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**Forest Commons –**  
**Role Model for sustainable local governance and forest management**  
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**Sustainable Local Governance and Forest Management**  
**The new challenges for Forest Common Properties in the Veneto**  
**Region (Italian Eastern Alps)**

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## Outline of Presentation

1. Introduction
2. Forest Commons: state of the art in the Veneto Region (Eastern Italian Alps)
3. Recent symptoms of uneasiness and conflicts in resource use
4. Direction for research



### Introduction

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#### Concept of 'Forest Commons':

*Common Pool Resources (CPRs):* non-excludable (or experience difficulty of exclusion) and rival in consumption (Ostrom et al., 1994)

but the concept of 'community-owned forest' is very multifaceted and can have different meanings in different European countries

Here, *Forest Common Properties (FCP)* are meant as  
'*Group property: resource rights held by a group of users who can exclude others*' (Ostrom et al., in Science 1999)  
'*Land that is under the corporate ownership of a legally defined community*' (Basso and Di Genio, 2011)



### Introduction

2/4

#### Forest Common Properties in Italy:

- Own mostly resources in mountain areas (economically marginal but environmentally important): meadows, pastures, forests, waters, game and fish, rocks, stones
- Resources are held and managed in common by local communities under long term – pre-roman, Medieval – institutional arrangements based on shared cultural values and commonly-accepted consuetudinary rules
- Have often self-explicative names, eg *Regole, Università, Comunità, Vicinie, Partecipanze, ...*




*Introduction* 3/4

**Forest Common Properties in Italy today:**

- More than 500 FCP estimated in 2005 ([www.Jus.unitn.it/usi\\_civici](http://www.Jus.unitn.it/usi_civici))
- On-going restitution processes
- Over 3 M ha of forest/pasture land (10% of total forest-pasture Italian area)
- Land owned by FCP is inalienable and indivisible and its use cannot be changed
- Status:
  - ✓ **'close', or 'private':** the status of community-member (with the connected set of rights and duties) is given solely to the descendants of the original families and transmitted through heritage
  - ✓ **'open', or 'public':** use rights are given to all the residents of the Municipality (less frequent)

Italian Geographical Regions	Area of Common Properties (ha)
Alpine Region	1,173,720
Po Plain	23,357
Northern Apennines	100,888
Central Apennines	285,815
Latium	168,208
Southern Italy	386,692
Sicily	44,534
Sardinia	314,814
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,085,028</b>




*Introduction* 4/4

Stable and well-rooted traditional institutions (Merlo et al., 1989), notwithstanding changes and discontinuities of the political power over history. Paradigms of

- environmental stewardship
- sustainable management of natural resources
- self-governance and homeostasis of socially-sustainable community, based on democratic government rules, balanced systems of rights/duties, social cohesion, identification of members with the community, fair distribution of benefits according to needs, high life quality


One example: education rates in Cadore at the beginning of the XX century were the highest of the Veneto Region thanks to the school system set up by the FCPs



*Forest Commons: state of the art in the Veneto Region* 1/10

**Why Veneto Region:**

- High tradition in collective ownership over time, from Cadore to Ampezzo to Asiago Plateau (autonomous local governments in the past, both from Venice Republic or Austrian dominations)
- Favourable political milieu → specific legislation on reconstitution and restitution (Regional Law 26/1996), clear property rights allocation
- Common properties – 'Regole' – own the most beautiful and intact Dolomite environments/landscape
- High touristic development/potential → source of conflicts



*Forest Commons: state of the art in the Veneto Region* 2/10

**Conceptual framework:**

Significance of CP ownership and its role on sustainable local governance and forest management

Legal/juridical aspects

- Legal recognition as juridical person
- Years in recognition
- Number of right holders

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- Rootedness in local community
- Homeostasis
- Social cohesion
- ...

