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Sylvie Clarimont and Vincent Vlès



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Pyrenean tourism confronted with sustainable development: partial and hesitant integration

Sylvie Clarimont and Vincent Vlès

- 1 The notion of “sustainable tourism” constitutes a sector-based and specific aspect of sustainable development principles as defined in the Brundtland Report. (World Tourism Organization). It has been late to emerge: none of the 40 chapters of the 21st Agenda, referent to global sustainable development, adopted after the Rio Summit in 1992, is specifically dedicated to sustainable tourism. Tourism, which has become a major economic activity in our leisure society, suffered paradoxically from a lack of recognition until 1995, when the world conference on sustainable tourism was held in Lanzarote (Canary Islands), an emblematic place for mass tourism. The founding principles of sustainable tourism are briefly exposed in the charter adopted at the end of the conference: this form of tourism “must be sustainable long-term ecologically, viable economically, and fair for the local population ethically and socially”¹. These principles are made a little more explicit by the WTO which proposed in 2004 a loose and consensual definition of sustainable tourism, describing it as being any form of tourism capable of guaranteeing the balance between the economic, social and environmental spheres “exploiting environmental resources to the full at the same time as both conserving the essential ecological processes and as helping to safeguard natural resources and biodiversity, respectful of the cultural authenticity of the communities concerned, offering each party concerned equally distributed social and economic advantages”². This type of definition summarizes perfectly the ambivalence of a form of tourism which sets out to make possible both exploitation and conservation of resources.
- 2 This type of tourism is being put into operation slowly and with difficulty in the Pyrenees, notably in the winter sports resorts, where the operators and public bodies find it very difficult to insert into a holistic vision of development which demands the reconciling of extremely different logics. Even if it has been put to the fore for ten

years already in State tourist development policy for resorts and inter-communal bodies, its real implementation is having to contend with considerable resistance, linked to a great deal of badly-enacted mediation, for want of sufficient planning motivation. The paradoxes are blatant in the choice between time-scales (short-term productiveness is prevalent in the scheduled operations, whereas sustainable tourism is put to the fore in the long-term strategy outlines and charters, albeit rather non-committedly), between territorial levels (opportunities and the landowner system of decision reinforce the local tradition of quick-profit-making operations, whereas regional or massif policies advocate measured and sustainable independent development), between incompatible forms of development (the resorts pursue as much as possible a “headlong flight” upward spiral logic of mass-investment in leisure property and ski-lifts – 42% of tourism investment in the last 10 years – whereas the official tendency is one of the necessary urban, economic and social requalification of the existing productive equipment and the best way of fitting it into society and the environment).

- 3 In the Pyrenees, cross-border comparative research into the forms and outcomes of sustainable tourist policy shows these difficulties (Clarimont, Vlès, 2006 and 2008). Beyond the multiple causes described quite well theoretically today (Méheust, 2009), we would like to underline three points specific to the Pyrenees:
 - 1/ tourism has been slow and hesitant in its progression towards sustainable development, which has held back its insertion as a priority in State policies
 - 2/ the break-up of combined skills in tourist development has meant that long-term objectives have not been put to the fore concerning projects, nor has the inter-communal system been put into use as a means of achieving this
 - 3/ permanent recourse to leisure construction as the main development factor has upturned traditional residential and land balance, has interfered with the financing of mountain resort requalification, has overlooked the main features of urban aging and public spaces and has omitted to pinpoint recovery strategies.
- 4 These three points reveal a notoriously insufficient global effort of policy instrumenting and planning and are directly linked to the non-existence of “valley schemes” which would have made it possible to organize long-term priorities time and space-wise and to fix the necessary operating modes, notably in terms of discussion.

Figure 1: the mountain territories investigated



The belated and hesitant emergence of pyrenean tourism in the field of sustainable development

