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## ALPS OF THE JULIAN ALPS

**Abstract:** The article presents an overview of the past and present state of the Alps, i. e. the seasonal mountain pasture of livestock and dairying practices in different areas of the Julian Alps in Slovenia and Italy. It is based on an overview of the relevant literature and archival documentation, as well as on the intensive participant observation during the grazing seasons of 1998 and 1999, and on continuous sporadic documentation up until today. Significant differences in the intensity of past and present mountain pasture and above all in the intensity of dairying practices were found out, both between micro-areas, as well as between individual alps of the same micro-area. The reasons can be attributed to (micro) geographical conditions, economic development, different forms of possession and organization of alps, and especially to specific social circumstances.

**Key words:** *Alps, the Julian Alps, dairying*

### INTRODUCTION

In the mountain regions, where agricultural activities are constrained by climatic effects of altitude, edaphic factors, scarcity of soil and steep gradients of the land, pastoralism has been the most effective and dominant agricultural activity. Large expanses of grasslands, which ring the valleys above the tree line, could be made accessible for productive activities because of the animals' ability to convert natural plants into nutritive food (Viazzo, 1989, p. 19). A combination of cultivation and herding emerged, known as Alpine husbandry or Alpine agro-pastoral system and consisted of two (or more) spatially segregated spheres of production — fields and meadows near the village, and the alps, i. e. low- and high-altitude pastures. In Slovenian, these alps are known as *planine* or *planšarije*, in Italian as *alpi*, *alpeggi* or *malghe*, in Friulian as *mont*, and in German as *Almen* or *Alpen*. The term of Pre-Roman origins designates not only pastures, but also huts, stalls and sometimes even a dairy that were occupied by animals, herders and eventually a

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dairyman in summer months (Melik, 1950, pp. 105–106, Netting, 1981, p. 19, Vi-  
 azzo, 1989, p. 20, Cole and Wolf, 1999, pp. 119–152, Ledinek Lozej, 2016).

The article is based on the overview of the relevant literature and archival doc-  
 umentation, as well as on the intensive participant observation during the graz-  
 ing seasons of 1998 and 1999, and on continuous more or less intensive field work  
 in different pastures from 2010 onwards.

## THE JULIAN ALPS

The Julian Alps are a mountain range of the Southern Limestone Alps that  
 stretch from north-eastern Italy to Slovenia, where they rise to 2,864 m at Mount  
 Triglav,<sup>1</sup> the highest peak. They are named after Julius Caesar, who founded the  
 town of Cividale del Friuli at the foot of the mountains. Natural conditions — rel-  
 atively low-lying valleys and basins that offer modest arable land, the proximity of  
 the Mediterranean and vast plateaus, stimulated exploitation of the highlands — e.  
 g. mining, charcoal-burning, ironworks and in particular stockbreeding in moun-  
 tain pastures.

Generally, the Julian Alps are divided into the Eastern and Western Julian Alps.  
 The Eastern Julian Alps lay in Slovenia and consist of ridges and high plains, where-  
 as the Western Julian Alps, which cover a much smaller area, are located in Ita-  
 ly (only the Kanin group lays partly in Slovenia). The climatic and morphological  
 features differ between the high plateaus and milder slopes of the south-eastern  
 part and the steep and high rocky walls of the north-western part. There are also  
 omnipresent cultural differences, issuing from the different ethnic and linguistic  
 groups<sup>2</sup> and from the inclusion of the territory into different and constantly chang-  
 ing historic<sup>3</sup> and present political frameworks.

The alps of the Julian Alps can be divided regarding the topographical location  
 (on plateaus, in basins, on slopes or ridges) and the altitude (from the nowadays  
 abandoned summer village of Predrobac at 226 m in the Valley of Natisone of the  
 Julian Prealps to the abandoned alp Zgornji Tosc at 1,812 m or the still working  
 alp of Velo polje at 1,693 m in the Bohinj mountains). The location and the altitude  
 influenced the type of the alp, therefore we can distinguish successively pastured  
 higher meadows or low-pastures (in Slovenian *rovť*, *senožet* or *prestaja*), middle  
 pastures (in Slovenian *nižje planine*, in Italian *piccola montagna*, in German *Voralp*

<sup>1</sup> For better readability all toponyms without standardized English form from the Slo-  
 venian part of the Julian Alps are kept in the Slovenian form and from the Italian part in  
 the Italian form, although they also exist in Slovene and in some areas also in Friulian and  
 German.

<sup>2</sup> The Western Julian Alps lie at the crossroads of German in the Canale Valley, Ro-  
 mance (Friuli and later Italian) and Slavic (Slovene) ethnic/linguistic groups.

<sup>3</sup> We could mention just the border between the Patriarchate of Aquileia and after the  
 Venetian Republic with the Austrian Empire; the Kingdom of Italy with the Hapsburg Mon-  
 archy and, after World War I, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia; and after World War II the border  
 between the Republic of Italy and Yugoslavia and lately Slovenia.

or *Mayen*), and high-mountain alps.<sup>4</sup> The location and the altitude influenced also the type of the stock, therefore cattle, sheep and goat, mixed and occasionally also horse and in the past oxen alps can be differentiated. Cattle and sheep alps can be distinguished into dairy alps and alps for dry or barren livestock.

