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Environmental History, The History of Tourism in the Mountains and the Construction of New Knowledge: A Study of the Architecture of Winter Sports Resorts in the French-Italian Alps

Caterina Franco

Foreword: What is environmental history?¹

- 1 Environmental history means “different things to different people” (McNeill, 2010, p. 347). For that reason, explicating the theoretical and historiographical frame of reference is necessary before exploring the potential of this field of study for research in the Alpine territories.
- 2 Environmental history emerged as a “self-conscious enterprise” in the United States in the early 1970s (McNeill 2010, p. 349), but it was not until the 1990s that it opened up to the rest of the world with a proliferation of approaches and research objects.² However, environmental history has never acquired a fixed disciplinary status or uniform institutionalization in academic contexts, and its definition varies according to geographical contexts and generations of scholars³. By adopting ideas proposed by North American environmental historians, we can define it as an attempt “to pull nature itself into the stream of human history” (Cronon, 2016, p. 259), to capture “The history of the relationship between human societies and the rest of nature on which they depended” (McNeill, 2010, p. 347) or to understand “human beings as they have lived, worked, and thought in relationship to the rest of nature through the changes brought by time” (Hughes, 2006, p. 1).

- 3 In France, the interest in environmental history is quite recent. This slow change can be explained, in part, by the fact that the idea of a relationship between man and nature in the process of constructing a territory, as well as “long-term” studies and cross-disciplinary approaches, did not have the same degree of novelty in French and European culture and historiography as they did in the United States in the 1970s. The history of the *Annales*, historical geography, environmental history, eco-history, rural history (Locher, Quenet, 2009, pp. 17-22) and landscape history in Italy were already exploring issues advocated by environmental history.
- 4 From the 2000s onwards, and in particular in the past decade, this field of research has aroused particular interest, and a growing number of conferences, writings and laboratories from all over the world have referred to it. For France, this interest manifests itself in the publication of an issue of the *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* dedicated to “Environmental History,”⁴ various books seeking to disseminate knowledge of North American origins and successive developments in environmental history (Fressoz *et al.*, 2014; Quenet, 2014; Locher, Quenet, 2009) or the translation of a collection of articles by William Cronon, published under the title *Nature et récits. Essays in Environmental History*, in 2016. The debate is also fuelled by re-readings of French (Pessis *et al.*, 2013; Judet, 2020) and global (Jarrige, le Roux, 2017) history in the light of the issues highlighted by the new approach, thus integrating the environment in an understanding of past phenomena. This interest can be explained by our current circumstances. The (simultaneously sanitary, climatic, energetic and economic) challenges facing society reveal and requires an understanding of the impact of human activities on the environment, as well as humans’ dependence on nature.

Environmental history and the history of tourism in the mountains: a construction of new knowledge?

Environmental history and Alpine research

- 5 A growing interest in environmental history is also evident in research on the history of the Alps and mountains in general. In recent years, a significant number of scientific publications have explicitly referred to this topic. In 2019, Polity Press published *The Alps. An environmental history*, an English translation of historian Jon Mathieu’s *Die Alpen: Raum - Kultur - Geschichte* (Mathieu, 2015, 2019). As stated in the original title, it brings together the spatial, cultural and historical dimensions of the Alpine territory under the umbrella concept of environmental history. This observation allows us to formulate the question that drives our thinking: Does environmental history produce innovation in the construction of knowledge on the history of the Alpine territory? When asked about this point, Jon Mathieu describes the way of *making knowledge* proposed by environmental history as both “old and new.”⁵ Since the beginning of the 20th century, studies carried out in the field of Alpine research – in particular, by geographers trained in the school of Vidal de la Blache – had already adopted an approach that provided, among others, an understanding of spatial dynamics without neglecting the temporal and, therefore, historical dimension and without even thinking of the history of the civilisation of the Alps as being influenced by the characteristics of the natural environment⁶. Moreover, the disciplinary cross-fertilisation that environmental history calls for is a particular aspect of Alpine research, as historian Jean-François Bergier

notes, due to the specific characteristics of the geographical context. Bergier states that “the history of the Alps can only be interdisciplinary [...] Because here, more than anywhere else, history is a confrontation between Man and Nature [...]. Moreover, Nature offers the historian sources of information that he seldom finds elsewhere. He can therefore take advantage of the achievements (and hypotheses) of geology and physical as well as human geography, of climatology [...] of glaciology, of palaeobotany, of forestry sciences and dendrochronology, and so on”⁷ (transl. from Bergier, 1996, p. 16). Moreover, according to Mathieu, environmental history is innovative because it allows a narrative to be constructed around the attempt to unravel the interactions between biophysical and human factors that take place over time.

