

# Tourism and Marginalization in the Alps: The Case of Media-Alta Valtellina Region

Francesca Mazza

Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Politecnico di Milano, Italy

[francesca1.mazza@polimi.it](mailto:francesca1.mazza@polimi.it)

**Abstract:** Tourism and marginalization are broadly considered different trajectories in the Alpine region's development. On the one hand, tourism is one of the main economic drivers in the Alps. However, many areas still depend on a mass tourism economy that produces relevant ecological, sociocultural and economic impacts. At the same time, marginalization identifies those contexts excluded by mass tourism development affected by shrinkage, abandonment and economic decline. Within this framework, the paper points out that these processes often overlap and coexist, producing complex and layered spatial geographies. The Media-Alta Valtellina Region, located in the Lombard Italian Alps, is provided as a case study to investigate the relationship between mass tourism and marginalization through two sets of indicators. Tourism indicators measure the impact of mass tourism development, while territorial capital indicators assess marginalization processes and the potential expressed by environmental, productive, demographic, infrastructural, settlement, and cultural resources. As a result, besides popular mass tourism poles and non-touristic marginalized areas, several mature tourism destinations emerge where marginalization effects and mass tourism issues overlap. Furthermore, territorial capital broadly appears as the intrinsic potential that must be activated and valorized to build new development trajectories. In conclusion, according to the different potentials expressed by territorial capital, the paper provides preliminary suggestions and guidelines for achieving the territorial rebalance between the multiple processes investigated.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Mass tourism, Marginalization, Territorial capital, Rebalance

---

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Marginalization in the Alps

Since the end of the XIX century, the alpine region has been affected by increasingly extensive marginalization. This process results from widespread socio-economic changes that have confined non-central areas to the margin, contributing to the definition of uneven socio-spatial development (Kühn, 2014). Thus, marginalization expresses an overall condition of economic, social, and territorial underdevelopment that occurs mainly in rural contexts and is commonly associated with the empowerment and polarization of central urban areas (Viesti, 2021).

The marginalization in the Alpine region results from the combination of socio-economic changes referred to the modernization process that began at the end of the XIX century and consolidated in the middle of the XX century, producing the collapse of the traditional Alpine world (Bätzing, 2005). Marginalization in the Alps involves multiple manifestations. These can be considered attributes of marginality, generally spread within marginal areas (Pelc, 2017).

The primary manifestation regards the population decrease, often combined with out-migration processes. Bätzing (2005) analyzes alpine municipalities' demographic trends from 1870 to 2000. A very heterogeneous framework emerges, highlighting the territorial contradictions produced by modernization. Specifically, constant population growth concentrates within easily accessible mountain valleys, localized tourist poles, and areas close to urban centers. On the other hand, rural alpine regions have experienced a constant population decrease.

Consequently, depopulation and out-migration contribute to relevant aging processes associated with changes in the population structure (Dematteis, Ferlino, Rota, 2019). From the economic standpoint, the previous manifestations combine with the decline of economic activities, including agriculture, retail and productive sectors (Cerea & Marcantoni, 2016). This process produces a decrease in employment and a lack of jobs. Besides economic activities, the quantitative and qualitative reduction of public services and their relocation to urban areas is another significant effect of marginalization, directly preventing access for the local population. All these manifestations contribute to the weakening of the economic base, measurable in the relatively low incomes compared with other territorial contexts. From a sociocultural perspective, the marginalization has often implied the progressive disappearance and loss of local cultural identities and the degradation of cultural heritage.

In a nutshell, marginalization is a widespread process within mountain areas. However, over time it has combined with different phenomena that required further investigation to understand the complexity of the development trajectories of the Alps over the last century.

## 1.2 The Rise of Mass Tourism in the Alps

In line with the global phenomenon, mass tourism in the Alps occurred in the postwar period, also known as the tourism golden age (Bätzing, 2005). The significant increase in tourism flows in the Alpine Region, both in the summer and winter seasons follows the widespread socio-economic changes broadly involving developed countries, including economic growth, the introduction of paid holidays, the development of leisure time, and the spread of new models of consumption and lifestyles (Battilani, 2008). These factors have combined with some specific issues of the alpine context, including the explosion of ski practice, the high specialization and competitiveness of sports activities, and the following interest in international alpine sports events. Moreover, the motorization processes have improved the accessibility to mountain valleys, further supporting the massification of tourism (Mocarelli, 2018).

As a result, the mass tourism boom has contributed to the unprecedented transformation of the alpine landscape and socio-economic structure, resulting in ecological, sociocultural, and economic impacts. Concerning the ecologic dimension, Bätzing (2005) identifies both direct and indirect effects triggered by alpine tourism development. First, the loss of biodiversity and the alteration of the water regime are commonly associated with land transformation for tourism purposes. The most relevant impacts regard the erosion of natural capital for the construction of ski slopes and glacier pollution (Bätzing, 1987). Furthermore, the increasing use of artificial snowmaking poses significant environmental externalities mainly related to energy and water consumption and additives (Steiger & Scott, 2020). On the other hand, tourism development indirectly accelerates urban expansion and land consumption connected to tourist infrastructures, including leisure and entertainment equipment, accommodation, and second homes. Finally, air and acoustic pollution are broadly associated with car traffic due to the growth of tourist flows.