- 5 It is first of all linked to the slow elaboration of the notion of sustainable development, which remained for a long time fixed to the notion of eco-tourism born in the Seventies to designate nature tourism characterized by a low carrying capacity (Tardif, 2003). These two notions have been developed progressively, first of all through the realization of the effects of mass tourism in the development of big sites open to the public (Gavarnie) and then in the management of the West Pyrenees National Park and areas protected for tourism, and lastly in view of protecting and safeguarding cultural and natural heritage resources. Although scientifically the notion of eco-tourism has been enriched with indicators making it possible to assess the tolerance level of a territory to tourism³, these models have never been instrumental as criteria for bringing in public funding. Even today, the synthetic indicator of carrying capacity, which makes it possible to identify a destination's saturation-point environmentally (biophysical tolerance capacity), through user and visitor practices (conflict-resolving capacity) and through facilities (infrastructure maximum capacity), is only referred to once, in no further detail, in the national Charter for sustainable development in mountain resorts (Association Nationale des maires de Stations de Montagne, 2007: 9). In this domain, concrete measures remain yet to be seen.
- 6 The introduction of sustainable practice in the tourist sector is a very recent factor (world eco-tourism Summit; 2002:70) which breaks with previous practice, notably those of the Glorious Thirties when for example the resort project of Artouste and Fabrèges, in Soussouéou was seen to dispense with the law and manage to implant

accommodation for 1600 persons, (half of which has been scheduled since 2008 and has yet to find an investor) despite the strict limitations of Mountain law, Council of State appeal, the protected nature of the valley, the closing of the ski-runs in 2004 for non-successful tourist management delegated by public services: the whole issue of sustainable tourism in mountain regions could be symbolized by the adventures of this tiny resort from 1955 to the present day.

- 7 Even if sustainability became an objective in the final declaration of the Johannesburg Summit in 2002, it has not been unanimously adopted in the resorts. The problem is that it is perceived as something vague, polysemous, equivocal and ubiquitous midway between global and local, and readily interpreted contradictorily. Even the notion of sustainability is not exempt from ambiguity according to whether one is centered on economic or anthropological perspectives (Blot, 2005: 216). However, in spite of its polysemy, injunction for sustainability, written into French law since 1999, has gradually been acquiring a normative dimension which is making it unavoidable in mountain habitats. The notion of sustainable tourism can gain to become more independent and more precise. While it is true that in practical terms the idea takes one back to the three dimensions used to define sustainable development: environmental, economic and social, and that sustainable tourism has entered a new long-term time perspective (and not the search for instant profit) and that it is there not only for tourists but also for all the permanent and seasonal inhabitants, concretely we can only observe the continuity of standard productiveness investment. For example, when the Pyrenean Tourist Centre policy was defined in 2002, it made sustainability one of its main objectives, but the absence of criteria for this, as much in its putting into practice as in the assessment of 2006 actions, reveals this incantation for “sustainable” which is then often contradicted in reality by the planning of big infrastructures. In the French Pyrenees, this policy was launched in 2002 by the French State, regions and departments with the aim to create a better shared economic and social balance for territories with one or more mountain resorts. These valleys make up 70% of the mountain's tourist potential. Even if the 28 Pyrenean resorts only represent 12% of French snow-related turnover, they are responsible for a third of visitor figures for the massif, and six resorts (Ax-les-Thermes, Font-Romeu, Gourette, Le Tourmalet, Luchon, Saint-Lary) are considered to be the main activity and job providers (Comète-Confédération Pyrénéenne du Tourisme, 2005). The Inter-ministerial Committee for Land Planning and Development of 23rd July 1999, which defined and launched the Tourist Centre Contracts in France, explicitly mandated the Prefets de Région to negotiate “sustainable use of natural and tourist heritage: natural resource and landscape management and job creation in these sectors” (CIACT, 1999: 21). The Inter-Regional Massif Convention which followed took up and developed this “sustainable” priority in the objectives designated to the signatory resorts. It was little followed up in reality when the Contracts backed by the departments were made up: “in view of the special qualities of Pyrenean territory, (massif policy) aims to place this area in an eminent position in Europe as far as the putting into practice of a sustainable development policy is concerned” (Convention de Massif 2000-2006). This sustainable development tourist policy necessitates finding a local inter-communal cooperative public institution to coordinate and sign the Contract. It makes it indispensable for the “pays” to incorporate into their charter the Centres' strategy at the same time as having the possibility of developing tourist activities in addition to those intended by the Centres' schedules (activities outside Centres or specifically local). Each Centre must also clearly

take up a specific stance, according to its potential as regards offer, market and competition. Lastly, the inter-communal bodies must arm themselves with activities relevant to the different fields: organization, accommodation, services, summer and winter activities.

