



Association Régions de France workshop

The workings of reception themed communication in regions and territories

The president, Georges Labazée began his speech with the reminder that there can be no reception policy if there is no communication. Apart from certain moves caused by the conditions of city life, or an attraction to the coast, most population movements originate from a professional communication plan adapted to their needs. The Limousin and the Basse Normandie are regions that illustrate the approach needed to create policies (participants, methodology, targets) the appropriate structures to be created between regions and territories, between partners (financial, technical and political) in order to improve the overall organisation.

The Basse Normandie example :

To set the scene, Claudine Thinon described the “Pays de Saint Lois”, which is a communauté de communes with 98 local authorities. It has 76000 inhabitants who live in a rural residential environment. It is an area that has to face an ageing population, and it is not a very popular area; inhabitants from the Ile de France prefer the coast.

The LEADER 2 and the LEADER+ programmes helped set up a professional communication accompaniment for those with a future project. In order to attract the target group which was the under 36 year olds, the method used was simple ; the creation of a newspaper entitled “This is where it happens”. The articles are based on feedback of different experiences and the editing done by a professional journalist. The computing division of the Pays reinforced the initiative, by creating a portal site, which contains pages with the services available for the young.

The deputy president of the Basse Normandie Regional Council, Frédérique HEURGUIER presented the financial measures taken, such as the creation of financial grants of 50% for those concerned (a director and 3 commission leaders) giving the reception territories a label to encourage every part of the territory to get involved, and lastly the initiative “Ré-inventons les campagnes” aimed at associations (accompaniment for future projects, home help, and development of the territory).

The example of the Auvergne :

The President of the Regional Agency for the Development of Territories in the Auvergne, Mr Jean Michel GUERRE, explained that the region’s reception policy was managed by the agency. Communication strategies for reception are led by the agency based on the principle “we say what we do, even if what is done takes longer than expected to set up. Communication makes way for the action, through experience this works”. The “Urbanophile” advertising campaign is representative of this approach, the campaign attracts people with future projects, and it has also helped to up date the region’s image.

Communication targets those who want a life change, or those who have a business project. It is out of the question to support the demographic cycle, and accept the increasing age of the population. It is essential to contend this tendency and to create methods suitable for those targeted.



The example of the Limousin :

Florence COLETTE stressed the interesting progress made by reception policies. “They are the driving force, providing the necessary circumstances to take a closer look at the development of territories region by region”. However they also lead to strong competition between regions. “What makes the difference is the region’s IMAGE”.

In the Limousin, politicians were concerned with the “in what way aspect”. They created the Pôles Locaux d’Accueil (PLA) which should not be considered as organised structures as such, but more as a quality label for the “pays” or the “PNR” which can use them as areas where existing structures and newcomers can exchange. Both politicians and territories had to show willing in order to set up such a policy.

The regional reception budget is not very high; it is divided into three main parts

- Development systems proposed by the PLA, whose job it is to put people in touch.
- Indirect communication via study actions and services (training in listening and organisation).
The service providers and the experts are not there to do, but to assist in the doing.
- The prognosis which makes it possible to analysis the evolution of migrations over time, along with the University.

What do the experts think ?

Jean-Jacques LAMAY (DEMAIN TV Channel) suggested that internal and external communication should not be put into opposition. Inhabitants should be able to recognize themselves and their territory in external communication.

Initiatives and success stories strengthen appropriation, and set the inhabitants into motion.

A communication plan, adapted to the local reality and well targeted, should be set up at the beginning ; it should support the actions and then be assessed.

Regional communication has to be legible, and should be based on the reality of the territories. This link between regional and local level is not always easy.

Sylvie LE CALVEZ (director of “l’acteur rural”) believes that there are two obvious regional strategies :

- Those who communicate “quietly” while everything is not completely set up
- Those who communicate first of all, and react afterwards

Both of these situations can cause problems. If the campaign is too powerful, those with business projects do not find in reality what they had been promised, and they are disappointed.

Going back to the partnership with the Pays de Loirs, she emphasised the team work which was set up in order to help the local newspaper with the writing and the titles. At first, a survey aimed at internet users was carried out, this action helped to improve the portal site’s structure and the ways of writing. She pointed out the possible services that a TV Channel such as DEMAIN TV can offer (buying advertising space, advertising campaign, institutional films). By broadcasting the initiatives, the channel helps to make people aware of the work going on in the territory : it’s the additional advantage of the media.



Numerous themes were raised during the debates.

How to respect the diversity of territories when developing communication strategies ?

“To integrate newcomers you have to manage the flow, and to attract them you have to create a flow” ;
The example of the Landes department speaks for itself : the west side and the coast are extremely popular ; the centre is almost deserted. The emphasis has been put on the upkeep of health services. Some structures are a long time in following the flow. Some of them, like the pays, represent modernity and are lively areas, others remain set in tradition.

As for the financial side, in the Limousin, programmes have meant that the PLA has been helped by an allowance of 1.5 million euros which has increased to 2 million euros with the “Projets en Campagne”.
The art of communication is essential ; it is an area where brain power is needed. This amount includes direct grants to help people set up, and indirect communication.

In Basse Normandie both measures (the labelling and the appeal for projects) cost 300 000 euros. The challenge now is to assess the impact of the funding on the policies, see the effects on projects, the inhabitants and on the image.

To conclude, reception plans are a way of updating all of the sectors of regional policies :

- The requirements of its transverse nature.

The constant concern about working with others :

- The requirements of partners.

As regards relationships with professionals, doing is important, but helping to do is better :

- The requirements of team building.

Lastly to be successful with reception plans, thought and action, creation and common sense should always go hand in hand :

- This is what makes it difficult.