

Local Territory Development: Past Experience and Future Prospects

Aosta – Wednesday 15 November 2006

Round table discussion 13.30-15.30

Table 1 What actions are necessary to improve services in mountain areas?

Moderators: Federico Molino (Centro Sviluppo S.p.a), Cristina Galliani (RAVA – County Council for Agriculture and Natural Resources) and Alessandra Mondino (Fédération des Coopératives Valdôtaines soc. coop.- Federation of Aostan Co-operatives):

The following were present at table:

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------|---|
| 1. | Bethaz Annalisa | RAVA – Urban management |
| 2. | Bordi Pietro | Aostaguide |
| 3. | Galliani Cristina | RAVA – County Council for Agriculture and Natural Resources |
| 4. | Gremo Chiara | RAVA - County Council for Territory, Environment and Public Works |
| 5. | Lanternia Laura | Municipality of Chamois |
| 6. | Molino Federico | Centro Sviluppo SpA |
| 7. | Mondino Alessandra | Federation of Aostan Co-operatives |
| 8. | Ottenga Alessandro | Freelancer |
| 9. | Rizzo Mara | Bonatti Mountain Shelter |
| 10. | Salza Giorgio | Consultant |
| 11. | Zancani Pia | Municipality of Pontboset |
| 12. | Sartore Loris | RAVA - Urban management |

Introduction

After all present had made brief presentations, the moderator explained the methodology and local results of Part 1 of the Euromountains.net Project, various particulars regarding cultural services and free time were taken into consideration. It became immediately clear that the methodology used for the Euromountains.net was parallel to that of regional urban laws (Regional Law n°11 1998 and Territorial Country Planning); TCP consists, in part of qualitative evaluation of services for the local population (customer satisfaction, numbers and area served...)

Various queries were posed and discussed:

What actions are necessary to improve services in mountain areas?

Dal dibattito è risultato che:

The following points emerged from the discussion:

1. **Local Boards- Citizen Collaboration:** it is clear that the reality of daily life differs from that proposed by regulations and laws and it is thus necessary to create mediators for the population and those who manage regulations and administration until better systems for the spreading of information are activated, thus ensuring that finance and growth opportunities are not wasted. Various regional territorial management tools such as CTP and Rural Development Planning may be used as tool for territorial planning at grass roots level.
2. **Evaluation of Local Population:** work is required to put a stop to the exodus from the mountains and make these areas attractive not only for tourists buying second houses, but also for the local population: thus doing, local history and heritage will be preserved. It is necessary to develop services that are aimed more at local residents rather than occasional visitors: one way to achieve this could be to promote collaboration and synergy between adjacent municipalities and in order to overcome parochial problems. Local policy should aim at making residents the main players in local development by creating a context in which private individuals are actively involved in territorial development and thus improving their own conditions and providing them with fertile ground for the promotion of entrepreneurial projects. In order to ensure that mountain areas are sustainable, they must be able to meet the needs of the population who desire the aforesaid sustainability.
3. **Tourism-Agriculture Collaboration:** the presence of animals in the pastures is fundamental for the landscape, but requires the necessary cleaning and organization of various structures present along tourist routes in high mountain areas.

What tools are necessary to support identified action plans? (laws, public and private finance, guidance for interested parties)

1. **Fighting Depopulation:** municipalities will provide apartments for young couples.
2. **Adequate Services:** planning collective and integrated services that meet the real needs of the population; priority must be given to the collaboration between adjacent municipalities for service provision, as stated in the CTP. The creation of poly-functional services is one example of adequate service.
3. **Law Adaptation:** predisposition of less restrictive laws (hygiene and health laws) thus preventing worker de-motivation.

4. **Continuous Training:** training from school-age onwards is necessary to impart the entire population with better knowledge of their own territory and training of territory workers will ensure innovative services.
5. **Guidance:** involvement of population thus making individuals, workers etc players in the process of creating common objectives and strategies as well as the proposal of pre-planned projects via meetings at different levels (politicians, administrators, technicians, local population...).
6. **Collaboration:** start-up of collaboration between various players suffering from similar difficulties in order to create a problem-solving system.

Who is involved in the process of improving services in mountain areas?

Private individuals and entrepreneurs will represent the real players in services in mountain areas, thus it is necessary that Valle d'Aosta becomes more open from a cultural and entrepreneurial point of view. Starting from school level upwards, the importance of training young entrepreneurs can be re-enforced.

Conferences and seminars involving successful entrepreneurs are fundamental to transmit information and ideas and motivate others.

What are the necessary requirements for mountain services in order to meet the needs of mountain inhabitants (quality service)?

