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(Article begins on next page)

1 **MINERAL WEATHERING AND LESSIVAGE AFFECT MICROBIAL COMMUNITY**
2 **AND ENZYME ACTIVITY IN MOUNTAIN SOILS**

3 Marinari S.^{a*}, Marabottini, R.^a, Falsone G.^b, Vianello G.^b, Vittori Antisari L.^b, Agnelli A.^{c,e},
4 Massaccesi L.^c, Cocco S.^d, Cardelli V.^d, Serrani D.^d, Corti G.^d

5

6 ^aDipartimento per l'Innovazione nei sistemi Biologici, Forestali e Agroalimentari, Università degli
7 Studi della Tuscia, Italy

8 ^bDipartimento di Scienze e Tecnologie Agro-Alimentari, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di
9 Bologna, Italy

10 ^cDipartimento di Scienze Agrarie, Alimentari e Ambientali, Università degli Studi di Perugia, Italy

11 ^dDipartimento di Scienze Agrarie, Alimentari ed Ambientali, Università Politecnica delle Marche,
12 Ancona, Italy

13 ^eResearch Institute on Terrestrial Ecosystem (IRET-CNR), Italy

14

15

16

17 ***Corresponding author: marinari@unitus.it**

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19

20 **Abstract**

21 The aim of the study was to assess if pedogenic processes such as mineral weathering and lessivage,
22 other than organic matter accumulation, can affect soil microbial population and enzyme activities.
23 This study examines six soil profiles located in a karst region of the North-Eastern Italian Alps and
24 characterized by a vertical textural differentiation due to lessivage. For each soil, four pedological
25 layers were recognized according to the dominant soil forming process: *i*) the top soil (Tp layer),
26 formed by A and AB horizons, characterized by organic matter accumulation; *ii*) the subsurface
27 eluviated layer (Elu layer), comprising AE and EB horizons; *iii*) the layer dominated by the in-situ
28 mineral weathering (Wh layer), made by Bw horizons; *iv*) the deepest layer (Ls), subjected to clay
29 illuviation and comprised by Bt horizons. In the upper layers (Tp and Elu), because of the low pH,
30 weathering also occurred, as indicated by the presence of disordered smectite and by the high values
31 of pedogenic Fe oxi-hydroxides to pseudo-total Fe ratio.

32 The microbial biomass content and structure, and the enzyme activities significantly differed in the
33 four pedological layers. The amount of microbial biomass was, as expected, most abundant in the
34 Tp layer, where bacteria and actinomycetes abounded. Conversely, in Elu and Wh we observed a
35 fungal-to-bacterial biomass ratio significantly higher than in Tp and Ls; in Elu, also the gram (+)/
36 gram (-) ratio was the highest. In the upper layer, the interaction between enzymes and minerals like
37 disordered smectite and pedogenic Fe-oxides appeared as responsible for the inhibition of the total
38 enzyme activity per unit of organic C, and of the lipase activity. In Ls layer, where clay illuviation
39 and high organo-minerals interaction occurred, the potential hydrolysis of organic matter was low,
40 as revealed by the SEI/TOC ratio, the reduced lipase activity, and the inhibited activity of α -
41 fucosidase and α -mannosidase. Even if the activity of most enzymes depends on the substrate
42 availability, which decreases with soil depth, those involved in lipid degradation displayed the
43 maximum activities in Elu and Wh layers, where a relative increase of the fungal population was
44 observed. In conclusion, our findings showed that the soil functionality, expressed by the microbial

45 community structure and enzymes activity, can vary according to organic matter–mineral
46 interaction following the weathering and lessivage gradients along the soil profiles.

47

48 *Keywords:* pedogenic processes, microbial biomass, organo-mineral interactions, illuviation, soil
49 horizons.

50 **1. Introduction**

51 Mountain soils are often weakly developed because of several limiting factors such as steep slope
52 and low temperature, which accelerate soil erosion and slow down the mineral weathering and
53 organic matter oxidative kinetics, respectively (Legros, 1992; De Feudis et al., 2019; Cardelli et al.,
54 2019; Massaccesi et al., 2020). Among the soil forming processes occurring in mountain soils,
55 organic matter accumulation at soil surface (e.g., Boča and Miegroet, 2017),
56 decomposition/neof ormation of clay minerals, and translocation of clay particles and organics along
57 the soil profile (Bockheim and Gennadiyev, 2000) are frequent. The organic and mineral phases can
58 reciprocally affect themselves, with soil organic matter (SOM) enhancing mineral weathering and
59 controlling the formation of secondary minerals (e.g., Anderson et al., 1982; Dahlgren and Ugolini,
60 1989), which in turn contribute to SOM stabilization (e.g., Eusterhues et al., 2003). The organo-
61 mineral interactions are one of the main mechanisms driving the stabilization of SOM, and the
62 nature of clay minerals controls this process (e.g., Mikutta et al., 2007; Agnelli et al., 2008; Kögel-
63 Knabner et al., 2008; Barré et al., 2014; Gartzia-Bengoetxea et al., 2020). The ability of clay
64 minerals to stabilize SOM is function of the reactivity of the mineral surfaces (e.g., Mikutta et al.,
65 2006; Wang et al., 2017), which decreases from high-charge phyllosilicates such as vermiculites
66 and smectites to illite and kaolinite (Bruun et al., 2010). As a part of SOM, also enzymes can be
67 stabilized by clay minerals, either by adsorption through enzyme active-sites and occlusion in
68 micro-aggregates (Sollins et al., 1996). These mechanisms limit the substrate accessibility and
69 contribute to form a reservoir of potential enzymatic activity into the soil (Burns et al., 2013) by
70 protecting enzymes against proteolysis and denaturation (Nannipieri et al., 2012). Because of this,
71 the enzyme activity is considered a sensitive indicator of ecotoxicological pollution (Turan, 2019;
72 Bilen et al., 2019). The ecological benefit of the organo-mineral interactions including enzymes has
73 demonstrated to play a key role also in terms of soil resilience (Benitez et al., 2004).

74 In soils affected by lessivage, clay minerals and their colloidal properties can further control *i*) the
75 possible translocation of the organo-mineral complexes, and *ii*) the formation of eluviated and
76 illuviated horizons (E and Bt, respectively) due to mobilisation, transport, and deposition of clay
77 particles or clay-humus complexes within the soil profile (Schaetzl and Anderson, 2005).
78 Furthermore, decomposition and synthesis of clay minerals are two processes often associated with
79 lessivage (Presley et al., 2004; Schaetzl and Anderson, 2005). Clay and clay minerals can be
80 weathered in the upper and more acidic soil compartment by congruent dissolution and the soluble
81 by-products translocated in the B horizons, where they precipitate to form new minerals (Shaetzl
82 and Anderson, 2005). When the lessivage is dominant on mineral weathering, the clay
83 mineralogical assemblage in the eluviated and illuviated horizons is usually similar, whereas under
84 decomposition/neof ormation processes the clay mineralogy can be strongly different. Consequently,
85 organo-mineral interaction, and thus microbial biomass and enzyme activities, can be affected by
86 the amount and nature of clay minerals (Torn et al., 1997; Wiseman and Püttmann, 2005; Mikutta et
87 al., 2006),

88 Since, as far as we know, few papers focused on the effects of pedogenic processes on soil
89 biochemical properties (e.g., Vittori Antisari et al., 2018), a combined pedological, chemical, and
90 biochemical approach has been adopted in this study to increase the knowledge on the soil
91 microbial community and enzymatic activity along the pedon. Specifically, the aim of this work
92 was to assess if lessivage and/or mineral weathering, other than SOM accumulation, can influence
93 microbial community structure and enzyme activity in mountain soils. We hypothesized that,
94 although SOM accumulation is the main driver of the soil biochemical activity, lessivage and
95 mineral weathering could act as limiting factors for the enzyme activities involved in the nutrient
96 cycling through organo-mineral interactions. We tested the hypothesis by a physicochemical,
97 mineralogical, and biochemical approach on six soil profiles with evident vertical textural
98 differentiation due to lessivage in a karst region located in the North-Eastern Italian Alps.

99

100 2. Materials and Methods

101 2.1 Study area and soil sampling

102 The study area was located close to the Brocon Pass (1600 m above sea level), North-eastern Italian
103 Alps (Figure 1), where the soils developed on the so called “scaglia rossa”, a thinly-layered, red to
104 reddish-pink marly limestone interbedded with clayey micritic limestones and shales (Tosoni,
105 2011). This rock has variables contents of clay minerals like micas and smectites (ISPRA, 2010),
106 and the colour is due the dispersion of iron oxides (mainly hematite and goethite) in the limestone
107 mass (Bertola and Cusinato, 2004).