Young researchers and the history of mountain tourism: widening spatial and temporal limits, crossing disciplinary fields, proliferating sources

- 6 Our article focuses more specifically on the intersection between environmental history and the study of tourism in the Alps. It evaluates whether environmental history is an approach that can be used to renew knowledge about a phenomenon that has already been observed in various disciplines. Accordingly, we present the results of a research experiment (carried out in the field of architectural history) regarding the history of ski resorts in the French-Italian Alps, while adopting the tools of environmental history. Our work raises theoretical and methodological questions and forms part of recent scientific output pioneered by young researchers, which we will discuss in brief.
- 7 Tourism is a privileged field of exploration for environmental history, as biophysical elements make up one of the primary resources of economic activity. Scott Moranda justifies the interest in this field by noting the possibility of “building a bridge between older cultural histories of tourism and a resurgent interest by historians in material and economic history” (Moranda 2015, p. 270). *Skiing into modernity. A cultural and environmental history* by Andrew Denning (2015), the work of Robert Groß (2017) on the evolution of skiing in Vorarlberg, Austria, and the social and environmental history of the tourism development of the French and Spanish Pyrenees proposed by Steve Hagimont (2017) are some of the many studies on mountain territories that are similar to this line of research. These authors highlight the transformation of elements drawn from the environment into a consumer product (Hagimont, 2017, p. 9) through the mediation of cultural imaginaries (Denning, 2015). They also demonstrate how history is influenced by factors external to the human sphere, including climate (Groß, Winiwarter, 2015) and natural hazards. This research is based on extensive archival work. The researchers focus on the long term (from the advent of tourism to the present day) and consider the evolution of the multiple components of a territory, which require the consideration of sources of different natures (administrative acts, letters, postcards, photos, press articles, maps, plans) that are often dispersed in various collections.
- 8 Such dynamic scientific output is undoubtedly stimulated by the recent creation of centres that bring together researchers from various disciplines around the study of mountains. The LabEx ITTEM⁸, the CIRM⁹ and the Environmental Humanities research group at the University of Lausanne, the Institut Kulturen der Alpen¹⁰ at the University

of Lucerne and the Ge.S.Di.Mont in Edolo¹¹, among others, facilitate the establishment of interdisciplinary studies and show a marked interest in environmental and ecological issues. Additionally, some laboratories have focused on the history of the Alps (e.g. LabiSAlp¹² in Mendrisio and LARHRA in Lyon¹³) and are open to contributions from geographers, economists, architects and sociologists, as well as studies that interweave human, economic and cultural history with environmental history.

Building an environmental history of winter sports resorts in the French-Italian Alps

The state of research on Alpine ski resorts

- 9 The history of winter sports resorts has been the subject of much research in several disciplinary fields – among others, notable studies in France have been carried out in the field of geography and territorial economy (Balseinte, 1958; Préau, 1968; Knafou, 1978; Guérin, 1984; Perret, 1993). Issues of the *Revue de géographie Alpine/Journal of Alpine Research* have also been devoted to the subject.¹⁴ Given the current threats to the future of winter sports resorts (because of climate change, market saturation and ageing infrastructure, among others), the most recent works emphasise the need to study ski resorts in the context of the territory (François, 2007; Vlès, 2016).
- 10 However, in the field of architectural research, ski resorts built at high altitudes have been studied mainly as autonomous establishments, the result of the colonisation of the mountain by urban culture and society. Ski resorts have been read as paradigmatic objects through which to grasp the concretisation of a society's imaginaries (Stacher, 2014; Picon-Lefèbvre, 2020), the evolution of modernity during the second half of the 20th century (De Rossi 2005, 2012; Wozniak 2004) and technological, typological and urbanistic innovation (Lyon-Caen, Chalabi, 2012, Delemontey, 2016).

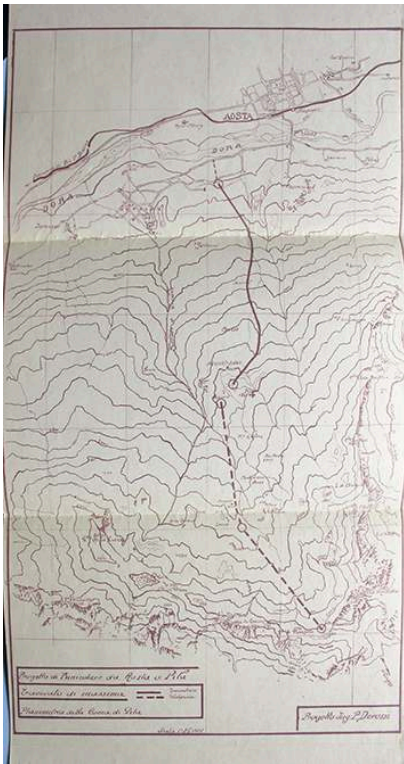
A study of the relationships between the architectural project and the environment over time

- 11 The present research considers the history of the construction of ski resorts as part of the process of a territory's transformation. On the one hand, we demonstrate that the construction of new buildings and infrastructure affects the multiple components of a territory; on the other hand, we highlight how the sites' historical, geomorphological and environmental characteristics influenced the design and development of the resorts. Environmental history constitutes the theoretical frame of reference for both the definition of a method and the production of analytical tools. This perspective requires broadening the study's spatial and temporal limits and including new elements such as geology, topography and hydrography in the construction of the narrative. Through two case studies (the Chamrousse resort in France and the Pila resort in Italy), "the usefulness of environmental history" (Cronon, 2016) to renew knowledge about Alpine ski resorts is put to the test.

