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Community microtoponymy: Proposals to read an oral corpus from Marene (Piedmont, Italy)

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Sara Racca

University of Turin
Via Sant'Ottavio 20
10120 Torino
Italy
sara.racca@unito.it

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Abstract: Investigating an oral microtoponymy set from a socio-onomastic point of view presents us with the challenge of how to read the variation these data disclose. Starting from the toponyms collected during field research in Marene (Piedmont, Italy), this paper intends to outline an analysis method that allows us to reconstruct the toponym formation process and observe the nodes from which the different paths branch out, causing this variation. The scheme that we follow here takes as its basis the proper name theory of the Italian linguist A. Prosdocimi, that involves splitting the name formation process into three levels: physical, cultural and linguistic "individuation". Some specific examples taken from the corpus collected in Marene – places mentioned just by one informant; places named by most of the informants and their cultural and linguistic interpretation – are presented in order to

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show the functionality and versatility of this scheme in analysing variation within a community's toponymic repertoire.

Keywords: Oral microtoponymy, socio-onomastics, sociolinguistics, variation, Piedmont.

Microtoponymie communautaire : propositions de lecture du répertoire oral de Marene (Piédmont, Italie)

Résumé : L'étude socio-onomastique des microtoponymes oraux nous place face au défi de traiter la variation présentée par les données collectées. À partir des données d'une enquête réalisée à Marene (Piémont, Italie), cet article vise à illustrer une méthode d'analyse qui permet de reconstruire le processus de formation des toponymes et d'observer les points de départ des chemins divers qui déterminent la variation. Le modèle que nous suivons se fonde sur la théorie du nom propre du linguiste italien Prosdocimi. Cette théorie nous permet de diviser le parcours de formation d'un nom en trois étapes d'« individuation » : l'individuation physique, la culturelle et la linguistique. Afin de montrer la fonctionnalité et la polyvalence de ce schéma pour l'analyse de la variation qui se vérifie dans un répertoire toponymique communautaire, nous proposons quelques exemples sélectionnés parmi les données de Marene – à savoir, des lieux mentionnés uniquement par un informateur ; des lieux nommés par la plupart des informateurs et leur interprétation à la fois culturelle et linguistique.

Mots-clés : Microtoponymie orale, socioonomastique, sociolinguistique, variation, Piémont.

Gemeinschaftliche Mikrotoponomastik: Vorschläge das mündliches Repertoire von Marene (Piedmont, Italien) zu lesen

Zusammenfassung: Die Untersuchung einer oralen Mikrotoponymie aus einer sozioonomastischer Perspektive stellt uns vor die Herausforderung, mit den Abweichungen umzugehen, die diese Daten offenbaren. Ausgehend von den Toponymen, die während einer Feldforschung in Marene (Piemont, Italien) gesammelt wurden, soll in diesem Artikel eine Analysemethode dargestellt werden, mit der wir den Prozess der Toponymbildung rekonstruieren und die Knoten beobachten können, von denen sich die verschiedenen Pfade abzweigen und die Variation verursachen. Das Schema, dem wir hier folgen, basiert auf der "Proper Name Theory" des italienischen Sprachwissenschaftlers A. Prosdocimi, das darin besteht, den Prozess der Namensbildung in drei Ebenen aufzuteilen: physische, kulturelle und sprachliche „Individuation". Einige spezifische Beispiele aus dem in Marene gesammelten Korpus – Orte, die nur von einem Informanten erwähnt wurden; Orte, die von den meisten Informanten benannt wurden, und ihre kulturelle und sprachliche Interpretation – werden vorgestellt, um die Funktionalität und Vielseitigkeit dieses Schemas bei der Analyse der Variation innerhalb eines gemeinschaftlichen toponymischen Repertoires zu demonstrieren.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Mikrotoponymie, Sozioonomastik, Sozio-linguistik, Variation, Piemont.

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Community microtoponymy: Proposals to read an oral corpus from Marene (Piedmont, Italy)

SARA RACCA

1. Introduction

This paper presents some considerations that came to light in a microtoponymy study that took place during the two-year period 2016–2017 in the town of Marene (Piedmont, Italy).[1] The aim was to recreate the toponym network that the inhabitants use to refer to the space in which they live in everyday life. That is to say, the oral microtoponym set referring to smaller place-objects, used locally by a limited group of people and mostly orally transmitted.

The corpus of toponyms was constructed using field interviews with local informants and can be analysed from both historical-etymological and sociolinguistic perspectives. Since this research seeks to assemble a sample of informants with different socio-demographic positions and to investigate how this can influence the personal set of place names, the sociolinguistic perspective, namely *socio-onomastics*, is adopted here. That means, exploration of the name variation is the core (Ainiala 2016: 371).

The aim of the research presented here was to see what linguistic materials the speakers concretely use to talk about referents that they consider worthy of being mentioned. However, their perception of what can be considered a "toponym" and what not was not taken into account. Thus, I collected all the linguistic expressions with spatially specific semantic content that were used in the interaction between the informant and the collector. They are the result of different strategies that closely match those that Schegloff (1972: 96–106) identifies as "sorts of place formulations": *geographical formulations*; *relation to members formulations*; *relation to landmarks formulations*; *course of action places*; *place names*.

Since the objective of this paper is not to define what the borders of the notion of "toponym" are, but to explore the place naming choices of single informants and the community, every linguistic production referring to a place is called "toponym" or "place name" here, without any distinctions based on the structural complexity of the utterance. This crude simplification is also the result of a need for textual expediency; the reader should remember that the

[1] This article is based on my Masters' thesis (Racca 2017), which is published in full on the website http://lnx.pubblitesi.it/ (it is necessary to sign up and log in to read it).

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terms do not refer just to Schegloff's category of *place names*, but also to the others (as the examples illustrate).

This paper is divided into three sections: firstly, the territory and the methodology of data collection and corpus construction are presented; secondly, the analytical scheme – based on Prosdocimi's proper name theory (1989) – is described; thirdly, some possible paths of analysis emerging from the application of this scheme to the corpus are highlighted.

2. Microtoponym collection in Marene

2.1. The examined area

All the place names collected during the investigation concern places belonging to Marene, a small municipality of approximately 29 square kilometres, located in the extreme west of the Po Valley, in Piedmont (Italy).

Situated 310 meters above sea level it lies between a flat area to the west and uplands to the east; this slight but noticeable difference in altitude provides a two-level layout that runs the length of the area from north to south. The land has an abundance of streams and springs, especially the lower western part, that was once marshy until Benedictine monks from Savigliano reclaimed it in the 16th century (Fogliato & Trabucco 2006).

