

# Local Resource Management and Institutional Change: Demographic Responses to Napoleon's Intervention in the Italian Alps.\*

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## Abstract

This paper investigates rural communities in the Trentino region of the Italian Alps who for centuries managed their communal forests and grazing land through self-governance. Many of these villages adopted legal charters to regulate their common property, however these institutions were forcefully abolished following the invasion by Napoleon's armies in 1796. We collect archival data on fertility and mortality before and after Napoleon's invasion for several hundred villages in the region. Statistical evidence shows that following Napoleon's intervention, charter villages experience an increase in population growth relative to non-charter populations, followed by a later increase in mortality rates. This appears consistent with historical accounts of increasing deforestation and exploitation of grazing lands following the institutional changes initiated by Napoleon.

**Keywords:** Common Property, Legal Institutions, Sustainability.

**JEL Codes:** D23, K11, L14, N53, P48

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