

REGION FRANCHE-COMTE CONTRIBUTION

General objectives

From 2004 to 2006, AlpCity PPs have developed the habit of working together and concepts allowing them facing similar issues on their different territories. The work is far from having produced all the expected results, notably as far as exchanges between partners and local managers as well as lessons learned are concerned. This is linked to the fact that an action requires a certain time (around 2 to 5 years) to get results.

Therefore the Region Franche-Comté offers to continue the work begun in AlpCity by following three main objectives:

- *Enhancing the recognition of the importance of small alpine towns in the territorial dynamic of the alpine space,*
- *Contributing to reinforce the attractiveness of small alpine towns as far as economy, tourism, services, landscape and urban quality are concerned in view of a harmonious and sustainable development of the alpine space,*
- *Contributing to a European policy of territorial planning and sustainable development.*

The continuation of this work could be done through an \bar{y} AlpCity II \check{A} project, considering that AlpCity I correspond to the period 2004-2006.

1. proposed organisation to reach these goals

1.1. Organising an horizontal and vertical \bar{y} AlpCity \check{A} network

The proposed organisation by the Region Franche-Comté would rest on a more direct networking of the partners at different levels (project / regions / local actors) and between the different levels to dynamise the \bar{y} network effect \check{A} and facilitate the dissemination of experiences by direct exchanges between local managers and/or between partners.

The experience of AlpCity 2004-2006 was focused indeed on exchanges between the Regions PPs, which met several times and gave the SSC information, materials etc. Two new dimensions could be integrated in the following AlpCity:

- *More direct exchanges between PP regions,*
- *Exchanges at the local level.*

The pursue of these objectives suppose to have the project organisation changed in order to integrate the dimension of local actors.

1.2. Deepening of exchanges between regions on conceptual and operational levels

Exchanges between partners during the first period enabled to structure the discussion on small alpine towns and the common issues between different partners:

- *Economic development*
- *Urban environment*
- *Services and quality of life*
- *Cooperation among towns*

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Practical experiences filled the discussion. The Region Franche-Comté noticed that the partners of ALPCITY 2004-2006 expressed the wish to develop these exchanges to “feed” their work at two levels : on the conceptual level and the practical level. Among those wishes, they wanted beyond the general meetings, direct exchanges between regions on specific themes.

On a conceptual level, exchanges on practices and the support of university researchers would enable to give a systemic analysis of the evolution of small towns according to the different issues and the interactions between those dynamics. A better knowledge of these evolutions would enable partners to orientate better their policies or even to adapt them.

On a more operational level and in link with the conceptual analysis, these exchanges would enable to continue to select good practices, to analyse them, to find transferable features.

1.3. Creating vertical and horizontal exchanges between operational project managers

Key actors managing directly the projects could be more directly involved by the Region level. Now that the discussion is structured, that partners know one another and that projects were launched, this second level of exchange would become essential so that project managers could:

- benefit directly from good practices selected in other territories, being able to adapt these practices to their own projects,*
- to know examples from other territories to develop new projects adapted to their area and informing their upper Administrative level of possible needs in terms of financial, technical assistance ...*

2. Differentiating the objectives of the AlpCity network according to the levels

This networking organisation could run by setting distinct objectives according to the involved levels:

2.1. Alpine space level: the level of project management

At this level, the lead partner would be responsible for the management of the project of course as well as of the coordination between all the partners ; it would play the role as during 2004-2006 of leadership for the group of regions partners by stirring the dynamic between partners and supporting spontaneous dynamics ; it will be in charge of linking the scientific level, le laboratory and the different partners.

It could be interesting also that regions could support the LP role of stirring up the dynamic and interface between the experts and local actors. In this view the new entity represented by the European Organisation for Territorial Cooperation¹ could be an interesting tool.

