

# **New perspectives on water management and environmental change in Central Asia: A research agenda**

PRIN 2022 Project

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SUSADICA Final Symposium

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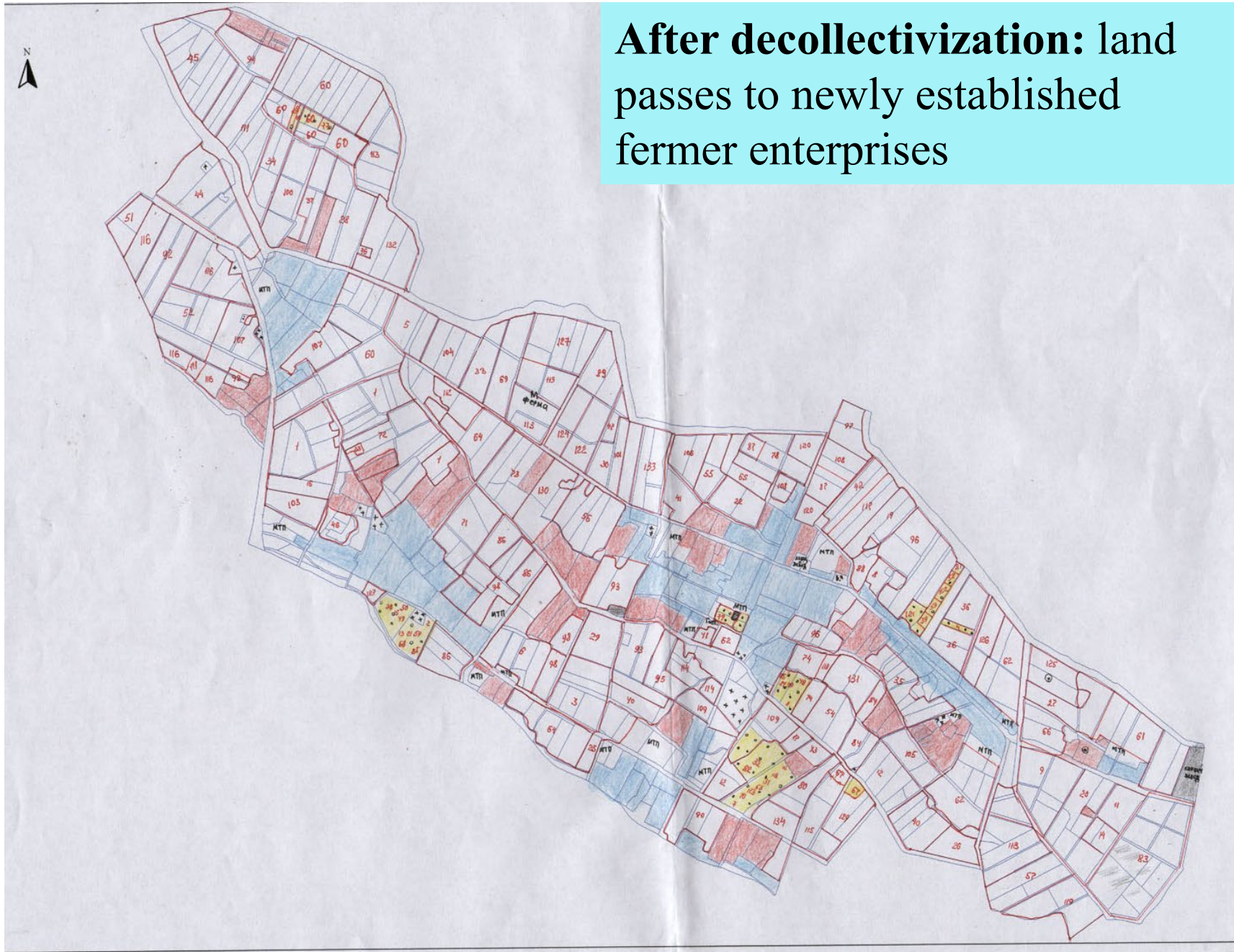
# State of the Art: Four scholarly “streams”

- High modernist projects
- Destalinization and decolonizing world
- The environmental turn in Soviet science
- Post-socialist rural transformations

# Research Objectives, Questions, Frameworks, and Scales

- Approach: combining archival research with anthropological fieldwork
- RQ: how do regional connectivities, regional political economies, changing environmental conditions link up and evolve?
- Different scales of analysis
- Three regions: the Hungry Steppe region, Khorezm region, Karakalpakstan

**After decollectivization: land passes to newly established farmer enterprises**



Khorezm 2004  
ZEF/UNESCO  
PROJECT  
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# Outlook: a new cotton bargain?

- The soviet cotton legacy and the challenge of **managing soil salinization** and degradation
- The **environmental burden** is unequally distributed among agricultural producers : “small and vulnerable vs big and successful”
- governments nowadays face the **dilemma** of either committing to expensive and complex land reclamation or abandoning valuable land to certain decline
- rural peoples’ **expectations** shaped by Soviet experience

=> redefining the terms of the Soviet-era ‘cotton bargain’

=> kinship networks and family relations grow in importance as environmental conditions are challenging the viability of past agricultural practices

# Project structure

- Research Units: University of Padua; University of Naples L'Orientale
- Budget: 209,000 euros (January 2024-December 2025)
- Niccolò Pianciola, Tommaso Trevisani, Riccardo Cucciolla, 2 Junior Researchers
- Two workshops:
  - “The Soviet Central Asian model: Sponsoring agriculture and water management projects for the third world” (Padua)
  - “Water management, environment, and agriculture in Central Asia: evolutions and practices 1991-2021” (Naples)
- Final Conference
- Application potentials and expected outcomes

# Thank you!

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- T. Trevisani (2011). Land and Power in Khorezm. *Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Eurasia*, vol. 23, Berlin: LIT Verlag