

The "Metropolitan City" in Italy: New Spaces for Dialogue and Interaction Between the City and the Mountain

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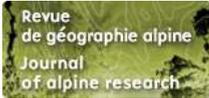
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Métropoles alpines. Vers une nouvelle alliance entre villes et montagnes ?

The “Metropolitan City” in Italy: New Spaces for Dialogue and Interaction Between the City and the Mountain

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The “Metropolitan City” in Italy: New Spaces for Dialogue and Interaction Between the City and the Mountain

Federica Corrado and Erwin Durbiano

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This article is the result of reflections shared by the two authors. The chapters may be attributed as follows: Federica Corrado, chapters 1, 2, 4, 5; Erwin Durbiano, chapter 3.

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The city-mountain interaction in the pan-Alpine document framework

- 1 The Declaration “Population and culture” – signed in 2006 by the Alpine states as a document in support of the principles of the Alpine Convention concerning certain specific topics – calls for attention to the role of Alpine townships as “centres for inter-town social, cultural, and economic services” (Declaration “Population and culture, Chapter V), able to guarantee suitable living conditions within the Alpine area. This implies: on one hand, a decrease in marginality by means of policies dedicated to service maintenance and the attraction of people and businesses, in order to guarantee human presence even in mountain areas that are not easily accessible; on the other hand, the declaration encourages the strengthening of a relationship between cities, Alpine, and extra-Alpine territories that shall not follow a logic of dominance/dependence – often still existing – but a system of mutual exchange and social/cooperative equality policies.

- 2 Therefore, the pillars of the envisaged territorial policies for cohesion and cooperation are the establishment of a solid presence in the area, and the creation of a virtuous city-mountain network. A metropolitan-mountain governance and specific, community-centred tools are thus required, in order to operate within the twists and turns of strategic local development planning and economic planning, and targeted towards giving value to local responsibility and skills.
- 3 In this path, the EU Alpine Macroregional Strategy (EUSALP) may be a crucial driving force, if it is interpreted correctly. It is indeed an agreement with the aim to coordinate different policies and provide the Alpine territory with a sustainable environment, an optimal economic and social development, and a position to offer an added value to both EU initiatives and initiatives at other levels. The three pillars of the resolution are the following:
 - to ensure sustainable growth and promote employment, competitiveness, and innovation, by consolidating and diversifying the specific economic activities, with the aim to strengthen mutual solidarity between the mountain and urban areas, as well as territories supplying amenities and those using them. This entails underwriting a fair and square “solidarity agreement” between the city and mountain area, as described in detail in the Grenoble resolution, which represents an added value to the strategy;
 - to promote a local development focused on environmentally friendly mobility: the development of services, transportation, and policies related to communication infrastructures;
 - to promote sustainable energy, natural resource, and cultural resource management; protect the environment and preserve biodiversity in natural areas.
- 4 The resolution thus is the crossway linking the city and mountain by means of a responsible alliance between urban and Alpines societies.

A proposal to (re)define city-mountain relationships

- 5 Currently the mountain area leads a period of new dynamism, in which the connection with the urban environment has an important role in terms of cultural redesign of values, physical and functional connections with the local areas, and creation of urban-mountain networks. We are witnessing a mountain system comprising experimentation and excellence, but even rupture and depopulation perspectives, in which the city and mountain are no longer simply the borders of an *entre-deux* (“between two”, Bourdeau 2015) relationship, and growingly a part of a “pluralized” territory which is rather the composition of elements making up a heterogeneous mixture of aspects, each with a role in the positioning and structure of such composition (Beauregard, 2012).
- 6 To build projects and policies at a metropolitan level today certainly represents a challenge that involves looking beyond one’s area of jurisdiction, to work to the benefit of a wider scope.
- 7 This paper – which strongly references a research study on the topic (Dematteis, Corrado, Di Gioia, and Durbiano, 2017) – aims to look more in depth at the matter of a new metropolitan-mountain configuration, and the local planning tools to construct the related vision. To this end, the paper – taking into consideration the current direction of Metropolitan Cities, the newborn institutions established as an intermediate level in local governance – considers the “Statuto Metropolitan” (a sort of Metropolitan City Charter),

namely the implementation of strategic planning in support of metropolitan (thus even metropolitan-mountain) governance, as a crucial element. Upon referring to such framework, the paper hereby presents the methodology and results related to a dissection of strategic plans that have, in the past, described and “designed” the urban-mountain relationship in practice. The results of such dissection have helped to focus on some of the theme-based core subjects that may be interpreted as a form of agenda concerning local matters, in support of local strategies conveyed towards a balance of the related components and, where possible, the recognition of an added value to the area that may emerge from the new configurations.