There are also important differences regarding the ownership and the management of the alps. The main difference is between (a) alps owned by individual owners (either feudal lords or small landowners), which can be benefited by themselves, rented to others beneficiaries or other beneficiaries could enjoy servitude rights/easements in those alps; (b) alps in common property — either so-called commons of the local inhabitants (e. g. *roža* in the Soča Valley Alps)<sup>5</sup> or possession of shares of land tenure;<sup>6</sup> and (c) alps in the property of local (or other public) authority, i. e. of public ownership. Individually owned higher village and low-pastures meadows are mowed individually, but pastured either individually or cooperatively, whereas high alps are generally in common ownership and management (which includes the management regimes of pastures, infrastructure, grazing and dairying activities and the connected regulations and joint operation activities for maintenance of the alp as well as costs and incomes distribution).<sup>7</sup> The ownership and management structures have undergone radical changes in the late 1940's in former Yugoslavia and an extensive transformation in the whole area throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The natural conditions, ownership and management structures and type of the pasture (lower or higher) influenced the morphological, urbanistic and architectural features of the alp. We can distinguish alps with common stable, dwelling and cheese dairy, and alp's settlements with individual stables and/or dwellings.<sup>8</sup> They can be dispersed or allotted in a lump, line or circle. In the Mediterranean

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<sup>4</sup> Herders and cattle would not move directly from the village to the alps; instead, they would first transfer to granges in the higher meadows, which were used for grazing in combination with haying and perhaps some cultivation. After a couple of weeks, the livestock was moved to the lower alps, where the animals would stay from two to four weeks before they were transferred to the upper alps, where they would spend the peak season. In September, they would again descend to the lower alps, then to granges and finally to the villages (Melik, 1950, Novak, 1989, Viazzo, 1989, p. 20, Cevc, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> How much livestock an individual could have usually depended on the amount of hay available as winter fodder, that is, on the size of the lowlands meadows (Koren, 2006, 6, Bizjak, 2015, p. 61).

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed description of common property in the Alps and its decline cf. Kissling-Näf et. al (2002).

<sup>7</sup> Two most evident advantages of joint herding were: (1) released manpower for agricultural tasks — by tending their livestock, a few individuals could relieve all village households of many time-consuming chores, thereby enabling the rest of the working population to concentrate on agriculture tasks; and (2) alleviation of the problems of the spatial disjunction of village fields and alps (Vincze, 1980, pp. 397–397, Netting, 1981, pp. 64–65, Viazzo, 1989, p. 23).

<sup>8</sup> Common buildings were primary characteristic of the sheep and goat alps, whereas the cattle alps used to be settlements of individual stables. By the time — with the decline of the livestock and staff, agronomic recommendations and influence of the Carnian tenant

part of the Julian Alps the huts and stables used to be built of stone, whereas in the northern and north-eastern part they were generally of wood.

On the basis of the natural and socio-historical features three mayor regions and the following sub-regions can be distinguished:

(a) the Carniola alps: the alps of Bohinj, Bled, Dobrava, of the Upper Sava Valley, the Prealps of Škofja Loka and the Selška Valley;

(b) the Soča Valley alps: the alps of the Trenta Valley and Bovec, Kobarid, Tolmin and of the Bača Valley;

(c) the Western Julian Alps' alps: alps of the Canale Valley, the Dogna Valley, the Raccolana Valley, the Resia Valley and the Western Julian Prealps.

### BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The existence of the transhumance breeding in the Julian Alps in the antiquity has been proven by archaeological findings as well as the etymology of toponyms, pasture and dairying terms (Novak, 1961, pp. 126–128, Cevc, 1984, p. 9, 2006, pp. 113–121). In 973 the Pečana alp in the Bohinj region is mentioned in historical sources (Kos, 1975, p. 422). The Patriarchs of Aquileia rented the alps to vassals or even gave to the inhabitants the possibility to use mountain meadows, pastures and other wastelands for the reimbursement of the tithe of the produce (Pascolini and Tessarin, 1985, pp. 52; Pascolini, 2001, p. 74).<sup>9</sup> Payments in cheese for hiring a mountain pasture during the summer season prove that cheese was processed from milk in mountain pastures of the Julian Alps already in the Middle Ages (Cevc, 2006, pp. 248–249).

The possibility to use mountain pastures changed radically with the Venetian Republic (1420–1797) in the south-western part of the Julian Alps, as it regulated the use of pastures in order to protect forests (e. g. the prohibition of grazing sheep and goats in the forests). The civic uses and private property of forests and pastures was reduced in favour of common or public property. Under the influence of the new French doctrine during Napoleon's occupation (1797–1814) the former common property was defined as communal property, i. e. property of the municipalities.