Natural resources as a historical construction. The development of tourism in Pila (Aosta Valley) 1920–1980

- 12 Pila is a natural terrace north of the city of Aosta, Italy, situated between 700 and 1,900 metres above sea level. The built fabric is the incomplete result of a plan for a so-called “third-generation” (later, “fourth-generation”) resort designed by architect and urbanist Laurent Chappis between 1964 and 1972. A study of various archives,¹⁵ as well as an examination of the local newspaper *La Vallée d’Aoste* and old cartography,¹⁶ has made it possible to reconstruct the long history of the site, which bears witness to a rich succession of largely unfinished projects between 1930 and 1980. This trajectory has been cross-referenced with the evolution of the network of actors and the changes in the cultural, political, geographical and economic context. Each project identified different elements of the environment (e.g., vegetation, sun, snow) as a resource for the development of tourism in the high mountains and envisaged the connection of the new establishment with the territory in different ways. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Pila Basin, previously the site of Alpine pastures and mining activities, was also a popular destination for villagers during the summertime, as shown by numerous articles in *La Vallée d’Aoste* that praise its forest, landscapes and water sources: “Since the end of June, the scabrous path of the Hermitage has been used by tourists, villagers and strollers of all kinds” (transl., 1922).¹⁷ The first project for the development of winter sports was designed in 1934¹⁸ by engineer Paolo Derossi, who was working for the municipality of Aosta, and involved constructing a funicular railway without providing accommodations at those heights. Pila was then imagined as a snowfield for the inhabitants of Aosta and tourists arriving in the city by train.¹⁹

Fig. 1. The project for a funicular between Aosta and Pila, by Ing. Paolo Derossi, scale 1:25,000, 1934.



Folder: "Sviluppo turistico di Pila", Archives of Regione Valle d'Aosta

- 13 In 1936, an entrepreneur named Adriano Olivetti commissioned a group of architects from Milan to draw up a regional plan. Although the plan was never implemented, they identified Pila as an ideal site for a tourist resort. Responding to the values of hygiene and health that drove the debate of the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM), it seems that sunshine was the primary element around which the new high-altitude centre would be organised. The time spent in the high mountains is thought of as a way to reconstitute the body and mind weakened by life in the industrial and unhealthy city: "The insolation of the area at the solstices and equinoxes has been examined to establish which were the sunniest points likely to host the tourist centre" (transl. from Banfi *et al.*, 1943, p. 163). The projects that had developed just after the Second World War gradually focused on making use of snow and potentially accommodating large numbers of tourists on site. The car, a consumer good that had become accessible to the masses, was the preferred means of reaching the mountains, and the tourist facilities would be oriented around it. The regulatory plan designed by the engineer and professor Giorgio Rigotti in 1955, which was never implemented, proposed a road with a carriageway as a framework to organise the various services, sports facilities and residences. The perception of the site itself is studied from the viewpoint of the car.²⁰

Fig. 2. Project for a new sport and tourist settlement in Gressan by Giorgio Rigotti, General plan, 1:4,000, 1955.



