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integral
Future-oriented integrated
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forests/landscapes

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Role of Common Properties in the integrated forest management of Veneto Region (Italy): which coordination with local municipalities?

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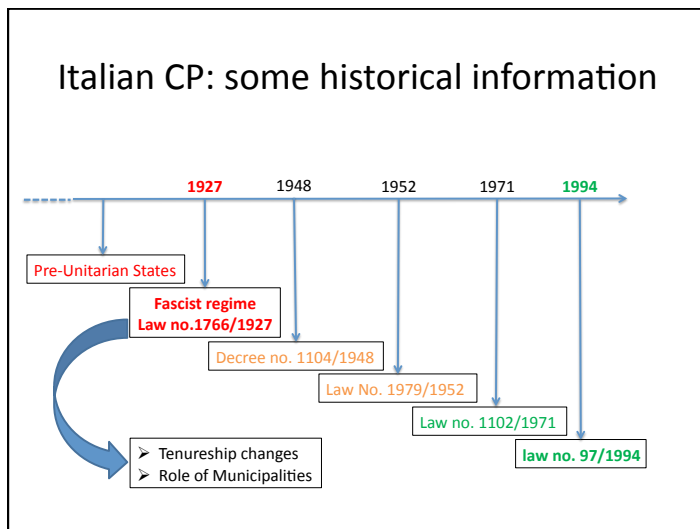
IASC 2014 Conference, "From generation to generation"
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Common Properties (CPIs) & the Italian common domain


Customary rights allow a local community to benefit some *utilitates* provided by a natural common pool resource, e.g. collecting wood, picking mushrooms, gathering herbs, grazing, hunting, fishing, etc.

	Civic Uses Lands		Common Properties
Ownership	Government OR private entities	Formally, the community	Community with legal status of association
Adminstr. entity (accountable to)	Depending on the owner	a) Municipality (Municipality) ----- b) Separate Administration (Community/Municip.)	Board (Community)
Membership (Criteria)	Open (residence)		a) Open – registration (residence) ----- b) Mostly close – registration (lineage)

Source: Bassi, 2012 (modified)



The peculiar case of the Veneto Region (1/2)

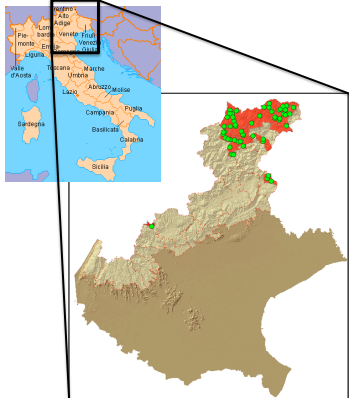


Regional Law 26/1996, art. 1

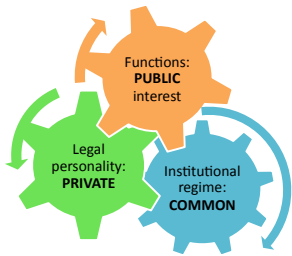
The Veneto Region recognizes *Regole* [...] as mountain organizations **concurring** to the **environmental protection** and to the **socio-economic development** of mountain territories.

According to the national law, the Veneto Region rearranges the legal discipline [concerning regional CPIs] and **promotes their reconstitution**, in order to foster policies aimed to stimulate investments in the agriculture and forestry sector.

The peculiar case of the Veneto Region (2/2)



- 54 CPIs; 18 newly reconstituted
- Several reconstitutions still ongoing





Objectives

Premises:

- The real commitment of Common Properties to the ambitious requests of the regional law is still a matter of discussion.
- In some cases, institutional conflicts between Municipalities and Common Properties exist, this turning down their environmental services provision levels.

1. Comparative analysis of motivations and real behaviours of CP leaders;
2. MA-CP cooperation assessment
 - a. Which prerequisite for positive MA-CP institutional relationship?
 - b. Outlooks: better coordination or disclosure of hidden conflicts?

Methodology (1/2)

- ❖ Secondary data analysis: the NewForex project results 
- ❖ 2 interviewing phases (Integral project surveys):
 - [1] municipal representatives
 - [2] Common representatives 
- ❖ (semi)Structured questionnaire
 - a) Environmental management
 - b) Economic development
 - c) Tourism development
 - d) Social development
 - e) MA-CP institutional relationship patterns
 - f) Outlooks on future MA-CP relationship

Methodology (2/2)

1) Face-to-face interviews with Municipal representatives

Selection criterion: Municipalities where CPs exist within their administered area

Reference persons: Officers responsible for the institutional contacts with local CPIs. (10 Majors, 2 aldermen, 1 municipal secretary, 1 office manager)

Why Municipalities? ► Represent the whole local communities; ► Former forest owners; ► Compulsory mechanisms of institutional coordination.

