

Zeitschrift: Histoire des Alpes = Storia delle Alpi = Geschichte der Alpen
Herausgeber: Association Internationale pour l'Histoire des Alpes
Band: 24 (2019)

Rubrik: English Summaries

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 12.01.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

English Summaries

Fabrice Mounthon, The rise of the commons in the French Alps: 13th–15h century

Until the late 13th century, waters, woodland, pastures, and fallow lands – which make up most of the French Alps: ‘mountain space’ – had been subject either to a feudal authority: *banal lordship* (*seigneurs de ban*, i.e. counts and lords of the manor), secular or clerical (bishops, chapters), or to the monasteries to which these had been granted. While the latter favoured a rather exclusive sort of owner farming (at least until the 15th century), other lords tended to give up the use of uncultivated lands to the local population, in exchange for a payment of dues. Between the end of the 13th and the 15th century, ownership of common resources, or *communia*, was transferred wholly or in part (‘useful property’), either to the parish communities or to farmers’ unions, known as *pareries* or *consortages*. In part, this change was the result of the confluence into the new princely state of communities of inhabitants in the process of asserting themselves. The transformation was achieved through negotiations conducted by means of genuine instruments within the scope of Roman law.

Stefan Sonderegger, Desirable Alpine pastureland and forests. The Alpine economy of Eastern Switzerland and the commercialisation of cattle farming between the late Middle Ages and the Modern Age

Examining the Alpine economy of Eastern Switzerland in the 15th and 16th centuries, this article aims to show to what extent increasing commercialisation of animal husbandry in the valley affected it, changing the use of communal ownership as far as the Alps’ highest altitudes. Farming specialisations began to develop from the late Middle Ages across Europe, generating a range of different farming areas. Cattle farming predominated in the pre-Alpine and alpine

regions of Appenzell and the Toggenburg, an activity that intensified driven by the commercial interests of urban institutions and of burghers owning lands not only in their immediate surroundings but also in the alpine regions, where the usufruct of commons was thus ramped up. The *Alpgenossen*, who held rights of usage over common pasture and mountain forests, defended their rights against outsiders and tried to stop newcomers from gaining access. The results of this regional study fit in with the broad international debate on commons.

Anne-Lise Head-König, Some thoughts on various facets of the issue of access to the commons and their enjoyment: a European diversity sometimes comparable to the Swiss one?

The article deals with the gradual adjustment of systems of access to collective goods in Switzerland and neighbouring countries, particularly under the impact of demographic pressure. It draws attention to the variations that have affected collective ownership over time. Spatial variations were the result of economic and institutional factors; but they were also due to the rise of private ownership prevailing over collective ownership, which rested on the enforcement of some normative principles. Likewise, the assignment of collective goods and their social and economic roles were a consequence of the diversity of power structures.

Giacomo Bonan, Claudio Lorenzini, Shared mountains, disputed mountains. Collective-use resources in the Eastern Alps (16th–19th centuries)

In the Eastern Italian Alps, for centuries common woodland and pasturelands have been two fundamental resources whose management has involved different actors. The local communities were entitled to the usufruct of these lands. The State – the Republic of Venice, the French and Austrian governments – oversaw the collective management of these lands in order to guarantee long-term supplies for the urban centres or the needs of strategic economic sectors. A third perspective concerns the marketing of the products obtained from these lands and the operators involved in these trades. The paper analyses the relations between these three components, shedding light on central activities of the Alpine economy in the preindustrial period.

Sandro Guzzi-Heeb, Religion, common goods and organisation of space in Alpine corporations, 18th–19th centuries

Since the end of the 18th century, the defence of the «religion of our fathers» has been a recurrent political slogan for alpine corporate communities. It emerged out of struggles against outside intervention and was used as a powerful argument for the maintenance of extended political autonomies. With Catholic religion playing an essential role in the life of local communities, religious infrastructure – including churches, chapels, altars, houses, properties, religious and artistic objects, etc. – has to be seen as an element of the local commons, as a collective good. Hence, it was managed according to the same logic and was subject to similar conflicts as the collective forests, meadows and alpine pastures, although formal property titles remained ambiguous and had to be shared with the Church hierarchy.

