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Mountain rural commons in Italy: a participation dilemma in a changing society

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Introduction

Rural common goods: looking for a new balance

Rural common goods in the Alps have **traditionally** guaranteed the balance between human subsistence and nature preservation (Granet-Abisset, 2015).

Resources in mountain territories have been often governed by collective action organizations (Nervi, 2016).



Introduction

Rural common goods: looking for a new balance

Nowadays, transformative changes (new economic models, demographic trends, new institutional settings, climate changes) are compromising the balance guaranteed by the commons (Granet-Abisset, 2015).



Introduction

Whose commons are these?

The in-migration trend of „new highlanders“ clearly highlights the emerging **participation dilemma**: whose commons are these (Viazzo, 2012)?

The traditional governance system of the commons is questioned.
It becomes relevant to investigate how such systems can adapt and innovate to face such changes (De Moor, 2019).

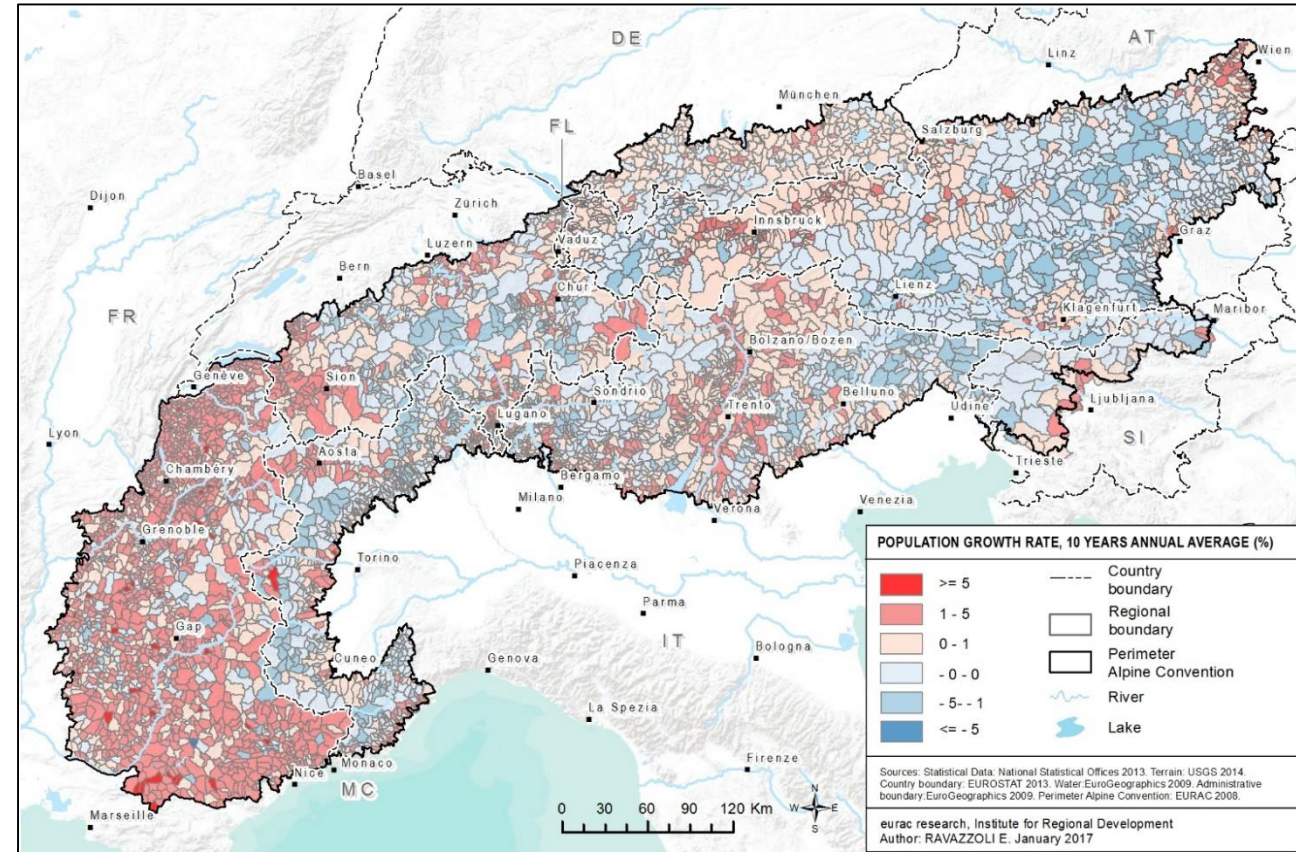


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Background

General trends in the European Alps

- **Demographic trends:** abandonment of high altitude/remote settlements, increasing population density on the valley floors; ageing population in high altitude/remote areas (Bätzing, 2005)
- **In-Out migration trends:** “new mountaineers” and other migration typologies determine changes in social composition of the population (Viazzo, 2012; Membretti e Viazzo, 2017)

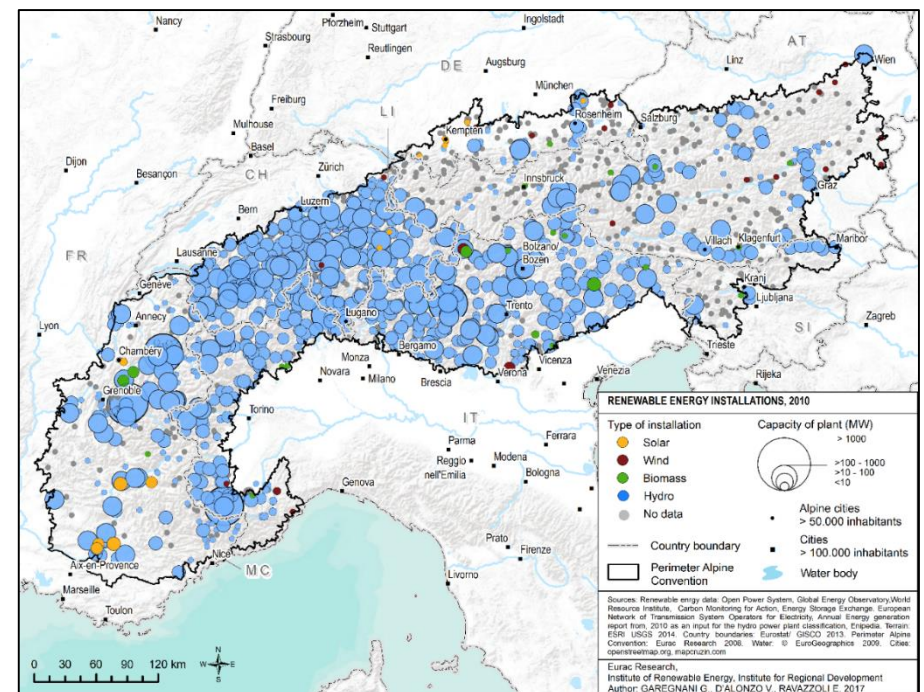
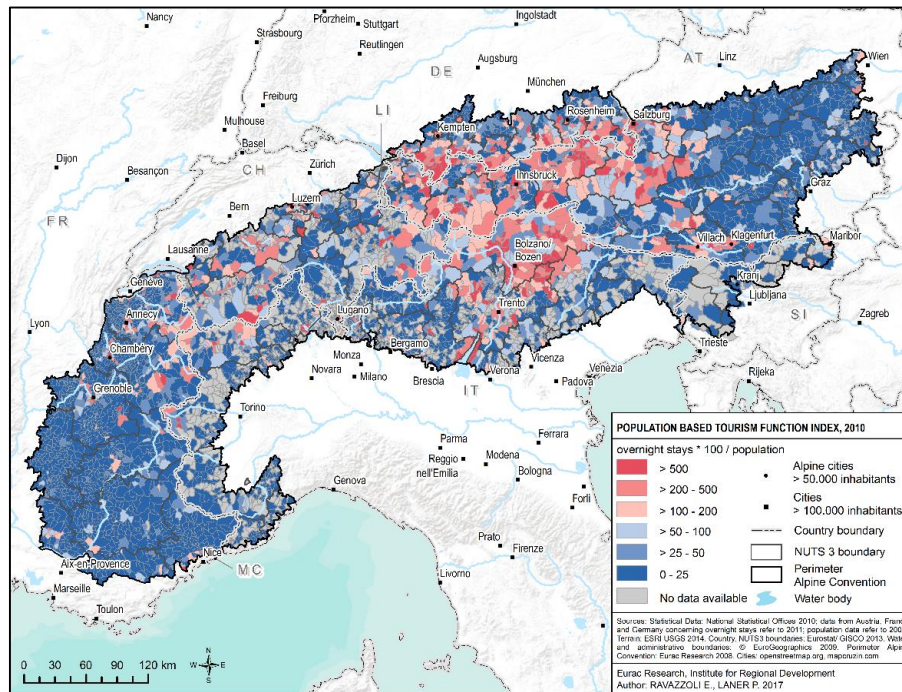