The Metropolitan City, a recent institutional body in national legislation

- 8 The “Metropolitan City” is a recent institutional body that was introduced in Italian legislation for the first time in 1990 (Law n° 142 concerning the judicial system of independent areas), with specific reference to the institutional procedure and organizational rules of the metropolitan areas and metropolitan cities. Over 10 years later, the Metropolitan City was recognized in the Italian Constitution as an independent entity.
- 9 The new Metropolitan Cities were officially born in 2014, following the approval of Law n° 56 “Disposizioni sulle città metropolitane, sulle province, sulle unioni e fusioni di comuni” (referring to provisions concerning metropolitan cities, provinces, and unions/fusions between townships). Metropolitan Cities are defined as wide-scale local entities, with the following institutional purposes: “catering for the strategic development of the metropolitan area; promotion and integrated management of services, infrastructures, and communication networks benefiting the metropolitan cities; catering for the relations concerning areas of the same institutional level, including European metropolitan areas”¹. The provisions also stated that the Metropolitan City area should correspond to the homonymous province. The legal document of reference would be the Metropolitan City charter.
- 10 The occasion to redefine the relationship between municipalities (the basic town administration body in Italy) and a new large-scale institutional body has been embedded and expressed in the newly formed Metropolitan Cities, with the related adjustments depending on the specific characteristics of the areas governed. We may highlight certain common elements involved in the setup of mountain areas and their relationship with cities as follows:
 - the recognition of area-specific characteristics: considerable attention is given to recognizing the mountain as an element with its unique structural diversity, therefore institutions must – above all – dampen the unfavourable, marginal conditions with a guarantee of equal rights for its residents;
 - management of the relationships between mountain areas and the metropolitan structure is distinguished by the potential to affect future organizational configurations by means of the possible activation of decentralized services provided by the new entity, and likewise for institutions in the mountain area to exercise metropolitan city functions;
 - certain management fields involving the entire metropolitan area may become the subject of a discussion directed towards acting on the mountain-city relationship; these include, in

particular, fields related to transportation and water management, which are strategic resources for the mountain area and the mutual exchange with the city.

- 11 It is in any case worth noticing a significant and critical aspect for the governance and management of mountain areas within the aforementioned law: institutional representation and the recognition of independent policies. Law n° 56/14 has defined – among the numerous changes introduced in terms of the setup of local administrations – the method to be used in the election of representatives of the Metropolitan City second-degree administration body. The criteria and philosophy previously adopted in the relationship between large townships and smaller towns – in terms of representation and as an expression of the variety of situations included in the metropolitan area – have been crucial in defining the archetypical relationship between the city and mountain areas, with the latter being a clear minority. The election of current town mayors or councillors as Metropolitan City councillors is thus based upon weighted voting depending on the total population and other demographics of the towns governed.

The Strategic Plan, a planning tool for urban-mountain areas

- 12 Keeping in mind the aforementioned institutional framework, we shall now examine the “strategic plan” defined, indeed, in the Metropolitan City charter, as the necessary planning tool to build a vision of the territory that may be a point of reference for large-scale development choices. The tool facilitates a process of local knowledge acquisition, the creation of future scenarios, and a collective dimension; it stimulates the birth of local networks to which territorial identities and forms of active citizenship cling to for the definition of a new concept of local entity.
- 13 The tool has been implemented in only few examples of Metropolitan Cities. Therefore, we have deemed it necessary to investigate a wide range of situations in which forms of strategic planning for the systemization of city-mountain relationships has been adopted; we have considered plans resulting from inputs to local governance different to the one in concern, but that may in any case serve as an indication of the method, process, and contents of a strategic plan based on exchange between urban and mountain areas.
- 14 Following a general survey, we have identified two categories of initiatives to analyse: the first category includes plans which have the common thread of a strategy research path explicitly connecting urbanism – generally related to a certain social class – to the rest of the metropolitan territory (mainly the rural-mountain area); the second category includes plans involving implicit relationships between the mountain and city areas, also in combination with other planning tools.
- 15 We condensed the analysis of the first category of plans to three significant cases: 1) the “Piano Strategico della città e del territorio di Cuneo 2020”, a strategic plan for the city and area of Cuneo towards 2020; 2) the “Piano Strategico territoriale della Provincia di Belluno”, a strategic plan for the Belluno area; 3) the Piano Strategico Metropolitan di Bologna 2020, a strategic plan for the metropolitan city of Bologna towards 2020. The different experiences have been analysed by using an investigation framework focused on three matters: a) *characteristics*, namely the skills-based aspects of the projects; b) *actors and networks*, with a specification of the different roles; c) *contents and management*,

through which we have highlighted the vision of the mountain-city relationship within the plans, and the method chosen to manage the latter.