Marene's economy has always depended on agriculture. Nowadays cereals are the main crop on land once dedicated to growing also hemp, rice and vines. The secondary and tertiary sectors – manufacturing, craftsmanship and commerce – have developed substantially since the post-war period, giving rise to urban sprawl and the creation of an industrial site.

In 2016, when the first interviews were carried out, Marene had a population of 3,175.[2] Records of demographic change over the years, starting with the first available data dating from the 17th century, show slow but steady growth that has increased in recent years. A drop in the town's population occurred only once, between the 1950s and the early 70s, when many Italians left the countryside to work in large industrialized cities or even abroad.

From a linguistic perspective Marene is similar to most other regions in Italy in that Italian is spoken in both formal and informal situations, whereas the local dialect (in this case Piedmontese) is used only in informal contexts and by a section of the population. The Italian sociolinguist Berruto (1987) used the term *dilalia* to describe this phenomenon. Active dialect competence is mostly found among older inhabitants, born before the 1960s. By contrast, younger people generally have only a passive knowledge of the dialect; dialect competence in this second group is generally limited to specific areas of daily

[2] Data about population come from the Italian National Institute of Statistics (*Istituto Nazionale di Statistica* – ISTAT: https://www.istat.it/).

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life (i.e. work), and therefore fewer lexical sets. Consequently, their competence is not comparable to that of a native speaker. In toponomastic studies, the *dilalia* implies that two toponymic layers overlap: one consisting in the official toponymy (which underwent a centuries-old "Italianisation" process) and another in the endemic oral toponymy (usually in Piedmontese, this persists and can be found in everyday use along with the official name).

2.2. The corpus: Methodological choices, interviews and collection

To collect oral toponyms directly from the speakers, field interviews involving 30 informants were carried out, recorded and then transcribed in their relevant parts. For each informant, I conducted a semi-structured conversation following established scholarly practice[3]: the informants were asked to cross the municipality mentally, with the help of a blank map, and to name all the places as they would in everyday life.

As I am both the collector and a community member, I enjoyed a privileged insider position while collecting data. This allowed me to adopt an "emic" stance with regard to the distinction between "emic" and "etic" standpoints developed by Pike (1967).

> The etic viewpoint studies behavior as from outside of a particular system, and as an essential initial approach to an alien system. The emic viewpoint results from studying behavior as from inside the system." (Pike 1967: 37)

To try to minimise my influence on the informant's production, I began the interview with a deliberately open question: "What do you call the places you know on this map?" According to Marrapodi (2011: 504), this is the only appropriate question, since it allows us to avoid defining *a priori* which spaces are to be named and which are not.

I conducted the interviews in Italian, as I am not a native dialect speaker – this is consistent with my age, since I was born in 1992 – and my faulty Piedmontese might have distracted the informant. The interviewees were explicitly asked to choose the language that they preferred to use to answer the question. So, when they selected Piedmontese, we became involved in a bilingual dialogue. Even though this may seem an artificial situation, it is not: conversations between one person speaking Italian and another (usually older) speaking dialect are common everyday occurrences in Italy and are perceived as totally natural to both speakers.

Informants were given a free rein to manage the conversations. I simply asked them for the meaning of or the reasons of place names when they were not obvious. When necessary, I reminded them of areas they had forgotten to

[3] The same used by collectors of the Piedmontese atlas *Atlante Toponomastico del Piemonte Montano* – ATPM (see Rivoira 2009 or the website https://www.atpmtoponimi.it/).

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mention, without suggesting any names myself.

Usually, the "ideal" informant in interviews designed to study the dialectal oral toponymy is identified with the acronym NORM: non-mobile older rural male (see Chambers & Trudgill 1980). In my case, however, since the research proposal was to observe toponymic usage from a sociolinguistic viewpoint, it was necessary to take into account the informants' socio-demographic features when constructing the sample. The inhabitants of Marene included in the research were therefore selected according to the following three variables – age, gender, origin – that might influence their relationship with the territory, thus the sample was composed as follows:

- age: 10 young people (15–35 years), 10 adults (36–65 years), 10 elderly people (66 years and over);
- gender: 14 men and 16 women;
- provenance: 15 native and 15 non-native.

The term *native* is used to denote a person who has lived in Marene all his/her life and who has at least one parent from there. Non-native informants, instead, are people who moved to Marene or who were born there but do not have a parent who was born there. The latter I assumed had not participated in the transmission process of a whole series of toponyms, that usually takes place within the family.

At least one person for each class created by the intersection of these three variables (twelve in total) was selected. To avoid collecting phonetic and morphosyntactic variants of names due to the incomplete language competence of informants an additional parameter was introduced: informants needed to be able to speak either Italian or Piedmontese at native-speaker level. Table 1 contains information about the language (Italian) and dialect (Piedmontese) competence of the informants, according to their own declarations and the assessments that I made during the interviews. Each informant is identified by a string representing his/her socio-demographic features: gender (F=female, M=male), provenance (O=native[4], N=non-native) and age (the last two numbers of the birth year). The last letter, when present, is used to distinguish two informants otherwise identifiable with the same string.

Table 1: Italian and Piedmontese competence of each informant

Informant	Italian	Piedmontese
MO00	native speaker	no active competence high passive competence
MN97	native speaker	no active competence high passive competence
MN95	native speaker	no active competence low passive competence

[4] The letter "O" in these strings stands for *originario*, that is the Italian for "native".

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FN92	native speaker	no active competence high passive competence
FO92a	native speaker	low active competence high passive competence
FO92b	native speaker	low active competence high passive competence
MO90	native speaker	medium active competence high passive competence
FN88	native speaker	medium active competence high passive competence
MO86	native speaker	high active competence high passive competence
FN85	native speaker	medium active competence high passive competence
MN72	native speaker	no active competence high passive competence
FO67	high active competence high passive competence	native speaker
FO66	native speaker	high active competence high passive competence
FN65	native speaker	low active competence high passive competence
MO64a	high active competence high passive competence	native speaker
MO64b	high active competence high passive competence	native speaker
MO62	high active competence high passive competence	native speaker
FN61	high active competence high passive competence	native speaker
FN59	native speaker	high active competence high passive competence
FN54	native speaker	low active competence high passive competence
FN50a	high active competence high passive competence	native speaker
FN50b	high active competence high passive competence	native speaker
MO44	high active competence high passive competence	native speaker
MN37	native speaker	no active competence low passive competence
MO36	medium active competence high passive competence	native speaker
FO35	medium active competence high passive competence	native speaker
FO32	medium active competence high passive competence	native speaker
FN32	medium active competence high passive competence	native speaker
MO26	medium active competence high passive competence	native speaker
MN22	medium active competence high passive competence	native speaker

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This heterogeneous sample produced a rich and varied corpus: nearly 1800 toponyms referring to 582 places. Table 2 shows an Excel cross-table containing an extract from the corpus. The columns show, from left to right, a number associated with each place, a brief description of each place, all the toponyms and variants related to each place collected by the interviews (written using Italian spelling or in IPA when the utterance is in Piedmontese).