Despite the economic growth in revenues and employment, mass tourism development's economic and sociocultural impacts are much more relevant and strongly intertwined. From the economic viewpoint, tourist infrastructure construction for winter and summer practices has required large-scale external investments provided by extra-regional financial companies since the local resources would have been insufficient (Perlik, 2019). The high costs of realizing and maintaining those infrastructures have produced a significant dependence of tourist destinations on exogenous capitals. Moreover, the current stagnation of the traditional tourism sector in the Alps has further increased the need for public financial subsidies (Bätzing, 2005). The massive investments in tourism attractiveness and the growing tourist demand have produced a widespread increase in land prices and rents. As a result, mass tourism development has favored an economic model based on high specialization and mono-functionality, often replacing the other local economic sectors.

The economic asset of tourism has also affected the sociocultural structure of alpine regions. The role of international companies, the globalization of tourism destinations, and the extra-regional tourist flows have produced conflicts with the resident population, enforcing the decisional power of the tourism sector elite. At the same time, replacing preexisting economic activities has further contributed to the loss of local identity and culture, leading to the "cultural migration" of local inhabitants (Zanzi, 2018). In addition, those groups unable to adapt have started to move away for unsustainable land and rent prices. Furthermore, the rise of the international tourism industry has contributed to the reduction of cultural assets into folkloristic representations serving tourism promotion and marketing (Minca, 1996).

## 1.3 The Relation Between Tourism and Marginalization

Mass tourism development and marginalization are identified as different but connected trajectories in the evolution and transformation of the Alpine region. Thus, they required to be investigated as complementary and interrelated phenomena (Varotto 2021). First, mass tourism rises as a response to existing marginalization processes in the Alps (De Rossi, 2016). The underdevelopment of mountain areas affected by marginalization has triggered their exploitation for tourism purposes according to modern urban lifestyles and new ways of consumption. Such assumption is supported by the dependency theory in which tourism is seen as reinforcing a development mode in peripheral areas (mountain regions) that increases dependency on developed ones (cities) and that exacerbates structural inequalities between core and peripheries (Britton, 1981; Chaperon et al, 2012). This dependency, based on the colonization of mountains by cultural and economic urban models has further enhanced the dichotomy between them (Mambretti, 2021). As a result, the narrative of the mountain as a periphery combines with the modern idea of pleasure, consumption, and entertainment in tourism activities, becoming a "pleasure periphery" (Brown & Hall, 2000). Consequently, the projection of urban cultural models on mountain regions mainly based on the rural economy has contributed to the tourism de-territorialization

meaning the replacement and cancellation of local identity and culture (Raffestin, 1986). From this perspective, tourism development often contributes to sociocultural marginalization (Zanzi, 2018).

Once established in a territorial system, mass tourism develops by concentrating on space and creating mass tourism poles that tend to attract and polarize (Williams & Shaw 1995). The definition of "tourist nodes" (Urry, 1990) or "tourist enclaves" (Saarinen & Wall-Reinius, 2021) translates to the Alps in the construction of "winter resorts" or "resort towns" (Perlik, 2019) where tourists' infrastructures are spatially delimited. As a result, this concentration has created spatial gaps with the surrounding marginalized areas. Sega (2021) has broadly identified such a process within the alpine territory polarization phenomenon that is still characterizing the current territorial development. Only the most accessible and dynamic mountain contexts grow and densify, increasing the conflict between the abandonment of marginalized areas and the intensive exploitation and densification of some privileged areas. This process is visible in the two images of the "golden mountain" and the "marginal mountain" (Corrado, 2020). The former emerges as a territory devoted to tourism monoculture, driven by economic growth, with a good presence of local services, while the second identifies the marginal and weak areas.

In a nutshell, the connection between mass tourism and marginalization processes is straightforward in the Alps. Although this relationship requires further investigation in specific alpine regions to catch its multiple features, a universal trajectory emerges. These contexts require a transition towards more sustainable development models that involve closer marginal areas contributing to their regeneration (Bourdeau, 2021). This transformation is crucial to ensure the territorial rebalance between the golden and the marginal mountains (Corigliano, Viganò, Mottironi, 2015).

In this framework, territorial capital is explored as a potential solution to trigger the transition of the still dominant mass tourism forms in combination with the definition of new development trajectories for marginal areas.

#### **1.4 A Shifting Approach to Marginalization: The Potential of Territorial Capital**

In the last twenty years, a shifting approach to marginalization has emerged. Mountains have risen as potential nodes beside cities due to the increasing interest in territorial cohesion and sustainable development (Crescimanno, Ferlino, Rota, 2010). In this framework, mountain marginal contexts were no longer conceived as residual spaces, underdeveloped and left behind by metropolitan areas. The current trend in avoiding the traditional consideration of mountains as peripheries has combined with a growing awareness of the mountains as a new centrality. This centrality reveals in the presence of territorial resources essential to ensure further development trajectories within mountain marginal areas (Dissart, 2012). Therefore, the attribute of marginality started to assume a more positive connotation, sustained by its intrinsic territorial potential. Thus, marginality can turn into a competitive advantage (Corrado, 2020).