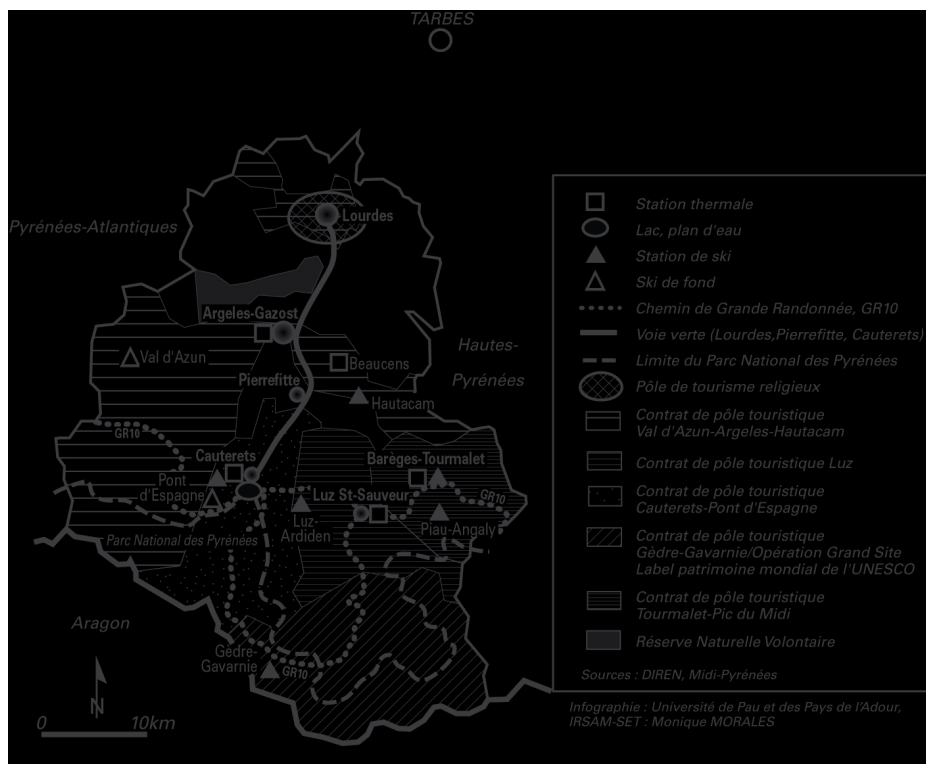
- 8 The difficulties in the setting up of Tourist Centre policy are particularly marked in the Pyrenees and come from different political problems: the insertion of resort management in the inter-communal agreements is not made easy by the acting bodies, apart from one or two exceptions (Vallée du Louron). Short-term image and marketing policies are favoured everywhere over spacial planning of valley-scale tourism where the organization of products, holidays, development, local facilities and the manner in which they are inserted into traditional society and its economy have only rarely been studied in an inter-communal and sustainable perspective. One of the first problems encountered nearly everywhere is the adopting of suitable areas: the inter-communal bodies are too small most of the time, and sometimes reduced to commune-ski resorts in the Hautes-Pyrénées department. The size of the inter-commune base is more often than not inadequate. The Tourist Research and Development Directive for Mountain Regions cites this impossible cooperation on its largest scale as being the direct cause of difficulties in four of the massif's Contract Projects of which those of the Aspe, Ossau and Barétous valleys only came into being at the end of 2008. There are several reasons behind the reluctance to create large associations in a sustainable tourism perspective. Firstly, it is difficult to put an EPCI coordinator into place in this sector, and even a Tourist Office Centre (each resort wants to keep its own, which means that it is the sole executive of its holiday organization and sales policies. It on no account shares or pools resources with its valley neighbours (Eaux-Bonnes-Gourette being the prime example). The financial partners have different ways of looking at the issue as well, particularly the Region and the Department. These planning attempts are made insufficiently complementary by the superimposing of disparate territorial plans (Tourist Centres, "pays", nature parks). In fact, local policy, which is more global and whose vocation is to incorporate the policy of the Centres, is not effective in incorporating ecological and social factors into its tourist economy. These Contracts, hastily put together, show that the intervention system is too new to really correspond with sustainable tourism criteria. It as if tourism was restricted on the one hand to "productive" tourist sites (curiously reduced simply to winter sports resorts) and on the other, are the social, economic and cultural aspects of the valley, with no integrally thought-out plan linking the two together. As for nature conservation, responsibility is for the most part dispatched off to the DIREN and to the National Pyrenean Park, the latter of which is not always consulted by the EPCI or the communes in the course of these procedures.
- 9 On the whole, reflexion and innovation seem to be lacking due to both the urgency of short-term work schedules (the Centre Contract, for example, must be devised, discussed and approved in less than a year; the idea of setting-up a SCOT reference plan is still unfortunately lacking in mountain regions), but also because of a lack of method and resources (even if some inter-communal urban services exist valley-wise, they are not always mobilized).
- 10 The reason behind the very slow acknowledgement of sustainable development by Pyrenean mountain local authorities is thus as much a failing of method as of motivation⁴.