Table 2: Example from the cross-table corpus

num.	description	place name	MO00	MN97	MN95	FN92	FO92a	FO92b	MO90	FN88	MO86	FN85	MN72	FO67	FO66	FN65	MO64a	MO64b	MO62	FN61	FN59	FN54	FN50a	FN50b	MO44	MN37	MO36	FO35	FO32	FN32	MO26	MN22
500	farmhouse	Casa di Giobbe				X																										
		/əl pə'siɲe/						X			X					X2			X								X		X		X2	
		/le pə'siɲe/													X																	
		le Pessine												X			X	X							X							
		Cascina Pessine																													X1	
		la Cascina le Pessine							X1																							
		dove sta Giobergia							X2																							
		dove abita Giobbe														X1																
		/dʒu'berdʒa/																										X				
501	intersection	lo stop del Mallone								X																						
502	street	la strada del Mallone																				X										
503	*frazione*	il Mallone	X				X	X	X	X	X1			X	X	X1	X1				X		X	X	X					X	
		/əl ma'luŋ/									X2						X2		X								X	X	X	X		
		il /ma'luŋ/														X2																
504	field	/pra dəl ma'luŋ/																													X	
505	field	/pra grand/																													X	
506	field	/pra'jot/																													X	

The table shows all the language material received from informants, with no distinction based on the complexity of linguistic construction or its extemporaneousness: even utterances that include minimal phonetic or morphosyntactic differences were registered separately. Each of the following columns represents the repertoire of a single informant, who is identified by the string outlined above. Crosses in the cells indicate that the informant provided a name for that particular place – if he or she produced more than one name for the same place, a number is attached to the cross, according to the order in which they were uttered. The cross-table therefore makes data comparison and quantitative evaluations easy, in view of the fact that both the whole repertoire and the single personal ones can be taken into account.

3. A proposed analysis: The application of Prosdocimi's proper name theory

Many possible strategies can be adopted when organising and analysing such a complex and varied collection of data. My intention was to find an analysis model that would enable us to reconstruct the toponym creation process and understand how and to what extent informants' socio-demographic features influence it. To that end, I adopted the three-step process developed by the Italian linguist Prosdocimi in his proper name theory (1989), adapted to the toponym specific case. Figure 1 shows a graphic representation

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based on corpus data, regarding a *frazione*[5] and a farmhouse.

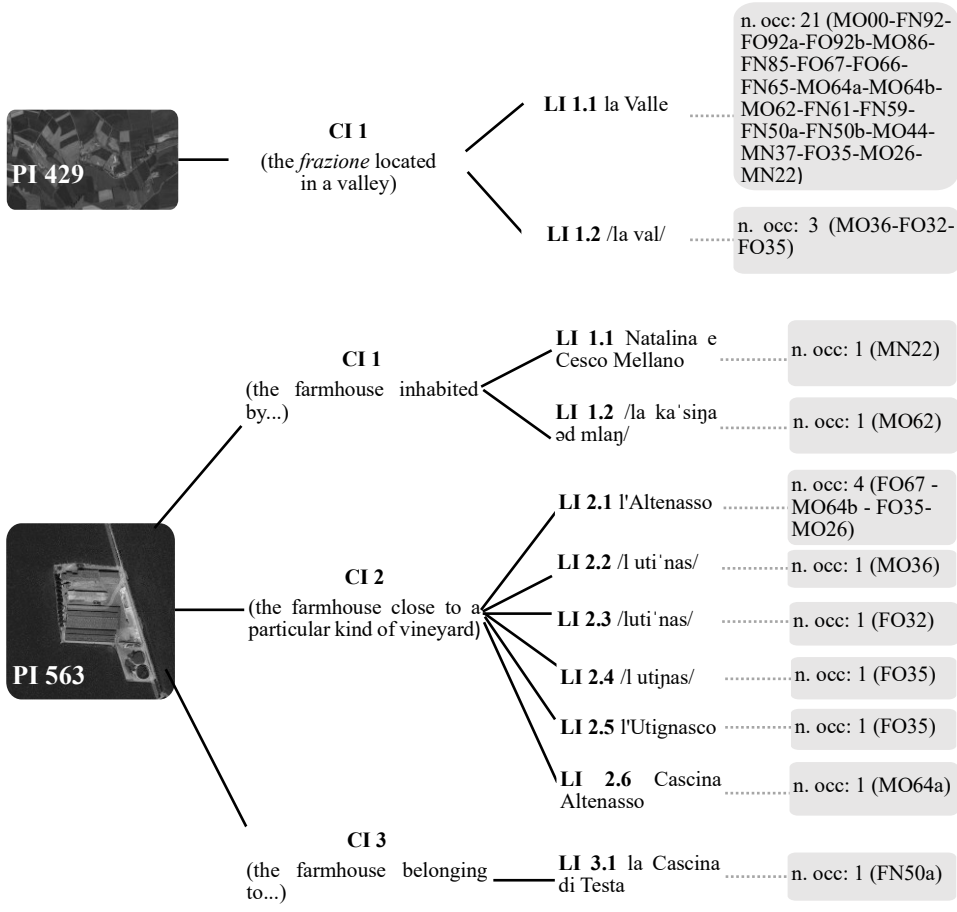


Figure 1: The "individuation process" applied to two cases extracted from the corpus

The first step of the model is "physical individuation" which involves selecting what is known and salient in a space and, therefore, worth naming. In this way, an ordinary place becomes a "physical individual" (PI). This stage necessarily leads to the second step, "cultural individuation", which is central to Prosdocimi's theory. Here, a meaning is attached to the PI, implying that it has been "culturally" recognized by the speaker and thus identified as a "cultural individual" (CI). Each CI associated with the same PI hence represents a different perception and interpretation of that place, which will find expression through different proper names. In the final step, "linguistic individuation", speakers make a concrete choice about the language materials,

[5] A *frazione* (pl. *frazioni*) is a small inhabited area or settlement within a municipal territory; the term has a specific place in Italian administrative geography that cannot be directly translated into English. This administrative division is in some ways similar to a *hamlet* or *ward* in English, but not precisely the same as either.

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in order to create a place name. Each CI can generate many "linguistic individuals" (LIs), the names speakers use to refer to places. Different LIs refer to the same PI and may therefore result from both distinct interpretations within a territory (different CIs) and the same interpretations within the territory, represented with various language materials (different LIs).

Whether the choices made by informants at different steps of the process are shared or not, coupled with the socio-demographic variables related to them, can provide a picture of how different community sub-groups behave when naming the territory they live in. This is what will be analysed below.