Actually, there were constant struggles between forestry and grazing interests also in the Austrian lands, especially where the state economic policy favoured forestry interests because of the iron foundries and their needs for wood. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Austrians abolished the possibility of pasture outside the boundaries of the alp and imposed on the alpine pastures a tax, higher than that of the bottom land, thus recognizing the significant economic potential of the pastures (Pascolini and Tessarin, 1985, pp. 52–53; Pascolini, 2001, pp. 74–75).

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management system in the western part — common stables became customary also in the Soča Valley cattle alps throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>9</sup> E. g. in the land register of the Tolmin region it is documented that in 1338 the Kašina alp under the Krn Mountain, owned by the Patriarchs of Aquileia, was rented out for the reimbursement of duties in the form of cheese, in Latin called caseus (Kos, 1948, p. 33).

Alpine pasture became even more significant with the Modern Age physiocratic efforts of the Austrian and Italian Monarchy<sup>10</sup> in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially after the decline of the mining and ironworks and with connected woodcutting, charcoal burning and transport activities. The Austrian and Italian ministries for Agriculture as well as the regional agrarian societies invested heavily in education,<sup>11</sup> in subsidies for the improvement of basic infrastructure, in supports and awards for the improvement of the mountain pasture economy, and in promotion of products with the possibility of additional value for the market. Therefore, it promoted dairy farming, especially that of the cattle, joint processing of milk and supported the establishment of cooperative dairies, which operated during the summer grazing season in the alps and during the rest of the year in the valley in order to improve the quality of production and increase the profit (Valenčič, 1990, pp. 32–37).<sup>12</sup>

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century competent state agencies proceeded to promote efficient dairying by publishing handbooks (Pevc 1925, 1926, Spiller-Muys, 1926), founding dairy schools and, after World War I, carrying out restoration of the alps (Tuma, 1924, Marsano, 1932). We can follow similar endeavours in the first decade after World War II. In the 1970's mountain pasture and milk processing started to disappear as a result of different socio-economic factors; in particular, due to the intensification of agriculture as well as due to the processes of urbanization and deagrization, which led to a general abandonment of the Alpine husbandry.

## PRESENT STATE

After the drastic changes in agriculture and society in the 1960's and 1970's the former (private, common and public) management regimes were transformed. The centuries-long system of graduated vertical migration was reduced, sometimes only to one or two pasture's grades. There were also drastic reductions in the number of cattle and in the number of staff needed to maintain the herds. And the third change was that in most of the alps there were only barren, dry or nursing animals, hence there was no milking and dairying, which used to be an essential additional value.<sup>13</sup> Therefore our primary interest was towards dairy alps, i. e. alpine

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<sup>10</sup> In 1866, in the aftermath of the Austro-Prussian War, with the Peace of Prague Treaty the south-western part of the Julian Alps (the Julian Prealps, Resia, Raccolana and Dogna valleys) fell under the Kingdom of Italy.

<sup>11</sup> The regional agricultural societies published expert literature (e. g. Trientl, 1872, Wilhelm, 1871) and even invited an expert from Switzerland, Tomas Hitz, to teach local cheese makers from the Tolmin and Bohinj region about Swiss dairying (Povše, 1870, pp. 18–17).

<sup>12</sup> Dairying obtained an even stronger organizational form with the cooperatives; actually cooperatives provided for the theoretical as well as practical education of cheese makers, for building and providing modern equipment to the dairies following the instructions of the agricultural and dairy experts, as well as for the sale of the products and distribution of income (Valenčič, 1990, pp. 35–36).

<sup>13</sup> In the past, a lot of effort was put in keeping the mountain cheese dairies updated with the latest technology and in educating the cheese makers. Actually cheese makers worked

pastures still accompanied with the milk processing in different dairy products (cheese, whey cheese, butter, butter-milk, sour-milk and whey). Actually, in the summer grazing season of 2016 there were only 38 dairy alps in the whole area of the Julian Alps.<sup>14</sup> Present state of the alpine pasture and dairying will be delineated on the basis of three case studies of dairy alps, which illustrate different paths of disintegration and transformation of past practices.

(1) *The alps of the Tolmin and Kobarid region: Modernisation of infrastructure and transformation of common property regimes*

The Tolmin and the Kobarid region of the Upper Soča Valley is the most vivid animal husbandry region in the Julian Alps. Beside the fact that there are fifteen dairy alps also the majority of dairy cattle, grazed in the Julian Alps' mountain pastures, takes place in the Kobarid and Tolmin alps. The alps are either in common (by members of the Agrarian Communities) or in public property (by local municipalities); they are managed by the grazing community of each alp. In case of common property the grazing community is not necessarily composed just of the owners of the land shares, as it used to be in the past; due to the shortage of grazing animals and breeders, some grazing communities became open also for the breeders, which do not owe a share of the alp. The reasons for robustness and viability of the Kobarid and Tolmin alps — despite the generally and specifically unfavourable conditions for extensive Alpine mountain husbandry — lie in the absence of other economic opportunities and in some locally specific fostering facts. Actually, in the most unfavourable period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, i. e. between the 1970's and the 1990's, there were only few opportunities to find an employment in other branches or sectors. Due to the scarcity of large forests<sup>15</sup> and cultivable land there were almost no opportunities to make one's living out of forestry or crop farming. There were only a few opportunities in the secondary sector, because of the remoteness from large industrial centres, and in the tertiary sector, because of the subsequent development of tourism services.

