

# 21<sup>st</sup>

## European Week of Regions and Cities

Thriving Regions, Stronger Europe

**(Un)formal territories in formal regions: the  
added value of European territorial  
cooperation**

Maria Coronato, National Agency for Territorial Cohesion, Italy



9-12  
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# Territories and Borders



- Since 1990 a **new spatial planning** appears in Europe: planning practice and theory have changed rapidly;
- **Borders** may be highly relevant in some practices and can be practically irrelevant in some others: the practice and context in question thus make a difference;
- Soft planning and hard planning to design and plan new territories (and borders): **porous** and **fuzzy borders**;
- **Borders** are normally by no means ‘fuzzy’ even if they may be “porous”;
- **Porous boundaries** do not have statutory meanings, regardless of whether they formally cross state or regional borders;
- **Fuzzy boundaries** in the sense that they can be modified and (re)designed effortlessly to reflect different interests and challenges defining **new synergies** and finding **new opportunities and solution** for *non structured territories* also by local stakeholders to find solution to environmental, social, economic and territorial challenges;
- To think a new relation among territories: metropolitan cities, mountain region, inner peripheries, internal areas and mountain regions as elements of a **complex system** where traditional concepts as *urban –rural, city and mountain, center and periphery* are useful to describe the **territorial capital available** but actually not totally able to define **future scenarios**;
- *From space of place to space of flows.*

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# Alpine contest (s): one Region more Territories

- **7 Countries;**
- **80 Million** of inhabitants of the Alpine region;
- 20% of Alpine space is covered by natural parks, protected areas **source of biodiversity for Europe.**
- **less than 20%** of the Alpine territory is suitable for settlements.
- there is a growing **need** for surfaces to be allocated to **transport infrastructure;**
- an apparently homogeneous territory from a geomorphological point of view, but which presents **significant territorial and socioeconomic imbalances within it (i.e. Switzerland effect);**
- large parts of the Alpine territory are now **urban** and **suburban** spaces; nevertheless some valleys are affected by the phenomenon of **emigration and depopulation**, in others **mass tourism** has diffused.

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## Typology of metropolitan areas

### Typology of metro regions

- capital metro region
- second-tier metro region
- smaller metro region
- non-metro region
- no data

### FUA & MEGA classification\*

- MEGA
- capital city
- second-tier city
- transnational/national FUA
- regional/local FUA

\*FUA: Functional Urban Area  
MEGA: Metropolitan European Growth Area

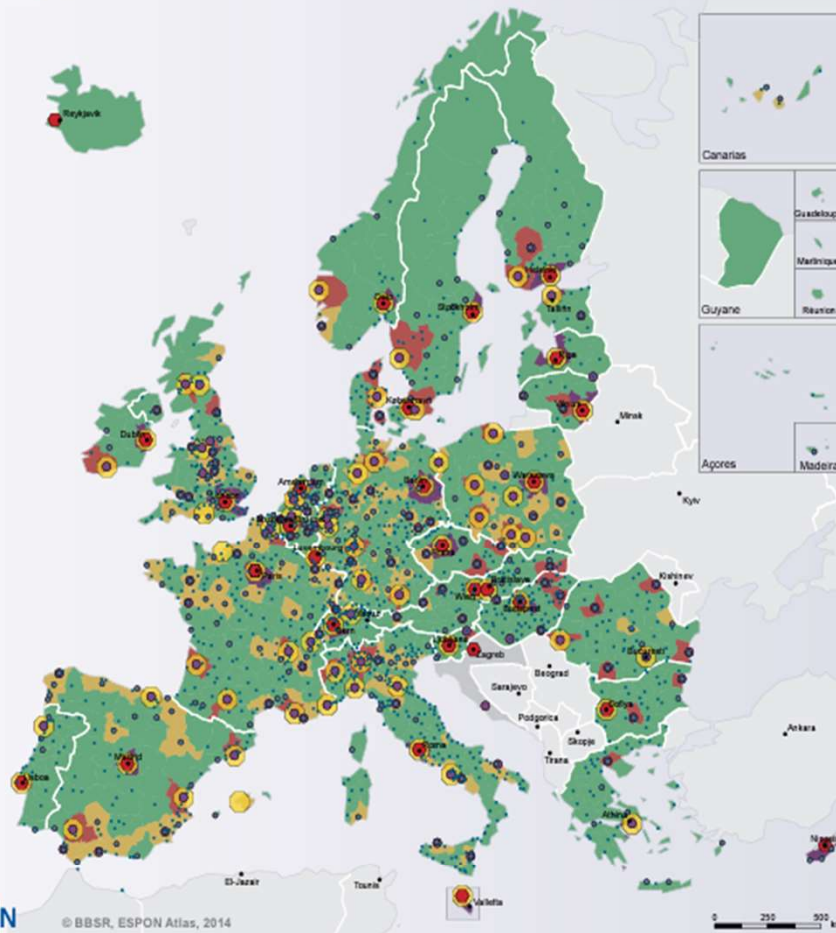
Regional level: NUTS 3 (2006)  
Source: ESPON-CU Typology Completion, 2011  
Origin of data: DG Regio, 2011  
© UMS RIATE for administrative boundaries