4. Corpus analysis: Some possible readings

Using the considerations outlined above as a starting point, I will trace some possible paths of analysis and lines of interpretation, so as to test the potential of Prosdocimi's three-step process. Considerations concerning informants' selection at the PI level will be presented first, followed by a focus on CI and LI level choices.

The material in the corpus was collected using two blank maps: one of the village itself and one of the surrounding rural area. Since the analysis of the collected data shows that informants behaved differently when naming elements within these two areas (as we shall see in the following sections), to distinguish one from the other I will call them respectively "centre" and "rural area" henceforth.

4.1. The "physical individuation" level

A total of 582 PIs were identified during interviews conducted in Marene: 333 in the centre and 249 in the rural area. Looking at the corpus from a quantitative as well as qualitative perspective allows us to perceive how thoroughly the inhabitants know and recognise every portion of space, since only some PIs are identified as salient by all the informants. What follows focuses on two types of occurrence: the first set (§ 4.1.1) includes those PIs that occur only once, having been identified by only one informant. There are 210 of these, 124 in the centre and 86 in the rural area. The second set (§ 4.1.2) is made up of PIs shared across the whole sample. That means not the ones referred to by all the informants (because there are no instances of this), but those that have been named by at least one informant per variable option (i.e. adult; non-native; female). There are 88 of these: 58 in the centre and 30 in the rural area.

The referents gathered in the intermediate category (the largest, with a total of 284) are shared by just some members of the sample. Even though correlations between the variable options and these referents are shown, they are not considered in this paper.

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4.1.1. "Physical individuals" with a single occurrence

This kind of referent is interesting because it depicts the internal variability of the community repertoire; furthermore, it reveals the different priorities involved in the selection process. Here, however, I have only outlined the main considerations that came to light analysing these data.

PIs with a single occurrence can be gathered together in three groups. First of them are places located near the informant's current or previous home, or that of his or her family of origin (parts of streets, fields, farms, meadows, an irrigation canal and the ruins of a small church). Second group are places connected to bygone activities or abandoned areas, kept alive only in the memory of elderly people (the ruins of a farm, an old primary school building, a general area whose borders are no longer defined). Third group are places related to hobbies, personal interests and other aspects of daily life (recreational or commercial activities, friends' homes, meeting places, and places connected with one's job).

These outcomes are in line with those of other oral microtoponymy research conducted in Italy (Marrapodi 2006: 51–52; Pons 2013: 41). It is therefore evident that no favourite representative typology among single occurrence PIs exists precisely because they belong to that part of the repertoire that splits the community rather than connects it. They reveal the different ways in which the territory can be seen and experienced.

4.1.2. "Physical individuals" shared across the whole sample

Even PIs shared by at least one informant per variable option indicate a predominance of "individuation" in the centre (centre: 58 PIs; rural area: 30 PIs). This is because the centre is the most inhabited and known area in the municipal territory.

As we can see in Figure 2, the network of shared PIs in the centre (located in the middle of the municipal territory) is quite dense, especially to the west of the central area, where residents live. An industrial site is found to the east. The rural area instead is characterised by blank zones; the shared PIs here are grouped on sites where there is a higher concentration of residential buildings and along the most important transportation routes. Some of them are grouped in two clusters, demarcated by a dashed line on the map in Figure 2. Both are inhabited areas located to the north and to the south of the centre (also demarcated) along the village's main road axis, the main transportation route connecting the village to neighbouring municipalities until three decades ago. Other PIs are situated in more isolated positions along less important transportation routes.

When speaking of types of shared PIs, man-made elements occur more frequently than natural ones. This is the case for both the centre and the rural area. Although human intervention in the latter is on a smaller scale, the

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informants' attention is nevertheless drawn to buildings. This evidence confirms what has emerged from other toponymy research carried out in Piedmont, even though those territories exhibit different social and geographical characteristics (see Pons 2013: 49–50).

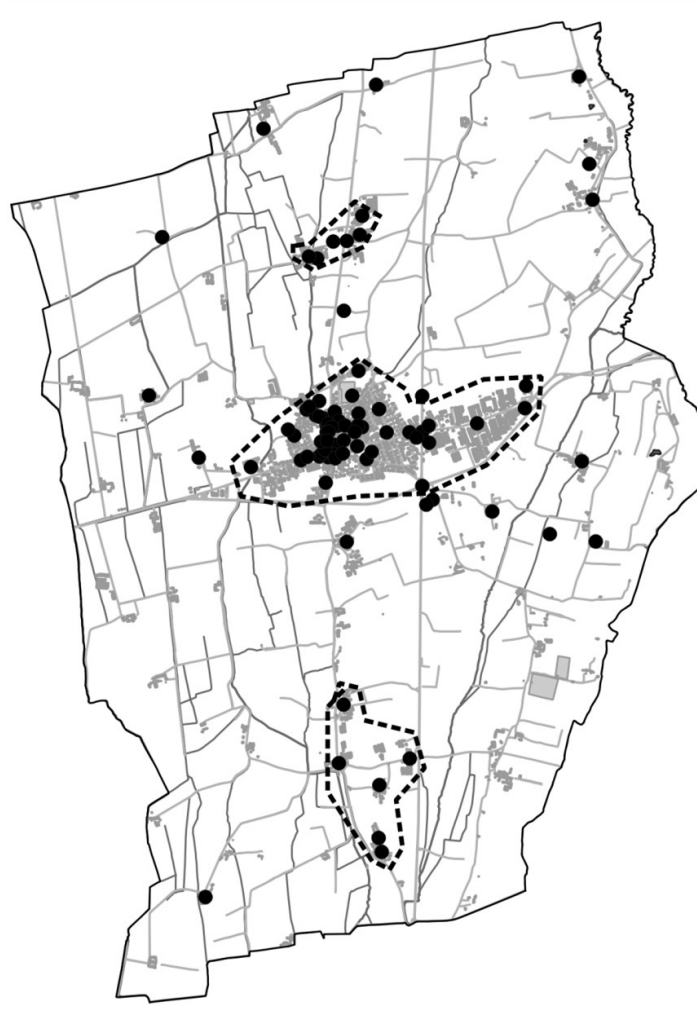


Figure 2: PIs shared across the whole sample of informants in Marene

In the rural area (Figure 3) there are 30 shared PIs, 20 of which belong to the only large category, dwellings and rural communities: 13 *frazioni* or parts of them and 7 secluded farmhouses. The remaining third include 4 commercial businesses (including restaurants, hotels, bars etc.), 3 art-historical buildings, 1 factory, 1 indistinct area and 1 road (which is also considered to be in the centre, since it crosses both the rural area and the centre).