108 The area is characterized by moderate to steep slopes covered by herbaceous vegetation mainly
109 composed of *Festuca paniculata* (L.) Schinz & Thell. subsp. *paniculata* and *Cirsium eriophorum* L.
110 (Table S1), and it is intensively pastured during the summer-autumn period. The climate is
111 continental with cold winters and hot summers. The mean annual air temperature is 4.4 °C, with
112 July as the warmest month (15.7 °C) and December as the coldest one (-2.7 °C). The mean annual
113 precipitation, including the snow water equivalent, is 976 mm. The soil is covered by snow from
114 mid-October till the end of April.

115 Six sites were selected within an area of about 0.55 ha (Figure 1). For each site, a soil profile was
116 dug to investigate the solum and the relationship between the soil forming processes and the
117 physicochemical and biochemical soil properties. All the profiles were described by Schoeneberger
118 et al. (2012) (Table S1). The investigated soils had a depth that varied from 37 to 60 cm (Table S1),
119 with the topsoil characterized by well-developed O horizons (1.5-4 cm thick) resting on A, AB, or
120 AE horizons (9-21 cm thick); below the topsoil, rather thick Bw and Bt horizons formed. Even if
121 the soils developed from calcareous parent materials, during the field operations the soil material
122 never showed effervescence with 10% HCl solution, indicating the absence of CaCO₃ in the solum.
123 This feature testified the occurrence of decarbonation along the investigated soil thickness.

124 Soil samples were collected by genetic horizons and maintain in a refrigerated bag for all the field
125 operations. Once in the laboratory, $\frac{3}{4}$ of each soil sample were air dried and sieved at 2 mm, while
126 the rest was kept at 4 °C for the biochemical analyses.

127

128 *2.2 Soil physical and chemical analyses*

129 The particle-size distribution was determined by the pipette method (Gee and Bauder, 1986) after
130 treatment with NaClO solution at 6% of active chlorine to remove organic cements (Lavkulich and
131 Wiens, 1970) and with dithionite-citrate-bicarbonate solution to remove Fe-Al oxi-hydroxides
132 cements (Mehra and Jackson, 1960). The clay fraction was collected for the mineralogical analysis.
133 The pH was determined potentiometrically in water after one night of solid:liquid (1:2.5 w:v ratio)
134 contact, using a combined glass-calomel electrode immersed into the suspension. The electrical
135 conductivity (EC) was determined by a WTW multi 340i conductivity meter (Weilheim, Germany)
136 in a 1:2.5 soil:water suspensions (w:v). Total organic carbon (TOC) and total nitrogen (TN) were
137 measured using the dry combustion method with Thermo Soil NC—Flash EA1112 elemental
138 analyser. The exchangeable cations were displaced by hexamine cobalt (III) chloride (Orsini and
139 Remy, 1976). The displaced Ca, Mg, K, Na, and Al were determined by Inductive Coupled Plasma
140 – Optic Emission Spectroscopy (ICP-OES, Ametek Germany). Exchangeable H was calculated as
141 the pH difference between the 0.2 M BaCl₂ solution before and after contact with the soil samples
142 (Corti et al., 2019). Effective cation exchange capacity (eCEC) was obtained as the summation of
143 all exchangeable cations (Ca, Mg, K, Na, Al, and H). The base saturation was obtained by dividing
144 the sum of exchangeable Ca, Mg, K, and Na by the eCEC value.

145 Pedogenic Fe and Al oxi-hydroxides were measured through extraction with Na-dithionite-citrate-
146 bicarbonate solution (Fe_{DCB} and Al_{DCB}) (Mehra and Jackson, 1960). Fe and Al in the extracts were
147 measured by ICP-OES. The pseudo-total amount of Al, Fe, Ca, Mg, K, Na, Mn, P and S (Al_T, Fe_T,
148 Ca_T, Mg_T, K_T, Na_T, Mn_T, P_T, and S_T) was obtained digesting finely ground sample aliquots in
149 polyethylene vials with *aqua regia* (3:1 HCl:HNO₃) in microwave oven (Milestone, 1200)

150 according to Vittori Antisari et al. (2014); then, the concentration of each element in the extract was
151 measured by ICP-OES. The Fe_{DCB}/Fe_T ratio was taken as an index of the amount of pedogenic Fe-
152 oxides with respect to the total Fe (Fe_T) (Qafoku and Amonette, 2017). The ratio between the molar
153 sum of Ca_T , Mg_T , K_T , and Na_T and the molar sum of Al_T and Fe_T [$(Ca_T+Mg_T+K_T+Na_T)/(Al_T+Fe_T)$],
154 which represent the most and less mobile groups of elements, respectively (Chadwick et al., 1999),
155 was calculated to assess the redistribution of the elements along soil profile driven by their mobility.

156

157 *2.3 Mineralogical analysis*

158 Mineralogical assemblage was determined on powdered and manually compressed aliquots by X-
159 ray diffraction with a Philips PW 1830 diffractometer, using the Fe-filtered Co $K\alpha_1$ radiation (35
160 kV and 25 mA); the step size was $0.02^\circ 2\theta$, the scanning speed was 1 sec per step, and sample
161 aliquots were scanned from 3 to $80^\circ 2\theta$. The mineralogical composition was obtained by identifying
162 the minerals based on their characteristic peaks (Brindley and Brown, 1980; Dixon and Schulze,
163 2002). For each sample, a semi-quantitative estimation was obtained by calculating the area
164 produced by the primary peak of each mineral by multiplying the peak height by the base at the
165 half-height. The clay fraction was Mg- or K-saturated; the Mg-saturated clays were
166 glycerol solvated, while the K-saturated ones were heated at $550^\circ C$. The presence of Al-
167 hydroxopolymers in the interlayers of the 2:1 clay minerals was ascertained, and their thermo-
168 stability assessed, by K-saturated and heated at $550^\circ C$ specimens (Brindley and Brown, 1980; Corti
169 et al., 1997; Dixon and Schulze, 2002).

170

171 *2.4 Soil biochemical analysis*

172 Soil microbial biomass C (MBC) and N (MBN) were determined using the fumigation-extraction
173 method (Brookes et al., 1985; Vance et al., 1987). MBC was obtained by $eC \cdot k_{eC}$, where eC was the
174 difference between organic C extracted using 0.5 M K_2SO_4 solution (1:4 w/v) from fumigated and

175 not-fumigated samples, and $k_{eC} = 2.64$ is the extraction efficiency coefficient (Joergensen, 1996).
176 The amount of C extracted by K_2SO_4 solution from non-fumigated samples (C_{ext}) was considered
177 the easily extractable and most labile soil organic C pool. MBN was calculated by $eN \cdot k_{eN}$, where eN
178 is the difference between N extracted using 0.5 M K_2SO_4 solution (1:4 w/v) from fumigated and
179 not-fumigated samples and $k_{eN} = 2.22$ is the extraction efficiency coefficient (Jenkinson, 1988). The
180 extracted C and N were determined with the TOC-V CSN and TNM-1 analysers (Shimadzu, Japan).
181 The living microbial biomass was determined as the sum of all microbial groups obtained using
182 Ester linked-Fatty Acid Methyl Ester (EI-FAME). The microbial community profiles were
183 determined, quantified, and converted to $\mu\text{mol} \cdot \text{g}^{-1}$ using peak areas from internal standard
184 (methylnonadecanoate, C19:0) used at known concentrations. A total of 13 EI-FAME biomarkers
185 were summed into the broad microbial groups Actinobacteria (10Me16:0, 10Me17:0, 10Me18:0),
186 Gram-positive (G+) bacteria (i15:0, a15:0, i16:0, i17:0, a17:0), Gram-negative (G-) bacteria (cy
187 17:0, cy 19:0 ω 8c, 18:1 ω 7c), and saprophytic fungi (18,1 ω 9c, 18:2 ω 6c), according to previous
188 studies (Zelles, 1999; Massaccesi et al., 2015; Stazi et al., 2017). The per mil fungal-to-bacteria
189 ratio (F/B) was calculated as an index of soil microbial community change, while G+/G- ratio was
190 proposed as an indicator of stressful conditions such as low oxygen availability, suboptimal pH or
191 water content, or low nutrient supply because of the greater dependence of G- than G+ on labile C
192 (Fanin et al., 2019). Moreover, the sum of EI-FAMES characteristic of general bacteria, G+ and G-
193 bacteria, actinomycetes, and fungi was used as broad taxonomic microbial grouping.
194 The soil enzyme activities were measured using 4-methylumbelliferine (MUF) and 7-amino-4-
195 methylcoumarin (AMC) fluorogenic substrates (Marx et al., 2001; Vepsäläinen et al., 2001). The
196 selected 17 enzyme activities (Table S2) are involved in the main biogeochemical cycle of C (β -
197 cellobiohydrolase, β -xylosidase, β -glucosidase, α -glucosidase, α -galactosidase, β -galactosidase, β -
198 glucuronidase, α -mannosidase, α -fucosidase, butyrate esterase, esterase lipase, and lipase activities),
199 N (leucine-arylamidase, valine arylamidase, and N-acetyl- β -glucosaminidase activities), P (acid
200 phosphomonoesterase activity), and S (arylsulphatase activity). Even if the pH values of the studied

