



Journal of Alpine Research | Revue de géographie alpine

109-1 | 2021

La montagne et la gestion collective des biens :
quelles influences ? quelles interactions ?

Questioning Mountain Rural Commons in Changing Alpine Regions. An Exploratory Study in Trentino, Italy

Cristina Dalla Torre, Elisa Ravazzoli, Andre Omizzolo, Alessandro Gretter
and Andrea Membretti



Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/rga/8589>

ISSN: 1760-7426

Translation(s):

Aprire il dibattito sui *commons* rurali di montagna nelle regioni alpine in cambiamento. Uno studio esplorativo in Trentino, Italia - URL : <https://journals.openedition.org/rga/8660> [it]

Publisher:

Association pour la diffusion de la recherche alpine, UGA Éditions/Université Grenoble Alpes

Electronic reference

Cristina Dalla Torre, Elisa Ravazzoli, Andre Omizzolo, Alessandro Gretter and Andrea Membretti, "Questioning Mountain Rural Commons in Changing Alpine Regions. An Exploratory Study in Trentino, Italy", *Journal of Alpine Research | Revue de géographie alpine* [Online], 109-1 | 2021, Online since 08 May 2021, connection on 09 May 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/rga/8589>

This text was automatically generated on 9 May 2021.



La Revue de Géographie Alpine est mise à disposition selon les termes de la licence Creative Commons Attribution - Pas d'Utilisation Commerciale - Pas de Modification 4.0 International.

Questioning Mountain Rural Commons in Changing Alpine Regions. An Exploratory Study in Trentino, Italy

Cristina Dalla Torre, Elisa Ravazzoli, Andre Omizzolo, Alessandro Gretter and Andrea Membretti

Introduction

- 1 Many resources in the Italian mountain territories, such as forests, meadows, pastures, alpine huts, mountain paths and roads, have traditionally been governed by civic use institutions or collective property (Greco, 2014). These institutions derive from the needs of people to autonomously and collectively manage their resources to guarantee their own sustainment in harsh climatic conditions. In this regard, they have guaranteed resource preservation as well as the development of the region (Granet-Abisset 2015). Such resources and goods collectively governed and –in some cases– owned by collective property and civic use institutions can be framed in the commons’ literature (Gatto and Bogataj 2015, Favero *et al.* 2016, Bassi and Carestiato 2016). Today, however, current socioeconomic transformations in the Alpine region linked to megatrends (climate change and resource scarcity, demographic change, global economy) are challenging this system of resource management from many perspectives. Socioeconomic transformations are challenging the way resources are perceived, who *de facto* has a stake on them, and how they should be governed. As a consequence, the current collective governance and care system of resources is at risk of deterioration and eventually disappearing.
- 2 Many studies have focused on the adaptation of traditional commons systems such as the Alpine ones to socioeconomic changes (Gatto and Bogataj 2015, Bassi and Carestiato 2016, Oliverio 2018, Gretter *et al.* 2018). However, few studies analyse the perspective of

innovating commons with the aim of disentangling the tension between these traditional systems and new emerging socioeconomic needs and stakeholders (Sick 2008). Few studies analyse the ability of rural commons and more in general social-ecological systems to transform to become resilient (Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen 2001, Gibson-Graham *et al.* 2016, Folke *et al.* 2010). The objective of this contribution is therefore threefold. It intends to reflect on the impact of the socioeconomic changes underway in the Italian Alps, in relation to the commons. It also intends to search for new approaches for the conceptualization of commons. Moving from concrete practices, it aims to investigate how commons can be innovated and transformed in the context of current socioeconomic changes and in order to make them more resilient and socially inclusive with respect to their access (Agrawal 2014). For the first and second objectives, an extensive literature review has been conducted. For the third one, a case study approach has been adopted. The explorative approach used in the investigation of the four case studies has been useful to acquire knowledge of the status quo, verify appropriateness of the research questions and to define future questions and research lines. The study prepares the ground for further structured investigations that explore cause-effect relationships in a more explanatory way (Yin 2003). The outcome of the contribution is an attempt to open the discussion on commons by enriching the commons scholarship with emerging approaches.

Background

Commons in the Alpine area: the right to exclude

- 3 Forms of collective management are considered efficient in preserving natural assets from free riding scenarios because the community self-organizes and develops rules for the use of local resources (Ostrom 1990 in Nyssens and Petrella 2015). According to Ostrom (1990), commons are characterized by three components: a) the presence of a rival and non-exclusive common resource; b) a set of rules on access, withdrawal and uses of the resource shared by members of the commons (commoners); c) a regime of collective property or civic use. These components relate mainly to questions about which community of users is initially defined as having use rights and who is excluded from access to a common resource (Ostrom *et al.* 1999). Schlager and Ostrom (1992) have explained the collective-choice property rights, which include access and withdrawal, management (the right to regulate internal use patterns and transform the resource by making improvements), exclusion (the right to determine who will have an access right), and alienation (the right to sell or lease the collective-choice rights).
- 4 In the Alpine area, these institutions have been established starting in the XIIth century through rural charters. These were a form of recognition of rights of the population to autonomously establish common rules from central powers to guarantee peaceful use of collective resources and the preservation for next generations of users (Pace 1999). These systems of moral economies responded to needs to access and withdraw resources in a situation of scarcity, low productiveness and harsh climatic conditions for activities like logging, extracting natural resources for constructions and furniture, grazing of animals (Gatto 2017, Casari 2007, Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen 2001). They were based on strict rules for access, withdrawal and exclusion (Casari 2007). Decision-making powers were (and often are) held by male representatives (*pater familias*),

although all people permanently living in the area of the commons could generally harvest the resources under civic use. Outsiders were (and often are) excluded from the use of communal resources, even if they have lived in the area for long time.

- 5 In the XIXth and XXth centuries, interventions of modernization culminating in the law n.1766/1927 have tried to dismantle or rationalize this system of managing resources. After this law and following legislation, institutions of separate administrations of goods of civic use (*ASUC*) were created (Federico 2002). This legislation and followings led to the evolution of collective property and civic uses institutions, which can be distinguished in two categories and a hybrid one (Carestiato 2008): “closed” institutions, in which resources are privately owned by a group of owners who inherit the right of property, and “open” institutions, where the right of resource use and exploitation is recognized to all residents. In the hybrid forms, rights of collective property and civic use are passed by inheritance and recognized also to residents after a long period of permanent residence in the region (20 to 30 years) (Rosá 2014). This way of managing the resources has guaranteed the balance between productive activities and environmental protection. Yet it based on a logic of exclusion.