This map does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the ESPON Monitoring Committee

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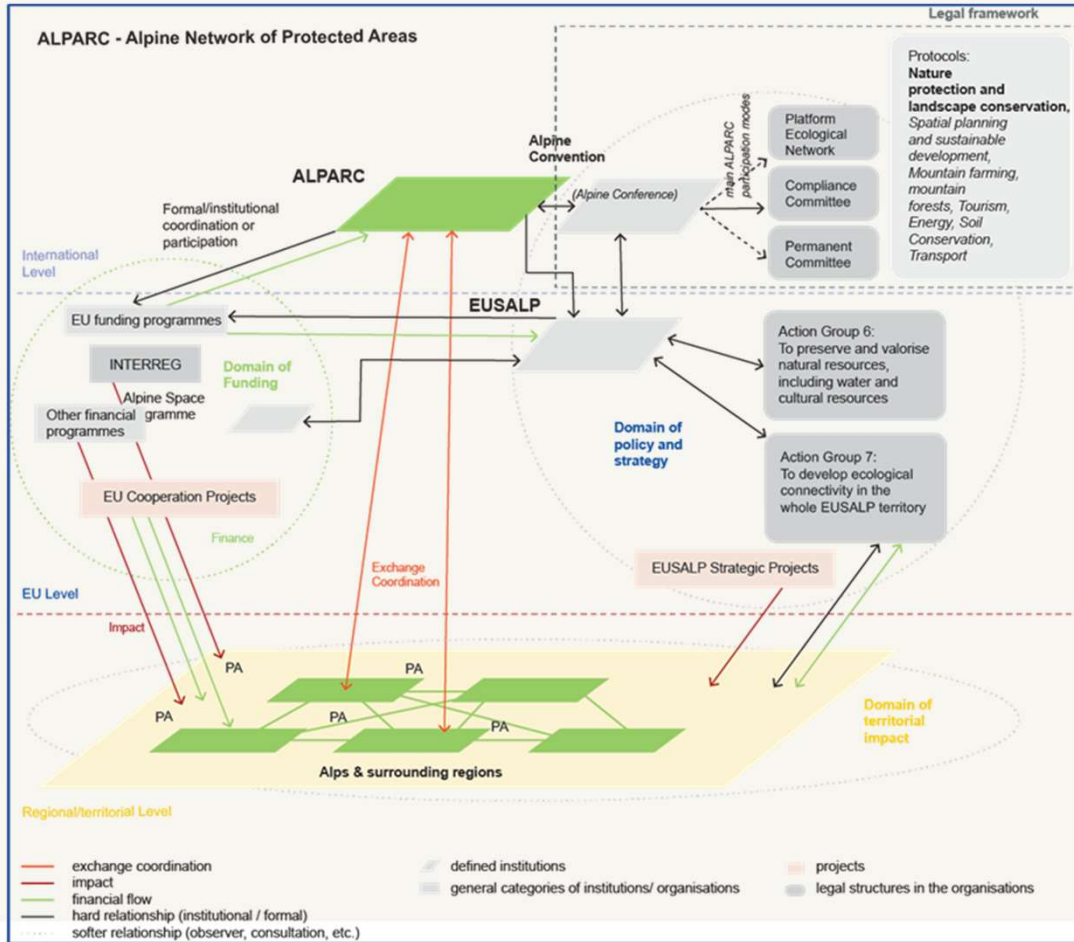
### Thriving Regions, Stronger Europe