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during the summer season in the mountain dairy and during the winter season in the valley dairy. We must add that cheese making courses are organized by agricultural experts also today.

<sup>14</sup> These alps are: Krstenica, Laz, Velo polje, Konjščica, Praprotnica, Uskovnica, Zanjarniki, Konjska dolina, Goreljek, Javornik, Zadnji Vogel, Bitenjska planina in the Bohinj region; Lom, Podkuk, Medrje, Sleme, Polog, Pretovč, Stador, Razor in the Tolmin region; Božca, Hlevišče, Kašina, Kuhinja, Zaslav, Leskovica, Idrska planina and Zaprikraj in the Kobarid region, and Duplje and Krnica in the Bovec region in Slovenia. And Montasio, Plan dai Spadovai, Coot, Lussari, Confin, Sompdogna, Poccet and Cuarnan alp in the Western Julian Alps and Prealps in Italy.

<sup>15</sup> Due to the morphological and climate (Mediterranean) influences there were no such large forests as, for example, in the northern parts of the Julian Alps, for example the Jelovica, Mežakla and Pokljuka plateaus or the Ferro and Canale Valley and Tarvisio surroundings.

Presumably to the viability of the dairy alps also added a long tradition of dairy cattle breeding and milk processing.<sup>16</sup> According to the official statistics, in 1891 there were already eighteen dairies cooperatives in the Tolmin region (Valenčič, 1990, pp. 34). After World War I, the agricultural policy provided for the restoration of the alps destroyed during the war on the Soča River front (Tuma, 1924, p. 76, Marsano, 1932). After World War II, in the 1970's, the local agro-advisory service introduced Brown-Swiss breed of cattle, instead of the at that time predominant Cika breed, because of the ability to produce larger quantities of milk. And finally, dairy breeding was accelerated also by the local dairy Planika (from 1967 to 1995 incorporated by Kraš food industry), which organized the transport of milk by means of cisterns or through milk pipes from some alps (e. g. the milk pipes from Zaslav, Slapnik in Kašina alp to Kuhinja alp, from which it was transported by the means of cisterns to the Planika dairy). Nevertheless, it adversely affected the processing of milk in the alps, it contributed to the preservation of grazing and organisational structures, hence the possibility to restore milk processing as it happened in recent decades in the alps of Kašina, Kuhinja and Zaslav. A high level of attention devoted to the dairying practices and maturation of cheese is nowadays evident in the activities of the Cheese Society Tolminc (*Sirarsko društvo tolminc*), resulting also in awarding the Tolminc cheese with a Protected Designation of Origin (Commission Implementation Regulation (EC) No. 187, 2012).

Actually, the majority of the fifteen mentioned dairy alps maintained continuous operation (at least grazing activities), while in others (e. g. Leskovica) pasture and dairy activities were reorganised in recent years. Examples of the continuous operation are the Sleme and Medrje alps. The alps are benefited jointly as a low (Medrje, 1,150 m) and high mountain pasture (Sleme, 1,436 m) and are one of the largest operating dairy mountain pastures in the Julian Alps. Before World War I the Sleme alp's settlement consisted of dairy and small stables for cattle and shepherds. Because the pastures of Medrje were quite remote, in 1912 co-owners from Zatulmin formed two associations which herded in turn in the pastures of Medrje or Sleme. Instead of small stables, as it was customary until then, one joint and larger stable was set in the mountain Medrje (Marsano, 1932, pp. 17–27). Due to the decline of the number of cattle in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the concomitant use of Sleme and Medrje alps was abandoned and they started to use the pastures sequently by stages. Lack of cheese makers and shepherds and the complexity of the care for the cattle contributed to the transformation of the traditional organization of the work and responsibilities in the alp divided among the

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<sup>16</sup> The existence of common alp's dairies in Tolmin mountains was proved already for the year 1771 and in the official statistics of cooperatives the predecessors of two Tolmin alp's cooperatives are indicated, namely a common milk establishment in Kuhinja alp from 1842 for the villages Krn, Vrsno and Selce, and a dairy in Duplje mountain pasture for the village Smast. In 1874 eleven farmers from Podljubin established a dairy cooperative with the purpose to improve the quality and the resulting profit in production of milk products with strict organizational rules regarding quantity, quality and hygiene of delivered milk (Valenčič, 1990, pp. 31–42).



Figure 1: Making of whey cheese in a copper cauldron; cheese dairy in the Sleme alp. Author: Špela Ledinek Lozej, 2011.

