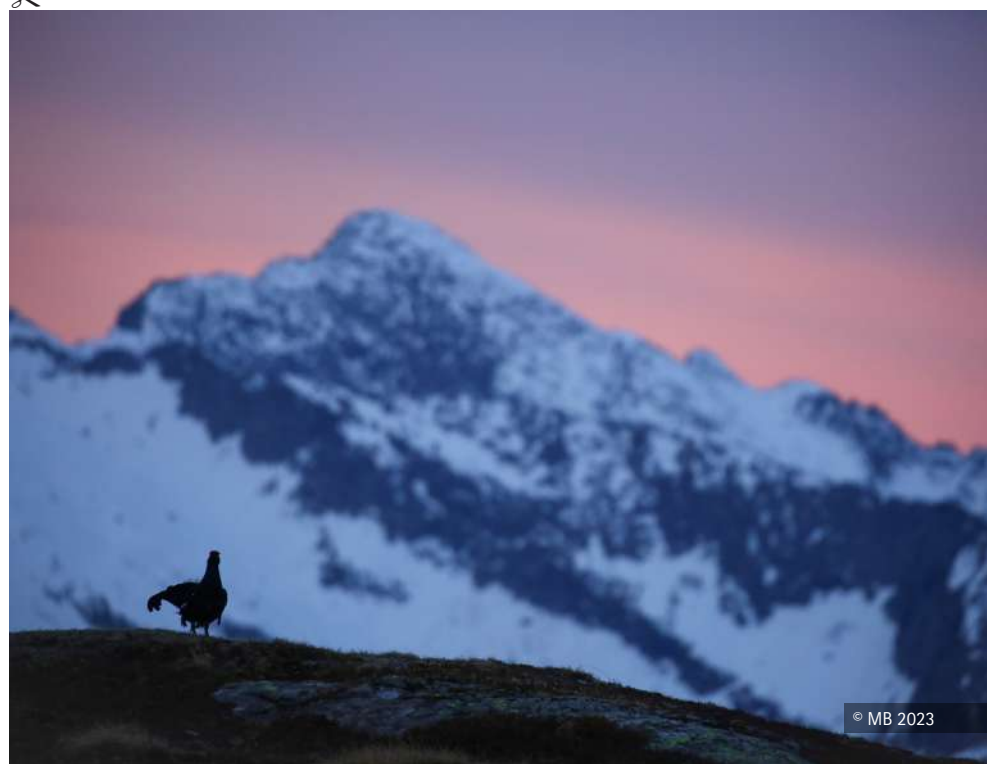
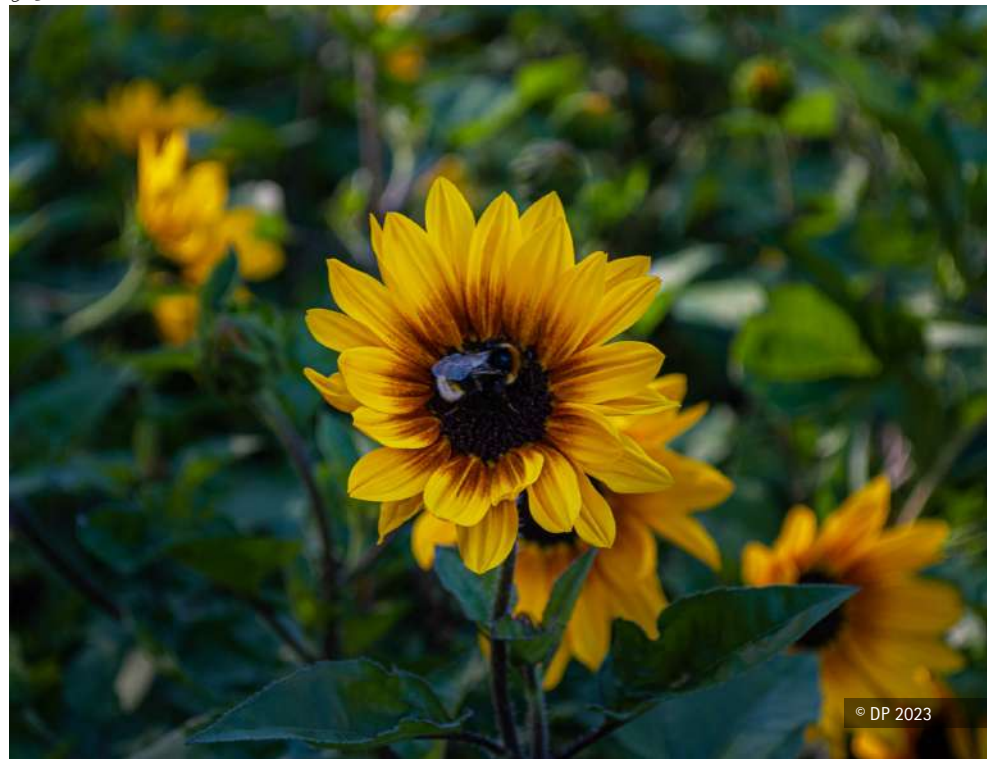
Weavings of time