According to this perspective, the territorial capital intended as a set of localized assets represents the competitive potential of a territory (Camagni, 2009). Indeed, those multiple endowments could be capitalized to trigger local development (Lella & Rota, 2021).

Camagni (2009) identifies different categories to explain the complex interrelations within the concept of territorial capital. The natural, settlement, and infrastructural are the first material components of the territorial capital, while the human, relational, productive, and cognitive ones represent their intangible dimensions. These last are considered the most relevant since they support the material component's activation. Indeed, they represent those territorial capabilities (i.e., collective actions and structure of living together) required to build a local development project (Dissart, 2012).

In a nutshell, territorial capital is proposed to re-interpret marginality in a positive understanding highlighting its potential in addressing the risks produced by marginalization effects and mass tourism impacts. In this perspective, the recognition and valorization of territorial capital are crucial to envisioning new development models for those contexts characterized by the coexistence between marginalization and mass tourism.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 A Case-Study Research**

The Media-Alta Valtellina region (MAV), located in the Lombard Italian Alps (Figure 1), is selected as a case study in the Alpine context due to the relevance of the issues related to winter sports mass tourism and marginalization dynamics. Furthermore, it shows the persistence of valuable territorial capital, including natural

and landscape features and many historical, artistic, and architectural elements (PTRA, 2019). The case study of the MAV region is provided to investigate the relationship between mass tourism and marginalization processes and assess the territorial capital to offer possible solutions for their rebalance. Two sets of indicators are defined to measure this relation: tourism and territorial capital indicators.

The six tourism indicators measure the phenomenon of mass tourism and its ecological, economic and sociocultural impacts on the region. The twenty-six territorial capital indicators assess the multiple processes of marginalization and

the potential involved in its territorial capital (Table 2,3). Therefore, using territorial capital indicators as a whole category reflects the theoretical approach based on a more complex idea of marginalization, including both the negative processes and potential territorial endowments. Specifically, negative processes related to marginalization are assessed by those ten indicators measuring depopulation, ageing, economic decline and lack of accessibility from main services centres (indicators marked with \* in table 2,3). Meanwhile, all 26 indicators evaluate the territorial potential in the human, infrastructural and services, settlement and cultural, environmental and productive dimensions (see section 3.1).

The selection of the two sets of indicators is supported by scientific reports on tourism and marginalization issues concerning mountain regions. However, the set of proposed indicators is a first selection that requires to be further expanded with the research's development. This gap concerns the non-tangible component of the territorial capital, which is not yet addressed in the article. Human, cognitive and relational capital, including stakeholders' networks, governance systems, and current local initiatives, must be evaluated to give a complete overview of the propensity of a local context to develop.



**Figure 1: Localization of the MAV Region. Source: Author's Elaboration**

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Mass Tourism, Marginalization and Territorial Capital Geographies in the MAV Region

The two sets of indicators highlight the spatial distribution of mass tourism and marginalization processes within the MAV Region.

First, tourism indicators show the distribution of mass tourism processes within the MAV Region municipalities (Table 1). The tourism intensity indicator identifies the concentration of tourist flows on the share of inhabitants (Alpine Convention, 2021). The most relevant mass tourism processes result in Livigno, Bormio, Valfurva and Aprica municipalities, where the indicator of tourism intensity further exceeds the highest value recorded in the Alps (<https://www.atlas.alpconv.org>). Consequently, those contexts show a significant concentration of mass tourism impacts.

Table 1: Tourism Indicators. Source: Author's Elaboration

MAV Municipalities	Tourism intensity	Percentage of tourism local units	Real estate market price	Urbanized areas variation (for tourism use)	Percentage of non occupied dwellings	Number of vacation homes (no business management)
	2019 n/ab	2020 %	2022 euro/mq	1954-2018 %	2011 %	2022 n.
APRICA	7023,9	46,2	2350,0	64,2	84,6	57,0
BIANZONE	79,7	32,5	1200,0	<1	75,2	1,0
BORMIO	12020,6	36,8	4800,0	20,3	68,4	123,0
GROSIO	295,4	12,1	1250,0	<1	46,1	15,0
GROSOTTO	*	7,4	1200,0	<1	59,9	7,0
LIVIGNO	20033,3	50,3	5200,0	76,8	63,3	956,0
LOVERO	*	6,2	1100,0	<1	37,3	7,0
MAZZO DI VALTELLINA	*	4,5	900,0	<1	53,5	11,0
SERNIO	1153,9	33,1	900,0	<1	41,6	1,0
SONDALO	320,8	12,6	1450,0	<1	37,5	6,0
TEGLIO	602,0	25,1	1500,0	<1	59,0	23,0
TIRANO	956,5	22,4	1600,0	<1	28,6	64,0
TOVO DI SANT'AGATA	*	8,1	1150,0	<1	44,5	2,0
VALDIDENTRO	4071,8	35,4	2700,0	30,9	65,9	93,0
VALDISOTTO	2405,8	18,6	2700,0	58,8	64,7	95,0
VALFURVA	7440,3	40,8	2300,0	64,7	66,7	50,0
VERVIO	*	0,0	1100,0	<1	63,7	2,0
VILLA DI TIRANO	284,7	12,2	1250,0	<1	51,9	9,0
MAV REGION	4756,5	22,2	/	39,7	58,7	1522,0
SONDRIO PROVINCE	1678,7	10,5	/	18,8	49,7	1879,0
Data source	Istat- Istituto Nazionale di Statistica	Istat- Istituto Nazionale di Statistica	Osservatorio del Mercato immobiliare	Geoportale Lombardia	Istat- Istituto Nazionale di Statistica	PoliS - Istituto regionale per il supporto alle politiche della Lombardia