The current socio-economic challenges and their impacts on the commons in the Italian Alps

- 6 Collective property and civic uses institutions are a product of the needs of people in mountain rural areas to autonomously and collectively manage their resources to guarantee their own sustainment. Today, however, current transformations in Italian Alps are highlighting the limits of this traditional way of managing resources. A progressive penetration of global economic interests at the local level is determining commodity trading and associated resource use and new production patterns (Jodha 2000). They relate for example to tourism, renewable energy production, intensive agriculture (Mayer *et al.* 2013). The restructuring of mountain economies leads to a selective intensification of resource exploitation in response to market signals, while increasing disparities in less attractive and profitable territories (Jodha 2000). In this type of economy, most exchanges happen on the market: collective resources are extracted and sold (e.g. timber) or are rented (e.g. pastures and dairy huts) by the collective owners acting together as an enterprise (Rosá 2014). There is only marginal direct extraction and use of the shared resource by the local community. From the demographic point of view, the megatrend of urbanization is determining depopulation, ageing of the population and brain drain in less attractive regions (often high altitude non-touristic villages). However, countertendencies of repopulation of mountains by new inhabitants (foreign and national), called *new highlanders*, have started in the last decades (Membretti *et al.* 2017, Corrado *et al.* 2014). Demographic changes create negotiation spaces over rights on resource use between “new” and “old” inhabitants, determine cultural change and an incoming of new ideas, of social and human resources at some degrees (Membretti and Viazzo 2017).
- 7 The effect of these trends on the commons have been tackled by many scholars from different perspectives. Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen (2001) have identified a trend of devaluation and/or idealisation of many commons: resources are no longer considered source of sustainment for the community, so their collective management becomes unnecessary for local people, because they can rely on income derived from activities

based on other resources and activities in other sectors. The resources therefore are left underused, abandoned, or become nostalgic symbols of the past identity of the territory and community members do not feel engaged in the institutions anymore. Similarly and more systematically, Gatto and Bogataj (2015) reflect on the main disturbances challenging forest commons in the south-eastern Alps. The first is communities' internal demographic structure, with shrinking or expanding numbers of members. The second is a decrease of engagement in management activities or decision-making procedures. Robustness is challenged by the raising call of more open and socially inclusive models, accounting for higher community heterogeneity in the access to resources. The third is the loosening of rural communities' ties with their resources, "which opens the path to conflicts between forestry and agricultural uses and infrastructure, urban development, recreational or amenity use" (Gatto *et al.* 2012). The last disturbance concerns the need for favourable legislation that recognizes commons' authority in self-management of resources.

- 8 Nevertheless, commons in the Alps are rooted in local traditions (Gretter *et al.* 2018) and many regions in Europe "are currently witnessing a revival of bottom-up collective action by citizens who prefer the self-governance of their resources" (Bassi and Carestiato 2016). This tendency can be explained by the recognition of the importance of local resources for the development of a region. Societal transformations underway call into question the traditional system of governance of collective goods. They question the way collective resources are conceived (what is in common, what uses are essential and therefore to be collectively managed?), and the way they are used and managed by the commoners (what rules of access, withdrawal, exclusion and alienation better suit the new conception of the collective resource, whose are the commons?). The transformations underway and their impact on the rural commons highlight the need to investigate how these systems can transform themselves to maintain their relevance and importance for mountain rural development.

Literature review on recent perspectives on commons: the need to include the community and to re-economize the commons

- 9 The reflection on the socio-economic transformations underway in the Italian Alps and their effects on commons in these territories brought us to search for recent perspectives that reframe the conception of the collective resources and their use in response to the changing needs, composition and definition of the community.
- 10 The approach of stewardship bases on the concept that land is a common resource to be protected as a collective effort. The approach recognizes ownership and the responsibility of resource care to who is willing to live and use its resources (Davis 2014). Bridging the scale of ownership and stewardship "suggests heterogeneous approaches to governing the commons, in which individual actions aggregate upscale to accomplish more than the individual actors intend" (Nassauer 2014). For this reason, stewardship implies a collective governance, which includes multiple responsible actors to develop desirable conditions in the face of changes (Chapin *et al.* 2009). It leverages on the development of the skills in local communities and the relations among community members, and also with other communities, local governments,

non-profit organizations and private actors. This perspective allows to re-define who can participate to the decision-making about the ownership rights and use of resources, on the base of the recognition of the common interest over a resource.

- 11 Commoning is a dynamic social practice that starts from the recognition of the community's need for a resource, its recognition as a common resource and the activation of the community in managing it collectively (Euler 2018). The assumption at the base of this reasoning is that there are no commons without community that perceives the resource as necessary for its survival or subsistence and took care of it (Mies 2014). This perspective on the commons allows the redefinition of the community of reference of a collective resource around those who recognize the needs of managing it as such. For that, the distinction among community of place, community of identity and the recognition of a community of interest (Means and Evans 2012) can help in delinking property rights and actual uses and needs around a collective resource in a commons.
- 12 Recent literature is emerging about re-embedding commons in the economy (Mies and Bennholdt-Thomson 2001) and re-embedding economy into society through commons, i.e. in societal relationships and values of reciprocity (Nyssens and Petrella 2015). According to feminist literature and the social and solidarity economy approach, re-embedding of economy in social ecological systems entails the reframing of what is meant by “economy”. The economy is conceptualized as the managing or negotiation (*nomos*) of habitat (*eco*). In this re-conceptualization of economy, commons function for the habitat maintenance to meet basic needs, support mutual wellbeing, consuming sustainably and distributing natural and social surplus to enrich social and environmental health (Gibson-Graham *et al.* 2016). However, these functions of the commons can lead to radically different outcomes, i.e. if access to the commons (and to the community) is relatively open, also to more heterogenous stakeholders, or closed. In the first case, commons are perceived as the governance of collective resources fulfil also the general interest, while in the second case commons fulfil the mutual interest of the community over their identity goods (Nyssens and Petrella 2015).
- 13 From the reviewed literature we derive two emerging tensions that question the traditional system of commons: a) social tension towards the inclusion of new stakeholders in the access, withdrawal, management of collective resources in commons system; b) economic tension towards a re-embedding of commons in the economy, intended as care for habitat.