The level of quality service in the mountain corresponds to that required in the area served, based on local needs, it thus difficult to make an exact evaluation.

Do you know any examples of good practice or projects aimed at improving services in mountain areas? What are they? Why may they be defined “good practice”?

1. Bibliobus: mobile library service, running until recently in the Comunità Montana Mont Rose area.
2. Maintenance offices in Comunità montane areas (eg in Piedmont): these offices deal with maintenance plans for the lower basin; this type of service is essential for sublevel areas where maintenance is difficult.

Table 2 What is the role of territorial communities in the development and promotion of resources and quality products in the mountains?

Moderator: Elena Di Bella (Province of Turin)

The following were present at table:

1.	Balliana Ercole	RAVA
2.	Bagnod Giancarlo	IAR - Aosta
3.	Charbonnier Laura	Comunità montana Monte Cervino
4.	Chaussod Sylvie	
5.	Di Cesare Andrea Ercole	OPSISLAB SrL
6.	Enrico Sergio	SAEC – Associated Studio
7.	Garbellini Lisa	Irealp
8.	Gressani Clio	EBRT
9.	Grivon Manuel	RAVA –
10.	Grosjean Vincenzo	Ass. Viticulteurs Encaveurs- Association of Viticulturists -Valle d’Aosta
11.	Magri Laura	RAVA – County Council for Budget, Finance, Planning and Regional Participation
12.	Mingasson Emmanuel	SUACI
13.	Moggi Franco	Employment Agency
14.	Politano Gian Carlo	RAVA – County Council for Production and work Policy
15.	Priod Daria	RAVA – County Council for Agriculture and Natural Resources
16.	Proment Laurette	Municipality of Saint-Oyen
17.	Soudaz Ugo Umberto	Il Riccio Co-operative
18.	Yoccoz Francesco	Rhiannon Co-operative

Introduction

The moderator started the discussion focusing on mountain areas:

1. Models from different areas do not always work (eg. Angrogna and Pontboset) and therefore the transfer of successful models is not always viable.
2. Areas such as the Langhe, are renowned for individuals possessing entrepreneurial spirit who are not afraid to take risks.
3. Innovative projects require great effort to be successfully activated; eg. 4 million euros were spent on producing 30 traditional products of the Province of Turin and 1000 producers and 100 restaurants were involved (they later became the official suppliers for the Turin Winter Olympics). This project, created thanks to the strong political pressure of Mercedes Bresso (President of the Piedmont region), required great public support and large numbers of human resources (12 people are involved with Elena de Bella’s service).

Regarding the table 2's topic, the moderator underlined the key elements before opening the discussion:

1. the institutional model (Mountain Communities, Provinces...).
2. The socio-economic development model, with particular regard to the centralization of investments (eg. in Piedmont, this model is heavily influenced by Fiat).
3. Economic-financial resources and their organization (political-strategic transparency of the County, Rural Development Plan,...).
4. Organizational resources, specifically territorial division and the role of the people (motivating public functionaries, entrepreneurial desire) → social and cultural background.

Debate

The discussion went as follows:

1. **Difficulties and benefits of quality products:** the necessity for an organisation to safeguard the specifics of any given product in order to facilitate its presentation on the market became clear.

However, it was also noted that businesses do not necessarily easily lend themselves to the conditions and standards of quality linked to brands. Those involved affirmed that a quality system can be accepted by a business but there must be the guarantee of economic profit.

There are various problems concerning traditional products:

- inspection of the distribution network;
- the validation of brands which are not Dop and Igp (as not all products are Dop or Igp!);
- promotion/advertising linked to rural tourism (eg. restaurants serving traditional local products).

The lack of inspection regarding the damage caused to local products as a result of imports.

2. **Sectorial Collaboration:** the difficulty of working together was highlighted; eg. the dynamics of the chestnut “industry” in the low valley are well-managed at private level with access to finance (eg. pruning, and clearing forests) but the system collapses when the situation requires collaboration.
3. **Relationship between Public Boards, Entrepreneurialism and the Market:** the entrepreneur is a “strange subject” who does not always possess the right amount of individualism- a fundamental for embarking in an activity which requires a series of investments, not all of which are recognized by business results. In Piedmont, entrepreneurs have noted a profit as the creation of a brand has increased the turnover of selected traditional products. The difficult start-up phase must in some way later be compensated for

in terms of earning. Large investment which is requested from Public Boards is necessary to start various ventures and the management should be the responsibility of the venture beneficiaries such as farmers who may unite to form a consortium.