Population growth rate, average % (Source: Alpine Convention, 2018)

Background

General trends in the European Alps

Economic trends: global markets' penetration determined since the 80s a transition from a mountain economy based on agriculture subsistence to one based on intensive agriculture, mass tourism, renewable energy production and resource extraction (Granet-Abisset, 2015)



a) Tourism intensity: overnight stays (Source: Alpine Convention, 2018)

b) Renewable energy installations (Source: Alpine Convention, 2018)

Background

General trends in the European Alps

Institutional trends: small municipalities not able to sustain the costs of services of general interest.

→ Trend towards aggregation/fusion of municipalities to increase service efficiency and decrease costs.



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Background

A two-speed mountain territory

High-speed areas: Mountain territories with high anthropogenic density

- Competition arises over shared natural resources
- Increased exposure to appropriation processes
- Decreased meaning as common resources with social potential (Debarbieux & Price, 2016)

Slow-speed areas: Depopulated mountain areas

- Resources suffer a loss of value (economic, social and cultural) due to their under use and lack of preservation
- Degradation
- Increased exposure to hydrogeological hazards, emphasised by the impacts of climate change



State of art

The commons as governance systems

Definition: governance regime, whereby a group of people holds a collective property or rights of use and needs to decide collectively over the common pool resources (De Moor, 2019)

3 components of commons:

- **common pool resource**
- common set of rules
- common property regime

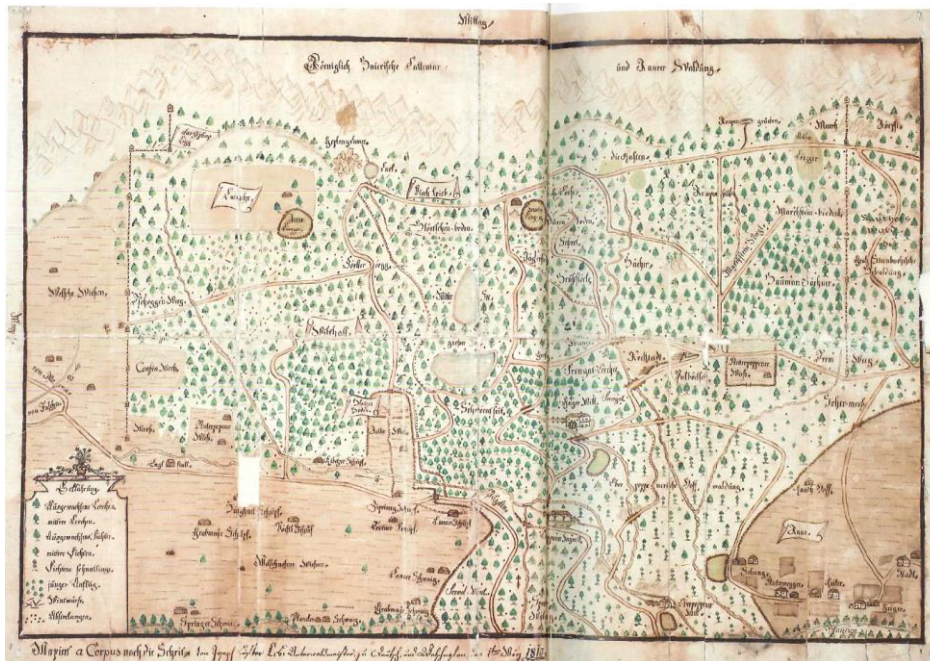
Common pool resources are characterised by:

- **non-excludability:** individual can access/consume these goods without playing a role in their provision
 - **subtractability** or **rivalry** in consumption
- There is a need to act collectively to manage them (Ostrom, 1999)

State of art

The commons as governance systems...typical of the Alps

collective use of pastures and forests was at the base of the alpine economy (Bartaletti, 2004).



State of art

The dilemma of the governance of the commons

Interplay between internal factors (incentives, motivation, behaviour) and external factors (environmental, political, demographic, economic, technological forces) (De Moor, 2019)

Challenges faced by the commons:

- Constant assessment and re-design of the rules in place in order to balance individual incentives and group incentives
- Institutional arrangements must be permanently adapted to the changing environmental, economic and political environment

State of art

Italian policies in the 20th-21st centuries

- Fascist Law 1927 → dismantling of ancient commons organizations and institutions based on descending rights, creation of „usi civici“ (rights of use) for the whole population of a fraction
- Post WW2 → fall of fascist regime, many provinces acquired autonomy in legislation over land use rights → restoration of ancient commons organizations
- Law 168/2017 → on collective properties, recognizes the diversity of commons organizations

2 types of institutions

- **closed-access institutions (communitarism)**: Regole, Interessenze, Vicinie; ancient/historical institutions, property rights are transmitted via hereditary rights;
- **open-access institutions (universalism)**: Separated administration of civic use goods (ASUC); the acquisition of rights derives from residence in one place for a certain period of time

Hypothesis

- The changing social composition, economic transition and climatic conditions specific to an area should be particularly taken into consideration in sustainable governing of rural common goods.
- Some social innovations in terms of reconfiguring networks, social practices and governance processes should be enhanced in order to guarantee resilience and sustainability of mountain rural commons.

