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Strategic Spatial Planning and Territorial Asymmetries. Grenoble and Greater Geneva: Two Alpine City Regions Put to the Challenge of Coherence

Nathalie Bertrand, Dominik Cremer-Schulte and Mathieu Perrin

AUTHOR'S NOTE

All the authors contributed equally to the drafting of this article.

Introduction

- 1 The past two decades have seen a significant rise in the number of (strategic) spatial planning processes at the urban agglomeration, city and city-region levels (Albrechts et al., 2003; Albrechts, 2006; Zepf & Andres, 2011; Stead, 2012). These extended project areas seem to offer the ideal context to revolutionise the relationships between cities, their outskirts and their surrounding rural areas, since the idea of territorial coherence has become the guiding principle of spatial planning. Furthermore, it is very often the notion of cohesion¹ that appears to underpin the processes at work. Nevertheless, these processes do not necessarily offer a genuine opportunity for change because in many cases the governance that has been established proves to be imbalanced or asymmetrical. Not all areas have the same ability to impact spatial planning projects.
- 2 Territorial asymmetry developments are hardly reported on in academic literature. Nevertheless, different approaches to the concept have been put forward. Scholars such as A. Cole & R. Palmer (2008, p. 22), M. Reuchamps et al. (2009, p. 19), D. Béland &

A. Lecours (2012, p. 56) or J. Loughlin et al. (2013, p. 64) use it to refer to differential treatments adopted in regions or federated states when it comes to administrative and sector-based policies. Furthermore, M. Perlik (2011) employs the same terminology to address disparities between peri-alpine urban centres and alpine residential areas, exposing new functional and spatial divisions that amplify inequalities in relation to access to development and identity divides. Adopting a different register, L. Davezies (2012, p. 15) uses the notion to underline the heterogeneous impacts of the economic crisis on different areas. Thus, some authors' idea of territorial asymmetry reflects a spatial divide between areas and/or communities, while others associate it with a difference in the treatment of distinct administrative regions and areas.

- 3 In this article, territorial asymmetry can first be understood from a geographic perspective; it reveals disparities in terms of the resources and abilities between communities that do not benefit from the same financial, social, human or even institutional capital (Putman, 1993). Territorial asymmetry can also be understood from a planning perspective; in this case it reveals the differential way in which areas and their interests are integrated in strategic planning documents. According to planning logic, a space can be polarised and geographic sectors specialised, all in the name of territorial coherence and its underlying collective challenges (less commuting, preservation of agricultural spaces and hence less land use, maintenance and even restoration of ecological connectivity, etc.). Nevertheless, this dual conception of territorial asymmetry aims to show that the governance processes implemented as part of spatial planning approaches at the city-region level tend to reveal, if not maintain, the pre-existing disparities between urban and suburban areas. In other words, planning asymmetry, which can sometimes be justified for functional reasons, can also be explained by an initial geographic asymmetry reflected in the planning governance process.
- 4 Two alpine city regions, for which strategic spatial planning approaches have been implemented, offer a good illustration of such a reproduction of original asymmetries through the planning process: the Grenoble city region and the cross-border metropolitan area of Greater Geneva. As both urban agglomerations are located close to the Alps and/or the Jura mountains, the question of territorial coherence and cohesion is all the more poignant. Because of their restrictive setting, the areas concerned tend to be divided up into highly contrasting geographic sectors from a functional and identity point of view, which amplifies the difficulty of a number of issues, including land use. In both areas, between 2011 and 2013, roughly 30 semi-structured interviews were carried out with local officials, planning technicians and researchers who described the context and its inherent challenges. The arguments put forward in this article are based on the oral material collected as well as the planning documents relating to both areas.

Urban governance, collective intention and territorial disparities

- 5 Given that there is no real reference model, so-called strategic spatial planning experiments at the city-region scale abound and vary considerably according to national and local contexts (Jouve, 2007; Reimer & Blotevogel, 2012). Nevertheless, they are generally based on a number of recurring principles: horizontal integration

(according to sectors and themes) and vertical integration (covering a range of political and administrative levels), strategic development guidelines, use of participatory and integrating processes involving local stakeholders, a marked interest in spatial prospects and identity, and a focus on the process itself rather than the results (Faludi, 2000; Brenner, 2003; Healey, 2004; Albrechts, 2006; Jouve, 2007; Zepf & Anders, 2011).

