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HOST2026

Design for complex territorial system strategies: designing Milano-Cortina2026's Olympic legacy

Executive summary

Host2026 is a research project that originates from the challenge of the 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Games (OPGs) in Valtellina. The issues on event management intersect with great opportunities related to the incoming funds and the media visibility that the territory will gain. In the pre-event period, the question is: "How can we activate sustainable planning with a long-lasting legacy?" And "How can this event turn into an opportunity by addressing the growing demand for hospitality?" The project involved research to discover problems and opportunities in the area, but above all outwardly through market research, trends and case studies, to understand how Valtellina characteristic traits could become opportunities. The interest in local, natural, cultural, and food and wine enhancement is in line with the progressive sustainability trends (in all its dimensions).

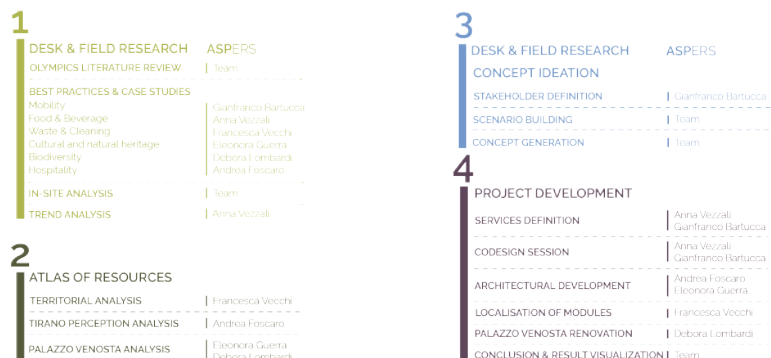
The research led to the proposal of a hospitality system evolving in topology and assigned functions. Indeed, HOST2026 aims to create a sustainable project whose legacy is not only reused but becomes an opportunity for growth, both for the local economy and for social and community development.

Starting from the visualization of an evolving scenario over time, the project proposes modular hospitality spaces capable of moving and changing functions flexibly. Hospitality spaces, both for accommodation and reception services, are connected to the territory through the local wine culture. The innovation does not lie in the final product but in combining modular experiential hospitality with a mega-event such as the OPGs. The proposal makes it possible to enhance the territory and to leave a memory in tourists to increase possibilities of their return with long-term visibility.

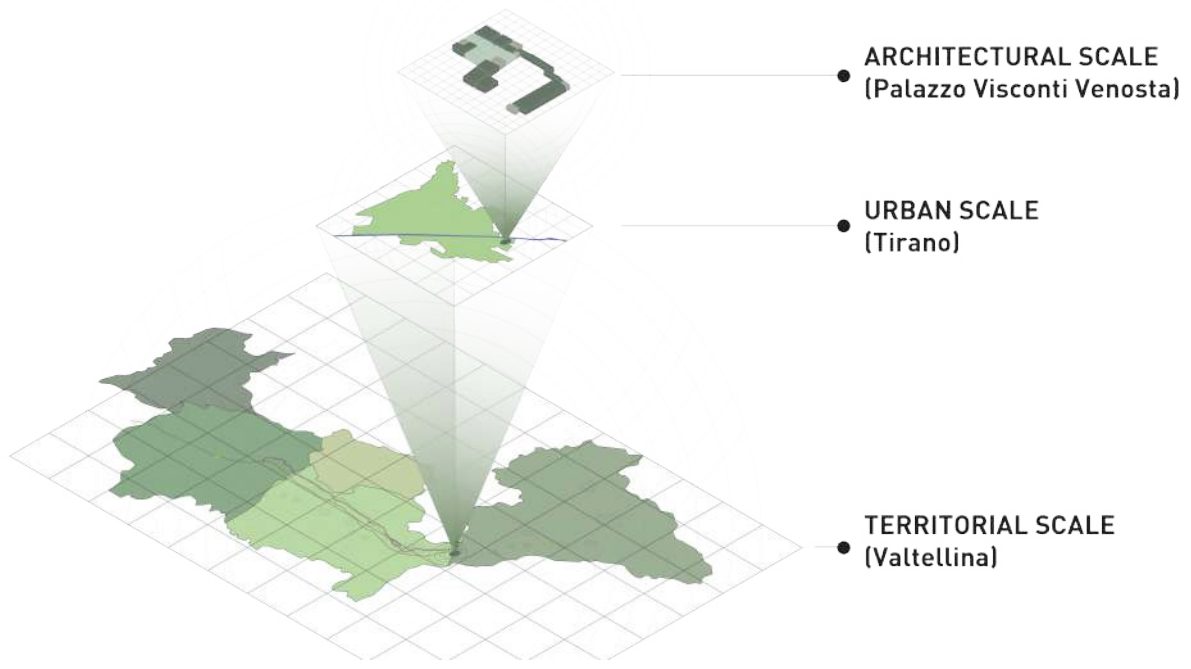
The result of the project is a research output that gives rise to a systemic project proposal named ALOC. ALOC identifies a direction to aim for, maintaining a degree of implementation of its assets by the stakeholders involved.