As in the 1930's, when Matteo Marsano exposed the tidiness and good organisation of the Sleme and Medrje (Marsano, 1932, p. 17), the alp is still well organised today. Already in the 1970's the breeders of Zatoľmin started to think about a milking machine in the alp. Due to the damage of the Sleme dairy caused by the earthquake of 1998, it was possible to restore it in the framework of post-earthquake reconstruction by the National Technical Office and with the additional help of the state and Municipality of Tolmin. Renovated dairy and modern milking parlour provides timesaving and hygienic milk processing. Therefore the breeders already think to modernise the infrastructure of the Medrje alp.

Sleme is not the only example of the successful modernization and renovation



Figure 2: Stables after renovation; the Kuhinja alp. Author: Špela Ledinek Lozej, 2011.

of the Tolmin and Kobarid alps. In the framework of post-earthquake renovation and EU projects there were also successfully reformed and modernized dairies and stables in other alps (e. g. in the Kuhinja alp). And finally, the renovation of the Laška seč alp (privately owned and managed lower alp of the breeders from Zatoľmin) won an international award at the international architectural competition

cheese maker and shepherds. The system of the house/family responsible pasturing and dairying was introduced, within which owners of cattle are obliged to take over the responsibility of the alp's management for a certain number of days per head of the cattle. They also have to participate at joint operations. Cheese and whey cheese are divided correspondingly to the amount of milk of each breeder.



Constructive Alps, organised by the Swiss Confederation and the Principality of Liechtenstein, for the sustainable renovation and constructing buildings within the area of the Alpine arc (Zakotnik, 2016, p. 7).

(2) *The Bohinj alps: Dissolving of the past practices and the polyphony of the individual solutions*

Bohinj is a mountain pastures area in the Julian Alps with a very high number of alps existing in past and also today. There were at least 52 alps in Bohinj in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One of the first abandoned mountain pastures was Lopučnica. The reason was the constitution of the protected area around Triglav lakes in the 1920's (Bajuk Senčar, 2013). Today, there are 25 alps with only pasture and 12 alps with milking (on most of them also cheese is produced).

Laz is a high alp<sup>17</sup> of the Stara Fužina-Studor Agricultural Community. In late medieval documents is present as an alp of Debeli vrh (which is the name of a nearby mountain) (Melik, 1950, p. 53), but from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century it takes the present name and location (Kos, 1960, p. 131). In the past it used to be an important alp in the northern part of Bohinj because of enough fresh water all through the summer.<sup>18</sup>

Today there are nineteen preserved buildings in Laz: sixteen herdsman huts, a cheese diary and two huts owned by the Triglav National Park. The architecture of the herdsman's huts is typical for the high Bohinj mountain pastures. The hut is lifted from the ground, it stands on a wooden upright or drystone, sometimes only part of the hut is lying on the ground. Under the herdsman's place there was a partly opened and partly closed place for the cattle. In the past, every evening the herdsman locked its herd under its hut. That has changed as today cattle is out of the stable during the night and the place under the hut is used for milking cows or for storing.

The cheese diary was built in 1900 with state subsidies.<sup>19</sup> The building plans for cheese diaries were prepared by agronomic experts; therefore almost all of them were built following same building plans.<sup>20</sup> The biggest change of Laz's cheese

<sup>17</sup> In previous times, herders in the middle of June came with the cattle to the low alps of Spodnja and Zgornja Grintovca for about two weeks and proceeded to Laz in the beginning of July. Today, the cattle comes to Laz straight from the village (by the road to alp Blato and then walking for around two hours) and huts in the lower alps are used as holiday huts. Not just that pasture in steps is not in use anymore, also different paths to the alp are taken.

<sup>18</sup> It is known that herdsman from the nearby alps (e. g. Krstenica) brought cattle to water in time of drought.

<sup>19</sup> It was common at that time and in periods before and after World War II to get state subsidies for the modernisation of technological process of cheese diaries as well as for the cheese maker's education. Even today cheese diaries are usually reconstructed with state or EU subsidies.

<sup>20</sup> At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, cheese diaries were relatively small stone-built buildings. Twenty years later, building planes provided more space and also the place for the



Figure 3: The Laz alp. Author: Saša Rožkar, 2011.

diary happened in the 1970's, when the old cauldron was replaced with a built-in one and in 1991, when an avalanche damaged the northern part of the building.

However, the biggest turn in last fifty years was not the transformation of architecture, but a change in the way of life and number of cows in the alp. If there were more than hundred milking cows in 1932 (Melik, 1950, cartographic supplement) and around fifty milking cows in 1971, when the Bohinj cheese making cooperative for the last time sent its cheese makers to the alp, the number of cows drastically decreased in the next decades. In the 1980's, there were two elderly herdswomen with sixteen dairy cows still making cheese jointly (Novak, 1987, p. 81). With the decrease of the cattle also the number of the staff needed diminished. Today, only two or three (depending on the season) huts are periodically inhabited by the herdsmen, all the others are used as holiday cottages.<sup>21</sup> Hence, there is (a) one elderly woman with a very traditional attitude toward life in the alp with a couple of cows that she

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cheese maker and his helpers to sleep and prepare food (e. g. cheese diary in Krstenica or Uskovnica alp). Some of them even had special room for visitors or hikers.