Urban agglomerations and city regions as components of a local geopolitical context...

- 6 These planning developments go hand in hand with a process of transforming and restructuring public action modes (Muller, 2005). They entail a deep-reaching change in the modes governing urban space. Today, traditional forms of government are being withdrawn while local authorities, cooperative structures such as joint intermunicipal associations and local instruments such as urban planning and development agencies are gaining ground in regions and large urban agglomerations (Le Galès, 1995; Jacquier, 2008). The notions of regional, spatial or even urban governance have taken centre stage. These are founded on cooperation, regulation and even interaction mechanisms and bring together a diverse range of public and private stakeholders exerting mutual influence over each other (Stoker, 1998). These governance systems are hitched to traditional forms of government (Jessop, 2000; Figuière & Rocca, 2012), which has resulted in such a level of complexity that the borders between issues and responsibilities have become blurred.
- 7 These new forms of governance have opened the door to powerful interests, influential networks and stakeholders taking advantage of the formation of coalitions and alliances, and mechanisms of cooperation and conflict (Perroux, 1964; Jacquier, 2008). Spatial planning processes are obviously conditioned by such changes (Harvey, 1989; Allmendinger & Haughton, 2010; Metzger, 2011). The frameworks resulting from these new forms of governance lead to action reflecting a difference in the weight pulled by stakeholders rather than a search for some form of general interest (Figuière & Rocca, 2012). The unequal distribution of leadership, competencies, access to information and even ability to integrate a given process suggests that today's urban governance has slipped into a process that "benefits some stakeholders to the detriment of others" (Jouve 2007, p. 397).

... emphasising the uneven ability of local communities and authorities to exert influence

- 8 Different works in the fields of political science and planning pinpoint the imbalances and asymmetries between stakeholders or areas. Their ability to weigh in on collective approaches at the intermunicipal or city-region scale greatly depends on the financial, human, social and institutional capital available to them.
- 9 Contemporary forms of governance certainly tend to promote the responsibility of social groups having budgetary resources to implement urban policy. Nevertheless, this financial dimension is only one aspect of the imbalance. Not all areas enjoy the same human resources, in other words the same skills, qualifications and experience built up locally; neither do they have the same social resources and capacities, i.e. the links formed between collective networks and stakeholders and characterised by norms

based on reciprocity and trust. Collective action can only be efficient and egalitarian if the stakeholders concerned share similar values of social organisation (Putnam et al., 1993). There are also differences in terms of institutional capital, in other words the ability of territorial systems to use their organisational structures to establish or reinforce norms and rules to promote a governance that limits situations of uncertainty and provides the means of adapting to changing contexts (Platje, 2008).

- 10 Unequally distributed, these different capitals provide some stakeholders and areas with an advantage in the governance processes they set up in order to implement planning approaches and other metropolitan projects. Lefèvre (1998) remarks that the best urban governance achievements are the ones that benefit from strong support and leadership from the core city. The core city has the ability to guide and lead the process, in particular because of its greater capacity to gather funds and mobilise technical and human resources. Aware of the importance that a city region can have in a context of high interregional competitiveness, the core city also appears to benefit from this ability to think at a higher level and hence recognise the need to gain the support of surrounding areas. Conversely, certain areas, notably rural ones, find themselves facing difficulties because of the complexity of urban governance and spatial planning processes. This is especially true in the case of France. Their mayors have to acquaint themselves with new development frameworks and contribute to intermunicipal strategies. Not only does this require technical, administrative, financial, legal and even economic skills but also a certain ability “to hold their own politically on the intermunicipal playing field” (Vignon, 2010, p. 44). Thus, given the varied profiles presented by their elected officials according to the size and urban/rural nature of the municipalities, these different areas show uneven capacities (Koebel, 2012).
- 11 This situation begs the question of whether these forms of governance, established to deal with urban policies and planning processes at the metropolitan level, are able to meet two of the expected objectives: establishing a certain amount of fairness between geographic sectors and achieving to some degree territorial cohesion (OECD, 2001).