Key Words

#Olympics #long-term legacy #multi-scale #experiential hospitality #community-based



Project phases and subdivision of tasks among members.

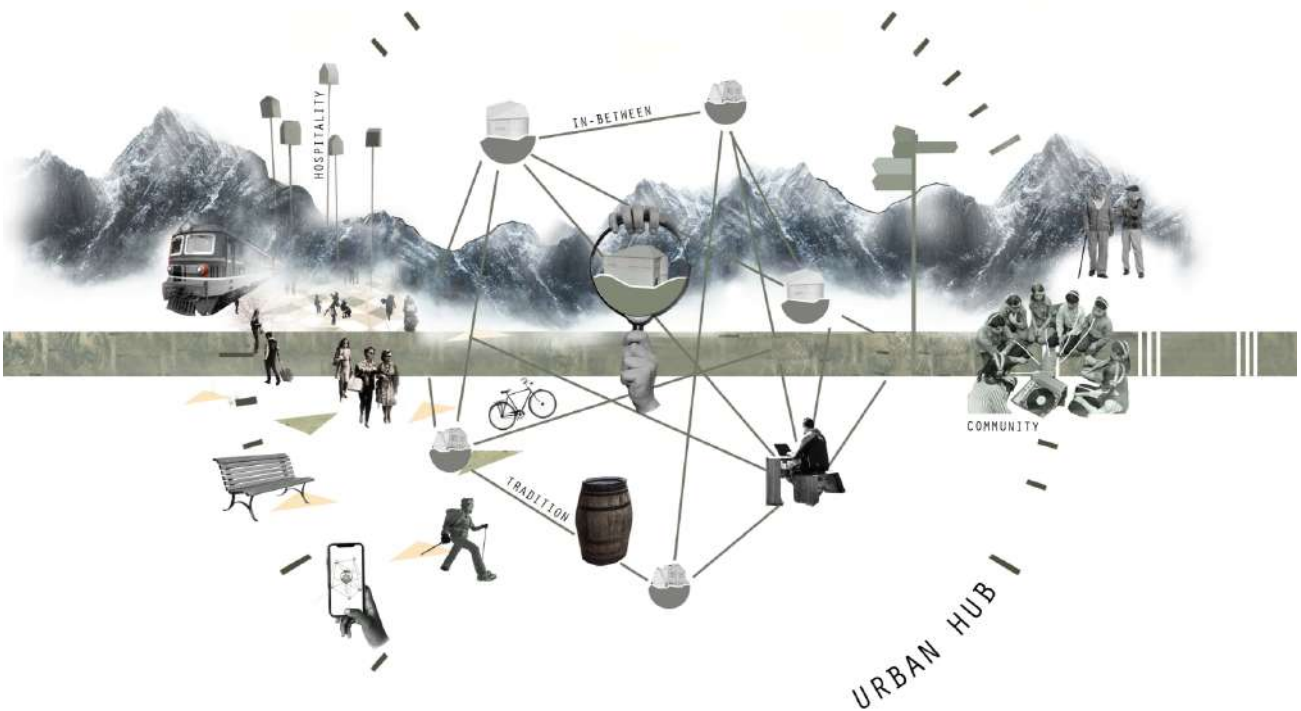


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From territorial multi-scale research to scenario building.