<sup>21</sup> Actually, it is forbidden by an ordinance of the municipal spatial plan (Odlok, 2016, pp. 37–38) and by the Triglav National Park Act (Zakon, 2010) to change the herdsman's huts into holiday huts. So almost any use in this way is illegal, but there is poor on none inspection.



Figure 4: The herdsman, who has been coming to the Laz alp since 1941, with her herd of goats. Author: Saša Roškar, 2013.

takes care of and makes cheese in her hut individually; (b) another elderly woman, who has been coming to Laz for decades and keeps herself isolated from other season's inhabitants with a herd of goats from different owners; (c) and there is a family with its own herd of ten to thirteen dairy cows, some calves, pigs and a horse, which also rents a cheese dairy; they also have a private cheese dairy in the village of Studor and a strong interest in the modernization of the last alp. The father is a qualified cheese maker and his children in their mid-twenties are able to take care of the herd and cheese production autonomously. They make cheese, whey cheese and butter and sell it in Laz, in their cheese dairy in the valley or at the local open market.

In local as well as in expert's consciousness Laz is architecturally the best preserved alp in the Bohinj region (Bizjak, 2011, p. 15). One of the reasons could be its remoteness and the absence of the road. The other reason could be that for decades it has been a holiday place for some artists. They promoted its cultural and natural heritage and they had a respectful relationship with the locals.<sup>22</sup>

Whereas the collective (and periodically also cooperatively) organized management structure in Laz alp has dissolved, in the other Bohinj alp of Krstenica it has been preserved in a slightly transformed form due to the personal engagement of

<sup>22</sup> The only hut in Laz preserved in its past form — without roof and wall isolation, with an open fireplace inside and without the cooking stove, with an old bed and storage box — was a hut rented for decades by the famous poet Dane Zajc. After his death, his partner still maintains it the old way.



Figure 5: The cheese dairy of the Krstenica alp, built in the 1930's and still in use.  
Author: Saša Roškar, 2006.

some crucial persons. And even more, while in the previous grazing seasons young generations only helped the long-time herdsman and cheese maker from Bohinjska Češnjica, this year the operational management of the alp (herding, milking and cheese making) was taken over by the new generation — a nineteen years old girl, who spent a lot of summers helping in the alp.

According to the historical documents as well as the oral history, Krstenica was one of the rare Bohinj alps, whose ownership changed through time. The Češnjica grazing community at the end of the Middle Age did not have any high alp in use, so Bled feudal authority gave the alps of Krstenica, Velo polje and Pod Mišelj vrhom to benefit. That fact produced centuries long conflicts with the Studor-Stara Fužina grazing community, who perceived itself as its historical owner (Kos, 1960, pp. 133–134; Ceklin, 1977, pp. 67–74).

The present location of the alp has been in use since the 1930's, when the cheese dairy was built by the architect Alfonz Pirc.<sup>23</sup> Almost all still preserved huts were also built in the 1930's and were traditionally meant for herdsmen, but most of them are now used as holiday huts. Traditionally, the cattle of each breeder was

<sup>23</sup> Several others cheese dairies were built according to the same building plans also on some other alps in Bohinj. They became the biggest and the most important object in an alp containing a room for milk processing, a cheese cellar, a room for the cheese maker and his visitors, a kitchen and a porch. They haven't changed much until today, but most of them are not in use any more.

looked after by a herdsman, who was either a member of a family or a hired staff. Besides looking after a herd, a herdsman was supposed to help in the cheese diary according to the strict rules of alternation based on the number of the cattle. The quantity of milk per herd was carefully measured and written down as it was the key for distribution of cheese and whey cheese between breeders. It was obligatory for the owner to provide food and wood for the herdsman and for the cheese maker. Hence, there was transport of the food to the alp and the cheese and whey cheese from the alp over the weekend. A big part of the transport was by foot, as there was no road to Krstenica. Today, there is a good road to the lower alp of Blato and from there a semi road to Krstenica. The possibility of transportation is probably one of the reasons of the viability of the Krstenica alp (Ledinek Lozej, 2002).