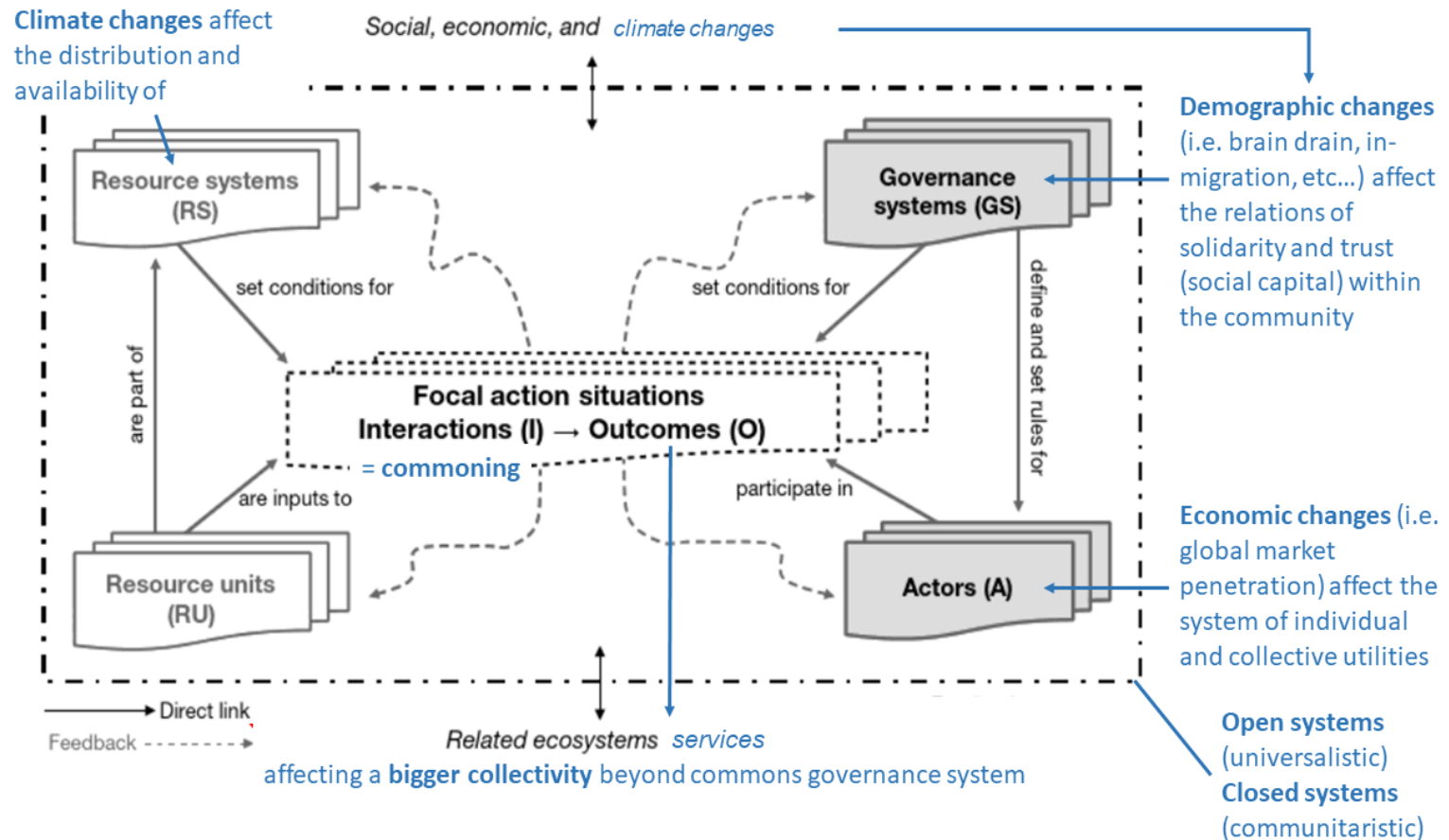
Research questions

1. How do these trends/changes/leverages affect the governance of common resources?
2. 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?

Theoretical framework

Revisiting the social-ecological system framework by Ostrom

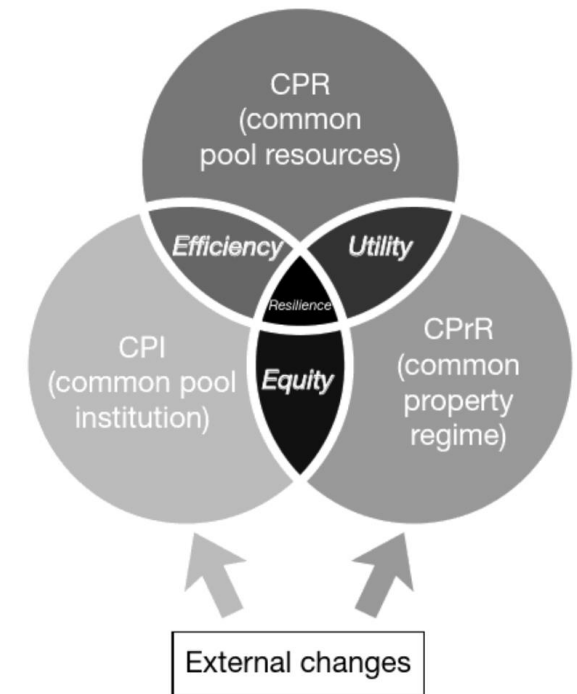
- withdrawal of resource units as core physical transaction
- well-defined boundaries of resource systems as main spatial property of nature-related transaction
- emphasis on collective governance
- **Influence of external variables on the commons**