In the centre (Figure 4), the largest group of shared PIs concerns 13 commercial businesses (shops, bars, restaurants or hotels). There are also 12

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road network elements (streets, squares, roundabouts), 11 public offices and services (schools, retirement homes, police station, post office, etc.), 7 art-historical buildings, 5 parks or sports and recreation grounds, 4 industrial buildings (3 factories and an industrial site) and 2 residential areas. The remaining 4 PIs include a cemetery, an aqueduct, a canal and the ruins of a mill.

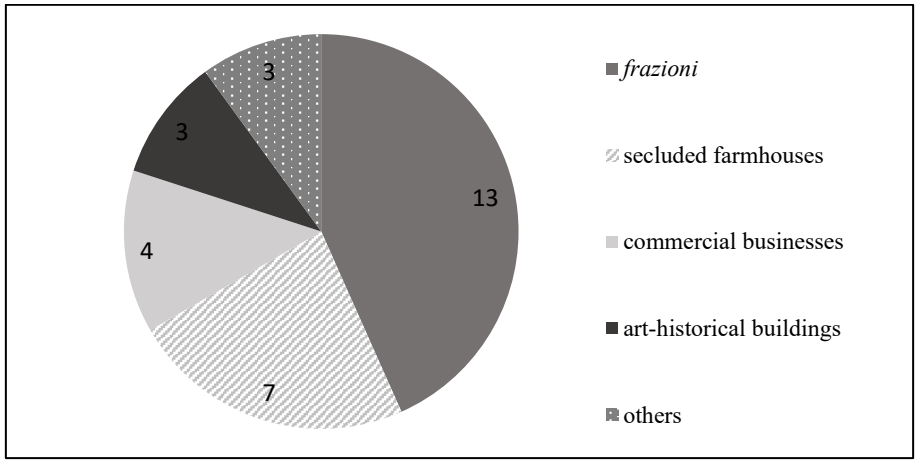


Figure 3: Types of shared PIs in the rural area

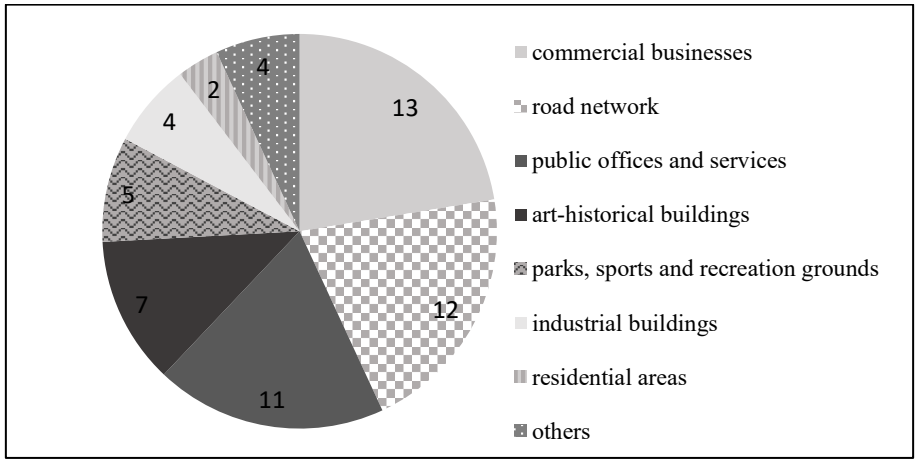


Figure 4: Types of shared PIs in the centre

Therefore, we can see that there is no preference for a specific type of place among shared PIs located in the centre. We only observe that spaces related to the community life are usually preferred. However, Figure 5 displaying the punctual or linear "shape" of the places shows us that punctual PIs are more often mentioned when the network is dense, whereas linear PIs, namely the streets, are used when they are isolated and the informants name few nearby places.

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Figure 5: Punctual and linear PIs in the residential part of the centre

4.2. "Cultural individuation" and "linguistic individuation" levels

After observing how inhabitants select what is important in municipal space, we can proceed to analyse how they classify these places ("cultural individuation") and consequently how they name them in everyday life ("linguistic individuation"). As in the PI stage, data collected can be analysed from different angles in these levels too. The approaches discussed here represent just some of the possibilities.

On average, 4.1 names were collected for each PI in the centre and 4.2 in the rural area. These numerical values do not give any clues about CI and LI usage, they simply enable us to understand the extent of variability within the collected repertoire.

The following analysis will focus on two sets of PIs, selected from the shared ones we saw before: firstly, those that have fewer than the average number of LIs per PI, in this case four or less (a total of 24, see Figure 6 and § 4.2.1), and secondly, those that have a much higher number than average, namely 10 LIs or more per PI (a total of 14, see Figure 7 and § 4.2.2). These two extreme cases were chosen here to try to understand if there are any patterns underlying the homogeneous or heterogeneous naming process. First of all, we can see their spatial distribution in Figures 6 and 7. The PIs with only a few toponyms are mainly located on the north-south axis (already highlighted above), whereas PIs with many names are more widespread across the territory.

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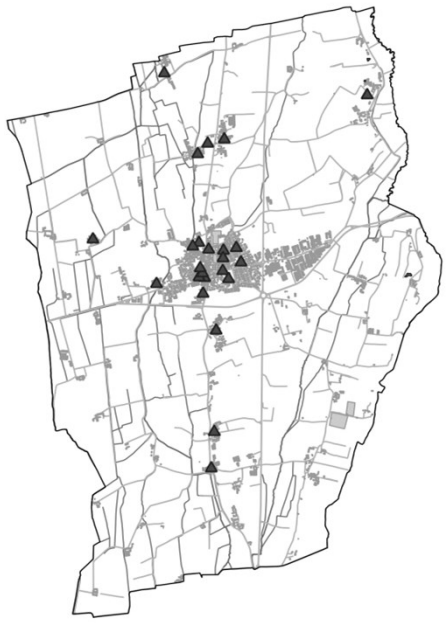


Figure 6: Shared PIs with fewer than the average number of LIs



Figure 7: Shared PIs with ten or more LIs

4.2.1. One place and few place names: When the community's toponymic behaviour is homogeneous

When a PI produces few LIs, but they are shared by many informants, it tells us that very homogeneous processes of signification and denomination are in place. In the shared PIs set, of them 24 can be found: 9 in the rural area and 15 in the centre (see the list in Tables 3 and 4).

Focusing our attention on these referents, it is possible to see that in the rural area they are all *frazioni*. In these cases, informants behave consistently: they begin by conceptualizing the place, a process that crystallises and enters into the heritage of the community even before any naming process takes place. The categories of meaning vary: there is a hagiotoponym (n. 341, namely "Saint Bernard"), an ecotoponym (n. 353, related to rice field activities), a phytotoponym (n. 358, related to the hemp plantation), an orotoponym (n. 429, "the valley"), and obscure toponyms (n. 483, 485, 491, 503, 529).