\*data not available for statistical issues

Lower values of the tourism intensity indicator, but still within the medium-high threshold, are identified in Valdidentro and Valdisotto municipalities, associated with less significant impacts.

In a nutshell, the geographies of mass tourism processes are mainly recognizable in the Upper part of the MAV Region with different hierarchies: Livigno, Bormio, and Valfurva municipalities emerge as attractive tourist nodes, while Valdidentro and Valdisotto, located in between, result as transition areas, functional to the previous but less tourism-oriented and specialized.

Regarding the other twelve municipalities, tourism indicators show a relatively homogeneous trend: although the low relevance of mass tourism, those contexts are identified as areas with a tourism vocation generally associated with traditional mountain assets (e.g., cultural and landscape values). (<https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/247191>)

Although mass tourism development and marginalization in the Alps are commonly investigated as opposite and contrasting development trajectories, the research highlights their relation. Indeed, tourism development and marginalization often overlap and get in touch more complexly. The assessment of territorial capital indicators for the mass tourism destinations in the MAV Regions shows a clear connection between the two processes (Table 2, 3).

A first evaluation regards the relation between mass tourism destinations and socio-economic marginality. In this direction, two different trends emerge: Livigno and Bormio municipalities show constant growth in demographic and economic dimensions, while the other four mass tourism destinations experience several marginalization processes. Regarding the latter trend, Valfurva and Aprica municipalities, historically characterized by population increase, in the last twenty years, have begun to experience a relevant depopulation process associated with changes in the population structure. This trend combines with the loss of local units and workers measured over the last ten years, especially in small retail. Valdidentro and Valdisotto municipalities, although long-term stationary demographic trends, experience a less relevant reduction of workers and retail businesses.

Table 2: Territorial Capital Indicators. Source: Author's Elaboration

Mav Municipalities	Demographic capital				Infrastructural and service capital		Settlement and cultural capital			
	Ageing index*	Population variation*	Population variation*	Percentage of under60 population*	SNAI indicator*	Percentage of ADSL cover	Number of cultural assets	Percentage of residential buildings built before 1946	Number of museums	Surface of historical settlements
	2021	1951-2021	2001-2021	2021	2020	2018	2020	2011	2019	2022
	%	%	%	%	/	%	n.	%	n.	ha
APRICA (T)	187,6	16,0	-6,3	68,8	D	99,6	2,0	10,0	0,0	3,4
BIANZONE	187,3	-16,1	4,8	66,6	C	100,0	6,0	35,0	0,0	3,9
BORMIO (T)	198,5	49,7	0,1	67,4	F	94,6	73,0	22,0	3,0	19,1
GROSIO	217,5	-1,5	-8,1	65,9	E	40,9	13,0	27,0	2,0	14,5
GROSOTTO	191,4	-28,2	-2,8	67,7	E	38,3	7,0	63,0	0,0	1,1
LIVIGNO (T)	44,3	296,0	34,1	86,2	F	81,5	3,0	12,0	1,0	2,2
LOVERO	164,8	-24,7	-1,1	68,9	E	100,0	6,0	24,0	0,0	3,6
MAZZO DI VALTELLINA	169,8	-2,9	-1,8	70,5	E	99,6	11,0	42,0	0,0	7,6
SERNIO	159,4	-13,7	8,9	71,7	D	99,2	4,0	41,0	0,0	4,3
SONDALO	257,2	-16,9	-11,2	65,8	E	28,5	12,0	42,0	1,0	15,1
TEGLIO	242,9	-24,4	-7,5	65,1	C	52,1	22,0	30,0	1,0	62,1
TIRANO	213,6	25,3	-2,3	67,4	D	92,4	30,0	20,0	1,0	54,6
TOVO DI SANT'AGATA	170,6	62,0	12,2	71,1	E	100,0	3,0	24,0	0,0	3,6
VALDIDENTRO (T)	120,7	49,2	6,4	73,0	F	27,3	12,0	19,0	0,0	6,9
VALDISOTTO (T)	124,6	34,1	12,6	74,2	E	89,8	13,0	26,0	0,0	6,6
VALFURVA (T)	190,5	18,1	-8,3	68,2	F	22,3	6,0	34,0	1,0	5,6
VERVIO	185,7	-75,0	-12,1	65,2	E	100,0	0,0	80,0	0,0	1,1
VILLA DI TIRANO	191,0	-11,1	-0,9	68,4	D	96,5	12,0	43,0	0,0	4,9
MAV REGION	167,2	0,1	0,0	0,7	E	75,7	236,0	0,3	10,0	220,1
SONDRIO PROVINCE	181,4	0,2	0,0	0,7	D	<i>no data</i>	532,0	0,3	21,0	992,0
Data source	Istat- Istituto Nazionale di Statistica	Istat- Istituto Nazionale di Statistica	Istat- Istituto Nazionale di Statistica	Istat- Istituto Nazionale di Statistica	Agenzia per la Coesione Territoriale	PTRA Media- Alta Valtellina	Geoportale Lombardia	Istat- Istituto Nazionale di Statistica	Istat- Istituto Nazionale di Statistica	Geoportale Lombardia