Theoretical framework

3 conditions for the existence of the commons

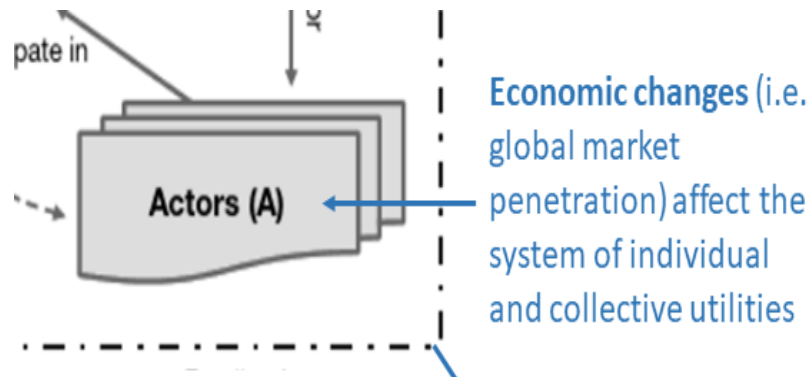
- **Utility:** coexistence of a personal utility for the use and benefit of resources and a collective utility for guaranteeing the availability of the resource in the future
- **Equity:** access rules, use rules, management rules and governance rules; sanctioning, continuous meeting and discussing as a way to guarantee equity (De Moor, 2018)
- **Participation and social control:** constant assessment and re-design of the rules in place in order to balance individual incentives and group objectives. The smaller the community, the better (Blanco and Walker, 2019)



Micro-perspective: how to achieve resilience on the commons? (De Moor, 2018)

The social-ecological system framework

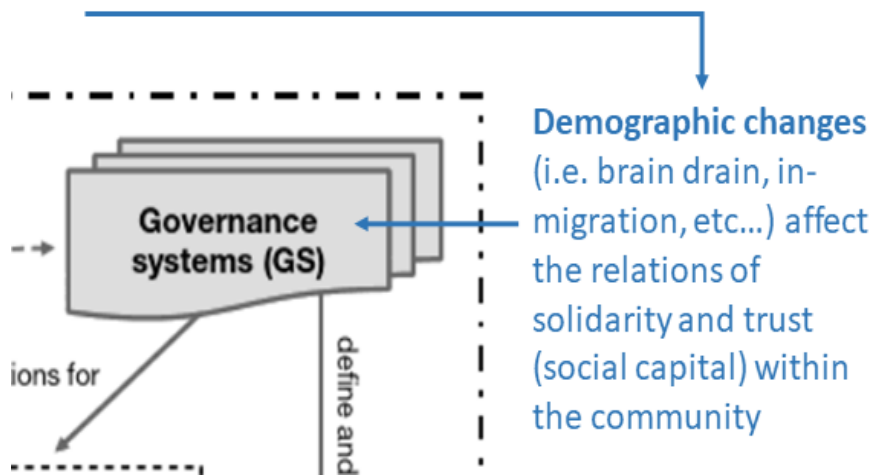
Global markets penetration



- From agricultural subsistence to mass tourism, intensive agriculture, renewable energy production
- Changes the resource-dependencies and utilities of the actors involved