201 soil samples ranged from 4.3 to 6.9, enzymes involved in a wide range of substance degradation
202 with optimal pH in acid and alkaline intervals were selected (Table S2). Therefore, specific
203 substrates were prepared using different buffer adjusted to the optimum for each selected enzyme
204 (0.5 M sodium acetate pH 5.5; 0.5 M Tris acetate pH 7.5). Fluorescence (excitation 360 nm,
205 emission 450 nm) was measured with an automatic fluorometric plate reader (Fluoroskan Ascent),
206 and readings were performed after 0, 30, 60, 120, and 180 min at 30 °C. The MUF and the AMC
207 standard curves were prepared and measured for each sample and buffer. The results were
208 expressed as nmoles of product (MUF or AMC) of each enzymatic reaction released per g of soil
209 sample per unit of time in relation to a standard curve prepared with increasing MUF or AMC
210 concentrations and incubated at the same experimental conditions. The Synthetic Enzymatic Index
211 (SEI), which expresses the sum of all enzyme activities, was calculated for all samples as a
212 synthetic measure of microbial functional capacity (Moscatelli et al., 2018). Based on the obtained
213 data, the specific enzyme activities per unit of TOC (SEI/TOC) was calculated to appraise the
214 nutritional status of SOM (Boerner et al., 2005; Trasar-Cepeda et al., 2008).

215

216 2.5 Data treatment

217 In the studied soils, four pedological layers were recognized according to the dominant soil forming
218 process: *i*) the topsoil layer (Tp), characterized by SOM accumulation and comprising the A and
219 AB horizons; *ii*) the sub-surface layer (Elu), providing indication of past or on going eluvial
220 processes and made of AE and EB horizons; *iii*) the intermediate portion of the soil profile (Wh),
221 characterized by *in-situ* mineral weathering and represented by Bw horizons; *iv*) the deepest layer
222 (Ls), subjected to clay illuviation and formed by Bt horizons. For each layer (Tp, Elu, Wh, and Ls),
223 the physicochemical, mineralogical, and biochemical properties have been calculated as the average
224 of the corresponding horizons for the six soil profiles. Because of the non-parametricity of the data
225 and the impossibility to transform them into parametrically distributed data, the significant

226 differences among the layers were checked by using the non-parametric Wilcoxon test. To define
227 the soil properties driving the layers differentiation, a principal component analysis (PCA) was run
228 for both physicochemical and biochemical data obtained from 30 soil samples (one per each
229 horizon) collected from the six profiles. This multivariate analysis is based on the linear model of
230 variance analysis and consists of decomposing the total variability among soil properties. The
231 variables were standardized due to the difference in the units of measure. The applicability of the
232 PCA to the data sets was verified through the application of Bartlett's sphericity test. Non-
233 parametric correlation (Spearman coefficient) was performed between physicochemical and
234 biochemical soil properties. Statistical analysis was performed using JMP 11.0 software.

235

236 **3. Results**

237 *3.1 Soil physicochemical characteristics*

238 The pH values of Tp, Elu, and Wh layers were strongly acid, with average values ranging from 4.55
239 to 4.82, while the deepest layer (Ls) significantly differed, reaching a moderately acid pH value of
240 5.97 (Table 1). The TOC and TN contents significantly decreased with depth (Table 1) and the
241 same trend was observed for P_T and S_T contents (Table 1). The C_{extr} concentration (Table 1), which
242 represented 1.80-3.43% of TOC, showed a decreasing trend with depth. Conversely, the
243 concentrations of Al_T, Fe_T, Ca_T, Mg_T, and K_T increased with depth (Table 2), while Mn_T and Na_T
244 had a homogenous content all throughout the profiles. The total clay content increased along the
245 profiles (Table 2), with the highest values, as expected, in Ls (692 g kg⁻¹). The eCEC values were
246 similar among soil layers (from 29.0 to 31.1 cmol₊ kg⁻¹) and the base saturation was always higher
247 than 50%. The EC values were lower in Elu and Wh (on average 0.07 and 0.09 dS m⁻¹, respectively)
248 than in Tp and Ls (0.35 and 0.20 dS m⁻¹). The content of pedogenic Fe and Al (Fe_{DCB} and Al_{DCB})
249 did not displayed a linear trend with depth (Table 2), but the Fe_{DCB}/Fe_T ratio (Figure 2A) had the
250 highest values (p<0.01) in Tp and Elu horizons (0.65 and 0.72, respectively). The

251 $(Ca_T+Mg_T+K_T+Na_T)/(Al_T+Fe_T)$ molar ratio showed lower values ($p<0.01$) in Tp, Elu, and Wh than
252 in Ls (Figure 2B). For these physicochemical data, the PCA has allowed to extract two principal
253 components with eigenvalues greater than 2 (Figure 3). The two-component model accounted for
254 64.5% of the total variance, with the first and the second axes explaining 41.6% and 22.9% of total
255 variation, respectively. The Table inserted in Figure 3 indicates that the first axis showed high
256 positive loadings for TOC, TN, P_T , S_T , and Fe_{DCB}/Fe_T ratio and high negative loading for C_{extr}/TOC
257 ratio. The second axis was positively driven by pH, EC, $(Ca_T+Mg_T+K_T+Na_T)/(Al_T+Fe_T)$ molar
258 ratio, and total clay. The PCA highlighted some differences among the four layers: *i*) Tp layer
259 generally showed positive values of both components; *ii*) Elu layer displayed positive values for the
260 first component and negative values for the second one; *iii*) Wh layer exhibited negative values for
261 both components; *iv*) Ls layer presented negative values for the first component and positive values
262 for the second one (Figure 3).

263

264 3.2 Soil mineralogy

265 The semi-quantitative mineralogical composition showed that quartz was the predominant primary
266 mineral (from 41 to 47%), with plagioclases, orthoclase, and micas present in small amounts (Table
267 3). All the samples showed the presence of a peak at 1.4 nm that moved to ≈ 1.8 nm after glycerol
268 solvation, and partially collapsed at ≈ 1.0 nm when the K-saturated specimen was heated at 550 °C,
269 indicating the presence of smectite (Figure S1). The 1.0 nm peak in the heated specimens was
270 however rather wide and asymmetrical in all samples, with the exception for those of the horizons
271 forming the Elu layers. A peak at 0.7 nm was detected in the Mg-saturated specimens and
272 disappeared after heating at 550 °C, indicating the presence of kaolinite. Therefore, in all the
273 horizons, the clay minerals were mainly represented by smectite (from 31 to 35%) and kaolinite
274 (from 2 to 5%). Smectite was also present as disordered layer minerals, as deduced from the broad
275 diffraction band between 1.4 and 1.5 nm of the Mg-saturated specimens and between 1.8 and 1.95

276 nm in the Mg-saturated and glycerol-solvated specimens. The pronounced asymmetry of the 1.0 nm
277 peak after specimen heating was indicative of Al polymers in the smectite interlayers, which
278 prevented the complete collapse of smectite at 550 °C (Table 3). In particular, disordered smectite
279 was present in the Tp and Elu layers, whereas HIS were absent in Elu layer.

280

281 *3.3 Microbial biomass and enzyme activities*

282 The amounts of MBC and MBN were significantly higher ($p < 0.05$; Table 4) in Tp (874 and 246 mg
283 kg^{-1} , respectively) than in the deeper soil layers (Wh and Ls; 118 and 227 mg MBC kg^{-1} ; 45 and 81
284 mg MBN kg^{-1}), while Elu layer displayed intermediate amounts (445 and 151 mg kg^{-1} ,
285 respectively). Conversely, the amount of the living microbial biomass expressed as the sum of the
286 microbial groups assessed by El-FAME and of bacteria and actinomycetes were the highest in Tp
287 (464, 449, and 53.5 nmol g^{-1} , respectively) and the lowest in Elu (63, 59, and 6.8 nmol g^{-1} ,
288 respectively). Furthermore, the F/B ratio was greater in Elu and Wh (47.5 and 39.1%, respectively)
289 than in Tp and Ls (28.2 and 24.4%), while the G+/G- ratio displayed the highest value in Elu (1.02)
290 (Table 4).