Coverage: 14 Municipalities (82%), dealing with 37 CPIs (~70%)

2) Face-to-face interviews with CPs representatives

Selection criterion:

- Geographical area (Municipalities and regional areas)
- Year of establishment (ante/post 1996)
- Results from 1st interviewing phase (institutional patterns)
- CP political and economic "significance"

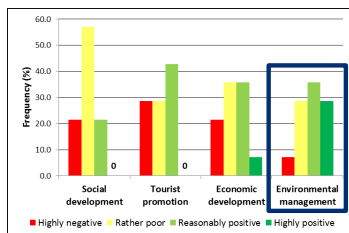
Reference persons: 13 Presidents, 1 Vice-President, 4 admin. Assistants

Coverage: 18/54 CP, standing in 13/17 affected municipal areas (78.6%)

Environmental management (1/3)

Municipal representatives' assessment

- ▶ Better forest management
 - FM not the municipal "core business"
 - Former reinvestment rates: 10%
- ▶ MA relieved from admin. burdens
- ▶ Simple and "ordinary" management



Environmental management (2/3)

- ❖ FM "core business" and reinvestment rates >10% (!)
- ❖ Relevant investments on rangeland assets:
 - Pasture restoration after past abandonment
 - Renovation/ refurbishment of alpine huts
 - Maintenance and new building of forest roads, with effects on:
 - Timber value
 - New forestry practices
 - New forestry mechanization
 - Proactive supply of some environmental services
- ❖ Local landscapes protected from speculative actions:
 - Quorum thresholds to validate land use destination >50%+1
 - High control also for ordinary decisions by common Assembly (vs. municipal ideological positioning).

Environmental management (3/3)

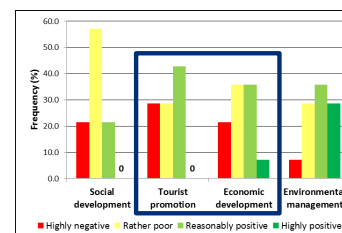
- ❖ **Some years spent** to assume complete control over FM:
 - Main focus on forestry for almost a decade
- ❖ Disproportionate **bureaucracy**
- ❖ Only **few commoners** (often retired) with enough willingness and time
 - Need to increase the internal participation
 - Need to make recourse to new competences and skills
- ❖ Environmental management should not be driven by and assessed solely through pure **economic perspectives**.
- ❖ Even the prosecution of regular interventions is **more than "ordinary"** FM!

Harvesting regularity in the last 10-15 years		
	Common Properties	Municipalities
Every year	100.0%	50.0%
Every 2-3 years	0.0%	30.0%
Occasionally	0.0%	20.0%

Economic development and tourist promotion

Municipal representatives' assessment

Dynamic and positive situations exist!
 Economic and procedural agreements on mutual MA-CP competences
vs.
 Attendant attitude and entrepreneurial potential not fully realized
 Hostility against tourists (*feeling of property*)



Economic development (1/2)

- ❖ Timber selling activities more carefully planned
- ❖ Harvested timber sold on the road side vs. still standing trees
 - Timber prices increased
 - Establishment of new local forest enterprises
- ❖ Rental contracts for rural buildings and lands > remunerative
(Refuges, alpine huts, agritourisms, lands where firms established)
- ❖ Tenants allowed to organize accommodating possibilities and agritourism services
(New clauses in the rental contracts)
- ❖ New fees to collect mushrooms on common lands (some discontents)

Relevance of timber selling revenues on total income		
	Common Properties	Municipalities
Totally	71.4%	0.0%
Relevant	21.4%	0.0%
Not much	7.1%	28.6%
Negligible	0.0%	71.4%

Economic development (2/2)

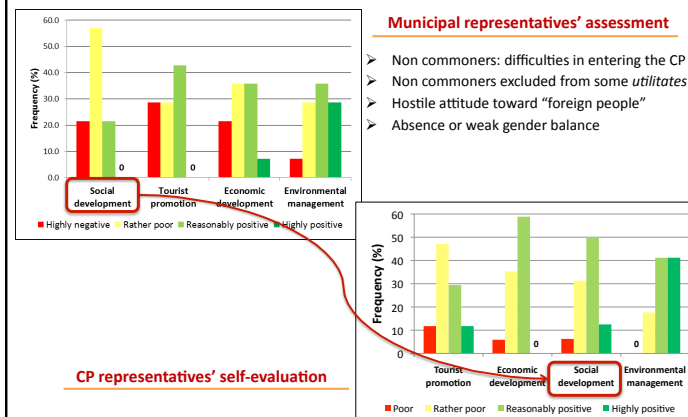
- ❖ **Activities that fall outside FM:**
 - Coffee bar (*feeling of community*)
 - Restaurants
 - Tourist accommodations
 - Flat purchase and rent in the near city
 - New ski slopes and facilities development: contribution vs. opposition
- ❖ **"Economic multipliers"** simply thanks to their private legal personality
 - Establishment of hydroelectric power plants or pit sites
 - **RDP funding**, coordination with Municipalities (rural road maintenance)