(T) municipalities with mass tourism dynamics

Table 3: Territorial Capital Indicators. Source: Author's Elaboration

MAV Municipalities	Productive capital							Environmental capital						
	Local units variation*	Local units workers variation*	Small retail stores variation*	Number of IGP/DOP producers	Income per-capita*	Number of agricultural firms	Number of agritourism farms	Percentage of reforestation areas on agricultural land*	Percentage of protected areas	Number of geositi	Percentage of cultivated agricultural areas	Percentage of alpine huts surface	Percentage of paesaggi del silenzio	
	2011-2018	2011-2018	2011-2018	2017	2019	2010	2019	1999-2018	2022	2020	2018	2018	2018	
	%	%	%	n.	euro	n.	n.	%	%	n.	%	%	%	
APRICA (T)	-4,9	-0,6	-0,2	0,0	17902,0	12,0	2,0	18,3	75,5	0,0	0,0	37,8	43,4	
BIANZONE	-16,5	5,1	-0,2	31,0	16174,0	75,0	2,0	0,2	0,0	3,0	71,3	53,1	0,0	
BORMIO (T)	2,7	4,8	0,2	17,0	20653,0	76,0	5,0	0,1	86,8	1,0	0,0	59,3	61,2	
GROSIO	-7,5	-11,0	-0,1	9,0	17094,0	175,0	3,0	0,4	0,0	0,0	0,0	42,2	83,0	
GROSOTTO	-2,9	-7,9	-0,1	5,0	19903,0	56,0	0,0	28,3	0,0	2,0	6,1	34,4	70,8	
LIVIGNO (T)	9,8	9,4	0,2	25,0	21650,0	111,0	0,0	1,5	62,4	2,0	0,0	7,3	40,8	
LOVERO	-1,9	0,9	0,1	30,0	18413,0	39,0	0,0	2,4	0,0	1,0	50,6	64,2	0,0	
MAZZO DI VALTELLINA	-1,6	-4,8	0,3	10,0	18157,0	27,0	1,0	0,7	0,0	1,0	14,3	6,1	1,3	
SERNIO	-14,3	-30,4	-1,0	32,0	17855,0	57,0	0,0	52,9	9,5	0,0	76,1	0,0	0,0	
SONDALO	-14,8	3,5	-0,2	2,0	18558,0	117,0	0,0	0,0	57,4	3,0	0,0	37,5	40,2	
TEGLIO	-5,1	-0,5	-0,1	28,0	17157,0	298,0	5,0	56,7	58,6	0,0	45,7	53,1	32,8	
TIRANO	-1,2	3,2	0,0	67,0	19731,0	212,0	1,0	16,0	40,0	0,0	52,7	0,0	11,8	
TOVO DI SANT'AGATA	-4,1	44,1	0,0	14,0	18568,0	26,0	1,0	170,4	0,0	0,0	26,2	54,8	0,0	
VALDIDENTRO (T)	5,3	-12,6	-0,1	5,0	17645,0	51,0	5,0	0,0	77,1	0,0	0,0	36,2	66,4	
VALDISOTTO (T)	2,0	5,4	0,4	3,0	18320,0	103,0	1,0	23,2	25,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,6	
VALFURVA (T)	0,9	-0,8	0,0	8,0	16165,0	74,0	3,0	0,2	97,4	2,0	0,0	0,0	30,8	
VERVIO	50,0	5,3	0,0	0,0	18298,0	17,0	0,0	0,3	0,0	0,0	15,1	40,5	3,0	
VILLA DI TIRANO	-5,5	5,8	-0,2	55,0	17030,0	173,0	5,0	118,5	18,4	0,0	47,2	15,0	30,0	
MAV REGION	0,0	0,0	0,1	341,0	18292,9	1699,0	34,0	0,1	0,5	15,0	0,3	0,3	0,4	
SONDRIO PROVINCE	0,0	0,0	0,0	581,0	19176,3	4430,0	113,0	0,1	29,4	42,0	0,2	0,3	no data	
Data source	Istat- Istituto Nazionale di Statistica	Istat- Istituto Nazionale di Statistica	Istat- Istituto Nazionale di Statistica	Istat- Istituto Nazionale di Statistica	ASR Lombardia	Istat- Istituto Nazionale di Statistica	Istat- Istituto Nazionale di Statistica	Geoportale Lombardia	Geoportale Lombardia	Geoportale Lombardia	Geoportale Lombardia	Geoportale Lombardia	Geoportale Lombardia	

(T) municipalities with mass tourism dynamics

The most critical trends regarding mass tourism contexts result in crowded tourist destinations, which rely predominantly on the tourism sector. However, they are also scarcely diversified in tourist supply, focused mainly on winter sports (Aprica, Valfurva). This process shows that tourism development only sometimes ensures the general well-being of the local population in the long run. This assumption challenges the role of tourism as a solution for contrasting marginalization processes in the past when mass tourism developed as a response to population loss and abandonment and recently in the common idea of tourism as a "panacea" (Darmento et al, 2020).

