

New Farming as an example of Social Innovation responding to challenges of inner mountain areas of Italian Alps

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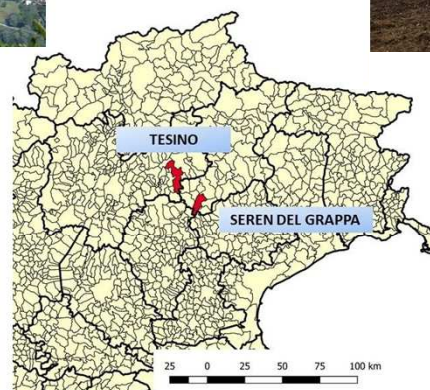


TWO CASES IN THE ITALIAN ALPS:
TESINO & SEREN DEL GRAPPA



DWELLING AND NETWORKS

LIFE LONG LEARNING AND EDUCATION



ACTIVATION AND CULTIVATION

CONTAMINATION AND PARTICIPATION



THE «PILLARS» FOR LOCAL SOCIAL INNOVATION



NOTE: Full text available soon on [Journal of Alpine Research!](#)



The cases were explored in order to respond to the research questions concerning the impacts of new farming on rural areas, an economic model of reference, neo-endogenous factors supporting social innovations and global processes acting at the local scale. The combination of new dwellers and a renewed interest in the primary sector enabled “new farming” to become a potential powerful engine to boost small-scale and locally-based activities of economic and social relevance. Their scale of operation is usually greater than the single municipality or community and evokes the need to reach minimal dimensions in order to obtain a better testimony of the innovation brought into the mountains, emphasizing the role of the network of networks. The importance of bottom-up initiatives in the primary sector designed to improve community wellbeing in mountain rural areas lacking policy support. In Europe, funding opportunities can be derived from Common Agricultural Policy. National strategies, such as the one in Italy aimed at circulating unused land (*Banca della Terra*) for farming initiatives, are also to be considered relevant. Furthermore, institutions such as FAO are starting to invoke a novel approach to agriculture such as agro-ecology and agro-forestry. However, future research is needed to identify specific policies addressing the dissemination of social innovation initiatives in mountain territories, specifically targeting the primary sector.

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CONTEXT

Changes in the socio-economic framework on-going since the late 1960s have disrupted the multi-centennial balanced models of organisation in mountain communities of the Italian Alps. Although traditionally populations have developed the capacity to adapt to the fragile and hostile environment characterizing mountain areas, new responses are needed to face emerging complex and cross-scale challenges. Independently or supported by local and regional authorities, communities are trying to halt or reverse these processes. The effort is the sum of different individuals belonging or related to the community, and not only collective.

SOCIAL INNOVATION

Social innovation can be the framing concept for initiatives aimed at improving community wellbeing by reconfiguring social practices embedded in mountain territories. Such initiatives start from the vision and values of a leading group, but become embedded in a context through the local community’s engagement. Processes of social innovation arose sparsely in various alpine territories, and many of them are connected to a novel interest in the primary sector by locals and new residents.

“NEW FARMING”

The combination of both, but not exclusively, could be considered as generating “New Farming”. It can be one concrete example that frames those initiatives which employ a new set of values related to agricultural production and an economic model of reference. New farming expresses a change in the relationship between actors and their context. The two cases (both facing depopulation, ageing and marginalisation) can be associated to this phenomenon. Emerging common include multi-functionality, new job opportunities and profiles, more substantial social effects and the presence of a series of barriers.