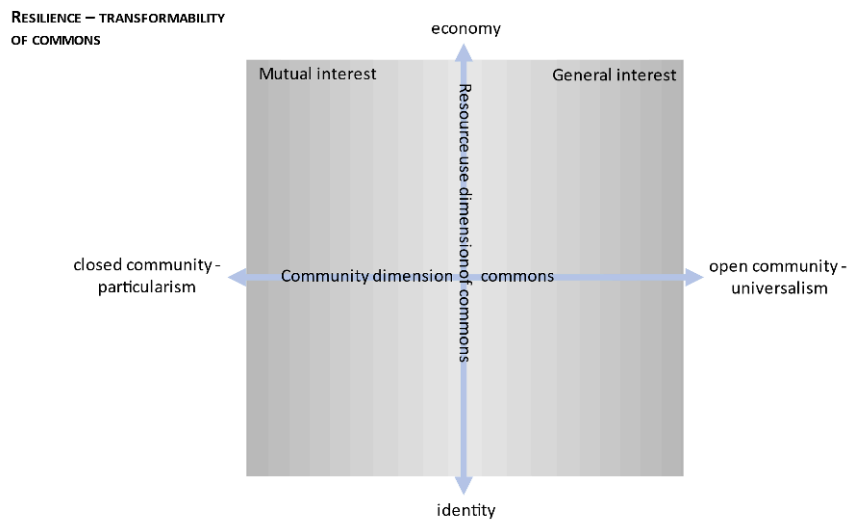
Concepts and Methodology for the analysis

- 14 To address the emerging tensions that question the commons, we apply the concepts of resilience and transformability to commons. Resilience is intended as “the inherent potential of a system that is available for change” (Holling 2001, p. 393) and can be considered as a measure of success to deal with socioeconomic transformations that increase the vulnerability of commons. Transformability is intended as “the capacity to create a fundamentally new social-ecological system when ecological, political, social or economic context make the existing conditions untenable” (Folke 2006 cit. in Gibson-Graham 2016). To apply the notions of resilience and transformability to commons, we need to recall what commons are. Commons are systems for the governance of the resources fulfilling the needs of a community. Resilient commons are

those systems that show capability to address socioeconomic changes to maintain their function, by transforming their basic components. These components are resources, rules, and community of reference (commoners) of a commons. By transformability of a commons, we mean for instance transforming rules of inclusion in the community of reference according to the changing demography of mountain rural regions and to the new uses and new meanings of a collective resource, recognizing new stakeholders that participate in the negotiation process, and transforming the use and the place that the resource has in the economy. We hypothesize that commons that do not transform to adapt to changes are not resilient and eventually become dysfunctional or irrelevant as a collective resource governing system.

- 15 Basing on the reflection just made on resilience and transformability of commons, in order to investigate the questioning of commons in response to socioeconomic changes, we identified two dimensions. The first dimension is related to the degree of openness in the access to the commons. It ranges from the pole represented by the closed community, where collective property rights and uses are inherited by family, to the pole represented by the open community with respect to the involvement of new inhabitants or new stakeholders in the commons. The second dimension relates to the degree of embeddedness of the commons either in traditional or in re-economized relationships and values, ranging from the pole represented by the identity perspective to the pole represented by the economy. By means of the continuums shown in **Figure 1**, we hypothesize that transformability of commons to reach resilience to socioeconomic changes is achieved through a degree of opening of the community of reference, yet a recognition of the role of stewardship to the people that are responsible for the care of the collective resource. Resilience of commons passes also through the re-embedding of commons in the economy and in society, by transforming the socio-economic function of commons towards developing the sense of need to care of the habitat, as the basic resource for the livelihood and thriving of the community. Therefore resilience is achieved by finding a balance between the general interest and the mutual interest of the stakeholders with respect to a resource, as shown by the gradients tending to the opposing poles.

Figure 1. Conceptualization of the continuums of analysis of commons



Source: Own elaboration.

- 16 The paper aims to investigate to what extent commons are questioned in a context of socioeconomic change and how the questioning leads to transformative commoning practices, by using a case study approach (Yin 2003). The case study approach allows us to provide in-depth contextualized description, that is appropriate when dealing with a complex and content-dependent phenomena that is occurring in the present, such as the one under study. Due to the novelty of the study's objective an explorative research approach is adopted, in which mainly qualitative social science research methods are applied (e.g. interviews, workshop, non structured participant observation).
- 17 Four cases studies have been selected for investigation. The criteria we adopted for the selection of case studies are the following. First, diversity in the institutional forms of commons, especially in relation to the rights allocation, rules of inclusion and exclusion, and types of resource use. Thus, we selected a civic use institution, two historical collective property institutions, and a community cooperative for the management of collective goods. The community cooperative does not own collective property or civic use rights *per se* but constitutes a transformative model for the governance of collective resources. According to the application of the notions of resilience and transformability to commons presented at the beginning of this section, all the selected cases can be considered in the analysis. The way the cases represent diversity of commons in terms of openness of community and resource use is explained in the next section. Moreover, we aimed for institutional diversity combined with geographical location: the four case studies can in fact be clustered in two Valleys of the study region, and in each cluster an open and a closed common is selected. Finally, good prior knowledge of the territory and of the stakeholders was an important criteria for the selection, as it allowed to obtain access to the community and to information.
- 18 The data collection has been performed from January to September 2019. An initial workshop was held in January 2019, where the case study representatives have been invited to discuss and present their institutions and the current and future challenges they are facing in terms of governing collective resources. Afterwards, we conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews (four in total) with the representative of each

institution (either the president or the director/manager) to collect more information about the rules of allocation of collective property rights, the definition of community and the conception of the collective resources and their use (interview guidelines can be consulted in the **Annex**). Moreover, we asked about strategies and transformations of the commons they are adopting to cope with socioeconomic transformations of the context. The fieldwork research activities have been consolidated with desktop research, grey literature and with follow up interviews to confirm collected and analysed data. Moreover, we conducted non structured participant observation, as we have the chance to live close to the investigated cases. Data collected are presented in the next section.

- 19 The explorative approach used in the investigation of the four case studies has been considered useful to acquire knowledge of the status quo, verify appropriateness of the research questions and to define future questions and research lines, to prepare the ground for further structured investigations to explore cause-effect relationships in a more explanatory way (Yin 2003).

