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The chestnut flour value chain and its role in the valorisation of Alta Versilia

The United Nations proclaimed 2022 as the 'International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development'. Mountains are indeed important centres of biological and cultural diversity; they contain numerous key resources and provide ecosystem services to both up and lowlands (Körner et al. 2005). However, mountain regions are often at risk of unsustainable development that does not protect their natural or social capital (Priece, 2007). The co-evolution between people and the environment in mountain socio-ecological systems seems to demand new thinking and new analytical tools. The European Commission in the Long-term Vision for EU Rural Areas, released in June 2021, mentions the strengthening of value chains to cope with the green and digital transformation of current society (CE 2012). Value chains are powerful toll to analyse the socio-economic dynamics and interaction of human beings with the geomorphological and biophysical factors that characterise a specific territory (Fernandez-Stark and Gereffi 2019). They are useful to see how social and economic processes differ from place to place, how space impacts on these processes and vice versa. With the increasing hurdle of the major environmental and social challenges (e.g., climate change, depopulation, digital divide, etc.), the understanding of the concept of value itself has expanded, shifting from a focus on profit maximisation, to satisfying the needs of different actors (Segerson, Pearce, and Turner 1991; Dushin and Yurak 2019). Therefore, while conventional value chains limit the concept of value to economic profitability, sustainable value chains expand the idea of value to include economic, environmental, and social well-being (Neven 2014).

Introducing the H2020 MOVING (MOuntain Valorisation through INterconnectedness and Green growth) project and its analytical framework starting from Ostrom's Socio-Ecological System (SES) framework (McGinnis and Ostrom 2014), the presentation explores on the concepts of value chain and socio-ecological system. Through the case of the chestnut flour value chain of Alta Versilia (Tuscany, Italy) namely are examinates (i) how mountain value chains can contribute to the valorisation of the territorial capital of mountain areas and (ii) to which extent economic actions are embedded in structures of social relations (Kuchler 2019). Reflecting on the structured interviews collected during the analysis of the chestnut value chain in Alta Versilia, the presentation elaborates on the role of social practices as central elements in the relationship between natural and social systems.

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