2.2. The partners level: first network

¹ *The rule of the European parliament (5th July 2006) gives this organisation a legal basis to facilitate and support the achievement of territorial cooperation actions with or without financial contribution from the EU. The participation of Non-EU members is possible under certain conditions. The setting-up of such an organisation would allow to share the responsibilities and financing between region partners instead of having them to be only the duty of the LP.*

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Each partner would be the leader on its area (Region, Bundesland...). The partners would be the relay between the project level and the local level:

- *They would inform local project actors about the themes discussed within the AlpCity project, the good practices, etc.*
- *They would be the relay in the bottom-up direction by indicating the good practices selected on their own territory to the project level in order to fill the database of good practices and the discussions on different issues.*
- *They would exchange in a transversal way between them on certain specific issues.*

All the exchanges would feed the discussions of partners and would contribute thus to have them adapt their way of action according to the achievements, the improvements made, etc. By working together on a more regular basis, regions could thus involve themselves stronger in the project life.

Eventually the interest of AlpCity II would rest on the stirring of local actors' networks around themes, issues, actions etc. The networking dynamic between local actors will be based on the PPs capacity to create and maintain it. See below for explanations.

2.3. network of local actors : exchanges and thematic networks

This level would be the one of territorial actions (case studies) within AlpCity. The idea is that local project managers also work in network through exchanges and meetings notably: good practices of some actors could be useful for the projects of others, etc.

The network life could be organised differently: organisation of excursions, exchanges of literature, newsletters, seminars, organisation of videoconferences, integrated website or within the AlpCity website. These thematic networks (for example: sustainable tourism, housing and sustainable urban organisation ...) would be identified by the partnered regions along the project advancement and discussions with local project managers.

The main benefit for the local actors would be not only to receive information brought by their Region or partnered organisation but also to be key actor.

2.4. the scientific support to partners and local actors : the laboratory

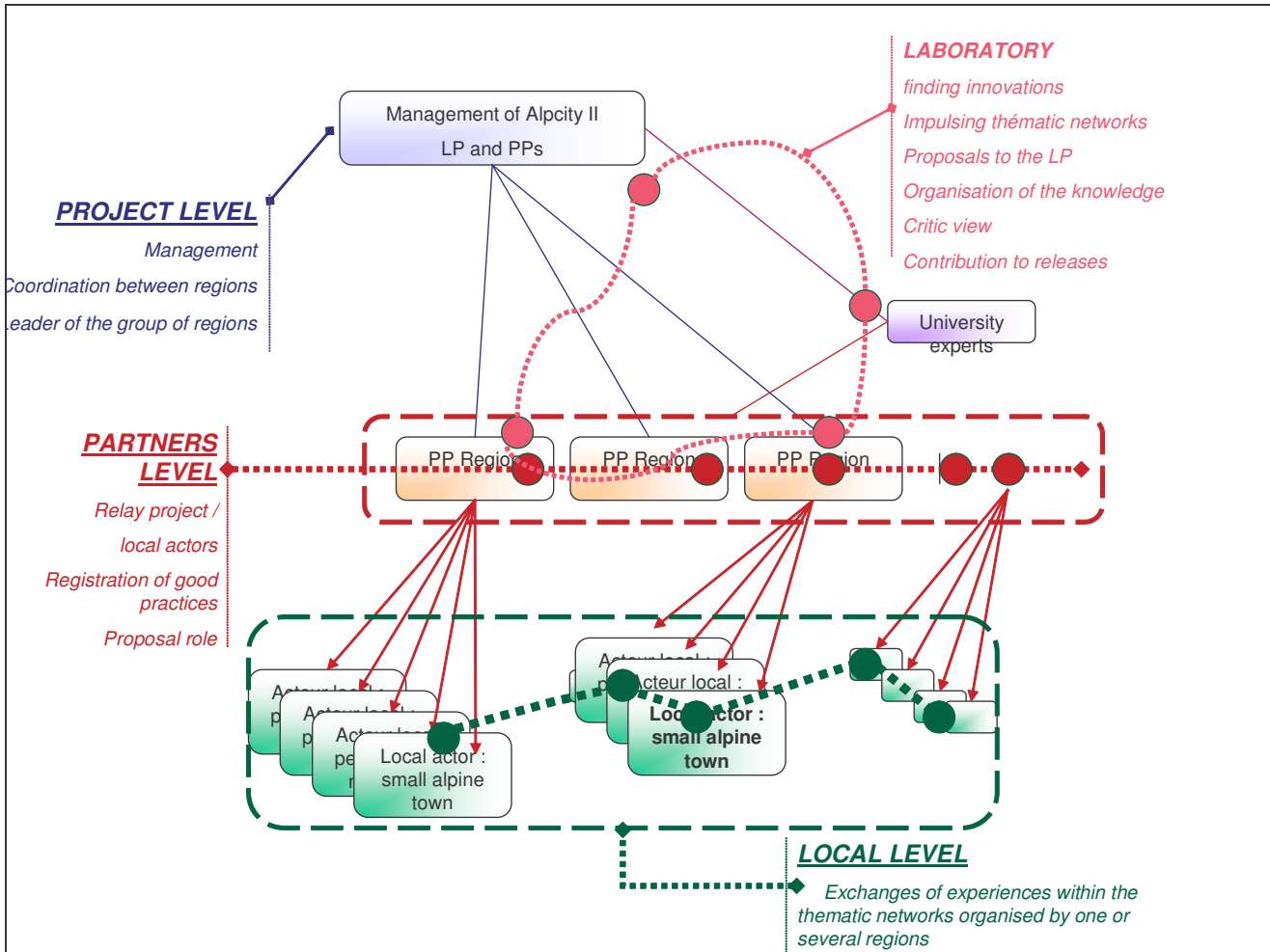
The scientific support would be pursued with the main objective of:

