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Abstract Submission for Special Session 75 "Collective Action and Territorial Transitions"

Title: Towards a framework for tackling the possible contribution of new commons to territorial development in mountain areas

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Abstract: People living in mountain regions face many challenges related to global social and environmental changes. In response, new forms of collective action – that we call “new mountain commons” – are emerging at local level. Commons are defined here as a model of resource management gathering three socio-ecological components: a resource, a community and a set of rules regulating access, use and management of the resource (Ostrom, 1990). More specifically, commons include a collective action by the resource’ users (i.e. the “commoners”) characterized by self-organization allowing the sustainable management of the resource system (*ibid.*). Following Hess (2008) definition, commons are qualified as “new” by the fact that they are of recent creation (end of 20th century - beginning of 21st century), they appeared “without pre-existing rules or clear institutional arrangements” and they concern the provision of goods and services from resources other than natural. These “new commons” have been studied in various contexts or areas such as cities, often named “urban commons” in the literature (Kebir & Wallet, 2021), but not so much in mountain contexts. Possible cases in the Alps have been identified (project MOUN¹), including infrastructure management (ski lifts, energy production), heritage restoration, and community services such as groceries, cafés, a nursery, and a maternity centre (Gros-Balthazard et al., in press). The current research – called ComMount² –, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, aims to study their possible contribution to territorial development in mountain areas. We examine how these collective actions, through the relationships between the actors and the cumulative knowledge they build up, contribute to the transition towards sustainability. Two challenges mountain regions are facing – transitions in the tourism sector and the supply of proximity services – are investigated. For this end, an analytical framework built on the concept of innovative milieus is developed to explore social innovations and their dynamics, and data from in-depth case studies in two Alpine regions of Switzerland – the cantons of Valais and Tessin – are analyzed.

References:

Gros-Balthazard M., Hürlemann S., Chezeli E., Kebir L., Canevet L., Decorzant Y., Leggero R., Lorenzetti L., Nahrath S., Otero I., Reynard E. (2024). Servizi di prossimità: verso nuovi beni comuni nelle Alpi? Stato di avanzamento e prospettive. In: Lorenzetti L., Leggero R. (a cura di), *Servizi di prossimità come beni comuni. Una nuova prospettiva per la montagna*. Roma, Donzelli, pp. 107-120.

¹ *MOUNTain commons facing global changes*, an eight-month pilot research funded by the University of Lausanne.

² *Mountain COMmons: questioning past and present Commons to address territorial development issues in MOUNTain areas (ComMount)*, Swiss National Science Foundation, <https://data.snf.ch/grants/grant/212414>

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Kebir, L., & Wallet, F. (2021). *Les communs à l'épreuve du projet urbain et de l'initiative citoyenne*. Paris: Plan Urbanisme Construction Architecture. 94 p. Disponible sur: <https://www.urbanisme-puca.gouv.fr/les-communs-a-l-epreuve-du-projet-urbain-et-de-l-a2239.html>

Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the Commons : The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 280 p. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316423936>