The breaking up of combined tourist competences has not been a contributing factor to long-term objectives in projects and inter-communal organization as a means of achieving this

- 11 Sustainable tourism principles depend on very well-established models of territory organization, equipped with medium or long-term prospective outlines if they are going to work. However, at the present time, tourism, because it is managed by communes (the resorts), which are often backed up by the departments, is being caught up in typical landowner logic, dealing with crises or files according to the opportunity: the carrying out of new and rather unsustainable UTN (the Fabrèges-Artouste resort, ambitious planning development programmes together with the Latas or Badaguas golf-courses in Aragon), urban sprawl and increasing linear development in the valley bottoms (Campan, Vallée d'Aure, Cerdagne, Alto Gallego, Jacetania). This leisure urbanization is made all the easier by the lack of urbanism documents (in mountain areas SCOT and PLU are frequently inexistent) or even encouraged by tax-free schemes linked with tourist residences in ZRL. However, in these scarcely populated areas, inter-communal organization is the only solution, offering the necessary pooling of resources (human, technical and financial); it alone calls for global territory projects in order to combat dispersion and illegibility, it alone is able to reconcile tourist destination management with the territory where it is to be carried out. And yet we are confronted in the Pyrenean valleys, with the breaking-up of works and planning supervision, its management and a lack of territorial planning, which are negative factors in the long-term recognition of projects.
- 12 What makes it difficult for sustainable tourism to be effectively appropriated by the acting bodies, are the procedure pile-ups, the dividing-up of land in valleys or localities and the insufficient accompanying effort of the State, the regions and the departments. Careful study of operations programmed in the Tourist Centre Contracts (2000-2006) has thus shown that what is sought after in almost every case is an increase in visitor numbers with little thought given to sustainable development perspectives, notably in the form of enlarged management and the sharing of economic and social projects. Innovative policy is lacking, due to lack of time, method and resources. Estimation of risks inherent to new development (natural catastrophe, the impact of artificial snow production on water levels, the generating of rubbish, economic and social changes, job insecurity...) remains very much below the strict necessary of a sustainable tourism approach. An example of this is the Luz-Ardiden inter-communal Tourist Centre Contract which remains very much based on a 1960s model of facilities development: in order to increase existing visitor numbers for snow-based activities, the village of Luz-Saint-Sauveur has invested in an additional cable-car to link up with the ski-slopes of Ardiden. To make this move economically viable and to offset costs, the local authorities will have to add accommodation for 3000 extra visitors (DEATM Toulouse, 2005). In Haut-Aragon, at Aramon, a semi-public company of which the region holds 50% of the capital, is financing the extension of the Formigal ski slopes, right next to the entrance of the National Pyrenean Park. The region hopes to offset this cost by developing an accommodation complex within the resort.

- 13 The choice of territories for the implementing of tourist policies interests itself little with territorial coherence: the operation is often left to the commune (commune-resort) to deal with, after discussion between the State, regions and departments, thus cut off from its valley context (it is on this level nevertheless that visitor reception, image, popularity and attractiveness are managed). The identification of a coordinating inter-communal public cooperation institution, which doesn't necessarily exist, is often long and leads to unnecessary further creations, to the extent that sometimes an inter-communal works supervision group is created for each new programme ! (example of the Vallée des Gaves).