The social-ecological system framework

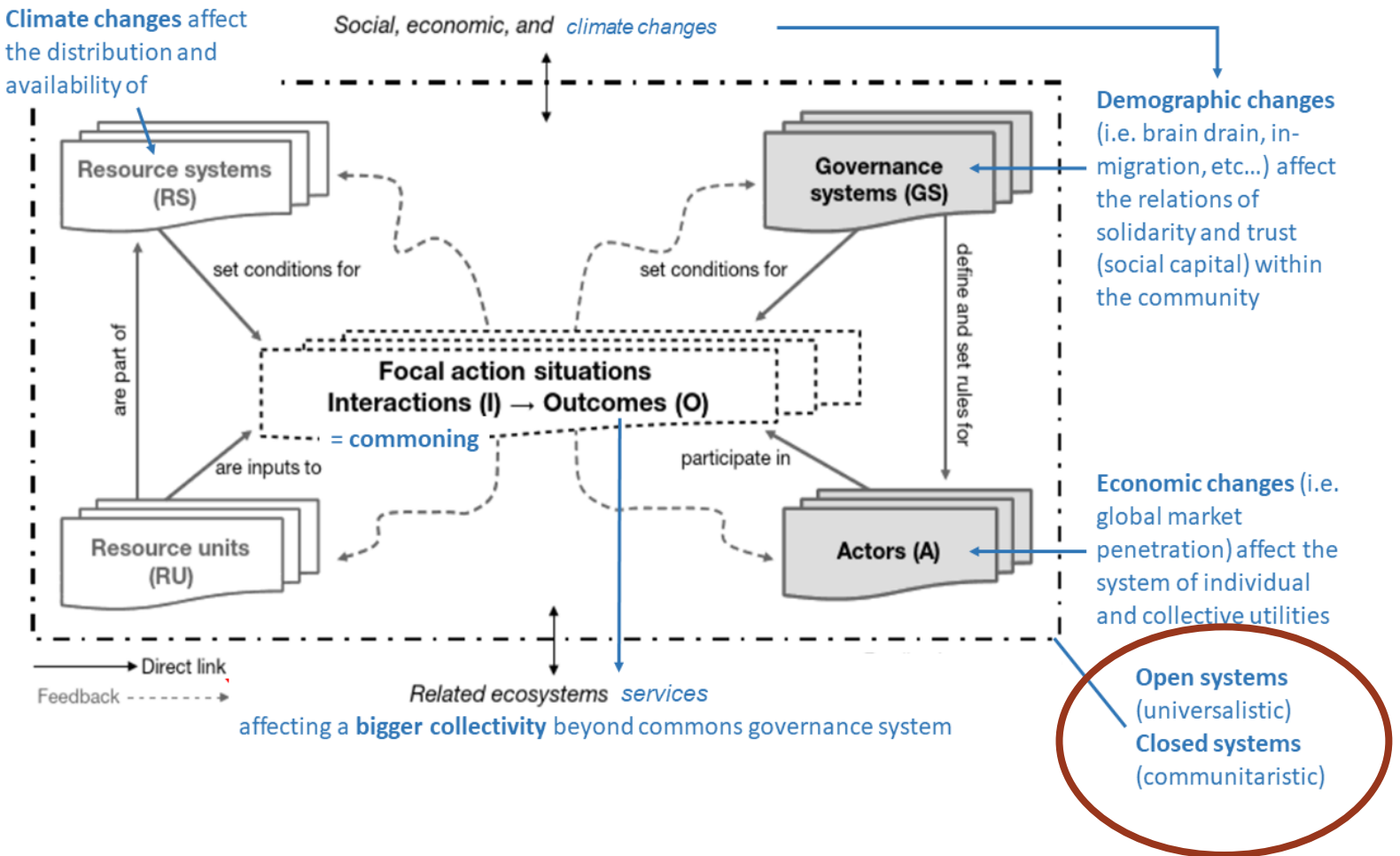
Depopulation, in-migration, low fertility



- Diversification of cultural backgrounds
- Changing the relations of solidarity and trust within the community
- Demand of use may alter, change of access rules

