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Métropoles alpines. Vers une nouvelle alliance entre villes et montagnes ?

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# Devices for Understanding Territory to Rethink Relations Between City and Highland in Alpine Metropolitan Areas

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# Devices for Understanding Territory to Rethink Relations Between City and Highland in Alpine Metropolitan Areas

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- 1 In May 2017 Annecy Metropolitan Council, in the preamble to a call to tender for a planning project covering Greater Annecy, advocated territorial diagnosis based ‘on the mental representations of the territory of policy-makers and technicians [...], on the links of interdependence and solidarity inside the territory [...] and with neighbouring territories’. The diagnosis should propose, the council added, ‘a broad and inclusive approach’ and ‘a method facilitating collective intelligence and appropriation of knowledge’ in order to ‘achieve a vision of a shared future’.
- 2 In December 2017 Grenoble Metropolitan Council announced that it was organizing its first Metropolis-Highland Forum, ‘to gain perspective and create links’. The accompanying press release explained that the aim was ‘to rethink relations between city and highland with a view to greater reciprocity’. It called for ‘continuity in the work and encounters initiated by the Council with many partners from all sorts of backgrounds’ in the hope that this would be ‘a key moment in the framing of future policy on city and highland’.
- 3 These two instances of work on metropolitan planning display a clear concern for method and process in order to rethink the relations between city and highland and build an Alpine metropolitan area. Far from being of minor interest we believe these assertions are symptomatic of the role of territorial knowledge and the relevant cognitive devices in framing metropolitan development projects. Such devices include the processes, tools, and organizational systems and/or techniques that enable us to compile, elaborate or use territorial knowledge in implementing public projects and action in a territorial context. We posit that the modalities and content of such devices reveal the rationales

underpinning territorial planning. They express past, present and projected relations between town and highland. As the vectors for representations and discourse these cognitive devices re-open the question of relations between city and highland, carrying on from work on cognitive categories (Debarbieux, 1999), the dimensions of identity (Fourny, 1999; Debarbieux, 2008) or the forms of territorial planning (Fourny, 1995; Vanier, 2006), particularly for Alpine metropolitan areas. They also raise questions about the emergence of current issues such as the ways of living in highland metropolitan areas (Fourny and Roux, 2017), aspects of in-between and hybrid habitability (Bourdeau, 2015) between city and highland, or indeed features of complex projects (Pia, 2015), the Alpine city (Diamantini, 2015) or its hyper-city counterpart (Corboz, 2000).

- 4 So our purpose is to show how territory-oriented cognitive systems anticipate, underpin and connect with current metropolitan development processes. Drawing on a body of territorial diagnosis studies, we shall show that cognitive devices express parallel rationales and a mesh of urban and highland issues (1). Interviews with policy-makers and technicians belonging to a metropolitan council in the French Alps show how much these cognitive devices reveal the prospects and pitfalls for integrating highland localities in a metropolitan body (3). Finally they highlight the emergence of adaptive devices (3) designed to facilitate the formation of Alpine metropolitan areas by proposing both integration in the existing community and the prospect of establishing arrangements and relations between city and highland on a new footing (4).

## Cognitive devices underpinning processes of metropolitan formation

- 5 Much as any other metropolitan area in the process of being established (Le Bras, Seigneuret and Talandier, 2016) Alpine cities are subject to territorial dynamics which recompose their overall structure, powers and scale of action.
- 6 For instance the Grenoble urban area, which comprised 23 separate *communes* (the smallest administrative unit in France) in 2000, became a *métropole*<sup>1</sup>, or metropolitan area, in 2015, bringing together 49 communes with a total population of 445,000. Similarly in 2001 10 communes made up the Annecy urban area, adding up to just over 140,000 people. Following various mergers Greater Annecy has comprised 34 communes since 2017, bringing its overall population up to about 205,000. In 2000 the urban area of Chambéry covered 15 communes, rising to 24 in 2006. In 2017 it took on board several communes in the Bauges massif, changing its name to Chambéry Métropole-Cœur des Bauges. The urban area has since been extended to form Greater Chambéry, taking in 38 communes with a population of just under 137,000.