Figure 2: the complexity of tourist planning in the Vallée des Gaves (Hautes-Pyrénées)



- 14 The fairly rapid result of this in the French Pyrenees is therefore a multi-layered effect of inter-communal structures in charge of works, the tourist programmes of which are super-imposed with no links between them. The juxtaposition of areas is effectively common. In this way the sharing of the canton of Argelès-Gazost by two associations of communes can be seen: that of Argelès-Gazost formed on 1st January 2003 by the adhesion of the association of communes of Davantaygue, Extrême de Salles and four other isolated communes; and that of Saint-Savin constituted on 1st January 2005 (figure 2). On top of these two public institutions, other forms of associations are super-imposed, more restricted geographically and occasionally bestowed with one single competence like the organization of tourist facilities: the SIVU (Syndicat intercommunal à vocation unique) from the Pibeste massif to the col d'Andorre (based in Agos-Vidalos), the Syndicat mixte de la haute vallée des gaves (Pierrefitte-Nestalas), the Syndicat mixte du Haut Lavedan (also based in Agos-Vidalos but whose purpose is rather different)... Lastly, all the communes in the canton also belong to inter-communal structures set up at a district level like the syndicat mixte de développement rural de l'arrondissement d'Argelès (SMDRA) and of course the Pays des vallées des

gaves! To this multi-layered inter-communal structure must be added seven other structures which all operate in the same tourist destinations: the Syndicat du Pays de Lourdes, which covers the district and is in charge of research; the association of communes of the Val d'Azun, which is in charge of tourist facilities (including a cross-country ski-loop) on the single cantonal territory of Arrens-Marsous; the Ardiden SIVOM, in charge of the development of the Tourist Centre Contract for the Luz-Ardiden resort; the Syndicat mixte of Hautacam, which is in charge of the ski-loop of the same name; the Syndicat mixte du Pôle Touristique du Tourmalet-Pic du Midi-La Mongie; and to top it all off, a Syndicat mixte for the National Park Maison and the Luz valley, which has been trying valiantly and with grace for the last thirty years to introduce a policy covering the whole valley consisting of local identity, economic activities and introduction to the environment. In these conditions, it is easy to understand that the state authorities, and more particularly the vice-préfet of Argelès-Gazost, are completely at sea and are trying to get the whole complex entity to unify – in spite of local politicians' resistance. The difficulties of getting a global vision of the future, which would be structured, agreed on and sustainable, to emerge out of these disparate interests, can be appreciated through this example.

Insufficient planning efforts

- 15 In order to limit the effects on the local economy of an over-pronounced seasonal trend and to preserve local resources, sustainable tourism has made urban development control a major stake. However, in France and Spain alike, tourist planning is still treated separately and henceforth by the inter-communal body- even if the tourist offices, the SEM companies and the DSP facilities remain the business of the resorts! - and urban development, which is still managed by the commune alone. Many Pyrenean valleys have been affected by a veritable building frenzy which is having serious consequences for the local population. Small-income families have found themselves on the edge because of both the steep rise in the local land taxes and scarce rented accommodation. The resorts, ill-equipped to deal with the land market, are at a loss, or on the contrary, encourage the rapid expansion of leisure construction in the hope of facilitating the development of their commune in the future. The construction of tourist residences, borne on tax advantages linked with the ZRR zones, is encouraged in the villages around the resorts. The inevitable result of this is a form of urban sprawl in mountain areas (Conseil national des Ponts et Chaussées, 2008). Efforts are certainly made to incorporate the tourist residences into the original village-structure respecting local architecture, but the cost of these new constructions is posed: service costs (sewage disposal system and water supply, electricity...), environmental costs, social costs (competition between the locals and the tourists in acquiring housing)... None of the territory surveys carried out for the Tourist Centre Contracts has touched on these essential aspects in terms of sustainable development and there are only isolated examples of social projects of local benefit carried out by Luz-Saint-Sauveur and Argelès-Gazost, for example lodgings for the seasonal workers, land reserved in the resorts for the construction of housing for permanent residents).
- 16 Up until recently it was true to say that the leisure property market had been particularly dynamic in the big resorts, notably so in those tourist residences benefiting from tax- free investment thanks to the “Demessine” plan and exempt from

VAT in exchange for a nine-year rental contract. Even if the gross yield of this investment was rarely more than 5%, it was less risky than the stock market and enabled buyers to profit from real tax advantages. This said, the number of recent tourist residences being built in certain valleys like the Vallée d'Aure or in Cerdagne is of a disturbing proportion. The concept of eco-quarters is strangely absent and there is no mention of positive-energy housing in programmes like the Chalets d'Aax residence (Ariège).