The study region and the four case studies of commons under analysis: transformability and resilience of commons in a changing Alpine region

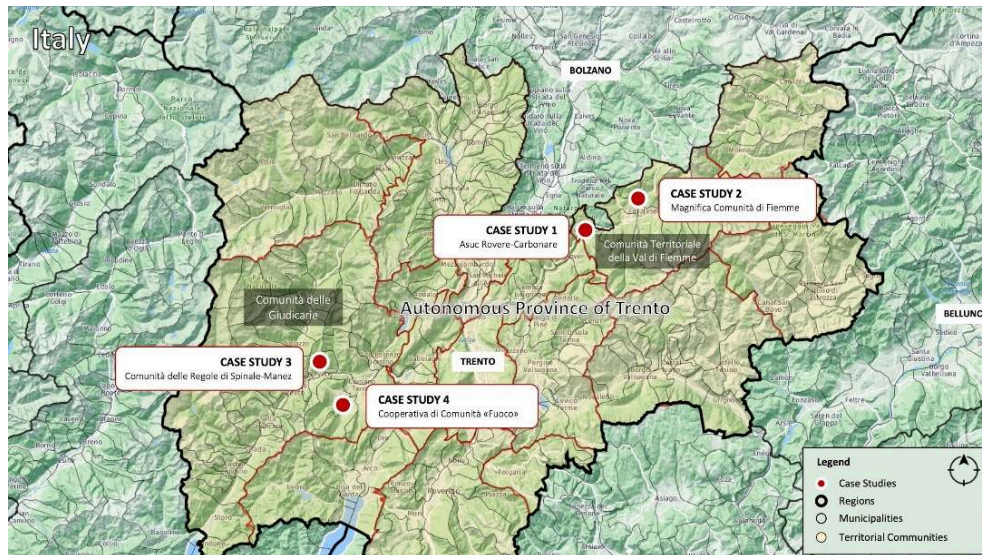
- 20 The Autonomous Province of Trento is a mountainous territory located in the centre-eastern Alps. Here there are 102 institutions of collective property and civic use rights, and in total collective lands cover the 60% of the total province area (75.535 ha; Greco 2014). Although these figures include also those collective properties administered by the public administration, which is beyond our scope of analysis, they demonstrate that the province of Trento (together with the Autonomous Province of Bolzano) form the region in Italy where the majority of collective lands are located. In the region, hybrid collective property institutions (*Regola*) and civic uses institutions (*Amministrazione Separata di Beni di Uso Civico - A.S.U.C*) operate at hamlet scale and are the traditional forms of collective resource governance. In more recent times, a tendency to constitute collective action institutions by communities and local stakeholders demonstrates the interest to renew the traditional system of collective management of resource with respect to their access and use. The community cooperative is an example of this new type of community organization. The four case studies selected aim to represent the mentioned diversity of institutions governing collective resources. **Figure 2** shows the data and information for each selected case study. **Figure 3** shows the location of the cases.

Figure 2. Synthetic Information on the selected case studies

Case study	CS1: Civic land institution, ASUC Rovere Carbonare	CS2: collection property institution (Magnifica Comunità di Fiemme)	CS3: collection property institution (Regole Spinalè-Manez)	CS4: community cooperative (Fuoco)
Year of constitution	14th century, civic land institutions since 1963, ASUC since 1977	1111	1377 and 1410	2018
Location	Fiemme Valley and South Tyrol	Fiemme valley, partly Sassa Valley and South Tyrol	Giudicarie Valley	Giudicarie Valley
Collective good and lands under property rights and management; extension (ha)	Mostly 1500 forest, pastures, non-cultivated land and a non-agricultural building, 150 ha	Forests, pastures, mountain huts and a historical pasture, 18,151 ha	Forests, pastures and built infrastructures: stone huts, cabins, shops, commercial structures; 4,623 ha. Most collective lands are in the Adornello-Spina-Cesopati.	The cooperative does not own property rights on civic lands, though it agrees with civic lands local institutions to manage production and daily maintenance and leisure aims.
Related economic activities in the commons	Wood extraction for the market and non-commercial use, pasturesland in location for free to a young farmer in exchange for caring of the pasturesland.	Silviculture, renewable energy from biomass, livestock farming and tourism.	Tourism and livestock farming and limited silviculture.	Support to develop community-based tourism.
Environmental and cultural activities in the commons	Biodiversity and ecosystems safeguard, social, cultural events on weekends and leisure activities (yoga in the forest, painting of books on the culture heritage).	Owner of part of the land in the Parco-Regio-Padè di San Martino Park, wood extraction organization in Italy to obtain the label of the forest stewardship Council (FSC).	Sports and cultural tourism for common users. Organic beef production from local breeding.	Work with artistic mountain miners on collective property resources.
Right of access and withdrawal	All residents (men and women) of the hamlet at the age 5 years, with exceptions.	Persons (men and women) with the status of Regolieri: inherited or acquired through permanent residence for 20 years.	Persons (men and women) with the status of Regolieri: inherited and maintained through permanent residence in the hamlet for 6 months a year or acquired through inscription to the register of the Regole for at least 50 years.	Different from collective property institutions, the access to collective resources does not depend on residence or other criteria.
Right of management, exclusion, alienation	Residents in the hamlet (except since 20 years can be elected in the management committee (comitato di gestione)	Regolieri representing a family (topofamoci) elected in the board of the Regole (mostly male)	Regolieri representing a family (topofamoci) elected in the management committee (comitato amministrativo); mostly male; for major decisions, all Regolieri have the right to vote.	Members of the community cooperative
Typology of commons	Open commons	Hybrid commons	Hybrid commons	Community cooperative

Sources: own elaboration based on Rosà 2014, Autonomous Province of Trento and interviews.