4. **Integration of territorial resources:** the debate highlighted the necessity of a 360° approach for local development. All territorial resources must be taken into consideration as must the input of all players.
5. **Human Factor:** as the individual's role is central, it is thus necessary to stimulate and motivate the aforesaid to take an active role in their territory. Some examples are as follows:
 - the successful revitalization of various terraced landscapes in Lombardy via the foundation of a producer's consortium (IREALP);
 - the Interreg "Portes du Grand-Saint-Bernard" Project which focused on people and organizational resources: by utilizing the tourism-agriculture alliance, the needs of the territory was transformed into a partnership with Switzerland;
 - adhering to objectives and sharing and re-evaluating available resources. Training is essential as workers and administrative functionaries may develop together. Focussing on the reality of Oltralpe has been an incentive to boost the self-esteem of workers. There has been a series of weekly meetings over the last four years and the Local Administration has built a tourist centre where "Grand Combin" brand products will be sold in the future. Now is the real challenge as it is up to the workers to keep the venture going and pay the management costs of the centre. The workers have been asked to complete a "Co-operation Chart" as it is important that there is assistance rather than complete substitution.
6. **Rural Tourism:** the results of the "local and rural tourism network" (120 people involved) are perplexing as some "old-timers" intend to abandon their post and will be replaced by "new entries".
7. **Public-Private Integration:** local communities must integrate strategic policy of public boards with the needs of local players, by investing in methodological tools (exchanges, training etc). When Public Boards define a strategy and make certain choices, their role as partner is only possible if the initiatives match the strategy: thus strategy must be discussed prior during guidance sessions. Six Territorial Pacts are currently active in Piedmont (all category associations are represented), producer-sellers and the Province; every citizen may make his voice heard through the apposite body. The application of the correct methodology is essential, especially if the risks are considered, in order to ensure the success of ideas and each individual's projects (active citizenship).

Table 3 What are the best policies for the defense and management of fragile rural space, landscapes and natural resources in mountain areas?

Moderator: Santa Tutino (RAVA – County Council for Agriculture and Natural Resources)

The following were present table:

19.	Bétemps Nathalie	RAVA – County Council for Agriculture and Natural Resources
20.	Bich Lucia	Freelancer
21.	Bionaz Luciano	Namasté-Association for Nature Guides
22.	Bocca Massimo	Mont Avic Park
23.	Busana Edi	Namasté-Association for Nature Guides
24.	Gaioni Sergio	La Genziana Nature Guides
25.	Grand Blanc Lorenza	RAVA – County Council for Agriculture and Natural Resources
26.	Levret Cécile	Euromontana
27.	Molino Fabio	CSV Valle d’Aosta
28.	Munari Giorgio	Municipalità of Ayas
29.	Ogliari Roberto	Agamai SrL
30.	Oreiller Paolo	RAVA – Flora, Fauna, Hunting and Fishing Management
31.	Papandrea Katia	RAVA - County Council for Agriculture and Natural Resources
32.	Pitet Luca	Municipality of Pontboset
33.	Vai Jean Paul	Rhiannon Co-operative
34.	Vuillermin Ubaldo	Association of. Professional Guides Gran Paradiso National Park

The moderator addressed the table and defined the principle objectives: the identification of new measures and new actions to be proposed for the Rural Development Plan (RDP) 2007-2013.

The following specific points were discussed:

1. Mont Avic Natural Park: the support of marginal areas (areas suffering from agricultural abandonment) is of fundamental importance for regional parks specifically for the defense of fauna and flora; traditional interventions aimed at supporting agricultural activity are not always compatible with the safeguarding of bio-diversity and particular habitats and land adjustment. It is therefore essential to supply those involved in agriculture with tools that ensure that agriculture has a minor impact and that the survival of species in the Park is guaranteed.
2. Tourism in the mountain: distribution the flux of tourists in different areas according to the available offer and territory is fundamental to develop sustainable environmental tourism.
3. Parks must be evaluated in an integrated manner which considers factors including but also extra to the park borders. Interventions must be aimed at the specific species to be protected, the COTURNICE project, for example, highlighted the fact that this species reproduce in marginal zones and pastures and the protection of such a species is guaranteed by

agricultural activity. Thus, agricultural areas become part of the network to safeguard areas out of the park itself.

