



# MANAGING RURAL COMMONS IN ITALIAN MOUNTAIN TERRITORIES: A PARTICIPATION DILEMMA IN A CHANGING SOCIETY

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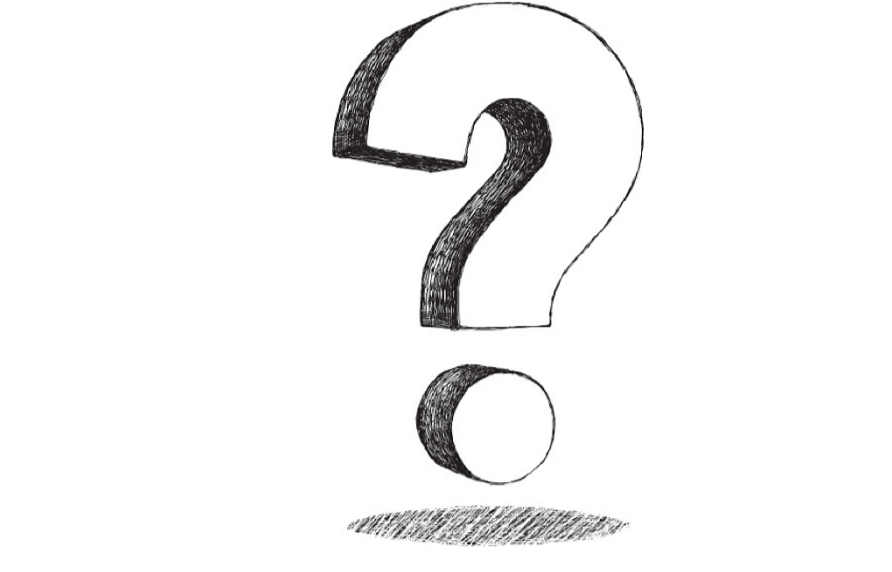
## 1. RURAL COMMONS IN MOUNTAIN TERRITORIES, LOOKING FOR A NEW BALANCE



Rural commons in mountain territories have **traditionally** guaranteed the balance between human subsistence and nature preservation (Granet-Abisset, 2015). Nowadays they are affected by the impacts of new socio-economic models, demographic and institutional trends and climate change are **questioning this balance**. Moreover, the trend of “new highlanders” and the change in values, highlights the emerging **participation dilemma**: whose commons are these? (Viazzo, 2012), keeping in mind that in mountain territories rules and customs that tend to maintain the **status quo** are still in place (Membretti & Viazzo, 2017).



We define **commons** as a “**governance regime**, whereby a group of people holds a collective property or collective rights of use over land (pastureland, forests) and assets (mountain huts, paths and roads) and needs to decide collectively over these common pool resources (De Moor, 2019). Common pool resources are characterised by **non excludability** and **rivalry**, therefore there is a need to act collectively to manage them (Ostrom, 1999). 3 are the conditions for the existence of the commons: a personal and collective **utility**, **equity and sanctioning** in access and use rules, participation and **social control** (De Moor, 2018; Blanco and Walker, 2019).



Hypothesis on the management of commons:

- it should take in consideration the changing social composition, economic and institutional transition in order to be resilient
- some innovations (social , institutional) should be enhanced in order to guarantee resilience and sustainability of mountain rural commons

Research questions:

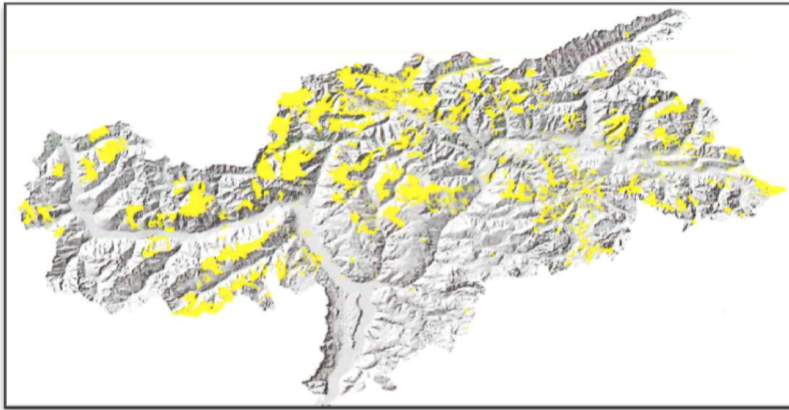
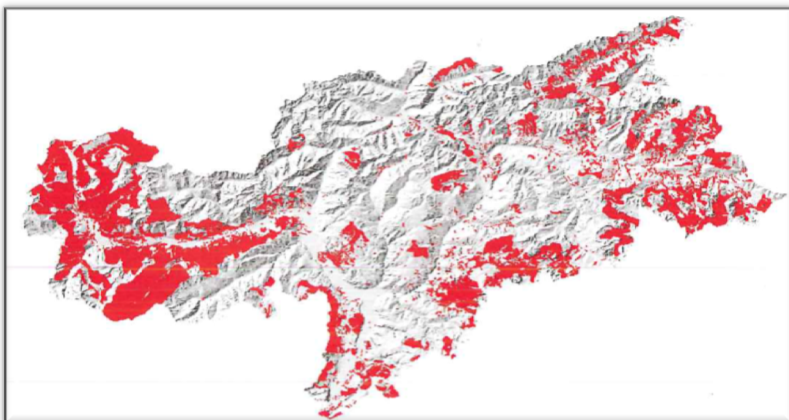
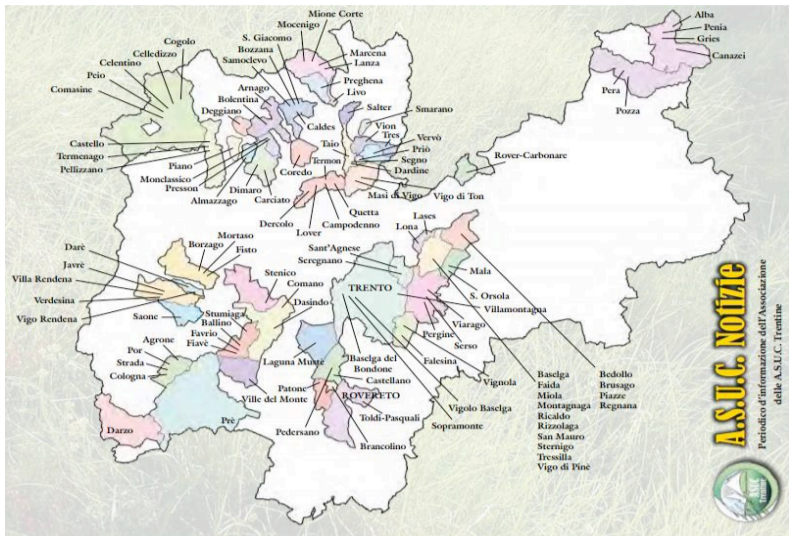
- How do these trends/changes/leverages affect the governance of common resources?
- On which criteria should the governance systems of rural mountain commons be based in order to enhance long-term preservation and valorization of such resources?