A second evaluation involves all mass tourist destinations and regards the geographical side of marginalization processes. The National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI) indicator, which measures the level of marginality according to the distance of each municipality from the main services supply centres, shows that tourist destinations are in a very peripheral position (<https://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/strategia-nazionale-aree-interne>). Consequently, their peripherality is associated with the highest distance from the main public services centres. Their geographic marginality raises the issue of car traffic during the high-season periods when many tourists' flows concentrate on mass tourist destinations. At the same time, the distance from public service centres requires an adequate level of public services for tourists and the local population. Therefore, a further evaluation is necessary to investigate the relationship between tourists and inhabitants' services.

Furthermore, data show a low concentration of cultural assets and historical settlements within mass tourist destinations, except Bormio, especially if compared with other municipalities of the MAV Region. Livigno and Aprica record the lowest settlement and cultural capital values in the whole region. A possible explanation is that tourism development has produced the built-up expansion outside the original settlements and the transformation of historical buildings to host tourism functions.

Despite the significant built-up expansion in mass tourist destinations, they present the highest values of environmental capital referred to protected areas in the MAV region. Consequently, these areas' environmental and landscape quality are central to limiting further tourist infrastructure expansion. At the same time, it is considered a potential resource to be valorized and activated through new sustainable forms of tourism.

Besides mass tourism destinations, the other twelve municipalities of the MAV Region show much more significant marginalization processes, except Tirano. Even with relevant variations, all these municipalities experience depopulation processes, loss of local units and workers, decrease in small retail stores, and abandonment of agricultural surfaces.

Specifically, the most critical contexts are Grosio, Grosotto, Sondalo, Teglio and Villa di Tirano, with negative trends both in demographic and productive dynamics, especially if compared to the close mass tourism destinations. A long-term decrease in inhabitants followed by an above-average ageing process is associated with a relevant reduction in local units and small retail stores. In addition, these municipalities emerge for the highest values of agricultural land reforestation. The combination of such processes shows how marginalization is a complex, multidimensional and multicausal phenomenon. The other municipalities show more diversified trends. Specifically, Lovero, Mazzo di Valtellina and Vervio are characterized only by a constant population decrease since 1951 with stationary and positive trends concerning economic and productive dynamics. On the other hand, Bianzone and Sernio, even if historically characterized by depopulation processes as the other marginalized municipalities, show in the recent period (2001-2011) a general increase in the number of inhabitants. Nevertheless, despite this light recovery, quite relevant losses in the economic and productive sectors are recorded.

The evaluation of the potential related to territorial capital points out a very heterogeneous framework over marginalized contexts. Specifically, three main different trends emerge.

First, at the more general level, marginalized municipalities show consistent settlement and cultural capital, especially if compared to mass tourism destinations. This peculiar condition reflects the potential of marginalization. In most cases, out-migration and abandonment have prevented the radical transformation of the ancient settlements by conserving the traditional and original structure. However, the state of conservation of the buildings should be evaluated to measure the level of decay. Thus, such a fragile built-up heritage must be protected and valorized.

More specifically, the other two trends highlight the different potentials of marginalized contexts related to environmental and productive capital. The southern part of the MAV Region shows a prevalent agricultural vocation. Villa di Tirano, Teglio, Bianzone, Lovero, and Sernio municipalities show considerable cultivated land (vineyards, apple and fruit trees). Moreover, most of them present the highest percentage of alpine huts



surfaces. The agriculture potential for the first three municipalities combines with a consistent concentration of agricultural firms, the number of IGP-DOP producers and agritourism farms. On the other hand, Lovero and Sernio show a slightly weaker productive structure.

The third trend regards the environmental and naturalistic vocation of the middle municipalities of the MAV Region, including mainly Grosio, Grosotto and Sondalo. Although the highest percentage of protected areas concentrates within mass tourist destinations, Sondalo municipality reveals a consistent number of protected areas with the highest number of *geositi* in the region. Furthermore, Sondalo, Grosio, and Grosotto municipalities show the highest concentration of *paesaggi del silenzio*, recognized at the regional level as those valleys with a low degree of anthropization and high landscape and environmental quality (PTR, 2019).

## 4. Conclusions

### 4.1 Perspectives for the Territorial Rebalance

The research found that tourism and marginalization often overlap and combine within the Alpine region, producing complex and heterogeneous spatial geographies. The assessment of indicators highlights the multiple risks of mass tourism impacts and marginalization but also the opportunities expressed by the territorial capital for local development and territorial rebalance.