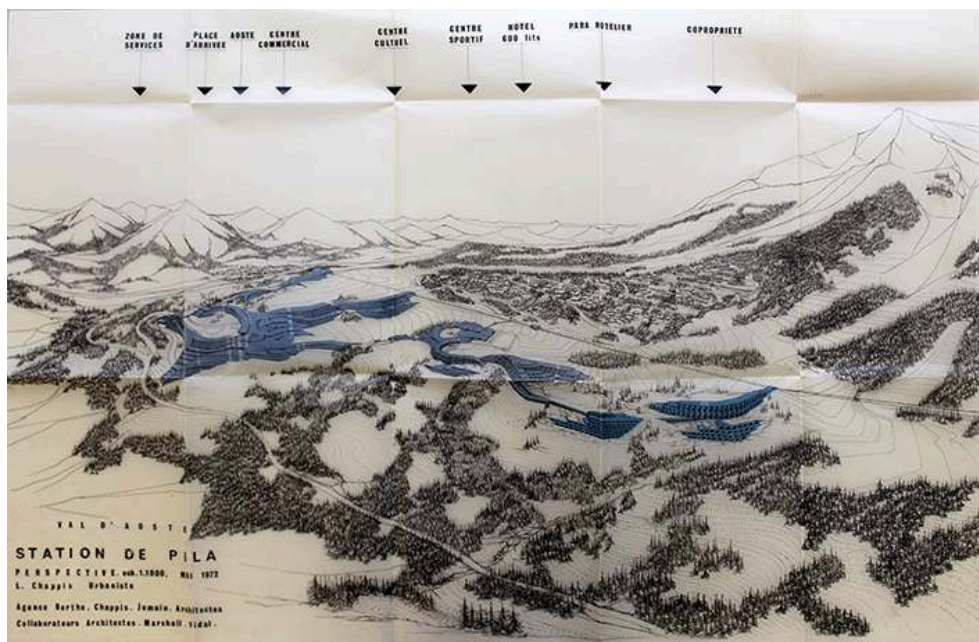
Archives of Gressan

- 14 Skiing is the central component of the large-scale project that the French architect and town planner Laurent Chappis proposed in 1964 for a private Italian-French company (STIFA, then Alpila). The latter had sufficient capital to obtain control of the land and invest in thousands of beds for tourists, having as a reference the integrated resorts that were simultaneously being built on the French side of the mountains.²¹ Therefore, the resort of Pila is thought of as an international destination, positioned at the nexus of the transalpine and motorway links that were completed in the 1960s.²² The number of tourist beds is calculated based on the ski area's development, and the natural elements are used to create a landscape for the skier: "Since the resort's *raison d'être* is the practice of skiing, all the development of the land and the distribution of activities are coordinated by the delimitation of skiable areas. [...] This boundary is drawn according to the orientation, slope and desirable convergence of ski slopes."²³ However, this vision is transitory. As both archive material and the press demonstrate, the project encountered difficulties, mainly due to tensions between the interests of the promoters, opposition from part of the local community who feared the impact on the landscape and the ambivalent positioning of the regional administration. This situation allowed the architect to transform the project in 1970 when a new master plan was created based on an agreement between the Regione Valle d'Aosta and the corporation. A completely different landscape was then conceived. The architecture sought to integrate with the topography and vegetation; the presence of the car had to be hidden: "The resort itself was designed with the imperative desire to fit into the site without disturbing it. Not destroying the trees and remaining on the scale of the site is the basis of any approach to the problem. [...] In this way, we think we can create a complex that,

while functional, will meet the requirements of environmental conservation.”²⁴ The project was never completed, as the company was forced to sell part of the land during the 1980s and 1990s to other developers who pursued a steady increase in their number of tourist beds.

- 15 Viewing these developments over many decades reveals that winter sports resorts are only the most recent stage in the evolution of tourism in the mountains, which, in the case analysed, began at the beginning of the 20th century. Over time, various relationships between tourist activity and the environment have been proposed with the design and creation of different landscapes. Today, we see the stratification of successive visions.

Fig. 3. Perspective representing the project for Pila, by Laurent Chappis Urbaniste, Berthe – Chappis – Jomain, Architectes, Marshall, Vidal, Collaborateurs-Architectes, scale 1 :10.000, May 1972.



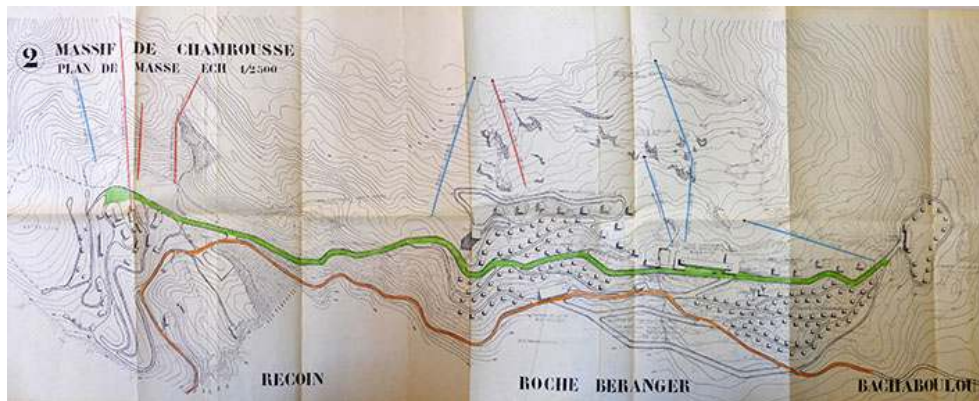
30 J 278, Departmental Archives of Savoie

The trajectory of a resort depends on the interactions between man and the environment. The case of Chamrousse (Isère) 1900–1980

