



Rhône-Alpes Région



INTERREG III B ALPINE SPACE
ALPCITY 2003-2006

PROGRAMME/WORK 8: COOPERATION BETWEEN TOWNS

1 AIMS OF THE WP: TO BUILD THE CONDITIONS FOR THE CREATION OF A NETWORK OF ALPINE/MOUNTAIN TOWNS

Why a network of towns? Cooperation between towns, especially in the shape of networks, is particularly crucial for the development of small towns.

In a context of competition and being undersized in an economy dominated by large cities, structured agreements between towns can help them to reach a higher "critical mass".

Cooperation is also a way to develop exemplary operations, through the transfer of experience and knowledge from one associate town to another. For example, the "Alliance in the Alps" network is aimed explicitly at promoting a policy of sustainable development.

. At a more local level, agreements between towns that are geographically close to one another enable them to organise their amenities at a town cluster level. When amenities are designed for larger demographic basins, they are of a much better level. By grouping towns together, it becomes possible to develop a polycentric structure in which the towns complement one another.

. Cooperation is a less governed and more bottom-up type of public action. The towns cooperate with one another on a voluntary basis, working towards objectives that they themselves set according to the issues they have in common. This system seems far more flexible and appropriate than organized institutional procedures. It encourages innovation through the exchange of experience, and, through the internal complementarities it promotes, also prevents the scattering of low-performance small-sized facilities. From this point of view, agreements are an instrument of sustainable development, which is supported as such by European policies.

The contributions of the WP to the creation of a network of small Alpine/mountain towns

Within the Alpcity programme, the theme of cooperation is somewhat special. It is a general objective and a method that most partners have targeted when preparing their thematic aim. This WP however has taken the network of Alpine towns as its thematic aim. The operations have assumed several shapes:

- Scientific knowledge about mountain towns, with an analysis of the region's (Franche-Comté) spatial structure, a statistical study of mountain towns connected with the Alpcity issue, so as to gain a better understanding of their role and specific features (Rhône-Alpes);
- An inventory of existing town networks in the Alps (RA);
- Debate sessions between small towns on their problems and development needs (RA). These working meetings help to develop awareness of common issues, and thus encourage the emergence of network structures;
- A system of support for the projects of small towns, in the shape of regional assistance in development engineering. In addition to the direct assistance given to the various small towns, the methodology used (call for projects, selection of design offices) is intended to enable an

examination of their problems and development processes, as well as a detailed analysis of requirements (RA).

Note

Territoire de Belfort used to be a member of this working group on the theme of keeping the elderly in their homes in mountain areas (gerontology network experience).

It withdrew from the programme in the first half of 2005. The Franche-Comté Region, in addition to its participation in the urban environment working group, joined this working group at the end of 2005 within the framework of a study on the territorial structure of the Franche-Comté region.

2 PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS:

Territoire de Belfort: no item in this project at the start of the programme

Franche-Comté region: the aim of this planned study is to identify the structure of the territory of the region as a whole (mountain area and off-mountain area) on the basis of urban clusters, regardless of whether they are on the region's territory or connected to its neighbouring French regions and Swiss cantons.

Rhône-Alpes region: development engineering (analysis/advice within a sustainable development approach 2 to 5 days at most) made available to small towns in RA mountain areas (Alps, Massif central, Jura) either to help them finalise local development projects, or to help them with their development and planning strategies at the local level and in their nearby territories.

21) Franche-Comté Region Project: research on the territorial organisation

Work of spatial analysis with maps and analysis in the following fields:

- population dynamics
- attraction and polarisation of urban areas
- spatial typology given population and socio-economic data
- hierarchisation of towns and small cities

Lessons learned:

- Duration and practical methodology

In this type of project one should begin by buying and selecting the necessary statistical data before analysing (in order to avoid wasting time in repeating calculations and maps). The setting up of the database was a long and time-consuming process given data access times allowed by data providers.

Also the limited duration of this case study compared to others has acted as a brake on information exchanges within the AlpCity project: 7 months to carry out this kind of ambitious study is really not sufficient.

This kind of research requires at least one year to have efficient results

- A useful collaboration / network

The success of a research at a transregional and transnational level requires to set up a network between the institutions and all the actors involved (university, laboratory, statistical observatory...) to exchange the methodology and obtained results but also statistical data as it has been carried out with the transnational observatory (OSTAJ)

In this, a steering committee gathering has been set up to follow the research: staff of the Région Franche-Comté, the national statistic institute, urbanism agencies and other local authorities was the place of fruitful exchanges and discussions (monthly meetings).

To exchange about methodology and obtained results some relationships have been also strengthened with the CESAER laboratory in Dijon, which has strong links with the Théma laboratory.

Results:

The results of these researchs will be very useful for planning new policies (for example the Region Franche-Comté will use these results of this case study for its future regional policies for the period 2007-2013. First results are already integrated in the Regional scheme for sustainable territorial planning, which is currently carried out).

22) Rhône-Alpes Region project

Situation prior to the start of the initiative and establishment of priorities:

At the start of the programme, two "networks" of towns already existed in Rhône-Alpes: large town centres and their urbanized areas, and medium-sized towns and their urbanized areas. Within the Alpcity framework, the Region's intention was to take an interest in small towns so as to learn more about their concerns and their need for exchanges on their issues (this was in addition to its policy of territorial agreements).