## Renewing knowledge for the benefit of highland metropolitan areas

- 7 At an institutional level the formation of metropolitan areas at issue (Ghorra Ghobin, 2015) in Alpine cities entails enlargement and gradual integration of highland localities and/or inter-municipal bodies. However such recomposition involves renewing the process of generating knowledge on the relevant territories (Roux and Feyt, 2011). So, whether it concerns territorial diagnosis studies, observatories, new collaborative or participatory arrangements, we see the deployment of cognitive systems which precede

and support territorial change. Furthermore all of them, in their content and the manner in which they are implemented, are charged with representations and characterizations of territorial issues, and emblematic of the various rationales driving action. Much as for territorial diagnosis, cognitive devices also enable us to identify the qualities of these new metropolitan territories, engaging in a process of territorial 're-cognition' and development (Roux, Lajarge, Esterni, 2005). To conceptualize the attractiveness, development and various forms of interdependence between city and highland, and metropolitan projects in the French Alps, we must start by qualifying their strengths and weaknesses (Bourdin, 2016; Roux, 2016), through a process of 'monitoring' (Roux, Escaffre, 2016). In this way cognitive devices bear out territorial dynamics (Crevoisier, Jeannerat, 2009). The analysis they entail potentially forms one of the necessary dimensions of any strategic thinking on metropolitan areas (Halbert, 2010). As such they contribute, according to some authors, to a knowledge economy (Campagnac-Ascher, 2016) and to innovation processes (Besson, 2012). Finally they offer a response to the need for greater public access to information and knowledge, the better to grasp real conditions, challenges and problems (Innerarity, 2015). Adopting a wide range of approaches, all worth entertaining, such cognitive devices should be valued as a means of better understanding the organization of relations between city and highland and on the rationales underpinning the formation of metropolitan areas in the Alps.

- 8 Our initial approach to a re-appraisal of relations between city and highland is based on analysis of the problems identified by territorial diagnosis studies<sup>2</sup> carried out between 2000 and 2015, focusing on three metropolitan areas in the French Alps<sup>3</sup>: Annecy, Chambéry and Grenoble. Framed in the course of research into the meaning of territorial diagnosis studies and the links between knowledge generation and public action (Roux, 2016; Roux and Marron, 2016), our aim here is not to carry out a comparative reading or analysis of the details of what these studies tell us about relations between city and highland in each of the three territorial configurations. Rather we aim to identify recurrent features, and explicit or implicit expressions of city-highland relations.
- 9 Regardless of the territorial context (in Annecy, Chambéry or Grenoble) territorial diagnosis accounts for the enlargement of the mesh of territorial government. This expresses itself in terms of planning stakes and territorial cohesiveness, the prospects for implementing projects that embrace an entire metropolis or extended urban area. But a larger scale does not necessarily reflect the expression of (regenerated) thinking on city-highland relations. In 2000-15 we see both rationales based on problematic juxtaposition of city and highland, and others rooted in territorial interweaving (Roux, 2006), in other words overlapping scales of thought, which by drawing on a project to form an Alpine urban area or metropolitan area, grasp the multiplicity and complexity of relations between city and highland.

## Diagnosis juxtaposing city and highland

- 10 Up to the mid-2010s, in all three urban areas covered here, social diagnosis of shifts in demographic make-up, the relative socio-spatial vulnerability or inequality of population groups was mainly restricted to built-up urban areas. This was due to the fact that the knowledge generated and used related to '*la politique de la ville*', in other words specifically policies on underprivileged neighbourhoods, and to other contractual arrangements dedicated to social and urban cohesion. This was also the case with housing issues,

covered in France by a *programme local de l'habitat*<sup>4</sup>. Here again diagnosis focused exclusively on the urbanized parts of future metropolitan areas. In other words, although the matter of a larger mesh was under discussion, up to this point in time knowledge on urban space, housing, social cohesion and solidarity remained separate or parallel. In the meantime comparable studies of highland space generally addressed environmental amenities. Similarly the relevant *schéma de cohérence territoriale*, or master plan, adopted a fairly conventional view of the juxtaposition of city and highland, with the former projected onto the latter. The highland hinterland was considered in terms of 'renewed attractiveness'<sup>5</sup>, striking a balance between 'making the most of its assets [and] preserving the environment and landscape [...] in order to develop sustainable tourism'.