- 16 Chamrousse is located in the Belledonne massif, between 1,650 and 1,800 metres above sea level. The resort, which became a municipality in 1989, is approximately 20 km by road from the town of Uriage and 30 km from Grenoble. It is divided into three hubs (Recoin, Roche Béranger and Bachat-Bouloud), arranged along a road that winds along the upper edge of the forest.
- 17 As in the previous case, the materials found at various archives²⁵ made it possible to discover a range of projects to develop tourist activity at high altitudes throughout the 20th century. In the early 1900s, the Chamrousse mountain pastures were the site of an Alpine garden created by the *Société des touristes du Dauphiné* to study Alpine flora.²⁶ The

site was then affected by the construction of chalets for the spa town of Uriage (Jaymond, 2013). A project of tourist roads, defended by a group of communes created in 1934²⁷ sharing the property of the Alpine pastures of Roche Béranger, intersects with the first proposals of local initiative, mixing private actors and communes, for tourist equipment.²⁸ The latter planned a chain of cable cars divided into sections, which would cross the road system at approximately 1,100 metres and run through an ancient coniferous forest with hotels and restaurants located at different altitudes near the resorts before reaching the snowfields²⁹. Under the Vichy regime, between 1940 and 1944, the *Service départemental des Ponts et Chaussées* was involved in the project, which gradually became concentrated above the tree line and planned a carriageway as the only means of accessing the snowfields³⁰. This plan was revisited after the Liberation and became the basis for a project designed by Laurent Chappis, chief architect, at the end of the 1950s³¹ and completed on the eve of the 1968 Olympic Games in Grenoble.

Fig. 4. Master plan for a ski resort in Chamrousse, scale 1 :2,000, by Laurent Chappis Urbaniste, for Département de l'Isère, 1959.



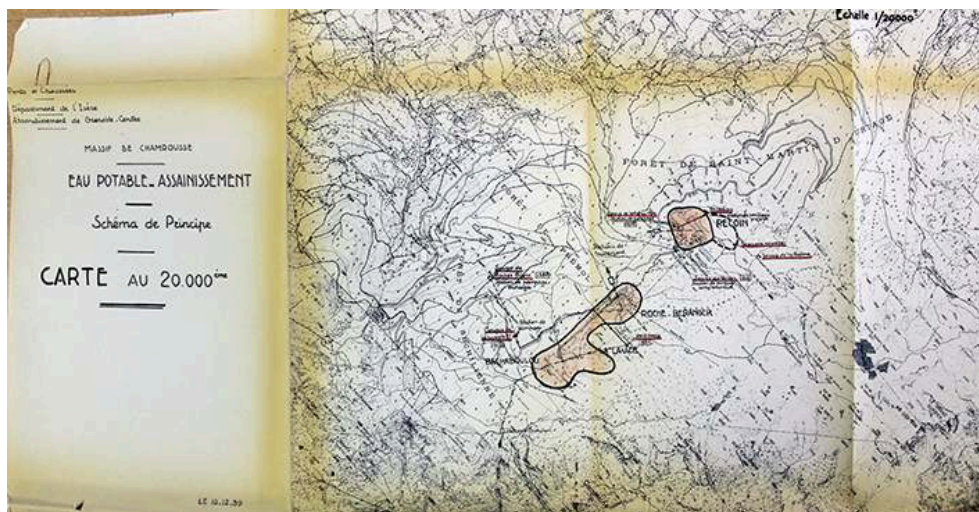
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- 18 By reconstructing this trajectory, we have succeeded in getting a better understanding of the central role that land ownership plays in defining the location of the new facility. The Roche Béranger project was developed on Alpine pastureland, which was jointly owned by the various communes at the foot of the massif. In the 1930s, these communes promoted the first initiatives, although they were never completed. The Recoin site was developed on plots of land expropriated from private owners during the plundering of Jewish families under the Vichy regime (Bruttman, 2010). The transfer to the department happened after the end of the Second World War, as the creation of a centre for winter tourism justified expropriation for public use.³²
- 19 Another key aspect of Chamrousse's history is the construction of an aqueduct to serve the new high-altitude resort. The archives show that the difficulty of ensuring an adequate supply was a constant in every project from the 1930s onwards because of the lack of drinking water sources nearby. The problem, which has affected various Alpine resorts over time, is aggravated by the peak of the winter season coinciding with the time when the natural springs run dry. Although the issue was taken into account by planners in the 1930s and 1940s, it was not considered by architects in the 1950s and 1960s, as the number of tourist beds was being calculated exclusively according to the development of the ski area. Throughout Chamrousse's history, water management has never been the subject of long-term planning and was often adapted to resolve

emergencies. In fact, the problem reappears with each increase in the number of visitors or residents³³. To solve the problem, costly pumping systems were installed following the completion of Recoign and Roche Béranger. A transformation of natural lakes into reservoirs was also planned (though never executed), as in the project of damming the Robert lakes,³⁴ which are a protected³⁵ area today. The use of springs beyond the limits of the resort was also planned as a fallback solution but caused tension with the industrial and agricultural activities that relied on the same basins.³⁶ The general plan of the ski resort has never been reconsidered to adapt it to the availability of springs; in the 1970s, however, because of a lack of drinking water, the department was forced to block the construction of new tourist residences and prevent extensions foreseen by the plan.³⁷

