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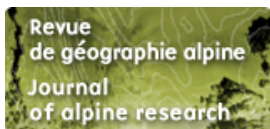
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Federica Corrado

## **Mathieu Petite, *Identités et chantiers dans les Alpes***

Peter Lang SA, Bern, 2011

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## Mathieu Petite, *Identités et chantiers dans les Alpes*

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- 1 The book deals with the issue of local development projects in Alpine area, paying attention on objects, territories and networks involved in the projects construction. The general focus is to understand as specific groups of subjects or single subjects take part to process of territorialization and identification of a community or an aggregation in order to define local development paths.
- 2 According to this general focus, the author deepens theoretical aspects, he analyses four case studies and he makes some final considerations, starting from the results of case studies analyses. So, the book is divided in three parts.
- 3 The first part includes theoretical reflections on specific concepts: territory and identity do not exist for themselves, a priori of territorialization process, but they are produced during the same process of territorialization. In this process, objects have a symbolic role and they are used to produce representations, in some cases they become elements of local ideologies. Subjects – through these ideologies - have the power to perform internal and external vision on a specific territory and to address projects on specific directions. In specific cases, as in the Alps, these representations are very closed to stereotyped images shared by internal and external society. In the history different stereotyped images have been attributed to the Alps: from romantic visions to place of wilderness and loisir. On the base of these considerations, it emerges that territorial objects are not only instruments to put in value in a project: specific and multiple symbolic meanings are given to them by different groups of interest. So, different types of relations (cooperative, conflicting, etc.) are established through the subjects and these relations contribute to implement the local process of territorialization.
- 4 Taking into account the concepts analyzed in the first part of the book, the second part presents the methodology individuated for the case studies analysis and the local development projects selected as case studies.
- 5 In particular, the case studies selected by the author are: a) the realization of a footbridge that links the part of Valais of German language to the part of Valais of French language. This footbridge has been built *ex nihilo*, it is not an element of territorial heritage, but his realization represents an important symbol of conjunction of two alpine people belonging to two different linguistic regions; b) a project of valorization of a territorial heritage to support a process of recognition of Walser identity in Vallorcine municipality; c) a project of local development in the depopulated village of Saint-Martin in Valais, where institutional subjects have implemented agro-touristic policies in order to create new economic possibilities to live there. This development action has generated interesting regional dynamics of development; d) a project of removal of unused signpost or material structures in mountain area in order “to clean” mountain landscape. This operation has been conducted by Mountain Wilderness, environmental organization with specific attention to the mountains, and it has moved different interests at different level.
- 6 In the third part of the book, the author illustrates the results of the analysis and he proposes final considerations. First of all, he puts in evidence as objects are relatively interpreted by the subjects involved in the process of recognition. Different images are produced on territorial objects and – on the base of these images – different relations are established through the subjects. Secondly, he underlines that all cases studied presented implement local dynamic that put in relation groups of subjects, institutions at different level and individual subjects: projects and objects become elements that change traditional representations of the space and are used to perform territorial identity. Thirdly, objects and projects are necessary to create relations through the subjects on which to implement local development process but at the same time networks of subjects search legitimation through the objects.

- 7 Chapter 3 deals with the issue of material objects in relation to the society. Three theoretical  
approaches are remembered on this issues:
- 8 a) symbolic interactionism in which the object depends on the intention to act of the subjects, it  
is the result of social interaction and it is realized and transformed during a definition process  
referred to the social interaction;
- 9 b) anthropologic approach referred to four interpretation of material culture. First  
interpretation considers the object as witness of a past that must be reconstitute. Second  
interpretation considers the object as sign in a semiologic vision. Third interpretation refers to  
the idea of social object. Fourth interpretation regards the memory object.
- 10 c) approach referred to actor network theory and interesting for the concept of network , human  
and not human role, not division between world and words.
- 11 Chapter 4 is focused on the concept of network with specific attention to two different aspects:  
scientific aspect referred to the concepts of social network, actor network, etc; empirical aspect  
related to informal links through local community to solve specific problems. Interesting  
consideration is that the object has been transformed by the subject during the process of  
construction of a project. This project is connected to multiple spaces of references, levels,  
scales.

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**Droits d'auteur**

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