Asymmetrically balanced spatial planning

- 12 The approaches implemented in the Grenoble city region (territorial coherence scheme adopted in 2012) and in the Greater Geneva metropolitan area (project charters for the France–Vaud–Geneva metropolitan area adopted in 2007 and 2012) are part of a 40-year history of local planning. Grenoble and its outskirts set up an urban planning and land use scheme (*Schéma Directeur d’Aménagement et d’Urbanisme*) as early as 1973, followed by a master scheme (*Schéma Directeur*) in 2000. In 2012, the Grenoble city region’s territorial coherence scheme (*Schéma de Cohérence Territoriale*, SCoT) paved the way for 273 municipalities to progressively buy into a spatial project meant to rise above sector-based interests. Cooperation between France, Vaud and Geneva started in 1973 with the France–Geneva Regional Committee (CRFG) and led to a Franco-Swiss cross-border metropolitan project. The project was supported by the Swiss Confederation as part of its urban agglomeration policy (*Politique des agglomérations*). The consultation phases on both sides of the border made it possible to build a cross-border project through three successive commitment charters.

- 13 Both planning processes link valley-bottom urban areas with more distant and sometimes mountain-based entities. They both reflect how difficult it is to fully integrate the surrounding rural and mountain areas into the scope of action and include them in thinking about different issues. Up until now, the mountain question has been kept relatively separate from urban issues. Given the marked contrast between the geographic entities involved, the territorial coherence targeted and the strategic guidelines selected in order to achieve it can be questioned. Based on a functional but asymmetrical balance, the strategies applied often confirm the pre-existing but varied dynamic movements between areas. Furthermore, while the same challenges are recognised across all geographic sectors, there is nothing to indicate that each sector has the same ability to apply these strategic guidelines in the field. The administrative frameworks, operational means and even the different pressures exerted on areas mean that the same guidelines cannot always be applied in the same way.

Multipolar, networked and hierarchically organised metropolitan areas

- 14 The functional relationships between French areas (French border communities of Haute-Savoie and Pays de Gex) and Swiss areas (Geneva and the district of Nyon) no longer need to be proved within the framework of Greater Geneva. “Setting up a metropolitan area” beyond national borders is nevertheless a central objective of the cross-border project. The metropolitan area is expected to be “compact, multipolar and green” (Charte de projet d’agglomération, 2012). Today, secondary polarities are structured by eight cross-border development areas or “PACAs” (concerted metropolitan development areas). These define the top spatial planning and development foci reflecting the spatial challenges of the metropolitan area. Based on the catchment areas around Geneva, they closely link urbanisation (compact polarities), mobility (improvements to transport infrastructures) and environmental aspects. Focusing on these eight areas, the Greater Geneva metropolitan plan outlines the measures to be implemented in terms of urbanisation and transport infrastructures in order to rebalance jobs and housing. The introduction of these development areas has had two consequences for the Greater Geneva region. Based on multipolar reasoning, the development areas have made it possible to structure the urban sprawl from the centre of Geneva through to the most rural or mountain sectors such as Pays de Gex or Salève (Saint-Julien-en-Genevois). However, although they have created a new centre-periphery structuring, they have also allowed disparities to emerge between PACAs with respect to planned investments. The Geneva–Annemasse–Salève PACA, which links the centre of the metropolitan area to the Salève mountain sector, is to benefit from significant and specific Swiss investments. Funds have notably been put aside for the building of the CEVA (Cornavin–Eaux-Vives–Annemasse) line, designed to extend the tramway beyond the Swiss border (Cahier, 61-1, 2011). The question of its financing had an impact on French-Swiss negotiations. However, the failed cantonal vote of 18 May 2014 concerning Geneva’s co-financing of the park-and-ride facility in France illustrates how difficult it is to finance mobility projects locally in the interests of the metropolitan area and to plan collective infrastructures. On the French side, this situation is viewed as proof of the Geneva canton’s inertia (intermunicipal joint association, 2015). Furthermore, these development areas are supposed to rebalance

jobs between the centre of the metropolitan area and its outskirts, with the 2012 charter announcing the creation of 30,000 jobs in France by 2030. However, this rebalancing is proving to be more difficult than planned in the document ratified in 2012, which illustrates the political difficulty of reversing polarities (cf. Tab. 1, cit. 1).