291 The enzyme activities involved in the C cycle (β -cellobiohydrolase, α - and β -glucosidase, β -
292 xylosidase, β -galactosidase, and β -glucuronidase) were the highest in Tp (76.3, 79, 389, 189, 89,
293 and 203 nmol MUF $\text{g}^{-1} \text{h}^{-1}$, respectively), and showed a significant reduction of their activity
294 starting from Elu (Table 5). Conversely, enzymes involved in N, P, and S cycles (N-acetyl- β -
295 glucosaminidase, leucine arylamidase, butyrate esterase, acid phosphomonoesterase, and
296 arylsulphatase) showed the highest activities in Tp and Elu layers and significantly decreased in Wh
297 or Ls (Table 5). Two over 17 enzyme activities, esterase lipase and valine arylamidase, did not
298 show any significantly change along the profiles, whereas α -mannosidase and α -fucosidase showed
299 a very low activity in Ls (9.7 and 8.2 nmol MUF $\text{g}^{-1} \text{h}^{-1}$, respectively; Figure 4A and B).
300 Conversely, the lipase had the lowest activity in Tp and Ls (154 and 197 nmol MUF $\text{g}^{-1} \text{h}^{-1}$,

301 respectively) and the highest in Wh (359 nmol MUF g⁻¹ h⁻¹; Figure 5A). The total enzyme activity
302 expressed per unit of organic carbon (SEI/TOC) displayed a similar trend of lipase (Figure 5B),
303 reaching in Ls an average value similar to that of Tp (110 vs. 77 nmol MUF mg_{TOC}⁻¹ h⁻¹;
304 respectively).

305 Compared to the others, lipase and esterase lipase activities were not correlated with pH, TOC, TN,
306 C_{extr}/TOC, clay content, and Fe_{DCB}/Fe_T (Table 6); lipase activity only showed negative correlations
307 with electrical conductivity (EC) and (Ca_T+Mg_T+K_T+Na_T)/(Al_T+Fe_T) ratio. The PCA run with the
308 soil biochemical data showed that 10 over the 17 enzyme activities had positive loading values
309 along the first component, which explained 62.8% of the total variance (Figure 6). Conversely, the
310 other seven enzyme activities (α -mannosidase, α -fucosidase, butyrate esterase, esterase lipase,
311 α -galactosidase, β -galactosidase, and lipase) were mainly correlated with the second component,
312 explaining 14.1% of the total variance.

313

314 4. Discussion

315 The clay coatings on soil pedis observed in the profiles (Table S1) and the increasing amount of clay
316 particles with depth (Table 2) proved that clay illuviation occurred in these soils and that this
317 process was responsible for the formation of Bt (illuviated) horizons. It is well known that clay
318 eluviation (with the formation of eluviated horizons) occurs mainly at pH values ranging between
319 4.5/5 and 6; below this range clay flocculates because of a high Al³⁺ and H⁺ activity in the soil
320 solution, while at higher pHs clay flocculates because of a high concentration of Ca²⁺ or other
321 divalent cations in the soil solution (Quénard et al., 2011). Accordingly, in the acid horizons (pH
322 4.55-4.82) of our soils clay eluviation could occur, whereas in the deep Ls layer the slight
323 increase of soil reaction (pH 5.97) induced clay to flocculate so to form illuviated horizons. In Ls,
324 the clay flocculation was possibly enhanced by the leached soluble elements (Levy et al., 1993;

325 Kaplan et al., 1997), which were able to increase the EC values with respect to the overlying Elu
326 and Wh layers.

327 The similar mineralogical assemblage of the four layers supported the occurrence of lessivage and
328 suggested that clay decomposition/neof ormation processes along the soil profiles were limited. The
329 presence of small amounts of hydroxy-Al interlayered smectite (HIS) indicated that weathering has
330 occurred through the intercalation of hydroxy-Al polymers into the smectite interlayers. This
331 transformation is rather common in soil affected by lessivage (e.g., Bonifacio et al., 2009). In
332 particular, the large presence of disordered smectite and very small amounts of HIS in the Elu layer
333 indicated the occurrence of weathering processes promoted by low pH values and of accumulation
334 of organic matter in the upper part of the soil profiles, as reported in several works carried out on
335 Italian mountains soils (e.g., Vittori Antisari et al., 2016; De Feudis et al., 2016; 2017a, b; Cardelli
336 et al., 2019). The occurrence of mineral weathering in Elu, as well as in Tp, is also confirmed by the
337 relatively high Fe_{DCB}/Fe_T ratio and by the PCA on soil physicochemical properties, which grouped
338 Tp and Elu layers into two well distinguished ellipses with respect to Wh and Ls (Figure 3).

339 The soil microbial biomass and the total enzyme activity (SEI) decreased with soil depth. These
340 results are usually found in soil since both these parameters largely depend on the amount and
341 quality of soil organic matter (Fierer et al., 2003; Sidari et al., 2008; Agnelli et al., 2016). However,
342 according to the PCA loading values on the first two PCs (Figure 6), soil biochemical properties
343 mainly depended on SOM accumulation process in Tp and Elu layers. Therefore, the highest values
344 of TOC content, coupled with the accumulation of N, P, and S in Tp and Elu, favoured the soil
345 microbial community (Likens et al., 2002; De Feudis et al., 2016; Adams et al., 2018), as indicated
346 by the higher MBC and SEI. Nonetheless, other processes than SOM accumulation affected the
347 biochemical properties of the investigated soils. Indeed, while TOC, TN, P_T , and S_T contents did not
348 significantly differ between Wh and Ls, SEI differed between them. As the main pedogenic process
349 at depth was the formation of Bt horizons due to clay illuviation, the lower SEI in Ls than in Wh
350 was ascribed to a higher inhibition of the enzyme activity due to the sorption of organics (including

351 enzymes) onto clay minerals (Singh et al., 2018), as demonstrated by the significant negative
352 correlation between SEI and clay content. By expressing the enzyme activity per unit of organic
353 carbon (SEI/TOC), it was possible to stress the effect of both leaching and weathering processes
354 (Marinari et al., 2020). In Ls, the hydrolytic activity per unit of TOC was lower than in Wh,
355 probably due to the organo-mineral interactions among substrates, enzymes, and the illuviated clay.
356 However, the SEI/TOC ratio was low also in Tp, where SOM accumulation was coupled to
357 relatively intense weathering conditions, as testified by the presence of disordered smectite and a
358 relatively high Fe_{DCB}/Fe_T ratio. According to Singh et al. (2018), in the Tp layer a strong inhibition
359 of the enzyme activities (per unit of TOC) probably occurred because of the interactions between
360 enzymes and smectite and/or pedogenic oxides.

361 A specific behaviour was observed for enzyme activities involved in the lipid degradation, lipase
362 and esterase lipase, which appeared not related to TOC content and, thus, to SOM accumulation.
363 Lipase showed the highest activity in Elu and Wh, and was low in Ls. As reported in a previous
364 study (Eichlerova et al., 2015), fungal groups have different patterns of enzymes such as esterase,
365 lipase, α -mannosidase, and α -fucosidase, so that the decrease of both F/B and G+/G- ratios in Ls
366 may justify the variations of soil biochemical activity. Furthermore, it has been shown that a
367 reduction in enzyme activity can occur when arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF) attach to lignin-
368 derived material such as lignin-derived biochar (Khan et al., 2020). The different enzyme activities
369 among soil layers may also indicate the presence of different microbial metabolic pathway as
370 consequence of selective sorption of aromatic and hydrophobic compounds such as lipids onto clay
371 mineral surfaces, so becoming less available to microbial attack (Kaiser and Guggenberger, 2000).
372 This was most possible in the Ls layer, where clay accumulated. In addition, the lowest activities of
373 α -fucosidase and α -mannosidase in Ls suggested the occurrence of a specific inhibition of these
374 enzymes by clay, as suggested by the high negative correlation coefficient between these enzyme
375 activities and clay content (Table 6).

376

377 5. Conclusions

378 Our findings showed that, in mountain soils developed from calcareous parent materials, pedogenic
379 processes such as mineral weathering and lessivage affect the soil biochemical properties along the
380 solum. The mineral fraction stabilized SOM in Tp and Ls, where the organo-mineral interactions
381 were more effective through the involvement of minerals like smectite and iron oxides in Tp and
382 illuviated clays in Ls. In Wh, where both organic substrates and enzymes were adsorbed onto clay
383 minerals, the microbial functions related to SOM degradation were more conservative, contributing
384 to the incipient phase of carbon sequestration in the horizons forming this layer. In this layer, the
385 microbial community was dominated by fungi, which were probably responsible for a higher
386 activity of the enzymes involved in the lipid degradation, particularly lipase and esterase lipase.
387 Therefore, soil functionality, expressed by microbial community and enzyme activities, varies
388 following weathering and lessivage processes, which differently affect the occurrence of organo-
389 mineral interactions along the soil profile. The lessivage, responsible for the formation of Bt
390 horizons, appeared to be a relevant process able to affect the activities of microbial biomass and
391 enzymes involved in SOM degradation.