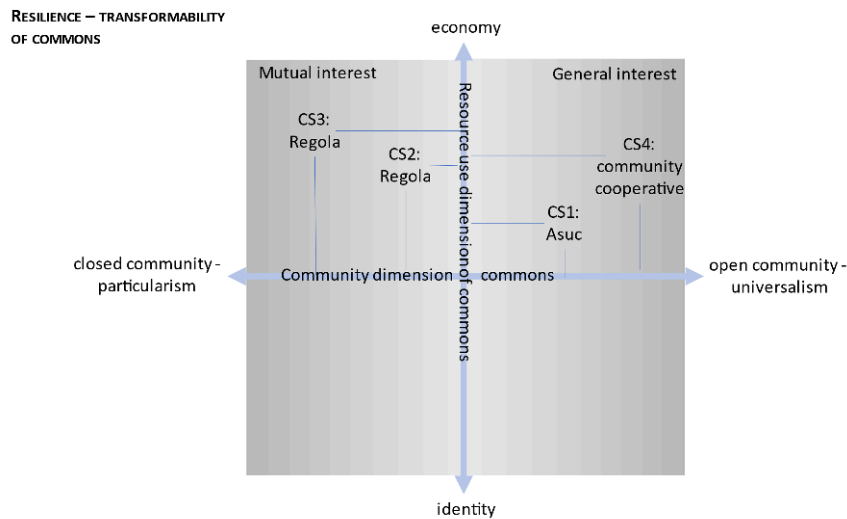
Figure 3. Location of the case studies in the region of Trentino



Source: own elaboration.

- 21 The collected information and the conceptualized dimensions allow case studies to be classified according to the continuums of community dimension and of resource use (Figure 4), which were explained in the previous section. In the next paragraph, practices of collective care and management developed in the case studies are presented, justifying case studies' collocation in the graph.

Figure 4. Categorization of the selected case studies according to the two continuums



Source: own elaboration.

- 22 Regarding the **community dimension**, following practices have emerged from the case study (CS) analysis. In CS4 and CS1, bonds were re-established among community members and a bridge was created with new community members. This was done in CS4 by de-linking participation to collective resource management (mountain huts and trails) to place-based belonging and linking it to the interest in taking care of the resource. The community cooperative developed a process of dialog with civic uses institutions in the region to obtain the management of abandoned or underused mountain huts. Anyone with a project or a strong interest in taking care and managing the resource can invest and ask to become a member of the community cooperative. In this way, social entrepreneurs, local designers and activists, but also tourists who have a second home in the region can potentially contribute and participate to bring new resources (e.g. ideas, new energy and funds) into the collective local resource management. In CS1, also new inhabitants who do not have full access rights to the commons (which are acquired after 10 years of residency) are welcome to access and collect wood from the commons, as well as participate to the cultural and social events organized by the commoners. Moreover, both CS1 and CS4 have been working towards sharing practices, respectively by creating new networks of commons at local level (CS4) and by participating in existing networks of civic uses institutions at regional level (CS1). Networking and collaboration strategies aim at tackling common challenges (e.g. hyper bureaucratization, lack of engagement). Differently, CS2 and CS3 tend to the pole of closed community. Although their institutions have been classified as hybrid (property rights are both hereditary and by residence), the requirements to achieve the rights are high: 30 years of continuous residence after registration in the Register of the Regola in CS3 and 20 years in CS2. Independently from rights allocation, all institutions under investigation organize social and cultural activities for the community, which is important for the feeling of bond and identity in the commons.

Figure 5. Habitat care activities in CS1



Source: Robert Brugger, 2019.

Figure 6. CS4 members explaining the project to the community



Source: Luca Albrisi, 2019.

- 23 Regarding the **resource use dimension**, all the cases have implemented strategies of re-embedding commons in the economy going beyond the dichotomous vision that opposes economic development and resource conservation. This has been done by valorising local value chains and sustainable resource use, although at different degrees and with different concepts of resource conservation. Implemented strategies

regard enhancing forms of entrepreneurship in commons that take care of the region: in particular, C1 and C4 promote small-size local organic agriculture, cultural activities and soft tourism that increases awareness about collective resource institutions. In CS1 in particular, engagement for the care of the commons and youth entrepreneurship are combined: free location of pastures of civic use is given to local young farmers, in exchange for the work of care of the pasture (and of the landscape) that farming provides to the community. Being CS4 a community cooperative, all revenues (to the net of costs and human resources salaries) must be re-invested in the region, also outside the community of commoners. CS1, CS2 and CS3 have implemented strategies to preserve traditional genetic pools in animal husbandry, breeding and dairy production. All cases recognize knowledge and typical agrobiodiversity as a collective resource to preserve. Different from CS1 and CS4, CS2 and CS3 have a strong orientation towards selling resource units, e.g. wood to the construction market, natural and landscape assets as touristic product or renting out collective goods, e.g. pastures and mountain huts to external entrepreneurs. The revenues are shared (only) among the commoners in different forms (money to cover heating costs, prizes for university and school exam for young commoners, offer of free sport courses, free location of collectively owned houses and buildings) or re-invested in the commons' regeneration.

Figure 7. Re-economising the commons through cultural activities in CS1



Source: Robert Brugger, 2019.

Figure 8. Re-economising the commons through soft tourism activities in CS4



Source: Cooperativa Fuoco, 2019.

- 24 From the results, it emerges that the cases tending towards opening the community (i.e. CS1 and CS4) have shown transformations strategies that allow the in-coming of new ideas and engagement and therefore increasing resilience of the commons. This has been carried out by enlarging stakeholders in the negotiation process over the collective resource management and connecting commons through networks for facing challenges beyond the local perspective. They have rules, which recognize ownership of the resource to residents of the region (through citizenship) or to members of the cooperative. Differently, those case studies that have hereditary rules or strict rules for residents (i.e. CS2 and CS3), have more difficulties in transforming the commons to be resilient to changing (demographic, economic and cultural) needs and conditions of the context.

What are mountain rural commons getting confronted by? Some concluding remarks and outlooks

- 25 The paper has shown that current transformations in the Alpine regions are questioning the rooted system of collective management of resources. Transformations question as rural mountain commons in their three components: a) the way in which collective resources are conceived, b) the way they are used and managed by the commoners c) and the very concept of community as a reference for a collective resource. What is at stake is the resilience of commons as systems of collective governance of mountain resources. Transformations also question how commons can enable community empowerment through self-management of the resources and sustainability of resource management.