## Diagnosis combining city and highland

- 11 While expressing a dichotomous juxtaposition of knowledge on city and highland, two registers of knowledge generation pointed the way forward to a new departure in relations between the two spaces, focusing on the issues relating to sustainable and environmental development<sup>6</sup>, and mobility and travel.
- 12 The prospects for extending the government of metropolitan areas in the French Alps soon ran into issues relating to the management of water, farm and woodland, and, more recently, landscape. Inevitably the overall drive to form a metropolitan space had to come to grips with catchment areas, steeply sloping land, peripheral areas and urban outskirts, each with their specific landscape and territorial character, investigating them in the light of spatial, technical and organizational priorities. Various management issues – relating to water (drinking water, waste water and sewerage), network optimization, risk, areas bordering on the highland or the city, or used for forestry and farming – require cognitive devices that rise above the conventional limits and representations of the highland city. Issues of this sort, bearing on resources, amenities, green or blue swathes, are addressed in particular in the bulky master plan<sup>7</sup>. But they also feature, in terms of both knowledge and action, in debate on the prospects for 'natural' metropolitan areas in the Alps<sup>8</sup> and/or 'green infrastructure for a better life' in these cities<sup>9</sup>.
- 13 When addressing issues of household mobility and multimodal transport networks, the relevant scale is also that of the urban area, labour pool or a part of the conurbation. Attention in metropolitan areas in the French Alps focuses on organization, universal access to the service and mobility. At Grenoble, for instance, studies and public debate on the merits of cable transport between city and highland have shown how controversial such solutions may be, on the one hand for a city which wants to be better connected to the surrounding highlands, on the other for highland communities keen to keep the city at a certain distance. But transport infrastructure and mobility services may also be the starting point for bridge-building and a fresh approach (Roux, 2015).
- 14 Much as territorial diagnosis studies, the cognitive devices which underpin metropolitanization often reveal a twin trend: on the one hand production of topical knowledge related to the scales of action, distinguishing the urban (such as social issues and cohesion) from more horizontal matters; on the other generation of knowledge that anticipates and underpins the workings of a metropolitan area in formation in the Alps. At stake, therefore, is the capacity of such cognitive devices to give expression to community-wide (metropolitan) dimensions without stifling more diverse city and

highland-related representations. In the following we shall look more closely at this point, through the eyes of policy-makers involved in building a metropolitan area.

## Cognitive devices for a rationale of metropolitan integration

- 15 Planning, integration and foresight for a highland metropolitan area<sup>10</sup> are inevitably underpinned by a whole range of cognitive devices, such as meetings between policy-makers and technicians, meetings with representatives of the community and business, expert appraisals, public meetings, systems for observation and consultation, and foresight workshops. Serving various purposes all these approaches involve policy-makers from urban and fringe highland localities. As a result, when one studies the way these actors relate to knowledge, public action and the workings of a metropolitan area<sup>11</sup>, one observes divergent practices and representations regarding a metropolitan perspective. In other words the cognitive devices and how they are used can tell us a great deal about relations between city and highland, and metropolitanization itself.

### Relating to information and knowledge required to act

- 16 Regardless of whether they were elected to represent the voters of a city centre or a highland village, all the policy-makers [on the metropolitan council] attach considerable importance to information and knowledge as a means of enabling action. In terms of practice this mainly entails meetings between councillors and technicians, or only between councillors to get better acquainted and improve decision-making. But at the same time policy-makers from highland localities explicitly voice a cultural difference regarding their access to and ability to grasp the knowledge needed to run a metropolitan area.

'There are 530 people in our locality, so it's a small highland commune. [...] As it is we're overloaded with meetings [...] so even we need to be selective. It's difficult to pick up all the [necessary] information; alternatively we're flooded with it, so the priority is to make good use of it (interview n°10, 14 September 2016).'