This was once a washhouse and it could have been abandoned and overgrown with moss. Instead, it has been filled with soil and bark, transformed into a small garden. [...] What could have been an unpleasant sight has become an oasis of beauty. I like to imagine that an elderly villager, deeply connected to the land, revitalized this space, bridging the gap between generations. To take care of our towns, the environment, and the nature that surrounds us, perhaps we should take a little more time to talk with our elders. Stop and listen to them. And discuss with them. Many of the things they did may not have been perfect, but we can still learn something. By combining the authentic and respectful bond with nature that the elderly have with the awareness and critical eye of young people, we can create a caring community.

Soranzén
Nicholas, 27 years old



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The essence of bees

Bees, jewels of the ecosystem, dance among flowers and pollen. With their tireless work, they bring life and fertility to every corner of our world. They are the architects of biodiversity—pollinators that sustain the balance of nature. Preserving bees means preserving our future. With gratitude, we must honor these precious creators of honey and fertility so that their melodious buzzing continues to resonate in our world.

*Misurina
Davide, 18 years old*



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From sea to mountains

The Dolomites and Venice, so different yet so similar. Their wealth is also, in part, their downfall: mass tourism. Like a drug, they can't live without it, but it destroys their soul. Decisions are often made (or not made) in favor of visitors and their money, at the expense of the environment and the local inhabitants, who often choose to move elsewhere, taking their culture and traditions with them. And so, these marvelous places, overflowing with people, end up empty.

*Col Gallina
Gioia, 25 years old*



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What almost no one sees

The invisible isn't always something small or hidden; sometimes it's simply something that happens in places and at times when nobody is around. The dances of the grouse take place only in limited, high-altitude areas, starting before dawn and ending long before hikers reach those heights. To witness them, one must be ready to wake up in the dead of night and climb in total darkness, then hide and wait in the quiet of the mountain night.