- 15 In the interest of combating suburban sprawl and limiting greenhouse gas emissions, the territorial coherence scheme (SCoT) for the Grenoble city region promotes a “*tiered urban framework*” (SCoT 2030, p.266). Although the structuring and future development of the area is very much based on existing urban potential (in other words, a multipolar monocentric region), the project confers different developments on the urban poles according to the roles defined for them in the project, in terms of demographic growth, distribution of housing or service offers. Central functions (facilities, services and shops) are reinforced by the valley area, starting from the centre of the Grenoble urban agglomeration and extending to the town centres of Voiron and Saint-Marcellin. The project outlines a gradation of functions to be covered by the more suburban sectors, shared between the main poles, supporting poles and local poles (or tourist poles linked to mountain sectors) and bringing together the whole city region into a meshed structure. Thus, “the objective of achieving balance and avoiding competition between areas has led to optimal areas of influence being defined for each pole in the region” (SCoT 2030, p.306) in order to “capitalise on the specific vocations” (p.22) of each area that makes up the city region. For instance, for the southern part of the urban agglomeration (Trièves), the scheme entails moderate demographic growth and the development of local economic sectors specialising in agriculture, wood production and tourism. For the eastern part (Grésivaudan valley), the scheme underlines the housing of hi-tech business and research activities.

A common objective of farmland preservation but with distinct planning concerns

- 16 Preserving farmland has become a shared objective and is even considered the norm. This is reflected in particular in urban projects in the Greater Geneva and the Grenoble city region. The importance of this issue is felt so keenly within the framework of planning that both projects are geared towards questions relating to biodiversity, food security and local food supplies. The 2007 France–Vaud–Geneva charter already reflected this important focus by outlining that “all partner sectors of the metropolitan area [...] see the conservation of the environment and of vulnerable natural and farming spaces as a top priority in their planning” (p.43); the subsequent 2012 charter stipulates that “the consumption of agricultural land, as well as fragmentation and conversion of natural environment to built-up areas” (Charter 2012, p.12) must be reduced. However, there are “friction” zones between PACAs, i.e. areas targeted for metropolitan development, and the so-called “functional” farming areas. These zones have been pushed to centre stage through the agricultural metropolitan project (*Books 13-25*, 2011). Although most of the 71,000 ha of farmland (two-thirds in France and one-third in Switzerland) corresponds to agricultural zones (on average 9% of this land falls into other zoning categories), the management of potential competition between urbanisation and agricultural production relies on robust national systems. Thus, in Switzerland, in order to fulfil national food supply needs, the protection of arable land at the cantonal level is guaranteed by the 1992 cropping rotation surface plan (SDA). The federal spatial development office therefore only approved a fraction of the urban

developments planned for the agricultural zone (ARE, April 2015) in the 2030 Geneva canton plan, specifying that the canton of Geneva should revise in its master scheme the actions planned after 2023 to be in line with its SDA quota. On the French side, although protecting agricultural land has become a definite political goal (Soucard, 2013)², the challenge still remains: protected agricultural zones are limited (two in the French part of Greater Geneva); and local planning documents, such as the municipal planning schemes (Plans Locaux d'Urbanisme) and territorial coherence schemes (SCoTs), which essentially address the challenges, are subject to the opinion of the CDCEA. However, the municipal disparity of arable space zoning is still considerable, and only "half to two-thirds of cultivated areas are considered by SCoT schemes as specifically delimited agricultural spaces" (Books 13-25, 2011, p.27). The result is that "SCoTs can act as strong protection tools. They have been used differently and do not all afford the same level of protection" (op cit., p.27, p.18).

Dealing with spatial inequalities in the planning process

- 17 These development asymmetries are the result of functional considerations that are nonetheless never completely free of local geopolitical stakes and social representations regarding urban and peripheral areas. But they also stem from the very process of drawing up planning documents at the city-region level. Local communities are unequally equipped to deal with the governance on which the drafting of these documents is based. The strategic objectives and guidelines tend to reflect the unequal distribution of financial, social, human and institutional capitals across areas, which makes the initial disparity still more obvious.