Through various projects and approaches, the whole of the local population is affected, including holiday home owners and tourists.

The Rhône-Alpes approach was set by the Region's executive (President and Vice-President).

Expression of aims and strategies:

The intended aim is to increase the autonomy of elected officials in small towns in carrying out their projects and development processes. The development engineering input may help to resolve stalemates brought about by low budgets and (technical) manpower resources in small mountain villages.

The operation includes three types of player: the Region, design offices (6 following consultation as part of a public procurement contract), and local authorities.

To prevent any arbitrary operations and meet the diversity of local needs, the Region has defined the spatial area to be considered (with the aid of INSEE, the French National Statistics Office): municipalities with less than 5,000 inhabitants, in mountain areas and that have employment centres and/or service centres and that are not in urban areas.

On this basis (i.e. 207 municipalities/small towns) a call for bidders wishing to benefit from the development engineering was launched.

To analyse the applications and ultimately select 21 engineering interventions over 20 small towns and *communautés de commune* (intermunicipal groupings) a technical committee (whose members included representatives from the Region's divisions, State departments, INSEE, resource centres, and the RA expert on the scientific committee) met twice.

Elected officials and technicians from the small towns and *communautés de communes* were called together on 2 occasions by the Region, once at the beginning, following the call for bidders and once at the end, as part of a feedback workshop with the design offices and technical committee.

Main phases, problems encountered, participation in projects:

The main phases: analysis of small mountain towns, rollout of engineering at the local level, regional feedback workshop.

Problems encountered during the rollout: rewording of a number of projects at the local level (but resolved in swift consultation between the Region, design offices and elected officials or technicians), differences in work carried out by design offices.

Depending on the engineering concerned, the contributions were made by means of technical and political meetings at the local level, through contacts and by putting partners in touch with one another, through public meetings, assistance in the production of questionnaires etc.

The contribution at the local level, the immediate result

On the whole, the small towns and *communautés des communes* appreciated the contribution made by the engineering to the progress of their projects and development processes.

Adapting to the different contexts and demands, and depending on the case in hand, the design offices contributed new perspectives and method, put the towns and *communautés des communes* in touch

with various players and local and outside partners, and provided the practical substance they needed to move forward in their projects and development processes.

Result in the programme's activity:

Creation of contact between small towns confronted with these problems: exchange of ideas, become aware of a community of issues.

Immediate advantages of the programme: possibility of a more confident methodological approach, projects more competitive (market analysis), fewer risks taken in a project, ranking of priorities in development and planning processes.

What lessons have been learned from the operations already conducted?

See the minutes of the meeting held in March 2006 at the Region and the summaries presented by the design offices, available on the Alpcity website.

3. PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY WP 8 FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THE ALPCITY PROGRAMME:

31) Transnational researchs among small towns of “massif”

The Alpine Space should be a spatial area to lead such transnational researchs (cross-border analysis) to improve our knowledge of the specific relation among small towns of a “massif”(“Jura” between Franche Comté and Rhône Alpes Region and also Switzerland, “Alpes” between all the regions concerned) and also the links between these two mountains. But it implies to have or to find similar indicators between the different areas. In this field, a cross-border look (France-Switzerland) was proposed thanks to the data put at disposal by the cross-border statistical observatory of the Jura area.

In that way, it should be useful to discuss jointly about polarisation functions related to employment and services within the Alpine Space. A scientific work with expertise would be interesting (for example method to test the accuracy and limits of the \bar{y} dominating flows \dot{A} methodology).

32) Forming of regional networks of small mountain towns in each partner Region and cross-border coordination

The work carried out within this WP as in the other Alpcity WPs has highlighted several types of network which could be developed in parallel. These different levels complement one another, are not in contradiction with one another, and are not redundant.

- At local levels: organisation of development projects and amenities between small towns that are geographically close to one another (such as a library network, network of tourist towns, etc)
- At a regional and/or international and mountain level: networks for exchanges about shared issues, about approaches to project and development processes: services centre, business development, urban planning and housing problems, circulation, improved access, development and planning strategy, participation of the full-time population and of second home owners/tourists, town skills centre, taxation, etc.
- At a European Alpine level: creating contacts between small towns / territories at the European level so that they can carry out joint projects (concerning heritage, biodiversity, training of health professionals for developing countries, etc.).

Operating conditions: management means at the regional/cross-border level and assistance at the local level.

Tools for finding out about and analysing the specific features of small towns: research programmes, mechanisms for monitoring changes in small mountain towns (an "observatory"), transfer systems (good practices database)

33) Call for projects at the European level for small mountain towns

Aims:

Alongside Urban type programmes: to give small towns located outside the influence of large towns/urbanized areas the means to resolve their problems and introduce endogenous projects aimed at maintaining and developing activities and services in mountain areas,

- means to carry out projects and strategic approaches for the future (backup in engineering and execution),
- means to support innovation and experimentation in public/private projects (see incubators).

Funding: Regions+Europe