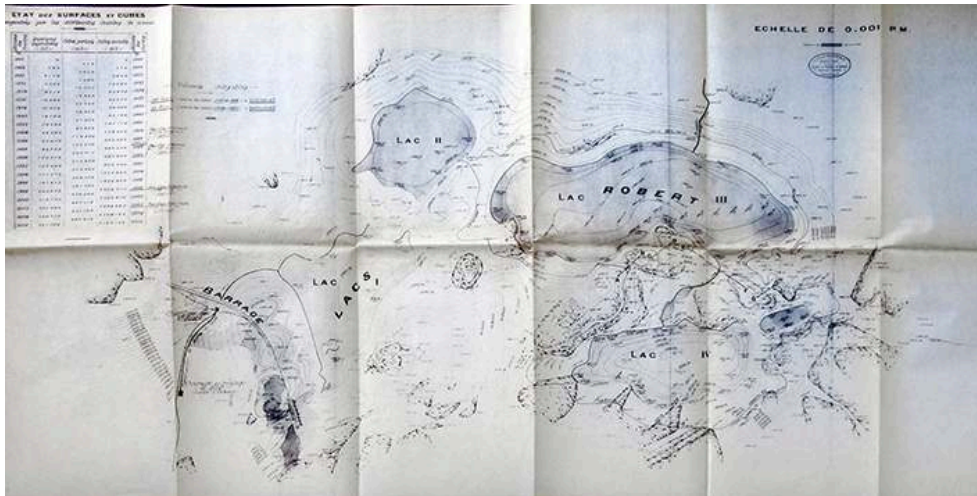
- 20 The history of Chamrousse shows that the creation of a new resort implies the transformation of multiple components of a territory. It also allows us to understand that the land system and the hydrography, among other elements belonging to the nature and history of the site, have played a decisive role in the evolution of the project.

Fig. 5. General plan for drinking water and sanitation, scale 1:20.000, by Ponts et Chaussées, Département de l'Isère, Arrondissement de Grenoble-Centre, 10/12/1959.



Conseil général de l'Isère. Direction économie et tourisme, 8516 W 73, Departmental Archives of Isère

Fig. 6. Project for the capture of the waters of Lake Robert. Undated map, scale 1:1,000.



Conseil général de l'Isère, Direction technique d'aménagement et de l'équipement, 8055 W 16, Departmental Archives of Isère

The uses of environmental history³⁸

- 21 The doctrine of the Snow Plan of the 1960s and 1970s, which guided the construction of ski resorts in the French Alps and inspired similar undertakings in Italy, considered winter sports resorts an “extension [...] of the city in a virgin rural space, subject to urbanistic, architectural or cultural models, provided by the outside and without correlation with the environment” (transl. from Delfante, 1970). Even today, much of historiography views the architectural design of high-altitude tourist establishments as being out of place. This position leads to a lack of interest in the physical dimension of the places concerned and favours an analysis of cultural imaginations and social dynamics, as Claude Raffestin writes: “The nature and culture of the tourist place are not supported by those of the real geographical place. [...] [They] are constructions of a social milieu [...]. However, what is the function of the real place in this production? It is only a support, a frame” (transl. from Raffestin, 1986, pp. 1, 16).
- 22 An approach using environmental history methods allows us to reverse the paradigm by re-reading the history of such infrastructure as being inseparable from the spatial and temporal dimensions of a real geographical place. The research reveals that a ski resort, like any human settlement, is set up in a territory characterised by interwoven natural or anthropic components (e.g., hydrography, geology, land use and property, transport and technical infrastructure). It has also been demonstrated that the high-altitude resort is a fairly recent model of tourism exploitation, the result of the economic growth of the 1950s and 1960s and of a cultural, social, political and legislative situation that created the conditions for land ownership control, the gathering of the necessary capital and technical implementation. However, other models were envisaged in the 20th century for the same sites, but they were never built. In our view, the notion of an “*ex nihilo* ski resort” and a generational interpretation (first-, second-, third- and fourth-generation tourist resorts) do not shed light on the trajectories of high mountain areas or explain the origins of the problems they face today.

- 23 Therefore, the history of the resorts has been reconstructed as the history of a territory whose limits and spatial scales vary over time and whose multiple interrelationships between environmental, social, economic and cultural components must be retraced. Such an approach seems to be in line with current issues: The discovery of the multiple components, both natural and anthropic, of high mountain tourist landscapes can prepare the way to identify resources other than snow, whose presence is increasingly uncertain due to rising temperatures. Furthermore, understanding history over the long term can facilitate a projection into the distant future.
- 24 Finally, we would like to return to the issue of the specificity of the Alps and mountains in general in the context of growing interest in environmental history. As various researchers have noted, high-altitude territories characterised by extreme natural conditions or extremely fragile ecosystems constitute a privileged object of study for questioning the interdependence between society and nature. However, the research approach is transposable, and the method used is valid for any human settlement. Moreover, a major benefit of this work is precisely its contribution to the construction of a methodology for writing the history of a territory, capable of reflecting the complexity of the world that we aim to understand (Cronon, 1993, 2016, p. 267).

