



## SHORT CONFERENCE A territory's identity

The aim of this workshop is to establish what role democratic participation plays in forming a territory's identity, which depends on the foundation of shared standards. The democratic participation undertaken by territorial conventions in the Auvergne has created or re-created part of the Auvergne's identity.

Firstly some questions on this subject must be answered. For example, it is important to assess what citizens expect when dealing with issues of identity, and what role they can play in developing a territory's image. Marked changes in identity must be taken into consideration.

There are four elements linked to the population, which have to be studied in order to work on the territory's image : the standards of the residents, their beliefs, their hopes and their fears.

The notion of a territory is an additional factor in the development of its identity. On a worldwide basis and taking the competition between territories into consideration, the idea of territorial expanse plays a role in the creation of identity, and promotes new dynamic cooperation. This is illustrated by the increasing importance of regions in France.

When reception policies are analysed based on identity, communication is often missing or unsatisfactory. It doesn't clearly illustrate the territory's identity : "we like living in our region, but nobody else knows". To make people aware of this wellbeing, **a real marketing strategy has to be established**. This should be done without depriving residents of their identity, and by portraying an image that residents consider as representative of their territory.

The example in the Auvergne showed that when local residents give their opinion on identity and reception policies, the debate immediately takes a political dimension.

Other than the territory's identity, numerous barriers exist when welcoming new inhabitants. Often they are geographical, linked to problems of isolation. This is why politicians express residents' requests for improved rail links, via the TGV.

The problem of different cultures and communication is emphasized by the lack of people who speak foreign languages.

A feeling which is frequently encountered is one of "we are already poor, if we have more people living here we will be even poorer".



The recurring question depends on the local inhabitants' **ability to accept other people, and vice versa** as often we wait for the others to share the natives' way of life. With the integration of new inhabitants, principles change and within this context, it is important that people accept each others ideals which consequently modify the territory's identity.

The development of local heritage, resources, shared festivities and free access to cultural exhibitions (ex : Paris plage, nuit des musées...) help to reinforce a territory's identity, and consequently its appeal. During such moments, people see themselves as equals. These moments make integration easier and help to forge a territory's identity.

Globalisation and increased mobility means that there are numerous opportunities to compare territories, and to decide what makes one territory better than another.

Native residents often expect the newcomers to be proud of their new found origins, to be open and ready to share the local way of life.

During the workshop, our attention was brought to a Dutchman who has been living in the Morvan for the past 4 years. He explained his desire to integrate and he explained his liking for the Morvan, even though there was not a definite or positive identity. His fondness grew thanks to social links with the locals. A village's identity can be explained by its willingness to open to others (ex : welcoming foreign students).

**An identity can be resumed as the compromise between what we are and what we accept to become.**

The debate led to other questions such as, is identity the same thing as belonging ? What is the difference between a territory's identity and the identity of those living there ?

A proposed theme for one of the next summer reception universities is the identity of a territory, do newcomers feel they belong, the locals' ability to be forthcoming with newcomers, is this ability the malfunction of the stimulation needed to welcome new inhabitants ?