- *taking part to the general structure of the whole project via their knowledge of specific phenomena of the small alpine towns through the analysis of changes,*
- *bringing a critic opinion on the results : analysis of transferable elements of local projects,*
- *contributing to the project releases.*

*This support could be organised within a **laboratory** whose originality would be to gather the partners and experts at key moments of the project in order to find innovations, impulse the thematic networks and make proposals for the project life. This laboratory would function also like a network.*

This vertical and horizontal organisation between the actors of AlpCity II could be represented as below.

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3. Expected operational results

3.1. Finding good practices

These good practices come from the operations carried out locally, from the tools and methods, from the types of governance, institutional, contractual incentives....

They represent different fields of action: economic, tourist or agricultural development, urban development, landscape integration, protection and enhancement of natural heritage and buildings, governance, institutions.

Partners would have the task to find these good practices and to identify possible obstacles encountered during the projects.

But partners, experts and the laboratory would also initiate themes in which there is an interest in finding good practices, either because an experience is particularly interesting somewhere, or because a theme appears as an incentive for the dynamic of small towns, etc.

3.2. Transfer to local actors

The focus of AlpCity II would be on the dissemination of good practices towards local project managers in order to create and impulse a dynamic of small alpine towns. In that sense:

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- *The scientific level, with the laboratory notably, would contribute to the analysis of the transferable features of good practices by emphasising their feasibility and success conditions,*
- *In the framework of the thematic networks gathering local actors, the organisation of field visits would be a good thing: as direct exchange between actors is the most efficient way to communicate and disseminate the good experiences. The direct exchange enables indeed to improve the understanding and thus the integration of new practices.*

3.3. Knowledge of small alpine towns

The various contributions of the PP regions and the laboratory would contribute to a better knowledge of small alpine towns' dynamics, on every study field of the project.

They would be structured by the scientific level and could be completed by comparative studies, studies on the territorial dynamics, exchanges between researchers and civil servants of Regions and towns.

The dissemination of this knowledge at local and regional levels could be done via releases, seminars excursions.

3.4. Contribution to the improvement of planning policies

Beyond the specific themes related to small towns such as urban environment, economic development, services and quality of life and cooperation, the issue of policies supporting these territorial dynamics could be also one of the discussion subjects, resulting at the end in proposals to the European Commission on territorial planning policies.