

Mountains, Models for Sustainability: Lessons from the Alps for Future Cities.

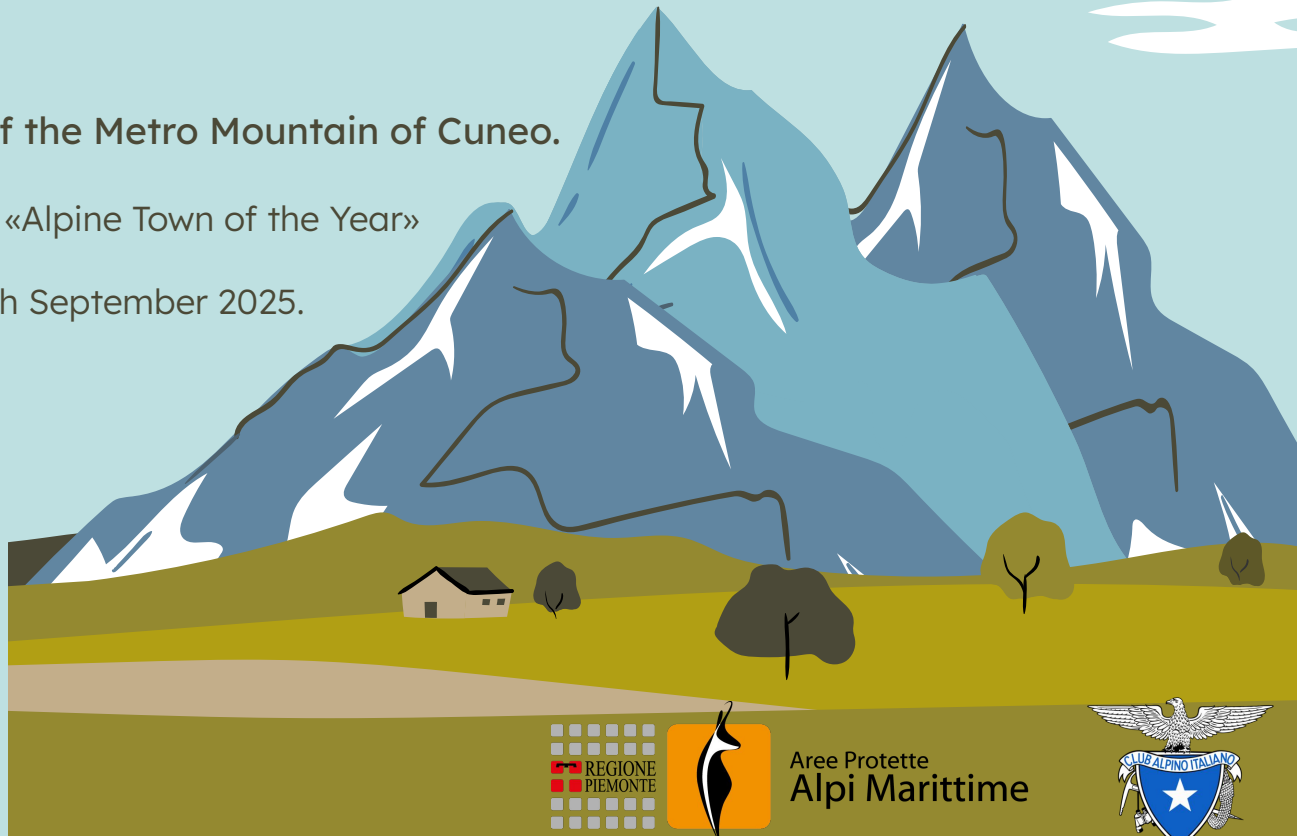
A perspective from the youth of the Metro Mountain of Cuneo.

2nd General Assembly 2025 of the «Alpine Town of the Year» association.

Chamonix-Mont-Blanc, 18th to 20th September 2025.



Città di Cuneo



Aree Protette
Alpi Marittime







Mountains are not just a place for escape, but a living laboratory where humans can learn how to face the challenge of the ecological transition

The mountain can teach us:

- **To respect nature and manage resources**
- **The value of effort**
- **The importance of the sense of limits**
- **Altruism and sense of community**

Resource Management: The Alpine Hut

In a mountain hut, frugality is a necessity, not a lifestyle choice.

Water, energy, food are precious goods not to be wasted. **Resources are limited.**

In refuges, one gains firsthand experience and learns the beauty and value of:

- water
- air
- landscapes not (*too*) modified by humans
- starry nights (*Starlinks and Co. permitting*)
- silence

...and it turns out that **LESS IS MORE!**



Rifugio Federici-Marchesini al Pagari - Alpi Marittime

1908



2019



Natural resources aren't unlimited

One of the most beautiful and representative historical panoramic views of the Maritime Alps glaciers was taken by Fritz Mader on **September 8, 1908**, from the path to Passo di Carboné, looking toward the Clapier-Maledia-Gelàs group. From the left, you can see the **Clapier, Peirabroc, Maledia and the Gelàs East and North-East glaciers**.

The repetition of the shot on **August 30, 2019** (photo by N. Villani) shows the **almost total disappearance of the ice masses**, equal to nearly 90% of the area they occupied during the Little Ice Age.

Effort as a Value

Reaching a summit (*cultivate a garden, clear a forest, or maintain a dry stone wall*)... requires skill, hard work and the ability to face challenges one step at a time.

In cities, everything seems simple and immediate.

Sustainable change — both personal and collective — **isn't immediate.**

It demands **preparation, effort, patience and perseverance.**

Climbing a peak also puts us in front of our limits and teaches us when it is time to stop.