Forest asset characteristics, management and uses

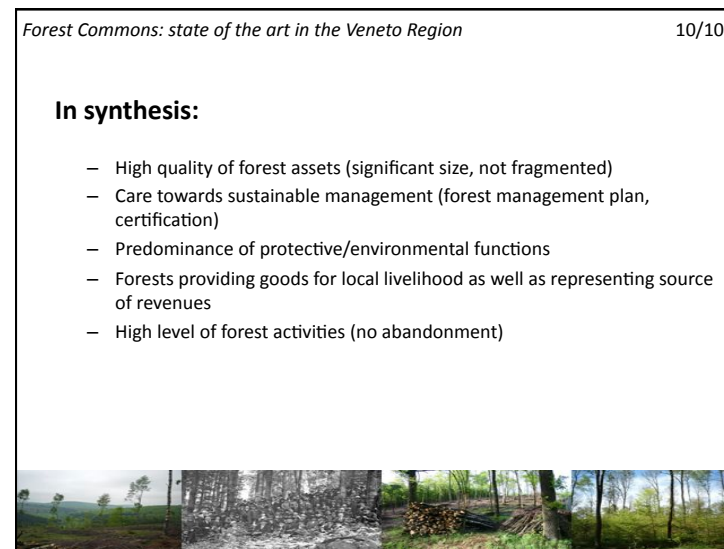
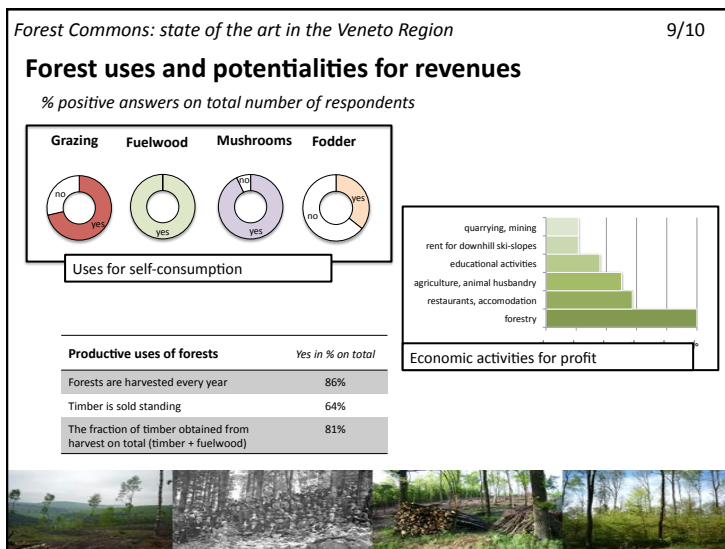
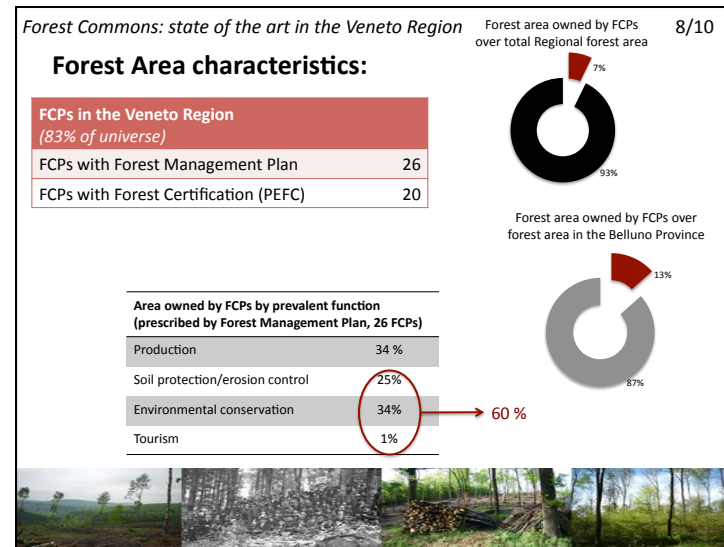
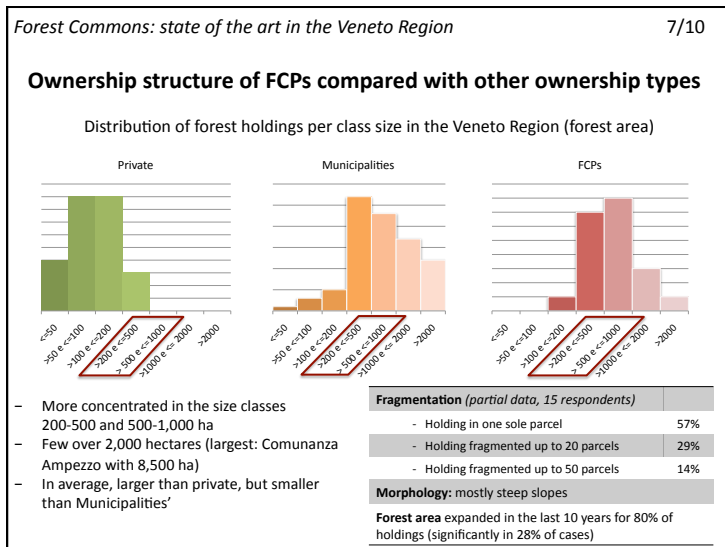
- Size of forest area
- Management plan/Certification
- Functions
- Structure
- Uses, products and services