- 26 Although explorative, our findings empirically show how commons are questioned and what transformative strategies have been implemented for the resilience of commons. The questioning of rural commons can be generalized in two emerging tensions: a) towards a re-conceptualization of inclusion and exclusion in access, withdrawal, management of collective resources in commons system, through their new re-significance and through the recognition of new stakeholders in the collective action; b) towards a re-embedding of commons in the economy, intended as collective care for the habitat. Our findings confirm that transforming the commons is about finding new forms of governance that re-actualize the sense of mountain rural commons (Gretter *et al.* 2018, Oliverio 2018) in a context characterized by restructuring of mountain economies, depopulation and brain drain, but also countertendencies of repopulation (Jodha 2000, Membretti *et al.* 2017, Corrado *et al.* 2014). The strategies to re-embed commons in the economy and society aim to surpass the dichotomous vision that opposes economic development to resource conservation. They also direct to strengthen forms of entrepreneurship that take care of the region. These strategies can be regarded as forms of community and solidarity economy in commons based on local resources (Gibson-Graham *et al.* 2016, Laville 2010).
- 27 Before drawing any conclusions, we must recall relevant theory on the functioning of commons and historical and traditional path that these systems have undergone in the whole Alpine region. Commons are territory-specific with a set of well-defined property rights (Pace 1999, Casari 2007). They theoretically because of forms of exclusions that prevent overexploitation (Ostrom *et al.* 1999, Schlager and Ostrom 1992). Having that considered, our exploratory study has helped in enriching the commons scholarship with emerging approaches such as those on commoning, stewardship, community and solidarity economy. Basing on the literature review and case study analysis we can now derive some conclusions.
- 28 The concepts of commoning and stewardship (Davis 2014, Nassauer 2014, Chapin *et al.* 2009) contribute to the scholarship on commons as they open the way to the creation of a community of care around a resource according to the interest and needs it fulfils. They also help to "soften" the distinction between the poles of community of place Vs. community of interest, particularism Vs. universalism, mutual Vs. general interest. In this perspective, commons can be the laboratory of a different connection between the local and the extra local. We believe in fact that attention should be paid to the losing of community ties to collective resources affecting some commons. The introduction of some transformations in the governance could reduce potential inequalities between members of the commons and newcomers and allow the incoming of new ideas, new resources and new citizen engagement in the commons.
- 29 The concept of re-embedding commons in the economy and society (Gibson-Graham *et al.* 2016, Nyssens and Petrella 2015) allow the consideration of requests by local and new inhabitants for the use of collective resources. Such stakeholders start community enterprises around activities that enable the resilience of the commons by transforming their use and economic meaning. The concept of re-embedding of commons in the economy may seem to clash with "classic" rules and use of commons, because it contains the risk of going towards re-marketization through excessive orientation towards businesses beyond social and local targets, which is anyway already happening (Jodha 2000). But this depends on the model of economy we have in mind. Differently from market economy, the approaches of community and solidarity

economies allow to valorise economic forms that are not based on exploitation and pure monetarization of the economic relationships. They sustain economies that base on the care of habitat.

- 30 The present study is of exploratory nature, allowing the deduction of working hypotheses to be explored in further studies. Future research is needed to investigate how transformations can emerge and take place, what are their enablers and processes, as it has been done in the field of social innovation (Secco *et al.* 2019, Neumeier 2017). Moreover, studies are needed to assess what type of impacts transformations of commons have in terms of community wellbeing and inclusion and sustainability of resource use and management (Agrawal 2014). In this paper, we have focused on the study region of Trentino and its path dependency. However, as our literature review has shown, commons are being questioned in the whole Alpine region and other mountain areas of the world. Future research is therefore needed to investigate both deeper in the case studies and elsewhere in order to compare other mountain regions and their path-dependencies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agrawal A., 2014.- “Studying the commons, governing common-pool resource outcomes: Some concluding thoughts”, *Environmental Science and Policy* 36, 89-91
- Bassi I., Carestiato N., 2016.- “Common property organisations as actors in rural development: a case study of a mountain area in Italy”, in *International Journal of the Commons*, n°10-1, pp. 363-386. <https://doi.org/10.18352/ijc.608>
- Carestiato N., 2008.- “Beni comuni e proprietà collettive come attori territoriali per lo sviluppo locale”, Tesi di dottorato, Università degli Studi di Padova.
- Casari M., 2007.- “Emergence of endogenous legal institutions: Property rights and community governance in the Italian Alps”, in *Journal of Economic History*, n°67: 191-226
- Chapin F.S., Carpenter S.R., Kofinas G.P., Folke C., Abel N., Clark W.C., Olsson P., Stafford Smith D.M., Walker B., Young O.R., Berkes F., Biggs R., Grove M., Naylor R.L., Pinkerton E., Steffen W., Swanson F.J., 2009.- “Ecosystem stewardship: sustainability strategies for a rapidly changing planet”, in *Trends in Ecology and Evolution*, 25(4). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tree.2009.10.008>
- Corrado F., Dematteis G., Di Gioia A., 2014.- *Nuovi Montanari, Abitare le Alpi nel XXI secolo*. Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Davis J.E., 2014.- *Origins and Evolution of the Community Land Trust in the United States*.
- Euler J. 2018.- “Conceptualizing the Commons: Moving Beyond the Goods-based Definition by Introducing the Social Practices of Commoning as Vital Determinant”, in *Ecological Economics*, n°143: 10-16.
- Favero M., Gatto P., Deutsch N., Pettenella D., 2016.- “Conflict or synergy? Understanding interaction between municipalities and village commons (regole) in polycentric governance of mountain areas in the Veneto Region, Italy”, in *International Journal of the Commons*, n°10-2.

Federico C., 2002.- “Dall’intento livellatore e liquidatorio alle nuove prospettive di valorizzazione dei domini collettivi”, in Nervi P. (eds.), *I domini collettivi nella pianificazione strategica dello sviluppo delle aree rurali*, Cedam, Padova.

Folke C., Carpenter S.R., Walker B., Scheffer M., Chapin T., Rockström J., 2010.- “Resilience thinking: integrating resilience, adaptability and transformability”, in *Ecology and Society*, n°15-4. <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol15/iss4/art20/>

Gatto L., Bogataj N., 2015.- “Disturbances, robustness and adaptation in forest commons: Comparative insights from two cases in the South-eastern Alps”, in *Forest Policy and Economics*, n° 58: 56-64.

Gatto P., 2017.- “Accesso alle terre e assetti fondiari collettivi: uno sguardo alla situazione internazionale e italiana”, in *Agriregionieuropa* n°13-49

Gatto P., Secco L., Florian D., Pettenella D., 2012.- “Sustainable local governance and forest management: the new challenges for Forest Common properties in the Veneto Region (Italian Eastern Alps)”, in Selter, B. (eds.), *Forest Commons - Role Model for Sustainable Local Governance and Forest Management*. Booklet 22 of the State Forestry Administration series, North Rhine-Westphalia, pp. 51-57

Gibson-Graham J.K., Hill A., Law L., 2016.- “Re-embedding economies in ecologies: resilience building in more than human communities” in *Building Research & Information*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09613218.2016.1213059>

Granet-Abisset A., 2015.- “Natural territories, cultural territories – tensions and conflicting challenges surrounding French high Alpine real estate since the nineteenth century”, in Grüne, N., Hübner, J., Siegl, G. (eds.), *Rural Commons - Collective use of resources in the European Agrarian Economy*, pp. 116-127.