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NOTES

1. Hughes (2006) and Quenet (2014) start by asking the same question.
2. In 1999, the European Society of Environmental History was established, echoing the founding of the American Society for Environmental History in 1977 (Locher and Quenet, 2009, p. 13).
3. The first generation of *environmental historians* was strongly influenced by ecologist ideas. This militant aspect has been less present since the 1980s, which saw the emergence of a second generation of researchers, including William Cronon.
4. “Environmental History”, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, no 56-4, 2009, p. 224.
5. Jon Mathieu, personal communication, November 2020.
6. In this regard, Mathieu cites studies by Philippe Arbos, Raoul Blanchard and Jules Blache.
7. This is from a speech in 1996 delivered at the founding of the International Association for the History of the Alps and reported in *Histoire des Alpes/Storia delle Alpi/Geschichte der Alpen*, no 1, 1996.
8. The Laboratoire d’Excellence “Innovations et Transitions territoriales en montagne” was founded in 2011 (originally named LabEx ITEM) and its activity extended until 2024, in 2020.
9. The Centre Interdisciplinaire de Recherche sur la Montagne was created in 2018.
10. The Institute Kulturen der Alpen was established in 2019.
11. The Centro di Studi Applicati per la Gestione Sostenibile e la Difesa della Montagna, established in 2006, is the research centre of the Università della Montagna, a branch of the Università degli Studi di Milano.

12. The Laboratorio di Storia delle Alpi takes over from the Istituto di Storia delle Alpi, founded in 2000 by the Alpine History Association and the Università della Svizzera Italiana.
13. The Laboratoire de Recherche Historique Rhône-Alpes is a Unité Mixte de Recherche of CNRS, founded in 2003.
14. *Revue de géographie alpine*, n° 84-3, 1996; n° 90-4, 2002.
15. The archives of the architect Laurent Chappis, fund 30 J, Departmental Archives of Savoie (AD 73), in Chambéry; the archives of the technical office of the municipality of Gressan, the municipal archives of Aosta, the archive of Regione Valle d'Aosta.
16. The topographic maps of the *Istituto Geografico Militare*, drawn up in 1890, 1930, 1960, scale 1:25,000 and the *Carta Tecnica Regionale*, drawn up from 1990, scale 1:10,000.
17. "Nouvelles du Pays", 1922.
18. During the fascist regime, Gressan was annexed to the municipality of Aosta.
19. Derossi Paolo, "Relazione-programma della costituenda Società Anonima Sviluppo Turistico in Valle d'Aosta SASTIVA", 1934, Dossier "Sviluppo turistico di Pila", Archivio Regione Valle d'Aosta.
20. Rigotti Giorgio, "*Piano regolatore di Gressan*", 1955, Gressan Archives.
21. Chappis Laurent, "Vallée d'Aoste. Études", 1964, 21 p. Box: *Pila. Aménagement de l'ensemble de la station*. Folder: *Premières études*. Fund Laurent Chappis, AD 73, 30 J 274.
22. The urban centres of northern Italy were brought closer together with the opening of an airport in Aosta in 1959 and the construction of the motorway network linking the Aosta Valley with Milan and Turin. The Great St Bernard and Mont Blanc tunnels were also completed in 1964 and 1965, respectively.
23. Chappis Laurent, "*Vallée d'Aoste. Études*", *op. cit.*, p. 6.
24. Chappis Laurent urbanist and Berthe-Chappis-Jomain architects, "Station de Pila, Plan Masse", 1972, dossier: *Aménagement de l'ensemble de la station*. Fund Laurent Chappis, AD 73, 30 J 278.
25. The archives of the architect Laurent Chappis, fund 30 J, (AD 73); the archives of the technical office of the municipality of Chamrousse, various funds of the Departmental Archives of Isère, (AD 38), in Grenoble.
26. Lachman, "*Jardins Alpains*", 1904. From an unidentified printed text. Dossier : *Jardins alpins*, 1904. Archives du rectorat de l'Université de Grenoble. AD 38, 21 T 196.
27. The Communes Indivises: Vaulnaveys-le-Haut, Vaulnaveys-le-Bas, Séchilienne, Brié-et-Angonnes, Herbeys.
28. On the one hand, the Parisian architect Jacques Sage, in collaboration with the Grenoble sports advisor Georges Rouet, envisaged a project for the Communes Indivises in 1935 (a project called SRCI: Sage-Rouet-Communes Indivises), which mainly concerned the land of Vaulnaveys-le-Haut; on the other hand, at exactly the same time, a project sponsored by private investors gathered in the SAREC (Société d'aménagement du Recoin de Chamrousse) was being developed on the lands of the commune of Saint-Martin-d'Uriage belonging to the Rouff family, who headed the Compagnie industrielle d'Uriage.
29. SAREC, 1935, 5 p.; Sage Jacques, "Rapport technique sur la création d'une station estivale et hivernale dans le massif de Chamrousse (Isère) ", 1935, 49 p.; Sage Jacques, "Aménagement du massif de Chamrousse en station de sports d'hiver et de tourisme estival", 1935, 6 p., dossier: Chamrousse- Historique - projets 1935 -1938. Chamrousse Archives.
30. Service des Ponts et Chaussées, Berrier Roger and Dosse Raymond, "Projet du Département de l'Isère. Massif de Chamrousse. Plan de situation Générale", 1944, Direction Départementale de l'Équipement. AD 38, 7093 W 107.
31. Chappis is hired as an architect and urban planner by the Groupement d'Urbanisme in charge of the development plan. Chappis Laurent, "Chamrousse. Aménagement du massif de Chamrousse, reconnaissance en ski avec M. Angelier, moniteur en chef", 1959, folder:

Reconnaitances; Chappis Laurent, "Aménagement de Chamrousse. Réunion du 22 décembre 1958", folder: Correspondance; Chappis Laurent, "Chamrousse. Reconnaissance ski avec M. Cumin", 1959, folder: Reconnaissances, AD 73, 30 J 147.

32. See, among others: Labuissière Jean, "Le massif de Chamrousse. Mémoire pour École Nationale de l'Administration", 1959, Conseil Général de l'Isère. Aménagement de Chamrousse (1944-1986). AD 38, 6765 W 1; Report by the Chief Engineer, "Déclaration d'utilité publique des travaux d'équipement de la station sportive du Recoin de Chamrousse", 1943, folder: Déclaration d'utilité publique. Conseil General. Direction économie et tourisme. AD 38, 8516 W 78.

33. See, among others: Sarret-Reynauld J., "Rapport géologique sur divers projets d'alimentation en eau potable de la station de séjour de Roche Béranger et de la station de sports d'hiver de Recoin (Isère)", 1959, Conseil Général. Direction économie et tourisme. AD 38, 8516 W 70; Sarret-Reynauld J., "Rapport géologique sur l'alimentation en eau potable de Chamrousse", 1966, 18 p., folder: Eau-historique. Chamrousse Archives.

34. Département de l'Isère, Direction départementale de l'Équipement. Arrondissement de Grenoble, "Station de Chamrousse. Renforcement de l'alimentation en eau potable. Captage des Lacs Robert. Avant-projet sommaire. Adduction par refoulement", 1982, folder: Eau-historique. Chamrousse Archives.

35. Robert's lakes are now part of the natural sites protected by the European Union's Natura 2000 network.

36. See, among others: Guizerix J. and C.E.A. - C.E.N.G. Division de Chimie Département de Chimie appliquée, "Proposition. Étude des caractéristiques de transfert des eaux du site de la cascade de l'Oursière (Massif de Belledonne - Isère)", 1974, 12 p., Conseil général de l'Isère. Direction technique d'aménagement et de l'équipement, AD 38, 8055 W 14.

37. Desbruyères Pierre, "Au tribunal administratif de Grenoble. La construction et les problèmes d'eau de la station de Chamrousse", *Le Dauphiné Libéré*, 6/12/1979, Chamrousse Archives; Direction départementale de l'équipement, Lettre au sous-préfet, "Alimentation en eau de Chamrousse", 1980, Conseil Général. Direction économie et tourisme. AD 38, 8516 W 73.

38. Cronon, 1993.

RÉSUMÉS

Environmental history is a rapidly developing field of study. In keeping with the ecological, energy and health issues that affect contemporary societies, it is important to understand the past by examining the interactions between human and natural factors. This interest is particularly evident in work on the Alps and mountains in general. Our contribution relates and adds to studies focused on the history of tourism in the Alps and assesses the capacity of environmental history to produce a renewed knowledge. Moreover, it investigates the specificity of the Alps and the mountains as a privileged field of study for environmental history. After outlining recent scientific output from around the world based on environmental history, we present the results obtained through a research experiment on the history of winter sports resorts in the French-Italian Alps. Understanding the relationships between the evolution of the projects and the natural and historical components of the sites where they are located and extending the spatial and temporal frameworks of the analyses and the use of multiple sources will clarify how tourism develops in high-altitude areas. Our work invites researchers to move beyond the image of infrastructure built "*ex nihilo*" or on so-called "virgin" sites and a narrative

limited to the period of the “Trente Glorieuses” to reveal the dynamics of how a territory transforms over time.

INDEX

Keywords : environmental history, tourist infrastructure, ski resorts, 20th-century Alpine architecture, French-Italian Alps

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