Tourist promotion

- ❖ Tourism outside statutory competences?
Managing forest landscapes vs. "promoting" them
- ❖ **Well-attended forest landscapes stimulate rural tourism**
- ❖ "Passive" attitude: CP simply *"do not impede"* tourist events
(Alpine marathons, bike races, snowshoes walking, etc.)
- ❖ **Accommodating services**
Alpine hut restoration/refurbishment, agritourism housing purposes, "diffused hotel" system project
- ❖ **By-side forestry activities**
Maintenance of foot paths, creation of picnic areas, placement of didactic posters;
- ❖ **Cultural activities**
One week-long events or single thematic days (wood carving, sculpture, etc.), local ethnographic museums

Heaviest barrier: administrative and institutional MA-CP disputes and, even more, **personal contrasts between their representatives (Majors, Presidents)!**

Social development



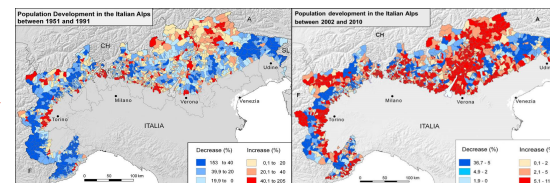
Social development (1/3)

- ❖ Social cohesion, **community identity**
- ❖ Several **events and public initiatives**
Local and historical carnivals, street singing of Christmas and Easter traditional songs, fairs and cultural events aimed to disseminate knowledge about local customs and CP historical vicissitudes, sometimes involving school classes.
- ❖ **Subsidies to local associations** and local churches
Fire-fighters, sport associations, Italian Alpine soldiers' association, local choirs. Local schools and public libraries. Local churches: ceiling maintenance, heating system installation, restoration of traditional Christmas nativity scenes
- ❖ **Social grants**
- ❖ Some benefits or social grants are bestowed also to non-commoners
Wood fuel provision, children school transport, school books, young married couples, new babies, non-self-sufficient people

Who benefits CP social grants?		
Whole local community	Right-holders' community	"Balanced" situation
53.3%	26.7 %	20.0%

Social development (2/3)

- ❖ Statute renovation, mainly tackling:
 - gender balance issues
 - **admittance of non-commoners to the right-holders' community**



Source: Steinicke et al. 2014

Urgent demographic issues affecting CP survival:

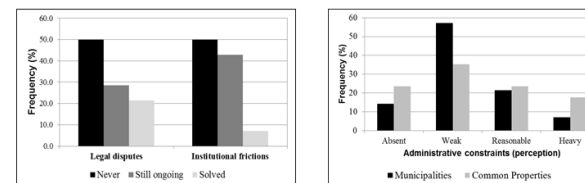
- Slight decreases or worrisome drops in the commoners' no.
- Weak participation to the common matters by young people

Social development (3/3)

Difficulties:

- ❖ Scarcity of human resources
- ❖ Limited economic availability
- ❖ Administrative issues and bureaucratic constraints "*challenging whatever CP does, or wants to do*".
- ❖ Tenacious resistances by eldest commoners against statutory changes (high *quorum* thresholds)
- ❖ Sorts of "political minorities" strongly support self-sufficient claims
 - Few years ago such positions were predominant within CP Assemblies.

CP-MA institutional relationship patterns



- Cadastral information inaccuracies
- Formal allocation of particular competences (e.g. permission release to access forest roads)
- Consciousness that a sort of "compulsory coordination" based on a top-down law prescription does not pose heavy limitations to the each one's autonomy
- CP always represented in the Town Council

CP-MA institutional relationship patterns

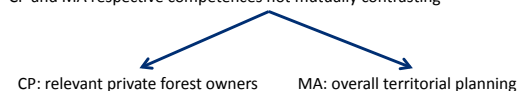
- ❖ CP-MA institutional relationship simply reduced to administrative procedures
- ❖ Right-holders as "territorial volunteers" and CP as *peculiar* private subjects
- ❖ MA tend to involve CP to obtain financial support
Restoration of urban fountains, paving of the local square, Christmas decorations supply, rural and urban road network maintenance...
- ❖ CP-MA political interference
- ❖ Few commoners took clear position against CP-MA cooperation, stating that these two different regimes should not interfere with each other.
- ❖ CP presidents main responsible for formal contacts with Municipalities (94.4%)

Most of the time institutional litigations are not really due to administrative reasons or policy issues, but they originate from personal contrasts.

CP-MA institutional relationship patterns

72.2% + 5.6% positive remarks on possible stricter future cooperation

- ❖ Need to share visions and projects concerning territorial development strategies
- ❖ Administrative facilitation, > human resources, > technical skills
- ❖ Relevant social overlapping: "*commoners settle lawyers' professional fees twice*"
- ❖ CP and MA respective competences not mutually contrasting



- ❖ Also CP **consortia** are worth to be established!

Conclusions

- ❑ Positive environmental safeguard and forest management
 - ❑ Economic development still tied to forestry, raising dynamic entrepreneurship
 - ❑ Tourism development: fist steps vs. positive situations
 - ❑ Social development assessment influenced by each one's user base
-
- CPs always represented in Town Councils: not a discriminating feature
 - Presumption that CP have nothing to do with Municip. lead to institutional frictions
 - Participation to the municipal administrative life vs. property rights defence
 - Too much private and single contacts should be avoided: formal mechanisms aimed to reinforce mutual cooperation are worth to be established