- 12 out of 76 European MEGAs located in Alpine Space but the average size of most municipalities is less than 5000 inhabitants;
- three distinct macro-territorial areas: **Plain, Peri-alpine and Alpine;**
- **GDP** is higher for Plain, than Peri-alpine and lower for the Alpine area;
- The **Alpine area** is highly **specialised** in agriculture, but also in tourism (construction and retail, transport, accommodation) and slightly less specialized in industry and finance; The **Peri-alpine** area registers instead a slight specialization in industry, finance and science, while the **Plain** in finance and science;

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# A multilevel strategies and approaches in Alps: Governance example in Alps (1/2)



ESPON LinkPAs, 2018

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EC, 2009: “[**Macro-region is**] an area including territory from a number of different countries or regions associated with one or more common features or challenges” EC, 2015 “The scale of macro-regional cooperation is defined by the overlapping of territorial and functional characteristics across different policy areas ”

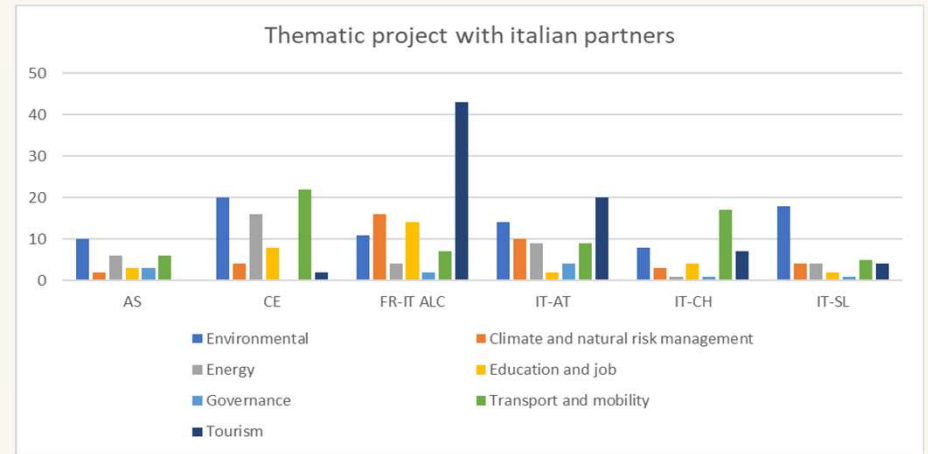
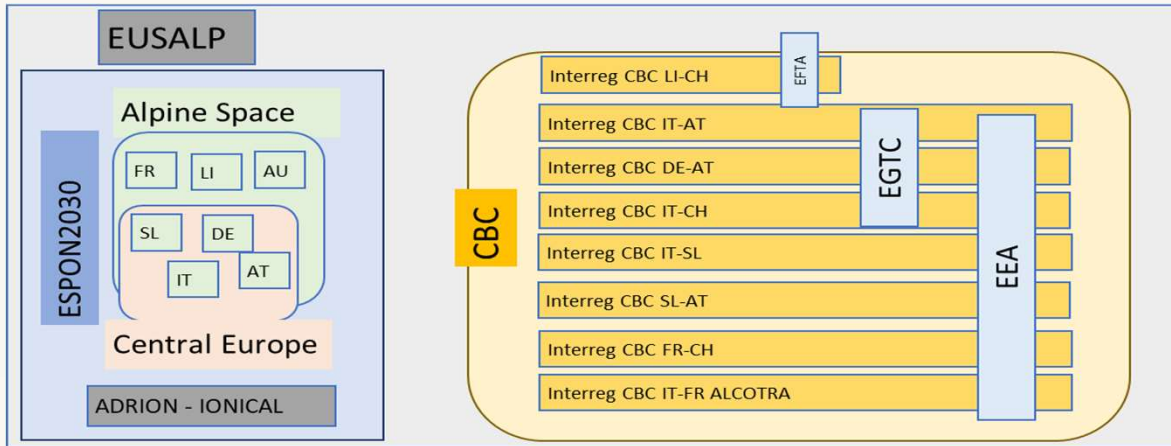
Davoudi (2019) suggest that “Designing for borderless areas creates new grounds for cooperation at all levels, bringing people and places closer together **to find joint solutions** for their well-being”.