**Project description
written by the
Principal Academic
Tutor**

Over the years, the organisation of mega events has increasingly focused its interest on the design of the legacy of the event itself on the territory involved, from different points of view: spatial, economic, social, environmental. In particular, the large flow of visitors and actors involved in a mountain realm characterised by small realities to be protected and enhanced offers an interesting scenario on which to reflect and design in a multidisciplinary form.

Key goals of the research project are focused on how to use the Winter Olympic Games 2026 challenge to re-design a long-term territorial strategy and new proximity systems, particularly for Valtellina area and Tirano, in northern Italy. The research and didactic project worked on the sustainable welcoming and diffuse hospitality of the different populations that will visit and live temporarily the area, through the strong involvement of the residents and the local stakeholders in the legacy project.

The research and project proposal are design-based. Essential for the design of a mega-event, with a view to sustainability and territorial promotion, the themes involved are meta-design, strategic design, service design, maintenance of assets and territory, sustainable mobility, planning and development of tourism and cultural services, participatory actions and processes.

The project focus on beneficiaries at a double level: territorial networks, public entities and other local stakeholders for strategic and territorial management outputs; residents, athletes and event staff, tourists for the level of new systemic offer of services in the hospitality, heritage, culture & leisure areas. The project is linked to the network and the activities of the Interreg CONVALORE project (founded by the EU) about the regeneration of heritage and landscape in Valtellina and Valposchiavo areas.

The design approach, shared and nurtured by the teachers' team, seem to ground effective synergies towards this objective. Nowadays, it is increasingly essential to think in a cohesive, community-based logic, capable of reflecting on the changes underway as well as co-constructing new opportunities. This also applies to the regions in the mountains that are experiencing profound and increasingly rapid change, impacting both the global and local levels.

**Team description by
skill**

The project was conducted by an interdisciplinary team whose composition greatly influenced the research direction. The group is composed of three designers, two architects, and an urban planner. At the same time, the academic tutors' training helped shape the project research and meta-project proposal on a systemic scale. The design-driven method was supported by professors exploited for the research phase, for the creation of scenarios, and for the community-based approach. Involving design goes back to the people but also involves them in the planning and decision-making part.

The design-oriented approach was integrated with architecture and urbanism; disciplines more focused on heritage, the built environment, and the vision of the territorial scale. Being future(s)-oriented consists in considering some critical questions for the design process.

The didactic process was based on a "horizontal approach" led by the team teachers and which contributed to guide students in the visualization of possible medium and long-term scenarios for the territory, with the involvement of local residents and stakeholders through co-design. Horizontal contributions co-existed with more specific "vertical activities" by tutors.

Matching different approaches and activities has contributed to the interdisciplinarity of the project and its outputs.

Goal

HOST2026 questions how to design and manage a sustainable and long-term legacy from OPGs 2026 for the Valtellina mountain area. The wide-ranging research seeks to understand the territorial context, its needs and to identify integrated and durable interventions for the Valtellina ecosystem.

Although this is a mega-event lasting only a few weeks, the territory needs to welcome wide audience and high numbers of tourists, forcing the planning of hospitality solutions both for sleeping and for short-stay services.

A main purpose is to strive for a forward-looking design of the investments to avoid the future waste of Olympic planning, and to take advantage of it. The Olympics can be strategically exploited as a visibility showcase to enhance the potential of the territory and its culture. Therefore, OPGs 2026 should be used to redesign a long-term multi-scale strategy for Valtellina, adopting a community-based approach and having Tirano as a pivotal point for its development. The multi-scale, long-term proposal aims to shape an integrated experiential offer for the area with durable benefits. The proposed perspective needs to be accepted by the community and network of stakeholders. The long-lasting purpose of strategic guidelines should support the socio-economic cohesion favoured by exploiting the Olympic challenge: mega-events can turn into mega-opportunities.

The strategy integration is trans-scalar and strictly related to the mountain context. Mountain areas are increasingly attracting projects and funds to repopulate and revitalise the economy towards a return to ruralism. Due to the evolving mountain conditions, the strategy should be considered as a structured input to be implemented by stakeholders and eventually adapted to requirements.