In conclusion, the paper provides preliminary recommendations for achieving the territorial rebalance between those multiple processes. However, the following suggestions could be replicable in similar contexts affected by the same conditions. With this purpose, three clusters summarise the primary research outcomes.

The first cluster includes mass tourism poles with positive demographic and economic trends (e.g., Livigno, Bormio). The main issue regards environmental impact mitigation, especially considering climate change crises (Steiger et al, 2019). Potential measures should control tourist flows, limit the access of tourists within the most fragile context, improve efficient public transportation and slow mobility, and prevent the expansion of tourist infrastructure and land consumption. Specifically for winter mass tourism destinations, technological measures to face climate change, including artificial snowmaking, should be gradually limited due to environmental damage and high production costs (Steiger & Scott, 2020). Another important issue concerns a specific aspect of the economic dimension affecting local society. In this sense, a better balance between the costs and income of the local population should be ensured (Alpine Convention, 2021).

The second cluster includes mature mass tourism destinations, where the impact of mass tourism development coexists with marginalization processes (e.g., Aprica, Valfurva). These are the most critical contexts since they require the combination of impact mitigation measures and climate change adaptation strategies with actions to counteract the ongoing marginalization. Indeed, in those contexts where tourism historically developed, the contraction of traditional mass tourism must turn into an overall transition towards more sustainable forms of tourism integrated within the local socio-economic tissue (Salvatore, Chiodo, Fantini, 2018). It is what Bourdeau (2009) defines as the shift from the industrial tourism model to the cultural and territorial one, based on the activation of territorial resources, identity and culture, and the integration with economic activities and services. In this transition process, the potential of territorial capital is straightforward (Dissart, 2012). For instance, in the case of the MAV Region, the environmental and landscape quality of mass tourism destinations play a crucial role in activating new development trajectories based on the integration between tourism (e.g., geotourism, scientific tourism), environmental valorization and forms of education.

The last cluster involves those contexts characterized by marginalization processes often in spatial proximity to mass tourism destinations (e.g., Sondalo, Teglio, Grosio, Grosotto). An integrated approach based on the regeneration of the territorial capital to create new economic activities and services is required to ensure their resettlement and liveability. With this purpose, the diverse vocations of marginalized areas expressed by territorial capital must be recognized, mobilized, and activated. Regarding the MAV region, the southern municipalities emerge for the productive and environmental potential related to agriculture and food production, while the northern marginalized areas rise for their naturalistic vocation. Finally, they all show significant potential for settlement and cultural capital.

## References

- Alpine Convention (2021) "Misurazione della sostenibilità turistica delle destinazioni di montagna nelle Alpi", [online], [https://www.alpconv.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Topics/Measuring\\_tourism\\_sustainability\\_of\\_mountain\\_destinations\\_in\\_the\\_Alps\\_2021\\_it.pdf](https://www.alpconv.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Topics/Measuring_tourism_sustainability_of_mountain_destinations_in_the_Alps_2021_it.pdf)
- Bartaletti, F. (2011) *Le Alpi. Geografia e cultura di una regione nel cuore dell'Europa*, Franco Angeli, Milano.