Forey (2009 and follow) “There is a need to separate the **macro-region** into different homogenous geographical-morphological areas: the macro-region can be re-aggregated on the basis of possible complementarities and synergy and challenges



# A multilevel strategies and approaches in Alps: Cooperation in Alps (2/2)

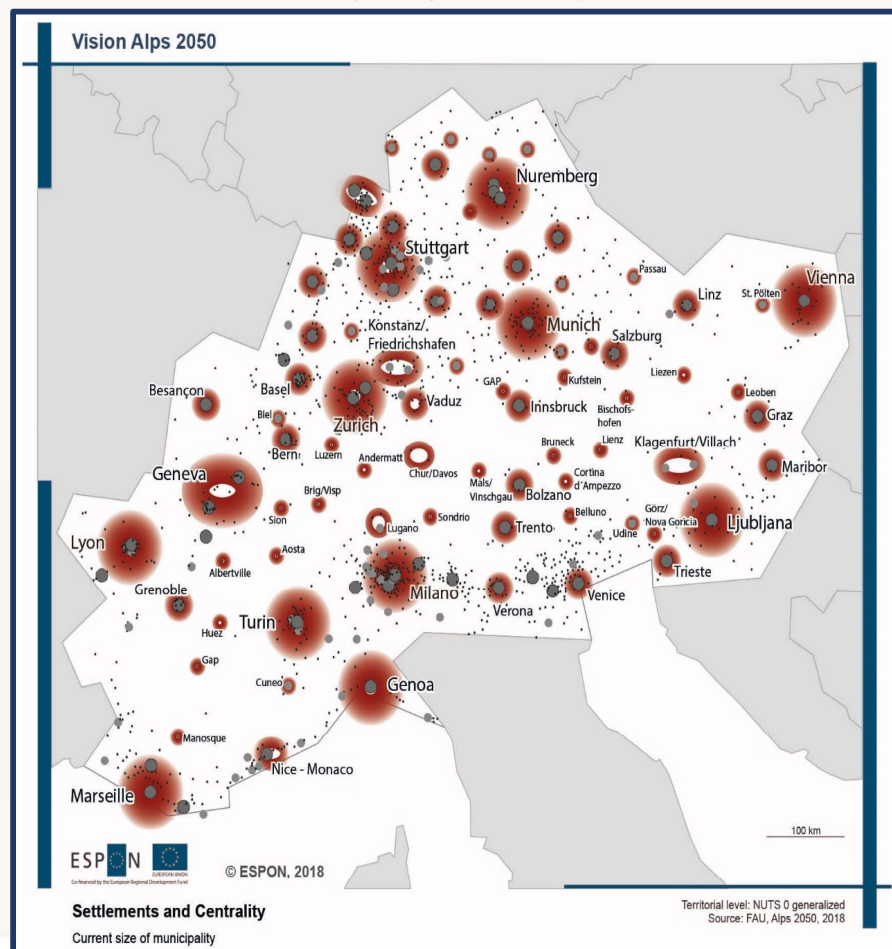
- **Alpine Convention,**
- **EUREGIO** (EGTC between Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino);
- **EFTA** (European Free Trade Association), **EEA** (European Economic Area);
- **TNC programmes:** Alpine Space, Central Europe;
- **CBC programmes:** Italy- Austria, Italy – France (Alps – ALCOTRA), Italy-Slovenia, Germany (Bavaria)-Austria, Alpenrhein – Bodensee – Hochrhein (covering territories belonging to Germany, Austria, Liechtenstein and Switzerland), Slovenia-Austria, France-Switzerland, Italy-Switzerland.