In all these cases, there is only one CI, but two LIs for each PI: indeed, every toponym has both an Italian and Piedmontese version. The Italian place name is always the most widespread of the two. Being the official "Italianised" form that originates from the Piedmontese one, it is the most recent and often appears on road signs. Results show that informants using the Piedmontese variation are native adults and elderly people, both male and female. The only exception is FN32, a non-native woman who has lived in Marene since she

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married and prefers to speak Piedmontese. In only two cases did young informants use the Piedmontese variation (FO92a for n. 483 and MO86 for n. 503), both times as a second option. When adults and elderly people provide both forms, they more often – five times out of seven – mentioned the Piedmontese form first. Three PIs (n. 485, 491, 503) also include a compound combining an Italian and a Piedmontese part, produced by a native and a non-native adult woman.

In the centre (Table 4), there are more types of PIs with few denominations: 5 road network elements, 2 commercial businesses, 2 public offices and services, 2 art-historical buildings, a sports area, a factory, a canal and an aqueduct. As regards the "cultural individuation" level, road network elements are identified mainly with their official hodonym (preceded by It. *via* "street"). Almost all the other PIs have as CI the description of their building type or function: a square (1), the headquarters of a cooperative society (8), a post office (88), a gym (159), a pharmacy (40), a castle (124), a tower (127), an aqueduct (172), a canal (100). Few other kinds of CI were collected, these include a bar (37) that is related to its commercial name and a factory (78) that refers to the owner with an anthroponym.

Those CI are shared by almost all community members. Then, some of those PIs also have a second CI, but it was provided just by one informant: the reference to an inhabitant for a street (168) and to the owner for a castle (124), both through anthroponym, and to a place in close proximity for two streets (168 and 237).

Results regarding the "linguistic individuation" level show that a significant number of the LIs are provided in Italian, even by some informants who favoured Piedmontese when naming rural places. As often happened in the rural area, Piedmontese forms were provided by adult and elderly people (with the addition of FN32), both male and female. However, when comparing the two areas, we can see that for each PI fewer informants used Piedmontese when referring to elements in the centre – e.g. just one informant produced a Piedmontese toponym for n. 40, 88, 169, 172 and just two for 127 – while other speakers used an Italian place name even if they were holding the interview in Piedmontese. The only exception is the PI n. 100, which is a canal everyone calls /la bjaˈlera/ in Piedmontese, including young and non-native informants. The toponym comes from the Piedmontese term for an artificial water canal, because it is the only one visible in the centre, in Marene it went from noun to hydronym.

A brief note about Italian forms should be made here. A popular bar (37) in the centre has two LIs, a commercial name *la Cremeria* and its apocopated form *la Creme*. This mechanism of truncating a toponym is typically used by young people in Marene. More examples from the collected corpus are *la Birreria*/*la Birre*, *la Polisportiva*/*la Poli*, *la Madonnina*/*la Mado*.

Therefore, when there is a slight variation, the consistency is kept until the "cultural individuation" level, except for some cases in the centre. Instead,

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on the “linguistic individuation” level an alternation insists, due to the change of linguistic code.

Table 3: PIs with few LIs each, shared across every sample class – rural area

341	/san bərˈnard/	FO66-MO62-MO36-FO35-FO32
	San Bernardo	MO00-FO92a-FO92b-MO90-MO86-FN85-FO67-FO66-FN65-MO64a-MO64b-FN61-FN59-FN54-FN50a-FN50b-MO44-MN37-FN32-MO26-MN22
353	/i munˈdiŋ/	FO66-MO64a-MO62-MO36-FO35-FO32-FN32
	i Mondini	MO00-FO92a-MO90-MO86-FO67-FO66-FN65-MO64b-FN59-FN54-FN50b-MO44-MN37
358	/əl kanaˈvuz/	MO64a-FO35-FO32-MO26
	il Canaposo	FO92a-FO92b-MO86-FO67-FO66-MO64b-FN50b-MO44-MN37-FO35-FO32-MO26-MN22
429	/la val/	MO36-FO32-FN32
	la Valle	MO00-FO92a-FO92b-FN92-MO86-FN85-FO67-FO66-FN65-MO64a-MO64b-MO62-FN61-FN59-FN50a-FN50b-MO44-MN37-FO35-MO26-MN22
483	/la ˈspriŋa/	FO92a-MO64a-FO35-FN32
	la Sperina	MO00-FO92a-FO92b-FN88-FO67-FN65-FN50b-MN37-MN22
485	/la ˈspriŋa ˈbasa/	MO64a-MO62-MO36-FO32
	la Sperina Bassa	MO00-MN95-FO92a-MO90-MO86-FN85-FN65-MO64b-FN54-FN50a-MN37-FO35-MO26
	la Sperina /ˈbasa/	FO66
491	/la ˈspriŋa ˈau̯ta/	MO64a-MO62-MO36-FO32
	la Sperina Alta	MO00-MN95-FO92a-MO90-MO86-FN65-MO64b-FN54-FN50a-FO35-MO26
	la Sperina /ˈau̯ta/	FO66
503	/əl maˈluŋ/	MO86-MO64a-MO62-MO36-FO35-FO32-FN32
	il Mallone	MO00-FO92a-FO92b-MO90-FN88-MO86-FO67-FO66-FN65-MO64a-FN59-FN50a-FN50b-MO44-MO26
	il /maˈluŋ/	FN65
529	/əl bergamiˈnot/	FO66-MO64a-MO64b-MO62-MO36-FO35-FO32
	il Bergaminotto	FO92a-MO90-MO86-FO67-FO66-MO64b-FN61-FN50b-MO26

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Table 4: PIs with few LIs each, shared across every sample class – centre