'As a deputy-chair I'm lucky enough to be part of the system, so I manage to obtain a lot of things. [...] And I can see [...] how my deputies must feel. If you don't attend all the meetings at the metropolitan Council – and in the smaller communes all the deputies work, in the public or private sector – you soon lose track. So the Council seem pretty technocratic, obscure and confusing, ultimately the basis for all sorts of misconceptions (interview n°15, 20 September 2016).'

### Relating to the types of knowledge used to act

- 17 Councillors from urban communes, in an effort to 'improve action', express the need for public meetings and encounters with civil society, or to a lesser extent the use of various forms of observation<sup>12</sup>. In contrast their highland counterparts place less emphasis on this approach, tending to stress their culture and knowledge of conditions on the ground, everyday expertise, close relations with local people and understanding of the latter's concerns. The reference to a pragmatic approach to local action is essential here.

'We deal with very practical matters! The problems at issue are very down-to-earth, everyday problems which are managed by council technicians. As policy-makers in

our commune our everyday dealings with the community are very practical (interview n°14, 19 September 2016).'

'Here, we're really familiar with our territory; everybody knows each other. If a problem crops up, people know where to find me and we take care of it (interview n°7, 13 September 2016).'

## Relation between knowledge and decision-making

18 Councillors from smaller communes are more inclined to see technical knowledge as being vital than their city counterparts. In contrast they believe it is 'less significant' in decision-making. In other words the former are less likely to systematically demand technical input before taking a decision than the latter, who seem more used to resorting to technical expertise. Yet, one of the points most often made by councillors from highland communes, regarding the metropolitan council and how best to reconcile local knowledge with action, is a sense of being (over-) ruled by technical considerations; of being kept at a distance from knowledge of the field and the concerns of residents, coupled with a separation between decision-making and situated knowledge. Our observation reveals, at one and the same time:

- Differentiated points of reference and relations to knowledge

'What I regret is being at several removes from the decision-making process and not knowing enough about things on the ground [...] like how the roads are managed. [...] They're city-dwellers with methods suited to Grenoble! But they know nothing about the territory. What I see, though I'm keeping an open mind, is a certain remoteness from residents. [And] Residents are very quick to seize on anything that confirms that impression (interview n°16, 22 September 2016).'

- Biased, expert technical or professional knowledge

'There are always plenty of technical memos but how do you expect me to understand technical memos? After all I'm not a specialist ... They tell us that's the way it is, for technical reasons ... so there's no option. They don't see things from the point of view of policy-makers. [...] We have our appraisals, studies and presentations, so we'll base our decision on that ... But I have to admit, that even as a deputy-chair, I don't always have much say in decision-making ... [...] There is so much paperwork, so much technical know-how that I think that in fact decisions tend to be taken elsewhere [...] I sometimes think the decision-making process is rather remote [...] I get the impression we don't carry much weight there; we're just here to rubber-stamp a decision that's already signed and sealed (interview n°12, 15 September 2016).'

- Decisions perceived as too 'technical'

'The technicians are always a step ahead of policy-makers [...] They serve things up that have already been thought through, so we're just there to register their view and put our stamp on it. It's one of the drawbacks with these big organizations (interview n°10, 14 September 2016).'

19 The representations and views of councillors representing highland communes are testimony to technical information and knowledge that, at first sight, is hard to understand and use for managing everyday issues and planning ahead. They also feel that decision-making is disconnected from issues on the ground, and vice-versa. This may be the expression of real or imaginary differences between city and highland as to perception of territory, use of knowledge and involvement in action. Stated differently, highland councillors say they need a better grasp of metropolitan technical expertise, whereas their city counterparts want to get closer to residents, in the city and on the highland fringes.

## Towards reciprocal city-highland acculturation

- 20 Setting aside the matter of a perceived difference, there is also the sense of gradual, reciprocal acculturation. For councillors from ‘small’ communes, finding their place in the ‘metropolitan system’ and gaining technical expertise, demands greater debate with their fellows in similar localities (thanks, for example, to local councillor conferences), but also by placing more frequent demands on consultants (such as the Agence d’Urbanisme, or inter-municipal planning agency). This is also reflected in a better grasp of metropolitan problems.