| Piano Strategico della città e del territorio - Cuneo 2020 | |
|---|--|
| CHARACTERISTICS | |
| Plan objective | The general objective is to build a vision of the future which shall be shared and agreed upon by all actors involved, and counting on the innovation ability of the local community |
| Area of the plan | Cuneo and the 54 townships of the Sistema Locale del Lavoro ("local work network") "No city is isolated from the area in which it is located, no city is self-sufficient, and its decisions – including but not limited to urbanism – always have minor or major repercussions external to it. That which is applicable to a metropolis is also applicable a medium-small sized town like Cuneo, and even more so if it is located in the foothills of 6 mountain valleys that crown it and depend on it, not only in its capacity as provincial capital" |
| Period of implementation | 2003-2006 |
| ACTORS AND NETWORKS | |
| Promoting entity | City of Cuneo |
| Partner entities | Administration bodies of the towns involved, trade association representatives, social/cultural organizations, banks, chambers of commerce, non-profit sector |
| Transversal relationships created | A bottom-up design process has been launched, involving the following phases: a) recording the demands of residents by means of interviews; b) seminars and debates open to the public; c) area-wide investigations; d) project design in roundtables and workgroups |
| CONTENTS AND MANAGEMENT | |
| Vision of the mountain area | The mountain viewed no longer as the city's playground, and with depopulation, ageing population, and lack of services though with hints of a newfound vitality |
| City-mountain design connections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to create a network: the mountain area may be a place for new tourism opportunities, in parallel with the urban reality • Reverse the trend of a mere functional dependence between Cuneo and its mountains • Support to cooperation networks with French regions • Increase of online services and public home care |

| | |
|---|---|
| Management and implementation of the Plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of an organization involving the strategic actuators of the plan, which will lead and perform its creation and implementation, link governance processes, and carry out its supervision and assessment • Establishment of a development agency, as the operational department of the plan, working in cooperation with institutions |
| Piano Strategico Territoriale della Provincia di Belluno | |
| CHARACTERISTICS | |
| Plan objective | <p>The general objective was to create a plan that could become a virtual "space" in which to move, with the idea of common good at the basis of its procedures. The goals and topics of the plan were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redefinition of a territorial identity with a modern approach • Competitiveness and economic growth in a multi-sector context • Facilitation of design coherence • Development of a concrete policy for the area |
| Area of the plan | Province of Belluno (69 townships in the Belluno area) |
| Period of implementation | 2005-2006 |
| ACTORS AND NETWORKS | |
| Promoting entity | Province of Belluno |
| Partner entities | The administrative bodies of the townships involved, representing all sectors, public and private |
| Transversal relationships created | The aim is to build a "collectivist philosophy" based upon a voluntary, inclusive, and open process that activates people and ideas |
| CONTENTS AND MANAGEMENT | |
| Vision of the mountain area | The mountain viewed not as an issue, but a market, reversing the traditional trends of a folkloristic development that widens the gap between residents and their historic identity. Therefore, an inverted image of the stereotypical, marginal, and peripheral mountain environment |
| City-mountain design connections | To promote liveability of the mountain area in connection to the city. Activation of innovative tourism processes, including the Cortina (province of Belluno) Ski World Cup bid as a point of reference for the entire province and beyond |