Financial means and scope for decision making

- 18 Planning processes are proving to be especially costly, notably now that there are new requirements for environmental studies to be performed. Not all areas enjoy the same scope for decision making in this field. In the French context, some rural municipalities and intermunicipal organisations are being asked to join the much wider and, above all, essentially city-focused SCoT scheme because of this, although local officials are not necessarily enthralled by the idea. In spite of the financial support allocated to rural SCoT schemes, rural officials often feel that it would be too difficult to bear the cost of financing an independent process. In the Grenoble area, for instance, elected officials of the Trièves, which is a mid-mountain area located 40 km south of Grenoble, seriously considered drawing up their own document but were eventually convinced to join the Grenoble city region's SCoT because of financial reasons (cf. Tab. 1, cit. 2).
- 19 Furthermore, within the same SCoT area, local communities do not have the same ability to launch planning processes at their own levels. Some embark on the development of intermunicipal planning schemes, sector plans, or otherwise participate in more informal projects. Although the financial aspect alone does not explain the unequal dynamics of different areas in this intermediate planning process, the question of available funds cannot be brushed aside (cf. Tab. 1, cit. 3). This ability to undertake such approaches at the intermediate level and to trigger collective thinking about the future of an area also generally allows the stakeholders involved to get a

better feel for their situation and to fashion a shared vision that they are then able to defend as part of a large-scale project, for example at the city-region level.

Political and technical human resources

- 20 Although the spatial project established within the framework of a SCoT is mainly steered by specific stakeholders, this is also because of the different levels of influence exerted by elected officials and technical experts. As part of inter-area negotiations, the weight of some political personalities, who hold a term of office or position in the organisation of parties that allows them to be heard, obviously comes to bear on the debates taking place, and the most influential elected officials are listened to by their counterparts (cf. Tab. 1, cit. 4). This varying degree of political influence does not necessarily play out according to a centre-periphery opposition or, in the two cases at hand, a valley-mountain antagonism: There are elected mountain officials with real political clout, even if their constituency has relatively little influence.
- 21 On the other hand, this geographic split can be seen more in the distribution of technical skills. Planning processes, especially because of their complexity, offer an obvious advantage to those who have better control over their legal framework and the different legal codes likely to be called upon, or even available tools and assistance. Consequently, the voice of stakeholders without such expertise is minimised during inter-area debates.
- 22 The relationship between elected officials and technical experts should also be studied as it varies according to geographic contexts. Technical experts are increasingly obliged to act as translators for their elected officials, explaining the challenges and crucial points to be focused on during negotiations (cf. Tab. 1, cit. 5). When this exchange cannot take place, often because of the way stakeholders represent the relationship between elected officials and technical experts, then the area finds itself at a disadvantage. Thus there is a disparate distribution of skills and an unequal ability to call on them.
- 23 Although a spatial project set up as part of a SCoT tends to value certain areas over others, this can also be linked to more exogenous considerations. For instance, the technical experts working for the Grenoble region urban planning agency admit that they have less expertise when it comes to areas outside of the city, notably the mountain areas (cf. Tab. 1, cit. 6).

Table 1: Table of quotations taken from interviewees

N°	Author	Citation
1	An elected official for the French part of Greater Geneva (Haute-Savoie NUTS3 region)	<i>“The second charter ratified the first. We need half of the inhabitants on each side and 30,000 jobs in France, [...] we sign, we know it won’t hold [...]. There’s still a 20 km² area free here... There’s nobody on it... whereas on the other side of the border, basically, they can choose... ‘We want you! You not!’”</i>