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- Environmental sustainability
- Sustainable forest uses
- Capacity to care for local needs
- Capacity to provide sustainable forest revenues ...








Recent symptoms of uneasiness and conflicts in resource uses 1/2

**2 stories from Italian FCPs: conservation vs development ?**


Story 1. The case of the camping site Project in Comelico



1. Region still marginal for tourism
2. Project environmentally sustainable and good chance for local development
3. Project carried out by a private entrepreneur
4. Municipality approved the project
5. Internal conflict inside the Regola (FCP, landowner), initially against the project, than new leadership in favour of project
6. Meanwhile institutional conflict, supported by the two different factions inside the Regola, with authorization unexpectedly withdrawn by the Ministry of Cultural Goods and Activities and in various subsequent court appeals
7. Project stopped in 2006, with the site already cleared off from trees

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Story 2. The case of the Pelmo-Mondeval ski area Project in San Vito di Cadore

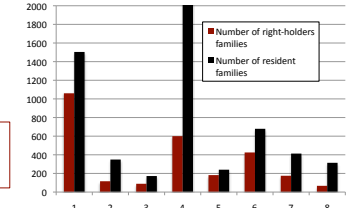


1. Region of high recreational value for winter sports, already rather congested, but san Vito suffers from more attractive power of Cortina d'Ampezzo
2. Environmental sustainability of project under discussion: area of outstanding natural beauty and archaeological value: scientific community against the project
3. Project by a joint venture of local/regional entrepreneurs
4. Municipality in support of the project
5. Regola (landowner): high internal disagreement between supporters and non-supporters, with high visibility in newspapers
6. Final General Assembly of Regole voted against the project with a narrow majority
7. Project stopped for the moment

Recent symptoms of uneasiness in resource uses 2/2

**Drivers of change/conflicts/local instability:**

- Environmental dimension: increasing scarcity of intact environments, therefore increased pressure on FCPs' heritage, top-down processes of nature conservation (eg Natura2000)
- Culture/traditional values dimension: abandonment of agricultural/forest activities: agriculture and forestry not any more factors of identity/cohesion of local community
- Local institutional dimension: loosening of coincidence between the community of right holders and that of residents



➔ Municipality and FCPs had opposite positions in the 2 stories !

Number of families of FCPs right-holders over total number of resident families in 8 selected FCPs of the Veneto Region

**Some conclusive remarks**

- Conflicts arise both within the FCPs (young/old generations) and between the FCP close community and the wider local community
- Excessive closeness is a threat to the survival itself of the FCPs (but also excessive development is a threat to the conservation of the environment)
- A key-issue is how to improve openness in respect to external stakeholders/new members of local community (new social dynamics vs. old traditions), e.g. by modifying existing statutes and allowing new members and women
- Dilemmas between conservation and development at FCPs need to find **new adaptive tools and strategies** to enhance participation
- Research on internal/external governance mechanisms is of high importance

Thank you for attention !



Grazing in the land of the Regole of Cortina d'Ampezzo, Dolomites