



## Developing territories and opening up mentalities

In what way can the reception and integration of newcomers lead to thought about new measures for new inhabitants and new businesses, which would open up the principal areas of development (housing, social, economic, environmental...)

Not forgetting the redevelopment of local economic activity and increasing the local community's awareness of the importance of welcoming new inhabitants.

A vast subject to consider at this workshop, during which evidence showed that the creation of reception policies has become essential in order to maintain a certain quality of life.

However the vision inhabitants have, is not shared by politicians. In order to define changes, preparatory meetings are needed based on a three way dialogue principle : Politicians, native residents, and newcomers to rural life.

Everybody has to exchange ideas, get to know each other and make themselves known. This is how we can change the way that migrants are seen. Foreigners should no longer be seen as people looking to take advantage or to takeover.

This approach helps to **open up people's mentalities in the different territories.**

During the discussions we realised that mentalities take a long time to change .It is sometimes difficult to access culture in rural areas, and the fear of foreigners persists. The opposite happens also, it is hard to know who puts up the most resistance ; the natives or the **newcomers.**

Sometimes associations "against" projects to modernise or reception projects (which are not always made up of native residents) are very active. Sometimes the population does not appreciate the first efforts of dialogue.

In some areas the rise in house prices has caused **the loss of some social links.** This is why for example, in the Pays de Ploermel Coeur de Bretagne, some property developers have been met with protests from local residents.

When politicians change, everything changes ! During these changes the difficult progress already made can be lost.

To overcome these difficulties the best way to succeed is to develop measures to increase human exchanges and relations. Creating resident portraits (native and newcomer) is a good way of getting to know each other, and of encouraging people to find out more about their neighbours (new or old). This is what the PNR des Causses du Quercy did. Improvements to mentalities have to be made on both sides.

Dialogue begins when the local population meets with others from the neighbourhood. For politicians this is a way of finding out what people think ; and for residents it is an opportunity to question their relations with the new inhabitants.



The desire to mix and to share increases. The problem of people grouping together in ghettos is therefore avoided. The integration of foreign residents is made easier due to their positive impact on shops, building companies, craft industries, local services (schools, hospitals), building restoration, and housing.

In Brittany for example, mentalities have definitely changed.

Among the ideas and suggestions made at this workshop, those of art and culture should be remembered as dynamic ways of integrating. For example, the **artistic project** led by Parcs en Résidence has put the village's distinctiveness into the limelight (its potential and its local heritage). Based on the human aspect, the project requested the help of the younger generation in an aim to get families involved in artistic projects, and therefore create a relationship with foreigners.

**Associative work is equally as important.** It is essential to set up associations to accompany certain projects. An association is a way of encouraging relations and it helps to install feelings of being compatible and of needing each other. The idea is to spread the experience to other villages and to find a way of creating a common project throughout the territory.

The situation of politicians, native country residents and newcomers working as a team helps to open up mentalities. A diagnosis is necessary, in liaison with the population in order to determine a project which deals with the main measures to be taken that would make integration easier for the newcomers to the countryside. The resulting debate between politicians and local residents could lead to the creation of a regional charter (Pays de St Flour - Haute Auvergne). Lastly, politicians' readiness to work in collaboration is a key element to the success of these reception and integration policies.

Some of the subjects discussed during this workshop aroused areas of disagreement and led to some questions :

- The paradox between regions willing to welcome and to set up reception policies, and the reticence of certain residents in the countryside ;
- The "Parcs" have different levels of opening and closing. Some would like to attract new comers and others would like to adopt the "let's live together" ;
- The paradox of talking about reception policies in France, when on European level the frontiers are closing.

Different experiences showed that **the fear of foreigners was a major recurring problem**, coupled with the **fear of being stereotyped**, a painful experience that some regions have already come up against.

To conclude, it is important to remember that internal communication between people of the same territory is always delicate. "The development of territories and the opening up of mentalities" go hand in hand. In the case of the Auvergne region, it is the inhabitants, who during a territorial meeting voiced their desire to see reception policies as a priority.

**Lastly working in collaboration with the local population means more time to think things over, change from daily routines, and allows ideas to follow their course.**