4. Small municipalities in middle mountain areas must find alternative solutions. Pontboset, with its steep territory makes traditional agriculture difficult, however this activity is fundamental for tourism, the safeguarding of bio-diversity and to contrast the diffusion of ligneous species; currently the available tools for land adjustment are not applicable.
5. Accessibility: many pastures are not accessible by road, but nevertheless the maintenance or recovery of the aforesaid is fund for environmental-landscape reasons; in some areas like the parks, road access is impossible. These pastures still exist, but it is unlikely that future generations will use such disadvantaged areas for agriculture.
6. Cultural Development: local development includes not only economic, but also cultural development; bio-diversity and the territory are resources and must therefore be considered as an added economic value. Exploiting native trout is important from a scientific and ecological point of view but also provides an economic advantage. Thus, the loss of bio-diversity is also an economic loss. The new cultural approach must be based on the concept that economic development in mountain areas is determined by the conservation of bio-diversity; consequently as bio-diversity is evolving it is essential to define what bio-diversity to protect.
7. Management Costs: people must be taught that the use of natural resources means management costs and must realize that everybody must contribute.
8. Differences between European and American parks: European parks are antropizzati.
9. Through guidance meetings, suitable solutions can be found and greater communication and the sharing of ideas, also with external parties, is important in building awareness of one's own territory and using it to the best advantage (eg, the use of officinal plants in Valle d'Aosta) . The creation of policies based on common objectives is also necessary.
10. New trends regarding the desire for parks for the sustainability of tourism development rather than territorial protection: generally a protected area is instituted when particular natural situations require safeguarding and following this, adequate socio-economic management models based on resident needs. Opinions regarding this do not always match: according to the Director of the Mont Avic Park (Massimo Bocca) and the Head of Services in Protected Areas (Santa Tutino), the Park should not protect agriculture/ agriculturists in product/production terms but must support agricultural businesses in order that marginal areas are used. The Mayor of Ayas (Giorgio Munari) believes that the institution of a park in his municipality means economic returns of local production and the territory.

11. Joint collaboration at territorial level is necessary: shops should sell local products, rather than current practice where such products are sold in supermarkets and local shops sell products made elsewhere.
12. Binomial Park-Tourism: the direct Park-Tourism link should not be taken be granted: data form the Gran Paradiso National Park Visitor's Centre are disappointing: tourism is created via incentive promotion/ marketing actions at territorial level.

Plenary Session 15.30-16.30

Feedback of Results from Round Table Discussions

Moderator: Alessandro Rota (RAVA – County Council for Agriculture and Natural Resources)

The following points were presented by the moderators of the three tables in the plenary session:

TABLE 1

The following points emerged during the debate:

- identify individuals who can act as go-betweeners for the population and those who are responsible for the management of norms and offices;
- make mountain municipalities attractive not only for second homeowners but especially for the local population;
- create a collaboration system between tourism and agriculture;
- create collective and integrated services;
- schedule less restrictive norms;
- create a continuous training system;
- increase meetings and guidance sessions for various individuals working in the territory;
- exploit local entrepreneurs.

TABLE 2

Key point: what can agriculturists do for territorial collectivity (rather than what can territorial collectivity do for the entrepreneur!).

The following points emerged during the debate:

- monetize the valorization of local products;
- create a collaborative spirit between different players;
- underline the role as catalyst and support of local communities;
- integrate economic resources (360° approach);
- make the very most of human resources;
- create a better-performing rural tourism network;

create a public-private partnership.

TABLE 3

The discussion at table 3 concluded with a series of queries:

(Definition → marginal area: an area which is subject to high levels of agricultural abandonment)

Agriculture in marginal areas has a limited income: how thus can one attribute the correct importance to agriculture in these areas? What subsidies can be used to compensate for the aforesaid agricultural difficulties?

- Agriculture in marginal areas is necessary to protect bio-diversity;
- how can we fight against agricultural abandonment in marginal areas?

The debate also identified the need to:

- give bio-diversity an economic value;
- start-up a process of cultural growth: suggested models must be created by all communities and shared with all local players;
- put additional services into action, thus creating integrated incomes for farmers;
- create incentives for agriculture in abandoned areas of zero profit but of important ecological value.

CONCLUSIONS

Following the presentations, the moderator stressed how integration had been the object of discussion in all 3 tables:

- agriculture – natural resources - tourism
- agriculture – urban management (problem of urban pressure)
- innovation - patrimony
- commercial system – producers
- integrated services

The need for more meetings, guidance sessions, debates between local players, the population and technicians...

The themes discussed were compared to the Rural Development Plan (RDP) and it was stressed how these topics are taken into consideration by the new RDP.

Thanks to a rich regional contribution system in the former RDP, it was possible to create support measures for all types of agriculture.

The current RDP contains new measures that meet new needs, especially regarding estate II (environmental estate) which is of fundamental importance for Valle d'Aosta as 70% of its resources from the EU are concentrated in this area.

Specific measures to support major costs for farmers working in the Natura 2000 zone (Subsidy Natura 2000) are currently being studied: the final definition of the aforesaid will be ready in 2007 via opportune consultations with environmental authorities and boards/ county councils with environmental concerns.