

Submitted Abstract

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Abstract

Climate change, combined with socio-cultural, economic, and political transformations in mountain regions, are profoundly modifying the dynamics of alpine mountain tourism. In this regard, the mountain hut is a marker of these changes. Its functions are being reshaped by an altered seasonality, modified accessibility, and socio-cultural changes that lead to new users' expectations. That results in adaptation in architecture, planning, user reception, and services offered by huts. They can also play a structuring role within the less-developed mountain areas in terms of collaborations with the stakeholders of the mountain valley, depending on the new spatial and temporal polarities of tourism.

This communication proposes to study the case of alpine huts in the Val d'Entremont in the Valais (Switzerland). We will review the evolution of mountain huts' role in this valley, focusing on the multi-level governance of the less-developed mountain areas and particularly on the stakeholders around these huts. To understand the transformation of these areas, we need to consider many different parameters: change in mountain practices, legislation, interconnections between mountain refuges induced by mountain itineraries such as the Haute Route, the diverse networks of stakeholders (local, national and transnational ones), and conflicts of use. To this end, we will show how this type of atypical accommodation (isolated site with general interest mission and commercial service, water and electricity scarcity, transport and supply constraints, etc.) can have a pivotal role in diversification and transition. Mountain huts can become platforms for coordinating recreational resources that promote and host new sporting and cultural activities.