- Battilani, P. (2008) *Vacanze di pochi, vacanze di tutti. L'evoluzione del turismo europeo*, il Mulino, Bologna.
- Batzing, W. (1987) *L'ambiente alpino. Trasformazione, distruzione, conservazione*, Melograno Edizioni, Milano.
- Batzing, W. (2005) *Le Alpi: una regione unica al centro dell'Europa*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino.
- Bourdeau, P. (2009) "From après-ski to après-tourism: the Alps in transition?", *Journal of Alpine Research, Revue de Géographie Alpine*, Vol.97, No. 3, pp. 1-11.
- Bourdeau, P. (2021) "Dilemmes de transition. Les destinations françaises de sports d'hiver entre agir créatif, inerties et maladaptation"[online], *Geocarrefour*, <http://journals.openedition.org/geocarrefour/18943>
- Britton, S. (1981) *Tourism, dependency and development: A mode of analysis*, The Australian National University, Canberra.
- Brown, F. and Hall, D. (2000) *Tourism in peripheral areas: case studies*, Channel View, Clevedon.
- Camagni, R. (2009) "Per un concetto di capitale territoriale", in Borri, D. and Ferlaino, F. (eds), *Crescita e sviluppo regionale: strumenti, sistemi, azioni*, Franco Angeli, Milano, pp. 66-90.
- Cerea, G. and Marcantoni, M. (2016) *La montagna perduta. Come la pianura ha condizionato lo sviluppo italiano*, Franco Angeli, Milano.
- Chaperon, C. and Bramwell, B. (2013) "Dependency and Agency in peripheral tourism development", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 40, pp. 132-154.
- Corrado, F. (2020) "Le fragilità della montagna. Tra micro (innov)azioni e grandi eventi," *Economia e società regionale*, FrancoAngeli Editore, Vol. 0(3), pp. 29-38.
- Corigliano, M.A., Viganò, G., Mottironi, C. (2015) "Tourism in the Alps: governing sustainability", [online], Ministero dell'Ambiente, [https://www.mite.gov.it/sites/default/files/archivio/allegati/convenzionealpi/16\\_06\\_2016/pubblicazione/Turismo\\_Sost\\_270516B.pdf](https://www.mite.gov.it/sites/default/files/archivio/allegati/convenzionealpi/16_06_2016/pubblicazione/Turismo_Sost_270516B.pdf)
- Crescimanno, A., Ferlaino, F., Rota, F. (2010) "Lo sviluppo delle Terre Alte tra marginalità e sostenibilità: evidenze dal Piemonte", *Archivio di Studi Urbani e Regionali*, No. 97-98, pp. 237-260.
- Darmento, S., Dezio, C., Kercuku, A., Moscarelli, R., Pessina, G., Silva, B. (2020) *Inner areas in Italy. A testbed for interpreting and designing marginal territories*, List, Barcellona.
- Dematteis, G., Ferlaino, F., Rota, F.S. (2019) *Le montagne del Piemonte*, Dislivelli - IRES Piemonte, Torino.
- De Rossi, A. (2016) *La costruzione delle Alpi. Il novecento e il modernismo alpino (1917-2017)*, Donzelli, Roma.
- Dissart, J.C. (2012) "Co-construction des capacités et des ressources territoriales dans les territoires touristiques de montagne", *Étude de cas sur l'Oisans*, [online], *Journal of Alpine Research, Revue de géographie alpine*, Vol. 100 No. 2, pp. 1-11
- Lella, L. and Rota, F.S (2021) "Le montagne italiane tra dinamicità e marginalità. La ripartizione del Piemonte in montagna interna, montagna integrata e distretti turistici", *Scienze del Territorio*, Vol.9, pp. 90-101
- Machiavelli, A. (2009) "Alpine tourism. Development contradictions and conditions for innovation", *Journal of Alpine Research, Revue de Géographie Alpine*, Vol. 97, No. 1, pp. 99-111
- Minca, C. (1996) *Spazi effimeri. Geografia e turismo moderno e postmoderno*, CEDAM, Padova.
- Mambretti, A. (2021) "Le popolazioni metromontane: relazioni, biografie, bisogni", in Barbera, F. and De Rossi, A. (eds), *Metromontagna. Un progetto per riabitare l'Italia*, Donzelli Editore, Roma, pp. 173-200
- Mocarelli, L. (2018) "Un ribaltamento di fortune. Il turismo invernale nelle Alpi italiane del secondo dopoguerra", in Del Curto, D. and Menini, G. (eds), *Gli insediamenti tradizionali delle Alpi. Conservazione e riuso*, Mimesis, Milano, pp. 20-35
- Pelc, S. (2017) "Marginality and Marginalization", in Chand, R., Nel, E., Pelc, S. (eds), *Societies, Social Inequalities and Marginalization. Marginal Regions in the 21st century*, Springer, Cham, pp. 13-28.
- Perlik, M. (2019) *The Spatial and Economic Transformation of Mountain Regions*, Routledge, Oxon and New York.
- Raffestin, C. (1986) "Nature et culture du lieu touristique", *Méditerranée*, Vol.3, pp. 11-17.
- Regione Lombardia (2019), *Piano Territoriale Regionale d'Area Media Alta Valtellina (PTRA)*, Documento di Piano.
- Saarinen, J. and Wall-Reinius, S. (2021) *Tourism Enclaves, Geographies of Exclusive Spaces in Tourism*, Routledge, London
- Salvatore, R., Chiodo, E., Fantini, A. (2018) "Tourism transition in peripheral rural areas: Theories, issues and strategies", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 68, pp. 41-56
- Sega, R. (2021) "Verso un territorio alpino-metropolitano", in Corrado, F. (eds), *Urbano Montano. Verso nuove configurazioni e progetti di territorio*, Franco Angeli Urbanistica, Milano, pp. 125-142
- Steiger, R., Scott, D., Abegg, B., Pons, M., Aall, C. (2019) "A critical review of climate change risk for ski tourism", *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 22, No. 11, pp. 1343-1379
- Steiger, R. and Scott, D. (2020) "Ski tourism in a warmer world: Increased adaptation and regional economic impacts in Austria", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 77, pp. 1-10.
- Urry, J. (1990) *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, SAGE, New York
- Varotto, M. (2021) "Oltre gli immaginari dicotomici: spazi di relazione e inversione dello sguardo", in Barbera, F. and De Rossi, A. (eds), *Metromontagna. Un progetto per riabitare l'Italia*, Donzelli Editore, Roma, pp. 201-219.
- Viesti, G. (2021) *Centri e periferie. Europa, Italia, Mezzogiorno dal XX al XXI secolo*, Laterza, Roma.
- Williams, A. and Shaw, G. (1995) "Tourism and Regional development: polarization and new forms of production in the United Kingdom", *Journal of Economic and Human Geography*, Vol.86, No. 1 pp. 50-63
- Zanzi, L. (2018) *Opus Montanum. Il popolo delle Alpi: una sorte ambientale comune a diverse culture*, Il Mulino, Bologna