## 2. METHOD

An exploratory analysis was conducted on four different systems of governance of collective property: two characterized by a collective **closed** system (hereditary, communitaristic), while two by a collective **open** system (by residence, universalistic).

A socio-economic analysis of the territories taken into account was carried out, and the different models of collective management were analysed. The area of study identified, for relevance and variety of the organizations, covers the mountain territories of **Trentino** and **South Tyrol**.

The different governance systems taken into consideration are four: Asuc Rover-Carbonare (Rights of use), Community Cooperative Fuoco, Regola Spinale-Manez, Magnifica Comunità di Fiemme. Qualitative interviews were carried out with each of the representatives of these institutions.



## 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Revisiting the socio-ecological system framework conceptualized by Ostrom:

- withdrawal of resource units as core physical transaction
- well-defined boundaries of resource systems as main spatial property of nature-related transaction
- emphasis on collective governance
- **Influence of external variables on the commons**

The diagram illustrates the socio-ecological system framework. It shows four main components: Resource Systems (RS), Resource Units (RU), Governance Systems (GS), and Actors (A). RS and RU are linked by a 'Direct link' and 'Feedback'. RS and GS are linked by 'set conditions for'. RU and GS are linked by 'set conditions for'. GS and A are linked by 'participate in'. A central box labeled 'Focal action situations' contains 'Interactions (I) - Outcomes (O)'. External factors like 'Climate changes', 'Social, economic, and climate changes', 'Demographic changes', 'Economic changes', and 'Open systems' are shown influencing the system. A 'Feedback link' is also shown affecting a 'bigger collectivity beyond commons governance system'.

## 4. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

### How do current trends affect the commons?

Type of change	Impact on the commons
Economic changes towards an economy of mass tourism, renewable energy production, intensive agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some resources uses become irrelevant (e.g. stones and clay for buildings)</li><li>• Others change of importance (e.g. mountain , landscape)</li><li>• Pressure on wood use for construction, water courses for hydropower production, soil for production activities</li></ul>
Demographic changes: fast turnover of inhabitants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partly loss of bonding among community members, interest, motivation in its resources</li><li>• however, there remains the attachment to the territory, which allows a certain degree of self-control</li></ul>
Demographic changes: in-migration of „new highlanders“	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Debate on the access of resources (universalism vs. Communitarism)</li><li>• New types of uses of resources, new radications, innovations and creativity</li><li>• Difficulties in integrating into the community, understanding the value of resources (also depends on the type of cultural background)</li></ul>
Institutional changes towards aggregations of small municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Loss of bonding, social control among community members</li><li>• Possibility of bridging and change of traditional institutions, networking, uniting institutions</li></ul>

### Criteria for commons sustainability and resilience

Field	Criteria
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support for young entrepreneurs-farmers, organic agriculture, locally based (in accordance to law 168/2017)</li><li>• Benefit for the people who are investing the community: payments for ecosystem services to incentivize nature conservation versus other uses and who takes care of it</li></ul>
Society, culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trust and Solidarity: re-establishing the bond among community members and the bridging with new community members</li><li>• Enhancing the practice of commoning, by communicating the value of the resources in common regime</li><li>• Recognition of communities as custodians (stewards) of the natural heritage.</li><li>• Valorize new projects and those who want to take care of a good by recognizing the common interest (commoning)</li></ul>
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Favor uses that enhance intergenerationality: i.e. no mining, yes forestry, no mass tourism (ski), no big infrastructures that are costly to maintain, yes slow recreation</li><li>• Exchange between managing community and benefitting collectivity: payments for ecosystems services</li></ul>

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The commons and the participation dilemma is an issue that is addressed extensively in literature. A sustainable management of natural resources in a commons model means preserving a non-market economic/pre-modern model in a capitalist economy. If we take into account global transformations and pressures on mountain territories, such a model is necessary to contain the processes of privatization, fragmentation and over-exploitation of mountain resources. The models of governance relating to these resources should not only be based on theoretical models of management and sharing relating to common goods, but should also initiate innovative processes of reconfiguring traditional institutions, networks and values so that the resources, now threatened, are enhanced and preserved in the long term.