- 17 This very classic form of investment has produced a general increase in the price of land and property: a 1.5 point higher rise a year than inflation, with local highs reaching up to +10% a year in the Pyrenees (Commissariat à l'aménagement des Pyrénées, 2006). These excessive and steady rises have affected all the valleys including those far from ski and winter sports resorts, as the study carried out in 2006 in the Aspe valley clearly shows. Furthermore, many resorts are beginning to have problems with water and snow levels, which have already meant investing, and penalise low altitude sites where local taxing is likely to be a source of high tension in the near future.
- 18 The situation is particularly serious in Haut Aragon. Urban development has spread greatly in all the Pyrenean communes, without reaching the extent which can be observed on the Mediterranean coast. The phenomena of peripheral or linear leisure-development (around a former village centre or along the main access routes to the resorts) is made worse by the proximity of a winter sports resort. In many communes housing-estate projects associated with the creation of a golf-course are being completed or projected (the golf-courses of Latas in Sabinanigo, Badaguan in Jaca...) in areas where rainfall is nevertheless low. The situation is such that in 2006, the regional government made the decision to suspend approval on all new projects of this type. Moreover, local inhabitants have begun to form committees to combat property speculation being tolerated or even encouraged by certain councillors. Social movements have been mounting, alarmed by the degradation of the mountain faced with the mass construction of holiday homes in all the Spanish resorts but also in French Cerdagne, in Andorra and in the Aure valley (holiday home residents' Federation of local associations, associations for the protection of the environment, Mountain Wilderness...).
- 19 Furthermore, continued snow-use in the resorts was already questionable in the past⁵, it is time henceforth to prepare for a time when it is less abundant and more expensive to use, and to that end it is going to be necessary to develop and think-out activities susceptible to compensate for the fact that skiing and ski-lift resources will no longer be viable. But it is also necessary to deal with the problem of land and building in the right way. These three tendencies will have very serious consequences on the financial commitments of mountain communes. As far as facilities are concerned, the debt indicator in mountain resorts exceeds that of seaside resorts by 120%. Tax pressure is about 20% higher in mountain resorts than in other tourist communes (Uhaldeborde, 2006: 95).
- 20 In France and Spain alike, resorts seem to be powerless either to fit into inter-communal organization or into a long-term framework in proportion to the valley's future. The construction development plans for the present and the future, managed at commune level, are considerable, in accordance with national and regional urban planning regulation. Even if it is very difficult to make a quantifying report, due to the dispersed nature of the information, managed by different bodies, attached to different

systems of authority (even in the same valley: U.T.N., Z.R.R., Règlement national d'urbanisme or PLU...), the pressure of construction development can be estimated at a minimum of 100 additional places per year per valley (DEATM Pyrénées, 2006 and DDEA 64, 2007).

- 21 Sustainable tourism is finding it hard to break through in Pyrenean resorts for the very reason that it challenges the productivity principles of tourist development which have been implemented in mountain areas since the Snow Plan of the 1960s. For local authorities, the continuing upward spiral is perpetuated from the moment when the reimbursement of structural facilities is financed by accommodation production, which itself demands additional heavy investment in order to guarantee offset of the cost with a reasonable visitor rate.
- 22 In conclusion, it is clear that on either side of the Pyrenees, changes linked to resident and tourist practices on the one hand, the resulting land competition and building development on the other, (competition for the use of agricultural land but also for all residential use), are being totally under-estimated at the moment by the local authorities both regionally and inter-regionally and on an inter-communal scale. The search for a project area, a production base and tourist offer organization is carried out very differently in France and Spain. On the French side of the Pyrenees, the necessity to work together harmoniously at all levels is far from effective. And yet the EPCI seem to find the “pays” sector interesting because it comprises the project area, the grounds for discussion and the mobilization of the acting bodies. The coming into existence of territorial dynamics, which the EPCI find lengthy to support and expensive to finance, needing to be boosted permanently at a local level with project management skills, find the “pays” a territory for development which is less subject to short-term stakes. However, here in France as opposed to Spain, the “pays” are still inexistent in tourist-related documents. These documents are themselves vague regarding the transfer of competences in a coherent block which would be the responsibility of just one community.
- 23 It is difficult to grasp the notion of “competence”, where confusion reigns between operational competence in tourist development and competence in the tourist-offices, where the capacity for action is often limited to identifying the means to be instrumented, thus adding further to an incompleted system of institutionalized reorganization in France, which financial incentive is visibly insufficient in improving. The sectors where people are willing to work together are subject to tourist policies on which the local authorities apparently do not wish to define and impose a sustainable nature. This is all the more so because they are still looking systematically for ways of raising tourist numbers in their development policy most of the time, which is rather paradoxical.
- 24 Lastly, it is to be noted here that on common and on the whole unique ground, French and Spanish territories are developing at a different rhythm regarding the acknowledgement of sustainable criteria in their respective tourist policies. The main reason for this is their different institutional advancements. This “multi-temporalism” is a very important dimension on the reflexion on organized pluralism, both coherent and mobile, which should be at the forefront to European reflexion on a *sustainable* way of local power decision-making.