392 Our results advocate that soil forming processes are key to understand the functioning of microbial
393 biomass and enzyme activities involved in SOM decomposition. Further, the used approach, which
394 considers the biochemical properties in relation to the pedogenic processes, can allow the
395 transferability of the results to other environments with similar factors of soil formation.

396

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401

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636

Table 1. Values of pH, total organic C (TOC), total N (TN), extractable C (C_{extr}), $C_{\text{extr}}/\text{TOC}$ ratio, total P (P_{T}), and total S (S_{T}) for the investigated soil layers. Values within brackets represent the standard errors. Different letter indicates significant difference among soil layers ($p < 0.05$). Brocon Pass, north-eastern Italian Alps.

Soil layers	n	pH	TOC g kg^{-1}	TN g kg^{-1}	C_{extr} mg kg^{-1}	$C_{\text{extr}}/\text{TOC}$ %	P_{T} mg kg^{-1}	S_{T} mg kg^{-1}
Tp	8	4.82 b (0.21)	83.5 a (15.4)	9.67 a (1.71)	1328 a (177)	1.80 b (0.26)	1282 a (192)	700 a (157)
Elu	4	4.55 b (0.05)	49.9 ab (12.5)	5.28 a (1.30)	1188 a (220)	2.62 ab (0.56)	1197 a (69)	644 a (79)
Wh	9	4.80 b (0.16)	24.9 b (5.4)	2.81 b (0.61)	738 b (96)	3.43 a (0.46)	749 b (101)	299 b (56)
Ls	9	5.97 a (0.38)	27.6 b (13.0)	2.42 b (0.63)	524 c (83)	3.27 a (0.61)	767 b (85)	262 b (45)

n : number of replicates for each layer.

C_{extr} : C extracted by 0.5 M K_2SO_4 solution .

Table 2. Concentrations of pseudo-total elements (Al_T , Fe_T , Ca_T , K_T , Mg_T , Mn_T , and Na_T), clay, Fe and Al extracted by DCB (Fe_{DCB} , Al_{DCB}), cation exchange capacity (eCEC), base saturation (BS), and electrical conductivity (EC) in the investigated soil layers. Values within brackets represent the standard errors. Different letter indicates significant difference among soil layers ($p < 0.05$). Brocon Pass, north-eastern Italian Alps.

Soil layers	<i>n</i>	Al_T	Fe_T	Ca_T	K_T	Mg_T	Mn_T	Na_T	Clay	Fe_{DCB}	Al_{DCB}	eCEC	BS	EC
		g kg^{-1}						mg kg^{-1}	g kg^{-1}		$\text{cmol}_+ \text{kg}^{-1}$	%	dS m^{-1}	
Tp	8	52.6 b (2.6)	29.8 b (1.6)	2.5 b (0.4)	10.6 c (0.4)	7.6 c (0.6)	2.5 a (0.4)	502 a (52)	628 b (39)	19.3 ab (0.7)	4.1 b (0.3)	30.9 a (3.3)	54.4 b (8.6)	0.35 a (0.08)
Elu	4	50.1 b (1.9)	32.0 ab (2.5)	1.5 b (0.5)	9.8 c (0.3)	6.6 c (0.2)	1.6 a (0.2)	494 a (24)	634 b (37)	23.3 a (2.1)	5.3 a (0.5)	33.9 a (3.4)	79.3a (8.0)	0.09 b (0.01)
Wh	9	60.6 a (2.0)	35.2 a (0.9)	2.3 b (0.4)	11.5 b (0.5)	9.3 b (0.5)	2.6 a (0.4)	487 a (38)	667 ab (26)	20.4 a (0.5)	5.1 a (0.2)	29.0 a (3.2)	56.2 b (9.1)	0.07 b (0.02)
Ls	9	61.7 a (1.3)	34.8 a (0.6)	6.1 a (1.3)	12.6 a (0.4)	10.7 a (0.2)	2.5 a (0.4)	532 a (29)	692 a (24)	18.4 b (0.7)	3.4 c (0.3)	31.1 a (3.8)	65.8 a (7.1)	0.20 a (0.05)

n: number of replicates for each layer.

Table 3. Semi-quantitative mineralogical composition of the investigated soil layers. Values within brackets represent the standard errors. Brocon Pass, north-eastern Italian Alps.

Soil layers	<i>n.</i>	Q	P	O	M	S	HIS	Kao
		%						
Tp	8	46(5) a	5(1) a	4(1) a	4(1) a	31(1)* b	7(2) a	3(1) a
Elu	4	47(2) a	6(2) a	5(1) a	7(1) a	32(1)* b	1(0) b	2(1) a
Wh	9	41(2) a	6(2) a	5(0) a	8(1) a	31(1) b	4(1) ab	5(1) a
Ls	9	42(2) a	5(2) a	4(1) a	5(1) a	35(1) a	5(0) ab	4(1) a

n: number of replicates for each layer.

Q = quartz, P = plagioclases, O = orthoclase, M = micas, S = smectite, HIS = hydroxy-aluminum interlayered smectite, Kao = kaolinite.

* mainly disordered smectite.

Table 4. Soil microbial biomass C (MBC) and N (MBN), and results of EI-FAME analysis for the investigated soil layers. Values within brackets represent the standard errors. Different letter indicates significant difference among soil layers ($p < 0.05$). Brocon Pass, north-eastern Italian Alps.

Soil layers	<i>n</i>	MBC	MBN	LMB- EI- FAME	B	F	P	Act	G+	G-	F/B	G+/G-	
		mg kg ⁻¹			nmol g ⁻¹							%	ratio
Tp	8	874 a (187)	246 a (129)	464 a (20)	449 a (21)	11.8 a (1.5)	2.8 a (0.3)	53.5 a (5.5)	130.6 a (7.9)	178.2 a (8.1)	28.2 b (4.1)	0.73 b (0.0)	
Elu	4	445 ab (267)	151 a (55)	63 c (14)	59 c (13)	3.1 b (0.4)	0.6 b (0.2)	6.8 c (1.4)	18.8 b (4.9)	18.1 c (4.2)	47.5 a (3.9)	1.02 a (0.1)	
Wh	9	118 b (30)	45 c (10)	120 b (37)	116 b (36)	3.6 b (0.9)	1.0 b (0.2)	17.2 b (6.2)	31.1 b (9.7)	41.9 b (13.2)	39.1 a (5.7)	0.80 b (0.0)	
Ls	9	227 b (102)	81 b (14)	112 b (24)	109 b (23)	2.3 b (0.4)	0.4 c (0.0)	12.8 b (2.8)	26.8 b (5.6)	42.4 b (9.3)	24.4 b (3.5)	0.69 b (0.0)	

n: number of replicates for each layer.

LMB-EI-FAME: living microbial biomass determined by EI-FAME, B: bacteria, F: saprophytic fungi, P: protozoa, Act: actinomycetes, G+: Gram positive bacteria, G-: Gram negative bacteria, F/B: fungi/bacteria ratio, G+/G-: Gram positive bacteria/Gram negative bacteria ratio.

Table 5. Enzyme activities in the investigated soil layers. Values within brackets represent the standard errors. Different letter indicates significant difference among soil layers ($p < 0.05$). Brocon Pass, north-eastern Italian Alps.