Short supply chains and local consumption

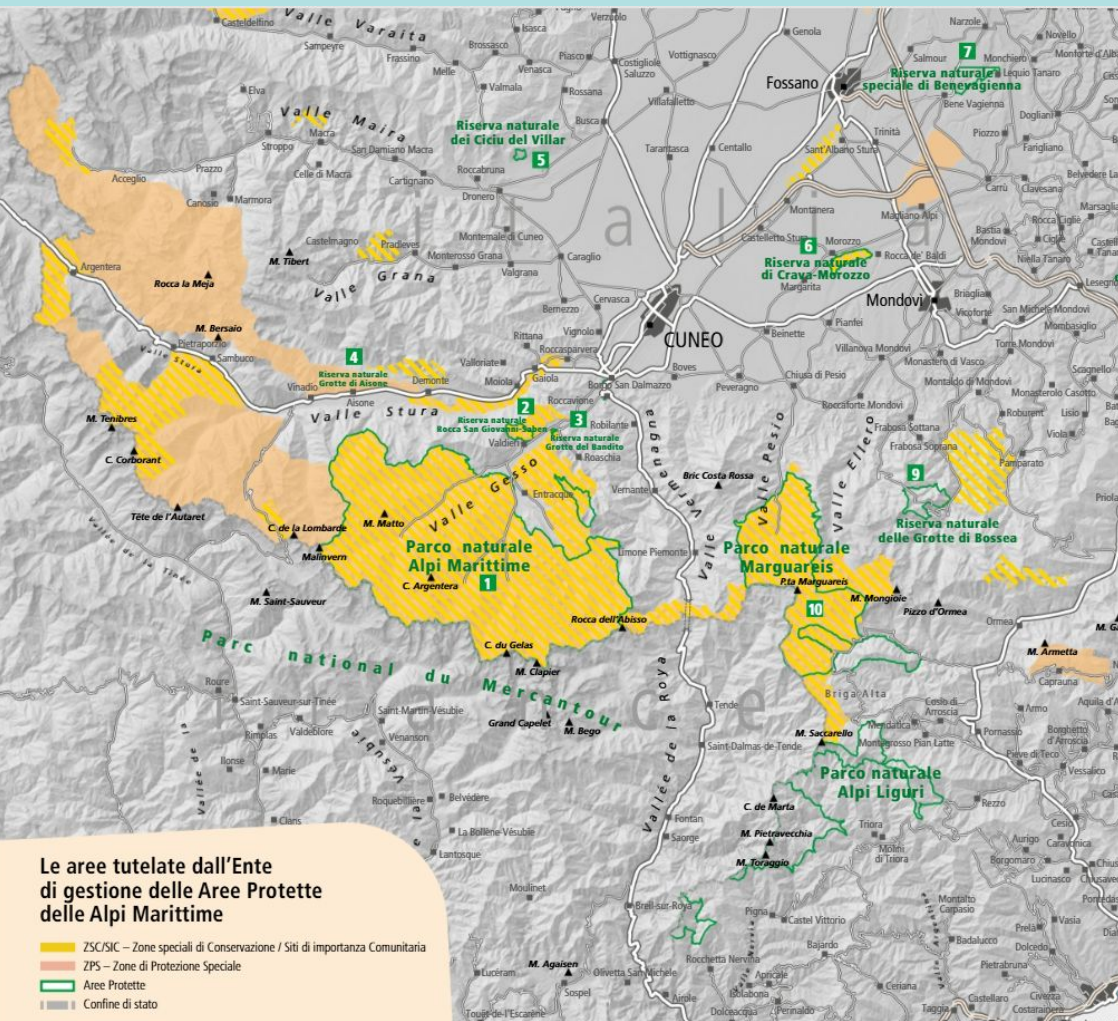
In the mountains, **survival has always depended on the careful management of local resources.**

Similarly, using the woods and cultivating the land allowed them to **maintain the territory.**

This bond with the land is an early example of a short supply chain, where **people used what nature provided** while **respecting its natural balance.**

Supporting and promoting local production offers us the opportunity to become more **conscious consumers** and **reduce our ecological footprint.**





Biodiversity as Wealth: the Protected Areas

In cities, the **impact of our actions on the environment and biodiversity** often goes unnoticed, while **in the mountains**, the consequences are **direct and visible**. Spending time in the mountains reminds us that **we are nature** and reconnect us with it.

Going to the Cuneo mountains often means visiting a **Protected Area** (Parks, Reserves, Natura 2000 Network sites).

Here, we can learn to **understand and coexist with nature**, love it and **take care for it**.

Protected Areas keep **ecosystems healthy**: **ecosystem services** are invisible, but essential for our lives.



Altruism and Community: The Alpine Rescue Service



The **Corpo Nazionale Soccorso Alpino e Speleologico**, a volunteer-based organization, **reflects** a significant drive of civil ethics and **altruism**.

The **rescuer's role becomes a metaphor** for a behavioral inclination that we should all strive for to create a **more supportive society**, where **individual interests can be set aside to benefit the community**.

This is what we all must aspire to, to find **trust in the future**.



Call to Action

Cities must view the **mountains** not as a a playground, but as **a source of knowledge and inspiration.**

Respect of nature and resources

Effort as a Value

Sense of limits

Sense of community and Altruism

Alpine principles must be integrated into urban planning, resource management, and civic education.



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Thanks for your attention!

Thanks to:

Comune di Cuneo

Ente di gestione delle Aree Protette delle Alpi Marittime

Club Alpino Italiano - Sezione di Cuneo

Jacopo Elia

jacopo.elia7@gmail.com

Marco Gautero

marcogau00@gmail.com

Costanza Luconi

costanza.luconi@areeprotettealpimarittime.it