Greco M., 2014.- “Le statistiche sulle Common Land nell’Unione Europea e in Italia”, in *Agriregionieuropa*, n°36

Gretter A., Rizzi C., Favargiotti S., Betta A., Ulrici G., 2018.- “Trento Social Commons. Coinvolgimento comunitario come modalità per una nuova relazione fisica e culturale tra spazi urbani periferici e rurali”, in *Journal of Alpine Research | Revue de géographie alpine* n°106-2, <https://doi.org/10.4000/rga.4499>.

Holling C.S., 2001.- “Understanding the complexity of economic, ecological and social systems”, in *Ecosystems*, n°4: 390-405. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10021-001-0101-5>

Jodha N.P., 2000.- “Globalization and Fragile Mountain Environments”, in *Mountain Research and Development*, n°20-4: 296-299. [https://doi.org/10.1659/0276-4741\(2000\)020\[0296:GAFME\]2.0.CO;2](https://doi.org/10.1659/0276-4741(2000)020[0296:GAFME]2.0.CO;2)

Laville J-L., 2010.- “The Solidarity Economy: An International Movement”, in *RCCS Annual Review*, n°2. <http://journals.openedition.org/rccsar/202> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/rccsar.202>

Mayer H., 2013.- *Mountain and rural economies under pressure: Identifying global and national challenges for sustainable economic development in mountain and rural areas in Switzerland*. Berne: Secrétariat d’Etat à l’économie SECO

Means R., Evans S., 2012.- “Communities of place and communities of interest? An exploration of their changing role in later life”, in *Ageing and Society*, n°32: 1300-1318. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X11000961>

Membretti A., Kofler I., Viazzo P., 2017.- *Per forza o per scelta. L’immigrazione straniera nelle Alpi e negli Appennini*. Aracne Editrice.

- Membretti A., Viazzo P. 2017.- “Negotiating the mountains. Foreign immigration and cultural change in the Italian Alps”, in *Martor*, n°22: 93-107.
- Mies M., 2014.- “No commons without a community”, in *Community Development Journal*, n°49-1:106-117. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsu007>
- Mies M., Bennholdt-Thomsen V., 2001.- “Defending, Reclaiming and Reinventing the Commons”, in *Canadian Journal of Development Studies / Revue canadienne d'études du développement*, n°22-4, 997-1023, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2001.9669952>
- Nassauer I.J., 2014.- “Care and stewardship: From home to planet”, in *Landscape and Urban Planning* Volume 100, Issue 4, 30 April 2011, pp. 321-323
- Neumeier S., 2017.- “Social innovation in rural development: identifying the key factors of success” in *The Geographical Journal*, n°183-1, <https://doi.org/10.1111/geoj.12180>
- Nyssens M., Petrella F., 2015.- “The Social and Solidarity Economy and Ostrom’s approach to common pool resources: Towards a better understanding of institutional diversity?” in Laville, J-L., Young, D., Eynaud, P. (eds.), *Civil Society, the Third Sector and Social Enterprise : Governance and Democracy (Routledge Frontiers of Political Economy)*, Routledge: Oxford, 2015
- Oliverio F.S., 2018.- “Verso una nuova definizione degli usi civici”, in *Agiregionieuropa*, n°14-55. <https://agiregionieuropa.univpm.it/it/content/article/31/55/verso-una-nuova-definizione-degli-usi-civici>
- Ostrom E., 1990.- *Governing the Commons: The Evolutions of Institutions for Collective Actions*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ostrom E., Burger J., Field C.B., Norgaard R. B., Policansky D., 1999.- “Revisiting the Commons: Local Lessons, Global Challenges”, in *Science, New Series*, n°284-5412: 278-282.
- Pace D., 1999.- *Amministrazione separate di uso civico in Nervi P. (eds.), Il ruolo economico e sociale dei demani civici e delle proprietà collettive*, Cedam, Padova.
- Rosá A., 2014.- “Il ruolo delle proprietà collettive nello sviluppo del territorio. Il caso delle Valli di Fiemme e Fassa”. Tesi di laurea. https://comunivirtuosi.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/TESI-Rosa%CC%80-Proprieta%CC%80-collettive-e-sviluppo-del-territorio_Fiemme-e-Fassa.pdf
- Schlager E., Ostrom E., 1992.- “Property-rights regimes and natural resources: a conceptual analysis” in *Land economics*, 249-262
- Secco L., Pisani E., Da Re R., Rogelja T., Burlando C., Vicentini K., Pettenella D., Masiero M., Miller D., Nijnjk M., 2019 .- “Towards a method of evaluating social innovation in forest-dependent rural communities: First suggestions from a science-stakeholder collaboration”, *Forest Policy and Economics*, Volume 104, 9-22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2019.03.011>
- Sick D., 2008.- “Social Contexts and Consequences of Institutional Change in Common-Pool Resource Management, Society & Natural Resources: An International Journal”, 21:2, 94-105
- Yin R.K., 2003.- *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 3rd ed., Sage, London.

APPENDIXES

ANNEX - Interview grid

Introduction

What is Asuc (or other institution e.g. Regola, Magnifica Comunità, Vicinia etc...)?

What type of activities does it do?

When was it established?

What type of collective resources and goods does it govern/own?

What is the extension of the collective lands governed/owned by your institution?

Which skills are needed to administer/govern collective resources?

What motivations leverage members to be part of the governing body of collective resource institutions?

What kind of ordinary decisions are taken?

What kind of extraordinary decisions are taken?

Who has the right to govern the collective resources?

Who has the right to benefit from them (access them, extract resource units)?

What are collective resources needed for? What types of needs they fulfil?

What is the economic, social, cultural importance/value of collective resources in your region?

Governance and sustainability

Are there any mechanisms (organisational, sanctions, monitoring) in place in your institution to ensure sustainability in the use of collective resources, the fair distribution of such resources, and to ensure that the utility of the individual is balanced with the collective benefit? What are they? How are they established? With what criteria?