The social-ecological system framework

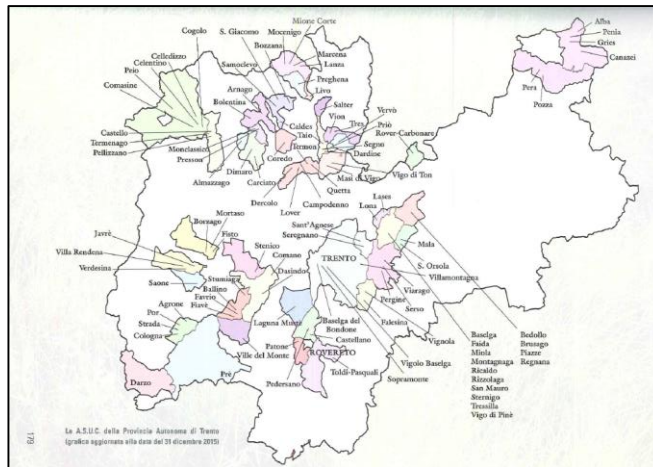
Open systems Vs. Closed systems



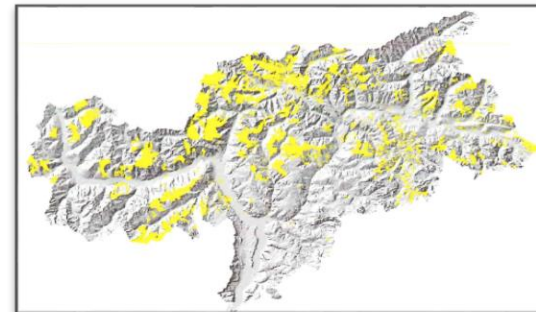
→ Distinction allows to better consider inclusiveness or exclusiveness of the system regarding new members of the community

Method

- Applied approach
- Focus on single social-ecological system in Italian mountain territories at the local level as the unit of analysis. (Asuc, Regola, Magnifica Comunità)
- Selection of Trentino-Alto Adige-Veneto as area of study, for relevance and variety



33% of the whole territory of Trentino region is under collective property and governance regimes (South Tyrolean Farmers ´ Union, 2016)



South Tyrol (figure): in red are open-access collective regimes, in yellow closed-access collective regimes. The second cover **28%** of the whole forest area of the Province (South Tyrolean Farmers ´ Union, 2016)

Early considerations

How do current trends affect 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">• Some resources uses become irrelevant (e.g. stones and clay for buildings)• Others change of importance (e.g. mountain , landscape)
Demographic changes: fast turnover of inhabitants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of bonding among community members (Putnam), interest, motivation in its resources
Demographic changes: in-migration of „new highlanders“	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Debate on the access of resources (universalism vs. Communitarism)• New types of uses of resources, new radications, innovations and creativity
Institutional changes towards aggregations of small municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of bonding, social control among community members• Possibility of bridging and change of traditional institutions

Early considerations

Criteria for commons sustainability and resilience

Field	Criteria
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support for young entrepreneurs-farmers, organic agriculture, locally based (in accordance to law 168/2017)• Benefit for the people who are investing the community
Society, culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trust and Solidarity: re-establishing the bond among community members and the bridging with new community members• Enhancing the practice of commoning, by communicating the value of the resources in common regime
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Favor uses that enhance intergenerationality (Nervi, 2016), : i.e. no mining, yes forestry, no mass tourism (ski), no big infrastructures that are costly to maintain, yes slow recreation• Exchange between managing community and benefitting collectivity: payments for ecosystems services

Concluding remarks

- Commons as enclaves of non-market economy in a capitalistic economy, for the containment of fragmentation processes of land privatization in the mountains.
- Commons as laboratories and spaces of innovation → attention to non-established commons, on movements processes of innovation.
- Reframe the commons using **stewardship** and **commoning** theories

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Thank you!



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