The traditional managing regime with a cheese maker and herdsmen transformed into a system where the management of the alp (dairying and pasture) was for more than twenty years (from the end of the 1970's until 2015) taken over by a hired individual. She was daily assisted above all by children (and in rare cases, where there were no children, also by adults) of the owners of the cattle from Bohinj villages. They were responsible for the cattle pasture and milking, as well as for helping in the cheese diary. Relatives came over the weekends bringing food and other things that were needed. This system is unique in the Julian Alps. The children are invited as vital parts of community and skilled at a very early age, therefore special bonds are made among them as well as between them and the alp, its life, work and traditions. Working with the youth for decades paid off. After the

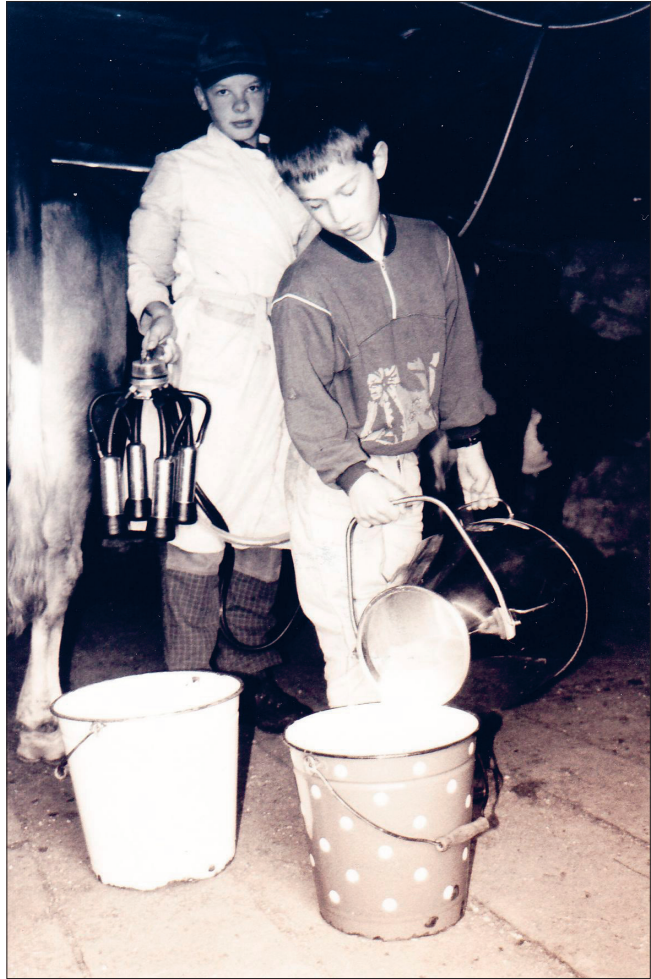


Figure 6: Young people helping at Krstenica alp.  
Author: Špela Ledinek Lozej, 1998.

retirement of the herdsman, young people competently stood on her place in this year's (2016) grazing season.

It must be added that in last decade and a half a revival of cheese making happened in Bohinj, thanks to the significant help of the agricultural advisory service. They restarted making cheese in the alps of Zadnji Vogel and Javornik as a collective organized management structure with a hired herdsman and cheese maker and they have plans for the renewal of at least three cheese dairies in the next years.

### (3) *The Montasio alp: Tertiariation of the alp by non-locals*

There are only eight dairy alps in the whole region of the Western Alps and Pre-alps; the most notorious of them is certainly the Montasio mountain pasture under the mountain chain of Montasio.<sup>24</sup> The favourable geographical location, the availability of already great facilities in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, fortunate historical coincidences and large breeding as well as agricultural policy's interests made this alp famous — of course, in addition to the even more known and notorious Montasio cheese. The Montasio cheese was mentioned already on a pricelist dating back to 1775; at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the expansion of the cooperative dairies, it spread in the underlying valleys and in the neighbouring plains (Ghinetti, 1885, Čotar 1988, pp. 42–95). Due to the effective state and regional support it has been a protected trademark since 1955; moreover, since 1986 it has featured a Protected Designation of Origin on national level, and since 1996 also on European level (Čotar, 1988, pp. 42–95, Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1107, 1996, p. 6).

The oldest written record of the Montasio alp dates back to 1085; it was mentioned among the assets of the nearby Moggio monastery, which was granted to the Prampero noble family. In the following centuries several quarrels over the ownership and use of Montasio alp were documented. The disputes ended in 1727, when the Prampero family gave in perpetual lease to the municipalities of Chiusa and Raccolana the three dairies under the Montasio — the Pecol, Parte di Mezzo and Larice alp.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, each of the mentioned alps was divided into several lots,<sup>25</sup> intended as individual compartments and entrusted to different tenants (Pasut *et al.*, 2016, p. 38). Being equipped with premises for housing of animals and men and for cheese making, each lot was managed independently; on the contrary — the pastures were common to all different lots and profited by all the cattle jointly (Marchettano, 1911).

Because of the destruction during the World War I, pasture in the Montasio alps was recovered after the restoration of the buildings in 1923 (Pasut *et al.*, 2016, p.

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<sup>24</sup> From a geographical point of view to the group of Jof di Montasio belonged seven alps: Pecol, Parte di Mezzo, Larice, Barbòz, Nevea, Cregnedul di sopra and Cregnedul di sotto. The first three are today part of the Montasio alp district, whose name was unified by the Montasio Alps Consortium (Associazione 2012 a; Pasut *et al.*, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> Actually, there were four lots in Pecol alp, six in Parte di Mezzo, four in Larice and one in Barboz; altogether sixteen lots (Pasut *et al.*, 2016, p. 40).