| | |
|---|--|
| Management and implementation of the Plan | <p>A network-based process. 6 phases launched: data analysis; collection of project proposals; definition of levers of change; definition of plan levels; sharing of results; initial implementation actions.</p> <p>The plan is strictly correlated to the Piano Territoriale di Coordinamento provinciale (local plan for provincial coordination), still undeveloped at the time.</p> |
| Piano Strategico Metropolitan Bologna 2020 | |
| OVERALL CHARACTERISTICS | |
| Plan objective | The Strategic Plan has the aim to identify concrete directions and actions for the new Metropolitan City, in a number of fields: innovation and development, environment, urbanism and mobility, knowledge/education/culture, well-being, and social cohesion |
| Area of the plan | Province of Bologna, currently the Metropolitan City of Bologna |
| Period of implementation | 2011-present |
| ACTORS AND NETWORKS | |
| Promoting entity | Emilia-Romagna regional administration, former provincial administration (currently the Metropolitan City administration) of Bologna, City of Bologna administration |
| Partner entities | The administration bodies of the townships involved; other entities representing both public and private sectors |
| Transversal relationships created | Debate sessions, workgroups, and rountables |
| CONTENTS AND MANAGEMENT | |
| Vision of the mountain area | Not directly outlined |
| City-mountain design connections | The Plan refers to Bologna and its metropolitan area in general. The mountain is mentioned as a resource, especially in the scope of the environmental sustainability scope of the Plan. The mountain area is included, more in general, in the actions designed to promote the "Bologna system" as a whole (see: tourism) |
| Management and implementation of the Plan | An organization of entities acting as strategic implementers of the Plan will be created, as well as a development agency as the as the operational department of the Plan, working in cooperation with institutions |

- 16 As for the second category of initiatives, we have identified two significant experiences. Firstly, the initiative carried out by the Aosta Valley region, in which both the Strategic Plan for Aosta – which is built on a vision of the city’s future strictly in relation to the surrounding *plaine* (valley) area – and the regional Strategic Plan, included in the “Quadro strategico regionale”, a regional strategic framework, which was in turn included in the 2014-2020 Regional development policy.
- 17 The second experience identified is the Piano Strategico dei Comuni dell’Alto Canavese, a strategic plan for the Alpine upper Canavese area, within the Metropolitan City of Turin, involving: Carema, Settimo Vittone, Nomaglio, Borgofranco d’Ivrea, Lessolo, Andrate, Chiaverano, Montalto Dora. The Strategic Plan is currently being completed, and envisages an alternative form of development that has at its basis the distinguishing element of the landscape: terracing.
- 18 The analysis of these two experiences has revealed how the development process of the Plans is directed towards a discussion and a provision of a strategic indication of future perspectives. In particular, the first experience highlights a process of reconciliation between the parties (mountain and city) within a horizontal integration process that requires approval at an extra-local level. The second experience, on the other hand, is rather a vertical integration process, in which the parties (mountain and city) may only reach unison through discussion, also related to larger-scale plans and thus creating a pyramid structure; this system assists a continuous and coherent confrontation with the metropolitan context.

The challenges of the Metropolitan City between the urban and mountain areas

- 19 The results of the analysis thus confirm that there no longer exists a net separation between a city culture and a mountain culture; the borderline instead becomes an occasion to share, systemize, and unite the territorial forms (urban-mountain), by building a “cooperation at the border” (Pasqui, 2003). The boundary is viewed no longer as a wall that includes or excludes, that assesses value and defines dependencies, but rather a weld line that facilitates a relationship between parties, with the individual customs and traditions as a starting point, a promotion of possible exchanges, and differences considered as an added value. As highlighted in recent debates held in France, we may perhaps speak of the metropolitan system as a “territorial ecosystem” (LABEX, 2017) in which to identify mutual dependencies, and in which to recognize the ability to innovate and experiment of the mountain areas, in order to call into question the past model of city-mountain relationship (Fourny, 2014). The research work performed has thus allowed the creation of a series of guidelines, which are a challenge for the newborn Metropolitan City, but at the same time important local issues that help to overcome the traditional city-mountain dichotomy and build the solidarity relationship demanded by the EU.
- 20 The first issue is the *change in local relationship types*. It refers to the fact that areas within the Metropolitan City necessarily shift from the symbiotic relationship typical of the urban/peri-urban (their functional descriptions) Alpine context to new relationship types based on “mutual benefit” (METREX, 2006). This requires, first of all, “better mutual understanding” and “capacity building” ability, by means of a process that re-positions

local actors in a more balanced system compared to the current one. This change involves a number of aspects, at least in terms of recording the demands of residents, representation within the resource allocation centres, and spaces for independent project design that may be the driving force of mountain-city relationship development.