SmartCTE platform, 2023



## Alps's contest: from evidence to a scenario by ESPON project Alps 2050 (1/2)



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Three levels of centrality:

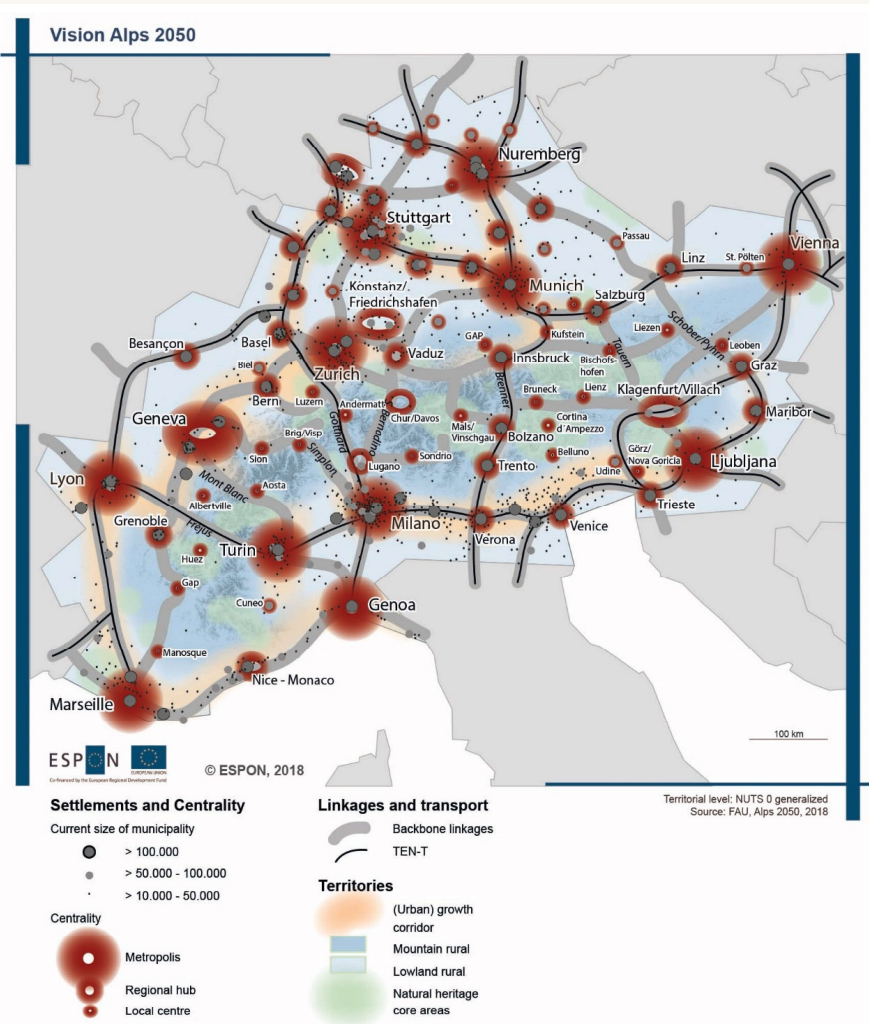
- Metropolises;
- Regional Hubs;
- Local centers;

Central spaces are no geographical points  
but “nuclei” for regional  
development that perform as rather soft  
spaces in practices.

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(2/2)



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Four general kinds of territories:

- (urban) growth corridors
- Mountain rural
- Lowland rural
- Natural heritage core areas

The Alpine region is the ‘contact zone’ of different natural spaces and of regional and national regimes and cultures (ESPON Alps, 2050)

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## Conclusion

- Thematic aspects and priorities modify the perimeters of planning;
- Administrative borders and cooperative borders are not exclusive;
- The several structures that insist in the same region make the territory porous and fuzzy with more and more different borders on the base of the local domains (social, economics, labour market, environmental, etc.);
- Fuzzy territories are “open” and can be modified on the base of challenges and need and cover/overlap the “space” between areas (metropolis, regional hubs, local center);
- Central role for local stakeholders to analysis needs and find commune solutions in territorial typologies present in *or* between formal regions;
- Fuzzy boundaries represent a deliberate attempt to insert new opportunities for creative thinking;
- Fuzzy territories and flexible organization to define a new competitive scenario