*Dolomiti
Michele, 26 years old*



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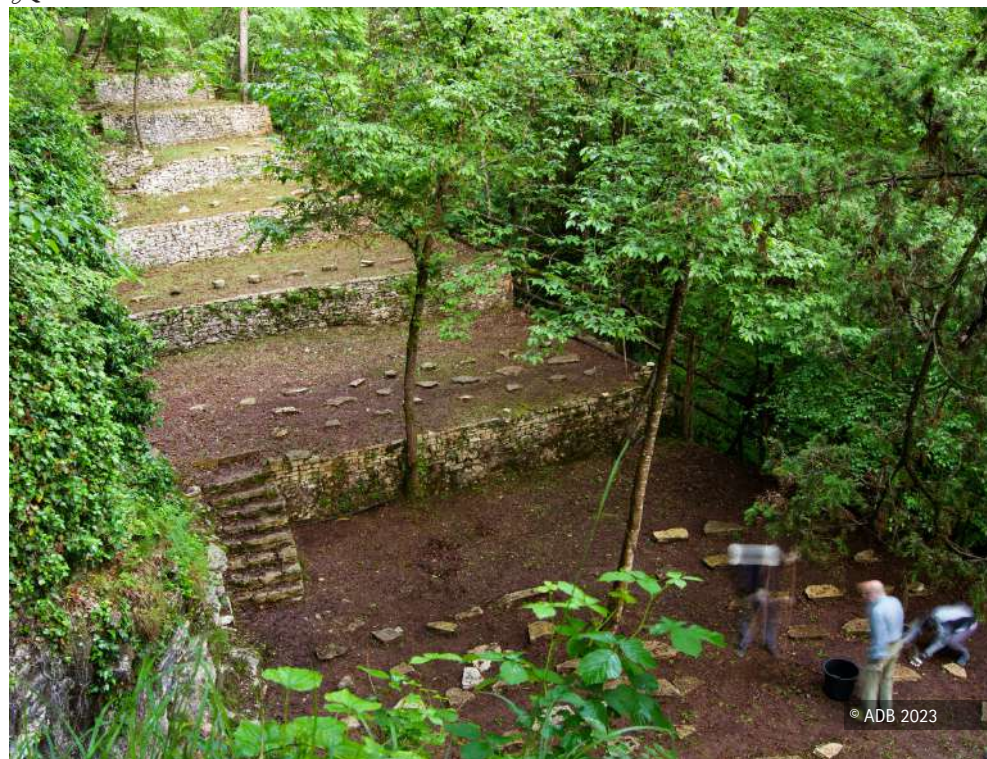
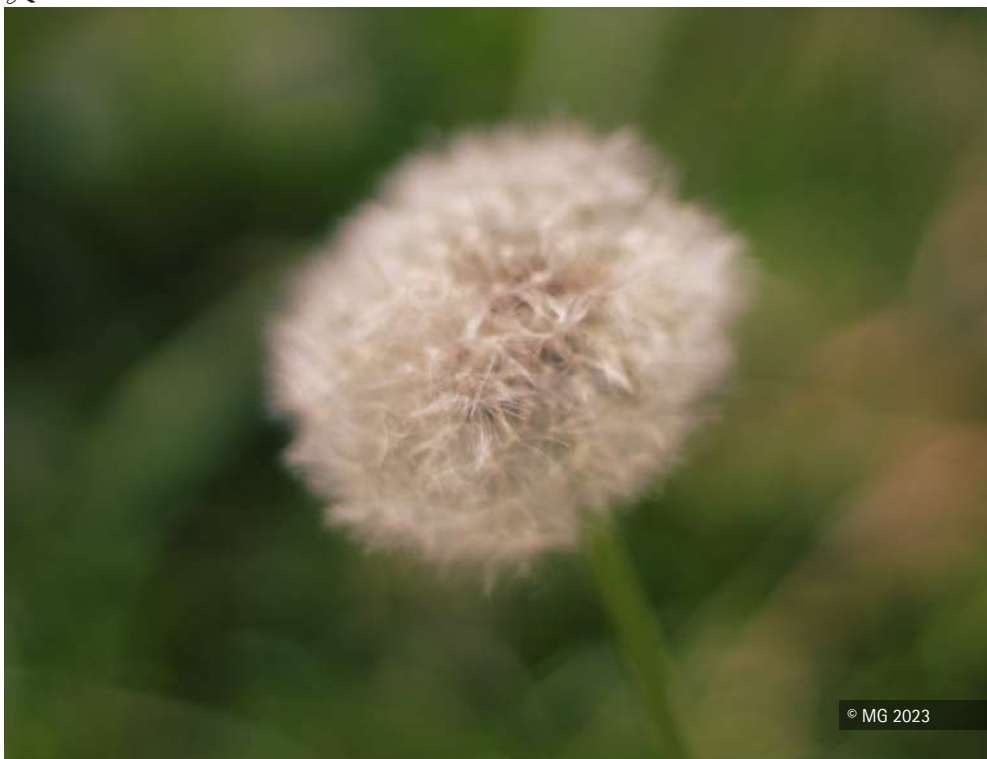
Recognition

I dream of Belluno becoming iconic, renowned in Italy and beyond, a magnet for hikers, climbers, ski mountaineers, and mountain enthusiasts in general. How many trails, routes, and magnificent environments are still relatively unknown? How many people have dedicated their lives to the mountains and can offer unique experiences to visitors? How many inspiring tales of legendary mountaineers from Belluno's past and present can be unearthed to further enrich this place? Of course, it's a matter of using resources in the right way, but the foundation lies in mindset and confidence. I want to be proud of everything that surrounds me, to know it more deeply, and to share it with pride.

*Losego
Alberto, 29 years old*



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Rural archeology

Not only are the terraces perfectly integrated into the landscape, but they also help preserve biodiversity and protect the land from erosion and landslides. By breaking up steep slopes, they prevent the formation of gullies during heavy rains. Originally built to cultivate steep terrains, many are now hidden beneath the forest canopy. A unique example is the terraces near the Calmada road, above Sossai. They have been repurposed as the natural stands for the Teatro al Mut, an open-air theater surrounded by trees and rocks. This innovative approach has breathed new life into these ancient agricultural structures and created a stunning natural stage.

Sossai
Alberto, 29 years old



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What gives life

Each tiny seed attached to this dandelion will create others, in a continuous cycle. Many will die, others will be scattered, but those few that bear fruit will literally give life to new plants...

Santa Giustina
Marco, 26 years old



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A plea for respect

While hiking on a forest trail, I found a glass bottle embedded in the ground. And that's just one of the many things I've stumbled upon during my walks. This can be very dangerous for nature itself and the animals that live there. This is a lack of respect that humans show for what we have most precious and beautiful. There is no concern or civic sense on their part. And this leaves me deeply saddened.

Valle di Garès
Giada, 26 years old



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The enchanted forest

Step into a forest and you'll enter a fairytale, there's no escape. A place of learning and growth, of getting lost to find yourself and discover something new.

Valmorel
Anonymous Author, 28 years old
Sculpture by Silvano Da Roit



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