Understanding the problem

Mountain areas have been increasingly affected by de-population and insufficient investments over time. Infrastructure, tourism and activities are generally clustered in a few poles, while minor hamlets cover a secondary role despite their heritage and cultural values. Recently, new fundings by European Union and PNRR have addressed a tendency towards “ruralism” and to innovate in marginal territorial areas. Attractions of actions and innovation can be also concentrated towards mountain sectors in case of extraordinary events, such as the OPGs.

Hosting OPGs in a mountain area can represent both an opportunity for new developments as well as a threat for excessive anthropic pressures in a short-term range and long-lasting footprints (i.e., over-tourism or presence of unused structures in the post-Olympic). Olympic planning requires the realisation of services to address different needs and habits according to the way of visit. The issue of hospitality not only involves the design of accommodations but also requires reflection on a tourist's journey and possible services involved for each step. Accommodation, mobility, catering, and waste are undoubtedly issues related to the primary needs of visitors. At the same time, issues such as cultural heritage and biodiversity need to be considered in order to both enhance the visitor experience and preserve and create a sustainable event design.

Related negative impacts may overcome benefits for the local mountain ecosystem and population in a long-term vision. Issues are more likely to emerge without a structured and local-based planning made before the OPGs for the post-event period and in dialogue with local stakeholders. Ensuring long-term legacy (tangible and intangible) is indeed fundamental for the Olympic movement. At the end of 2017, the IOC adopted a set of policies to formally incorporate positive values at every stage of Olympic preparation and help hosts to unlock future values. However, a durable positive legacy would be even more challenging to shape in case of delicate ecosystems. This is the case of Valtellina, which is one of the areas to host the Milano-Cortina Winter OPGs in 2026.



Location of modules with urban services during the Olympics in Tirano.



Visualisation of modules during the different periods and seasons.

Exploring the opportunities

The Olympics and the Valtellina context offer several opportunities for the territory that should be exploited. Organising OPGs in the area can increase visibility from an international point of view. The mega-event will attract various investments, which should not only have a short-term benefit on the valley. According to the impacts of past Olympics, post-event tourism will have an annual growth rate of between 8 and 9 percent in the affected territory. Local businesses and the population should use the Olympic revenue as an opportunity to strengthen the networking of actors and their offers.

On the other hand, Valtellina is characterised by a diverse cultural and natural heritage, among which the traditional and distinctive wine-growing landscapes are protected by UNESCO. Wine production has shaped the territorial heritage and the traditional economy. The overall offer presents a rather diffuse structure, although the tourist clusters in the Upper Valley contribute to a lack of coordination between actors. Local opportunities can be analysed in a multi-scalar context,

from the valley to the architectural scale (Palazzo Venosta in Tirano). This approach contributes to conceive flexible solutions that change over time, closely linked to local actors and opportunities.

Generating a solution

The problem and the goals have shaped long-term solutions applying an anticipatory approach.

HOST2026 consists of a strategic multi-sectorial research and territorial analysis to integrate the hospitality challenge of the 2026 OPGs rather than solving it completely. Two outputs were produced by the team: on one hand, a strategic research analysis at different scales, on the other, a project proposal called Alòc. "Alòc" in the local dialect means accommodation and underlines its community-based soul. The multi-layered investigation designs a long-term sustainable vision which led to a meta-project for Valtellina Turismo (a tourist board for the Valtellina promotion composed by local consortia). The Alòc management by a single entity (Valtellina Turismo) seeks to overcome fragmentation. Alòc aims at enhancing the territory by a complementary experiential offer based on local wine culture, which strictly related to the local economy.

The offer adapts for three interlinked scenarios, or rather Olympic, post-Olympic and long-term legacy. The physical implementation consists of a diffuse experiential system by modules, located in the protected vineyards of Valtellina from the Olympic period. Local wineries and hoteliers can rent modules from Valtellina Turismo to widen their own offer, address bed demand and diversify their activities. The coordinating headquarter is Palazzo Venosta in Tirano, which turns into a hostel, "wine hub" and final milestone of Strada del Vino.

Hospitality structures are complementary to movable and changeable service modules: they satisfy tourist transit in main municipalities during the OPGs and distributed along wine paths in the post-Olympic.

Following sustainability principles, the project should not hinder the development of other social and economic activities but rather enforce shared value by connectivity and exchange, starting from the existing potential. The network creation also within the community should increase social awareness and strengthen existing businesses for a long-lasting economic and social legacy.

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