What is changing in the way resources are used/appropriated/valued (purpose, who benefits)?

What are the sources of pressure for these changes?

What are the real challenges you will face in the future taking into account economic, demographic and climate changes?

Migration

Are there new inhabitants in the region of your collective resource institution? Who are they, where do they come from, why did they move?

Have you ever found them curious/interested in the activities of the collective resource institution? Or about using/using/benefiting from the common goods administered by the institution?

How is this interest/request seen by the community?

Can you imagine that one day a new inhabitant might join the council of the collective property institution?

What kind of changes do you think migrations will bring to the management and use of the commons?

ABSTRACTS

Most of rural resources in the Italian mountain territories, such as forests, pastures, huts, mountain paths, have historically been governed through collective organizations and institutions that have guaranteed the balance between productive activities and environmental protection. These systems can be framed according to the literature on *commons*. Although the model of collective resource management is still strongly rooted in the Alpine region, socioeconomic changes underway call into question the way resources are conceived, used and managed by communities and the very concept of community as a reference for a collective resource. Few studies have focused on the transformation and adaptation of *commons* to the changes taking place, such as the progressive penetration of global economic and demographic megatrends at the local level, with the aim of decoding the new tension between community needs and societal needs. By referring to the concepts of resilience and transformability of social-ecological systems, this paper aims to reflect on the impact of the socioeconomic transformations underway in mountain rural regions, to search for new approaches for the conceptualization of *commons* and to investigate how *commons* can be transformed in order to make them resilient and more socially inclusive. For that, an extensive literature review and an exploratory fieldwork using a case study approach have been performed. The paper's results are exploratory, from which working hypotheses have been derived to be explored in further studies. These hypotheses relate to socio-economic and cultural practices as well as approaches that would enable the re-embedding of the *commons* in the economy and society undergoing change.

La plupart des ressources rurales dans les territoires de montagne italiens, tels que les forêts, les pâturages, les fermes d'alpage, les sentiers de montagne, ont été historiquement régies par des organisations et des institutions collectives qui ont garanti l'équilibre entre les activités productives et la protection de l'environnement. Ces systèmes peuvent être encadrés selon la littérature sur les *commons*. Bien que le modèle de gestion collective des ressources soit encore fortement ancré dans la région alpine, les changements socio-économiques en cours remettent en question, la façon dont les ressources sont conçues, utilisées et gérées par les communautés, ainsi que le concept même de communauté comme référence pour une ressource collective. Peu d'études ont porté sur la transformation et l'adaptation des *commons* aux changements en cours, comme l'incursion progressive des mégatendances économiques et démographiques mondiales au niveau local, dans le but de décoder la nouvelle tension entre les besoins des communautés et ceux de la société. En faisant référence aux concepts de résilience et de transformabilité des systèmes socio-écologiques, cet article vise à traiter l'impact des transformations socio-économiques en cours dans les régions rurales de montagne. De nouvelles approches pour la conceptualisation des *commons* et leur transformation pour les rendre plus résilients et inclusifs sont aussi examinées. Pour cela, une revue approfondie de la littérature et un travail exploratoire sur le terrain avec une approche basée sur une étude de cas ont été réalisés. Les résultats de l'article sont exploratoires, et des hypothèses de travail en ont été tirées pour être explorées dans des études ultérieures. Ces hypothèses concernent les pratiques socio-économiques et culturelles ainsi que les approches qui permettraient de réintégrer les *commons* dans une économie et une société en mutation.

La maggior parte delle risorse rurali nei territori montani italiani, come boschi, pascoli, malghe, sentieri di montagna, sono state storicamente governate attraverso organizzazioni e istituzioni di risorse collettive che hanno garantito l'equilibrio tra attività produttive e tutela ambientale. Questi sistemi possono essere inquadrati secondo la letteratura sui *commons*. Sebbene il modello di gestione collettiva delle risorse sia ancora fortemente radicato nella regione alpina, i cambiamenti socioeconomici in corso mettono in discussione il modo in cui le risorse sono concepite, utilizzate e gestite dalle comunità e il concetto stesso di comunità come riferimento

per una risorsa collettiva. Pochi studi si sono concentrati sulla trasformazione e l'adattamento dei *commons* ai cambiamenti in atto, come la progressiva penetrazione dei megatrend economici e demografici globali a livello locale, con l'obiettivo di decodificare la nuova tensione tra i bisogni della comunità e le esigenze della società. Facendo riferimento ai concetti di resilienza e trasformabilità dei sistemi socio-ecologici, questo articolo propone di riflettere sull'impatto delle trasformazioni socioeconomiche in corso nelle regioni rurali di montagna, di cercare nuovi approcci per la concettualizzazione dei *commons* e di indagare come i *commons* possano essere trasformati per renderli resilienti e più socialmente inclusivi. Per questo, è stata condotta un'ampia revisione della letteratura assieme ad un lavoro esplorativo sul campo utilizzando un approccio di ricerca basato su casi studio. I risultati dell'articolo sono esplorativi, e da esso vengono derivate alcune ipotesi di lavoro da approfondire in ulteriori studi. Queste ipotesi si riferiscono a pratiche socioeconomiche e culturali così come ad approcci che permetterebbero il reinserimento dei *commons* nelle economie e nelle società in trasformazione.

INDEX

Keywords: socioeconomic changes, transformability, innovation, resilience, commoning practices, stewardship

Mots-clés: transformations socio-économiques, transformabilité, innovation, résilience, pratiques collectives, intendance

Parole chiave: cambiamenti socioeconomici, trasformabilità, innovazione, resilienza, pratiche collettive, custodia

AUTHORS

CRISTINA DALLA TORRE

Eurac Research - Institute for Regional Development, Viale Druso 1, 39100 Bolzano (Italy).
cristina.dallatorre@eurac.edu

ELISA RAVAZZOLI

Eurac Research - Institute for Regional Development, Viale Druso 1, 39100 Bolzano (Italy).

ANDRE OMIZZOLO

Eurac Research - Institute for Regional Development, Viale Druso 1, 39100 Bolzano (Italy).

ALESSANDRO GREYTER

Fondazione Edmund Mach, Research and Innovation Centre, Via Mach, 1 - 38098 San Michele all'Adige (Italy).

ANDREA MEMBRETTI

University of Turin, Department of Cultures, Politics and Society, Campus Luigi Einaudi, Lungo Dora Siena, 100, 10153, Torino (Italy).