Soil layers	<i>n</i>	Cell	Chit	BG	AG	AP	Sulph	Xylo	But	a-Gal
nmol MUF g ⁻¹ h ⁻¹										
Tp	8	76.3 a (20.3)	304 a (70)	389 a (98)	79 a (16)	1506 a (293)	900 a (166)	189 a (47)	1553 a (301)	128 a (29)
Elu	4	22.8 b (7.9)	113 b (33)	142 b (48)	40 b (14)	1034 a (282)	704 a (233)	91 ab (30)	1204 a (299)	100 a (35)
Wh	9	19.8 b (5.1)	105 b (25)	126 b (28)	37 b (9)	571 b (114)	369 b (107)	58 b (21)	880 b (201)	46 b (11)
Ls	9	12.2 b (3.1)	78 b (28)	69 c (16)	17 b (4)	292 c (45)	193 b (59)	23 c (8)	474 c (107)	19 c (4)

Soil layers	<i>n</i>	b-Gal	b-Gluc	E-Lip	Lip	LeuAryl	ValAryl	SEI	SEI/MBC	
nmol MUF g ⁻¹ h ⁻¹										
						nmol AMC g ⁻¹ h ⁻¹	nmol AMC g ⁻¹ h ⁻¹	nmol MUF/AMC g ⁻¹ h ⁻¹	nmol MUF mg ⁻¹ MBC h ⁻¹	
Tp	8	89 a (25)	203 a (29)	254 a (104)	154 b (30)	132 a (18)	26 a (5)	6067 a (1054)	7.9 b (1.8)	
Elu	4	64 ab (22)	114 b (22)	301 a (37)	300 a (108)	160 a (19)	22 a (2)	4515 ab (1178)	16.5 b (5.0)	
Wh	9	37 b (7)	126 b (15)	271 a (54)	359 a (79)	61 b (12)	17 a (2)	3151 b (507)	32.5 a (5.9)	
Ls	9	18 c (4)	82 c (14)	192 a (42)	198 b (52)	51 b (11)	18 a (2)	1755 c (279)	27.1 ab (10.7)	

n: number of replicates for each layer.

Cell: β -cellobiohydrolase; Chit: N-acetyl- β -glucosaminidase; BG: β -glucosidase; AG: α -glucosidase; AP: Acid phosphomonoesterase; Sulph: arylsulphatase; Xylo: xylosidase; But: butyrate esterase; a-Gal: α -galactosidase; b-Gal: β -galactosidase; b-Gluc: β -glucuronidase; E-Lip: esterase lipase; Lip: Lipase; LeuAm: leucine arylamidase; ValAryl: valine arylamidase; SEI: Synthetic Enzymatic Index; SEI/MBC: Synthetic Enzymatic Index per unit of microbial biomass carbon.

Table 6. Spearman correlation coefficient between physicochemical and biochemical properties for the investigated soil horizons (n=29). Brocon Pass, north-eastern Italian Alps.

	pH	TOC	Total N	C _{ext} /TOC	Clay	EC	Fe _{DCB} /Fe _T	(Ca _T +Mg _T +K _T +Na _T)/(Al _T +Fe _T)
MBC	-0.399 *	0.643***	0.704***	-0.521 **			0.467*	
MBN		0.589**	0.541**	-0.462 *			0.318 ns	
Cell		0.851***	0.903***	-0.736***			0.572 **	
Chit		0.727***	0.815***	-0.696***			0.510 **	
BG		0.825***	0.884***	-0.656***			0.586 **	
AG		0.781***	0.833***	-0.630***			0.552 **	
AP	-0.501 **	0.836***	0.897***	-0.649***	-0.392 *		0.764***	-0.397 *
Sulph		0.830***	0.889***	-0.692***			0.767***	
Xylo	-0.392 *	0.842***	0.902***	-0.674***			0.704***	
But	-0.489 **	0.814***	0.853***	-0.634 ***	-0.398 *		0.738***	-0.441 *
a-Gal	-0.581 **	0.737***	0.782***	-0.572 **	-0.456 *		0.672***	-0.541 **
b-Gal	-0.563**	0.761***	0.811***	-0.607 **	-0.461 *		0.694	-0.474 **
b-Gluc	-0.501**	0.682***	0.736***	-0.615 **			0.559 **	
a-Man	-0.658***	0.589**	0.608***	-0.423 *	-0.512 **		0.654***	-0.656***
a-Fuc	-0.636***	0.510**	0.515**	-0.394 *	-0.563 **		0.659***	-0.707***
E-Lip								
Lip						-0.464*		-0.480 **
LeuAryl	-0.440 *	0.629***	0.702***	-0.530 **			0.772***	-0.376 *
ValAryl		0.579**	0.616**	-0.593 **			0.606***	
SEI	-0.535 **	0.794***	0.858***	-0.622***	-0.428 *		0.753***	-0.419 *
SEI/TOC	-0.433 *	-0.428*	-0.366 *	0.395 *		-0.711***		
SEI/MBC		-0.515 **	-0.561**	0.435 *				

*** p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05; TOC: total organic C; C_{ext}/TOC: extractable C/TOC ratio; Fe_{DCB}/Fe_T: Fe extracted by Na-dithionite-citrate-bicarbonate solution/pseudo-total Fe ratio; (Ca_T+Mg_T+K_T+Na_T)/(Al_T+Fe_T): (Ca_T+Mg_T+K_T+Na_T)/(Al_T+Fe_T) molar ratio; MBC and MBN: microbialbiomass C and N, respectively; Cell: β-cellobiohydrolase; Chit: N-acetyl-β-glucosaminidase; BG: β-glucosidase; AG: α-glucosidase; AP: Acidphosphomonoesterase; Sulph: arylsulphatase; Xylo: xylosidase; But: butyrate esteras; a-Gal: α-galactosidase; b-Gal: β-galactosidase; b-Gluc: β-glucuronidase; a-Man: α-mannosidase; a-Fuc: α-fucosidase; E-Lip: Esterase lipase; Lip: Lipase; LeuAryl: Leucine arylamidase; ValAryl: valine arylamidase; SEI: Synthetic Enzymatic Index; SEI/TOC: Synthetic Enzymatic Index per unit of organic carbon; Synthetic Enzymatic Index per unit of microbial biomass carbon.

FIGURE CAPTIONS

Figure 1. The study area.

Figure 2. Boxplot of Fe_{DCB}/Fe_T ratio, where Fe_{DCB} and Fe_T are amount of Fe extractable with Na-dithionate-citrate-bicarbonate and pseudo-total, respectively (A) and molar ratio between the sum of the Ca_T , Mg_T , K_T , Na_T and Al_T plus Fe_T (B). Different letters mean significant difference at p-level <0.01.

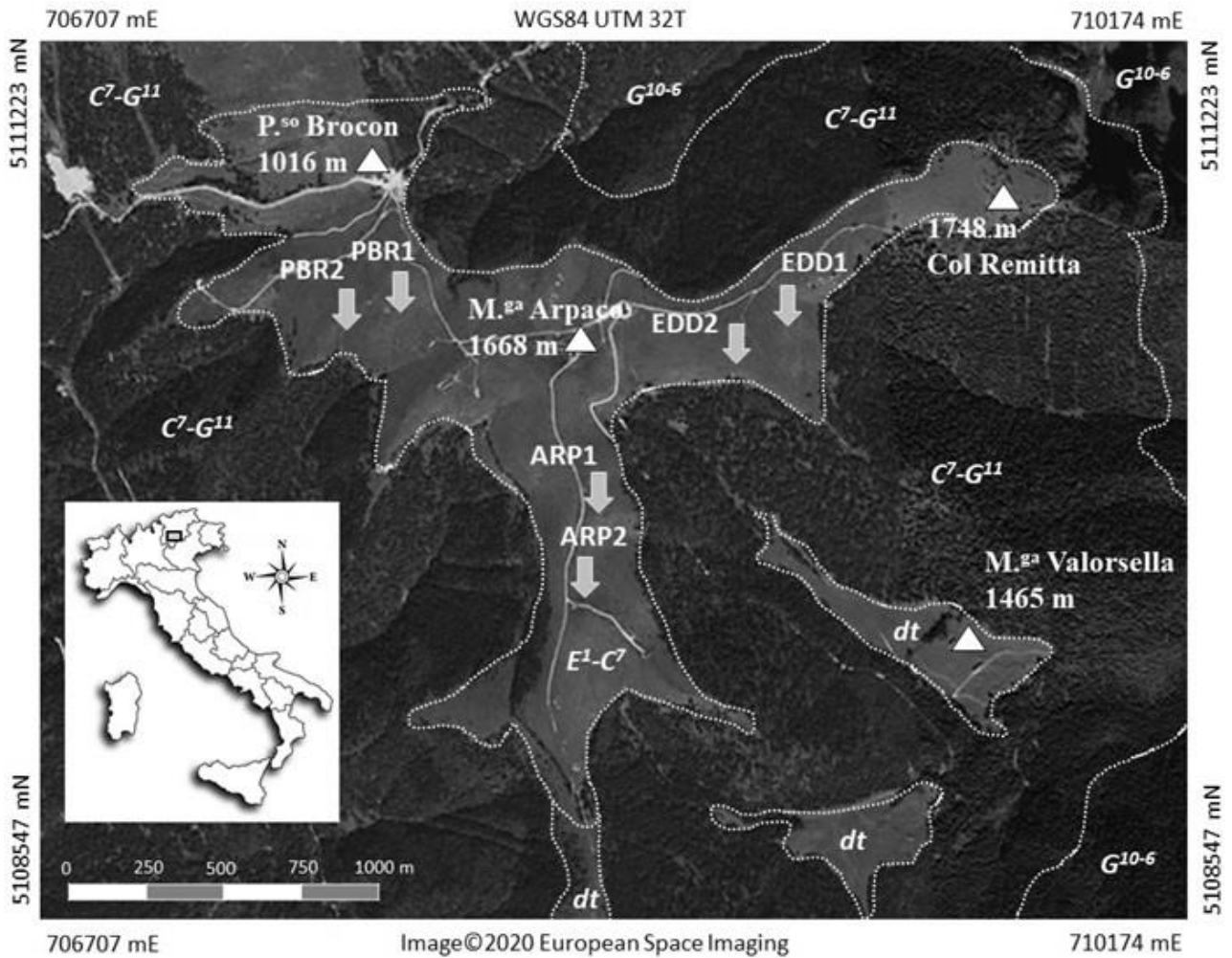
Figure 3. Principal component analysis of the physicochemical properties of soil layers (Tp, Elu, Wh and Ls). On left, plots of first and second components grouping variables, on right table of rotated loading values for the first two PCs from soil samples (in bold significant values $p < 0.01$).