2	An elected official for the Trièves [Grenoble city region]	<i>"[The development of a SCoT] costs several hundreds of thousands of euros. That's a lot of money! So it was better to club together and tell the Grenoble region's SCoT, 'Come and work in our area!' Again, it seems pretty trivial, but it did go a little way towards carrying the day, as they say. And that's when we put some of our prerogatives to one side, but why not? The core, the matrix, the heart, is the city."</i>
3	A planning technician [Grenoble city region]	<i>"[A SCoT] costs a fortune, and that's a real problem, everywhere, in any area. Who can afford to cough up that kind of financing? It's a real problem. [...] We're going to have the same problem financing intermunicipal local urban planning schemes in rural sectors."</i>
4	An elected official for the Trièves [Grenoble city region]	<i>"[T]here are political affinities that are leading to the emergence of majorities. Left-wing elected officials are not going to ride roughshod over Baietto [then-president of the Grenoble agglomeration community] or want to upset him, so they'll follow his lead because he's one of the area's political leaders."</i>
5	An elected official for Grenoble [Grenoble city region]	<i>"For example, I found that the person in charge of urban planning in the municipality helped me enormously. Elected officials don't necessarily know how to do everything. I said to myself, 'Thank goodness he's there!' Because at least he helps me to understand. He takes the time to explain to me, so there we are..."</i>
6	A planning technician [Grenoble city region]	<i>"[Our mountain culture,] it's weak, you see! Historically, we're not very good at it. We've always worked in the valleys. [For the past two or three years in] the agency, we've been trying to work on the mountains. There are things being done. There was the Belledonne area that was less structured and wanted to be part of the Grenoble city region's SCoT. There were some things that were OK, but we weren't really clued in to the culture. Our culture was very urban... but we're now more rural, more suburban. But that, that's also linked to the agency's position, working with areas like Gap, like... Before, we were much more city-focused. Today, we've got people who work a lot on the Vercors. So, the Vercors is not part of a SCoT, but we're working on [the mountain areas that make up] the Vercors and the Chartreuse."</i>
7	A technical expert for the Nyon district [Greater Geneva]	<i>"Obviously, we have a difficulty here. The canton of Geneva is a full member of Greater Geneva. So, perhaps [on the French side], they have the same difficulties as us. On top of that, we have to meet the requirements of cantonal policies that are not necessarily the same as in the canton of Geneva. So, we're feeling a bit torn."</i>
8	A planning technician [Grenoble city region]	<i>"One area that's really managed to set up a lot of planning is the Voiron area... but in fact it initially introduced counter-planning measures. They planned against Grenoble and against the master scheme. They had been so traumatised by the 1973 master scheme - because they were the main ones to be impacted - that they built on that. They said, 'We're going to build ourselves up' - at the time, it was mainly right-wing politicians whereas the agglomeration was left-wing - 'We're going to set up joint associations and then intermunicipal communities against Grenoble [...]' And so they became federated."</i>

9	A technical expert for the district of Nyon [Greater Geneva metropolitan area]	<i>"There are some people in the canton [of Vaud] who consider themselves functionally bound to Geneva, but that's not where their identity lies. To a certain extent, there's this fear that they're going to be caught up in something that will make them forget who they are."</i>
10	A planning technician [Grenoble city region]	<i>"The city-mountain relationship is a complex one. [...] I don't know whether you knew [this planning technician working in the Chartreuse area and who used to say]: 'Stop there, you - Grenoble's SCoT - stop seeing us as your outskirts. We are also a centre; we are the centre for your leisure activities!' [...] But as for them, they can't deny that they're influenced by the city."</i>

Institutional organisation, local governance and planning culture

- 24 The degree of institutional organisation, the maturity in local governance and the planning and project culture vary according to geographic sectors. Sometimes, stakeholders of a defined area work together because of simple administrative realities. These realities, which include administrative borders and rules, oblige them to become more organised and to develop their skills in relation to a given issue. In this respect, more mature and experienced spatial entities tend to be at an advantage. For example, the State of Geneva works with the regional council of the Nyon district and the joint association of the French communities (ARC, *Assemblée régionale de coopération du Genevois Français*) involved in the metropolitan project. These latter structures, more recent, do not have the same institutional background nor the same legitimacy as the State of Geneva. At these intermediate levels, developing a shared vision requires time, which is obviously a drawback when it comes to defending a position in negotiations (cf. Tab. 1, cit. 7).
- 25 Nevertheless, the existence of such a planning and project culture does not always depend on administrative geography. Sometimes the factors are more deeply rooted in the minds of elected officials, technical experts and other local stakeholders. For several decades, the Voiron area, which is the second-largest pole in the Grenoble city region and one of the SCoT sectors, has shown concern over planning issues. In response to an urban planning and development master scheme drawn up for the Grenoble city region (Martin, 1997), local stakeholders founded the Voiron Development Joint Association the following year, in 1974, hence undertaking their own planning process (cf. Tab. 1, cit. 8). Concerned by the same agricultural issues, they also collaborated on the development of an ambitious land use policy, hence equipping themselves with the tools to gain more control over their local space. The experience that they accumulated allowed them to develop an ability to plan ahead and embark on planning processes.