1	la Piazza	MO00-MN97-MN95-FO92a-FO92b-FN92-MO90-FN88-MO86-FN85-MN72-FO67-FN65-MO64b-FN61-FN59-FN54-MN37-MO26-MN22
	/la ˈpjasa/	MO64a-MO62-MO36-FO35-FO32-FN32
	Piazza Carignano	MO90-MO64b-MO26
8	il Consorzio	MN97-FO92a-MN72-FO67-FO66-MO64b-FN61-FN50a-MN37-MN22
	il Consorzio Agrario	FN50b
	/əl kunˈsorsju/	MO64a-MO36-FO35-FN32
	/əl kunˈsorsjo/	FO32
37	la Cremeria	MO00-MN97-MN95-FO92a-FN92-MO90-MO86-MN72-MO64b-MO62-FN61-FN59-FN50b-MN37-MO36-FO32-MO26-MN22
	la Creme	FO92b-FN88-FN85
40	la Farmacia	MO00-MN97-MN95-FO92a-FN59-FN50a
	/əl farmaˈʧista/	FO32
78	Crosetto	MN97-MN95-FO92a-FO92b-FN92-FN88-MO86-FN85-MN72-FN65-FN61-FN50a-FN50b-MN22
	/kruˈzet/	MO64a-MO62-MO36--FO35-FO32
88	la Posta	MO00-MN97-FO92a-FO92b-MO90-MO86-FN85-MO64b-FN50a
	le Poste	MN95-FN92-FN88-MN72-FO67-FO66-FN61-FN59-FN54-FN50b-MO36-FO35-FO32-FN32
	/əl ˈposte/	MO62
100	/la bjaˈlera/	MN95-FN92-MO90-MO86-MO64b-MO62-FN59-FN54-MO44-MO26
124	il Castello	MO00-MN95-MN97-FO92a-FO92b-FN92-MO90-FN88-MO86-FN85-MN72-FO67-FN65-MO64b-FN54-FN50a-MO44-MN37-MO36-MO26
	/əl kaˈstel/	MO64a-MO62-MO36-FO32
	il /kaˈstel/	FO66-FO35
	la Villa Grosso	MO64a
127	la Torre	MO00-FO92a-FO92b-FN92-FN88-MO64b-FN50b-MN37
	/la tur/	MO62-MO36
159	la Palestra	MO00-MN95-FO92a-FO92b-MO90-MO86-FN85-MN72-FN65-MO64b-FN54-FN50b-MN37
	il Palazzetto	FN88

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168	Via Trieste	MO00-FO92b-FO67-FO66-FN65-MO64a-MO64b-MO62-FN54-FN50a-FN50b-FO32-MO26
	la Via di Panetto	MO90
	/la stra k a va a le ˈskole/	FO32
169	Via Torino	MN95-FO92a-FO92b-FN92-MO90-MO86-FN85-MN72-FO67-FO66-FN65-MO64b-FN61-FN59-FN54-FN50a-FN50b-MN37-FO32
	/vja tyˈriŋ/	MO62
172	l'Acquedotto	MN97-MO86-FN85-MN72-FO67-MO64a-MO62-FN61-FO32
	/l akweˈdot/	MO36
237	Via Marconi	FO92a-FN92-MO90-FO67-MO64b-MO62-FN54-FN50a-FO32
	la Prosecuzione di Via Roma	FN88
264	Via Sant'Anna	FO92a-FN92-MO90-FN88-FN85-FN65-MO64b-FN61-FN54-FN50a-MO36-FO35

4.2.2. Many ways to name a place: When the community's toponymic behaviours are different

There are a number reasons why a particular PI might have many LIs: different conceptualisations, different place names for the same CI, and variants of the same place name. As there are many cases of one place having many different toponyms, the following analysis will concentrate on those PIs that have ten or more LIs (Tables 5 and 6).

In the rural area, PIs are farmhouses (two of which have been turned into a restaurant and a rehabilitation centre), whose names derive from distinct "cultural individuation" mechanisms. Firstly, the meaning that informants attach to the place may be related to the farmhouses' resident(s). This is evident from the way anthropotoponyms and periphrasis that include the name, surname or byname of the inhabitant are used. Furthermore, each informant can choose a different resident to make his or her connection (usually, someone of a similar age), thus contributing to the diversity of the collected place name set.

Secondly, those PIs can also be identified through an interpretation that produced known toponyms in the past, but which has since been forgotten by inhabitants. Sometimes the meaning is still understandable, but the origin of the toponym is not clear (e.g. Pi. /əl kaˈstel əd la reˈʤiŋa/, namely "the queen's castle"). However, etymological and bibliographic research or comparison with toponymic repertoires collected from nearby areas will usually shed light on its origins. Here is an example to illustrate how this process works: 374 is identified using several variants of an orotoponym (It. *La Bassa*, Pi. /la ˈbasa/, Pi. /əl

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ˈbase/), 519 by a phytotoponym (It. *il Bosco*, Pi. /əl bosk/). But when informants do not know the reason why a particular toponym is used, they usually conjecture that it is related to a person who lived there at some point, so they recognise it as a surname – which in some cases it is, e.g. It. *Botta*, Pi. /ˈbota/.

Thirdly, the CI may simply be a description of the building type or its function (as we have already seen with some PIs with few LIs), e.g. *l'Albergo*, *la Comunità*. Or, it may draw our attention to a specific feature of the place, as in It. *dove ci sono i maiali*, which refers to a pig farm located there.

Each PI can have several CIs. When studying the toponym it is often obvious that an informant has interpreted a place using more than one of its features. This intertwining effect leads to the formation of LIs with a complex structure, such as /la ka/ *del Bosco di Testa*. These toponyms can be in Piedmontese, in Italian or – as in the example – a combination of the two.

Table 6 lists PIs with ten or more LIs in the centre. Types of referent are more varied than those in the rural area: three churches, a square, an apartment complex, a sports centre and a cheese factory.

"Cultural individuation" processes in the centre are similar to those in the countryside. CIs are intertwined and each place name is the result of overlapping conceptualisations of varying complexity. It naturally follows that LIs partly resemble and at the same time differ from each other. However, there is usually a favourite CI for every PI. With churches, the reference is to a religious order, brotherhood or saint the building was named after. It could also be generated by the element's proximity to another place, as is the case with a square (144) and some toponyms used by non-native informants for two churches (60 and 262). Thus, the centre contains a dense network of salient places, whose names often reveal relationships between them.

The CIs of 202 also contain a reference, albeit implicit, to another place, expressed here as "new". In fact, 202 is a recently built sports centre, whose most remarkable characteristic for many informants is the fact that it is "new" with respect to an older sports centre (also collected in my corpus). The main "cultural individuation" of the complex of apartment blocks (151) is the fact that it is located on an upland (this CI is also the basis of its official place-name and that is probably the reason why it is so common among the LIs). Finally, the main CI of the cheese factory is a reference to the owner, spelt out as an anthroponym that also includes part of the company's commercial name. However, more than any other CI, this place had generated many elaborate CIs that combine in different ways references to cheese, a young person working there and decorative statues of cows, which often coexist in its toponyms.

Generally, fragmentation of these PIs occurs on a "linguistic individuation" level that is in part due to the alternation between Piedmontese and Italian but mostly to the fact that different terms are chosen to express the same concept (e.g. It. *chiesa*/*chiesetta*/*cappella* for "church"). Therefore, combinations used to create complex toponyms are rarely the same. Even

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though members of the community know these places very well, they do not have a stable toponym. Despite this, intercomprehension between people is guaranteed when referring to them, as the LIs are transparent and the CIs are widely shared. Therefore, even if the linguistic form of the toponym is different, the idea that the LIs carry is the same.