Figure 7: Parte di Mezzo compartment of the Montasio alp.  
Author: Špela Ledinek Lozej, 2016.

47). Only in 1931 the Montasio alps became property of the Chiusaforte Municipality (after a centuries-long dispute with the family of Prampero), but the joy hasn't lasted long, because as early as in 1936 the municipality decided to sell the alps because of debts. It was undersold to the Friuli consortium (later on association) Keepers of the Service Bull Stations of Udine (*Tenutari stazioni taurine di Udine*) (Dreossi and Pascolini, 2010, pp. 201–202, Pasut *et al.*, 2016, p. 36). The consortium brought together the owners of race bulls and was therefore one of the main anchors for the reconstruction of the Friuli cattle and herding. Hence, the acquisition of the Montasio alps was presented by the regime propaganda as the constitution of the most modern and equipped alp for the pasture of young lowlands race bulls of the “fascistically disciplined breeders”. The innovation drive was interrupted by World War II and the facilities were restored only in the 1960's. At that time also the compartment of the Parte di Mezzo was given in the management of the public institution Breeders Association of Friuli Venezia Giulia (*Associazione Allevatori del Friuli Venezia Giulia*) for the purposes of an experimental dietary supplementation of calves at mountain pastures, while the other three alps (Pecol, Barboz e Larice), still managed by the Keepers, were dedicated to dairy cattle. In the 1980's a renovation of the Pecol alp took place with the implementation of the milking parlour, electrification, and additional regulation of water supply (Pasut *et al.*, 2016, pp. 49–50).

Whereas the owners, the Association of the Keepers of the Service Bull Stations has invested a lot into the development of infrastructure (e. g. in the neat renovation



Figure 8: Traces of the 2013 Tour of Italy stage are still present; Pecol compartment of the Montasio alp. Author: Špela Ledinek Lozej, 2016.

of buildings, also for the purposes of tourism activities), the tenants, the Breeders Association of Friuli Venezia Giulia, have accelerated the promotion of the alp, also in conjunction with the Montasio cheese promotion, and the organization of various events, e. g. in 2013 the stage of the cycling competition Tour of Italy ended on the Montasio plateau. In 2016 there was almost one event every weekend during the grazing season (e. g. tastings, feasts, walks, night of Saint Laurence, etc.) (Associazione, 2012 b, 2012 c).

In the grazing season of 2016 there were around 120 dairy cattle in the compartment of Pecol, twice as many calves in Parte di Mezzo, and some pigs in Larice, from different owners, which are members of the association. They were attended by the staff rented by the Breeders Association of Friuli Venezia Giulia. And there were thousands of tourists every day, standing in the queue to be served by professional staff, to buy some premature cheese, to eat from plastic plates and to enjoy the atmosphere of a proper tourist destination. If the mountain of Montasio is a story of success, this success relates to an intensive tourism breakthrough and not to the preservation of traditional economic activities and social or management structures.

## CONCLUSION

Although the use of meadows and grassland and dairying in the alps of the Julian Alps radically decreased compared to the data from the times before and right



after World War II, the centuries long Alpine culture still remains. It can sometimes take new forms of organisation or it can take what is good from tradition and transforms it for the new times. In the areas where there are no important economy branches, it could be also an important part of the local economy. In other areas it can be an added value for the local tourism. But the most important role of the alps is to be found where they are still maintained by the local community, which preserves the agricultural knowledge about pasture and mowing rotation between village, pre-alps and lower and higher mountain pastures, as well as the knowledge of cheese, butter and whey cheese making, with all the heritage incorporated in space, buildings, cheese making equipment, naming and also social and community bonds. Without the connection with the local community it keeps its economic role, but is not much more than a backdrop for (mass) tourism.

Figure 9: Dairy cattle in the Montasio alp with the Kanin mountain range in the background. Author: Špela Ledinek Lozej, 2016.

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ALPI JULIJSKIH ALPA

*Rezime*

U radu je prikazano prošlo i sadašnje stanje Alpi, tj. sezonske ispaše stoke na planinskim pašnjacima i prakse izrade mlječnih proizvoda u različitim područjima Julijskih Alpa u Sloveniji i Italiji. Rad je zasnovan na pregledu relevantne literature i arhivske dokumentacije, kao i na intenzivnom posmatranju učesnika u toku sezone 1998. i 1999. i na kontinuiranoj dokumentaciji do danas. Utvrđene su značajne razlike u intenzitetu korišćenja planinskih pašnjaka u prošlosti i sadašnjosti i iznad svega u intenzitetu proizvodnje mlječnih proizvoda, kako između mikro-područja, tako i između pojedinačnih Alpi istog mikro-područja. Razlozi se mogu pripisati (mikro) geografskim uslovima, ekonomskom razvoju, različitim oblicima vlasništva i organizaciji planinske paše, a posebno specifičnim društvenim okolnostima.

Ključne riječi: *Alpe, Julijske Alpe, mljekarstvo*