‘They put me on a committee with the problem neighbourhoods, whereas there’s almost no social housing in my village. [...] But it’s interesting. I can grasp the scale of the problems at their root. [...] So there’s a greater sense of solidarity (interview n°7, 13 September 2016).’

- 21 Lastly it is borne out by a desire for greater involvement in metropolitan debate.

‘We voice the views of our group [...] which is unofficially labelled the “small commune” group, so we are very much involved [...] and we want to have a say in the metropolis (interview n°10, 14 September 2016).’

- 22 In return, the process of rising above a technocratic, urban outlook projected onto highland communes, finds expression in relations of alterity.

‘Things are moving very fast ... There used to be 27 communes [represented on the urban-area council] who knew more or less what they were talking about, with habits as how to things work and a good understanding of one another. [...] Now there’s been an influx of councillors from rural and highland communes, who had no grasp of what was being done and different concerns, other than policies in favour of underprivileged neighbourhoods, for instance. But that’s to be expected; they have their own concerns. And now we’re all together. So with all this we must start by getting to know one another, then learn together and act together (interview n°15, 20 September 2016).’

- 23 The main contribution of cognitive devices to city-highland relations and to the metropolitan area as a whole is to boost the capacity for listening and understanding by all parties. The challenge for cognitive devices is to reconcile common policies with a metropolitan perspective, territorial particularities and a plurality of actors in the territories (Gumuchian et al, 2003).

## Cognitive devices for the ergonomics of a metropolitan territory

- 24 In response to these multiple outlooks, ‘ergonomic’ cognitive devices – devices of which the modalities and content suit the relevant territorial contexts and problems – are once more being deployed. The aim is to generate ‘collective intelligence and appropriation of knowledge’, while contributing ‘to a common vision of the future’. Although the process of metropolitan formation involves gradual acculturation for all concerned, the prospect of renewing relations between city and highland is challenging in practice. Of the councillors we surveyed the baseline for territorial action remains the commune (50 % of respondents), well ahead of the metropolitan area (17 %)<sup>13</sup>. This view is even more predominant among councillors from highland localities than among their city counterparts. That the commune remains the key point of reference, for local knowledge



and action, undoubtedly bears out what Alain Faure (2016) referred to as ‘the island temptation’, which involves ‘presenting problems [pragmatically] as close as possible to residents’ and in which ‘inter-territoriality is described as [...] irrelevant’. So the aim of highland metropolitan areas is to make us to come to terms with the re-assertion of an attachment to ‘close at hand’, ‘micropolitan’ territories (Escaffre, Roux and Louargant, 2016) and with the plurality of resident relations to the highland metropolitan area (Fourny, Roux, 2017).

- 25 The dual involvement of the local and metropolitan requires us to adapt the design of cognitive devices, apparent in various ways. Devices for public consultation, collaborative or inclusive processes, foresight workshops and digital platforms, however ingenious they may be, all entail the expression of territorial pluralities, identities and possible particularities in the service of a common project.

‘We produce diagnosis studies and registers for each commune, to show their specificity, but at the same time we produce one document for everyone, with all the councillors (technician interview n°18, 6 September 2017).’

- 26 The process of adapting design to local conditions is both didactic and pedagogical, with a practical and a strategic dimension.

- These cognitive devices are of pedagogical value because they help actors to relate to one another differently.

‘We learn a great deal and this is a feature of my experience of inter-municipal action. People often say it is very remote from the grassroots [...] In fact inter-municipal exchanges have taught me a great deal, by making me meet new people. It’s far more important than anything else. You meet people who live quite close but you didn’t come across. Now you get to talk, giving rise to collaboration between territories, projects on art, exhibitions ... It creates a social bond which is very, very important. An exchange of good practice which forms a very valuable reservoir of human relations. Personally I have learnt a lot and it want it to be known (interview n°8, 13 September 2016).’

- They have pragmatic merits too, enabling the expression of observed and/or lived realities, whether it is a matter of voicing disagreement or working together.