Table 5: PIs with ten or more LIs – rural area

Rural area:

371 (farmhouse; drug rehabilitation centre): Tetti Botta - i Tetti Botta - /tei̯t di ˈbota/ - Tetti /ˈbota/ - la Comunità - la Comunità Cenacolo di Suor Elvira - la Comunità Cenacolo - la Comunità di Suor Elvira - dove c'è la comunità - Suor Elvira.

374 (farmhouse): la Bassa - /la ˈbasa/ - /əl ˈbase/ - le Cascine la Bassa - Barge - i Barge - dove abita Michela Barge - dove c'è Barge - dove ci sono i maiali - /ˈbardʒe di criŋ/ - Barge dei /criŋ/ - /ˈbardʒe k a teŋ i criŋ/.

400 (farmhouse): dove abita Mini - Casa di Mini - da Mini - /miniˈkiŋ/ - dove c'è /miniˈkiŋ/ - Bosio - /i ˈbozju/ - Casa Bosio - la Cascina di Bosio - i Ramé - la Cascina Ramé.

411 (farmhouse; hotel and restaurant): i Ramé - il Ramé - l'Albergo - /l alˈbergu/ Ramé il Ristorante - il Ristorante Ramé - il Ristorante i Ramé - il Ristorante dei Ramé - /əl paˈlaz/ - /əl ristuˈrant/ - il Palazzo - Cascina Palazzo.

422 (farmhouses): la Casa di Rino - la Cascina di Rino - le Cascine dei Rinaldi - Rinaldi - /i tei̯t/ - Tetti Famolassi - i Famolassi - Rino - Rinaldi e Mina - dove abitava Marco Rinaldi.

432 (farmhouse): il /kaˈstel - /əl kaˈstel/ - /əl kaˈstel əd la val/ - il Castello della Regina - /əl kastel əd la reˈdʒiŋa/ - il Castello Regina - Gallo e Massimo Fogliato - Fogliato e Gallo - Gallo - Fogliato - la Cascina di Fogliato - la Casa di Massimo Fogliato - Francesco - Zio Cesco.

519 (farmhouse): la Cascina di Matteo Testa - la Cascina di Testa - Casa di Testa - /ˈtesta dəl bosk/ - Testa /dəl/ Bosco - Testa - i Testa - il Bosco - /əl bosk/ - la Cascina del Bosco - /la kaˈsiŋa dəl bosk/ - la Cascina Bosco - la Cascina Bosco dei Testa - /la ka/ del Bosco di Testa - la Casa di Matthew - la Casa della sorella di Pina.

Table 6: PIs with ten or more LIs – centre

Centre:

60 (church): la Chiesetta - la Madonnina - /la maduˈniŋa/ - la Chiesa della Mado - /la dʒeˈzjətːa əd la maduˈniŋa/ - la Madonna della Neve - la Chiesetta di Via Galvagno - la Piccola Chiesetta - la Chiesa della Madonnina - Madonnina del Ponte - la Madonnina della Neve - la Chiesa di Nostra Signora della Neve.

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129 (church): i Neri - /i neɨr/ - i Battuti Neri - la Chiesetta dei Neri - la Chiesa dei Neri - /la ˈʤezja di neɨr/ - la Chiesa dei Battuti Neri - la Chiesa della Misericordia - la Chiesa di San Giovanni Decollato - la Chiesa Sconsacrata - dove c'erano i presepi.

144 (square): la Salita della Chiesa - la Salita - la Salita della Parrocchia - /la munˈta əd la paˈrokja/ - la Salita /əd la paˈrokja/ - la Discesa della Parrocchia - la Discesa - il Piazzale della Chiesa - il Piazzale della /paˈrokja/ - la Piazza della Chiesa - /la ˈpjasa paruˈkjal/.

151 (apartment blocks): i Palazzi - i Palazzi Giganti - i Palazzoni - gli Altopiani - gli Altipiani - l'Altopiano - dove abita Simone Guelfi - la Zona Altopiano - Villaggio Altopiano - /i paˈlaz/ - /i altoˈpjaŋ/.

202 (sports centre): il Palazzetto Nuovo - il Centro Sportivo di Giobbe - il Campo Sportivo - /əl kamp spurˈtiu̯/ - /əl kamp əspərˈtiu̯/ - /əl kamp spərˈtiu̯ nøu̯/ - /əl ˈʧentru spurˈtiu̯/ - l'Impianto Sportivo - il Campo Sportivo Nuovo - il Centro Sportivo Nuovo - il Campo Sportivo Grande - il Centro Don Avataneo - il Don Avataneo - la Poli Nuova - la Polisportiva Nuova - la Polisportiva /ˈnøva/ - il Circolo Sportivo - la Bocciofila - le Bocce - la Bocciofila /ˈnøva/.

262 (church): Sant'Anna - la Chiesetta di Sant'Anna - la Chiesa di Sant'Anna - la Cappella di Sant'Anna - la Rotonda con Chiesetta - la Chiesetta - la Chiesetta al fondo di Via Sant'Anna - la Chiesetta dietro la Banca - la Chiesetta davanti alla Piazza - /sanˈtana/ - /la kjeˈzətːa əd sanˈtana/.

302 (cheese factory): dai Formaggi - la Mucca Finta - dove ci sono le mucche finte - Supertino - Sepertino - Sepertino Formaggi - Cappa - /əl furmaˈʤe/ - Quello che vende i Formaggi - /ˈndua c a je əl ˈvake/ - /seperˈtin di furˈmaʤ/.

5. Conclusion

Analysing the toponymic repertoire of a community from a sociolinguistic point of view involves working with a set of denominations characterised by variation. Starting with the corpus collected in Marene (Piedmont, Italy), I have proposed a way of analysing this kind of data based on the reconstruction of the toponym development process and use of the three individuation levels (physical, cultural and linguistic) in Prosdocimi's proper name theory as consequential steps in that process. If we observe these levels separately, we are able to pinpoint when different community sub-groups act in divergent ways in the process. We have observed that some "individuation" mechanisms are shared regardless of the informant's characteristics or the area examined (residential centre or external rural area), meanwhile in some cases the classes of informants act differently, thus determining variations. These variations indicate different ways of looking at, experiencing and interpreting the landscape and surroundings, as well as different ways of using the local language(s) to name elements within it.

In the specific case of Marene, the focus was on places that were

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considered to belong to the whole community as they emerged during the interviews with a number of informants – at least one informant for each variable option. We have seen that some of these places have an almost unique name, while others are referred to in many different ways. In this research, I have tried to investigate the possible reasons for these differences.

The aim of this paper is not limited to showing a detailed picture of the community microtoponymy in the specific case of Marene, but to use its example to illustrate an analytical scheme that I have found extremely useful. It enables us to understand variation not only at a superficial level of language, but also at a deeper level concerning usage and motivation of the lived-in space.

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