- 21 The second issue is *the need to plan a metropolitan-mountain area in which the idea of town centre and suburb is replaced by a strategic polycentric vision in which the urban environment and the mountain environment cooperate to achieve the stability and competitiveness of the system*. We are thus heading towards the idea of “urban bioregions” (Magnaghi and Fanfani, 2010) in which “the marginal and peripheral areas, the valley systems, and the deeply rooted areas that historically define the identity of urban systems regain centre stage, as they serve to guarantee a reorganization of mutual, and not hierarchical, relationships between urban and open agricultural-forest spaces, in order to create a new balance of ecosystems, energy, food, and functionality”. The innovative mountain has invested on quality as its distinguishing element (an emblematic example of this are all the brands related to the alpine environment): has the city been able to truly take advantage of this? “Chambéry, a city in the department of Savoie (France) and the entry door to 3 large protected areas (the Massif des Bauges natural reserve, the La Chartreuse natural reserve, and the Vanoise national park), is a pioneer in this field. The city supports a number of projects by rural townships in order to prevent depopulation. In the autumn of 2006, Chambéry inaugurated the “Maison des Parcs et de la Montagne” (house of the parks and mountains), located in a central position and equipped with large spaces, in which the protected areas are presented in a modern exhibition” (CIPRA, 2007, pg. 227). This is an example of how the urban-mountain system is able to generate an added value in its own structure.
- 22 The third issue concerns *inter-territorial nature as a tool to build metropolitan identity*, namely an identity that sees individuals living more and more *between* territories rather than within them, as argued by Martin Vanier (2008). In this sense, the hypothesis of a “politicization” of networks – which involves the territories and helps build forms of alliance with a variable structure in terms of specific topics, or a form of multi-territory and multi-level cooperation (with multiple actors and topics) – lends itself to the metropolitan-mountain contexts. In these cases, on-site workshops are a very valuable tool to record the demands of residents. An example of such workshops is the Alpine Lab coordinated by CIPRA Italia in the upper Susa Valley (Corrado ed., 2015; Corrado, Pastorelli, eds. 2018): an interactive, multidimensional, transversal, and inclusive experience to create new knowledge-building spaces and present new interpretations of projects as well as self-designed projects within the metropolitan system and beyond. It is thus possible, along the lines of such inter-territorial nature, to devise new configurations in addition to strictly institutional ones, thus creating recognizable and proactive bonds, which facilitate sharing, cooperation, and cohesion with regard to different topics and issues.

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NOTES

1. Article 1, paragraph 2 of Italian Law n° 56 issued on 7/04/14.

ABSTRACTS

The mountain areas live a period of new dynamism, in which the connection with the urban context has an important role in terms of cultural redesign of values, physical and functional connections with the local areas and creation of urban-mountain interactions.

The article focuses on Italian mountain system, comprising experimentation and excellence, but even rupture and depopulation perspectives, in which the city and mountain are no longer simply the borders of an *entre-deux* (“between two”, Bourdeau 2015) relationship.

The article taking into consideration the current direction of Metropolitan Cities, the newborn institutions established as an intermediate level in local governance. The new Metropolitan Cities were officially born in 2014, following the approval of Law n° 56 “Disposizioni sulle città metropolitane, sulle province, sulle unioni e fusioni di comuni” (Provisions concerning metropolitan cities, provinces, and unions/fusions between townships). Metropolitan Cities are defined as wide-scale local entities and they are institutional body with task of planning and local development government, in many cases regarding urban and mountain territories.

The article proposes a wide range of situations in which forms of strategic planning for the systemization of city-mountain relationships has been adopted. At first level, it has been considered Strategic plans that give formal indication about the exchange between urban and mountain areas. Three significant cases: the Piano Strategico della città e del territorio di Cuneo 2020 (2020 Strategic plan for the city of Cuneo and its surroundings mountain areas); the Piano Strategico territoriale della Provincia di Belluno (Strategic plan for the mountain-urban area of Belluno); and the Piano Strategico Metropolitan di Bologna 2020 (2020 Strategic plan for the metropolitan city of Bologna and its surroundings mountain area).

At second level the analysis regards the initiatives carried out by the Aosta Valley region (the Strategic Plan for Aosta) and the experience of the “Piano Strategico dei Comuni dell’Alto Canavese” (Strategic Plan for the townships in the Alpine upper Canavese area, within the Metropolitan City of Turin). Wide areas in which the actors have experimented a strategic planning in order to create strong interactions between urban and mountain context through a process of local governance.

The results of the analysis permit to highlight some issues: the definition of mutual benefit between city and mountain context; the construction of a strategic polycentric vision inside the urban-mountain territories; concerns inter-territoriality as a tool to build metropolitan identity.

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Keywords: metropolitan city, urban-mountain interactions, metro-mountain governance

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