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NOTES

1. Sustainable development Charter, Lanzarote, 1995.
2. http://www.veilleinfotourisme.fr/1186758213380/0fiche_article/&RH=GTIDDT.
3. Various models have been perfected such as the ROS (Resource Opportunity Spectrum – 1978), the LAC (Limits of Acceptable Change – 1985), the VIM (Visitor Impact Management – 1990) or the VERP (Visitor Experience Resource Process – 1993) which offer indicator systems making it possible to acknowledge the natural environment carrying capacity and the visitors' experience.
4. The local agenda 21 are few in number at the present day in the Pyrenees, especially on the French side. They are rarely put into action on an inter-communal scale (the Sobrarbe constituting a notable exception). While the DPH (Diputacion provincial de Huesca) plays a major role in getting the agendas set up in Aragon, there is less mobilization in France, no doubt due to insufficient impetus at a higher level.
5. The negative impact of artificial snow on sustainable development is well known: pollution from the combined elements, excessive draining of the water tables, construction, temporary and unstable high mountain water reserves with local reflux of the water-table, excessive energy expenditure (Conseil Régional Midi-Pyrénées, May 2003).

ABSTRACTS

The cross-border comparative study of the forms and outcomes of the introduction of sustainable tourism by inter-communal efforts in the western Pyrenees has revealed the difficulties of imposing the model, and, worse, this model is often the alibi justifying a mass of incoherent tourist policy, which, being defective in forward planning and territorial coherence, makes it difficult to apply. Research on this theme was carried out from 2004-2006 at the *Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour* in collaboration with the University of Saragossa. The three conclusions it reached are presented in summarized form as follows: 1 - incorporation of tourism in the field of sustainable development has been belated and hesitant, resulting in big delays as far as its application is concerned; 2 - in France more than in Spain, the multi-level nature of inter-communal bodies together with the lack of transfer of competences in mass tourism have produced the breaking-up of territorial-based development and its management, excluding long-term consideration project-wise. 3 - the overbearing presence of big leisure-construction operations is upturning the traditional residential and land management balance and reveals insufficient initial planning efforts.

L'étude transfrontalière comparée des formes et des résultats de la mise en œuvre du tourisme durable par l'intercommunalité dans les Pyrénées occidentales montre les difficultés du modèle à s'imposer ; pire, il est souvent l'alibi justifiant une multitude de politiques touristiques éclatées, qui, par défaut de prospective et de cohérence territoriale, rendent difficile son application. Une recherche a été menée sur ce thème de 2004 à 2006 à l'Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour en

collaboration avec l'Université de Saragosse. Elle est parvenue à trois conclusions dont on présente ici l'essentiel : 1. l'intégration du tourisme dans le champ du développement durable a été tardive et hésitante, d'où un retard important dans son application ; 2. en France plus qu'en Espagne, le « millefeuille » des intercommunalités et l'absence de transfert du tourisme en bloc de compétences ont produit un éclatement de l'ancrage territorial de l'aménagement et de sa gestion, occultant la prise en compte du long terme dans les projets ; 3. la prégnance toujours sensible des grandes opérations d'immobilier de loisirs bouleverse les équilibres résidentiels et fonciers traditionnels et témoigne d'un effort de planification insuffisant.

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AUTHORS

SYLVIE CLARIMONT

Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour, laboratoire SET (Société Environnement et Territoire),
UMR 5603 du CNRS. sylvie.clarimont@univ-pau.fr

VINCENT VLÈS

Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour, laboratoire SET (Société Environnement et Territoire),
UMR 5603 du CNRS. vincent.vles@univ-pau.fr