‘The core city in the valley has certain advantages, for instance in terms of transport. But up here we have an on-request Flexo bus service<sup>14</sup>, though it’s not as frequent. We don’t have the same amenities, which is understandable, but even so it’s like that for a lot of things (interview n°10, 14 September 2016).’

‘Yes, there are actions with the youth council, exhibitions too ... because we took part with the inter-municipal council. It’s good for doing things with neighbouring localities, but a bit difficult because we’re only small, not necessarily adjoining the others. Without the inter-municipal council we wouldn’t have been able to do that, so that was good (interview n°14, 19 September 2016).’

- Lastly these cognitive devices have a strategic dimension, because the metropolitan council sees them as a means of ‘setting [things] in motion, [...] to do things together but without framing specific policies for the highlands (technician interview n°19, 11 September 2017).’ So they make it possible to stay on an ‘island’ and be part of the metropolitan area.

## The outlook for cognitive devices in forming a highland metropolitan area

- 27 Cognitive devices, by their content and their approach, emphasize rationales and shifts in the way we grasp relations between city and highland. Extending the mesh of

government and metropolitanization processes necessarily entails renewal of knowledge and the ways in which it is generated. But extending the mesh is not sufficient in itself to overcome conventional patterns for representing city and highland. Nor is it sufficient – to say the least – to create effective, new reciprocal relations between city and highland, including in the name of a highland metropolitan area. On the other hand metropolitanization processes and their debate through cognitive devices revive 50 years of territorial planning and master plans which have always queried the relation of urbs to highland. In so doing the cognitive devices deployed here reveal three types of figures and expressions of city-highland relations.

- The first is that of the ‘metropolis in the highlands’. Regardless of the devices and modalities for generating knowledge, the metropolitan project remains – as its name suggests – a project to build an urban, technical, political metropolis. In this context, even if the cognitive devices succeed in bringing out specific features of highland spaces and/or city-highland relations, the purpose of the project and territorial action is primarily the city, hegemonic, expanding and set in a highland environment. Its setting enables it to highlight amenities that serve the metropolis, its image, its recreation, perhaps even the production of some of its artefacts.
  - The second is that of the ‘metropolis and its highlands’. The primary merit of cognitive devices here is to enable us to qualify relations to the highlands and pinpoint forms of alterity. In this respect cognitive devices play a part by naming (the relational qualities between city and highland), but also through rhetoric and the framing of specific projects or actions for the territorialization of the metropolis and its highlands, the latter forming one of the components of a metropolitan territorial system.
  - The third and last figure is that of the ‘highland metropolis’. Cognitive devices act as systems for mediating between actors, policy-makers, technicians and citizens. They enable systems of shared knowledge and interaction for various purposes and projects interfacing between city and highland, focusing among others on food, mobility, housing, recreation and risk management. Cognitive devices take the form of open innovation systems underpinning the formation of public, personal or private partnerships, bringing together knowledge on actions and services in a city-highland metropolis. As such they play a part in a metropolis of interrelations, interfaces and contracts between city and highland.
- 28 Ultimately cognitive devices contribute to reiterating or making new representations, to the possible construction of forward-looking figures, which, we hope, may break new ground. They undoubtedly play a part in prompting debate on the issues for links between city and highland, by requalifying or even underpinning territorial interrelations in which the specific nature of the incline, relations between top and bottom, hill and valley, south and north-facing slope become an integral part of a metropolitan problematic. Other metropolitan areas are challenged by their relation to the environment (Nantes and the Loire estuary, Toulon and its harbour), but knowledge on and relations between city and highland remain an ongoing concern, with plenty of scope for additional observation and action.