Figure 4. Boxplot of α -mannosidase (A) and α -fucosidase (B) activities. Different letters mean significant difference at p-level <0.05.

Figure 5. Boxplot of lipase activity (A) and Synthetic Enzymatic Index per unit of organic carbon - SEI/OC (B). Different letters mean significant difference at p-level <0.01.

Figure 6. Principal component analysis of the biochemical properties of soil layers (Tp, Elu, Wh, and Ls). On left, plots of first and second components grouping variables, on right table of rotated loading values for the first two PCs from soil samples (in bold significant values $p < 0.01$).

Figure 1



Soil profile location

EDD2



Litological formations in succession from the Upper to Lower Cretaceous

G¹⁰⁻⁶

«Rosso Ammonitico»
(Malm-Dogger)
White or brick red
limestones

C^{7-G¹¹}

«Biancone»
(Cenomanian-Malm)
Greyish – white or
white limestones

E^{1-C⁷}

«Scaglia rossa»
(Eocene-Cretaceous)
Red or pink marls and
clayey limestones

dt

Heterogeneous
glacial debris

Figure 2

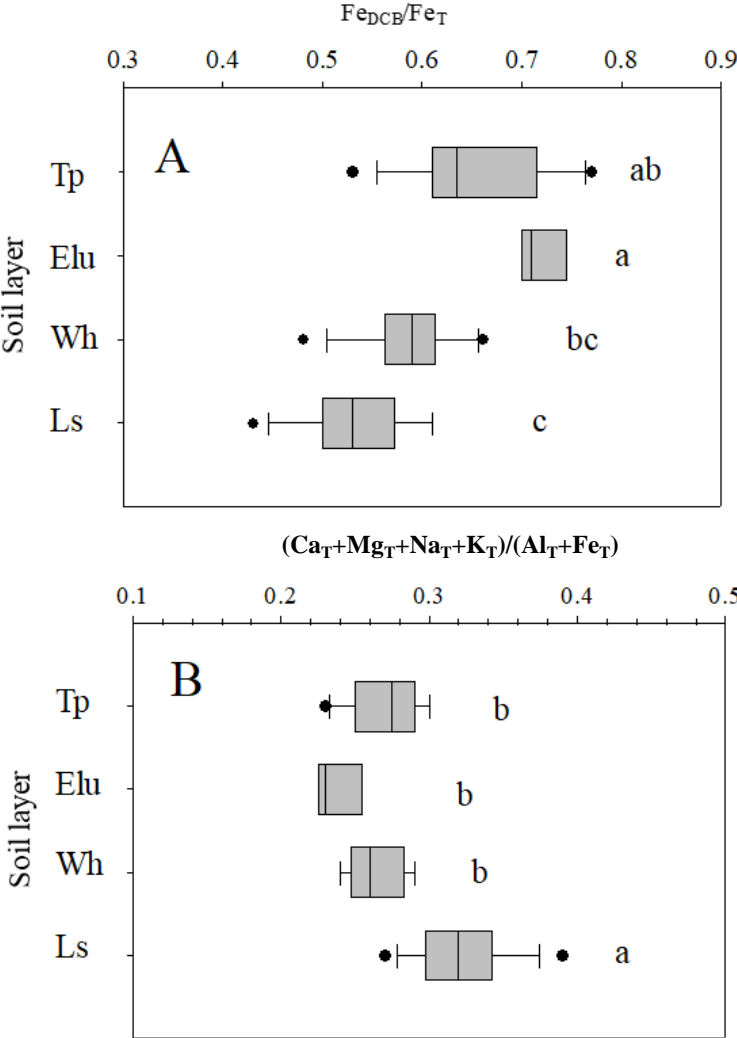
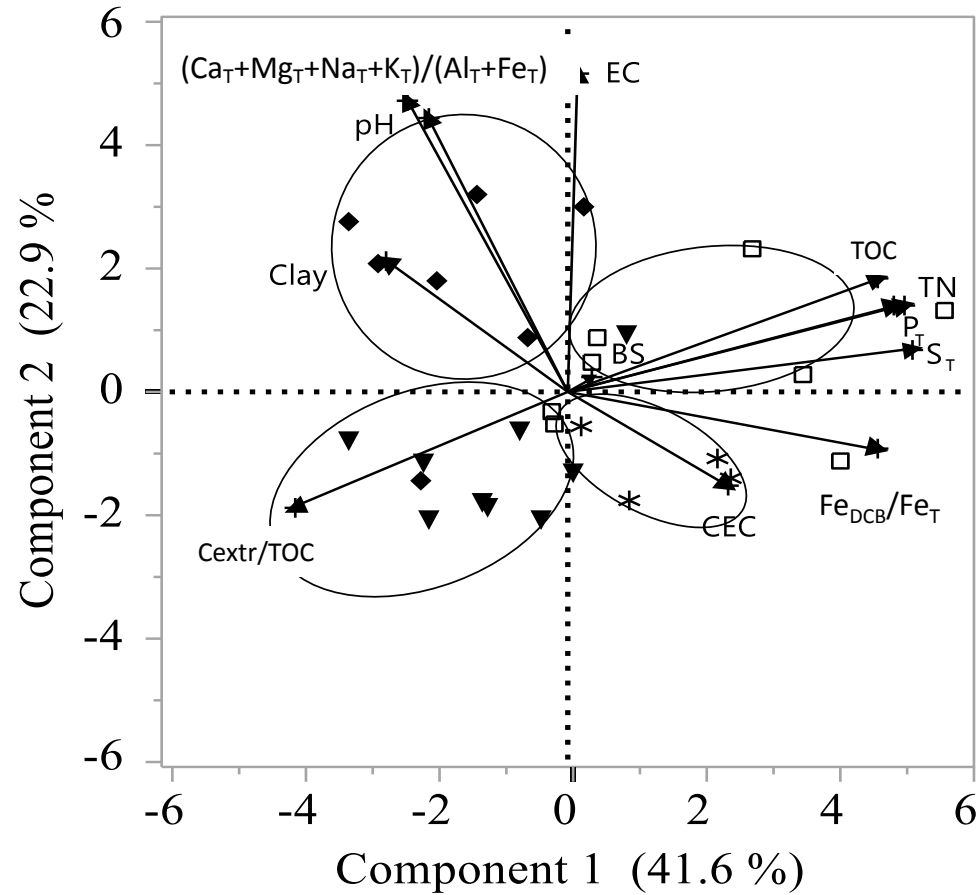


Figure 3



□ Tp ✖ Elu
 ▼ Wh ◆ Ls

Soil properties	Component 1	Component 2
pH	-0.137	0.939
TOC	0.878	-0.002
TN	0.928	-0.095
C _{extr} /TOC	-0.735	-0.060
P _T	0.870	-0.048
S _T	0.880	-0.179
Clay	-0.325	0.431
CEC	0.258	-0.335
BS	0.028	0.026
EC	0.321	0.847
Fe _{DCB} /Fe _T	0.680	-0.379
(Ca _T +Mg _T +Na _T +K _T)/ (Al _T +Fe _T)	-0.076	0.802
Eigenvalue	4.99	2.74
Accumulated variance	41.6%	64.5%

