

Maintain what humans need – regional authorities in the French Alps know how

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ADRETS is a small association, based in Gap in the Hautes Alpes, which works for and with the regional authorities of the French Alps (in Provence Alpes Cote d'Azur and Rhone Alpes). Supported by the State (Datar Alps) and the local communities, ADRETS tries to be attentive to the evolution of services in the territories, to support field experiments, provide support, methodological implementation of innovative responses to problems and organizes their capitalization through exchanges between territorial professionals and persons in charge. Work is available online www.adrets-asso.fr.

The outlying rural areas of the Alps are characterized by low population density, geographical enclavement and difficulties of communication, a strong climatic and economic seasonal variation... After a wave of rural exodus, followed by tourism development, new populations want to come, to settle down and live within this exceptional natural environment. But for that it is necessary to find a housing, an economic activity and basic services. Housing and the land are subjected to the competition with tourism. The economic activity offers few established posts of quality. And the services rather tend to be withdrawn whereas the request for services is new and increasing.

We understand by services to the public all that is necessary for every day living: state utilities, services of care, employment, formation, housing, access to culture and leisure activities. The services for early childhood, education and the services at home for dependant people, the commercial public utilities (economic services of general interest) and the basic commercial services (trade of first need) and of course services of mobility to reach the urban centres... We distinguish 18 bouquets of essential services...

In a context of concentration of public utilities for reasons of management and budgetary restrictions, the alpine valleys have difficulties to provide an access for everybody to the high quality services expected by the inhabitants.

The stake in the services is the attractiveness of the territory, in order to maintain it alive... It is also the development of the social link and the fight against the social and territorial inequalities.

Via concrete examples, we will see how alpine territories were organized to answers these questions. The analysis of these experiments allows to identify some methodological points to direct the research solution and the actions:

1. The preliminary diagnosis of the situation with the participation of the users and the services,
2. the definition of goals and action plan in development plan services
3. The ongoing evaluation of quantitative and qualitative supply of services
4. The organization of the information of the inhabitants on what exists
5. the pooling resources in proximity
6. the coordination of the actors
7. The use of technological innovations
8. the organisational innovation, with the public-private partnership and the intervention of the tools of the social economy

These experiments are far from answering all the questions and often remain fragile. A work of capitalization in network is in progress with the hope to press on public politics to assure the future of these territories of exception...

It is certain that without voluntarist politics for a development of services for the permanent inhabitants in affected regions, there will be no possibility to assure a sustainable protection of the Alps.