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## NOTES

1. As defined by the law dated 27 January 2017 on modernization of public territorial action and affirmation of metropolitan areas, or Maptam law.
2. Roux E. (ed.) et al., 2016, 'Les diagnostics de territoire : quelle connaissance pour quelle action ?', PACTE-Université Grenoble Alpes, Commissariat Général à l'Égalité des Territoires, 100 p.  
This work produced a body of 130 territorial diagnosis studies on the inter-municipal councils of Annecy, Chambéry and Grenoble. In particular it analysed the perimeters, topics, procedures and/or registers of public action associated with territorial diagnosis.
3. The term Alpine metropolitan area is used here in a generic sense, in so far as, in strictly institutional terms each territory ranked as an *agglomération*, or urban area. Grenoble became a *métropole*, or metropolitan area, as defined by the Maptam law, in 2014. Annecy and Chambéry are aiming to become metropolitan areas, but have not yet achieved this status under the terms of the law.

4. The diagnosis studies required by Programmes Locaux de l'Habitat establish existing housing needs and the associated problems, set targets for the programme, with specific goals and priority actions.
5. See p. 35 of *Projet d'Aménagement et de Développement Durable* of the SCoT (master plan) de la Région Urbaine Grenobloise; Etablissement Public du SCoT de la Région Grenobloise, 2014.
6. This is one of the original features of knowledge generated on Alpine metropolitan areas in comparison to what we know of the main focus for observation of other metropolitan areas are housing, the economy, social issues, territorial organization, travel and transport (Roux, Escaffre, 2016).
7. For example the documents making up the Grenoble urban region master plan (SCoT) – introductory report, planning and sustainable development project, strategic goals, business development planning – totalled about 1,000 pages.
8. See the Métropole Nature (2004) Interrreg III B programme: <https://www.europarc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Guide-metodologique-Metropole-Nature-FR.pdf>
9. See the Interrreg Alpine Space 'Landscape and Open Space Development in Alpine Metropolitan Areas' (Los Dama!) 2016-2019 programme: [http://www.alpine-space.eu/projects/los\\_dama/en/home](http://www.alpine-space.eu/projects/los_dama/en/home).
10. Phrase borrowed from the *Projet d'Aménagement et de Développement Durable* in the Plan Local d'Urbanisme Intercommunal de Grenoble Alpes Métropole (2016).
11. This work was carried out in 2016 as part of a research programme 'Connaissance territoriale et action publique sur le territoire de Grenoble Alpes Métropole' (Pacte, led by E. Roux, and Grenoble Alpes Métropole). Focusing on practice regarding territorial cognitive devices and action at Grenoble metropolitan council, this work drew on a questionnaire survey of 180 elected representatives of the communes making up the Grenoble metropolitan area, including 46 councillors from communes with under 2,000 inhabitants. It also drew on semi-directive interviews with a panel of 16 councillors: seven from small localities, either located in the highlands or with under 2,000 inhabitants; five from communes with a population of between 2,000 and 10,000; four from urban communes with population exceeding 10,000.
12. The survey of a panel of 180 councillors from communes making up the Grenoble metropolitan area showed that they make little use of observation tools: almost two-thirds admitted that they knew little of work based on observation and almost half said they had no use for it. However the councillors most interested in territorial observation tended to be representatives of large, urban communes, serving their second or third term of office. They were consequently used to the technical sophistication of metropolitan cognitive devices (Roux, Marron, 2016).
13. Other points of reference followed, such as the neighbourhood (15%), sector of the metropolitan area (10%), inter-territorial (4%), regional natural parks (3%) and other perimeters for action (1%)..
14. A type of on-demand public transport operating on the fringes of the metropolitan area, as a solution for serving localities bordering on the highlands.

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## ABSTRACTS

This paper proposes to show how territorial cognitive devices, in their capacity as patterns of representations and expressions of contemporary problems, are indicative of the rationales underpinning the formation of 'Alpine metropolitan areas' and shifting relations between city and highland. Drawing on analysis of a corpus of territorial diagnosis studies and interviews with policy-makers and technicians belonging to a metropolitan council in the French Alps, we show that cognitive devices primarily express the rationales of juxtaposition and interweaving of urban and mountainous issues. They also express the prospects and pitfalls for integrating mountain municipalities in a metropolitan area. Lastly they reveal the emergence of devices for adaptation and mediation to ease the formation of metropolitan areas in the Alps with reciprocal relationships between city and highland.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** cognitive devices, relations between city and highland, Alpine metropolitan areas, territorial planning, public action

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