Figure 4

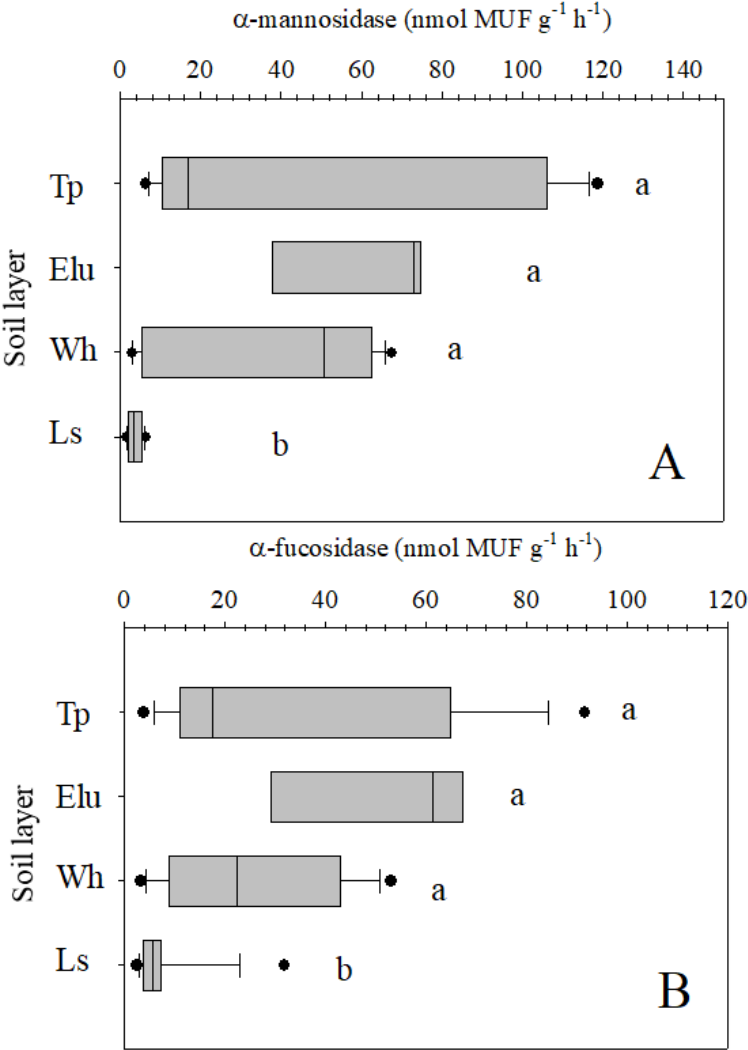


Figure 5

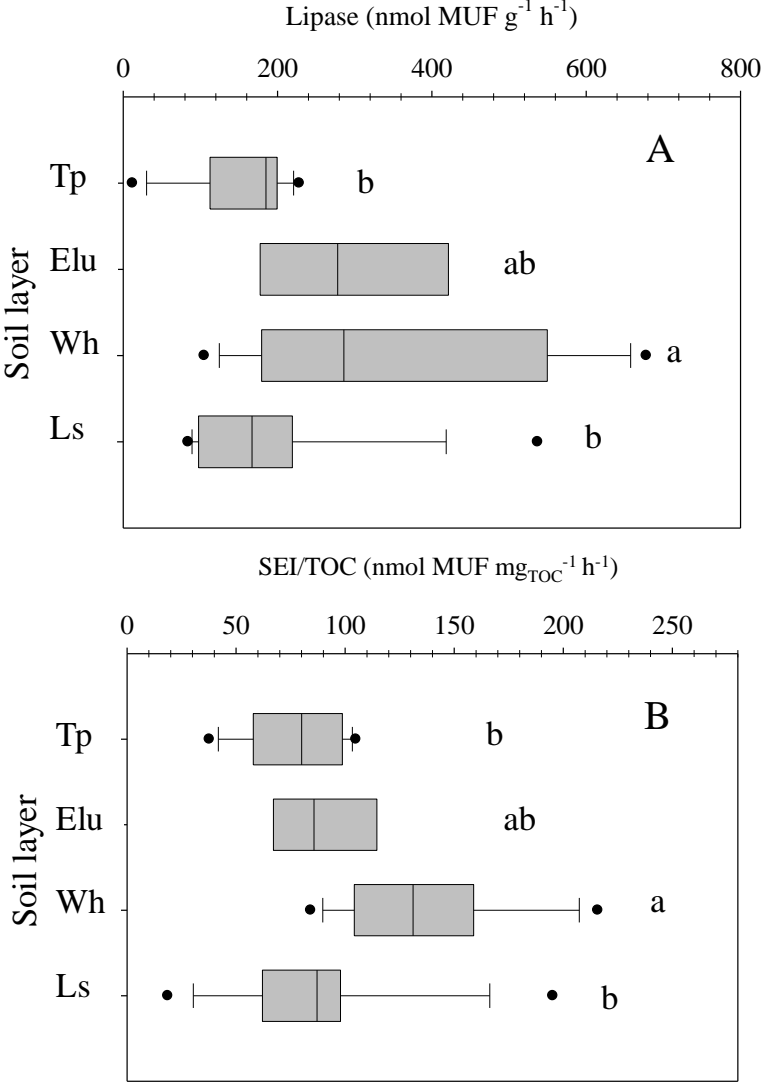
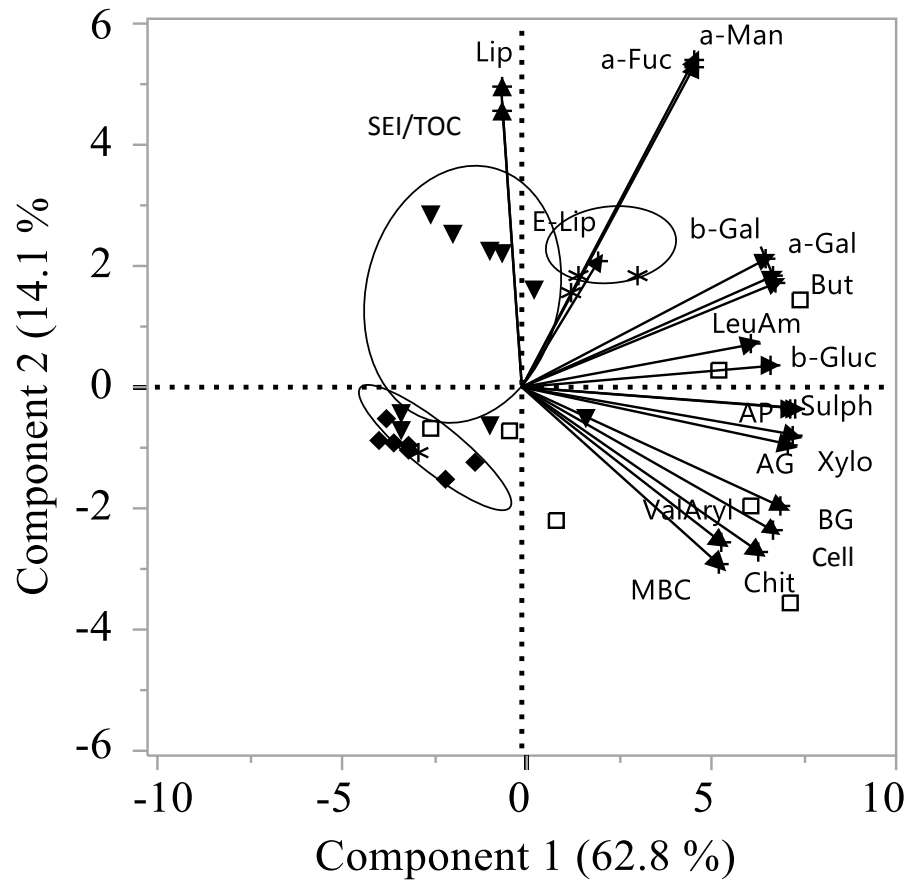


Figure 6



Soil properties	Component 1	Component 2
SEI/TOC	-0.251	0.555
MBC	0.79	-0.152
Cell	0.955	-0.023
Chit	0.92	-0.083
BG	0.966	0.036
AG	0.949	0.174
AP	0.951	0.258
Sulph	0.93	0.251
Xylo	0.958	0.199
But	0.801	0.497
a-Gal	0.752	0.537
b-Gal	0.786	0.508
b-Gluc	0.833	0.317
a-Man	0.371	0.875
a-Fuc	0.375	0.859
E-Lip	0.176	0.344
Lip	-0.274	0.606
LeuAm	0.752	0.339
ValAryl	0.789	-0.104
Eigenvalue	11.92	2.68
Accumulated variance	62.8%	76.9%

Declaration of interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper entitled **MINERAL WEATHERING AND LESSIVAGE AFFECT MICROBIAL COMMUNITY AND ENZYME ACTIVITY IN MOUNTAIN SOILS**

The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests:



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