Socio-spatial representations and metropolitan imaginary

- 26 Another aspect to be taken into consideration concerns how elected officials and technical experts imagine and represent the different areas that fall within the planning scope or the city region under construction. The way an area is addressed in such processes involves both identity-related and functional considerations. For instance, identity issues seem to limit the involvement of the Nyon district's stakeholders in the most rural and Jura-based areas. Most of the local populations are afraid of being associated with an identity linked to Geneva and the city (cf. Tab. 1, cit. 9). Having begun to take part in the metropolitan project, the elected officials have somewhat changed their view of their own areas and that of their neighbours. Nonetheless, their vision of the project and their expectations in relation to it cannot be the same as in the Geneva canton.
- 27 With respect to the Grenoble SCoT, stakeholders in the Trièves have come to question their relationship with the urban agglomeration: The more traditional populations worry about how to maintain their relative isolation in the face of the neo-rural inhabitants, some of whom have "fled" to the area from the city. The elected officials are not the only people caught up in this representation game. At the Grenoble city region's urban planning agency and in the surrounding regional natural parks, the same difficulty has emerged: How should these urban and mountain spaces be addressed, and how should their interrelations be faithfully represented? (cf. Tab. 1, cit. 10). In one way or another, representations often tend to have a wooden and caricatural vision. Such representations obviously have an impact on urban governance and the planning process since they guide action and the project as a whole.

Conclusion

- 28 This article highlights the influence of capitals – financial, human, social or even institutional – that are unequally distributed from one local community to the next within the context of planning governance. In other words, geographic asymmetries can be seen to have an impact on spatial planning because of their reproduction in the planning processes. Planning processes at the city-region scale should encourage the representatives of central authorities and those of the peripheral areas to work together more closely since they are linked by functional relations and have to address similar problems. However, as they often find it difficult to define their own interests when urban planning is undertaken, peripheral regions regularly prefer to stay outside of the planning processes and areas being established around urban agglomerations when they have a choice. Thus, what is really needed is thinking about how to build territorial coherence in planning processes and what forms of governance should be implemented when developing the project and defining strategic guidelines. This work is all the more important in city-region contexts close to mountain areas where, perhaps more so than in other areas, pre-existing disparities are reflected or even amplified through planning processes. If efforts in this direction are not made, it is difficult to imagine a spatial project capable of rising above the historical tensions between valley-bottom urban entities and peripheral sectors located in the foothills or at higher altitudes.

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NOTES

1. Whether at the European level – as shown in the various coherence reports of the European Union – or the metropolitan level, coherence and cohesion are very often considered as necessary to the structuring of perimeters supposedly set up to (re)unite diverse areas (Bertrand & Perrache-Gadeau, 2009; Faludi, 2010).
2. In particular, the French Agriculture and Fisheries Modernisation Act (LMAP) of 27 July 2010 and the French National Environment Commitment Act (ENE) of 12 July 2010 promoting County Commissions on the Utilisation of Agricultural Areas (CDCEA).

ABSTRACTS

Territorial coherence is today a guiding principle of spatial planning, especially at the city-region scale. The increasing number of spatial planning initiatives on such extended perimeters comes with the hope of a renewed relationship between cities, outskirts and rural areas. The aim of this article is to show that the governance processes at work in strategic spatial planning projects tend to reveal, or even to maintain, disparities between urban and peripheral areas, especially in mountain regions. Such areas' ability to influence spatial projects proves to be uneven since they have different resources (financial, social, human and institutional). Based on spatial planning documents and interviews, the research reported in this article analyses the planning initiatives in two alpine city regions: Greater Geneva and Grenoble.

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Keywords: strategic planning; urban governance; territorial coherence; spatial equality; Grenoble; Greater Geneva

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