François-Xavier Viallon, Karina Liechti, Martin Stuber, Rahel Wunderli, Mediation, incorporation, complementarity. Forms of state access to collective pastures and woods in Switzerland at the end of the 19th century

The creation of the modern State in the 19th century entailed changes in the legal framework of landed property as well as in public policy. The article analyses the connection between the Confederation that was taking shape and the existing forms of corporate collective ownership. More particularly, we investigate the relationship between State actors and corporate actors with regard to managing woodland and pastureland resources. Far from enforcing a simple top-down policy, the State gained a foothold by integrating several levels of administration and other social actors, laying the foundations of a strategy of modernisation on a large scale. Hence, the existing forms of collective organisation remain and hold on to their independence.

Gerhard Siegl, Understanding persistence: the town of Imst as an illustration of rural commons in Tyrol

According to Elinor Ostrom's design principles for long-enduring common pool resource institutions, the user communities of the town of Imst – over half a millennium old – are to be classified as robust. It is nonetheless worth asking how this uninterrupted stability came about, surviving so many political,

economic and social turning points. As an opening thesis I suggest a fragility of rural commons, which in retrospect, given their existing de-facto longevity and robustness, is scarcely perceptible. Besides Ostrom's design principles, additional reasons for the persistence of common pool resource institutions have to be considered. Physiographic, economic and socio-historical explanations may provide us with a more profound understanding of the functioning and persistence of rural commons in Tyrol and Imst respectively.

Elisabeth Johann, The collectively managed forest in the history of the High Tauern, now: 'the High Tauern National Park, Carinthia'

Situated in the National Park, and mostly used as alpine pasture, commons in Upper Carinthia date back to the first mediaeval settlements, when only part of the land was owned by a farm while the rest was shared. On the other hand, commons are also the result of the replacement of old usage rights on manorial land dating back to the 19th century. Legally, today they are both treated in the same way. Participation in the commons brought with it many benefits for each member, as well as a series of obligations that concerned the public good. The result of centuries-long sustainable management is an attractive and diverse cultural and natural landscape with a high tourist potential.

Martin Schaffner, Categories of knowledge. On the history of knowledge in the use of common pool resources in Ursen Valley (Uri, Switzerland)

Based on recent multidisciplinary research in the alpine valley of Ursen, the article deals with the management of the commons, which are the property of the Corporation of Ursen. The study looks at the epistemological potential of an approach that focuses on the knowledge implied in the management of the common pool resources. Having first discussed well-worn concepts such as the 'local knowledge' vs. 'expert or scientific knowledge' opposition, the author uses empirical evidence to argue for a more promising approach, which applies a two-level model. By analogy with Bateson's logical 'categories of learning', the author proposes to distinguish between a primary and a secondary category of knowledge, where the first relates to the everyday management of pastures, the second to the system of land use in the CPR areas of Ursen valley.

Antonio De Rossi, Constructing the Alpine landscape by means of complementary contrast

On the basis of a number of reflections developed in his two volumes on *La costruzione delle Alpi – Immagini e scenari del pittoresco alpino* (1773–1914) and *Il Novecento e il modernismo alpino* (1917–2017), the author investigates the mechanisms that have contributed to defining a specific idea of mountain landscape. In particular, over and above the tradition of the Sublime, the author claims that the Alpine landscape was built out of an original interpretation of the Picturesque, hinging on what we call the complementary contrast device. A device whose long duration and foundational significance may also be captured within 20th-century Alpine modernism, and within the aesthetics of the technological sublime.

Jordan Girardin, The Lemanic Arc, the cradle of Alpine tourism. What digital humanities teach us about the history of travel in the Western Alps (1750–1830)

The region of Lake Geneva played a crucial role in the development of travel networks around the Western Alps during the Enlightenment, and subsequently contributed to the rise of the Alps as a spatial entity recognised across Europe. This article aims to show that Lake Geneva, although not entirely surrounded by Alpine mountains, was perfectly located and equipped to guide travellers into the valleys of the Alps and contribute to the mountains' rising popularity among the Western European elites of the 18th and 19th centuries. The article argues for a new approach, blending quantitative analyses (through statistics and large databases), qualitative ones (through the close reading of textual sources) and digital humanities tools to render these results through data visualisation.

